

## ***Socio-Educational Reform Movements in N.W.F.P. - A Case Study of Anjuman-i- Islahul Afaghina***

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The suppression of the 1857 uprising finally established the superiority of the British army in North India. Consequently, after a brief period of despondency, the Muslim leadership started efforts to reform Muslim community by establishing various educational institutions like M.A.O. College, Aligarh, Dar al-'Ulum, Deoband, Nadwatul 'Ulama, Azamgarh, Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore and Madrasatul Islah U.P. The Muslims of North Western India, also did not lag behind their brethren in their efforts for Islamic revivalism and reformation of the Muslim community. The following pages provide a resume of these efforts in general followed by a detailed history and working of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina. The paper also analyzes its contribution in the reawakening of the Pakhtuns and its failure to survive as a centre of higher education for the Muslims of the N.W.F.P. It is also one of the objectives of this paper to draw the attention of the non-Pakhtun academics and writers to the political dynamics of the pre- and post-independence N.W.F.P. in a proper perspective — avoiding any extreme view about the role of certain political parties/individuals in the Muslim struggle for independence which culminated in the creation of Pakistan.

Since the arrival of the British in N.W.F.P. in 1849, the people of the N.W.F.P. had been engaged in efforts to expel the British. They adopted a policy of armed resistance particularly in the tribal areas and in some cases succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the British in the region. That was why the British rule did not extend into this region as smoothly as compared to other parts of India. Terrain of the region,

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warlike temperament and religiosity of the people all contributed to the resistance of the Pakhtuns to any alien rule in the area. They looked upon the arrival and rule of the British as a curse, the removal of which was considered a sacred duty for every individual, which was epitomized in religious parlance as *jihad*. The movement revolved around personalities such as Hadda Mulla, Mulla Pawinda, Sartur Faqir, Babarai Mulla, Faqir Alingar, Sandaki Mulla, and the remnants of the Mujahidin movement stationed at Asmast, Charamarkand, Makin, Tirah and Tahkot. The activities and structure of this group was mainly confined to the tribal areas of the province along the border of Afghanistan.

At the end of the nineteenth century, an indigenous method of peaceful persuasion and educating the younger generation was also adopted along with the armed struggle. This indigenous socio-educational movement was headed by Hajji Sahib Turangzai<sup>1</sup> who organized his disciples for the social and educational uplift of the Pakhtuns. On the other hand, he adopted new social and political methods to mobilize the people against the British. To achieve these objectives, he started a movement to weed out the unhealthy and un-Islamic local customs and traditions from the Muslim society. As education was considered to be the most important tool for the reformation of society, Turangzai attached utmost importance to the opening of schools in the Peshawar valley at the end of the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century. Maulavi Taj Muhammad,<sup>2</sup> Maulavi Fazl-i-Mahmud Makhfi,<sup>3</sup> Maulavi ‘Abdul ‘Aziz,<sup>4</sup> and Abdul

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1 His original name was Fazl-i-Wahid. He is considered to be the first great Pakhtun freedom fighter who offered the most determined and implacable opposition to the British in the North West Frontier. He engaged the British for the first time in 1915 at Rustam. The rest of the encounters took place in Mohmand area till he died on December 14, 1937. He was buried in Ghaziahad in Mohmand Agency.

2 Son of Mir Ahmad Khan, he was born at Mardan in 1870. He graduated from Lahore. In 1904, he returned and joined the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam High School, Peshawar, as a teacher. He had contacts with the ulema headed by Maulana Mahmudul Hasan who start struggle against the British. When Abul Kalam Azad launched his Hizbullah, he became one of its active members. When Turangzai started his movement of establishing independent schools he left his job and established the first independent school in Mardan. (Abu Salman Shahjahanpuri, ed., *Tahrik-i-Nazm-i-Jam‘at Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Lahore: Nazir Publishers, 1977, p.266). Maulavi Taj Muhammad then migrated to Mohmand where he continued his activities of preaching and religious teaching. (Siddiqullah Rikhtin, *Da Muhtamim Jaund*, Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1988), pp.1-10.

3 Born in 1884 at Charsaddah, he passed his matriculation examination from Islamia High School, Peshawar. He moved to Agra for religious education and then became a disciple of Maulana Mahmudul Hasan. He was also among those who were selected by Abul Kalam Azad for his Hizbullah movement in Peshawar.

Ghaffar Khan<sup>5</sup> backed him in this movement. According to some sources seventy<sup>6</sup> schools were opened by Turangzai while the other put the number at thirty-four.<sup>7</sup> Turangzai supported the Turkish Khalifa in the World War I against the British and thus provided enough reason to the British government to take a stern action against him. Knowing the designs of the British, Turangzai escaped first to Rustam and then moved to the Mohmand area, an independent tribal territory in the North-west of Peshawar and joined the armed struggle started by his mentor Hadda Mulla<sup>8</sup> at the end of the nineteenth century. He succeeded in establishing his hold over Mohmand and remained a formidable enemy to the British till his death in 1937. The Mohmands under the leadership of Turangzai fought relentlessly against the British. During this period, the British expeditions against the Mohmands ranked second in number only to those led against Waziristan. The British faced enormous resistance in

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(Shahsawar Sangarwal Niyazi, *Da Pakhto Adbiato Maasar Tarikh*, Peshawar: Danish Kitab Khana, 1997 p.53; Abu Salman Shahjahanpuri, *op.cit.*, p.226). During the British onslaught on the followers of Turangzai, he fled to Tribal belt and thence to Afghanistan from where he returned to Bajaur (now Agency) to resume his earlier activities. (Hajji Faiz Muhammad, *Hijrat-i-Afghanistan*, Sayyid Darbar Ali Shah, Lahore: Taj Company Ltd., 1977, p.45). Makhfi was a very good poet. He is considered to be the founder of Pakhtun nationalist poetry. (Abdul Akbar Akbar, *Da Rusi Turkistan aw Afghanistan Safar*, Peshawar: Hamidia Electric Press, n.d., pp.7-8). He died in 1947.

- 4 A religious scholar belonging to Utmanzai.
- 5 Abdul Ghaffar Khan better known as Bacha Khan was born in 1890 in the village Utmanzai. After receiving his education at the Mission High School Peshawar, he joined Turangzai. He took an active part in 1919 in the Anti-Rowlatt Bill agitation and was one of the leaders of Khilafat and Hijrat movements in N.W.F.P. The political developments around 1930 in India and N.W.F.P. brought a great change in his political perceptions. During the later years, Ghaffar Khan devoted all his time and energies to the establishment and organization of the Khuda'i Khidmatgar. He was frequently arrested by the British authorities. After the creation of Pakistan also, he was arrested several times for his political and 'unlawful' activities. In 1964, he finally went to Afghanistan where he lived up to 1973 in self exile. This man of one word, at last died on January 21, 1988, and was buried at Jalalabad in Afghanistan, which he himself had chosen for his last resting place.
- 6 Shahjahanpuri, *op.cit.*, p.274.
- 7 Aziz Javid, *Hajji Sahib Turangzai* (Peshawar: Idara-i-Tahqiq wa Tasnif, 1982), p.76.
- 8 His original name was Najmuddin. He belonged to a village called Hadda in the Nangrahar province of Afghanistan. He took active part in the armed struggle against the British in Tribal areas including the Ambela war of 1863 and the 1897 uprising in the Tribal belt. In his last days he settled in his native village and started imparting religious education to students. He died in 1902. (Shafi Sabir, *Tazkirah-i-Sarfarushan-i-Subah-i-Sarhad*, Peshawar: University Book Agency, n.d., pp.125-36).

