

## **Educational Movement of Badshah Khan in NWFP<sup>1</sup>**

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Khan Abdul Gafar Khan (1890-1988) was one of the prominent Indian freedom fighters in India. Gafar Khan, the Pashtu nationalist, who initiated non violent, democratic and peaceful politics in frontier province. The canvass of his work is wide but this paper will focus on only his educational movement which he thought as the pre-requisite of his movement. It's really not important that how many schools he has started, how many pupils could complete elementary education from his schools but one should realize the multi folded challenges before him and in which scenario he began his work and supported by masses in all possible ways.

Objective:

- i. To understand 'the least educated' (31-2) Pathans before Khan Abdul Gafar Khan
- ii. Sincere efforts made by Gafar Khan and response of British Government to it
- iii. Sustainability of the educational movement
- iv. Importance of his movement in totality

Gafar Khan writes in his autobiography '*My Life and Struggle*', "The British had opened many schools in Punjab but in our country no steps had been taken to educate our children (11)". There were very few schools only in large towns but no Pathan teacher was recruited any of these schools. Pyarelal writes, "More money went in bribes and punitive expeditions for construction of every ten miles of railway or road than would have sufficed to establish schools, post offices, hospitals and dispensaries and such amenities, which the trans border people lacked and which they would gratefully accepted as a friendly gesture"(2-26), he gave account of the road and rail construction. Pyarelal wrote that during 1911 to 1924 Pathan faced total 2851 raids in this area (8-26) thousands of Pathans lost their lives in these expeditions. It reveals that government's

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<sup>1</sup>Method of citing references:

References are indicated by two numbers in bracket separated by a hyphen. The first number refers to the serial number of the book in the 'List of Reference Book' and second number refers to the page number in that book.

priority was different and education was even not tertiary priority of the Raj. It was not only neglected but forbidden task for general Pathan children.

Education was not easy task for Pathan children. Pathan children were discouraged from within and without. They were neither supported by parents, nor teachers and nor government. Each effort from authorities was for keeping Pathans uneducated and illiterate. Mullahs were damn against local dialect of Pathan children i.e. Pashtu and instead of it Urdu was chosen for instruction which was alien language for them (1-12).

Mullahs, were already bribed (26-46) for this task and various clans of the area were provided allowances for their good behavior (29-55) and both were against any kind of secular education. Mullahs were preaching that there will be 'no place in heaven for any pupil of (such) schools, they will be thrown into hell' (1-11), consequently Pathans were 'cursed with illiteracy' (27-30).

Gafar Khan has gone in the roots of the issue. Gafar Khan analyzes, why pathans didn't give importance to education and comes. He observes that due to caste system in Hindu society before arrival of Islam in the frontier area education was the privilege of Brahmins and still Pathans are adhere to this concept. Teachers are not Pathans and so they don't have any emotional attachment and social commitment. Apart from this they were generally untrained and beating children mercilessly which was resulted in high drop out of pathan children.

According to Gafar Khan British govt. has created a false image of the gentle, gallant Pathans (1-123), they are living from ages in darkness, poverty and hunger is prevailing everywhere in the land and it has resulted in inferiority complex of pathans and he wanted to promote Pathans from all these issues. He wanted to unite, to educate, to free Pathans from family feuds. He thinks that education is the only effective tool, which will help in this liberation movement.

Gafar Khan was subscribing Moulana Abul Kalam Azad's 'Al-Hilal', Moulana Zafar Ali Khan's 'Zamindar' and 'Medina' and understanding the national polity. Consequently he was interrogating himself about how to free our people from foreign slavery. He met great scholars Mohammed-ul-Hasan and Moulavi Ubeidullah Sindhi in Deoband and others in Aligarh. He sharpened his thoughts by continuous interaction with other scholars. He desired that patriotic youth should be produced from academic institutions. He expresses," Just Think! If the educated youth of the country became so money minded, if in their greed and avarice they can sink so low that they are willing to betray their country and their faith for a few copper coins, how

can ever hope to instill in their hearts the passionate love for their country and a burning desire for service” (1-31).

Gafar Khan was the keen observer of all happenings in NWFP. After completing primary education he was enrolled in a Mission School and there he was impressed with the dedication of Rev. Wigram. He admired Mr. Wigram for his extra ordinary services he rendered for Pathans who were not of his religion and country. He denied for joining a Guides Corp in British Force and even he chose to be in his motherland instead of going to London for his further education like his elder brother Khan Sahib.

He was observing that how the elites, landlords and Mullahs could be bribed, allured for money and taking British side and Pathans were became absolutely voiceless and desperate. Colonial Govt. had introduced Frontier Crimes Regulation Act 1904, which was the most brutal and savage Act. Anybody could be thrown behind bars with the help of this Act and literally hundreds of pathans were suffering from this Act. But Gafar Khan observed that Pathans were neither united nor literate and they have no sense of nationalism.

Ghani Khan writes about his father, “He (Gafar Khan) had found a new love- his people. Pathans must be united, educated, reformed and organized. He started to talk to them, to draw their attention towards the misery and darkness of their lives. He tried to make the Pathan think” (26-51. He had various non violent democratic weapons like Gandhi but he selected education as the first and most effective one for social reform of his community. At the age of 20 he assisted in opening of Dar-ul-Ilm (1-24) by Hazi of Turangzai. Hazi of Turangzai was the pioneer of education in NWFP (2-63).

