

Qissa Khani Massacre and its Effects on the Role of Anjuman-i Islahul Afaghina (1921-46)

Mohammad Sohail*
Muhammad Idris**

ABSTRACT

Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina was an educational, social, intellectual and creative movement for the reclamation of the Pakhtun society in the early decades of 20th Century in the British Indian North West Frontier Province now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal territories. It was founded in 1921 and successfully worked until the incident took place in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar city, where hundreds of people were wiped out in a protest on April 23, 1930. The massacre which was not even initiated by the Anjuman, put an unprecedented loss to the pure social movement. As a result of the incident, all the members of the Anjuman were arrested throughout the province. Nevertheless, later on, through Gandhi-Ervin Pact in 1931, some of the leaders were released and institutions under the umbrella were revived. After the provincial elections in 1937, and formation of the government by the Khudai Khidmatgars (K.K.), some phenomenal personalities were invited to visit the Azad

* Lecturer in Education, Department of Education, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, (Corresponding Author).

** Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, (Co-Author).

School Utmanzai, which recognized them in the rest of the subcontinent.

Introduction

In the civilized societies, it is the duty of the state to provide education to its citizens. However, for colonies, masses were, debarred and individuals and associations upheld the task to educate their masses. In the Indian British NWFP now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, education was mostly imparted by the rustic educational movements. They include the Anjuman Himayat Islam, the Khalisa Movement, the Sanathram Movement and the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina in the early decades of 19th Century. Out of them Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina made a lot of contribution by establishing more than 106 schools round the province and tribal territory. Literacy rate was enhanced by 9 percent in one decade, after the establishment of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina in 1921. However, in April 1930, a massacre in Peshawar city known as Qissa Khwani Bazar massacre, reversed the educational and social paradigm of the Anjuman and turned it into a resistive and political one.

Qissa Khwani Massacre in 1930

The year 1930 saw many massacres in the shape of bloodshed incidents in the different areas of the province immediately after the successful annual meeting of the movement on April 20 and 21. As mentioned earlier the annual meeting was also attended by the congress committee of Peshawar. It was represented by Agha Lal Badshah, Agha Gul Khan, Karim Bakhsh Sethi, Agha Jan Mohammad and Lal Usman and Ali Gul.¹

The organizers of the annual meeting invited the Peshawar Congress Committee to speak on the occasion. In his speech Mr. Agha Lal Badshah, made a fervent appeal to the participants to join the civil disobedience movement

1 Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, File 1573, 223.

against British imperialism, which was to be commenced on April 23, 1930.²

The Congress committee in a huge procession at Shahi Bagh, Peshawar presided by Ali Gul Khan, decided to picket on liquor. The congress and Najawan Baharat Sabha members were; Agha Syed Lal Badshah, Maulana Abdul Rahim Popalzai, Maulana Hilali, Dr. Ghosh, Ghulam Rabbani Sethi, Rahim Bakhsh Ghazniwi, Sanobar Hussain, Abdul Rehman Riya, Roshan Lal and Lala Pera Khan etc. At night all the congress leaders were arrested, however Allah Bash Barqi and Ghulam Rabbani Sethi escaped. The Police arrested them on the next day from the office of the congress committee. At their arrest, a huge crowd assembled and asked the authorities to let them go without bars in their hands. The police agreed and the two leaders were followed by the crowd of almost twenty thousand. The crowd also entered along with them in the Kabali Police Station. The police in panick called the Deputy Commissioner for help. The DC, without analyzing the situation asked the army for help. In the meanwhile, the army lorry of armored core reached. The lorry rushed into the Kabali gate crushed ten to twelve people, seven were killed on the spot and the remaining injured. The charged crowd set ablaze the armored car. It resulted in an indiscriminate firing on the people, killing round about 250 and injured more than 700.³

After April 23 massacre of the Qissa Khwani Bazar Peshawar, the government decided to arrest all the prominent Khudai Khidmatgars in the province. Bacha Khan himself was arrested near the Nahaqi Police Station followed by thousands of them in the province.

Utmanzai, Prang and Charsadda were seized by the army and Khudai Khidmatgars were brutally beaten and arrested after Qissa Khwani massacre. The two sons of

2 D.O.A.L, File 1573,222.

3 Waqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim politics in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 151.

