

Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan's efforts for the Pashto Language Movement

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Abstract:

Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan is a towering Personality in the Socio political scenario of the sub continent and Khyber PakhtoonKhwa in Particular. He has contributed a lot to Pashtoon society in the field of education social reformation and political awareness. Apart from this he his role for the promotion of Pashto Language and Literature is also vital and fundamental. This study is particularly relevant to the critical concept of social change. This paper will bring forth important contribution of Khan Abdul Ghaffar khan with special reference to education and his struggle in building peace and harmony in Pashtoon society. He laid foundations of promoting Pashto language, literature and peace education to bridge the gap between Pashtuns and British imperialism. In valuable effects have been made by him for the promotion of Pashto language and literature in the shape of Pashto language movement. This paper deals with all these relevant details.

Living nations can never forget their leaders and always remember them as their heritage. Pakistan is also among these nations which pays best regards to their historical legends and nationalist heroes. These legends had started different type of movements during their time period for the peace and development in the region. The most specific purpose was to get rid of the darkest period of history “The British imperialism”. Time period of the British domination in the sub-continent was from 1857 to 1947. Colonial rulers and administrators had a very vigorous attitude towards the Indian natives.

The trends of politics and governance previously known N.W.F.P understudy dates back to British India. The region passed through different structural units from administrative in 1901 to Governor's province in 1932. Is politics ha special relevance to the politic of United India. After partition the political development in the region rendered political consciousness of its people too. In

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every period Pashto communities have very positive attitude towards their own language. It is seen as a strong mark of identity and a symbol of pride.

Khyber PakhtunKhwa is a region under the territorial integration of Pakistan. Geographically it is located in the land of sub-continent where the mountains of Hindu Kush meets with Afghanistan. Earlier it was called as NWFP from the British time when it was made the North-West frontier of imperial territory. Now the government of Pakistan has changed its name as Khyber PakhtunKhawa. The political upheavals in the region of NWFP present Khyber PakhtunKhawa links back to British India. In different period of time the region has faced many changes in structural and administrative setup. After the advent of the colonial forces in the sub-continent, they demolished the Sikhs rule from the frontier region and came into direct contact with the Afghan government. The later attracted the former because of the military and political incursion into the border linked areas of Iran, China and Central Asia. Russia was also moving forward towards the Central Asia. Alarmed by the expansionist policy of Tsarist Russia and later of the Soviets the British regarded the province as the most important as the most important area in terms of defense of the raj. To keep a keen check and provide efficient administration the government of India constituted it a separate province in 1901.(1) Due to its strategic importance especially in the view of Great Game from 1840s to 1940s NWFP become an ice pot for the British imperialism. Throughout the history it remained an important place of land for the tourists, military men, warriors and administrators.

NWFP has played a significant role in the shaping and re-shaping of the Indian history. It's vital and deliberate locality made it not only the frontier of India but also become an international frontier region to enter in Sub continent.(2) British got the chance to capture NWFP in 1849 and become overpowered after the invasion of Punjab from Sikh domination. The region remained a part of Punjab till 1901, when Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, separated the five districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, and with the amalgamation of five agencies namely Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, North and South Waziristan, and formed a detach province from Punjab called as North West Frontier Province of India. As said earlier, because of its distinctive character, the province was treated by the British in a 'special way'. Security considerations were given priority over social, economic and political reforms. Contrasting with

other provinces of British India NWFP was not given importance initially. It was administered through Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) a special ordinance for the province.(3) As they wanted to have full control over the western sides of India and suppress the local inhabitants activities. Before self-determination political conscience in NWFP influenced all Indian politics and the freedom struggle in sub-continent. The province developed some distinguishing features and association of its own which made the province different from the other provinces. Violent and nonviolent movements both were putting forward the freedom struggle at the same time. NWFP was significantly Muslim majority province containing 93% of the population. For Pashtun Islam is the integral part of their day to day life .infect Islam is the mark of identity for them. 20th century saw the rise of regionally political movement against the raj. KhudaiKhidmatgar movement was a religious and political movement.