N.W.F.P. which was unprecedented in their history in the subcontinent. Consequently, the British closed all schools, started by Turangzai in the settled districts and arrested his supporters including teachers of the schools.

In the beginning of twentieth century another group started a socio-educational movement for the uplift of the people in the province. It was inspired by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's M.A.O. College at Aligarh and Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam's Islamia College at Lahore, in the beginning of the twentieth century. According to them, the subjugation by the British was not the sole cause of the downfall of the Muslims. They held the internal weaknesses of Muslim society responsible for the backwardness of the community in all spheres of life and came to the conclusion that the uplift of Muslims was only possible through modern education. Thus in different parts of the province various organizations like the Muslim Association, Bannu, Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Islam, D.I. Khan, The Muslim Azad Committee, Hazara, Abbotabad, Youth League, Charsaddah, Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, Peshawar, Jami'yyatul 'Ulama-i-Sarhad and District Khilafat Committees, sprang up with the idea of uplifting the community by spreading modern European education. These organizations worked for the welfare of the people but with little success.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan,<sup>9</sup> succeeded in forming a committee of Muslim notables to work for the uplift of Muslims in the province. These leaders enjoyed friendly relations with the British administration. Consequently, Islamia Collegiate was opened in 1913 in Peshawar, which was subsequently upgraded to Islamia College and offered courses in humanities, natural sciences and theology. Soon, it became a centre of learning for those who could not travel to Aligarh. Islamia College enlightened the youth in modern knowledge and generated western thinking among them. The people in general did not trust the British-sponsored institutions from religious point of view. On the other hand, the armed struggle for independence from the British was also not viable for the people of the planned areas. In such circumstances, the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina, founded in 1921, and the Azad High School, Utmanzai provided a middle path between the two extremes. It tried to equip the Pakhtun youths with pen and book, and did not let them turn to the British educational institutions which could only result in cultural 'enslavement'.

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9 See for details, Shakil Ahmad, "Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum: Life and Work," Ph.D. dissertation (1987), Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar.

At the end of the World War I, Indian Muslims started Khilafat Movement for the preservation of the Khilafat and for the territorial integrity of the Turkish Empire as it was before the war. When the Muslims felt that Britain was not acceding to their demands, they started thinking of migrating (*hijrat*) from India in protest against the British policies. In 1920, Abdul Hai Farangi Mahalli and some other ulema declared India a *Dar al-Harb* (country hostile towards Islam and Muslims) and appealed to Muslims to migrate to a *Dar al-Islam* (country at peace with Islam and Muslims). The proximity of Afghanistan and the welcoming attitude of King Amanullah Khan, encouraged the people to migrate to Afghanistan. People of the N.W.F.P. took a very active part in the movement. In fact, it was the N.W.F.P. that was most heavily affected in human and financial terms as compare to any other part of India.<sup>10</sup>

The Hijrat movement eventually ended in a fiasco, but its failure opened a new chapter of socio-ideological crosscurrents on both sides of the Durand Line.<sup>11</sup> Leaders of the province reassessed their political thinking and actions taking into consideration the changing scenario of the world in general and of India in particular. It was realized by them that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to fight the mighty British power with the old and traditional war methods. Moreover, the realization of the dreams for the uplift of the Muslim community and gaining of freedom from the British was impossible without the removal of certain weaknesses in the Pakhtun society, such as tribal and family disputes, lack of unity, extravagance, strict observance of the outdated customs and traditions, lack of modern education, and ill-treatment of women, etc. The Khilafat Committee in keeping with its call for a non-cooperation, boycotted the British courts and educational institutions and started establishing independent schools and *Shari'at* tribunals for resolving disputes among the people and reactivated the early efforts of Turangzai for the reformation of society through the establishment of independent schools. The first school of its kind was opened on April 1, 1921, at Utmanzai (Charsaddah), through the efforts of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar,<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Abbas Khan,<sup>13</sup>

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10 See for details, Abdul Rauf, "Hijrat Movement in the North West Frontier Province – A Historical Perspective," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Vol.XXXVII, No.4, October 1999.

11 International boundary line drawn between Afghanistan and British India in 1893. The border is named after the British envoy Mortimer Durand who was designated to negotiate a settlement with the Afghans.

12 Born in 1899 at Umarzai village in Charsaddah, he attended Islamia Collegiate and Islamia College, Peshawar. In protest against the British policy towards the

Mian Abdullah Shah,<sup>14</sup> Maulavi Muhammad Israel,<sup>15</sup> and Mian Ahmad Shah.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Maqsd Jan of Bannu,<sup>17</sup> who left Islamia College on the call of the Khilafat/Non-cooperation movement, was appointed the first headmaster of the school. It was the first independent school where religious education was imparted along with modern education and vocational training.

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Muslims he eventually left Islamia College, Peshawar, and got admission in Jami'a Millia (Aligarh). After completing his education, he came back to his native village and took active part in the freedom struggle and reformation of the society. He was one of those people who after the end of the Hijrat movement chose to go across to Central Asia and Moscow in connection with the freedom struggle. He wrote his travelogue under the title *Da Rusi Turkistan aw Afghanistan Safar*. He was a poet and the first dramatist of Pushto. He wrote many books. He died in 1977 at the age 78. (See for detail, Dr. Fazal Rahim Marwat, 'Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar – A Revolutionary Saga', *Pakistan*, No.29-30, 1994).

- 13 Son of Shabaz Khan, a well known landlord of Utmanzai. His mother was the daughter of a renowned Sardar of Kabul who enjoyed contacts with anti-British elements of Afghanistan. He studied up to primary level and acquainted himself with the political developments in India and Afghanistan through *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Madina*, *Al-Bilagh*, and *Siraj al-Akbar*. He was a follower of Turangzai. He took prominent part in the Hajji's educational activities and actively participated in the agitation against the Rowlatt Act 1919. He also participated in the Hijrat movement and went to Kabul in August 1920. During non-cooperation movement he was chosen as one of the five members of the Court of Arbitration for the peaceful resolution of mutual disputes in Utmanzai. In 1923, he became the nominated president of the Anjuman to which he contributed Rs.500/ every year. As a result of a protest against the president's order of closing the school for 15 days instead of 25 days, he resigned from the presidentship of the Anjuman. (Charsaddah Situation, Chief Commissioner Office, Peshawar, S.No.459), pp.5-6.
- 14 Born in a religious family of Charsaddah, he throughout remained a close associate of Bacha Khan.
- 15 Son of Maulana Shakirullah, Maulana Muhammad Isra'il was a religious scholar and in charge of the theology section of the Azad School. He was sentenced for his activities in the Anjuman and in the Khuda'i Khidmatgar movement.
- 16 He was born in the family of Hajji Abdul Mannan in 1896 at Charsaddah. After graduating from Aligarh in 1920, he went to London for higher studies and qualified for the Bar in 1926. He played an active role in almost all activities launched for the freedom struggle during this period. He was the first general secretary of the Afghan Youth League and was arrested several times in connection with his political activities. He dissociated himself from Bacha Khan and joined Khaksar movement headed by Allama Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi in 1937. He died in 1960.
- 17 He belonged to Bannu. His father, Amir Mukhtar Khan, was also a prominent political figure in the freedom struggle against the British.

