

THE CAREER OF MUHAMMAD BARKATULLAH (1864-1927): FROM INTELLECTUAL
TO ANTICOLONIAL REVOLUTIONARY

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ABSTRACT

Samee Nasim Siddiqui: The Career of Muhammad Barkatullah (1864-1927): From Intellectual to Anticolonial Revolutionary
(Under the direction of Cemil Aydin)

This thesis analyzes the transition of Muhammad Barkatullah, a Muslim-Indian living under British colonial rule, from intellectual to anti-British revolutionary. The thesis assumes that this transition was not inevitable and seeks to explain when, why, and how Barkatullah became radicalized and turned to violent, revolutionary means in order to achieve independence from British rule, and away from demanding justice and equality within an imperial framework. To do this, the focus of the thesis is on the early period of his career leading up to the beginning of WWI. It examines his movements, intellectual production, and connections with various networks in the context of major global events in order to illuminate his journey to revolutionary anti-colonialism.

To my parents

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The US-based revolutionary magazine, *The United States of India*, opened its November 1927 edition with a heartfelt obituary:

Maulvi Barkatullah, a great revolutionary leader and a staunch patriot, passed away in San Francisco on September 12, 1927. His death is a grave loss to India in that it constitutes a severe blow to the revolutionary movement whose main pillar he had been for more than thirty years. The loss will not easily be forgotten, nor will the gap created soon be filled. Heroes like Barkatullah are not born everyday.¹

Despite the glowing words, Muhammad Barkatullah's legacy, while not "forgotten," has not received the attention it deserves. The only significant English-language scholarly work, to-date, focusing explicitly on Barkatullah is a recent article by Humayun Ansari.²

That is not to say that he is completely invisible in other scholarly work. Look under the surface and Barkatullah appears sporadically in a variety of fields, most notably, in the work on

¹ "India Loses Hero," *The United States of India* 5, no. 5 (1927): 2.

² Humayun Ansari, "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's Transnationalism," in *Transnational Islam in the Interwar Period in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers*, ed. Gotz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 181-209. This is an excellent overview of Barkatullah's career and Ansari does address Barkatullah's early career and puts forward some convincing arguments as to *when* and *why* Barkatullah's shift from an intellectual to an anti-colonial revolutionary may have taken place. The space given to it in this short article, however, with a large portion of it aimed at exploring his revolutionary activities during and after WWI, means that Ansari is unable to provide a clear picture of Barkatullah, the intellectual, becoming Barkatullah, the revolutionary. This is partly because, similar to other writings on Barkatullah, while Ansari claims that Barkatullah was a respected intellectual, he does so without dissecting his ideas or analyzing his substantial intellectual contributions and, instead, focuses on his revolutionary activities from WWI onwards. Barkatullah had a long career before 1914, a period in which he was a prolific writer. Most of this large collection of articles have never been cited, let alone analyzed thus far.

Indian radicals based outside of India.³ He was, after all, one of the early participants in what became a geographically expanding, ideologically diversifying, and politically radicalizing web of Indian revolutionaries and anti-colonial activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴

Radical international network and Barkatullah's internationalism

While this revolutionary network did not have a headquarters or an originator, it is said to have first taken root in organizations set up by Indian activists living in the United Kingdom in the last decade of the nineteenth century before spreading around the world through a host of crucial vectors.⁵ The most important nodes in this network were London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Istanbul, San Francisco, Tokyo, Singapore and Shanghai. The revolutionaries in this interconnected global network cut across class, religious, linguistic, and ethnic lines. And, while the network was predominantly comprised of Indian men, it is important to not ignore the importance of women like Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama in London, Paris and Germany for the movement.

The movement leaped forward when members on the U.S. West Coast formed the

³ One of the earliest works that looks at Barkatullah's activities is T.R. Sareen's *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1979). It is a useful summary of this transnational network that does mention Barkatullah's work and connections in the United States, Berlin, Afghanistan and in Bolshevik Russia.

⁴ For instance, Cemil Aydin's work looks at the connections between Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), while Michael Silvestri explores the Irish and Indian nationalist connections in *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Humayun Ansari, on the other hand, looks at early Pan-Islamic socialists in "Pan Islam and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists," *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 590-537. For literature looking at Barkatullah's work in the United Kingdom, see Humayun Ansari's "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's Transnationalism" and Ron Geaves' autobiography of Abdullah Quilliam, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam* (London: Kube Publishing, 2010).

⁵ Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)*, xi.

Ghadar Party in 1913.⁶ Ghadar served as the “connecting tissue” for this network and should not be understood as a purely nationalist movement. For historian Maia Ramnath, while the Ghadarite goal to liberate India “from foreign occupation is easily intelligible to nationalist logic, in both geographical and ideological terms they [over-spilled] the purview of of mainstream nationalism,” and figures used internationalist methods and invoked universal principles as they worked alongside various non-Indian networks and governments.⁷ These revolutionaries comprised Pan-Islamists, Socialists and Anarcho-Syndicalists but despite this ideological heterogeneity they shared a vision of an India free from British rule. For instance, Barkatullah was both an Indian nationalist and a loyal Pan-Islamist who strongly believed in Muslim unity and the symbolic importance of the role of the Caliph. For him, nationalism and Pan-Islamic solidarity were by no means contradictory.⁸ Barkatullah’s internationalism is exhibited by his writings pertaining to colonialism not directly linked to India and Islam, and by his close working relationship with Irish Fenians, Japanese Pan-Asianists, Bolsheviks, and Pan-Islamists from around the world during his long career. As Ramnath writes, Barkatullah is “by far the most important interface of Pan-Islamism, communism, and Indian national liberation struggle,” as well as *the* central figure in the Indian movement’s activities in Japan.⁹ Both in terms of strategy and ambition, Barkatullah’s career as an anti-racist intellectual and anti-British revolutionary was internationalist in scope.

⁶ “Ghadar” means mutiny or revolt in Urdu.

⁷ Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

⁸ It is important to note here that interwar Pan-Islamism was not necessarily anti-imperial either, for even Pan-Islamic, anti-colonial activists like Rashid Rida and Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani had an ambivalent relationship with European empires. See Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017) and Umar Ryad, “Anti-Imperialism and the Pan-Islamic Movement,” in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. David Motadel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131-149.

⁹ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 222.

Migration and intersectionality

Barkatullah's career, and the network as a whole, is best conceptualized in terms of movement and space. Movement and space help chart how, when and where Barkatullah's shift from an Islamic intellectual to an anti-British revolutionary takes place. Movement of bodies, ideas and materials, facilitated by technological improvements in the printing press and steamship travel, were crucial for Barkatullah and other revolutionaries to access the kinds of environments needed in order to create productive spaces for activism, sharing ideas and intellectual production. Improving travel and communications technology also aided in both expanding and connecting geographically distant revolutionaries.

It was his flight from British India in the 1880s that allowed Barkatullah to develop relationships with revolutionaries, both Indian and non-Indian, in cities like Liverpool (1880s-1893), London (1893-1903), New York (1903-1909) and Tokyo (1909-1914). Only by relocating to the colonial metropole in the late 1880s would Barkatullah have been exposed, first hand, to the vitriolic racism the Muslim community faced in Britain in the nineteenth century. Barkatullah's move to the United States in 1903, meanwhile, not only brought him into close proximity to radical Indian nationalists, Irish-American Fenians, socialists and African-American intellectuals, but also helped him find a less oppressive environment than the United Kingdom where he could publish commentaries on British foreign policy with relative freedom. It was through living in exile that Barkatullah was most clearly able to recognize the intersections of his anti-British and Pan-Islamic political struggle. As Michael Goebel argues regarding nationalism in interwar Paris, migration "render[ed] injustices, inequalities, and the juridical pitfalls of colonialism much more palpable." For Goebel, there was "something inherent

in the very process of migration that piqued new ways of seeing the imperial order.”¹⁰

The ability to learn and converse in various foreign languages – Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, English, Japanese and Arabic -- enabled Barkatullah to make moving between geographic, cultural and political spaces productive. Learning English in Bombay before leaving British India allowed him to communicate with a cosmopolitan array of intellectuals throughout his travels. While expertise in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Hindi proved a major source of income for him while living in London and Tokyo, where he worked as a language instructor. The ability to write in different languages also opened up possibilities to address diverse audiences around the world. Understanding different languages helped Barkatullah translate ideas and concepts across linguistic, cultural and religious lines.

In the end, prior to his decisive revolutionary turn, Barkatullah’s first significant move was to the heart of the British Empire in the 1880s, followed by escaping British imperial jurisdiction entirely by moving to the United States in 1903 and Japan in 1909.¹¹ In many ways his movement exemplifies the trajectories others within the Indian anti-colonial network took, usually reacting to the growing imperial policing and surveillance apparatus. Anti-colonial Indians began moving to the colonial metropole to escape oppression in British India and take advantage of the liberal environment in Britain. British authorities reacted to political activism in the colonial metropole by Indian residents with increased surveillance and targeted policing, especially after 1905. In the next phase of this cat-and-mouse game, Indian anti-colonial activists faced “trans-imperial cooperation” when they began moving to the Continent, in particular, Paris and Berlin. Barkatullah left Britain before 1905, however, he was probably aware, or at least had

¹⁰ Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.

¹¹ He, of course, did move back to the United States for a short period in 1913 before the start of WWI before beginning his cooperation with the Germans and the Ottomans during the war.

suspicions of the fact, that he was being monitored by Scotland Yard. While he did not move within Europe and, instead, moved to New York, parallel to their cooperative relationships with rival European empires like the French, the British trans-imperial surveillance apparatus had reached North America as well, when the West Coast began to see a large influx of Indian immigrants in the early twentieth century.¹² Barkatullah then moved to Japan in 1909, which was, in part, an attempt to escape the trans-imperial surveillance network. Barkatullah, therefore, was not only having to escape the British empire's territorial jurisdiction, but its surveillance and policing reach as well. It is important here to recognize how this racialized trans-imperial surveillance and policing affected the mode and narrative of Indian anti-colonialism. As Brückenhaus writes, the "feedback cycle" between the anti-colonialists and imperial policing "caused each other to become more transnational in the scope of their networks and in their ideologies."¹³

Road to radicalization

While Barkatullah's revolutionary activities and connections to other movements has been looked at by a variety of academics mentioned earlier, the wide lens applied to their work leaves important questions under-investigated. Particularly absent are the details in his journey towards sedition and eventual acceptance for the use violence in working towards his revolutionary objectives.

The outbreak of World War One is generally considered to be a crucial moment that

¹² Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance and Indian Anticolonialism in North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and "Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in the Transnational Western U.S.-Canadian Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011): 420-436.

¹³ Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3. Seema Sohi makes a similar argument about the dialectic between imperial policing and anti-colonialism in the works cited in the footnote above. She discusses how Indians in North America began drawing connections between British colonialism and racialized immigration and discrimination in the United States and Canada.

changed the landscape of radical anti-colonial resistance. While revolutionary activities intensified quantitatively and qualitatively after the outbreak of the Great War, one question still needs answering: *when did radical revolutionaries begin to seriously imagine a future outside of empire?* That is, going from the struggle for equal rights and privileges *within* empire through constitutional means and public pressure towards demanding independence through violence. What led anti-colonial thinkers to go from *thinking* about independence to using violence and collaborating with rival states or empires? The answers to these questions vary, both in terms of specific nationalist or transnational movements, and with regards to the individual figures within them. As Frederick Cooper contends, “[a]nti-colonial movements were not a stage along an inevitable pathway from empire to nation, but part of a wider pattern of struggle whose culmination in the multiplication of nation-states was conjunctural and contingent.”¹⁴ The same can be argued for individual revolutionaries as parts of these movements. Exploring the career of one individual allows for a focus on the precise moments and places where momentous changes occur in the lives of revolutionaries who were part of these larger, complex movements. While local and geopolitical events and environments significantly shape these experiences, academics need to be cognizant of the fact that these individual journeys are, in the end, *also* personal ones.

While Erez Manela is right to assert that the “Wilsonian Moment” in 1919 was a transformational moment that brought the call by “colonized and marginalized peoples” for self-determination to “much broader publics” outside of “just intellectuals and political elites,” this thesis does not narrate that story.¹⁵ By charting the trajectory of Barkatullah’s radicalism, this

¹⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 153.

¹⁵ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5-7.

thesis aims to highlight how, for many exiled Indians, the revolutionary ethos was present before self-determination sentiments became widespread in India itself after WWI.¹⁶ Instead of focusing on the importance of European and American imperial competition and the impact of calls for self-determination by the likes of Woodrow Wilson and, to a lesser extent, Vladimir Lenin, by exploring Barkatullah's career up until the lead-up to the First World War, this thesis illustrates how the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905, the protests and anger in response to the proposed partition of Bengal, the Chinese Revolution in 1911, and interactions with anti-colonial revolutionaries like the Irish-American Fenians, played a significant role in convincing Barkatullah and others that British Raj in India had to be ended by any means, even violence. The outbreak of WWI provided the opening, and the possibility of forming imperial allies of convenience, for Barkatullah and his fellow Ghadarites to strike.

Anti-Muslim racism and Civilizational Discourse

Barkatullah began his career as a religious scholar and intellectual, born and educated in India, who became increasingly radicalized during his time living in Britain (1880s-1903) and the United States (1903-1909). His early positions on what relationship the British Empire should have with India seem ambivalent, particularly during his time in Britain. It was in the United States, with the freedom afforded to him, where his writings become more critical of British actions and motives around the world. Although he only began to cause British authorities serious alarm by publishing anti-British seditious materials after he moved to Tokyo in 1909. In the end, it was the outbreak of WWI when he eventually began actively working towards using violent means to overthrow the British, aligning himself with the Germans during WWI, and the Bolsheviks after the end of the war. While there is a clear intensification in

¹⁶ It should be noted that Bengal had experienced radical anti-British protest and revolutionary violence in the aftermath of proposed partition of Bengal in 1905. This topic shall be addressed later in this thesis.

