



EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF BACHA KHAN FOR THE PASHTUN SOCIETY

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Abstract

History has rarely seen such leaders who raised their nation from the darkness of ignorance to the light of glory Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's (otherwise known as Bacha Khan) was one of them. When the society was under the power of lords, he gave the lesson of equality, blowing new life in the dead society. It was his struggle, his tiresome efforts, his tolerance, the devotion that he uplifted his people from serving their lords to become a respectable, educated nation. He dedicated his entire life to the service of the Pakhtun nation and strongly believed that if any change had to come, it would come only through education. For this instance, he established in various part of the province where teachers used to teach on voluntary basis. Bacha khan gives his educational philosophy and shape his contributions underpinning educational service for educating the disadvantaged pakhtuns of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Bacha khan wanted modern education for the Pashtun so they could compete with other nation of the world. Through education, Bacha khan wanted to channel bigotry, hatred and revengefulness for bringing peace, harmony and brotherhood in puhktoon society and he worked tirelessly to support women, their rights to education and inheritance. Bacha khan also emphasized on technical and vocational education so that the pakhuns get and settle in appropriate jobs and thereby serve the society.

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INTRODUCTION

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan born in Uthmanzai (Charsadda) in 1890. His father, Bihram Khan, belong to Muhammad Zai tribe having agrarian background. Bihram Khan's grandfather, Obaidullah Khan was executed by the Durrani rulers of Afghanistan and therefore, his family had migrated to Charsadda. As for as his name "BACHA KHAN" is concerned, so once he had to address a gathering against the Rowlett Act of 1919, where in the mosque of Haji Sahib Turangzai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan was declared as the president of the gathering. Common people did not understand the meaning of the president of a meeting and to them president means 'Bacha', so, he was then known as 'Bacha Khan'. (BAKHTIAR, 2020).

Bacha Khan founded a School in 1932 by the name of Azad School but more specifically known as the Khudai Khidmatgar School, which was latter on renamed as the Azad School in Reti Bazaar, close to Kohati gate. It was originally an elementary school but was later upgraded to a higher secondary school. Initially it was primary school but later on it was upgraded to higher secondary school. Edward Mission High School was the first educational institution in this area people came here in order to gain education. There were some famous personalities who attended this school include General Yahya Khan, Dr. Khan Saib, Patrus Bukhari, Dr. Najeebullah, Rahmat Shah Sahil, Abdul Wali Khan, Ajmal Khattak, Ustad Awal Mir, Qalandar Momand and Bacha Khan as well.

When Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan formally known as Bacha Khan, intervened, the system was about to crash. Despite being a landowner, he was fully aware of what the Pakhtuns required. He was a supporter of Haji Sahib's social reform movement, but his educational strategy really pleased him. In 1910, Maulvi Abdul Aziz assisted Bacha Khan in opening a madrasa/school in Utmanzai (BREKHNA ET AL. 2021).

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the great Pashtun leader is still remembered in India for his role in the national movement. The values he stood for still remain relevant for contemporary times. Born in Peshawar, North-West Frontier Province in 1890, he is known for his non-violent opposition to British rule during the final years of Empire on the Indian sub-continent. In his early career, he wanted to uplift his fellow Pashtuns through the means of education. It was during his tireless work to organize and raise the consciousness of the Pashtuns that he came to be known as Badshah Khan, the 'King of Chiefs'. He was an ardent believer in the common destiny of the people of both India and Pakistan. Apart from this his commitment to democracy and non-violence made him a legendary South Asian to be celebrated de-spirit the borders in contemporary South Asia. In 1985, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and in 1987 he became the first non-citizen to be rewarded India's highest civilian award – the Bharat Ratna (HAQQANI, 2014).