### Foundation of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina

After establishing the Azad School at Utmanzai, the founders felt the need for an association which could undertake the responsibility for its supervision. Such an organization could also work for the establishment of other independent schools on this pattern in the entire region. Consequently, the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina (Society for the Reformation of Afghans) was founded in 1921. The Anjuman Annual Report for the year 1924-25 summarized its aims and objectives as follows:

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 *Shari'at* and have impaired the Pathans financially.<sup>18</sup>

The following were appointed as the office bearers: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan — President, Mian Ahmad Shah — Manager, and Mian Abdullah Shah, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, and Muhammad Abbas Khan were the members of the cabinet.<sup>19</sup> When Abdul Ghaffar Khan was arrested due to his pro-Khilafat activities and sentenced to three years imprisonment in December 1921, the Anjuman elected Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar as President, who served so well that the absence of the first president did not, in any way, affect the good working of the institution.<sup>20</sup> Later on, he was replaced by Hajji Abdul Ghaffar Khan as President, while Khadim Muhammad Akbar<sup>21</sup> took over as Secretary of the Anjuman.<sup>22</sup>

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18 Internal Section Diary No.71 dated 29.10.1925, Non-Cooperation Movement, S.No.1563, F.No.25/1/15, Vol.II, Special Branch (hereafter SB.), Directorate of Archive N.W.F.P. (hereafter D.O.A.), Peshawar.

19 The Anjuman was composed of the Executive Committee, the Advisory Committee and the General Committee. According to its Annual Report for the year 1926-27, the number of the member of Executive Committee was eleven, and that of Advisory Committee and the General Committee was sixty four and ninety four, respectively. (Abdul Ghaffar Khan Secretary, *Salana Report Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina Utmanzai*, Rawalpindi: Lakshami Press, n.d., p.6; Internal Section Diary No.85, dated 22.4.1927, "Non-Cooperation Movement", F.No. 25/i/15, Vol.II, S.B., D.A.O. Peshawar, p.50.).

20 *Ibid.*, p.48.

21 Son of Mirza Ahmad, he was born in 1888 at Charsaddah. After getting his education he joined the revenue department as a *patwari*. During the Khilafat movement, he resigned from service. He contributed in prose and poetry to the journal *Pakhtun*. To start with, he was a close associate of Bacha Khan but then

Working in a society riddled with suspicion and mistrust and based on traditional tribal ties was not an easy job. However, it was very difficult for the members of the Anjuman to establish its altruism in the eyes of the egotistic Pakhtun society which suffered from detrimental customs and traditions inherited from their forefathers. One of the characteristics of the Pakhtun society was to give top priority to avenge murder of a blood relative; the educated segment equally approved of this practice.<sup>23</sup> Women were debarred from inheritance and had very little access to educational institutions.<sup>24</sup> It was considered enough for them to be able to recite the Holy Qur'an and to know how to offer prayers five times a day. They hardly had a say in choosing their spouse and making of other choices regarding their lives. In fact, women in the Pakhtun society like in any other primordial society were considered a private property. Men were, and are, responsible for looking after them as they would take care of their other property. In those days fighting and farming were two main preoccupations of the Pakhtuns and modern education was considered a passport to Hell by the religious minded,<sup>25</sup> and getting religious education had no place in the priorities of the upper and ultramodern strata of the society. In such a situation, the establishment of such an institution was a big achievement of the leaders of the community. There is no doubt that the leadership skilfully exploited the situation arising out of the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, Khilafat, Hijrat and non-cooperation movements in the province. They

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developed differences with him and finally parted company with him in 1930. He supported Pakistan Movement and died in 1954.

- 22 Alhaj Muhammad Khan Mir Hilali, *Nangiali Pukhtanah*, Peshawar: Maktaba-i-Jumhuriyyat, 1377 A.H./1958, A.D., p.336.
- 23 Spain's observation about him will still be read with interest, "The young Pathan who has won a degree and social recognition at Oxford or Cambridge returns to his native village where his first act may be to take up the family blood feud." (J.W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963, p.20).
- 24 In 1901 there were 162 primary schools in N.W.F.P. out of which only 8 were for girls. The numbers of these schools increased to 494 in 1924-25 but there were only 21 schools for girls. Naushad Khan, "The Evolution of Education in N.W.F.P. From 1901-1925," *Arts and Letters, Biannual Research Journal of Languages, Social Sciences and Islamic Studies*, Vol.I, No.3, Autumn, 2001, pp.7-8.
- 25 There is a saying in Pushto that:
- Those who learn in schools  
Are none but money's tools.  
In heaven they will never dwell:  
They will surely go to Hell.
- (Muzakkir Shah Khalil, *Da Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq Jauand aw Adabi Khidmaat*, Peshawar: Khaleeq Academy, 2001, p.43.

were successful in diverting the attention of the Pakhtuns to the socio-cultural and educational reformation.

This story of success was, in the first place, rooted in the nature and working of the Anjuman. The first and foremost of its characteristics was the concept of division of work among its members. In any collective enterprise, not all persons are suited to perform all duties. There is a natural tendency in each individual to do a particular sort of job better than others. This aspect becomes all the more vital if an organization wants to induce social change in society. Taking cognizance of this aspect of human nature, Abdul Ghaffar Khan in one of the meetings of the Anjuman, stressed upon the division of work. He advocated that some people should work to increase the financial support, some should take over the task of enlisting new members, and yet others should take over the responsibility for the supervision of the day-to-day affairs of the school.<sup>26</sup> Thus various individuals performed the multifarious functions of the Anjuman. Certain people were entrusted to get financial support for the Anjuman's activities. The well-off, majority of whom were landlords of Hashtnagar like Abbas Khan, Abdul Khan, Abdullah Shah, etc., enlisted themselves for this task.

Another group took the responsibility of spreading and propagating the message of the Anjuman. Oratory played the most important and dominant role in mobilizing people in the South Asian societies throughout the twentieth century. The Anjuman was aware of this fact and thus a group of people like Maulana Muhammad Israel, Abdul Karim (student), Mian Ahmad Shah, and Fazl-i-Wahid Mulla, of Sherpao, etc., visited different villages, addressed common people and enrolled them as members of the Anjuman. Good speakers and those who could recite the Holy Qur'an and sing national songs beautifully dominated this group. Students of the school usually joined this group in touring the villages. These students also delivered speeches in the mosques and *hujras*, which inspired the people to extend every possible support to the Anjuman.<sup>27</sup> A well-organized and disciplined performance of these students in the annual meetings of the Anjuman also aroused the feelings of the people in favour of the Anjuman. The Anjuman prepared a Friday

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26 Ahmad, *Khuda'i Khidmatgar Tahrik* (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1991), Vol.I, p.12.