Barkatullah's radical ideas and methods, his trajectory remained contingent. It is important to recognize the significant difference between being an anti-colonial activist with revolutionary tendencies, and a revolutionary who becomes the enemy of a powerful state or empire. The former could mean a mild irritation to surveillance, while the latter implies treason, which, under British law, was punishable by death.

Over the course of this thesis, I argue that while Barkatullah's overtly seditious activities may have begun after his move to Tokyo in 1909, it is his time in the United States, between 1903 and 1909, that is equally crucial and thus in need of further investigation. Developing close working relationships with radical Indian and Irish nationalists in this space and at this historical moment was to prove transformational.

Other geopolitical events that shaped Barkatullah's vision and perspective were related to European powers' actions in Ottoman territory. Barkatullah grew up in an Indian Muslim family, and pursued training as a religious scholar. More significantly, Barkatullah was an early Pan-Islamic activist and intellectual, who believed in the importance of the Ottoman Empire, as a sovereign modern Muslim empire, and in the position of Caliph as the symbolic figurehead of the 'Muslim World.' It should be noted that the idea of the Muslim World emerges in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷ His commitment to this ideological and political movement remained firm

¹⁷ In his article, "Globalizing the Intellectual History of the Muslim World," Aydin critically examines the history of the emergence of the 'Muslim World' and argues that the term itself, "a term referring to all Muslims in the world, simply did not exist before the mid-nineteenth century." What were the intellectual and conceptual shifts within the Islamic intellectual tradition then that facilitated this new conceptualization of the 'Muslim World'? In his article "The Language of Muslim Universality," Faisal Devji goes back to the first major Muslim thinker, the British Muslim Indian Sayyid Ahmed Khan, who forged a link between Islam and humanity. Devji writes that a "global history only becomes possible once the human race emerges as its subject." As Muslim reformers responded to critiques of Islam as backward, in relation to Europe, with regards to scientific and technological advancement, they argued against racial and civilizational theories and brought "humanity to the fore as history's true subject." Responding to critiques of Islam from enlightenment thinkers arguing that Islam, unlike Christianity, was backwards, fanatical and, crucially, did not conform to natural law, Khan argued that "Islam, when cleansed of superstitious accretions was both the most natural and the most universal of religions." The crucial point to note here is that Khan, in proving Islam's universality on "nineteenth century notions of nature and therefore with the human species, both which stood outside the doctrinal sphere of religion to provide criteria of its veracity." Staying in

until his death.

An issue Barkatullah's Pan-Islamism brings up is, how we are to understand religion? Literature on Muslim engagement in politics has tended to move away from reducing Muslim motivations to religious piety or an uncritical adherence to an ancient, static, orthodox religious tradition. The tendency for intellectuals concerned with the issue of religion and its definition, specifically with regards to Islam, has been to focus on economic, political and sociological motives instead, and, in doing so, emphasize agency of the individuals and groups in question. While this approach is an important corrective to that reductive understanding of Muslim motivations, it often reduces 'religion' to a strategic tool.¹⁸ These instrumental understandings of religion ignore the emotional connection to one's religious identity and the significance of religious tradition.

I argue that not only does Barkatullah have a deep commitment to his Muslim identity, he is actively taking part in what Talal Asad calls the Islamic "discursive tradition" through his scholarship engaged with questions of role and nature of the Caliphate and Islam's relationship with modernity.¹⁹ As this thesis will elaborate later, Barkatullah was trained as an Islamic scholar

Muslim India, Devji looks at the Sayyid Ahmad Khan's disciple, Altaf Husayn Ali, to see the implications of this. Ali, in trying to argue that Muslims, particularly Indian Muslims, had declined in relation to Christian Europe, had to redefine the *umma*, or the Muslim community, in sociological terms. This, in many ways, mirrored enlightenment thinkers who saw Islam in demographic as opposed to metaphysical or juridical terms. These ideas were being debated across Muslim societies, connected through improved communications and transportation infrastructure, facing various forms of contact with European colonialism. While it is important to stress that these reformulations were often responding, directly or indirectly, to critiques of Islam by European intellectuals with the backdrop of military, scientific and economic domination, these intellectuals were engaged in a dynamic process that critiqued, appropriated and adjusted European ideas. This was a process of translation not diffusion: Cemil Aydin, "Globalizing the Intellectual History of the Muslim World" in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 162 and Faisal Devji, "The Language of Muslim Universality," *Diogenes* 57, no. 35 (2010): 25-39.

¹⁸ Benjamin Hopkins makes a similar argument, See, "Islam and Resistance in the British Empire" in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. David Motadel (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 167.

¹⁹ In his article, Ovamir Anjum defines this tradition as consisting of "discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established has a history." Individuals, groups and institutions, are engaged in discourses related to past tradition to ensure "correct

in India, and thus Islam has an enduring presence throughout his writing. Islam was not *just* a tactic, but rather formed a significant framework of his worldview. That being said, it is important to not reduce Barkatullah's ideas and motivations to any essentialist reading of his Muslim-ness and to note the diversity of ideological, personal, and geopolitical influences that informed him.

Barkatullah's ideas were being formulated in the context of discourses on the universality of civilization. In the civilization discourse from the beginning of the 19th century, civilization was inextricably linked with the idea of progress and modernity. While it was global, it was also linked, implicitly or explicitly, to the concept of race and the nation. Non-European intellectuals around the world were universalizing European enlightenment ideals and concepts, by

performance" for the present and the future. Therefore, Islamic discursive tradition is a "historical set of evolving discourses, embodied in the set of practices and institutions of Islamic societies and hence deeply imbricated in the material life of those inhabiting them." This 'Islam' is deeply embedded in the material- the political, the economic, and the social. Asad also critiques Geertz's understanding of Religion. For Asad, Geertz's definition of religion ignores power and materiality: power to interpret scripture, to implement norms through institutions, and to exercise disciplinary power. Geertz, Asad argues, distinguishes religion from politics, science and common-sense and never "examines whether...religious 'experience' relates to something in the social world believers live in" which is related to his understanding of "symbols as *sui generis*, the precondition for religious experience (which, once registered, must by definition be 'genuine'), rather than a condition of social life (facilitating some objectives and making others difficult)." Islam and religion, therefore, should be understood as a "discursive tradition," and hence, not a closed-system and deeply connected to the material. Religion, according to this understanding, cannot be reduced to, or disconnected from, politics, economics, culture and society. While institutions and power relations are always important, it should be noted that individuals certainly have agency according to this conceptualization. As Anjum notes in summarizing Asad's position, that "[r]efication of Islam is not possible...because it is not a fixed social system but rather...a relationship with certain foundational texts and a particular historical narrative of their origins." Ordinary Muslims, not just specialists in Islamic jurisprudence, particularly since the wide-spread availability of the printing press since the nineteenth century in the Muslim world, participate in this tradition through interpretation and argumentation: "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and his interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Africa, and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 661. Tomoko Masuzawa's *The invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) explores the emergence of 'World Religion' as a concept in nineteenth century European discourse. Discourses that Masuzawa would argue cannot be separated from geopolitics, and often helped buttress European colonialism. In this discourse, Islam, for instance, was often regarded as the lesser, Arab, Semitic religion, that compared unfavorably to the Aryan Christianity. She argues that, in the nineteenth century, Islam was generally seen as: "fastidiously elemental and constant, tending toward fanatic militancy. The nineteenth century devised some daring theories about the purported characteristics; the twentieth century forgot them. What has become invisible under the new discursive regime, then, is the very speculative logic that rationalized and legitimized the commonplace characterization in the first place." This is the context in which Barkatullah was arguing that Islam was a universal religion that was compatible with modernity and, hence, not backwards, or fanatic.

translating, modifying and adapting these ideas into their own context.²⁰ Far from rejecting enlightenment ideals, Barkatullah and others were arguing against their cultural, religious, linguistic and racial exclusivity.²¹ This global circulation of European ideas came as a result of geopolitical immediacy, by being forced to react to the consequences of rapid European military expansion, and were facilitated by technological advancements in steamship travel and the printing press.

In his writings, Barkatullah argued that the ‘golden era’ of the Islamic civilization existed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, up until the time of the third Caliph, Uthman. His strategy was to reconstruct a global history of civilizations and place Islam within it, in addition to making comparisons between social reform and institutions from the ‘golden era’ and contemporary Europe and North America. He did this to suggest that Muslims were indeed capable of having a civilization, and therefore Islam was not incompatible with progress and modernity as racialized European discourse had suggested. That is not to say he did not account for the contemporary state of affairs. While ‘European Civilization’ had ‘awoken’ from its slumber since the Reformation, Barkatullah argued, Muslims had rested on their laurels and their societies had stagnated. For Barkatullah, European encroachment on Muslim lands and the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, the only Muslim empire, illustrated this. However, despite the pessimistic outlook on the plight of contemporary Islamic civilization, he argued that the solution was to combine useful European technology and ideas with what was essential in Islam. In other words, to adapt ideas, institutions and technology from Europe and apply them into their context.

²⁰ On the global circulation of ideas and the process of translation and universalizing concepts, see Christopher Hill, “Conceptual Universality in the Transnational Nineteenth Century,” in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 134-158 and Marwa ElShakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), 1-23.

²¹ For example, See Cemil Aydin on the Pan-Asian and Pan-Islamist critiques of the racialized application of enlightenment ideas in *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*.

Barkatullah was also eager to emphasize the egalitarian potential within the Qur'an and the message of the Prophet Muhammad. He argued that the Prophet was a gradualist social reformer and the fault in Muslim societies was not that the Prophet's message was defective, but rather that Muslim leaders had forgotten the egalitarian ethos inherent within Islam.

In the end, Barkatullah's commitment to Pan-Islamic solidarity in the face of racialized discourse on Islam and the Ottoman Empire remained firm right until his death. However, Barkatullah's career cannot be reduced to his Pan-Islamic activism, as exhibited in his connections with Irish-Fenians, radical Indian nationalists, Pan-Asianists, socialists, liberal Christians and occultists from Britain and the United States. Barkatullah's empowerment from his involvement in an increasingly radicalized global network in the years leading up to the First World War, and his increasing disillusionment with Britain's ability to offer justice and equality, cemented his anti-colonial vision for the future of India. This is that story.

CHAPTER II

BARKATULLAH OF BHOPAL: ISLAM AND PAN-ISLAM

While Barkatullah's career as an intellectual and revolutionary was almost entirely outside of India, his early life is important for understanding not only his understanding of Islamic historical and theological debates but, arguably more importantly, his interest and enduring commitment to the Pan-Islamic movement that emerged in a formative stage of his life and career.

Muhammad Barkatullah was born around 1864 in the princely state of Bhopal, in the central state of Madhya Pradesh in present-day India.²² His father, Shaikh Kadratullah, worked for the Bhopal State as a Munshi, or secretary, but died when Barkatullah was still very young in 1876. Barkatullah was educated in Urdu, Arabic, Persian languages and Islamic philosophy at the *Madrassa-e-Sulemania*, as he worked towards becoming an Islamic scholar, or *alim*.²³

Barkatullah's first move came within British India, as he travelled to Khandwa and then Bombay, where he enrolled to study English and worked as a tutor. Change, even from Barkatullah's early career wasn't just geographical, but also intellectual and political. The Indian

²² In some sources he is believed to have been born between 1859 and 1864, the latter date is the one that is most cited, particularly in the British records. I am sticking to the latter date for the sake of simplicity. For more on his early life read Muhammad Irfan's Urdu language biography *Barkatullah Bhopali: Ek Jhan Gasht-I Inqalabi* (Bhopal: Irfan Publications, 1969). For more on Indian princely states, See Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati, ed., *India's Princely states: People, Princes, and Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

²³ He is often referred to in both, his own writings and those about him, as *Maulana/Maulvi* Muhammad Barkatullah *Bhopali*. *Maulana* or *Maulvi* are titles for Muslim leaders or learned individuals, while *Bhopali* indicates someone hails from Bhopal. The latter point is something not uncommon for figures of the period in India.

Mutiny of 1857 marked the end of Indian Muslim sovereignty in India. The trauma of colonialism, the loss of sovereignty coupled with imperial racism, proved to be a “major catalyst in the intensification of intellectual activity among reform-minded Muslim scholars” and ushered in the birth of new, competing reformist movements.²⁴ The most significant new reformist outfits in the late 19th century South Asia were the Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-i Hadith and Ahmadiyyah.²⁵ As Sher Ali Tareen suggests, these movements were engaged in bitter polemical debates on normative practice of Islam in the context of modernity. This period also marked a major shift from contestation of authority between individual scholars to “an unprecedented group-centered orientation.”²⁶ This was the intellectual landscape in which Barkatullah, the young *alim*, was educated.²⁷

On the global level, there was an emergence of the Muslim World as a concept and Pan-Islamism as a transnational movement from the mid-nineteenth. Cemil Aydin argues that the term Muslim World itself, a term referring to all Muslims around the world, did not exist before prior to this period and “became the basis of the ideal of Pan-Islamism.”²⁸ The idea of the Muslim World emerged in the context of the increasing European encroachment into Muslim-majority territories, with the aggressive colonial expansion being “sustained by more systematic theories of Orientalism and race ideology, establishing permanent identity-walls between

²⁴ Ebrahim Moosa and Sher Ali Tareen, “Revival and Reform,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 467.

