

Book Review

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Syed Wiqar Ali Shah (Kakakhel), *Pir Manki Sharif Sayed Aminu'l Hasanat Aur Unki Siasi Jidd-o-Juhd*, (Urdu) National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, 1990, 184, Rs.70.00 (paperback)

The North West Frontier Province has a unique place in the history of the freedom movement. Tempered by incessant wars against the Sikhs during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Pakhtuns continued their struggle against the British successors throughout the later half of the same century. The wars of Totaki (1850) and Bahadur Khel (1852) bear ample testimony to the tough time given to the Imperial power. Almost sixty severe skirmishers occurred between the British army and the Pakhtun tribes during 1849-1901. It was in such a precarious setting that Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1899-1905) proposed the separation of Pakhtun region from the province of the Punjab. The formation of the new province of North-West Frontier was announced on 9 November 1901 but it formally came into existence on 12 April 1902. It is, however, an unfortunate episode of modern history that owing to its 'exceptional' situation the new province did not receive any benefit from the Reforms Acts of 1909 and 1919. Laws like the Frontier Crimes Regulation and the Ghazi Act were promulgated in the province which militated against all norms of human decency and basic human rights.

Oppressive rules invariably cause political awakening of the people. The twentieth century marked the inculcation of political awareness in the Province. Its first formal manifestation came in 1912 in the formation of

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the Muslim League at Peshawar. Only two years later human history experienced the pangs of The First World War (1914-1919). The Muslims of India contributed to the War effort in men, money and materials. They did so on the repeated assurances of the British that Turkey would be dealt with favourably, in the event of British success in the War and that the Muslim Holy Places would be immune from attack. When these promises were not fulfilled after the war and Turkey's end became a foregone conclusion, the Muslims of India actively launched movements like the *Khilafat* and *Hijrat* and actively participated in the 'non-cooperation movement' also. The people of the North West Frontier Province, who shared the grief and anger of other provinces, participated in the movement enthusiastically and made considerable sacrifices. There was not a single home in the Frontier which was not affected by the struggle. The official records of the British and Indian governments are full of the stories of their sufferings.

The year 1929 saw the launching of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, which was to determine the course of Frontier politics during the remaining part of the first half of the century. The movement derived inspiration from the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and passive resistance. Though amongst the warlike people of the NWFP it appeared to be a paradoxical but amazingly it proved very effective. Abdul Ghaffar Khan also played one of the most crucial role in the Frontier politics even after independence. In April 1932, the Province became a Governor's Province and belatedly Reforms were introduced in the region. Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India (1931-1936), personally visited Peshawar and announced the appointment of Sir Ralph Griffith as a Governor. He also suspended the operation of the 'Frontier Crimes Regulations' for one year. Later elections were held under the Government of India Act 1935 in which the Congress emerged as the single largest party. But Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan (1886-1937) was able to form government with the support of other minority groups. However, his ministry did not last for long and only after about five months of assuming the office of the premier, he was voted out of office by the Congress. He was succeeded by Dr Khan Sahib (1883-1958), the brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. This was a severe set-back to the Muslim League and when the Quaid-i Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) visited the Province on October 1936, he failed to make his mark. It was not until after the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 that the Muslim League could make a come-back and in 1943 it formed a coalition government under Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. This had been made possible

by the Congress decision to resign ministries as a protest against India's involvement in the World War II. But the Muslim League government was soon dislodged by the Congress as it was not strong enough and Dr Khan Sahib once again formed government in the Province.

Such were the circumstances when Muhammad Aminu'l-Hasanat, the Pir of Manki Sharif emerged on the political scene of the Province. He was to play vital role in the Pakistan movement. The Pir Sahib was a well known religious personage of NWFP. He was born in 1922 at Manki Sharif (Nowshera). His father, Abdul Rauf, was a learned man who gave him sound religious education. Aminu'l-Hasanat succeeded his father as a Pir at the age of 12 years. He took an active part in organizing the anti-Nehru demonstrations during the latter's visit to the Frontier in October 1946. After the birth of Pakistan he could not pull along with Abdul Qayyum Khan and founded the Awami League. He retired from active politics in 1955 and died as a result of a road accident in 1960.

The book under review *Pir Sahib Manki Sharif Sayed Aminu'l-Hasanat Aur Aunki Siasi Jidd-o Jahd* authored by Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah treats the life and work of the Pir of Manki Sharif in historical perspective. Starting from the family background of the Pir, the author gives a brief description of the spiritual leanings of the family. The information is based entirely on the family sources and none of the statements given have been critically analysed through the accepted methods of historical investigation. Most of it comes from two sources: Abdul Halim Asar Afgnai's *Tazkira-i-Sufia-i-Sarhad*. One can argue that since family background does not form a major theme of the book it could have been dealt with briefly. This argument, however, does not hold good as information not directly related to the subject abounds in the book (see, for example, 36-41).

