

Educational Philosophy of Baacha Khan (Abdul Ghaffar Khan)

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Abstract

In the history of Khyber Pakkhtun Khawah (KPK), some personalities played vital role for the awakening of the masses. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as Baacha Khan was one of them. This article relates the facts that how Baacha Khan used education as a weapon for the revival of Pakhtuns. Baacha Khan declared the education as the foremost remedy of the Pakhtun society. He not only took steps to flourish education among Pakhtuns but also tried his best to refrain the Pakhtuns from the evil customs and practices. This article also describe the institutions which were established by Baacha Khan to achieve the goal.

Keyword: Baacha Khan, Pakhtuns, NAP, Education, Madaris (religious educational institutions), Mullas (Religious Scholars)

Introduction

To normalize the violent nature of Pakhtuns, Baacha Khan introduced non-violence philosophy. To inject non-violence philosophy in Pakhtuns was not an easy job. Though he faced lot of hurdles but continued his struggle. During his struggle he concluded that education was prerequisite for injecting this philosophy in Pakhtuns. For this purpose he started an educational program to civilize the Pakhtuns.

Three prominent leaders were famous for their struggle to inject education in Pakhtuns. Haji Abdul Wahid famously known as Haji Sahib Turangzai was one of them. He worked for educating Pakhtuns. He challenged the British authorities. He

introduced a chain of *madaris* (religious educational institutions) in which both religious and modern education was given but mainly focused on religious education. In this struggle he couldn't take British in confidence. The British suppressed him and his educational plan. Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum was another who also wished to educate Pakhtuns. He worked closely with British to earn their confidence. After earning confidence he established an institution '*Dar-ul-UlumIslamia*' (Islamia College) in 1913. Beside the above mentioned two great men, another personality who also did great work to educate Pakhtuns was Abdul Ghaffar Khan¹, famously known as Baacha Khan. He wanted to throw away the violent label from Pakhtuns. For this purpose, he reintroduced the non-violence philosophy of Islam. To inject non-violence philosophy, he visited the entire region but lack of education created hurdles for him. From his visits he concluded that education was the prerequisite for injecting this philosophy in Pakhtuns. So he introduced his own educational philosophy by keeping balance in religious and modern education. British did not wish to allow him to educate Pakhtuns in his style and created problems for him but he stood firm and faced all with courage.

Pakhtun Tendency toward Education:

After capturing most of the territory of Indian Sub-continent, British started their struggle for spreading Christianity. They introduced missionary activities. Through those missionary activities British aimed conversion of Pakhtuns to Christianity. For this purpose British used the sacred profession of doctors and teachers. They established missionary hospitals and schools in different parts of the region. By using their professional activities, Edward Herbert (first British Commissioner of Peshawar) opened Edward Mission School at Peshawar in 1853, and Sir Robert Croft was appointed its first Principal (Obhrai, 1938).

Initially, it was a primary school but later on was upgraded as Higher Secondary. School was opened at Reti Bazar near Chowk Yadgar Peshawar and then shifted to a historical building near Kohati Gate. That historical building was initially used by Sardar Yar Muhammad Khan (1823-1829) and his younger brother, Sardar Sultan Muhammad Khan (1831-1834) as a palace. They were the brothers of Afghan King Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. Both worked for Afghan King as Sardars (lords) of the area because at that time this area was under the jurisdiction of Afghan king. Later on this building was used by British as Governor House (Ihsanullah, 2013).

Edward Mission High School was the pioneer among all the educational institutions in the region. Peoples from all around came and received the education in

¹Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan famously known as Baacha Khan was born in the house of Behram Khan in 1889/90 at Utmanzai. He received his early education at village mosque then admitted in Municipal Board High School at Peshawar. In 1904 he was admitted in Edward Mission High School and passed class 5th in 1909. Later on he joined other schools but couldn't complete his education. He started the reformation movements for the revival of Pakhtun society. This legendary Pakhtun leader was died on 20th January 1988 and buried in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. *Chronology of Baacha Khan*, www.anp.org

this school. Personalities like Dr. Khan Saib (ex-Chief Minister of Pakhtunkhawa), General Yahya Khan (ex-President of Pakistan), Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan (founder of Islamia College Peshawar), Dr. Najeebullah (ex-President of Afghanistan) studied here in this school (Ihsanullah, 2013).