Gafar Khan started his own schools for social reforms and Moulavi Taz Mohmmmed the Principal, Moulavi Fazl Mohmmmed, Moh. Rabi and Moh. Makhfi worked as in charge of the school. He took active participation in establishing national schools for Pathan children (2-12) and other places in the vicinity of his village. Except Hazi of Turangzai all teachers were learned in Dar-UI- Ulum Deoband and were ready to dedicate their time and knowledge for their brothers. They left Deoband and joined this mission and lived with less or no remuneration in these schools. But these schools were demolished by Michail O’Dwyer in 1915 (2-63).

In the same year Gafar started a new National Islamic school in Utmanzai, his native place and Moh. Abdul Aziz became the in charge of the school (1-37).

After Khilafat Movement and Nagpur Congress in 1920 Gafar Khan engaged himself in constructive program like national education. He was continuously travelling, meeting people, convincing them for education of their wards. A new wave of educational movement began by him. His meeting with villagers was objected. Commissioner Sir John Maffey tried to persuade Baheram Khan, father of Gafar Khan to close his all schools and stop all efforts and live like other Pathans were living. But even father of Gafar Khan couldn't stop him. He took education as his mission and religious duty and key to beginning of all reforms (2-25). He was sent to jail for three years from 1921-24. During this imprisonment Chief Commissioner himself sent a mediator Khan Bahadur Abdul Rahim Khan to Gafar Khan. Sir John promised to release Gafar Khan if stops touring in the province for educating people. Gafar Khan rejected the offer and completed his jail tenure (2-27). Colonial authorities were well versed with the strategies in this area whoever were rising their voice were bribed or barred.

Earlier larger numbers of students were enrolled and parents were approaching from surrounding villages and requesting for schools at their places. But British were not interested in educating Pathans. They targeted Hazi of Turangzai and closed all national schools in the province and arrested all teachers and thrown them in Habithal jail in Dera Ismail Khan. All active & passive supports were threatened and bullied in the area.

Dhir was one of the princely states in NWFP, here Gafar Khan opened a school for Pathan children and Moulavi Faz'l Mohammed Sahib Makhfi appointed as in-charge of the school and people around the village were pleased and they sent their wards in the school. But British Political Agent Mr. Cab forced Nawab to demolish the school and he did (1-53). This example discloses that educating Pathans was a herculean task. Not only British but Pathan themselves were also great hurdles in this mission.

Gafar Khan was frequently visiting to Deoband and Aligarh and trying to hunt the Pathan talent in these institutions. He convinced them for their dedication. After Khilafat Movement when all national leaders were opening National Schools in the country, Gafar Khan founded an organization named *Anjuman –Ul- Afghania* and opened an Azad High School in Utmanzai, his native place. Qazi Sahib Ataullah, Moul, Ahmed Shah, Hazi Abdul Gafar Khan, Hazi Moh. Azam Khan, Abdullah Akbar Khan, Taz Moh. Khan, Abdullah Shah, Khadim Moh, Akbar Khan (1-54) were founder teachers of this school. All were studying in Aligarh but left for educating their brothers. After the arrest of Gafar Khan immediately schools were closed by British govt. It is

interesting to understand how Britishers were treating to these teachers. Firstly they were frightened, threatened, harassed sometimes they were sent to jail (1-55). British also tried to allure educated youth to attract by better paid jobs so that these people should not be engaged in nationalist schools. But some teachers were committed and after all types of atrocities imposed by govt. they continued schools.

In 1920s Gafar Khan became the voice of Pathans. He advocated for 'Pashtu' as their national language. Till date it was spoken dialect of Pathans but no written material was produced by them. Gafar Khan thought that it was not fault of the language but purposely it was propagated that Pashtu is spoken in hell by Mullahs (1-89). Gafar Khan was a visionary person. He started 'Pakhtun' periodical and it was circulated widely among all Pashtu speaking people across the world. Shortly it was identified as the mouth piece of Pathans. Various writers got space and even pathan women could publish their grieves. Gafar Khan was of the view that nation is known by its language and we have it. When he got opportunity after 1937, when his brother became the chief minister of NWFP and one of his colleagues Qazi Ataullah Khan became the Education Minister Pashtu was announced as the state language and Pashtu made compulsory medium of instruction in all schools in the province (1-157).

How one can evaluate the contribution of Gafar Khan regarding education? I think education was most important tool for enlightenment of the society. Before and after Gafar Khan all renowned political leaders and social revolutionaries like Jyotirao Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, D. K. Karve, Rajarshi Shahu, Ramaswami Periyar, Mahatma Gandhi, G. K. Gokhale, B. G. Tilak were directly or indirectly connected with educational movement in India. Rashid Ahmed Gangohi and Moulana Nanavati had founded Darul Uloom Deoband for education of Musalmans. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan started Aligarh Educational Movement for religious and non religious education for Muslims in India. But it is interesting finding that except NWFP British govt. had encouraged educational activities, provided grants, educationists were felicitated, budgetary provision was made for educational activities in British India. Educational system was set in British India. But because of the strategic location, all time threat from Russian, French or other attacks education and political reforms both were denied here till 1937. The worst part of this government policy was teachers were inhumanly treated, threatened, harassed and kept behind bars, supporters were discouraged and school buildings were demolished. No civilized government will do such barbaric acts.

Gafar Khan was the first person who envisaged school education in NWFP. He spoke proudly Pashtu language. He published 'Pakhtun' and infused a new life in this language. Plays, poems, news and essays were written in Pashtu. Women were writing and expressing their woes through this periodical. It became the most important platform for Pathans across the globe.

His dream of separate Pakhtunistan was buried forever in 1947. He fought against his own people in Pakistan but he was continually sent to jail for this or that reason. He must be the first freedom fighter who had spent 30 years of his life behind bars. He is all time inspirer for all, who stands for the protection of universal values, for humanity and human rights.

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