Bacha Khan educational system setup by Bacha Khan was also criticized by the mullahs of that time they claim that the education given to the young generation in this school is totally against the Islamic way of life. They actually used Islam as a weapon against Bacha Khan in order to discourage the society to avoid the education. They consider the education of this institute as a 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" (Altaf, 1987)

A lot of conservative people came in Bacha Khan's opposition they consider him to be an agent of Western mind set calling him his efforts by the saying through the following words:

*“Sabaq Da Madrasy Wayi
Dapara da paisay wayi*

*Pa Janat Key Ba Ye Zai Na Wee
Pa Dozakh Key Ba Ghuttey Wayi”*

Which means that those people who learn into these institutions just only for the sake of the fulfillment of western ideology and were sponsoring by them financially. And there will be no place in heaven and will live for all time in hell.

Educational Role Of Bacha Khan In Pashtun Society

The political philosophy of bacha khan was pluralistic and accommodative in nature in which the doors were opened not only on his own muslim bothers, but also to non-muslim community. Besides this, he also gave due status to skilled people in the society and staunchly propagated their rights. The study shows that bacha khan always treated the poor and rich alike. It is evident from the fact that he treated the key leaders like Amin Jan of Charsadda and Wathani Chacha of Bannu without any Discrimination. The former two were landlord of their respective localities, while the latter two were commoners in their respective localities. Bacha khan was the social and political reformer in the pakhtoon community who raised the voice for gender equality, and protection of women rights. Women were not enjoyed due status in pakhtoon society, and were regarded as second-class citizen of the society. There were not allowed to participate in the political process of the state. (KHAN A. U., 2017).

Bacha Khan Efforts For Education Services

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan face the oppression of the british, the repression of the mullahs, and primitive culture of violence and vendetta prompted bacha khan to serve and uplift his fellow men and women by means of education. At 20 years of age, bacha khan opened his first school in Utmanzai. It was an instant success and he was soon invited into a larger circle of progressively minded reformers. A champion of women rights, between 1915 and 1918 he visited 500 villages in all part of the settled districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. It was in this frenzied activity that he had come to be known as Badshah (Bacha) khan (King of Chiefs). Ghaffar khan set up the Darul-uloom in 1910 Uthmanzai and Mardan to give primary education to the villagers. Having witnessed the repeated failure of revolts against British Raj, khan decided that social activism and reform would be more beneficial for the Pashtuns. So, in 1921, he set up the ‘Society for the Reformation of the Afghans’, to again rid the Pakthuns of illiteracy and social evils. He also followed the obvious nationalist cause with the main objective of the formulation of united, independent, secular India. He, therefore, established the Khudai Kidmatgar’s, ‘Servants of God’ movement in November 1929. Ghaffar khan was called the ‘Frontier Gandhi’ for his faithfulness to the principle of non-violence. (ALTAF, 2021).

Ghaffar khan recognized that the struggle for political freedom was inherently linked to social reform. He fervently believed in the empowerment of the masses through education and social awareness. Consequently, he established the Khilafat Movement, a mobilization of various communities against colonial repression. His approach, underscored by non-violent principles, aligned him c loosely with the broader objectives of the indian independence movement led by figures like Mahatma Ghandhi. Integral to his mission was the promotion of education as a vehicle for upliftment. Bacha khan founded numerous schools, with a strong emphasis on advancing literacy, particularly among women. He understood that empowering women through education would ripple through future generations, fostering a more enlightened society. His school programs sought not only to educate but also to instill a sense of pride in Pashtun culture and heritage. The educational institutions established under his guidance contributed significantly to social

reform among the Pashtun population. Bacha khan's relentless advocacy fostered a sense of community, encouraging collective action towards political and social change. Through his initiatives, Abdul Ghaffar khan advanced the broader agenda of not only liberating his people from colonial oppression but also elevating their social status through progressive education. His multifaceted approach underscores the importance of intertwining political and social reforms in pursuit of a just society. (THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BACHA KHAN: ABDUL GHAFAR KHAN, 2024)