²⁵ Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 31.

²⁶ Sher Ali Tareen, “Normativity, Heresy, and the Politics of Authenticity in South Asian Islam,” *The Muslim World* 9, no. 3 (2009): 523.

²⁷ For more on the Muslim intellectual landscape, see Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 35-61.

²⁸ Cemil Aydin, “Globalizing the Intellectual History of the Muslim World,” 168.

Christian white Europeans on the one hand and the Muslim world or the ‘colored races’ on the other.”²⁹ It is in this context that “a Muslim world identity emerged as a commonsense knowledge, a geopolitical reality, and a civilizational-religious identity that everybody agreed on.”³⁰

One of the most influential early Pan-Islamists was Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897). Al-Afghani, born in Asadabad in Northwestern Iran, had been expelled from Egypt and moved to India for a brief period where Barkatullah is said to have met him.³¹ Al-Afghani’s activism involved a double-critique: he not only criticized Western rule over Muslim societies but also challenged the authority of traditional *ulama*. His solutions lay in Muslim unity and a “revival of reason as a force of guidance” along with more polities with more “representative forms of government.”³²

The compatibility of ‘Islam’ with ‘reason’, the push for democratic reforms and Pan-Islamism that al-Afghani strove for, became the most durable commitments throughout Barkatullah’s career. It should be noted that the context for these arguments on Islam’s relationship with ‘reason’, ‘science’, and ‘democracy’ wasn’t just Western colonialism. Rather, figures like al-Afghani were directly addressing Eurocentric critiques of Islam represented in their binary oppositions: ‘superstition’, ‘traditional metaphysics’ and ‘tyranny’. Arguably, what al-Afghani is most famous for came after he left India for Paris, when he impressively critiqued the influential French academic Ernest Renan’s lecture attacking Islam for being an obstacle to

²⁹ Cemil Aydin, “Pan-Nationalism of Pan-Islamic, Pan-Asian, and Pan-African Thought” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 676.

³⁰ Cemil Aydin, “Globalizing the Intellectual History of the Muslim World,” 168.

³¹ Muhammad Irfan Khan, *Barkatullah Bhopali*, 53.

³² Ebrahim and Tareen, 462.

science and modernity.³³ The al-Afghani-Renan debate would have been a moment that Muslim students and intellectuals like Barkatullah would have keenly followed and discussed.

Barkatullah would begin countering Eurocentric discourse on Islam himself when moving to Britain.

³³ Cemil Aydin, *Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 48.

CHAPTER III

BARKATULLAH IN IMPERIAL BRITAIN: THE PAN-ISLAMIST INTELLECTUAL AND ACTIVIST

Barkatullah moved to Britain in the late 1880s, when he was still a young man.³⁴ Despite growing up in under British rule, the move to the colonial metropole had to have been a significant change for him. The journey may have seemed like the logical choice; Barkatullah was convinced by al-Afghani's position that "Muslim freedom was possibly only if the secrets of European intellectual, military, technological, and political superiority had been mastered."³⁵ Barkatullah arrived at an interesting time in British history. The late 19th century saw the earliest institutionalization of Islam in Britain, with the establishment of the first Mosque and Islamic institute in Liverpool under the leadership of Abdullah Quilliam in 1887. Barkatullah became its first *imam*.

Quilliam, a solicitor born in a Methodist family, officially converted to Islam in 1888 and became an unlikely international Pan-Islamic figure. Similar to Barkatullah, the relative accessibility of steamship travel and the printing press played an important role in Abdullah Quilliam's life and career. Quilliam's travels through North Africa had sparked his initial interest in Islam. Islam provided an alternative to what he saw as the "Christian decay and depravity," the symptoms being the rising alcoholism and sectarianism that he observed in Liverpool.³⁶ New

³⁴ January 14, 1924, History Sheet of Maulvi Muhammad Barkatullah, IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p.1, Indian Office Records.

³⁵ Humayun Ansari, "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's Transnationalism," 183.

³⁶ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain*, 48.

publications provided Quilliam and the burgeoning community with both a voice to educate fellow Muslims and the wider British public about Islam, and a space for discussion on both local and global issues. This community was establishing itself, however, in a period marked by anti-Muslim bigotry. From negative articles in newspapers, to hatred directed towards new converts, to desecration of mosques and Islamic institutes, to physical attacks, the experience of the Liverpool Muslim community was reminiscent of Muslims living in post-9/11 Europe and United States.

Barkatullah's impressions of his new surroundings were still generally positive, however. The decay in Muslim societies, as he saw it, was a result of despotic governments that neglected educating their subjects. For Barkatullah, living and working among this burgeoning Muslim community with a large number of converts, led him to conclude that since "Muslims in the West are Muslims by reason, not by birth, they promise to be the pioneers of future civilization."³⁷ The positivity may have been partly due to the fact that Barkatullah had escaped the oppressiveness of the Government of India and moving to the liberal, "soft heart" of the British Empire, although it was his optimism and regard for the model established by Quilliam in Liverpool that is crucial.³⁸

Part of his remit, as a religious figure in Britain, was to try and address some of the misconceptions of the 'Islamic civilization.' In a fascinating article, published in 1892, in the *Indian Magazine and Review*, Barkatullah wrote a brief history of the Hajj. The publication was established by the National Indian Association (NIA), a British-based organization that had both

³⁷ Muhammad Barkatullah, *The Crescent* 20 (1886), quoted in Humayun Ansari, "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's Transnationalism," 183.

³⁸ Nicholas Owen explores the dual governing strategy of the British empire, where the British raj was far less constrained in disregarding liberalism in favor of more oppressive forms of surveillance and regulation, and the challenge Indian Radicals posed to this system in "The Soft Heart of the British Empire: Indian Radicals in Edwardian London," *Past and Present* 220 (2013): 143-184.

Indian and English members. While the article looks at the evolution of the pilgrimage, Barkatullah's agenda was to highlight the modernity inherent within a traditional Muslim custom while, at the same time, criticizing Muslim leadership in leaving their societies behind "the West." The article was written at a time when new European colonial "transport infrastructure — the hard networks that bound steam hubs together — ... [had] intensified Muslim contact with non-Muslim peoples and places," while making "the cost of a passage to the Hijaz affordable to a larger number of pilgrims than ever before."³⁹ European empires, the British empire in particular, had also become increasingly entangled in the administration of Hajj travel. European introduced steamship travel had unintended consequences, therefore, by not only altering the demographics of pilgrims, both in terms of "sheer numbers and ethnic diversity," but also affecting disease control and, crucially, helping to unite Muslims from distant geographies across the world.⁴⁰ The increased use of steamship travel prompted surveillance by the British on pilgrims as authorities feared this would provide an avenue for anti-British activities.

For Barkatullah, the Hajj, aside from bringing Muslims from around the world together for the sake of brotherhood and intellectual and cultural exchange, was also beneficial for trade and industry. For instance, he argues that the "influx of people every year" would necessitate labor and "thereby give an impetus to the industry of the inhabitants."⁴¹ Most significantly, the "system of pilgrimage is based on strict commercial science."⁴² To illustrate the modern nature of the "system", he compared the "results" to that of the "World's Fair", like the one held in

³⁹ Nile Green, "The Hajj as its Own Undoing: Infrastructure and Integration on the Muslim Journey to Mecca," *Past and Present* 226 (2015): 193; John Slight, "British Imperial Rule and the Hajj," in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. David Motadel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55.

⁴⁰ Nile Green, "The Hajj as its Own Undoing," 195.

⁴¹ Barkatullah, "The Mecca Pilgrimage," *Indian Magazine and Review*, no. 256 (1892): 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Paris in 1889. In a strategy consistent with his later work, he goes on to criticize Muslim leaders for not improving the sanitation and facilities for the pilgrim since “the primeval ages,” that could, in the future, lead to infectious diseases like cholera spreading among pilgrims.⁴³ He called on the “Sultan and the Sheriff of Mecca to introduce reform in this direction at once, and to do away with this evil forever.”⁴⁴ Hence, while Barkatullah was keen to emphasize the modernity of the pilgrimage system in its early years, he was unwilling to credit the Ottoman leadership for the recent improvements to pilgrimage travel.

A feature of Barkatullah’s career was his ability to write in multiple languages, and this was certainly the case during his time in Britain. Even in his early intellectual career outside of India in Britain, he did not exclusively write about Islam or Muslims. Not long after leaving India, Barkatullah wrote several pieces for an Urdu language periodical called the *The Mirror of British Merchandise and Hindustani Pictorial News*. The publication focused on advertising British-produced goods, using Indian raw materials, that were being sold in India at higher price, along with looking at exploring the close ties between Britain and its colony. According to a review of his writings in *The Mirror*, he encourages Indians to travel to Britain, despite the arduousness of the journey, aim of providing information for aspiring Indians in future articles. In another, Barkatullah paints a “vivid picture of Western intelligence,” encouraging Indian women “to follow” Western women’s lead towards intellectual pursuits in an article translated as “Our Ladies.”⁴⁵ The question that brings up is: do Indian women not engage in, or have

⁴³ There had been several cholera epidemics relating to the Hajj in the second-half of the nineteenth century. In fact, it was the devastating cholera epidemic of 1865 that initially prompted the British to get involved in Hajj administration. See John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj, 1865-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁴ Barkatullah, “The Mecca Pilgrimage,” 187.

⁴⁵ A.M.K. Dehlavi, “The Mirror of British Merchandise and Hindustani Pictorial News,” *Indian Magazine and Review*, No. 263 (Nov, 1892): 582.

ambitions towards pursuing, intellectual activities? A speech Barkatullah gives after moving to London may give a clue as to his understanding of Muslim women of his generation.

It was probably around 1893 when Barkatullah moved to London, and became directly implicated in the imperial project as he worked as the “principal of the Oriental Academic... where he trained students from Oxford and Cambridge universities, going in for the Indian Civil Service examinations, in Arabic, Persian and [Urdu] languages and literatures.”⁴⁶ In London, he not only became an integral figure in Indian and Pan-Islamic organizations, Barkatullah also established relationships with network of radical reformers, that included liberals, socialists and theosophists. For instance, between 1895 and 1898, several lectures were given on Sundays at the South Place Institute in Finsbury, London, and Barkatullah was one of the speakers.

The South Place Institute was a part of the English Ethical Movement in the mid-1880s. This movement attracted a constellation of radical thinkers and reformers that, at various moments, included: secularists, atheists, socialists, liberal thinkers, theosophists and free-thinkers.⁴⁷ As Peter Weiler writes, the ethical movement was “one of many Victorian responses to the loss of faith created by biblical criticism and science, was an attempt to save the moral message of Christianity, once the Bible could no longer be taken as proof.”⁴⁸ In that regard, South Place and other ethical societies, “provided a meeting place for reformers to discuss social questions and also represented an important aspect of their social thought.”⁴⁹ This included

⁴⁶ Charles Brodie Patterson, “Mohammad Barakatullah: A Biographic Sketch,” *Mind* 12, no. 7 (Oct, 1903): 494.

⁴⁷ For more on the South Place Institute, see I.D. MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 41-69.

⁴⁸ Peter Weiler, *The New Liberalism: Liberal Social Theory in Great Britain 1889-1914* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982), 79.

⁴⁹ Peter Weiler, *The New Liberalism*, 79.

figures like Annie Besant (1847-1933), for instance, the international leader of the Theosophical Society (TS), who had close relations with Indian nationalists and had given several lectures on Islam, one of which, entitled *Islam in the Light of Theosophy* was also delivered at the South Place Institute several years after Barkatullah's, in which she would go on to make some similar arguments to the ones he made.⁵⁰

While the audience can be seen as being receptive to hearing critiques of British rule as well as non-Eurocentric perspectives on the society and cultural practices of empire's "colonies, settlements, and countries spread" around the world, it was not a platform where speakers were invited to call for an end to British rule itself.⁵¹ As the "Prefatory Note" of the first volume makes clear, the idea behind the lectures was "that a wider and deeper knowledge of the growth, present condition, and possibilities of each integral part of our Empire *would tend to strengthen the sympathetic, material, and political ties which unite the colonies to the mother country.*"⁵²

The lecture delivered by Barkatullah, published as an essay in *The British Empire Series Volume I*, was focused on the position of women in Islam.⁵³ For this liberal, non-Muslim audience, Barkatullah attempted to provide a counter-narrative to Western discourse on Muslim women that depicted them as an erotic, exotic subjects of investigation, subjugated and lacking agency in uncivilized societies. The discourse over the status of women in India had political

⁵⁰ For a biographical sketch of Annie Besant, see James A. Santucci, "Annie Besant," in Wouter J. Hanegraff, Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek and Jean-Pierre Brach, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 170-173; Annie Besant, *Islam in the Light of Theosophy: A Lecture*, (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1912).

⁵¹ WM, Sheowring, "Prefatory Note," *The British Volume Series Volume I* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, 1899), v. Although it should be noted that several figures within this broad network like Annie Besant, for instance, were sympathetic to the cause of Irish and Indian Home Rule.