Sardar Ganga Singh were killed by the army near the Municipal Committee building on GT road on May 31, 1930. The masses made a procession in the protest lead by Hakim Abdul Jalil Nadvi in the city area. The furious British Army fired on the procession near the Ghantagar Bazar and eleven people were martyred in the incident. Another massacre happened in the area of Mardan in Takkar, in which many Khudi Khidmatgars were martyred. It was due to the killing of the assistant commissioner Mardan Mr. Merfy, who entered in a crowd for beating them. The killings were continued in the Hathi Khel Bannue, where a procession was targeted.⁴

Khadim Mohammad Akbar was arrested and so brutally beaten in the hot season of June in the Dera Ismail Khan jail. He remained unconscious in the jail for many days, compelling the government to release him. But he lost his senses afterwards. This was a huge loss to the Anjuman schools. All these tragedies happened from April to August 1930.⁵

Refusal of the Muslim League and Allying with the Congress

Due to anti-imperialism policy of the KK, Muslim League turned down its request for help.⁶ On the eve of Sahibzada Adul Qayum Khan and other leaders in the movement, the Khudai Khidmatgar leadership asked the Congress for help.⁷ The successful alliance between Congress and Khudai Khidmatgar resulted in affirmative by an agreement of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. All the political convicts were released from the jails, including prominent Khudai Khidmatgars on March 5, 1931. Bacha Khan along with Agha Lal Badshah, Pir Bakhsh Khan and Abdul Rasheed were received by the

4 Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My life and Struggle* (Kabul: Ministry of Information, 1983), 193.

5 AltafUllah Khan, *Khadim Mohammad Akbar- Life and struggle* (Peshawar: University of Peshawar, Journalism Department, 1987), 54.

6 Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*: 129.

7 Abdul Khaliq Khaliq, *Za aw Zama Zamana* (Peshawar: Idarae Ishaghat Sarhad, 1961), 196.

historical crowd in the Peshawar city. They offered prayers at the memorandum of Martyrs in Qissa Khwani and Bazari Kalan⁸.

The year 1930 in general and the Qissa Khwani massacre in particular caused huge loss to the Anjuman and Azad schools.⁹ It was the time when all the energies of the movement were diverted towards freedom rather than the reformation of the society.¹⁰ However, the approach was modified and formal education replaced the informal mode in the coming years through Khudai Khidmatgar Movement.

The next annual meeting of the Azad School Utmanzai was held on April 15, 1931. It was this particular meeting when the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina was merged into the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement.

The rift between Khudai Khidmatgar Movement and provincial Congress Committee in 1931, and subsequent decision of alliance or merge, also deactivated the Educational activities of the movement. As a result, many Co pioneers detached themselves from the movement, including Abdul Akbar Khan, Akbar, Barrister Ahmed Shah and Khadim Mohammad Akbar, the former isolated himself from all kinds of activities other than literary which continued till his death, the latter migrated to the Swat state after illness.¹¹ The school affairs were handled by the Amir Mumtaz Khan, Master Karim, Amir Nawaz Khan Jalya, Obaidullah Khan and Khan Abdul Wali Khan, afterwards.

Prominent Students of the Azad School Utmanzai

The Azad School Utmanzai had the history of producing thousands of students who later gained the fame of celebrities in different fields of life. In the initial days, it

8 Khaliq, *Za aw zama Zamana*, 201.

9 Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, *Safarnama Roosi Turkistan aw Afghanistan* (Peshawar: University Book Agency), 116.

10 Abdul Rauf, "Socio Educational Reform Movements in N.W.F.P: A Case Study of Anjum-i-islamul Afaghina," XXVII, no 2 (2006):29.

11 Dost Mohammad Khan, Personal interview by corresponding author, February 12, 2012.

enriched the countless panorama in the shape of Abdul Ghani Khan and Abdul Wali Khan. The former was the philosopher, poet, architect, sculpturist, artist, engineer and a historian while the latter was a statesman, writer, historian and a researcher of sublime recognition.

The second badge had a bright student named Ahmed, a freedom fighter, choreographer and a student leader. His fellows included Abdul Karim alias Master Karim, a writer, critic, literary person, and an educationist.

The list include the great persons like Mian Mohammad Numan, Abdul Malik, Abdul Khaliq, Mohammad Naqeeb Khan, Ameer Mohammad, Suhbat Khan, Ghulam Sarwar, Abdul Sattar, Dost Mohammad Khan, Suhbat Khan, Pir Mohammad Khan of utmanzai, Mullah Shahzada of Turangzai, Fazal Mohammad, Ashrafuddin and Qamar of Charsadda, Faqeer Mohammad of Rajjar, Fazli Rahim of Agra, Gul Baz , Aziz Mohmmad, Siraj, Gul Mohammad of Babara, Abidullah, Akbar Khan, Hidayatullah Khan of Qazi Khel, Amanullah and Bala of Bannu.