Bacha khan's vision of education provided an alternative for a substantive social change and a society based on social justice, non-violence, gender equality and pluralism. Bacha khan was a true statesman and a great social reformer who has envisioned a society free of all biases and social injustices. Bacha khan had launched a chain of Azad schools across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a part of his Tehreek-i-Islahie Afghana (Reforming Pakthuns) in 1920s with a vision to educate masses on their social and political issues. The Anjuman Islahe Afghana had been set up for the purpose of social and educational reforms. Prof. Sohail khan said that schools set up by british Raj taught the students to ridicule people of their own land while the Azad schools devised an alternative syllabus comprising subjects of religion, science, technical education, and language of Pashto, Urdu, English, Arabic and Persian.

Prof. Khadim Hussain, Chief of Bacha khan educational Foundation Trust, in his paper said that Bacha khan considered 'Poha' (Knowledge) like a light and wanted to spread it to remove ignorance and other social evils with the support of the local community. He said that in fact Bacha khan's alternative vision of education was based on four ideas; human dignity, development of physical, emotional and cognitive abilities of students, gender equity and integrating local particulars with global view (SHINWARI, 2013).

Bacha Khan's Educational Movements (1910)

In 1910 Bacha khan in collaboration with Maulvi Abdul Aziz established an institution at Utmanzai (Charsadda). They visited the adjacent areas and tried to focus people attention on education. Bacha khan awakened the Pakhtun Senses regarding the importance of education in their hearts. The mullahs opposed the educational plan of Bacha khan. They spread propaganda that Pashto is the language of hell. The used to say that people who study in schools would be sent to hell. They had to say that studying in school is to get paisa and such people have no pace in the paradise and will be sent to hell. He was only 20 years old when he opens a mosque school in his hometown. This was a school which taught both secular and religious studies to the students. This was the starting point of his educational movement aimed at promoting literacy and social reforms. The curriculum was based on both Islamic studies as well as other languages mathematics and to know the student about the method of problem solving and critical thinking with the support of Maulvi Fazli Rabi, Maulana Abdul Aziz, Maulvi Taj Mohammad, Fazli Mahmoud Makhfi, and the well-known spiritual and religious figure of Deoband Maulana Mahmoud ul Hassan, Bacha Khan start an Islamia school in Utmanzai and another in Gadder (Mardan). After starting the school, they went to nearby villages in order to convince the people about the modern and technical education. After the passage of time, they built several other schools. As a result, when the British saw such type of change, they criticized the vision of khan through mullah claiming that his mission is to taught to the student is un-Islamic and against the tradition of Pashtun society. (BREKHNA ET AL. 2021).

Bacha Khan's Educational Movement (1919)

After launching a school in 1910 now it was little bit of crucial stage for khan and his team because both the SHORT-SIGHTED mullahs and British authorities kept an eye on Bacha Khan and the rest of his colleagues. Haji sahib Turangzai was in momand agency and bacha khan was also followed everywhere, the mosque was also threatened by the Britisher and targeted by the mullahs. On the main point bacha khan was detained in 1919 under the Rowlet Act. Abdul Ghaffar khan was one among those reformers who established Azad schools in villages to educate the young generation. The schools were running on a voluntary basis and assisted through a systematic setup. Various people supported Abdul Ghaffar khan in his mission and contributed as and when required, namely, Fazal Mahmood Makhfi, Maulvi Tajuddin, Maulana Israel, Abdul Akbar khan Kaunda Chachi (A widow and aunt of Bacha khan), Maqsood Jan khan, master Kareem and others.