Role of Ghaffar khan in promoting Pashto language Movement

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a well-known personality in NWFP. He was known as Bacha Khan and was entitled by ‘Sarhadi Gandhi’ due to his non-violence ideology. The political struggle of this renowned person in Frontier Province was super facial. Khan Abdul Ghaffar khan was basically a social worker and he firmly believes in serving humanity. He struggled very hard to enlighten the Pashtun society through flashing lights of knowledge.

Ghaffar Khan started his social activities as an educationist. He joined a social reformer named Hajji Fazli Wahid, a well-known prestigious personality of NWFP famous with Hajji of Turangzai. Their joined efforts opened the educational institutions known as Dar-ul-Ulum at Utmanzai and Gaddar (Mardan) in 1910. On one side of the religious education, students were permeating with the concepts of nationalism in these institutions. Education was free for all without any discrimination. Exact number of these religious institutions or Madaris, their number of students and the teachers, and the source of income is not available. In these Maddaris the curriculum consisted on teaching of Holy Quran and Hadith, Fiqha, Islamic history, Pashto, Mathematics, English and Arabic. However, professional and occupational skills were also part of the study. There was no educational institution for higher studies in the region at that time.

After the astringent experience of migration in 1920s, it was realized by Ghaffar Khan that migration was not the solution of the Indians problems. We should work hard to get rid of our problems. Actually he was disappointed in examining the results of the Hijrat Movement. He himself was in Afghanistan. Now he decided to go back to India and organize his people. He thought that education is the best way to make the people aware of their rights. He suggested his friends by helping the people to eradicate the illiteracy and social evils from the Pashtun society. He knew that British would never allow him to start his educational activities again in the settled districts. So he joined FazalMahmoodMakhfi to laid the foundation of a school at Khiloono in Dir. Natives of Dir appreciated the efforts and they started sending their children to school. When Nawab of Dir comes to know this activity, he was a political agent so he demolished the building of the school and Fazal Makhfi along with Bacha Khan was expelled from the district. After sometime Abdul Ghaffar Khan came into his hometown at UtmanZai there he consulted the educated people of the area and started his educational and social activities again in the village. They also agreed to eradicate the internal social evils and conflicts through peaceful means. Moreover they wanted to spread awareness of modern education as well as promotion of Pashto language in the region. In 1921, Ghaffar Khan initiated his Nonviolent Movement, when he laid the foundation of Anjuman Islah-ul-Afghaina a “reformation of the Afghan society”.(4)

Formation of Anjuman Islah-ul-Afghaina

To inspect some of his objectives, Abdul Ghaffar Khan established a society “Anjuman-e-Islah-ul-Afghaina” on April 1st 1921. He himself becomes its president and Mian Ahmed Shah was assigned as secretary. The goal to organize the Anjuman was to promote unity amongst the Pashtuns, exterminating the evils from the society, prevention of the expenditures upon social events. Additionally to promote the Pashto language and literature and above all enhancing the real love for Islam On 10 of April 1921, first branch of Azad Islamia Madras’s was started at UtmanZai on 10th April 1921. Following this more branches Madrass’ were opened in different areas of Peshawar valley. There is no exact figure available about the number of these Madras’s but a careful study tells us the numbers of such schools were 70. The curriculum taught in the

schools were mainly about Holy Quran and Hadith, Fiqha, Islamic history, Pashto, Mathematic, English and Arabic. Moreover, along with the educational skills vocational and professional skills were also taught in these schools such as carpentry, weaving and tailoring. As there was no educational institution for higher education in NWFP, students of these madrass' would have to enroll in Punjab University for higher education. Mian Ahmed shah, Maulana Mohammad Israel and main Maaruf shah were the founding fathers of these madrass' and they were teaching there without salary. On 1st of December 1923, the madrsa was affiliated with Jamia Millia Islamia Delhi. The funding source of these madrasas came from the Anjuman members who contributed their own finance for the progress of education. Ghaffar khan and his brother Dr. Khan sahib took first step by sending their own children to the schools. Other members of the community pleased to see Ghaffar khan initiative and they started sending their children too. As there was no fee problem, no caste and creed discrimination in these madras so they got an instant popularity in NWFP. There number increased from 140 to 300.(5)