The author then takes up the early years of the Pir Sahib's involvement in the political activity. Here again while starting from the formation of the Jami'at al-Asifa, the author digresses to discuss the political history of India, a discussion which is rather unnecessary. The Jami'at al-Asifa was founded specifically to support the Muslim League's policy and programme, apart, of course, from working for the introduction of Islamic element in politics. The Jami'at al-Asifa was formed on 14 October 1945 and the election had not been held till that time. Their support to the Muslim League was, however, conditional to League's commitment to the introduction of the Shari'at. It is important to note that the Pir Sahib, who was the president of Jami'at al-Asifa, remained in

contact with Quaid-i Azam throughout and kept him informed of the Jami'at al-Asifa's programme. The Quaid-i Azam, while appreciating the efforts of the Jami'at, was careful not to commit himself on the future constitution of Pakistan. The Jami'at al-Asifa had demanded a clear statement of policy on the future of Islam in Pakistan. It had insisted that the policies of the government of Pakistan must be based on Shari'at. and that the government be run in accordance with the precepts (22). The Quaid's assurance came in following words:

When the preliminary question of Pakistan is settled, it will not be the Muslim League that will frame the constitution of Pakistan in which 75% will be Musalmans and therefore you will be a Muslim Government and it will be for the people of Pakistan to frame the constitution under which the Pakistan Government will come into being and function. Therefore there need be no apprehension that the Constitution making body which will be composed of overwhelming majority of Muslims can ever establish any constitution for Pakistan other than the one based on Islamic ideals, nor can the future Government of Pakistan act contrary to Islamic ideals and principles.¹

The Pir Sahib, in spite of the polite rebuff, announced his all-out support to the Muslim League in the 1945-46 elections. He declared that it was binding on every Muslim to support the Muslim League and to render sacrifice for the creation of Pakistan. He based his proclamation on the verses of the Holy Qur'an which maintain that it is lawful to support Muslims but unlawful to support non-Muslims. It is at this stage that we see the Pir of Manki Sharif devoting himself whole-heartedly to the cause of Pakistan. His association with the Muslim League proved of great advantage as it was not only his personal appeal that reinforced the religious factor in the struggle for Pakistan. The Pir of Manki Sharif commanded respect among most sections of the 'ulama, *pirs* and *sajjadah nashins* of the Province and it greatly helped the Muslim League in winning popularity in the region. The Pir Sahib's own followers numbered almost 200,000 which entitled him to take credit for 'injecting into the Muslim League a new religious and political fervour.²

Encouraged by this new factor in the NWFP politics, Quaid-i Azam decided to visit the Province in November 1945. This time he was

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1. "Quaid-i Azam to Pir of Manki Sharif", (18 November, 1945), Appendix IV, 144.
 2. Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change*, (USA: 1980), 23.

received by the pro-League Pakhtuns quite enthusiastically. As a gesture of good-will the Quaid visited Manki 'Shaif where he was presented an address of welcome by Mian Abdul Karim of Ziarat Kaka Sahib. Here again he was asked categorically to state as to what would be the spirit of the Pakistan constitution. The Quaid's reply was straightforward: he felt sorry for being asked such a question at all and he maintained that there should have been no doubt whatsoever in this connection. He stated that the Muslims have one God, one Prophet and one Qur'an and that the Qur'an is the law which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave to the Muslims thirteen hundred years ago. The Qur'an is our law (32).³ The Pir Sahib asked the Quaid to reiterate his commitment in writing to which he obliged (32).⁴

Then followed the general elections in which the Muslim League was to establish its claim to be the only political party representing the Muslims of India. But in the Frontier Province the situation was far from being satisfactory for it. The Congress was more popular than the Muslim League. The League leadership had tried to win popularity during the period when the Congress was out of power and Aurangzeb Khan was the premier (May 1943-March 1945). But their performance was unsatisfactory and lost even that little support which it had attracted over the years. In his letter to the Quaid-i Azam, the Pir of Manki Sharif drew out accurate picture of the situation. He informed his leader that to contest election against a well-organised political party like the congress would be very difficult for a disorganised Muslim League without substantial patronage of the central high command and the Quaid-i Azam himself (34). The Quaid's reply was clear:

Our present machinery is set up and is the result of only a few years of our efforts and it may not be as efficient and as satisfactory as some of us may desire. But the people, if they have the will and the spirit of unity and comradeship and feel confident then they can make wonderful success of the present machinery. I therefore, appeal to you and every Muslim to do your bit, make your contribution whole-heartedly and I am confident that victory is in the hollow of our hands in the North West Frontier Province.⁵

3. The author has quoted Aziz Javed, *Quaid-i Azam Aur Subah Sarhad*, (Idarah-i Tehqiq-o-tasnif, 1978), 145-6 for the statement of the Quaid-i Azam.