27 Abdul Wali Khan and Abdul Ghani Khan, two sons of Abdul Ghaffar Khan also actively participated in these activities.

*Khutba* (Friday prayer address), the theme of which was the reformation and education of the Pakhtuns.<sup>28</sup>

The third category of the leaders of the Anjuman devoted themselves to teaching in the school. These were mostly young students who left their educational institutions such as Aligarh and Islamia College Peshawar on the call of the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements. They carried out their duties enthusiastically. However, this section was deficient in educational skills. This group included Maqsud Jan (Headmaster), Amir Mumtaz Khan (who succeeded Maqsud Jan when the latter left for further studies), Sheikh Sanobar (ex-student of Aligarh), Bazad Khan (second master from Hazara), Hastam Khan, Muhammad Umar and Mian Ahmad Shah (senior master).<sup>29</sup> Sometime other leaders of the Anjuman also join this group and the students benefited from their experiences.

Convincing the people to adopt something against their accepted standards always demands enormous convincing power — suited to the intellect and minds of the people. In such circumstances, only well-versed, selfless and committed leaders and workers can bring a change in the society. Leaders of the Anjuman put forward the case of educating the people with arguments, using the religious terms and local symbols understandable to the people. It was constantly conveyed to the people that Islam demands from the Muslims time and energy to learn it first and then follow its teachings. For the first time the people were listening religious views from places other than the pulpit. Leaders of the Anjuman analyzed the situation of the Muslims in general and of the Pakhtuns in particular. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, President of the Anjuman, said that the backwardness of the people was due to lack of education, their indifference to obey the commandments of the Holy Qur'an, lack of unity and practising the customs against the laws of *Shari'ah*. He further stressed that the Muslims had been a free nation and that the country was their own and they should try to free themselves from the yoke of slavery. While reminding the audience of the past glory of Islam and stressing on the potential of the Muslims, Ghaffar Khan narrated the following story in one of the annual meeting of the Anjuman:

One day a lioness attacked a flock of sheep. She was pregnant. During the attack she gave birth to a cub. In the course of birth the lioness died, and

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28 Sayyid Iftikhar Hussain, "The Journal *Pakhtun* – An Appraisal", M. Phil thesis (1982), Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, p.100, cited by Asma Begum, "Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan As a Social Reformer", M.A. thesis (1989), Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, p.43.

29 Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp.16, 25, 33, 35.

her cub was left to grow up with the flock of the sheep. It learned to graze and even bleat. One day a lion from the forest attacked the flock and was surprised to see a lion cub running away from him, terrified and bleating like the sheep. Outraged, he managed to catch the cub and draw it away from the flock, down to a nearby river. "Look in the water", he commanded the cub. "You are not a sheep, you are a lion! You have nothing to fear. Stop bleating like a sheep and roar!"<sup>30</sup>

By narrating this, Bacha Khan commended the Pakhtuns to shake off their slumber and strive for freedom that was their birthright and which they had lost owing to communal dissensions.<sup>31</sup> He also emphasized on relinquishing the prevalent customs and traditions which hindered the socio-economic development of the Muslims. Other leaders of the Anjuman also frequently berated the disgusting local *rawaj* (traditions) by quoting religious arguments. They asked the people to practise the Islamic way of life and follow the *Shari'ah*, which was the most important and most effective way of getting rid of the un-Islamic rites and customs.

The sincerity, honesty, commitment and devotion of the Anjuman's leadership were unquestionable. Whatever they expressed in words they proved it through their deeds. Bacha Khan enrolled his two sons in the Azad High School. He himself upheld the principle of universal education and admitted female member of his family in these educational institutions despite the opposition of his family including his in-laws. The Anjuman when asked for the protection of the rights of women, Bacha Khan started it from his own family. In this connection he was reported to have elicited the consent of one of the female members of his household before finalizing her matrimony.<sup>32</sup> Leaders of the Anjuman donated their own money first and then asked for donations from the community. The Anjuman condemned and discouraged the custom of *skhat* (*Sakhawat*) and *khirat* (*Khayrat*) (alms giving by the bereaved family) on the death of their kith and kin.<sup>33</sup> When the British started persecuting the leadership of the Anjuman, they stood firm and did not shy away from being arrested by the police. They were arrested several

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30 Translation taken from Eknath Easwaran, *A Man to Match His Mountains: Badshah Khan, Non-Violent Soldier of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., California: Nilgiri Press, 1985), p.92; Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Jauand aw Jadujuhd* (Kabul: Government Press, 1983), pp.308-09.

31 Abdul Ghaffar Khan's speech at the anniversary of the Madrasah Zia'ul Islam, Tarnab, dated March 6, 1925, S.No.1563, pp.24-25.

32 Asma Begum, *op.cit.*, pp.90-92.

33 Khan Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan aw Khudai Khidmatgari*, Peshawar: Da Chap Zai, 1993, Vol.I, p.70.

times and imprisoned for months and years, but refused to bow before the British. All this inspired the people more and more to come forward and lend their support to Bacha Khan and the Anjuman.

Hajji Muhammad Akram Khan donated a mudhouse for the Azad School.<sup>34</sup> It had a few rooms. There were no chairs and desks for the students. Classes were held in the open fields and the student had to sit on the grass while for the teachers there were only *daris* (cotton mats). People from the tribal areas in general and from Dir and Bajaur in particular, were attracted to the school.<sup>35</sup> The school had a boarding house whose expenses were borne by Bacha Khan's paternal uncle's widow, who would send breakfast, lunch, supper, and evening tea from her home to the students in the hostel.<sup>36</sup>

Initially, the Anjuman attracted few people but gradually due to the efforts of its founders, people started taking interest in its activities. In the beginning (April 1921) only forty-five students<sup>37</sup> enrolled themselves in the school, but their number rose to 350 during the next year.<sup>38</sup>

In certain instances, the workers of the Khilafat movement integrated their activities with those of the Anjuman. For instance, Bacha Khan was the president of the Khilafat Committee as well as that of the Anjuman. Furthermore, women's participation in the organization was also encouraged which was a very interesting and perhaps unprecedented step in Pakhtun history.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, women took an active part in the

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34 *Ibid.*, p.58.

35 *Ibid.*, p.68.

36 Jehanzeb Niyaz, *Zama da Jauand Qisa tha Auridali tha Katili* (Lahore: Millat Printers, 2005), pp.14-15.

37 File No.25/1/15, Vol.III, S.No.1564, B.No.85, S.B., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.185.

38 Muhammad Akbar Khan and Abdul Akhar Khan, *Annual Report of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina*, Peshawar: Frontier Press, n.d., reported by Intelligence Branch, Non-Cooperation Movement, S.No.1563, F.No.25/1/15, Vol.II., S.B., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.52.