⁵² WM, Sheowring, "Prefatory Note," v-vi. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ These volumes mostly contain essays that were initially given as lectures.

implications as well. As Siobhan Lambert-Hurley explains, “[o]ver the course of the nineteenth century, ‘the women question’ emerged as one of the grounds on which British administrators and their Indian subjects debated the subcontinent’s fitness over self-rule with their position of women an indicator of a society’s development.”⁵⁴ Barkatullah’s position in this lecture are similar to that of his compatriot residing in Britain, Syed Ameer Ali and other Indian Muslim modernist *men* of the time.⁵⁵

Barkatullah argues that, while no one could claim with any credibility that “all Islamic institutions are perfect,” the European gaze lacked historical knowledge and cultural context.⁵⁶ An ethnocentric understanding of “happiness,” according to Barkatullah, had meant that because Muslim women did “not have the pleasure of free intercourse with men,” Muslim women lives were seen as desperate and miserable.⁵⁷ Images depicting Muslim women being “caged, like wild beasts, to toil and be tortured” was pure fiction. For Barkatullah, the “means of acquiring happiness in different countries may be different,” and women in Muslim societies had spaces where they joked, laughed, sang, listened to music.⁵⁸ Not only that, women had power and authority in the domestic sphere and had begun to gain education at universities. To a very limited extent, some were even participating in contemporary politics. For instance, Her Highness Shah Jahan Begum was the contemporary leader of his home state of Bhopal, whose

⁵⁴ Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, “Debates Over Women’s Status in Islam: The Case of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal,” in *India’s Princely States: People, Princes, and Colonialism*, ed. Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati (New York: Routledge, 2007), 141.

⁵⁵ Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, “Debates Over Women’s Status in Islam,” 142.

⁵⁶ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Mohamedan Women,” *The British Volume Series Volume I* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, 1899), 375.

⁵⁷ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Mohamedan Women,” 375.

⁵⁸ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Mohamedan Women,” 375.

leadership he goes on to praise. Interestingly, Sultan Shah Jahan herself would go on to publish a series of lectures on the status of women's rights in Islam in 1917.⁵⁹

In this lecture, Barkatullah takes possession of this anthropological lens, except, as an Islamic scholar, having grown up as Muslim man in India. Despite trying to highlight Muslim women agency, for all the images of them singing and laughing, he fails to give them a *real* voice. His writing does not suggest any Muslim women were consulted. While he argues that complete isolation from men did not exist during the time of Prophet Muhammad, they were “free” to enter public spaces with the condition of being “decently dressed.”⁶⁰ The fact that public spaces were male spaces did not receive a critique, presumably one a Muslim woman might have provided. For Barkatullah, a woman was the “queen of her home”, who could have the tendency of being too enamored with “costly dresses and precious jewels.”⁶¹ Instead of recognizing feminist activism or challenging the structural impediments for women to enter male-dominated spheres in industry or politics, he bemoans their lack of ambition. However, as Ayesha Hidayatullah points out, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Muslim women intellectuals and activists had begun calling for precisely those things Barkatullah found them passive regarding: “women's equal rights in the public sphere, particularly in the areas of education, work, politics, and nationalist movements.”⁶²

Despite the male-centered perspective on the topic of women in Islam, Barkatullah's article provided some important critiques of ethnocentric accounts in Western literature of the time. For Western intellectuals looking to give a more nuanced perspective on women's place in

⁵⁹ Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, “Debates over women's status in Islam,” 139-156.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Mohamedan Women,” 377.

⁶¹ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Mohamedan Women,” 378.

⁶² Aysha A. Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34-35.

Islam, Barkatullah's positions proved a useful resource. A British journalist named Walter Gallichan published a book in 1915 entitled *Women under Polygamy* to counter simplistic Western perceptions of polygamy. He relied heavily on Barkatullah's article for his chapter on polygamy in Islam, although he thought Barkatullah was a Muslim woman.⁶³

Barkatullah's perspectives on Islamic legal positions relating to polygamy are interesting. Feeling compelled to address the issue in light of criticism from Christian missionaries and orientalist that considered the practice 'backwards' and anti-women, he argues that Islam has often been criticized for condoning polygamy, yet it was a practice endemic in Arabia before Prophet Muhammad brought the message of Islam to the region. As a gradualist reformer, Barkatullah argued that, the Prophet, through the teachings of the Quran, "not only put a check" on the practice, but went as far as "morally abolish[ing] it."⁶⁴ While the Quran does permit a man to marry more than one wife, the conditional clause that they only do so if they can treat their wives equally, or with impartiality, was rendered "humanly impossible," for Barkatullah. Therefore, he suggests we think of it as an "indirect prohibition" on polygamy.⁶⁵ Interestingly, this was an area Barkatullah's position contradicted that of Abdullah Quilliam. Quilliam had written several pro-polygamy articles and had and indeed practiced polygamy, having had two families simultaneously during his lifetime.⁶⁶ As we shall see later, it would not be the only issue they would have fundamental disagreements over.

⁶³ Walter M. Gallichan, *Women under Polygamy* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1915), 115-120. He does also mention Barkatullah's colleague, Syed Ameer Ali, in this chapter as being another respected Muslim intellectual whose views should be taken into account.

⁶⁴ Barkatullah, "Mohamedan Women," 382. The idea of the Prophet Muhammad being a "gradualist reformer" was an argument Barkatullah and Syed Ameer Ali make regularly in their arguments defending the egalitarian ethic within Islam.

⁶⁵ Barkatullah, "Mohamedan Women," 382.

⁶⁶ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain*, 51-58.

Barkatullah spoke at South Place on at least one more occasion 1900, when he was asked to open a discussion concerning the “Future of India” with the influential liberal, secularist reformer and freethinker, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner (1858-1935).⁶⁷ A brief review of the discussion in the *South Place Magazine* notes that Barkatullah viewed India as racially and culturally diverse place which was “essentially the land of philosophy and speculative thought, and its intelligence had for long been directed to the study of the problem of the universe.”⁶⁸ Therefore, India of the East was spiritual, a place in stark contrast to the material powers in the West. While the knowledge and experience of the West had been introduced to India through the British, Barkatullah bemoaned how the capitalist English had “monopolised the openings created by commerce, and Western machine products were killing the old-time native industries of India.”⁶⁹ Barkatullah, it seems, had begun to take part in the discourse- in which Western theosophists played a central role- that looked at Asia or the East, as the spiritual ‘Other’ of the materialist West. In this narrative, the East was had something to offer to the West, despite being militarily and economically weaker. The strategy from Barkatullah, therefore, seems to be to argue that Islamic universalism and mystic traditions, had as much to offer as Hinduism and Buddhism. This was a strategy that seems to take hold properly after he moved to the United States when he focused on showcasing the esoteric aspects of Sufi Islam to liberal Christians, unitarians and theosophists.

While the South Place was primarily a white, English institution, it is important to recognize that Barkatullah was not the only Indian, or Indian Muslim involved in the lecture

⁶⁷ “South Place Discussion Society,” *The South Place Magazine* 5, no. 8 (May, 1900): 126.

⁶⁸ “South Place Discussion Society,” 126.

⁶⁹ “South Place Discussion Society,” 126.

circuit at the institute. For instance, Muslim Indian reformers like Syed Ameer Ali and influential Bengali intellectual, activist and, later, politician, Romesh Chunder Dutt, were also invited to speak at about Islam and the conditions for Indians living under British rule.

The geopolitical dimension to the way Islam and Muslims were viewed in Britain and abroad was something the likes of Barkatullah and Quilliam were acutely aware of. As Ron Geaves notes in his biography of Abdullah Quilliam, “disturbances and acts of violence against the fledgling Muslim presence tended to flare up when there was a conflict between Britain and various parts of the Muslim World.”⁷⁰ As the institute in Liverpool became an intellectual and diplomatic hub for Muslims visiting Britain, Quilliam developed close relationships with powerful Muslim leaders like the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Amir of Afghanistan. Quilliam was particularly loyal to the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph, who had become a significant donor for his work in Britain. For instance, in June 1894, he took a journey to Lagos for the opening of a new mosque as a representative of the Sultan and was officially appointed the Sheikh al-Islam of Britain.⁷¹ It was this global, diplomatic aspect of Quilliam’s ‘Liverpool model’ that appealed to Barkatullah as much as the symbolic importance of having a cosmopolitan mosque and Muslim organization at the heart of Imperial Britain.

In the world of empires, where did loyalty lie for Pan-Islamists living in Britain? Barkatullah’s attitude towards the British Empire during his time in Liverpool and London was ambiguous. While he was certainly critical of bigoted depictions of Islam and Muslims, and was critical of British policies in India, he did not call for the end of British rule. At South Place, for instance, Barkatullah is said to have wanted India to “eventually receive [a] share of local

⁷⁰ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain*, 68.

⁷¹ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain*, 75.

autonomy and equal treatment.”⁷² And, as Barkatullah, Quilliam and other Pan-Islamic activists viewed the Ottoman Empire as an important symbolic representation of Muslim modernity, the inheritors of the position of the Caliph, and a crucial source of income and legitimacy, their activism was directed towards convincing the British, as the “greatest Mohammedan power,” that a robust alliance with the Ottoman Empire was important.⁷³ In a joint letter by the Committee of Indian Muslims in London, the two took umbrage with a Reuters telegram that, in their view, reported negatively on the Ottoman Sultan based on information from untrustworthy sources. Their hope was that the “British Press will not be influenced by Levantines... whose sole object[ive] is to create bad feeling in England against Turkey” and the Sultan.⁷⁴ The letter concludes with a crucial statement: “*As Indian Mohamedans, most faithful and loyal subjects of our most gracious Majesty the Queen, we have at heart to see the relations between Turkey and England based on the most cordial footing.*”⁷⁵ Barkatullah’s name was the first one that appeared under the letter, signed as the chairman of the organization.

In London, Barkatullah had also become closely associated with Muslim activists like Mushir Husain Kidwai, Rafiuddin Ahmad and Munshi Abdul Karim, Syed Ameer Ali, and was involved in Pan-Islamic associations like the Muslim Patriotic League (MPL) and the Anjuman-I Islam (AI).⁷⁶ Despite the prayers for Queen’s health, as part of the MPL, Barkatullah had also

⁷² “South Place Discussion Society,” 126.

⁷³ For more on the how the idea of the British ruling over the largest number of Muslims was understood and used by both, by British officials from various ideological positions and their Muslim subject, see Faisal Devji, “Islam and British Imperial Thought,” in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. David Motadel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 256-270.

⁷⁴ The Committee of Indian Mohamedans in London, letter to the editor, *The Standard*, September 9, 1892.

⁷⁵ The Committee of Indian Mohamedans in London, letter to the editor, *The Standard*, September 9 1892. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ Humayun Ansari, “Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali’s Transnationalism,” 185 and *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800* (London: Hurts and Company, 2004), 85.

become more critical of British policies.⁷⁷ He had also been put under surveillance, most likely due to British paranoia over Pan-Islamism and Muslim disloyalty, along with the possibility of disrupting “linked-up agitation,” between British liberals and Indian activists. In that regard, Barkatullah was seen as a someone who needed to be monitored closely.⁷⁸ According to British Intelligence reports, Barkatullah had even served as a “news agent” for the Amir of Afghan while working London, providing a weekly newsletter through an Afghan agent in Karachi from 1896 and 1898.⁷⁹ Crucially, Barkatullah had diverged from Abdullah Quilliam with regards to his loyalty to the Sultan. While Barkatullah wanted a strong Ottoman Empire, he did not believe the Sultan was an able leader. Barkatullah’s critical stance towards Abdulhamid remain consistent throughout his career and seem to mirror the Young Turks’ position, who he aligned himself with.⁸⁰ According to a Scotland Yard report, he had become “involved in a conspiracy against” the Sultan and after the news reached Constantinople, had Barkatullah “ventured on Ottoman territory” during Sultan Abdulhamid’s reign, “he would have been arrested at once.”⁸¹ Whether he was actually involved in a conspiracy against the Sultan is unclear, however, he was almost certainly connected to the Young Turk journalist, activist and, later in life, politician,

⁷⁷ “Mohammedan Prayers,” *The Sheffield Telegraph*, January 22, 1901.

⁷⁸ Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29.

⁷⁹ January 14, 1924, History Sheet of Maulvi Muhammad Barkatullah, IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p.1, Indian Office Records.

⁸⁰ For more on the Young Turks and their connections to Indian Muslims, see, Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain* (New York: Brill, 1997). For more on the Young Turks and their critiques of Sultan Abdulhamid II, see, Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) and M. Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁸¹ July 30, 1924, Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard on “Maulvie Mahomed Barkat-ullah,” IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p.1, Indian Office Records. In this file on Barkatullah, it is claimed that he worked closely alongside his Turkish companion, “Obeidullah,” who was in Liverpool around 1890 or 1891.

Mehmet Ubeydullah Efendi, who was exiled by Abdulhamid and spent several years in Britain, including six months in Liverpool.⁸² As we shall see later, this relationship with the Young Turks would prove important during WWI.

With Britain increasingly drawn into various nationalist rebellions in the Ottoman controlled Balkans at the turn of the century, and with the increasingly anti-Ottoman rhetoric in the press, arguing for the importance of the Ottoman-British alliance became even more crucial. Yet, with the threat of treason, criticizing British foreign policy vis-à-vis the Balkans was proving difficult for both Barkatullah and Quilliam.

Barkatullah had also become interested in the tactics of the Irish Home Rule movement, quite possibly, through his connections to radical circles that congregated at societies like the South Place Institute. Besant, for instance, not only strongly identified with her Irish roots, had also become an advocate for Irish Home Rule from the 1880s.⁸³ Possibly because he may have begun to feel suffocated under the watchful eye of British authorities, and due to the lure of more freedom across the Atlantic, he was convinced by Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb, an American convert to Islam “in a similar mould to Abdullah Quilliam,” to move to the United States.⁸⁴ Despite the British intelligence reports on Barkatullah, his radicalization in London, and his interests in Irish nationalist tactics, at this stage, Barkatullah was not yet a revolutionary. He was still primarily a Muslim-Indian intellectual, just one who was becoming increasingly critical of the British Empire and a part of various Indian, Pan-Islamic and liberal

⁸² Ibrahim Kalin, "Ubeydullah Efendi, Mehmet," *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy* (Continuum, 2006. Oxford Reference, 2010). Date Accessed 21 May. 2017
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199754731.001.0001/acref-9780199754731-e-388>.