In addition to these political leaders renowned writer Patrus Bukhari was also student of this school. Similarly the renowned Pakhtun leader and founder of famous Khudai Khidmatgar movement Abdul Ghaffar Khan also studied in the school till 5th class. Beside Herbert Edward other some British officials also worked for education but the aim of all of them was to convert poor masses from Islam to Christianity. These activities disturbed illiterate Pakhtuns and they couldn't differentiate between true and false properly (Farhad, 2007; Ihsanullah, 2013)

Such circumstances warranted a strong personality who could rescue the Islam and restore the dignity of Pakhtuns. In this critical situation appeared Abdul Wahid popularly known as Haji Sahib of Turangzai came forward. He felt that Sikhs and British wanted to destroy Pakhtuns socially and economically. Pakhtuns were indulged in non-Islamic activities which disturbed their social life. To get rid of those non-Islamic activities, Haji Sahib started a movement for the reformation of Pakhtun society. During that movement he felt that for the success of this movement it was important to impart religious education to the Pakhtun masses. For this purpose he established a chain of *Madaris* (religious schools) throughout the Pakhtun region to counteract missionary schools in the region. Those *Madaris* were popularly known as '*Azad Madaris*'. Haji Sahib couldn't establish those *Madaris* himself but common Pakhtuns established those *Madaris* with their own funds and Haji Sahib only managed these *Madaris*. The number of these *Madaris* is not confirmed, the British record suggested it 34 but other sources place them 72, 120 and 150 respectively (Aziz, 2007; Toru & Marwat, 2005).

Haji Sahib himself used to inspect the schools every month, and inquired about the educational performance of the students as well as the teachers. He also announced prizes both for students and their teachers. There was no fee structure in these schools. The success of this system frightened the British and they started to oppose him and his schools. He was arrested in 1910 and sent to the jail. This forced him to leave the settled area and migrated to Mohmand Agency where he lived till his death in 1937 (Toru & Marwat, 2005).

Baacha Khan Joined the Squad:

Migration of Haji Sahib disturbed his educational plans. Though his disciples reopened these schools but couldn't maintain that system which was introduced by Haji Sahib. The system was about to crash when Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan properly known as Bacha Khan came forward. He was a landlord but knew exactly that what *pakhtuns* needed? He was a part of Haji Sahib social reforms movement but greatly impressed by his educational plan. Baacha Khan with the help of Maulvi Abdul Aziz opened a madrasa-cum-school in 1910, at Utmanzai (Khan, 1983). The Mullahs (religious leaders) opposed the plan by declaring it as a

missionary school but they had no real alternative. They opposed Baacha Khan and his colleagues at different occasions. Once Baacha Khan and his colleagues were busy in a village to introduce the masses of their educational system. In the meantime a Mullah named Mullah *Chitrali* came with his books and gun and said:

“I am against Baacha Khan and his education which he wants to propagate. He quoted a few words from the books taught in those schools and said; what is this? Is it education? It wasn't an education”

He asked Baacha Khan that he came there to decide with book or gun (Khan, 1983). Baacha Khan replied:

“As you know that I am not a man of gun but a man of books. As you know better that God and his Prophet allow us of receiving education. And you people are against the missionary schools then you should arrange your own education system for these innocent Pakhtuns but I know that you people are not able to do this. So don't stop us from educating these people (Khan, 1983).

It became a routine that Mullah opposed the education system of Baacha Khan and his colleagues. They usually used Islamic education as a tool by saying that in these schools they didn't teach religious education. Like past they also used the religion Islam as a tool against Baacha Khan's education system. They considered the school education as *Kufr* (Heresy). In this context they propagated a verse among masses which was:

“Those who study at school, do it for the love of money. There is no room for them in paradise; instead they will find themselves in hell” (Asma, 2004).