39 Samandar Khan Samandar compiled some of the accomplishment by Pakhtun women in his book entitled *Pakhtane*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1957. This book is translated by Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah and will shortly be published by National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam, Islamabad.

meetings of the Anjuman side by side with men;<sup>40</sup> they also made donations to the Anjuman.<sup>41</sup>

The Azad School of Utmanzai was rapidly followed by the establishment of independent schools in other parts of the region especially in Charsaddah, Mardan, Swabi and Nowshera tehsils.<sup>42</sup> According to Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar there were one hundred and twenty such schools while Mian Jafar Shah and Abdullah Shah stated that there were only eighty such schools. The official record, however, listed a maximum number of fifty one schools and total enrolment students of at 3212 in the year 1924.<sup>43</sup> However, it is not certain that all these institutions were run by a single organization.

The Azad School was affiliated with Jamia Millia, Delhi, on December 1, 1923,<sup>44</sup> which also conducted its examinations. A number of students after passing their matriculation examination from here joined Jamia Millia, Delhi, for further education.<sup>45</sup> The school mainly followed the Jamia Millia syllabus with necessary modifications required by the local environment. Pushto was adopted as medium of instruction but certain subjects were taught in English. For example, Mathematics books were not available in Pushto; so it was taught in English.<sup>46</sup> Urdu was also taught as a subject in the school, and sometime speeches were also delivered in Urdu in the annual meetings and other important functions. For example, Abdul Ghani Khan (elder son of Bacha Khan), a

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40 In the annual meeting held in April 28, 1928, about a hundred women participated along with two to three thousand men (Police Dairy, dated April 29, 1928) S.No.1563, B.No.85., SB., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.123.

41 For example, a report said that Kunda Bibi and the mother of Abbas Khan donated rupees one hundred and rupees sixty respectively. On another occasion, the mother of Abbas Khan donated rupees five hundred for the school. (Charsadda Situation, Chief Commissioner's Office, N.W.F.P., S.No.459. D.O.A., Peshawar, p.3).

42 It is reported in the Annual report of the Anjuman for the year 1926-27, that the following schools are affiliated with the Utmanzai institution: Khadi Kali, Ghunda Karana, Zarinabad and Kharkai in Charsadda tehsil, Shahbaz Garhi, Sawaldar, Katlang, Ismaila, Nawan Kali, Turlandi, Garyalra, and Bara Garhi in Mardan and Swabi tehsils, Ziarat Kaka Sahib in Nowshera tehsil. (Internal Section, Diary No.85, dated 22.4.1927, S.No.1563., p.110.)

43 Stephen Alan Rittenberg, "The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province 1901-1947," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, Microfilms International 7916443, pp.65-66.

44 Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North West Frontier Province*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.23.

45 Wali Khan, *op.cit.*, p.68.

46 Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.33.

student of Azad School, delivered a speech in Urdu in one of the annual meetings of the Anjuman.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, students of the school would often recite the patriotic poems of famous Urdu poets, which deeply aroused the emotions for freedom. For example, in one of the annual meeting of the Anjuman, the proceedings were opened with the famous poem of Allama Muhammad Iqbal:

*Chin-o-Arab hamara, Hindustan hamara.*<sup>48</sup>

(China and Arabia are ours, India is ours)

The Anjuman established the following sections in the Azad School Utmanzai:

**Theology Section:** One of the main objectives of the school was to impart religious education and to reform morals and to represent Islam in its true spirit. Thus theology comprised one of the important sections of the school. The Holy Qur'an, Hadith,<sup>49</sup> *fiqh*, history of Islam<sup>50</sup> and Arabic language were included in this section. Maulavi Shah Rasul and Maulana Muhammad Israel were two important members of this section. Mainly thanks to the exertions of this section, some students became well versed in the recitation of Holy Qur'an, while others became knowledgeable in the basic teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Still others became well acquainted in the Arabic language, which was evident from their performance in this language in one of the annual gathering of the Anjuman. In this function, a dialogue was held among the students about religious and modern education as well as technical and industrial assignments that were given to them in the school.<sup>51</sup>

**Vocational Section:** Muslims in general and Pakhtuns in particular were far behind in commerce, trade and industry. N.W.F.P. had no industrial base. All goods were imported from other provinces. Trade was mostly in the hands of non-Muslims, who were less than 5% of the total population. In order to acquaint Pakhtuns with the industrial skills,

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47 Ghani Khan's speech, dated April 29, 1928. He supported the national education and condemned those who visited European officers frequently and called them 'sycophants'. He appealed to the Muslims to shun their lethargy. (S.No.1563., p.115.)

48 Internal Section Diary No.66, dated 27.10.1925, S.No.1563, p.43.

49 *Bulugh al-Maram*, a book of *Hadith*, was adopted in the syllabus. (Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.17).

50 *Ta'rikh al-Ummat* by Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri was prescribed as a history book in the syllabus. *Ibid.*, p.17.

51 Proceedings of the Annual meeting of the Azad High School Utmanzai, Extract from the internal section diary, dated May I, 1928. S.No.1563, F.No.25/1/15, Vol.II, B.No.85., D.O.A., Peshawar.

several vocational subjects were included in the school like the art of preparing the *kulahs* (a kind of cap worn by Pakhtuns), tailoring, carpentry and weaving.<sup>52</sup> For the vocational training, several handlooms (*khaddis*) were brought from down country for manufacturing of cotton fabrics. This particular handmade cloth known as *khaddar* was equally popular among rich and poor classes of the society. The promotion of *khaddar* was to create a sense of love for the indigenous product and hatred for foreign products.

**Propaganda Section:** The Anjuman had in its plan the establishment of a separate branch for propaganda, but due to lack of funds it could not do so. The task was then entrusted to some of the members of the working committee of the Anjuman and some students of the school who were trained for this purpose. Teachers and members of the Anjuman trained certain students who spent two days a week outside the school in visiting different villages and addressing the people in mosques and *hujras* (community centres). On many occasions they were successful in persuading the people to give up non-essential expenditure on death and marriage ceremonies. They urged the people (who were reluctant to send their children for modern education to British schools) to send their children to the independent schools for education.<sup>53</sup> Those teachers who accompanied the students on these tours included Mian Ahmad Shah, Maulavi Muhammad Israil, and Khadim Muhammad Akbar. Sometimes, leaders of the Anjuman such as Abbas Khan, Taj Muhammad Khan and Hajji Abdul Ghaffar Khan also participated in these activities.<sup>54</sup>

**Other Subjects:** The religious and vocational education was complemented with modern subjects like English,<sup>55</sup> Mathematics, General Knowledge and Geography, Urdu, History and Pushto. On Thursday, after 12 O' clock students were encouraged to take part in the extra-curricular activities such as oratory and poetical contests, etc.<sup>56</sup>

The independence schools offered a nine-year course which was equivalent to Matriculation from the Punjab University.<sup>57</sup> Each academic year included a Quarter, Mid-year and Final year examinations. The

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52 Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp.7, 37.