4. Author's interview with Midrarullah Midrar on (13 March, 1987).

5. Quaid-i Azam to Pir of Manki Sharif, (18 Novmeber, 1945), Appendix IV, 147.

The results of the elections in the NWFP, however, proved a different story. The Muslim League captured only 17 seats out of a total number of 50 seats in the provincial legislature. The Congress got 30 seats. Two seats went to the Jami'iyat 'Ulama' while the election on one seat was won by a pro-Congress Sikh candidate. The author while agreeing with Erland Jansson,⁶ is of the opinion that the Muslim League candidate did not work in a collective and united manner during the elections. Every candidate fought the election on his own, neither receiving nor giving any help from/to other candidates of the party or the party organisation. He is of the view that if Pir Sahib's timely warnings had been adhered to in time, the defeat could have been avoided or at least its severity lessened. He also does not ignore the charisma of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) and the popularity of his *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement which caused the Muslim League defeat (36). Abdul Ghaffar Khan had substantial following in the Province. His influence can be judged from an announcement of the Muslim League leaders, under the Pir of Manki Sharif, made on 16 January 1946, in which they had agreed to serve under him if he joined the Muslim League.⁷ It is strange that this important episode does not find a mention in a book which has been devoted to the life and work of the Pir Sahib and despite the fact that the author has referred to it in an earlier work by him.⁸

Among other cause of the Frontier Muslim League's poor performance in the 1946 elections one may mention the Congress slogan of economic reform which attracted the common man more than the Muslim League candidates who came from the landed aristocracy. This is evident from the so called formula that was adopted while the tickets were awarded. The formula was said to be that:

Where Nawabs were available, K. Bs were rejected. Where K.Bs were to be found K.S. were ignored, where K.S. were the applicants, Khans had no chance and in the presence of Khans commoners were of course a dirty lot.⁹

In August 1946, the Muslim League adopted 'Direct Action' against the attitude of the British Government as with regard to the Cabinet

6. Erland Jansson, *India, Pakhtunistan*, (Stockholm: 1981), 148.

7. Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Muslim League in NWFP*, (Karachi: Royal Book, 1992), 99.

8. The book was published in 1992 but it had existed in the form of manuscript of the author's thesis since 1986.

9. Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Muslim League in NWFP*, 99.

Mission Plan (16 May 1946). The Pir Sahib of Manki Sharif was elected as the president of the Action Committee formed by the NWFP Muslim League. The Pir of Manki Sharif took active part in the protest conferences and demonstrations against Muslim massacres in Bihar by the Hindus following the 'Direct Action'. The author has dealt with this part of Pir Sahib's life reasonably well. He maintains that it was due to the Pir Sahib's inspiring personality that a large number of Ahrars and a few Congressites joined the Muslim League. The visit of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1965) to the NWFP in October 1946 has also been discussed in detail. Nehru's visit proved to be a thorough failure which helped the Muslim League to organise and launch big movements for the cause of Pakistan. The author has ably highlighted this episode.

Despite the fact that the Congress had emerged victorious in the Frontier in 1946 elections, the tide soon turned in favour of the Muslim League. Apart from these factors enumerated above, there occurred an event in early January 1947, which the Muslim League was so anxiously waiting for (65). It so happened that a widowed Sikh woman, Basanti, 'embraced' Islam and married a Muslim named Muhammad Zaman. The Sikhs protested and termed it as forceful conversion. To find the truth she was shifted to the residence of premier Dr Khan Sahib, where she claimed that she had been converted against her will and that she wanted to go back to her family in Hazara. The Provincial Muslim League blamed Dr Khan Sahib for the shift in Basanti's stand and organised protest meetings against him. Fearing that the situation might worsen the government banned public meetings. The Muslim League retaliated by launching on 20 February 1947 a Civil Disobedience Movement. As a result Abdul Qayyum Khan (1901-1981) and other Muslim League leaders were arrested for the violation of Section 144. The Pir of Manki Sharif, who had been appointed the president of the 'War Committee' formed by the Provincial Muslim League, was spared the arrest since the government feared that his political and religious influence was such that it might cause more trouble than defusing it. The Civil Disobedience Movement gained momentum with every passing day. The Pir of Manki Sharif took advantage of the situation and worked untiringly for the success of the movement with its twin objectives: to dislodge the Khan Sahib ministry and to educate public opinion regarding the creation of Pakistan. The first signal of their success came when the Muslim League emerged victorious in the Kamalzai bye-elections.