⁸³ Annie Besant, *Annie Besant: An Autobiography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893).

⁸⁴ Humayun Ansari, “Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali’s Transnationalism,” 187.

networks in London. Barkatullah was on the move once again, this time exploring a cosmopolitan environment outside British territorial jurisdiction.

CHAPTER IV

BARKATULLAH IN THE UNITED STATES: THE RADICAL PAN-ISLAMIST AND INDIAN NATIONALIST

Barkatullah, now an established intellectual with connections in Indian nationalist and Pan-Islamic circles around the world, set sail for New York in 1903.⁸⁵ Considering the restraints in the colonial metropole, moving to the United States must have felt liberating. Barkatullah began publishing in journals almost immediately after arriving at his new home. While he continued to try and educate non-Muslim audiences about Islam and fighting back against arguments of Muslim ‘backwardness,’ Barkatullah also began to enter some of the important foreign policy debates of the time writing, primarily, in New Thought magazines like *The Arena* and *Mind*, both published by Charles Brodie Patterson. This suggests a clear departure from his time in Britain, where he limited himself by-in-large to writing about Islam. Most likely due to the freedom afforded to him, particularly during his early years in the United States, he ventured into the arena of international politics, one he would enter even more directly, as a significant player, later in his career.

His first article, published in September 1903, examined yet another major theme in the discourses on Islam, in both Muslim and non-Muslim spheres: the relationship between Islam

⁸⁵ Although it seems he was in contact with “Islamophilic Theosophists” like Albert L. Rawson in St. Louis as early as 1895, making clear his intentions of moving to the United States to become an integral part of the burgeoning Muslim community there, arguably an attempt to build a Muslim community on Quilliam’s Liverpool Model in New York. Letter from Rawson to Lant, April 19, 1895, John A. Lant Papers, Missouri History Museum. For more on Rawson and “Islamophilic Theosophy,” see, Patrick D. Bowen, *A Hhistory of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 1* (Boston: Brill, 2015).

and democracy. The article begins in his characteristically direct style by Barkatullah asserting his position that democracy is the ideal system for any polity. One that not only “tends to secure the greatest amount of happiness [for] the largest number possible”, but is also the *only* form of government that would be “able to establish peace on earth and good will among all nations of the globe.”⁸⁶ In part, probably trying to ingratiate himself to his new hosts, as with the genuine impressions of other intellectuals who had immigrated to the US at this time, he was quick to highlight how the United States was the ideal example of a flourishing democracy.⁸⁷ Although judging from his comments on the racial prejudice faced by African Americans discussed later in this thesis, his praise may have been referring more to American *ideals* than the reality. Although the official position, at the time, to allow revolutionaries from around the world to organize in the United States so long as they did not break any US laws, probably played a part in Barkatullah’s thinking.

Justice, considered a key feature of a democracy, also existed in the early ‘Islamic Civilization,’ according to Barkatullah. Laws were established in accordance with the fundamental principles of Islam, and the *Shura* council functioned similarly to “modern legislative assemblies”, while the Caliph was the executive, after the Prophet’s death.⁸⁸ The demise of this “glorious democracy” came about during the time of the third Caliph, Othman. Barkatullah argues that there is a “striking analogy between the circumstances and causes” leading to the demise of the Roman Republic and the Islamic Commonwealth. While Rome

⁸⁶ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Islam and Democracy,” *The Arena* 30, no. 3 (1903): 256.

⁸⁷ It would have made sense for Barkatullah and other Indian figures to not want United States authorities to help their British counterparts in suppressing radical Indian anti-British agitation and organizing. They may have foreseen, perhaps, the United States cooperation in British surveillance of Indians residing in the United States, beginning in 1906.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 260.

suffered due to the fear Julius Caesar's growing power engendered for the safety of the republic, the commonwealth's downfall in Arabia resulted from the alarmed "Muslim patriots" who feared for the "security of the Islamic Commonwealth" due to his "partiality to his kinsmen."⁸⁹ The comparisons of the halcyon days and the demise of the Islamic Commonwealth with contemporary United States and the Roman Empire were a rhetorical strategy used to illustrate Islam's inherent compatibility with democracy and, the concept it was implicitly linked with, modernity.

Searching back to the origins of the 'Islamic Civilization,' he used the establishment of an 'Islamic commonwealth' by Prophet Muhammad in Arabia, as *the* ideal example of Islamic democracy. Significantly, in Barkatullah's eyes, there existed "perfect equality" in the commonwealth, without any discrimination based on "caste, color, race, or position."⁹⁰ There is no mention of gender in this regard, however. An example of the equality in this polity, for Barkatullah, is how "Bilal, a negro ex-slave, had no less respect than Omar," a companion of Prophet Muhammad who would later go on to become the second Caliph after the Prophet's death.⁹¹

The mention of Bilal here is interesting, as Edward E. Curtis demonstrates, Bilal ibn Rabah would later become an important symbol for people of African descent all over the world, including African American Muslims.⁹² While it is unclear whether Barkatullah was attempting to attract African Americans to Islam through the call of racial inequality in *this* article, he was

⁸⁹ Ibid, 257.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Edward E. Curtis IV, *The Call of Bilal: Islam in the African Diaspora* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

clear in other publications about what religion African Americans would be advised to join. In a letter to the editor published on May 3rd 1903 in *The New York Daily Tribune*, Barkatullah responds to a previously published article he deemed to be misrepresenting Islam by claiming that Muslims despise “the white Christian.”⁹³ Barkatullah argues that Islam is a universal religion that is against any form of racial prejudice, and a religion that has followers around the world from a number of races, including the “negro race.” For him, the root of Muslim ire was not Christianity but racist Christian missionaries. Barkatullah argues that it is not Muslims or Islam that has a problem with racial inequality but the West, when he writes that the “color problem and the question of the superiority and inferiority of race is the creation of the Anglo-Saxon race, which appears in different guises in the different parts of the world, and is accentuated to the highest pitch in the United States of America.”⁹⁴ Barkatullah goes even further to argue that like Christian missionaries going to Muslim-majority societies attempting to convert “unitarians to the trinitarian faith,” Muslim missionaries should be allowed to be sent to “the negroes of the South to convert them to Islam.”⁹⁵

Barkatullah, it seems, had also become involved with an upper-class, inter-racial, and socialist group known as the Cosmopolitan Society of New York.⁹⁶ Craig Steven Wilder describes this social group as one that “opposed all concepts of racial superiority” and held “regular meetings in the homes of Brooklyn’s white and black elite,” discussing issues related to

⁹³ Muhammad Barkatullah, “White and Black in the South,” *The New York Daily Tribune*, May 3, 1903.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Also known as the Cosmopolitan Society of America, the Cosmopolitan Club and the Cosmopolitan Society of Greater New York. It was established in 1906 by the famous American suffragist and activist, Mary White Ovington. It included important African American figures like Owen M. Waller who, like Ovington, was one of founding members of the NAACP in 1909. Barkatullah is mentioned as being one of the members of this society in Addie W. Hunton, “The Cosmopolitan Society of Greater New York,” *The Voice of the Negro* 4, no. 4 (1907): 185-186.

resisting race-based oppression.⁹⁷ Similar to his time in the United Kingdom, there is no indication Barkatullah had any significant relationships in the contemporaneous working-class communities in the United States that Vivek Bald discusses in his work, for instance.⁹⁸ These elite, if not necessarily mainstream, connections allowed Barkatullah to publish in a variety of newspapers and journals.

Barkatullah's first foray in the US writing about contemporary international politics came in November 1903, in the influential literary journal, *The North American Review*. Publishing in the oldest literary journal in the United States reflected his stature as an intellectual and the strength of his connections. Barkatullah, in his punchy, direct style, describes the 'Great Game' European powers -- namely France, Britain and Russia-- were playing with the "crumbling edifice" of the Ottoman Empire. In this game, the Europeans held all the cards. The situation in Macedonia, the subject of his article, was similar to what had been happening in Crete and the Balkans since the early-19th century. Christian subjects had been "imbued with seditious sentiments through the influence of missionaries" and had brought "the question of the Cross *versus* the Crescent" back into prominence.⁹⁹ The diplomatic game France, Britain and Russia were engaged in was with the pretense of humanitarianism, Barkatullah is eager to point out. They portrayed themselves as the protectors of Christians in the 'East,' although, under the surface, the reasons for the conflict were power and geopolitics. The Ottoman Empire, which he saw as a cosmopolitan Muslim empire, was hated because of its religion.

⁹⁷ Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn 1636-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 148.

⁹⁸ See Vivek Bald, "Overlapping Diasporas, Multi-racial Lives: South Asian Muslims in the U.S. Communities of Color, 1880-1950," *Souls* 8, no. 4 (2006): 3-18 and "'Lost' in the City: Spaces and stories of South Asian New York, 1917-1965," *South Asian Popular Culture* 5, no. 1 (2007): 59-76.

⁹⁹ Muhammad Barkatullah, "A Mohammedan View of the Macedonian Problem," *The North American Review* 177, no. 564 (1903): 741.

Barkatullah's criticism was not limited to these European empires, however. He was incisive in skewering the capitalists and the Ottoman Sultan. The capitalists, for Barkatullah, held a great deal of influence and power in the affairs of 'nations.' They exploited not just the labor classes, but also saw revolutions as an opportunity for profit. As Barkatullah writes, revolutions are "harvest time for the capitalists," when they strike favorable deals and take control of finances.¹⁰⁰ While he never claimed to be a socialist, even as he called all Muslims to ally with the Bolsheviks after WWI, he used the vocabulary of socialist critiques from an early stage. He admonishes Sultan Abdulhamid II for centralizing power and surrounding himself with "dishonest men." Clearly, Barkatullah's loyalties in Constantinople did not lie with the Sultan or his ministers and advisors.

The expanding scope of Barkatullah's foreign policy and his internationalism are illustrated most clearly by his critical analysis of the British invasion of Lhasa, Tibet in 1904 in the *Forum*, another influential mainstream American magazine. Barkatullah attempted to expose the "real" reasons for British interests in Tibet. While the two main reasons given by the British for their actions were that a) the Tibetan government had rejected a letter from the Viceroy of India and was, instead, developing closer relations with Russia, and b) the Tibetan authorities had not followed through with their commitments in accordance with commercial conventions made in 1890 and 1893. Barkatullah argues that this was just the pretense, while the real reasons were greed. The British were interested in the discovery of substantial mineral wealth found in South-West Tibet, gold in particular. With Russian attention and military resources directed towards China with the onset of the Russo-Japanese war months earlier, the British took advantage.

¹⁰⁰ Barkatullah, "A Mohammedan View of the Macedonian Problem," 742.

While exposing British greed and militarism was the main agenda of this article, Barkatullah has another concern to highlight: the importance of religion. He begins the article by describing Lhasa as “that holy city of the Buddhistic world,” that had been free from foreign invasion for centuries.¹⁰¹ The British, therefore, had violated the sacredness of this holy Buddhist space. He goes back to this issue later in his piece arguing that religion remains important for the ‘East’, and warns “those who violate the sanctity of religion doubtless tread upon thin ice.”¹⁰² He cites the Indian Mutiny in 1857, which resulted, in part, from retaliation by the mutineers to being forced to use cartridges greased in the fat of cows and pigs, as an example of how dangerous it can be for European powers to ignore religious sensibilities. While the Ottoman Empire and the position of Caliph are absent in this article, Barkatullah’s message is clear: religious institutions and symbols matter.

While Barkatullah was in the United States writing these articles as an intellectual having moved from Britain, he was not the typical Indian immigrant in America. Barkatullah had arrived into New York at a time of great demographic and societal change. Thousands of Indian migrants had moved to the Canada and the United States in the first two decades of the 20th century. Prior to this period, the Indian presence on American soil was relatively insignificant. The labor shortage resulting from the end of the Atlantic slave trade in the mid-19th century had been replaced by mass migration of indentured colonial workers from India to British colonies across the world, like the Caribbean and the north coast of South America.¹⁰³ Exploitative economic policies in the second half of the 19th century had left Indian peasants from Punjab

¹⁰¹ Muhammad Barkatullah, “The British Invasion of Tibet: In Defense of the Dalai Lama,” *The Forum* 37, no. 1 (1905): 128.

¹⁰² Barkatullah, “The British Invasion of Tibet: In Defense of the Dalai Lama,” 137.

¹⁰³ Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 15 and Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 17.

with no choice other than to join the British army or move abroad for work to avoid poverty. Indebted to moneylenders along with heavy taxation and the fragmentation of landholdings meant agricultural workers in Punjab began to look for work outside India. Those who joined the military saw little monetary reward for dangerous employment. Many began to move to East and South East Asia like the Philippines, Malaya, Penang, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Yet, after hearing about the opportunities available in North America, the “attraction of earning more and bettering their lives drew” Punjabi laborers and army veterans, predominantly Sikh, moved to the United States and Canada.¹⁰⁴ Parallel to the thousands of economic migrants, there was an influx of Bengali and Punjabi intellectuals to the East and West Coast of North America, escaping heightened repression by British authorities. There was also a growing number of Indian students moving to the United States for a better education.

Aside from his interactions with Indian activists, socialists and new thought figures, Barkatullah would also come into contact with a cosmopolitan array of nationalist intellectuals and revolutionaries in the United States from around the world. As Emily Brown notes in her autobiography of Barkatullah’s close associate Har Dayal, that there were Irish, Russian, Polish and Mexican revolutionaries working to “overthrow the governments in their respective countries,” without any legislation to indict them.¹⁰⁵ This productive space was to prove transformative for Barkatullah, and it was the radical Indian and Irish nationalists that Barkatullah began to work most closely with in the United States, through his base in New York City.