53 Ahmad narrated several such instances in his book. See Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp.7,8.

54 *Ibid.*, p.109.

55 English was started from class 4<sup>th</sup> (Niyaz, *op.cit.*, p.19).

56 *Ibid.*

57 That was the only university in the whole region comprising the present day Pakistan.

leaders and office bearers of the Anjuman were responsible for the supervision of these schools and they regularly reported on their performance.

To run independent and national spirited schools, a particular kind of teachers were required. They were supposed to have command over both religious and modern disciplines. They had to have a flair for the reformation of society and the capability of inculcating the spirit of freedom and patriotism in the younger generation. The Khilafat movement of the early 1920s enormously contributed for the creation of such people. When the Khilafatists saw that the British did not accept their demands, they resorted to non-cooperation movement in 1920. On the call of the leaders of the Khilafat Movement, a number of Muslim students in the N.W.F.P. left their institutions. Some of them joined Jamia Millia Aligarh, which later shifted to Delhi. Likewise, several Pakhtun students left Aligarh College also. These students after coming back to the province joined the schools established by the Khilafatists and Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina as teachers. These teachers were paid nominally. In early 1930s the salary of the headmaster was Rs.40 and a second master received Rs.20 p.m.<sup>58</sup> Sometime they worked without any remuneration also.<sup>59</sup> The Anjuman supported poor students by providing them clothes, books and other requirements.<sup>60</sup>

### **British Policy towards the Anjuman**

When the first Azad school was established at Utmanzai which was followed by the opening of other schools, the then Chief Commissioner of N.W.F.P., Sir John Maffi, complained to Ghaffar Khan's father and asked him to stop his son from participating in such activities. Ghaffar Khan, however, compared imparting of knowledge and opening of schools to the worship of the Creator which could not be discontinued at any cost.<sup>61</sup> The Anjuman, nevertheless, tried its best not to provide any excuse to the British administration to take any action against these schools. They carried out all their activities within the limits of law and peacefully persuaded the people to take interest in the Anjuman. However, whenever the British got opportunity they did not hesitate to take a stern action against leaders and workers of the Anjuman. When the drama of Amir Nawaz Jalya (*Dard*) was staged in one of the annual

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58 Niyaz, *op.cit.*, p.14.

59 S.P., Peshawar to A.I.B., dated 9.1.1924, S.No.1563., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.3; Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.25.

60 Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.14.

61 Ghaffar Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.185-86.

meetings of the Anjuman, British arrested and imprisoned all those who took part in it.<sup>62</sup>

The British observed closely all the activities of the Anjuman and tried to discourage these efforts through different means. Scepticism was created about the certificates of these schools, and it was argued that these schools could not compete with the government schools and that after securing certificates from these schools, the students would not be able to get employment.<sup>63</sup> They offered temptation of employment in government department to the teachers of the school but did not succeed.<sup>64</sup> The British were confident that due to scarcity of funds, these schools would not survive and would ultimately close down. History shows that it was not scarcity of funds but unhealthy internal politics which shattered the Anjuman.

The anti-imperialist stance of the Anjuman was dubbed as Bolshevism which carried a special connotation for the English as well as for the local religious sections of the society. The English administrators and policymakers in India and Britain had an extreme aversion for the Bolsheviks and thus any linkage with their movement was enough to warrant government disapproval and taking strong action against these elements. On the other hand, the anti-religious views of Bolshevism were an anathema to the religiously important personalities of the area also. The Anjuman tried to dispel the notion that it was an anti-imperialist body and gave out that most of its moving spirits were drawn from the capitalist class.<sup>65</sup> Though, the Anjuman was declared a nonpolitical organization established for the social uplift of the community, the tone and tenor of its speeches and nature of its activities were not quite apolitical. In its annual meeting held on 29 April, 1928, Sanobar Husain Mohmand criticized the rise in the rates of land revenue by the British government. He referred to the struggle of the people of Bengal<sup>66</sup> who succeeded in getting their demands acceptance by the British in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He pleaded that the leaders

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62 Abdul Wahid, "Pa Pakhto Adab da Khudai Khidmatgaro Sha'irano Adabi Pairzawani," Ph.D. dissertation (2004), Department of Pashto, University of Peshawar, p.213.

63 Ghaffar Khan, *op.cit.*, p.312.

64 Wali Khan, *op.cit.*, p.68.

65 Annual Report for the year 1926-27, S.No.1563., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.104.

66 Struggle of the Bengalis for the annulment of the partition of Bengal, which finally succeeded in 1911, and the decision was reversed by the British Indian government.

should raise their voices against the British government in unison<sup>67</sup> and urged the people to rise against the government. Such views of its leaders were reason enough for the British to look at the Anjuman as a political threat to their rule in the long run.

### **The Anjuman and the Muslim World**

The Anjuman took keen interest in the affairs of the Muslim world. Majority of its top leadership was already engaged in the Khilafat Movement in N.W.F.P. They responded to the developments in Turkey and Hijaz in their own way. The Anjuman also took significant interest in the developments of Afghanistan. When Amanullah Khan faced a *coup d'etat* by Bacha Saqao in 1929, it greatly perturbed the people of the province. The Anjuman saw a British hand in the anti-Amanullah propaganda. The Anjuman tried to counter this propaganda, started activating the people in support of Amanullah Khan, and collected Rs.20,000 for his help.<sup>68</sup> During this period of turmoil some Afghan students returned from Europe and were stranded in Peshawar. The Anjuman temporarily accommodated them in the Azad School. Food and other necessitates for the twenty-five students were provided by the Red Crescent Committee.<sup>69</sup> After the flight of Amanullah Khan from Kabul, Abdul Ghaffar Khan met him in Bombay and later on, when Nadir Khan, a relative of Amanullah Khan, returned to Kabul via Peshawar to counter the Bacha Saqao *coup*, the Anjuman supported him, too, and organized a huge procession at Utmanzai on October 13, 1929, to show solidarity with the anti-Bacha Saqao elements. The rally was addressed by Mian Ahmad Shah and was accompanied with slogans which said Amanullah Khan was their king and long live Nadir Khan and that Afghanistan, Hindustan and Frontier would ultimately attain independence.<sup>70</sup>

The efforts of the Anjuman were commended by some Indian Muslim leaders like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan also, who impressed by the performance of the students of Azad School and urged others to follow the example of the progress set by the Azad School, Utmanzai.<sup>71</sup>

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67 Sanobar Husain's speech at the annual meeting of the Anjuman. Reported in I.S. Diary, dated 29.4.1928.

68 *Pakhtun*, October 1929, Vol.II, No.6, pp.33-39, cited by Iftikhar Hussain, *op.cit.*, p.96.

69 *Ibid.*, pp.33-36.

70 *Ibid.*, p.97.

71 Maulana Zafar Ali's speech at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Jami'yyat-ul 'Ulama-i-Hind at Peshawar in December 1927.