Professor Dr. Mohammad Jehanzeb Niaz was also the student of the Azad School Utmanzai. According to Dost Mohammad Khan, Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of the India studied in the Azad School and was migrated to the DB school in Utmanzai in 1936. The application in the school record shows that he remained here in the school.



Figure-3.4: An old school-time application of Indian Ex-Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in his own hand writing (1935).

18-12-1938	315	
9-9-1938	316	
16-4-1938	317	
5/6/1935	318 65	1/45
10-12-1934	319 679	
1-12-1937	320	
		2015/03/28

Figure-3.5: The admission withdrawal register, where the entry of Manmohan Singh was entertained.

Exceptional Student of Azad High School Utmanzai

The village Rajjar, adjacent to Utmanzai, attracted many students towards Azad School Utmanzai. Although, there was an Azad school in Rajjar, but it could not receive the due fame, as the one in Utmanzai was nearer and more prominent in many ways. Dr. Jehanzeb Niaz, Mohammad Ayub and many more fellows were admitted in the Azad School Utmanzai. Among them, a student named Allama Faqir Mohammad Abbas Khan (1909-2015), was also admitted in this sublime institution. He was the son of Malik Bahadar Khan of Mohammadzai tribe, Rajjar. He studied up to class 8th in the Azad School Utmanzai. Later, he did his matriculation from DB School Charsadda. He did his F.A, B.A and three masters in Pashtu, Arabic and Persian as a private candidate. He was appointed as clerk, and at the same time started writing books, articles, translations, compilations and explanations on the religion, social, literary and logical themes.¹²

12 Daily Aaj Peshawar, Editorial Section, September 8, 2002, G1.

He started writing articles in monthly magazine 'Pakhtoon' in 1928. He wrote as many as five thousand and five books till 2014. He also have the honor to write an encyclopedia of thirty volumes, each of 500 pages. His name was also sent to Genies Book of World Recordsd by a friend of Dr. Zahoor Awan.¹³ He was awarded pride of performance by the then President Ziaul Haq in 1984. In this competition, his competitors were prominent writers Amir Hamza Khan Shinwari, Mian Syed Rasool Rasa and Samandar Khan Samandar. He translated many Islamic books from Persian, Arabic to Urdu and Pashtu. A mission of Americans offered him one lac dollars for the translation of *Angele* into Pashtu, but he declined. According to Shamsuddin Mufliis Durrani,¹⁴ Allama Faqir Mohammad Abbas had given all the credit of his intellectual development to the Azad School Utmanzai and the teachers of the same institution, which was purified latter by Maulana Abdul Qadir - former Director of the Pashtu Academy, university of the Peshawar. He died on May 8, 2015.

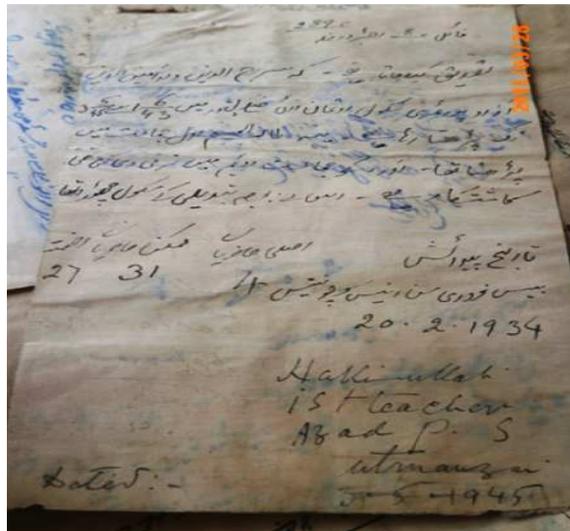


Figure-3.6: A glimpse of an application of a teacher, Hakimullah of Azad High school, Utmanzai.

13 Daily Aaj Peshawar.

14 Monthly *Pakhtun*, July, 2015, G1.

Problems and Issues in the Azad School and Anjuman

The schools and the Anjuman faced hardships right from the beginning. These barriers were either financial and administrative or often hard tackling by the government. The social aspect had remained a nuisance, too.

The study of the record from 1921 to 1931, disclose that financial position remained strong, as compared to the next decade. The Anjuman members made regular subscriptions. Apart, Bacha Khan had purchased a land of worth Rs. 7000, the annual income of which solved financial constraints. However, the period observed disfavor of the government. The regular surveillance of the school activities, teachers and students, detached many of them from the Anjuman and school. According to Zyarati Kaka,¹⁵ a renowned general of the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, the viceroy in a meeting told to the Governor, that Azad School is not an educational institution. He termed it a weapon ready for destruction and directed towards London. Similarly, the British rulers spread out many rumors against the school.