¹⁰⁴ Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977), 41.

¹⁰⁵ Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1975), 152.

Michael Silvestri's *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory* explores the various stages of contacts between Indian and Irish nationalists and anti-colonial revolutionaries in the early 20th century. Considering the range of ideological perspectives within both the Indian and Irish nationalist movements, their partnerships tended to align along what they were striving towards. The United States provided an ideal space for some of these interactions. Barkatullah's collaboration was with the radical Irish nationalists. Unlike radical Indian nationalists, their Irish counterparts had long been established in American politics and society. This meant Indian nationalists like Barkatullah, without the financial resources and established institutional capacity, were initially dependent on Irish-American revolutionary organizations.¹⁰⁶

Muhammad Barkatullah's closest Irish partners were John Devoy and George Freeman. Devoy was an Irish-American nationalist, under whose leadership the radical Fenian organization Clan na Gael had become the most powerful Irish republican organization.¹⁰⁷ The *Gaelic American* newspaper, owned by Devoy, would consistently attack British colonialism in and outside Ireland, and events India registered high on their radar. They also reprinted articles from Indian newspapers and gave support for Indian nationalists to publish in the US. Taraknath Das, for instance, began publishing his anti-British newspaper *Free Hindustan* using the *Gaelic American* press. In October 1906, Barkatullah and his fellow Indian nationalist Samuel Lucas Joshi established the Pan-Aryan Association with the help of Freeman and Devoy. The official aim of the organization was to "bring India and America into closer contact and to be helpful to students from India...the association started their anti-British propaganda," alongside calling for Hindu-Muslim unity, something he seems to have maintained throughout his life and was

¹⁰⁶ Michael Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 19.

embodied through his friendships.¹⁰⁸ The Pan-Aryan Association also called for the “formation of a league between the peoples of Ireland and India for the overthrow of British rule.”¹⁰⁹

While the Indian-Irish connection has not been entirely overlooked, it has certainly been underplayed in scholarship thus far on the movement. For instance, as Silvestri suggests, while the series of plots to ignite a rebellion in British India during WWI are often referred to as the ‘Hindu-German conspiracy’, the “historian Matthew Erin Plowman has argued, ‘Irish-Indo-German Conspiracy’ is [a more] appropriate label for these plots to overthrow the British Raj.”¹¹⁰ Barkatullah, then working with the Germans in Europe, played a crucial role coordinating with, among others, George Freeman and Larry de Lacy, from the Clan na Gael who was an associate of Devoy’s.

While it is clear that these connections formed in the United States with Irish nationalists served Barkatullah and Ghadar well in the future, their impact during his time in the United States may have gone further than just being crucial collaborators. The Irish-American Fenians had a much longer, and established record of using violent means against the British for independence. Devoy himself was jailed for his involvement in the failed Rebellion of 1867 by the Fenian Brotherhood, the precursor to Clan na Gael, that had come off the back of failed attempts by them to invade Canada in an attempt to put pressure on the British to leave Ireland. Working in close-proximity with Devoy and Freeman in the United States must have played a part in convincing Barkatullah and other Indian nationalists from Ghadar that using violence to achieve independence was a realistic and, arguably, the only means. Barkatullah’s collaborations

¹⁰⁸ Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)*, 55.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Michael Silvestri, *Ireland and India*, 27. Matthew Erin Plowman is quoted from, “Irish Republicans and the Indo-German Conspiracy of World War I,” *New Hibernia Review* 7, no. 3 (2003): 105.

with the Irish during WWI also highlight how connections once created, do not become any less significant with a move. Improvements in communications, print press and steamship technology meant geographic barriers were easier to overcome for the network. These revolutionaries operated in nodes of a network that were by no means hermetically sealed spaces.

The United States had been a safe haven for revolutionary nationalists, but the Indian nationalists were to come under increased scrutiny. As Seema Sohi points out, by the beginning of 1906, a “British surveillance apparatus” emerged, following “Indian radicals as they moved across the globe, settling intermittently in cities like Paris and Tokyo in search for safe havens to organize outside imperial reach.”¹¹¹ This surveillance apparatus had “extended its reach in North America with the cooperation of US and Canadian immigration officials.”¹¹² British officials began to disrupt the North American network of Indian radicals by using American and Canadian immigration laws to deport those residing there or rejecting entry to those suspected of harboring anti-British tendencies.

The surveillance wasn't the only concern for Indian immigrants living in the US. There were growing anti-Indian immigration conversations taking place across North America at this time. As officials began to limit Indian immigration into the countries, there was also a rise in “anti-Hindoo” racism. The organized manifestation of this hostility came in the shape of white labor groups who saw Asian migrants –initially the Japanese and Chinese, followed by the most recent immigrant group, the Indians- as a threat to their livelihood. The hostility and conversations surrounding their exclusion were racialized, and it was soon to get worse. On September 5th 1907, the first outbreak of mob violence against Indians broke out in Bellingham,

¹¹¹ Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 83.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 83.

Washington, where Indian mill workers were beaten by white mobs. Two days later Vancouver erupted in a race riot, targeting Chinatown and Japantown, partly fueled by rumors of large number of Indians would be arriving from Bellingham, fleeing the riots there. Due to British trepidation at Indian anger, Canada passed restrictive immigration legislation that, while it directly impacted Indians, did not explicitly target them on racial grounds. The United States, on the other hand, began to manipulate the “public charge” clause from 1909 to limit Indian entry into the US. The combination of the riots and the exclusionary immigration policies by Canada and the United States “politicized thousands of Indians on the Pacific Coast, who began drawing explicit links between racial discrimination in North America and colonial subjugation in India.”¹¹³

If, in this moment, the environment politicized “thousands of Indians” who had, presumably, not been overtly “political”, having moved to the North America as economic migrants, what effect would it have had on someone entrenched in the world of anti-colonial politics or someone who was working in close proximity with radical Irish-American Fenians? In 1909, according to secret British intelligence reports, “reliable information” alleged that “Freeman, S.L. Joshi and Barkatullah used to meet twice a week at Barakatullah’s house to discuss” anti-British activities.¹¹⁴ It is clear that Barkatullah’s had moved towards being an intellectual who had become increasingly involved in radical activities with Indian and Irish activists. His shift from being interested in the work of the Irish Home Rule movement in the UK, to being closely associated with Irish-American Fenians in the United States illustrates his shift

¹¹³ Ibid, 29.

¹¹⁴ James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1917), 202.

towards more radical politics.¹¹⁵ While this radicalization in his politics seems clear, it is important to note that these interactions with Irish-American Fenians did not mean Barkatullah had given up on attempts to portray Islam as a universal World Religion to theosophists, unitarians and liberal Christians. For instance, Barkatullah, considered one of the most influential and erudite Muslim thinkers residing in the United States, was invited to the “Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals” held in Boston between September 22-27 1907 to give a lecture entitled “Liberal Mohammedanism in India.” Barkatullah argues in this lecture that Islam is a peaceful, spiritual religion that believes in brotherly harmony with all other faiths of the world.¹¹⁶ As this shows, Barkatullah was experimenting with a variety of strategies that involved a constellation of, often overlapping, networks simultaneously.

Barkatullah’s “seditious” writings in Tokyo, following his departure from New York, signaled a clear intensification in his radicalism.

¹¹⁵ In summarizing the difference between the two polarized politics of Irish nationalism (beginning from the mid-1880s), the constitutional nationalists and the Republican revolutionaries, Fearghal McGarry argues that while the differences between the two might be exaggerated, the former can be understood as those who “sought self-government within the union by peaceful methods” while the latter were those who “sought the goal of a republic to be achieved, if necessary, by force.” The Irish Home Rule movement that Barkatullah was interested in while in London were constitutional nationalists, while the Irish-American Fenians he was working with from his time in the US onwards were radical Republic revolutionaries. In *The Rising: Easter 1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15.

¹¹⁶ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Liberal Mohammedanism in India,” in *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion: Proceedings and Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals, held at Boston, USA, September 22-27, 1907*, ed. Charles W. Wendte (Boston: International Council, 1907), 542-545.

CHAPTER V

BARKATULLAH IN TOKYO: THE ANTI-BRITISH PROPOGANDIST

The Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war had been widely seen as representing the victory of a ‘yellow race’ against a ‘white race.’ While Ethiopia under Menelik II had defeated the Italians almost a decade earlier in the Battle of Adwa in 1896, 1905 was a truly global moment. Seen as the first major defeat of a ‘white’ superpower by a ‘non-white’ one was symbolic in that it represented the perfect rebuttal of white supremacy.¹¹⁷ It not only “energized and strengthened” anticolonial nationalists, but it also provided an alternative model for modernity: a model was interpreted by many to mean that non-Western religion, language and culture were not seen as obstacles for progress.¹¹⁸ While students and activists from around the non-Western world began to move to Japan to learn the “secrets” of their success, some like Barkatullah, sought to establish Tokyo as another Pan-Islamic, anticolonial Indian nationalist hub, with their connections with Japanese Pan-Asianists.¹¹⁹

In January 1904, almost a month before the war had begun and five years before moving to Tokyo, Barkatullah wrote an article from his base in New York examining why impending

¹¹⁷ For more on the 1905 “moment,” see Cemil Aydin’s “A Global Anti-Western Moment? The Russo-Japanese War, Decolonization and Asian Modernity” in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s—1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

¹¹⁸ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, 79.

¹¹⁹ For more on Pan-Asianism literature outside of Cemil Aydin's *Politics of Anti-Westernism*, see Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War 1931-1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, Maryland.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

conflict between these two great powers was inevitable.¹²⁰ The incredible and sudden rise of Japan as an industrial and military power had been accompanied by an awareness of the ‘White Peril,’ or European colonial interest in the region. China had been humiliated by the British, “a most Christian nation,” in the Opium Wars had been the first warning among many for Japan to not only become a military superpower, but to establish a united bloc by the “unification and regeneration of the entire yellow family, comprising [the] Chinese, Japanese, and [the] [K]oreans.”¹²¹ This meant the establishment of a “Mongolian system” for all of the ‘Mongolian race,’ with Tokyo as the metropole of this Asian Empire. In many ways, this vision of “Pan-Mongolianism” (or Pan-Asianism) can be seen in similar ways to Barkatullah’s vision of the Ottoman Empire being a Pan-Islamic empire. While Barkatullah did acknowledge that Japan was in an alliance with Great Britain, he argued that the British did not have the “slightest intention of helping her ally” and has, in fact, “resolved to conquer [Tibet] while Russia and Japan are at loggerheads in the Far East” along with taking advantage of the “situation in the Near East by bringing under her direct control the tribal states of Southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf.”¹²² Hence, even in this situation when they were allied with the power Barkatullah sided with, the British could not be trusted and their intentions had to be scrutinized.

Not only was Japan firmly on the radar for Barkatullah and other Indian activists by 1904, they had also begun making overtures to Japanese officials and Pan-Asianists *before* he moved to Tokyo in 1909. In the euphoric mood in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese victory over Russia, with the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth which formally ended the war

¹²⁰ Muhammad Barkatullah, “The Russo-Japanese Imbroglio,” *The Forum* 35 (1904): 458-470.

¹²¹ Muhammad Barkatullah, “The Russo-Japanese Imbroglio,” 462.

¹²² *Ibid*, 469.

in September 1905, Barkatullah and others of the Hindustanee Progressive Association of New York City (HPA) congratulated the Baron Kaneko Kentaro, the Japanese government's special envoy tasked with enlisting President Theodore Roosevelt's help in brokering a peace deal with Russia. An address by the HPA, signed by their President Barkatullah among others, stated their admiration for the Meiji Emperor Mikado Mutsuhito in securing the East from the villainous West, by claiming:

Through his majesty's goodness of heart Buddhism triumphs over Christianity, and through his majesty's wisdom the Orient has become secure in the future from perennial wanton incursions of the free-booters of the West, the wagging of evil tongues and the murmuring of evil minds notwithstanding.¹²³

In many ways, the Japanese had overcome the same racism and bigotry at the hands of the Christian West that Barkatullah and other colonized figures wanted to defeat themselves. In the wake of the Russo-Japanese war, Japan was not just a symbol of non-white defiance for Barkatullah, but a non-Christian outside of Europe that could provide another fruitful avenue for anti-British agitation: both in terms of becoming a powerful ally and by giving space to anti-colonial activists to organize.

Barkatullah's apologetic and romanticized attitude towards the two non-white empires, the Ottoman and the Japanese, does suggest his positions on empire and colonialism were ambivalent. In all likelihood, facing the threat of European colonialism and white supremacy had meant support of any empires that could potentially resist Western domination was a necessary evil. As Maia Ramnath argues, "the Ghadarites were pragmatists, not dogmatists; activists above all, not systematic armchair theorists."¹²⁴ That is not to say that Barkatullah lacked conviction in his principles or ideas, however. He genuinely believed in racial, religious, and economic

¹²³ "The Japanese Envoy Cancels Several Engagements," *New York Tribune*, September 11, 1905.

¹²⁴ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 11.

equality, for instance, despite turning a blind eye to Japanese atrocities due to the immediacy of geopolitics. While he supported Japanese colonial ambitions and criticized nationalist uprisings in Ottoman territories, a holistic reading of his writings does suggest his belief that a system that is representative of everyone in society was ideal. One of his most consistent critiques of Sultan Abdulhamid II, for instance, was that he had become increasingly autocratic and had not introduced any democratic reforms. Although, one could argue that had more to do with Barkatullah's belief that the Ottoman Empire under the Sultan was unable to compete the European empires and supported his rivals. Whether empire was incompatible with democracy is unclear in his writings, however his preference was for democratic governance. Both the egalitarian ethic and democratic principles, Barkatullah had argued, were in the Qur'an and the message of the Prophet Muhammad.