### Annual Gathering of the Anjuman

The most important and distinct feature of the Anjuman was its annual meeting, which was held regularly in Utmanzai. Attended by Frontier's prominent personalities with different points of view,<sup>72</sup> these meetings also provided an excellent occasion for the reunion of old students of the school. In the initial days, fewer people were attracted but gradually their number increased. For example, on the eve of the first anniversary held on April 27, 1922 only 800 people attended.<sup>73</sup> But in the subsequent years, it became one of the most important social and political events for all those who were striving against the British rule in the province. In the annual meeting held in 1927, the attendance reached to about eighty thousand.<sup>74</sup> These meetings brought the people together to discuss matters of common interest and listen to the views of different leaders of the community. During the proceedings the annual report of the Anjuman was also used to be tabled and prizes distributed among the distinguished students. One of the peculiarities of these gatherings was the declamation contests, singing of patriotic songs and staging of dramas by the students. In the later days, *musha'iras* (poetical contests) were also held on the occasion. In one of such *musha'iras* the sample line (*Misra'-i-tarh*) set for the contest purported:

“If you have any idea for the liberty of your country”.<sup>75</sup>

About fifty poets sent their poems for the *musha'ira* while a considerable number of poets recited their poems in person.<sup>76</sup> At the end of *musha'ira* three best poems were selected for awards. According to the judgement, Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq won the first prize, while Maulana Fazl-i-Mahmud Makhfi and Dr. Ahmad Gul of Kohat were awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes, respectively.<sup>77</sup> In another *musha'ira* the sample hemistich purported:

“Young men had always gone out to fight the battle of freedom.”

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72 Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq, *Da Azadi Jang*, Peshawar: Idara-i-Isha'at-i-Sarhad, 1972, p.50.

73 The Azad School Utmanzai, F.No.25, Vol.III, S.No.1564, B.No.85, D.O.A., Peshawar, p.85.

74 Hilali, *op.cit.*, pp.362-65.

75 Abdul Wahid, “Pakhto Adab Aw Khudai Khidmatgar Tahrik”, M.Phil thesis (1995), Department of Pushto, University of Peshawar, p.42.

76 Police Diary, dated April 28, 1928.

77 Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq, *Za Aw Zama Zamana*, Peshawar: Idara-i-Isha'at-i-Sarhad, 1974, p.41.

and the first prize was won by Gul Ahmad of Marghuz.<sup>78</sup>

The poems recited at these *musha'iras*, usually revolved round the themes of the unity of the Pakhtuns, importance of education, atrocities of the British rulers and their native collaborators, a wish to get their country free and to prepare themselves for sacrifices etc. In one of the annual gatherings the students of Azad High School staged a drama written by Abdul Akbar Akbar in which it was shown that the peasantry could get justice neither from *jirgas*,<sup>79</sup> nor from the courts because the Khans were more inclined to favour the members of their own clans than to comply with the dictates of justice and fair play; doctors were indifferent to the timely post-mortem of the deceased and the *lambardars* harassed the *zamindars*. The moral solution to all these tribulations the drama emphasized was the achievement of independence through sacrifice.<sup>80</sup>

It was in the course of these gatherings that the leaders realized the importance of launching a periodical and donations and subscription were asked from the audience for its publication. Soon the dream became true and a monthly magazine, *Pakhtun* was started in May 1928 from Utmanzai under the supervision of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.<sup>81</sup> The journal on its masthead contained the following lines of Khadim Muhammad Akbar,

“A year spent in servitude is nothing as compared to a single moment of freedom spent even in the agonies of death.”

Patriotic poems and articles in Pushto, inculcating a commitment to freedom and aiming at social reform were a noteworthy characteristic of this journal and its contributors included Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq, Mian Ahmad Shah, Torsam, Gul Ahmad, Khadim Muhammad Akbar, Mian Sayd Rasul Rasa, Ataullah Jan, Alif Jan Khataka, Fazl-i-Wahid, Amir Nawaz Jalia, Master Abdul Karim and Muhammad Ashraf Maftun.<sup>82</sup> The organizers tried their best to convert *Pakhtun* from a monthly journal to a daily newspaper but their efforts did not bear fruit primarily due to its

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78 Police Diary, dated April 21, 1930,

79 It referred to the *jirgas* appointed by the government which could not take any decisions independently.

80 N.W.F.P. SA No.18, dated 5.5.1928., S.No.1563., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.120.

81 *Pakhtun* continued its publication under the editorship of Khadim Muhammad Akbar (May 1928 to April 1930), Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq (January 1931 to December 1931; April 1938 to December 1940 and August 1945 to August 1947). (Muzakkir Shah, *op.cit.*, pp.208-09).

82 Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.113.

frequent closure by the government. Two student magazines *Nargas* and *Tafrih* were also launched by the students. *Tafrih* comprised three sections — English, Urdu and Pushto but, since printing was not possible, these magazines were handwritten. They contained articles and poems on the topic of freedom of India written by the students of the Azad School.<sup>83</sup>

The Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina enormously influenced the Pushto literature. The theme of purposeful poetry was not new in Pushto. Rahman Baba, Khushal Khan Khattak and others had already employed Pushto poetry for the moral uplift of the people, criticizing the regrettable habits of the Pakhtuns and eulogizing the warriors of the past and the struggle of the people against the aliens. However, the changing world of the twentieth century brought in its wake new ideas in the literature. It was during one of the annual gatherings of the Anjuman that for the first time a Pushto drama *Drai Yatiman* (three orphans) by Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar was staged by the students of the Azad School. The theme of the drama was the atrocities inflicted upon the poor by the landlords and the hypocrisy of certain ulema who enjoyed the patronage of the government.<sup>84</sup> It was unbelievable that a drama can be produced in Pushto and can be staged by Pakhtun actors.<sup>85</sup> These dramas might have had technical shortcomings but they very faithfully depicted the Pakhtun society of the early twentieth century. In the beginning, the themes of the dramas were general and not specific; For example, the drama staged in 1928 did not aim at any particular figure but on the general social conditions of the Pakhtun society. However, the 1930 drama was more specific and political in tone and character. During this drama actors appeared frequently on the stage and chanted slogan in favour of the Indian struggle for independence and against the British government like “*Sarhad Hindustan Azad*”, “*Inqilab Zindabad*”, “*Fakhr-i-Afghan Zindabad*”, “*Khuda’i Khidmatgars Zindabad*”, “*Zalim Hakumat Barbad*”, “*Bartania Barbad*”, “Up Up the National flag”, “Up Up the Hindustan”, “Down Down *Inglistan*”, “Up Up Jawahirlal Nehru”, “Down Down King George”, etc.

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83 The daily *Sarhad*, Peshawar, 3.7.1933., reported by C.I.D. dated 14.7.1933., S.No.1563., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.227; Niyaz, p.28

84 Muhammad Azam Azam, “Pukhto Adab ki da Drami Irtiqā”, *Pukhto* (monthly), Kaliz Number, 1985-86, p.129.

85 Raza Hamadani quoted by Muhammad Azam Azam, *op.cit.*, p.129.

From here on, Pushto poetry came to imbibe anti-imperialist sentiment more than ever before.<sup>86</sup> The activists of the Anjuman stirred up the sentiments of the people against the British rule and in favour of national education, the abandoning of un-Islamic customs and halting of internal feuds and the struggle for the freedom of their homeland from the British. The role of the *Pakhtun* in this regard proved to be very important. The journal attracted readers not only from inside the country but also abroad, especially, in Afghanistan.