Waqar Ali Shah recommended in his writings, the popular traditions that he was sent to the local mosque to get early education of Holly Quran. The Pashtun have great respect for religious education. Ghaffar Khan's life unveils that he was a religious man but it does not mean he was a typical mullah. Infect he was a realistic man and was aware of the day today challenges of the Indians people. He believed that education is the tool for the development so we should utilize it for bringing peace and change in the society. After throwing some light on Ghaffar khan's religious life it is necessary to analyze his Non-violent Movement. In 1921 he was elected as local leader of the Khilafat Committee in his own area. During later period of 1921, Ghaffar Khan got the invitation from the Provincial Khilafat Committee in NWFP at district of Peshawar. The Committee offered the slot of presidency to Ghafar Khan which he willingly accepted. After becoming president of the committee Ghaffar Khan toured whole of the province and spread awareness of the Khilafat Committee in the ruler areas. During this visit Gaffer Khan delivered his address aiming at to line up people against the British imperialism. Government did not tolerate his anti-government activities and arrested him on 17 December 1921 and imprisoned him for three years in jail to control his anti-government activities. He

was set free in 1924 and was warmly greeted back by his friends and family.(6)

Due to Ghaffar Khan self-sacrificing services he was awarded with the title of Fakhre-i-Afghan (pride of Afghan). His imprisonments brought sympathy, unity and love among the Pashtuns. When Ghaffar Khan visited the whole province as president of the Anjum the entire province accorded inspiring welcome to untiring Pashtoon hero. In 1926, Ghaffar Khan and his family members performed Hajj. The same year, the newly assigned king of Saudi Arabia Sultan Ibn Saud tendered invitation to the respectable Muslims leaders from all over the world to participate in general discussion regarding Islam. The Indian representative went to Makkaha were incorporating Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Ismail Ghaznavi. The discussion remained upon the significant issues and their solution in the light of Islam. On his arrival to his home in India, Ghaffar Khan contacted with the scholarly minded people in NWFP. There was no socio political newspaper at that time, so Ghaffar Khan decided to publish a magazine in Pashto. It soon got popularity in the province. He formed his organization named Anjuman Islaha-ul-Afaghina in 1921, the farmer's organization in 1927, Anjuman Zamindaran, by following this organization was named as Pashto in May 1928, started his magazine Pakhtun. Afterwards he proceeded towards the formation of Khudai Khidmatgars Movement. This movement based on the ideology of nonviolence. Earlier in 1930, it had 500 nonviolent members and by the end of the year it reached to 300,000.(7)

Ghaffar Khan was also prepared unarmed army. It was opposed by many of the leaders as it was taken against the norms of Pashtun society, their culture and tradition. The prevailing moral code emphasized Islamic beliefs justifying violence in defense of the faith. In addition, when some of the more vengeful traditional customs came into conflict with Islam the former often led to feuds that a more profound understanding of Islam might not have condemned. His father too was a religious man so he become successful in his efforts of pleading Non-violence.

Mian Akbar Shah was an active participant of the Anjuman. He had visited Soviet Union and now wanted to form youth organization on the same pattern as the young Turks and young afghan had at that time"(8). Ghaffar Khan inspired from the idea and he thought to establish this kind of organization at Utmanzai. So he called a

meeting on 1st September 1929. This meeting resulted in the establishment of the Zalmo Jirga. Abdul Akbar Khan was nominated his president and Mian Ahmed Shah as secretary. The membership was opened for every person. There was no discrimination of any kind. Everybody was allowed to join it freely. The mandatory compulsion for the members was not too indulged in any form of communalism. Pashto was considered official language for the Jirga's work. The goal of this organization was to achieve complete autonomy, and freedom for the India through all possible means. At the end of this meeting almost 70 people joined the organization at the spot. The important feature of the Jirga organization was all the members were belong with academic activities and working group.(9)

All the members belong to rural areas and none of them were from elite family. After the successful progress of Olasi Jirga another organization was formed in 1929 called as Khudai Khidmatgars Movement. Soon it became popular in the province as a major political party.