Prior to moving to Japan, Barkatullah had become a prominent activist, scholar and public intellectual during his time in the United Kingdom and the United States. While it is clear that he had been on the radar of British surveillance, he only seriously began to alarm British officials after he relocated to Tokyo. His move to Japan clearly illustrates how crucial the expanding network was for Barkatullah and those advising him. It was his colleagues from the Pan-Aryan Association, Freeman and Joshi, and Indian nationalists in Paris, who encouraged him to apply for an academic post in Japan. Madame Cama and Shyamji Krishnavarma from the Paris network are said to have pulled "some strings" by asking R.D. Tata from the prominent Tata family to "secure the appointment."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 11; Department of Criminal Intelligence (DCI), 10.4.1909, B. June 1909, nos. 108-114, in Arun Coomer Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1927: Select Documents* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002), 111.

After moving to Japan in 1909 to work as a Professor of Hindustani at the University of Tokyo, the British colonial government in India became increasingly concerned with an English-language newspaper he began publishing in 1910 called *The Islamic Fraternity*. It was described by James Campbell Ker, a colonial civil servant in India who served as the personal assistant to the director of British criminal intelligence, as an “anti-British” newspaper “published by a Mohamedan for Mohamedans.”¹²⁶ While the tone of the newspaper was considered “objectionable” from the outset, it wasn’t until 1912 that British officials deemed it necessary to prohibit its importation into British India under the Sea Customs Act of 1878.¹²⁷ The recommendation to suppress *The Islamic Fraternity* was given by the Secretary to the Government of Bombay based on articles deemed to be a concerted attempt to “stir up religious feeling and to excite hatred and disaffection” towards the British government in India.¹²⁸

Despite the suppression of *The Islamic Fraternity* into India, Barkatullah continued to be a concern from his base in Japan, where he successful in “winning over some high-profile Japanese politicians” and had become friends with influential Pan-Asianists like Okawa Shumei.¹²⁹ Hasan Hatano, a Pan-Asianist Japanese convert to Islam and Barkatullah’s protégé based in Tokyo, began to publish another newspaper called *El-Islam* in 1911.¹³⁰ Soon after the suppression of *The Islamic Fraternity*, copies of *El-Islam* (written partly in English and partly in Japanese) made their way into India in 1912 and 1913 and was considered to be a continuation of

¹²⁶ James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1920*, 120.

¹²⁷ Simla, August 1, 1912, IOR/L/PS/11/28, p. 1, Indian Office Records.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Harald Fischer-Tine, “Indian Nationalism and the ‘World Forces’: Transnational and Diasporic Dimensions of the Indian Freedom Movement on the Eve of the First World War,” *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007): 338.

¹³⁰ Muhammad Barkatullah, “Islam in Japan,” *Islamic Review* 2, no. 6 (1914): 274.

Barkatullah's "anti-British campaign"¹³¹. Utilizing the now elaborate radical global network, other seditious pamphlets like "An Nazir-ul-Uryan," published in Urdu, alleged to have been written by Barkatullah, made their way into India through Shanghai.

Although Tokyo became an important base to spread anti-British literature and establishing connections in Pan-Asianist circles, he was by no means disconnected from the rest of the network. In 1911 he travelled to Constantinople and Cairo via St. Petersburg and Odessa. The trip was crucial, Ramnath argues, not only because he was able to reconnect with Europe-based revolutionaries like Krishnavarma, but also because it "marked an intensification of Barakatullah's focus on national liberation."¹³²

Barkatullah's "intensification" towards national liberation was affected by global events from 1911 leading up to the First World War as well. Italy invaded Ottoman Libya in September 1911, and the news would only get worse for Barkatullah as the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) would weaken the Ottoman Empire even further. Reflecting on his time in Japan, Barkatullah explains the importance of the Italian invasion in Tripoli, and the "garbled accounts about Turkey" that accompanied it, in the sudden shift in editorial policy of the *Islamic Fraternity*. The newspaper felt compelled to "enter into politics" and counter the narrative, as the "misrepresentations of the Turks and Islam tended to undermine the cause of Islam in Japan and to create a gulf of misunderstanding between the Turks and their co-religionists the world over."¹³³

While the nationalist struggles from inside the Ottoman Empire were seen as a blow by Barkatullah, the Chinese revolution of November 1911, led, in part, by the Chinese nationalist

¹³¹ Simla, June 19, 1913, IOR/L/PS/11/58, p. 1, Indian Office Records.

¹³² Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 224.

¹³³ Muhammad Barkatullah, "Islam in Japan," 274.

and Pan-Asianist Sun Yat-Sen was viewed as a significant victory.¹³⁴ Sun Yat-Sen and other Chinese nationalists had been connected with Indian and other nationalists in London, Tokyo and the United States. Not only was Sun Yat-Sen's organizational structure a model for Ghadarites, in 1914 his party even "offered assistance to Indian struggles."¹³⁵ For anti-colonial revolutionaries in Ireland and India, not only did the overthrow of the Qing dynasty mark the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912, part of Sun Yat-Sen's revolutionary rhetoric involved critiques of Western imperialism and a desire free China from foreign economic and political domination that appealed to them.¹³⁶ The Irish-Indian-Chinese revolutionary connections can be summed by the title of an article published in the December 2nd edition of the *Gaelic American* entitled "India Stirred by Italian Aggressions and the Chinese Revolution."¹³⁷

In Ireland itself, the country outside India whose nationalists Barkatullah most closely associated with, the Home Rule Crisis followed the granting of the Irish Party's wishes with the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill in April 1912. The Ulster unionists, who were opposed to the granting of Home Rule, decided to create a paramilitary group, the Ulster Volunteer Force which was "prepared to use violence to secede from a Home Rule Ireland."¹³⁸ The Republicans, in response, with the "hidden hand of the Irish Republican Brotherhood," created the Irish

¹³⁴ The differences in how he views these nationalist movements illustrates his ambiguity towards imperialism which were complicated by his commitment to Pan-Islamism and belief, at this moment, that the Ottoman Empire and the Caliph represented symbolic significance.

¹³⁵ Emily Brown, *Har Dayal*, 151.

¹³⁶ For a survey of the recent scholarship and narratives about the 1911 Chinese revolution read Wang Guo, "The 'Revolution' of 1911 Revisited: A Review of Contemporary Studies in China," *China Information* 25, no. 3 (2011): 257-274. For a brief summary of Sun Yat-Sen's ideas and publications read Theresa Man Lind Lee, "Modernity and Postcolonial Nationhood: Revisiting Mahatma Gandhi and Sun Yat-Sen a Century Later," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 41, no. 2 (2015): 131-158.

¹³⁷ "India Stirred by Italian Aggressions and the Chinese Revolution," *Gaelic American*, December 2, 1911.

¹³⁸ Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916*, 45.

Volunteers in the following year.¹³⁹ Before the Home Rule Crisis “few contemporaries believed Ireland was on the very of revolutionary change,” argues Fearghal McGarry, however, “[t]he emergence of volunteer militias-which weakened British authority and transformed Irish politics after 1913- created revolutionary possibilities that could not have been foreseen.”¹⁴⁰

Finally, there were significant developments in India that had an effect on the radicalization of the Indian network globally. The proposed partition by the British authorities of the state of Bengal in 1905 was met with widespread protest and gave rise to both the non-violent *swadeshi* movement and radical revolutionaries who attempted to assassinate British authorities with the intention of both shocking and disputing the colonial administration and inspiring revolutionary spirit throughout British India.¹⁴¹ As Joseph McQuade writes, while these ‘terrorist’ organizations were “first developed in Bengal, they quickly spread to other parts of India, and soon became transnational in their ambitions and areas of operations,” with the Ghadar party being the most significant organizations that was, in part, influenced by the violent Bengali organizations.¹⁴²

The years leading up to WWI and Barkatullah’s departure from Tokyo had been tumultuous. A period which saw imperial encroachment into Ottoman territories by a Western power, the establishment of a Chinese Republican following a revolution that overthrew the Qing Dynasty, heightening tension in Ireland and the influence of radical networks from Bengal.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 42-43.

¹⁴¹ For more on revolutionary violence in Bengal, see Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in Indian, 1900-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and “Foreign Influences on Bengali Revolutionary Terrorism, 1902-1908,” *Modern Asian Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994): 533-556. For more on the *swadeshi* movement, see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973).

¹⁴² Joseph McQuade, “The *New Asia* of Rash Behari Bose: India, Japan, and the Limits of the International, 1912-1945,” *Journal of World History* 25. no. 4 (2016): 645.

By the end of Barkatullah's time in Tokyo, he had helped establish Tokyo as an important node in the network.¹⁴³ Tokyo, during his brief time there, became an important hub through which both revolutionaries and revolutionary literature would pass.¹⁴⁴ This expanding network gave the revolutionaries more options, and scared the British further. Barkatullah himself had become more open and virulent in his anti-British writings and activities. While he had not joined violent revolutionary activities thus far, the British were in no doubt that he presented a clear threat. After increasing pressure from the British government, Barkatullah's contract was not renewed at the University of Tokyo and he returned to the United States in 1914. WWI and the Ghadar's "echo of mutiny" was about to start sounding out.

¹⁴³ Although it should be noted that Indian students, who were in contact with Krishnavarma, had already established an 'India House' in Tokyo and were working with Chinese and other nationalists from Asia prior to Barkatullah's arrival. However, as Harald Fischer-Tine rightly points out, the movement "gained new momentum with the arrival of Maulavi Barakatullah," in "Indian Nationalism and the 'World Forces,'" 337. For more on Barkatullah and the Indian network in Tokyo, based primarily of extracts from the Bombay government intelligence files, see Aravind Ganachari, "Two Indian Revolutionary Associations Abroad: Some New Light on the Pan Aryan Association and the Indo-Japanese Association," in *Nationalism and Social Reform in a Colonial Situation* (New Delhi: Kalpaz, 2005), 137-147.

¹⁴⁴ According to British records, Hatano, who had seemingly betrayed Barkatullah, could provide them with the names of three leaders of the seditious movements and a list of five hundred addresses in and outside India where seditious literature was sent. See D. October 1915, no. 43, "Note of Foreign Office, Dated 27.8.1915," in Arun Coomer Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1927: Select Documents* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002), 113.

CHAPTER VI

OUTBREAK OF WWI: BARKATULLAH THE REVOLUTIONARY

Barkatullah arrived back to the United States on the *Hong Kong Maru* on May 23rd 1914 and joined the Ghadar Party with WWI on the horizon.¹⁴⁵ Not long after Britain declared war against Germany in 1914, a US-based newspaper made a declaration of their own. The Ghadar Party, formed of expatriate Indian revolutionaries, declared war against the British Raj. They laid out clearly what was at stake for those brave revolutionaries willing to listen to the call in joining the revolt against their British masters:

Salary: death
Reward: martyrdom
Pension: freedom
Field of Battle: Hindustan¹⁴⁶

Barkatullah was a key component in the meetings leading up to the decision that the time had arrived for a rebellion.¹⁴⁷ Now, without ambiguity, Barkatullah had become a fully-fledged revolutionary.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel W. Backus, July 3, 1914, Mohamed Maulavie Barakatullah Case Number 13442/012-08, Immigration Arrival Investigation Files, 1884-1944, Record Group 85: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004. This was accessed through the US National Archives and Records Administration, Regional Branch, San Bruno, California.

¹⁴⁶ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 1.

¹⁴⁷ “Lahore Conspiracy Case Judgement, Part III, Indian Revolutionists in America,” A. October 1915, No. 91, in Arun Coomer Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1927: Select Documents* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002), 88.

The decision to declare war may have been facilitated by the fact that German authorities may have been in contact with Ghadarites months before WWI broke out, thus preparing Barkatullah and the Ghadarites for when it did. Germany, for the Ghadarites, was the enemy of their enemy, and therefore an ally.¹⁴⁸ Barkatullah and other Indian and Pan-Islamist revolutionaries had been in contact with German authorities with the possibility of working together to further their common interests. Influential German leaders had been convinced by the diplomat Max von Oppenheim that the British and French could be weakened by turning their Muslim subjects against their colonizers. Oppenheim was crucial in convincing the Ottoman leadership to join the Germans and declare a *jihad* against the British, the French and the Russians.

Barkatullah arrived in Berlin on a German passport in early 1915 and soon became an involved in German propaganda activities by publishing pamphlets in various languages and speaking to Muslim prisoners of war in Germany to fight against their colonial masters. While these attempts were largely unsuccessful in convincing Muslims to join the cause against the British en masse, the Germans still viewed Barkatullah as a formidable ally. Later in the same year, he was sent to Afghanistan, through Constantinople and Persia, with another Indian Nationalist, Raja Mahendra Pratap, to convince Amir Habibullah to help in their efforts against the British during the Great War. According to British intelligence, “he received the Order of the Majidieh,” a military Order of the Ottoman Order, “from the Sultan on the recommendation of Dr. Nazim Bey, the Young Turk leader” before he left Constantinople.¹⁴⁹ While their attempts did not come to fruition with Habibullah, they stayed in Kabul to publish seditious newspapers

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 88.