It was very difficult for Baacha Khan and his colleagues to take repugnance with those Mullahs because he knew that Pakhtuns were more religious than other nations and they gave complete respect to their religious scholars. They follow them blindly without any hesitation and confirmation. This might damage Baacha Khan's plan of educating Pakhtuns. So he counteracted and resolved the matter by linking it with Haji Sahib of *Turangzaimadaris* chain. Baacha Khan knew that Haji Sahib was respected more by Pakhtuns because of his spiritual qualities (Khan, 1983). That helped him very much and Mullahs stopped propaganda against Baacha Khan and his education system. This gave a boost to Baacha Khan and his colleagues. The plan was interrupted when British planned to arrest Haji Sahib but he escaped to Mohamand Agency.

Chain of Azad Islamia Schools:

Migration of Haji Sahib to Mohmand Agency disturbed his educational plan. This was continued till 1920. During this time, Baacha Khan visited the whole Pakhtun region. During his visit he noted ignorance and illiteracy among Pakhtuns. From those experiences he concluded that for the revival of Pakhtun society a revolution was needed with the help of leaders and scholars. Education was prerequisite for not only those leaders and scholars but was also important for common masses. So education was declared remedy for all miseries of Pakhtuns. To educate Pakhtuns, Baacha Khan laid the foundation of Azad Islamia School in 1921 at Utmanzai. In this mission Baacha Khan was supported by his close colleagues like Qazi Attaullah, Mian Ahmad Shah, Muhammad Abbas Khan, Haji Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Taj Muhammad Khan, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, Abdullah Shah and Khadim Muhammad Akbar (Khan, 1983). Maqsd Jan Khan of Bannu became the first headmaster of that Azad School at Utmanzai. His elder brother Amir Mumtaz Khan also joined the school as a teacher. Both these brothers who were studying in B.A left Islamia College (Khan, 1983) Peshawar during Khilafat Movement. When Maqsd Jan left the school to seek further education, his elder brother Amir Mumtaz Khan became the headmaster of this school (Aziz, 2007). Lack of teaching staff compelled Baacha Khan to teach himself in the school. His two sons Khan Abdul Ghani Khan (Tendulkar, 1967) and Khan Abdul² Wali Khan (Shazia, 2005) were among the first students of that school. At first Ghani Khan was sent to the National High School Peshawar but as Baacha Khan wanted to prove the excellence of these schools, he sent Ghani and Wali to his own established school. His message was clear that 'look these schools were so good that my sons also got admission in them (Aziz, 2007).

The idea of Azad School became so popular among Pakhtuns which was a great success for the founder. Within no time the number of those schools reached to 50 in different parts of the region (Aziz, 2007). On the other hand the British were afraid of Baacha Khan's Azad schools. To stop Baacha Khan from such activities they used different tactics. They humiliated his teachers, by giving greed of enough salary and offered them better posts in government schools. If they were not agreed British used to torture their family members and close relatives but couldn't succeed to impress the teachers which might affect the school performance. Within six months Azad schools alarmed the British authorities. Objections were made on Baacha Khan's tours of different districts. Chief Commissioner of the Province Sir John Maffey summoned Khan's father and told him;

²Abdul Wali Khan was an eminent Pakhtun leader. He was born in the house of Baacha Khan in December 1915 at Utmanzai. Wali Khan received his early education at his home town, in his father established Azad School. He was admitted in Azad School in 1922. He started his political career as he joined NAP and later on became a president of NAP Wali-group. Wali Khan played a big part in the approval of 1973 constitution. Wali Khan established Awami National Party in 1986 and elected as the president of the party. He died on January, 26, 2006 and buried in his home town.

“I have noticed that your son is visiting village after village and opening schools. I have also noticed that other people stay quietly at home and do not bother about those things. Ask him to stop this work and stay at home like other people otherwise you both will have to face consequences” (Aziz, 2007).