Formation of Khuadai Khidmatgar Movement

In 1928 political upheavals change the situation in Pashtun dominated areas of Afghanistan and India. After the formation of Annjuman-e-IslahulAfghaina a political party Khudai Khidmatgars (Servants of God) was organized. They became popular very soon in the region. Both the organizations have similar goal. They wanted to promote the Pashtun society and culture, enhance their nationalistic prospective and eradicate social evils from the society. The leaders were almost the same persons of both the organizations. Sarfaraz Khan became its first President and Hijab Gul became first secretary.(10) After a short time, they established their strong roots in rural and the urban areas of the Pashtun society. After some initial surprising success of the recruitment of KhudaiKhidmatgars, Ghaffar Khan became popular and gained the confidence in promoting his idea more openly. He convinced the people that "I am going to give you a weapon that the police and army will not be able to stand against it. It is the weapon of the Prophet, but you are not aware of it. That weapon is patience and righteousness. No power on earth can stand against it.if you exercise patience victory will be yours."(11)

Khudai Khidmatgars were emphasized strictly to follow the rules. They were trained in specific way. They were also recruited for military ranks but before any job were given to them; oath has been taken to avoid any use of power in violent ways. They were advised to carry special uniform which recognized them as the 'Red Shirts'. A most worthy characteristic of the Khudai Khidmatgars was their strict policy of nonviolence. They were trained not to resist the enemy with weaponry powers. But the stress was put on forbearance and tolerant behavior. Blood feuds and resistance is very common in the Pashtun and tribal communities.

Therefore, Ghaffar Khan's realized that violence would cause more violence in response. Consequently a large number of people joined Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, among them many were Hindus. In 1929, Ghaffar Khan visited with Khudai Khidmatgars and attended the congress session. Congress welcomed them and promised them to send a committee to inquire and solve their grievances. Ghaffar Khan was inspired by the commitment and discipline of the congress affiliated members. Therefore on his arrival he toured whole of the province with the others Khudai Khidmatgars and organized the people on the pattern of congress organization."(12).

In 1930, KhudaiKhidmatgars were twelve hundred soon after a couple of months they reached to twenty-five thousands in numbers. QissaKhawani Bazaar incident was a true picture of nonviolence. On 23 April 1930, on the call of the congress the Khudai Khidmatgars participated in the civil disobedience movement, Ghaffar Khan and some of his close associates were arrested. The authorities dealt with demonstration harshly, killings and injuring scores of them. Gurwal tribe belongs to British military refused orders to take actions against the Khudai Khidmatgars. The British authorities were annoyed and also alarmed. They immediately replaced them with new troops. With the arrest of the high leadership and a harsh treatment meted out to their workers, Khudai Khimatgars were constrained to change their stance.

Conclusion:

Abdul Ghafar khan always focused upon his utmost supreme cause of freedom. He opened many schools to spread his idea in the Pakhtun community. He was aware of the educational importance of his upcoming generations. He was also seeing the socio-economic backwardness in the region. So he decided to eradicate all these

problems in an organized manner. This organized way was opening of schools in different part of the NWFP. But schools were closed down by the government at the initial stage. To meet all the challenges ghaffar khan turned himself towards politics to get support from people and the government authorities. He did not involve himself in power politics. Although he has strong ties with congress political party but he was not politician at all. He was more concerned to serve his own people. He believed that only nonviolence can bring his people on for front and enabled them to grow in stature. It was the result of his efforts that pashtun society was turned to promote their own language, literature and message of peace to the world.



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