Bacha Khan's Final Educational Movement

The third phase is come after the deep examination of the first two waves. Bacha Khan had a plan to educate the young generation as well as to nourish the spirit of nationalism. This time, Bacha Khan had a group of great colleagues, as the Anjuman members, Khan Muhammad Abbas, Abdul Ghaffar, Haji Khan Mahie Haji Muhammad Akram Khan Turangzai Jamadar Noor Muhammad Khan Turangzai Muhammad Zareen Khan Umarzai Akbar Abdul Akbar Khan Mohyiddin Ghulam of Tangi. Nineteen Fakhre Qaum Mian Sahib Zyarat Mian Jaffer Shah Akram Fazli of Mian Qilla Bagragi Fazli Rabi Barrister Ahmed Shah of Prang Charsadda, number and Khadim Mohammad Akbar of Prang Charsadda, number Qazi Khel Charsadda Mian Abdullah Shah The Charsadda Taj Muhammad Khan Amazu Garhi Maulana Shah Rasool.

Establishment Of Azad Islamia Schools

Khan Abdul Ghaffar khan established almost 50 educational institutions by the name of Azad Schools in different parts of the province. The first Azad school was established in Uthmanzai in 1910 and later on various schools by the same name were established in other parts of the province particularly in Charsadda, Mardan, Sawabai. The Holy Quran and Fiqha as well as hadith and Arabic language were also taught as part of the curriculum to provide religious education to the pakthuns. On April 1, 1921, khan established the azad school in Uthmanzai. Haji sahib of Turangzai was residing in Lakaro, a tribal territory in momand Agency, when khan brought a delegation of nobles there. He had recently returned from the Hijrat movement and planned to work in education in the tribal belt. Bacha khan had established a madrassa in Uthmanzai, according to the delegation, and he had been asked to work there. Instead of travelling overseas, he bought his family with him to serve the country. It was the month of March, 1921, on other hand claims that Islahul Afaghnia Anjuman existed before the first Azad school in Uthmanzai. (ASADULLAH ET AL., 2023)

To enlighten the Pashtuns and to eradicate the habits like telling lies, slandering, backbiting and using obscene language, religious, ethical and cultural education was made an integral part of the curriculum of Azaad schools, Pashtu was the medium of instruction in all schools. Vocational education, like tailoring, shoemaking, handicrafts and weaving, was compulsory in these schools. (MARWAT, 2012).

Anjuman-e-Islah-e-Afghana

After the bitter experience of Hijrat, Ghaffar khan realized that migration from India was not the solution of their problems. He was disappointed with the result Hijrat. He decided to go back to india and organize his people against the illiteracy and social evils then

prevailing in the Pashtoon society. He was convinced that the British would not allow him to resume his educational activities in the settled district. Therefore, he, accompanied by Fazal Mahmoud Makhfi, started a school at Kalona, in Dir. The local inhabitants appreciated their activities in this regard and started sending their children to his school. He consulted the like-minded pashtoon social workers and intelligentsia. They decided to resume their educational and social active ties collectively. They also decided to jointly struggle for the eradication of social evils from the Pashtun society like bolls feuds and factionalism, prevention of crimes and the use of intoxicants. Moreover, they emphasized on creating awareness among the pashtons regarding the modern education and revival of Pashto language.

To pursue some of these goals and objectives. On 1st April 1921, the Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afghana (the Society for the Reformation of Afghana) was formed with Ghaffar khan as its President and Mian Ahmad shah as Secretary. The stated objectives of the Anjuman included: promotion of unity amongst the pashtons, the eradication of social evils, prevention of lavish spending on social events, encouragement of Pashto language and literature, and the creation of 'real love' for Islam among the Pshtoons. As stated, one of the top most priorities of the Anjuman were to educate Pashtuns. On 10 April, 1921, nine days after the formation of the Anjuman, the first branch of Azad Islamia Madrassa was opened at Uthmanzai, followed by many more branches in different areas of the Peshawar valley. A careful study suggests the number of such schools as 70. Moreover, vocational skills like carpentry, weaving and tailoring were also introduced in the school. As there was no educational institute for higher studies in the province, the students were prepared for the matriculation examination of the Punjab University. Anjuman's founding members, including Mian Ahmad shah, Maulana Mohammad Israel and Mian Maaruf Shah were teaching at the Madrassa without any remuneration. On 1st December 1923, the Madrassa was affiliated with Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. The main source of funding came from the Anjuman members. Who contributed enormously to finance the educational activities of Madrassa? Ghaffar khan took the initiative by sending his children to the Madrasa followed by his elder brother Dr. Khan Sahib, Other members of the Anjuman and notables of the area who appreciated Ghaffar khans' efforts and enrolled their children in these Madaris joined them. As education was free and the Madaris were open to all communities, without any prejudice of caste or religion, soon these educational institutions get popularity and the number of students increased from 140 to 300.