When his father came to home, he told his son that; ‘why could not he stay at home like other people?’ Baacha Khan replied, ‘Father, if someone else stop you from offering prayers, would you advise me to do the same?’ ‘God forbid’, his father said ‘offering prayers is a sacred duty.’ Baacha Khan replied, ‘to me, educating people and serving the nation is as sacred like prayers.’ On this his father said, ‘I see, you are right. If it is duty, then do it.’ Khan’s father sent a message to Chief Commissioner by saying that; ‘Pakhtuns could not give up their religion and sacred duties for their sake’ (Umerzai, 1967). Few days later, Baacha Khan was arrested by refusing to shut down his educational plan. He was arrested under 40 F.C.R. on December, 17, 1921 from Utmanzai when he was busy in making a football ground for the students of the Azad School. After arrest he was asked for surety of good conduct which he refused. He was sentenced three years rigorous imprisonment by taking part in anti-British agitation (Tendulkar, 1967).

The Azad School at Utmanzai was rapidly followed by the establishment of branches in other parts of the region especially in Charsaddah, Mardan, Swabi and Nowshehra tehsils. According to Abdul Akbar Khan there were 120 such a schools while Mian Jafar Shah and Abdullah Shah stated that there were only 80 such schools in the region. The official record, however, listed a maximum number of fifty one schools (Asma, 2004). As education was free and the schools were open to all communities, without any prejudice of caste or religion, the school gained popularity with in short span of time. The number of students increased from 140 (April 1921-March 1922) to 221 (April 1922-March 1923); and from 264 (April 1923 –March 1924) to 300 (April 1924-March 1925) (Khan, 1983). Azad Schools were affiliated with JamiaMillia, Delhi, on December 1, 1923. Jamia Millia conducted its examinations and a number of students after passing matriculation in Azad Schools joined JamiaMillia for further education. The schools mainly followed the Jamia syllabus with necessary modification required by the local environment. Pashto was adopted as medium of instruction but certain subjects were taught in English. As Mathematics books were not available in Pashto so it was taught in English. Urdu was also taught as a subject (Rauf, 2006). The curriculum also included teaching of the Holy Quran, Hadith, Fiqah, Arabic language and Islamic history to impart religious education in the Pakhtuns. Maulana Muhamamd Israel and Maulvi Shah Rasul were two important member of religious section who worked voluntarily with the school (Shah, 1999) not only these two but most of the staff worked voluntarily and few teachers were paid nominally. In early 30s the salary of the headmaster was Rs. 40 and second headmaster received Rs. 20. Beside free

education some time the poor students were supported by providing clothes, books and other requirements (Rauf, 2006).

Anjuman-e-Islah-e-Afghana:

After the establishment of Azad School at Utmanzai, Bacha Khan established a society for the reformation of pakhtuns in 1921. The name of the society was 'Anjuman-e-Islah-e-Afaghina' (Society for the reformation of Afghans). The society aimed to encourage the economic, social and educational uplift of the pakhtuns. He stressed upon the pakhtuns to take professions for earning money despite wasting their time in useless activities. To set an example, Baacha Khan himself opened a shop at *GurMandi* (sugar cane market) and started working by himself in his own fields. The establishment of this association also aimed to take the responsibility of supervision of Azad schools system and worked for the opening of other schools (Shah, 1999).

The annual report of 1924-25 of the society summarized its aims and objectives as:

“The anjuman aims at propagating the cause of Islam and imparting national and religious education in the Pashto language to the Muslim community. It has hitherto been found impossible to reform the Afghans in the matter of party feeling and morality under the existing foreign education and law. The Anjuman will try to put a stop to the evil customs which are against the laws of *Shariat* and have impaired the Pathans financially” (Rauf, 2006).

The following were elected as office bearers of the Anjuman:

- i). Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (President)
- ii). Mian Ahmad Shah (Manager)
- iii). Mian Abdullah Shah
- iv). Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar
- v). Muhammad Abbas Khan.

In the absence of Baacha Khan due to three years imprisonment, the Anjuman elected Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar as President. Later on he was replaced by Abdul Ghaffar Khan as President. Khadim Muhammad Akbar took over as Secretary (Khan, 1983). The Anjuman was divided into three Executive, Advisory and General Committees. The number of the Executive Committee members was eleven, Advisory committee included sixty four and General committee strength was ninety four (Rauf, 2006).