¹⁴⁹ This further illustrates Barkatullah’s close relationship with the Young Turks. Supplementary History Sheet of Maulvi Barkatullah, IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p. 1, Indian Office Records.

and soon established the Provisional Government of India (PGI), with Barkatullah named the Prime Minister. The PGI was established to “create alliances with countries opposed to the British and, with their help, to liberate India.”¹⁵⁰ For instance, the PGI invited the Tsar of Russia to break their alliance with Britain and sought help from the Republican government in China.¹⁵¹

While many of his ambitious endeavors, like convincing Muslims loyal to the British and French empire to rebel against them, were largely unsuccessful, it is worth thinking about how Indians like Barkatullah had, in this particular historical moment, become significant international actors that governments like Germany invested heavily in. Barkatullah and his colleagues, with no state structure, military or significant funding of their own, were able to convince German officials that they were worth investing in. They had sold themselves as important cogs in a network that spread across and beyond the boundaries of the British Empire. The Germans were particularly interested in the opportunity to mobilize Pan-Islam against the British and, in that regard, Barkatullah was crucial.

The end of WWI, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought about a dramatic shift in the geopolitical landscape and for Pan-Islamists in particular. As Maia Ramnath points out, after the end of WWI, many Bolsheviks and Pan-Islamists “identified each other as important allies in the struggle against Western Imperialism, especially as manifest in its most advanced form, British capitalism.”¹⁵² In March 1919, a short booklet by Barkatullah aimed at recruiting Muslims around the world entitled *Bolshevism and the Islamic Body Politic* stated:

¹⁵⁰ Ansari, “Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali’s Transnationalism,” 193.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 193.

¹⁵² Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 195.

Oh Mohammedans! Listen to this divine cry. Respond to this call of liberty, equality and brotherhood which Brother Lenin and the Soviet Government of Russia and all eastern countries, we are announcing to you that the secret treaties made between the deposed Emperor and other States as regards the occupation of Constantinople, as well as treaties ratified by the dismissed Kerensky, have been annulled and torn up. The Russian Soviet, therefore, considers it essential that Constantinople should remain in this hand of the Muslims.¹⁵³

In June 1919, a leaflet addressed “To all Muslims of Asia” signed by Barkatullah as a German delegate to Afghanistan began to be circulated in Central Asia. In contrast to the Bolsheviks who had deposed the despotic Tsar, Barkatullah states that the “British are opposed to this spirit of freedom and equality and especially afraid of its spreading in Asia, particularly in India, where the awakening of the Indian Muslim is feared...[today] there is not as single form of home government which has not accepted Bolshevik methods, enthusiasm and sincerity.”¹⁵⁴ In an attempt at building a revolutionary spirit, he asks Muslims to look towards his colleagues in the British Isles, where a “revolution of workmen and labourers is taking place. Ireland has separated herself from the British Empire and become independent.”¹⁵⁵ Ireland, it seems, was never far away from Barkatullah’s consciousness.

At the Baku Conference of 1920, “Soviet rhetoric explicitly called upon Muslims as such to play a role in the world revolution.”¹⁵⁶ One of the main factors that attracted these revolutionaries, including Barkatullah, to the Bolsheviks, outside of promises of funding, arms and training, was the Soviet Union annulling of secret treaties signed by the Tsarist regime with the entente powers, and returning occupied territories of Persia.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Supplementary History Sheet of Maulvi Barkatullah, IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p.2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 1-2.

¹⁵⁵ Supplementary History Sheet of Maulvi Barkatullah, IOR/L/PJ/12/213, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 195.

¹⁵⁷ Humayun Ansari, “Pan Islam and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists,” 517.

Barkatullah along with Abd Al-Rab and Obeidullah Sindhi, were the key figures involved in introducing the Bolsheviks to the Pan-Islamic network. For some of these Pan-Islamic figures, there was no contradiction between socialism and their faith and, if anything, saw connections between them. For many others, Moscow was an unlikely destination and the relationship was nothing but a pragmatic decision to ally with them at this moment. Barkatullah's position was interesting in this regard. While he openly stated he was neither a Communist or a Socialist, his anti-colonialism and Bolshevik calls for revolution based on equality and liberty were compatible. And, indeed, looking back at his early writings, criticism of capitalist greed, the destruction of industry in India, and the treatment of the lower classes by the British were part of his critique of British rule well before he could have even foreseen an alliance with the Bolsheviks.

In the end, none of these ventures brought any tangible results for Barkatullah and his fellow revolutionaries during his lifetime. Arguably, the most jarring defeat would have been the abolishment of the office of the caliphate by Mustapha Kemal of the newly established Turkish Republic on March 3, 1924.¹⁵⁸ Barkatullah had played a part in the Khilafat Movement, an Indian movement between 1919 and 1924 that attempted to pressure the British government to show dignity towards the Ottoman Empire and preserve the authority of the Sultan as the Caliph.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ For more on the abolishment of the caliphate, see M. Sukru Hanioglu, *Ataturk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 131-144 and Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 127-132.

¹⁵⁹ For more on the Khilafat Movement, see Gael Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

Not long after this monumental moment, he wrote his last major work, *The Khilafet*.¹⁶⁰ Similar to his earlier work, prior to becoming a fully-fledged revolutionary, Barkatullah was keen to emphasize how Islam, at its core, has a great civilizational heritage that is compatible with modernity and principles of justice and equality. What explains the crisis, as he sees it, in the Muslim World that culminated in the abolishment of the caliphate, is the history of despotic leadership since the founding of the Ottoman Dynasty. Consistent with his earlier writings, he is particularly scathing in his assessment of Sultan Abdulhamid's leadership. The "centuries of despotism," Barkatullah argues, has meant that "even the learned among the Muslims have lost the faculty to understand that Islam originally meant spiritual fraternity, social liberty, constitutional equality and democratic polity."¹⁶¹ Barkatullah was hesitant to criticize Mustapha Kemal and the leaders of the Turkish republic for their decision, however, and writes:

The destruction of the Ottoman empire was in reality identical with the abolition of the Khilafat. What Mustapha Kemal and the Grand National Assembly of Angora Republic have done, simply amounts to the accomplished fact officially. The resources of the Angora Republic, moreover, could not afford to maintain the dignity of the Khalifa. Viewing from this point of view, the whole performance without a civil war and bloodshed exhibits a great capacity, moral courage and frankness on the part of its authors. To abolish an institution hallowed with the traditions of thirteen centuries, like Khilafat, in a Muslim country requires an unusual amount of courage.¹⁶²

The purpose of *The Khilafet* was not to investigate the history of the caliphate, but rather, an attempt at engaging in the discussion in the global Muslim public sphere about what should be done now that the caliphate had been abolished. Barkatullah makes it clear what the stakes are for the Muslim World without Muslim unity under the leadership of a Caliph when he writes,

¹⁶⁰ Muhammad Barkatullah, *The Khilafat* (Dhaka: Society for Pakistan Studies, 1970). Originally published as *The Khilafet* (London: Luzac and Company Oriental Foreign Booksellers and Publishers, 1924). For secondary literature on this publication, see Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 194-199.

¹⁶¹ Muhammad Barkatullah, *The Khilafat*, 72.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 74.

“we must hang together, otherwise we may be hanged separately.”¹⁶³ However, Barkatullah argues that the the role of the Caliph had to be limited to being a spiritual leader, similar to what had happened to the papacy in Rome. Without a powerful Muslim empire like the Ottoman Empire, and with Muslim polities either being under direct or indirect domination by European powers, Muslim delegates had difficult decisions to make at the upcoming conference discussing the future of the caliphate in Cairo in the following year. Barkatullah suggested they would be best served refraining from electing any contemporary Muslim leader. In the end, despite who the next caliph might be, Barkatullah maintained right until his death the promise in, and necessity of, the transnational solidarity of the Muslim World and the symbolic importance of the institution of the caliphate.

Barkatullah remained remarkably active in the years leading up to his death and seems to have been the connecting link between the Indian-based nationalists and the Comintern. In 1926, he met Jawaharlal Nehru through Dr. M.A. Ansari who, like Barkatullah, was a part of the Khilafat movement and had now become an important member of the Indian National Congress (INC).¹⁶⁴ They discussed the need for the Comintern to participate in propaganda activities in India in close coordination with Indian nationalists, particularly the non-communist ones. The concerns of Nehru, that the Comintern propaganda strategy was causing more harm than good, were communicated to the Comintern by Barkatullah.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Ibid, 83.

¹⁶⁴ Iftikhar Haider Malik, *US-South Asia Relations, 1784-1940: A Historical Perspective* (Islamabad: Area Study Centre for Africa, North & South America, Quaid-i-Azam University, 1988), 248 and Ansari, “Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali’s Transnationalism,” 201; Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 195.

¹⁶⁵ For more on this, see Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta, “Comintern and the Indian Revolutionaries in Russia,” in *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India: 1919-1943: Dialectics of the Real and Possible History* (Calcutta: Seribaan, 2006), 235-281 and “The Comintern and the Indian Revolutionaries in Russia in the 1920s,” *Calcutta Historical Journal* 18, no. 2 (1996): 151-170.

Barkatullah and Nehru were to meet again, representing the Ghadar Party and Indian National Congress respectively, at the “Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism” held in Brussels in February of the following year.¹⁶⁶ The conference was organized by the Indian anticolonial revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and the German politician and communist, Willi Munzenberg. Despite being funded by the Comintern, the conference drew anticolonial leaders from across 104 countries and “the deliberations consisted not of Soviet diktats, but rather of speeches by anticolonial nationalists” and “provided the archetype for the Bandung Conference convened three decades later in 1955, as well as for a series of International Youth Congresses and Peace Conferences along the way.”¹⁶⁷

He died on September 20th 1927, during his visit to San Francisco for Ghadar’s annual conference with his chronic diabetes finally catching up to him. Barkatullah was committed to the cause right till the end.

¹⁶⁶ “List of Organizations and Delegates attending the Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism,” February 10, 1927, p. 3, League Against Imperial Archives, International Institute of Social Justice, Amsterdam

¹⁶⁷ Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 183. Outside of Manjapra’s excellent work, for more on the League Against Imperialism (LAI), see Fredrik Petersson, “Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: The League Against Imperialism and Berlin, 1927-1933,” *Interventions* 16, no. 1 (2014): 49-71 and Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

As this thesis has tried to demonstrate, Barkatullah's turn from an intellectual to a revolutionary was not inevitable, but "conjunctural and contingent."¹⁶⁸ Barkatullah went from being an Indian-Muslim intellectual arguing against imperial bigotry and inequality to someone "embracing the program of springing the imperial lock by forging transnational alliances and cultural diplomatic ties in the diaspora."¹⁶⁹ While Barkatullah had indeed become an anticolonial revolutionary fighting the British, like other revolutionaries in the interwar period, he tried to work alongside middle-ranking imperial powers like Germany, the Ottomans and the Japanese.

While he may have been ambivalent about colonialism itself, his commitment to working for equality and justice remained consistent throughout his career. Barkatullah's mode for achieving his goals remained consistent too: internationalism. Arguably, it was the transnational nature of the British Empire that meant that Indian-Muslim figures like Barkatullah would begin to look for solutions to imperial racism globally, by forming alliances with a dizzyingly cosmopolitan array of networks, individuals, states and empires. It is important to highlight, however, that these networks were not limited to those that were colonized.

Barkatullah recognized that Britain and the 'West,' were not homogenous. From his earliest days in Britain, alongside becoming a central figure in the diasporic Indian and Pan-

¹⁶⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 153.

¹⁶⁹ Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*, 92.

Islamic networks, Barkatullah's initial strategy was to develop relationships with British socialists, theosophists and liberals for "linked-up agitation" against British injustices and bigotry.¹⁷⁰ It was precisely the fissures within, and between, Western powers what he, and others were trying to exploit.

Before Barkatullah became a revolutionary, in both the United States and Britain, he not only developed relationships but he also tried to counter bigoted depictions of Islam, Muslim societies and Ottoman Empire by giving lectures and writing in newspapers and magazines. Barkatullah understood how deeply intertwined colonial geopolitics were with narratives relating to race, culture and religion in the 'West.' He could see, for instance, how the supposed tyranny and backwardness of the "terrible Turk" could be used as justification for supporting nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire like the ones in Crete and the Balkans. Therefore, for Barkatullah, intervening in the British and American public sphere on conversations to do with Islam was more than just about restoring dignity to Muslims like himself. In doing so, Barkatullah beyond just writing Muslim apologetics and was engaged in what Tomoko Masuzawa calls "colonial self-articulation."¹⁷¹ By presenting Islam as a liberal, egalitarian, modern, and universal religion he tried to show how Islam had as much to offer theosophists, liberal Christians, and unitarians that Islam that had as much to offer to the West as Hinduism and Buddhism did.

Barkatullah's decision to become an anti-British revolutionary when WWI began meant that it was the rivalry and diverging interests between the British and various empires and states that became the focus for him. Even then, however, Barkatullah never lost sight of the importance of staying engaged in the public sphere, although his attention seemed to be focused

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India*, 29.

¹⁷¹ Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 282.

primarily on Indians and Muslims across the world.

In the end, Barkatullah died before he was able to see a post-colonial South Asia. Although he also missed out on experiencing the trauma of partition that accompanied it. Having worked closely alongside Hindu, Sikh and Parsi Indian revolutionary brothers and sisters, Barkatullah may not be able to recognize South Asia today where Hindu and Muslim are often spoken about from the far-right edges as being natural enemies. His cosmopolitan, inclusive and egalitarian form of Pan-Islam, the most enduring part of his ideological identity, does not square with the Pan-Islamism that came back into global consciousness in the 1980s and is now widely seen as inherently violent and destructive. Excavating and recollecting the imaginations, activities and connections from Barkatullah's life seem as timely as ever of how things were, and could be, different.

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