It was with an aim to reform the Afghans/Pakhtuns that leader of khudai kidmatgar bacha khan founded an Anjuman-i-Islah ul Afghaniya in 1921 with the first of his Azad schools opening at his village Uthmanzai in Charsadda. A chain of about 100 Azad schools throughout the erstwhile frontier province and Fata followed. Bacha khan understood that the Pakhtuns needed to be made fully conscious of the importance of non-violence, education, women's emancipation, their local culture, history and social traditions, to unite as a proud nation that was also self-sufficient. For this he devised a curriculum that was designed to develop various skills along with creative and liberal thinking among the pakhtoon youth of the time. Therefore, the curriculum taught at these co-education schools was really a combination of mathematics, science and Islamiyat and several indigenous skills. So, it was to revive the vision of the leader that the Bacha khan Trust Educational Foundation (BKTEF), a non-partisan body, was registered in 2003 and began work in 2007. The body devised a culture-based curriculum that claims to ensure indigenous skills, techno-creativity fulfilling market requirements and futuristic vision

among the Pakthoon youth of today. Both soft and hard skills are encouraged. The soft skills include techniques for effective communication such as reading, writing, speaking, listening and note-taking while the hard skills include drawing, painting, design, print-making, calligraphy and 3-D projects along with other technical and vocational activities such as wood carving, weaving, ceramics, jewelry designing, etc. (INPAPERMAGAZINE, 2011)

Bacha Khan's Educational Philosophy

Bacha Khan had a multi-dimensioned personality and long-sightedness'. These categories can be used to describe his contribution.

- Academic accomplishment
- Literacy services
- Efforts related to politics for the independence of subcontinent
- Vision of societal reform inside the Pashtun society
- Philosophical approach (Intellectual wisdom)

Such type of categories show us the vision of Bacha Khan based on the reformation of Pathan society from different aspects. Just like, Intellectually, physically, morally, traditionally, and modernity just can defeat the threat that could harm the spirit of Pakhtun nation. He was in the favor of technical and vocational construction of Pashtun society and to provide innovative education to the young generation within the limits of Islamic way of life and rules and regulation.

Bacha Khan's romance and commitment to the philosophy of non-violence, democratic values, national rights and reawakening of the nation and downtrodden through struggle have made him not only immortal but one of the great personalities of this age. His personality had left deep imprints not only on the history of independence struggle before 1947 but also upon democratic movements in Pakistan. Perhaps Asma Jahangir had best summarized the contribution of Bacha Khan in one of her last speeches as: "A Pakistan without Pakthuns and a Pakistan without Bacha Khan would have been a narrow-minded Pakistan." (SYED, 2020)