In the absence of Baacha Khan, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar did very well and the Anjuman became popular among the common masses. Baacha Khan used to guide the office bearers of the Anjuman from Jail which intensified his social and educational movement not only among the Pakhtun dominated areas but in other part of India as well. The association used Azad schools students and teachers effectively for different activities. Along with other students Baacha Khan's sons also took

active parts. Once Ghani, aged 9, in his speech demanded from the government that 'why my father is imprisoned, what crime has he committed?' his younger brother Wali, used to recite the Holy Quran on such occasion to catch the audience attention. These activities worked effectively and people responded positively by taking active part in every activity arranged by the Anjuman. Those activities flourished Azad schools. On this Baacha Khan said that: "my imprisonment greatly benefited the Pakhtuns. They became more sympathetic to our Azad School and they gave larger aid" (Rauf, 2006).

After three years imprisonment, Baacha Khan was released. He was warmly welcomed by the teachers and students of Azad School at Utmanzai. A huge gathering was organized by the Anjuman with the help of school management to welcome their leader and founder of Azad schools. For this purpose people from all parts of Pakhtunkhwa were invited. In the gathering Baacha Khan was bestowed the title of "*Fakhr-e-Afghan*" (Pride of Afghan) (Rauf, 2006). His speech, created passion in the audience which encouraged Baacha Khan and his followers for further propagation of his educational plan. To examine and expand Azad school branches, Baacha Khan and Khadim Muhammad Akbar started a visit of all the established schools. Khadim Muhammad Akbar took exams from the students at Azad Schools while Baacha Khan visited the *Hujras* (place of pakhtun social gathering) of different Khans to preach the importance of education to the illiterate masses. Baacha Khan was succeeded to a large extent in his mission. On the other hand British were feared from the charismatic personality of Baacha Khan and his educational plan. They tried every possible opportunity to stop him from doing so but could not succeed to stop him. This compelled the British to find out local landlords, *Mullahs* and educated people to flop the Baacha Khan educational plan. Most of those were studied in missionary schools. They started their activities to educate masses against Baacha Khan educational system. They used places like mosques, Hujras and other social and religious gathering to aware the people from the bad impacts of Baacha Khan's education system on Pakhtun society. They guided the people by saying that: "if you people educate your off springs in those schools which were founded by Baacha Khan then who will give them the certificates and government jobs" (Tendulkar, 1967).

The masses had the awareness about good and bad and they rejected all those people and followed Baacha Khan and his education system with confidence. Their anti-Azad Schools propaganda couldn't work. After failing in anti-Azad schools propaganda, they started propaganda against Anjuman and succeeded by creating a conflict among the office bearers of the Anjuman. MianMaroof Shah, an office bearer of Anjuman was the first victim of that conspiracy. He created differences within the Anjuman and everyone started reasoning with one another which was not a good sign for the welfare of the Anjuman. On this conduct he was terminated from Anjuman but his seedling of conflict was still in the Anjuman. And the whole conflict was for the downfall of Baacha Khan from the presidency of Anjuman. Baacha Khan tried his best to reunite the Anjman office bearers but could

not succeed. Finally he resigned from the president ship of Anjuman which solved the issue to some extent (Khan, 1983).

Pakhtun Journal:

Launching of *Pakhtun* journal was a great achievement of Baacha Khan. He started the journal in a situation when Pakhtuns were kept betrayed and ignorant by British authorities. For the propagation of Azad Schools and Anjuman, Baacha Khan visited throughout the Pakhtunkhwa. During his visit he observed that most of the Pakhtuns were illiterate and only a small number of people were literate. So, he concluded that a journal in their mother tongue i.e. Pashto was necessary (Khan, 1983).

Baacha Khan observed that;

“*Pakhtuns* were not even conscious that Pashto was their language, and wherever they go, they adopt the local language and forget their mother tongue. Have any of us ever made an effort to nurture and to develop the Pashto language (Khan, 1983).