Meanwhile on 20 February 1947, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, in his address to Parliament declared that 'His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948.'¹⁰ This statement and the successful culmination of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Punjab which brought about on 2 March 1947 the downfall of the coalition Ministry of Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana (1900-1975),¹¹ gave an impetus to the Civil Disobedience Movement in NWFP. Public meetings and protest demonstrations became a daily feature of activity in the Province. 'So effective and sustained was the defiance of government authority, spurring League volunteers to court arrest', writes Z.H. Zaidi in his introduction part ii of his *Jinnah Papers*, 'that jails across the province had to be emptied of a large number of prisoners to accommodate the volunteers. Even the Governor was on "tenterhooks" wondering how to cope with the burgeoning jail population'.¹² The movement was called off only when Lord Mountbatten, (1900-1996) the new Viceroy announced the June, 3 plan. The plan while maintaining that the 'position of the North West Frontier Province is exceptional', envisaged a referendum to 'be made to the electors of the present Legislative Assembly in the North-West Frontier Province' to choose between joining the Pakistan dominion or the Indian dominion. The Frontier Congress and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* demanded that there should have been a third option, that of an independent Pakhtunistan. But it was not agreed to. The Pir Sahib of Manki Sharif took active part in the preparations for the referendum. His efforts bore fruit when on 20 July 1947 the referendum result officially announced. As many as 2,89,244 votes were polled in favour of Pakistan, while only 2,874 votes were cast for the Indian dominion. The Congress and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* had boycotted the referendum. It was on the basis of this referendum that NWFP became part of Pakistan when it came into being on 14 August 1947.

The author has also discussed at length the Pir of Manki Sharif's role in the struggle for the freedom of Kashmir and in the politics of the

10. Z.H. Zaidi, (ed), *Jinnah Papers: Prelude to Pakistan*, (20 February, 1947, 2 June, 1947), Vol. I, Part I, (Islamabad: 1993), 2.

11. The date given by the author (21 March, 1947) is not correct, which certainly is a typing mistake.

12. Zaidi, *Jinnah Paper*, 326.

NWFP generally. The Pir Sahib had very serious reservations regarding the system of government in the new state. Disillusioned by the activities of the Muslim League under the Chief Minister Abdul Qayyum Khan, Pir Sahib formed his own party, the Awami Muslim League, which contested the elections of March 1951. But it could get only 4 seats in the Provincial Assembly. Soon he left politics and devoted his energies to religious activities and the preaching of Islamic ideals. Aminul Hasanat the Pir of Manki Sharif died on 28 January 1960.

Conclusion

For a trilingual writer like Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah there lies a great advantage of having a ready access to source material in different languages. He has tried his pen in three languages (English, Pashto, Urdu), and has succeeded in capturing the attention of his readers in all of them. It is said that 'the proof of highest culture is to say the greatest matters in the simplest way'. Wiqar Ali Shah has proved himself to be a man of 'highest culture' by adopting a lucid, simple and coherent style in this book. There are, however, some limitations to all authors and Wiqar Ali Shah is no exception. Despite his stylistic merits, the book fails to fascinate a specialist because of digression and too much pre-occupation with the background information and unnecessary details. But for the general these digressions and details are very useful in providing information about the context of important events. Moreover, the author has ignored some of the very important aspects of Pir Sahib's life. For example he does not satisfy the reader's curiosity about his religious philosophy, the mystical order (silsila) to which he belonged and his approach towards different sects and religious groups. But as its title suggests that it is only a political biography, the omission is not a serious one. The author despite his sincere efforts does not succeed to maintain the required degree of objectivity in his study of the Pir Sahib. But with all its shortcomings the book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Pakistan movement. The enormous amount of original sources that the author has been able to discover during the study, especially in the Pir Sahib's Personal Collections, will go a long way in facilitating the work of the future historians on the politics of NWFP in general and the Pir Sahib's life in particular. He has also made full use of the 'Special Branch Files' which are now available in the NWFP Archives. The account, in general is sketchy and a complete picture of Pir Sahib's multi-faceted personality fails to emerge and one feels that there is a need for a comprehensive biography of the Pir of Manki Shairf.