Reformation of the society through educational growth of quality and quantity in formal mode plus working in the society directly using informal and non-formal means, both continued side by side. Education, as the only trajectory, will not yield fruit, if society was not reformed, and Anjuman analyzed. The introduction of stage Dramas, poetic competition and huge annual meetings. Were steps of direct involvement of the society towards educating it, in a non-formal way? It made a massive awakening, which latter, played a formidable role in the freedom movement. In latter days, after 1930, it was assumed that freedom of the nation from the foreign rule is more superior to education and reformation. Anjuman-i-Islahul Afghaniya and Khudai Kidmatgar movement, the two sides of a coin, one the contemplatory the other as pragmatic, culturally introduced the Pashtun nation to the rest of the globe as a civilized nation (M.Sohail, Rani Gul, Rukhshanda Mushtaq, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The epoch-making personalities like Bacha Khan can be best assessed in terms of their interaction with the times in which they lived. Epitomizing non-violence and peace as a creed, Gautama Buddha and Christ stand out in the annals of history. In the contemporary period Tolstoy left deep impressions on the thoughts of Gandhi, who embraced the ideal of non-violence and passive resistance using it as a weapon against the apartheid in South Africa. But on this list of preachers of non-violence, in the history of the region Bacha Khan emerged as the tallest. Though born and brought up in a typical Pakthuns family or rural

background, bacha khan had the vision, courage and firmness not to blindly follow the old trodden path hindering the progress and unity of pakhtun society. Therefore, from a beginning, he denounced the norm of 'badal' (revenge) fracturing the society and campaigned against it. His movement focused to purge the society of the vices, including gender discrimination, disregard for education and religious extremism. The pakhtuns are battered by colonial rulers as they considered them to the weakest link in their defense against potential invaders through Afghanistan. His thinking made him relies bacha khan that emancipation of the mind and should lay in freeing the society from the evil.

The Khudai Kidmatgar Movement, which helped in imparting political awareness to the people of pakhtun belt. Whilst alive and attached to his passion for freedom form the colonial imperialists, bacha khan did not lose sense of realism. He had the vision that the might of imperialism could not be browbeaten with an armed struggle and, therefore, popularized the idea of non-violent struggle imbuing the ideas and might of morality and ethics. Reached to every village; with person-to-person contact, he tried his best to foster unity among the fragmented groups. Bacha khan came to know that to alter the shabby form of pashton society revolution is the one think which could help them awake and known about the trends of modern world. He also knows that it will take time and with the passage of time he wants educated and learned people. He began efforts to educate Pashtuns and find people who shared his values. For this purpose, he started educational efforts and built number of schools in Pashtun society, in the name of Islam to promote education particularly in the rural areas where education was scarce. He was strongly in favor of critical thinking to encourage the student about to ask question and challenge established norms and values.

The primary purpose of his philosophy aiming to promote national duty among Pashtuns, transcending tribal and regional divisions. He also wants to develop the society for societal reform he uses education as a tool, promoting values such as equality, justice and non-violence. He wants the societal reform both spiritual as well as secular. He says that the pashton are neither follow the scared ways of Islam nor in arena to compete with the rest of the modern states. That why he worked to promote and update the society and remove those hurdles which is blocking the way of pakhtoon nation towards modernization by the name of Islam used by the mullahs. He believed in the importance of education, knowing the women empowerment and the protection of the basic fundamental rights can help in the growth of well-developed society. A 6'5" charismatic khan stood up to overcome it through community mobilization, education, and social and economic reforms. He raised over 100,000 strong non-violent army of men, women, and youth the khudai kidmatgar, or servants of God drawn from the multi-ethnic traditions of the subcontinent. These servants of God included the diverse cultures, ethnicities, nationalists and religious such Muslims, as well as Hindus, Christians, parses, soj, and Buddhists. They came together in the cause of peace, social justice, religious tolerance, freedom and human dignity for all. Bacha khan started his career as a reformer; the mullahs feared that if the people were enlightened, they would no longer get alms and gifts. He explained to them that their welfare lay in the prosperity of the people and the progress of the nation dependent on the enlightenment of the people. Islam has enjoined that it is the duty of every man and woman to get educated. Go in the quest of knowledge earn unto china. The Prophet said. "It is better that the people should take their education in the schools opened by the british rather than remaining illiterate, "Abdul Ghaffar khan told the mullahs. "When you ask the people not to go to the schools started by the British, you

should open you own schools. He tried to enlighten the mullahs without any success. "When God Almighty could not make these mullahs understand, how could I?"

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