Baacha Khan started ‘*Pakhtun*’ journal in May 1928, and he was its editor. Yearly subscription of the journal was Rs. 4. To attract the attention of the students, its yearly subscription was reduced to two and half rupees. The Journal was of medium size having forty pages. Initially the journal was published from Rawalpindi, then from Amritser and finally from Peshawar (Tendulkar, 1967). The journal contained well written articles on different subjects like politics, Pashto literature, Pashto poetry, Islamic history, gender issues, Indian affairs, social problems of Pakhtun society, Afghan affairs and etc. In no time *Pakhtun* journal became a mouth piece of the Pakhtuns. People not only in Pakhtunkhwa but abroad demanded it. Its circulation was reached from 500 to 3000 which showed how famous was this journal among Pakhtuns (Chand, 1989).

Objectives of the “*Pakhtun*” Journal:

Main objectives of the “*Pakhtun*” journal were:

- To create a sense of fraternity and love among the Pakhtuns and to extirpate mutual rivalries.
- To create a true spirit of patriotism and motivate them to struggle for freedom and to teach how to fight for it.
- To promote the cause of the Pashto language and to develop it to meet the scientific and literary demands.
- To eradicate social evils amongst the Pakhtuns and to advise them against extravagance, ease and luxury so that they might improve their economic condition.
- To reform their character morally.
- To teach them the true Islam and to eradicate foolish beliefs.

- To teach them valour and selfless service and to expose the weaknesses of their national character.
- To remove all sorts of fanaticism, group rivalries and to create among them qualities of toleration.
- To warn them of lack of modern education and technical flaws.
- To root out vicious practices of lying, gambling, drug addiction and bloodshed (Chand, 1989).

Pakhtun was a multidimensional and multi-purpose journal of Pakhtuns. It not only made Pakhtun aware of social evils but also played an important political role to aware the masses of future dangers. The writers of the journal mostly focused on Pukhtun Wali³ (Shah, 2007), freedom and liberty because that was the demand of that time. Besides this many articles were wrote on medical, women and children issues. Mainly journal focused on uplifting of Pashto language and in no time the language developed so much that it can compete with other regional languages comfortably. In shortly it was a journal for the reformation of Pakhtun society and people.

British were first feared from the Azad Schools and then from Pakhtun magazine of Baacha Khan. That's why he was continuously involved in one or other matter and imprisoned him to interrupt his educational plan. They first arrested Baacha Khan on April, 23, 1930 at Nahki under Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) and imprisoned for three years (Asma, 2004). Immediately, after his arrest, Pakhtun Journal publication was also banned. After one year imprisonment he was released and he restarted its publication. In December 1931, Baacha Khan was arrested again and publication of the journal was closed. After his release in 1934, his entrance in Pukhtunkhwa was banned. This couldn't allow him to republish the journal and it was continued till 1937. The ban on Baacha Khan's entry in Pakhtunkhwa was lifted on August, 24, 1937. After his arrival to the province he immediately started publication of *Pakhtun* and continued till October 1942 but was banned once again after his arrest. Soon after his release in 1945, the journal was restarted and it was continued till August 1947 (Ihsanullah, 2013).

Conclusion:

Baacha Khan worked for the revival of Pakhtun society. After complete observation of the Pakhtun society he concluded that revolutionary steps would needed for the revival of this society otherwise Pakhtun nation would be destroyed. He felt that revolution needed scholars and educationists which weren't available among Pakhtuns. He started struggle for educating Pakhtuns to find out like-minded people. In his educational plan he mainly focused on religious education. Lack of religious education brought the evil customs and traditions in Pakhtun society in name of Islam. Baacha Khan used education as a weapon for the revival of Pakhtuns.

³Pukhtoonwali means the unwritten rules and code of life of the Pakhtoons. It includes strict rules of hospitality, revenge, honour etc.

Baacha Khan concluded that education was the only solution of all those miseries of Pakhtuns. He not only educated Pakhtuns but also taught them the ways of living. He tried to eradicate the evil and un-Islamic customs from Pakhtun society which was the main educational contribution of Baacha Khan. He taught the lesson of non-violence to Pakhtuns.

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