Abdul Majeed¹⁶ narrated such a story about rumors. One such example was the presence of a big sesame tree on the premises of the school. A rumor was spread out that there were some supernatural happenings in the tree. This made the students harassed. Maulana Mohammad Israel, a religious teacher in the school with the consultation of other members of the Anjuman, decided to cut the tree. It made a positive effect on the students.

The other unavoidable problem was the patronage of the Mullah, who opposed the modern education terming it sin. This propaganda was calmly tackled by the Anjuman, through making close relations with the renowned learned religious scholars of the time. According to Abdul Wali

15 Jehanzeb Niaz, Personal interview by the corresponding author, Febraury 10, 2012. Zyarati Kaka was a renowned Khudai Khidmatgar general of village Utmanzai. An interview was taken by his son Jehanzeb, who is working in Pakistan Television, Peshawar Centre.

16 Abdul Majeed, personal interview by the corresponding author, Febraury 16, 2012.

Khan¹⁷ these Mullah's were being paid by the British rulers to make this nation illiterate, so that an uneducated nation be used for the interest of the imperialism.

The financial problems increased in 1932. The reasons were the withdrawal of the Anjuman members, both from the membership as well as subscriptions. Mohammad Abbas Khan, Abdul Akbar Khan and Mian Ahmed Shah were such examples. Even, some of them made another jirga named Afghan Jirga, and they opposed the Anjuman activities in the newspapers and pamphlets. This was the repercussion of their grievances over the merging of Khudai Khidmatgar Movement into the Congress.

Khadim Mohammad Akbar reacted to it in a famous verse:

Bacha Imam za muqtadee wum

Gandhi imam shu zaka zan la nyat tarama

Ta che da zamzam oba kre gade da ganga sara

Starge be bya sanga lagawe da Mustafa sara

(Bacha Khan was the leader and I was the follower

Now Gandhi is leading that's why I am leaving

You mixed the water of the holy Zaz Zaz to the river Ganga

How will you face the Prophet in the life hereafter).¹⁸

Another reason of the lack of funds aroused when Sultan Mohammad Khan, a relative of Bacha Khan took possession of the land that was associated with the regular income of the school. The land was purchased by Bacha Khan in 1923. He was advised so many times by the Anjuman members, but to no avail.¹⁹

The sudden spread and regular meetings of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the entire region took the interest diverted

17 Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan Aw Khudai Khidmatgaree*[Pashto: Bacha Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement] (Peshawar: Bacha Khan Trust Resaerch Centre, 1995), 25.

27 Sultan-i-Room, *Essays on History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 395.

19 Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Bundle, 85 B, File 1775, 43.

towards their parades, mass meetings and agitational purposes. The subscriptions were utilized in those roles and thus the school activities took a breather with less priority.

Later on, the formation of Congress ministry in the province in 1938, an annual grant in aid was sanctioned to the school on October 15, 1938 to cope with the financial restraints.²⁰ In the same period the Head of the Jamia Millia Dehli, Mr Zakir Hussain, on the request of the Chief Minister Dr. Khan Sahib, invited the teachers of the school for a teacher training. A group of the teachers received training both from Wardha College and Jamia Millia.²¹

Conclusion

The Anjuman-i Islahul Afaghina was a comprehensive movement which served and struggled not only for the educational uplift of the society, but for the social, moral, intellectual, anthropological, literal, cultural and political awareness of the Pakhtun nation. The Pakhtun society was full of social evils, which was keenly observed by strong senses, a prescription was suggested, through the formation of the Anjuman-i Islahul Afaghina. The Azad High School Utmanzai, as a centralized institution worked as a sublime educational light house for the whole province. The Anjuman strived for the integration, reformation, refinement and civilization of the society through its systematic educational movement.

The sole way of success to a desired destination was declared as collective efforts, for which the Anjuman was launched. The initial success was the indulgence of the Landlords of the area of Hashtnagar, whose psyche of feudalism, if contemplated, was very intricate.

Winning the sympathies and contribution of the Islamic scholars of the time, was another step forward towards gaining the trust, particularly at the gross root level. The

20 Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Bundle 85-B, File 14, 41.

21 Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Bundle 85, File 776, 34.

fulfillment of organizational excellence, administrative transparency and close supervision were the other characteristics of the movement of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina. Above all, it was the charismatic leadership, which, contrary to the other paradigms, focused on 'training' as one of the innovative style of leadership.

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, the 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 later played a formidable role in the freedom movement. Later, after 1930, it was assumed that freedom of the nation from the foreign rule, is more superior to education and reformation. The Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina and the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, the two sides of a coin to culturally introduce the Pakhtuns to the rest of the globe as a civilized nation.