The role played by the Anjuman in the sphere of education and in creating a community awareness among the people was also commendable. There were few government schools and only two degree colleges — Edwards College (founded in 1901) and Islamia College (founded in 1913) — in the whole province in the 1920s. Common people, especially in rural areas, had little representation in these institutions. The masses were not aware of the importance of modern education. However, the Anjuman did not succeed in establishing a complete network of schools in the entire province and in the eradication of social evils prevalent in the shape of *riwaj* (customs) in Pakhtun society. Secondly, whatever it did, it was mainly confined to the rural areas of the province. Nevertheless, it succeeded in convincing the people that education was one of the most effective cures for all social problems.

The students trained in these institutions later on became the torchbearers of the freedom movement against the British. The ongoing struggle of the people in the Indian subcontinent against the British was integrated with the syllabus of the school. Students were even evaluated in their knowledge about the ideas of freedom and independence in the examinations conducted by the Anjuman and they were encouraged to organize different activities, particularly to inspire and unite the people for the community welfare activities.

The students started to learn vocational subjects and thus the hatred of Pakhtuns for these professions decreased. Before that, Pakhtuns considered business and all related professions inferior to farming and almost all business in the province was dominated by the Hindus and Sikhs. Abdul Ghaffar Khan came forward and set an example by

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86 See for details Abdul Wahid, "Pa Pakhto Adab da Khudai Khidmatgaro Sha'irano Adabi Pairzawani", Ph.D. dissertation (2004), Department of Pashto, University of Peshawar.

establishing his own trading centre in his native town, Utmanzai.<sup>87</sup> Other Muslims in the province also followed suit.

The Anjuman which was established to unite the scattered Pakhtun community, at last itself fell prey to its internal dissensions. Mistrust crept in and affected badly the activities of the Anjuman as well as the functioning of the Azad School at Utmanzai. Differences erupted between Abbas Khan and Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar and then between Ghaffar Khan and Abbas Khan. Consequently, Abdul Ghaffar Khan resigned from the Executive Committee. However, he did not renounce his membership and continued his financial support to the Anjuman. On the contrary, Abbas Khan not only resigned but also stopped his financial support to the Anjuman. Abdul Ghaffar Khan blamed Khadim Muhammad Akbar for all these intrigues.<sup>88</sup>

### **Khuda'i Kidmatgars and Azad High School**

The faction led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan laid more stress on the political expediency and thus the reform movement which was launched to gradually educate and socially reform the Pakhtun community came to be riddled with agitational and revolutionary politics. While the results of the latter might have taken some time to fully reveal themselves, the outcome of the former soon gripped the entire movement. During the same period, several revolutionary youth organizations like Naujawan-i-Bharat Sabha made their appearance and in some cases, even British officials were also physically attacked, killed and wounded. In N.W.F.P., the need for the formation of an organization which could use the potential of the Pakhtun youths, particularly that of the rural areas, who constituted the majority population of the province, was also felt. A conference for this purpose was held on September 1, 1929 which was presided over by Khushal Khan of Bariqab and after extensive deliberations *Da Zalmo Jirga*, a Youth League, was formed. Abdul Akbar Khan and Mian Ahmad Shah were appointed its president and general secretary, respectively.

The organization ostensibly adopted the creed of non-violence. Its banner displayed a "hammer and sickle", on the communist pattern. This pattern of the flag was, however, soon discarded in order to dispel the possibility of the wrong impression that the Youth League was a Russia-inspired body. For the establishment of its units in the whole province,

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87 He narrates in details, how he faced opposition from his fellow Khans, who called him a *Banya*, a scornful remark in those days. Ghaffar Khan, *op.cit.*, p.188).

88 *Ibid.*, pp.338-39.

the *Jirga* visited Tal, Hangu, Bannu and D.I. Khan, highlighted the poor condition of the community and emphasized the need for an organization to reform the society.

In January 1930, a meeting was held in Utmanzai. To carry out the practicable programme of the reformation of society in the villages a volunteers corps was needed. Several people presented themselves for the task. These volunteers were named the *Khuda'i Khidmatgars*<sup>89</sup> (the Servants of God), and they worked under the supervision of the Youth League.<sup>90</sup> These volunteers were bound by an oath of discipline to follow and enforce the organization's policy as determined by the high command. The oath was as follows:

I am a *Khuda'i Khidmatgar* and as God needs no service, but serving his creation is serving Him, I promise to serve humanity in the name of God. I promise to refrain from violence and from taking revenge. I promise to forgive those who oppress me or treat me with cruelty. I promise to refrain from taking part in feuds and quarrels and from creating enmity. I promise to treat every Pathan as my brother and friend. I promise to refrain from antisocial customs and practices. I promise to live a simple life, to practice virtue and to refrain from evil. I promise to practise good manners and good behaviour and not to lead a life of idleness. I promise to devote at least two hours a day to social work.<sup>91</sup>

The members of the organization considered it a religious movement launched for the advancement of religion and that they were serving religion by being members of this organization.<sup>92</sup> According to common practice in those days, it was thought necessary that these volunteers should have a separate uniform. As the white colour was not suitable for manual work<sup>93</sup> it was decided that all volunteers would dye their shirts, trousers and turbans in chocolate colour which was misrepresented as red in the British official records and the organization was quickly dubbed as "the Red Shirts". The British administration was quick to connect it with the "Red Menace",<sup>94</sup> which had already occupied British minds as the Red Communists' movement in Russia. Sarfaraz

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89 Mian Ahmad Shah suggested the name of *Khuda'i Khidmatgar* instead of *Surkhposh* (Red Shirt). (Hilali, *op.cit.*, pp.387-88).

90 Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, Karachi: Muhammad Ali Educational Society, 1986, p.14.

91 Translation taken from Easwaran, p.11; Ghaffar Khan, *op.cit.*, p.358.

92 Intelligence report, Charsaddah Camp, dated 19.5.1930, S.No.398. Chief Commissioner's Office, Peshawar, D.O.A., Peshawar, p.202.

93 Khaleeq, *op.cit.*, p.61.

94 Spain, *op.cit.*, p.165.

Khan was appointed the president and Rab Nawaz as *Salar* (commander) of the organization.<sup>95</sup> These volunteers were asked to drill in military style. They occasionally accompanied, Abdul Ghaffar Khan in uniform to inspire the people to enlist themselves in the organization. By the end of March 1930 the number of volunteers enrolled in the Charsaddah subdivision was reported to be between 2,000 and 2,500.<sup>96</sup> In the beginning of 1930s the activities of the leaders of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina came to be dominated by their involvement in the *Khuda'i Khidmatgar* movement and thus the Anjuman eventually came to be transformed into the Red Shirt movement.<sup>97</sup>

Throughout April 1930 the process of touring and enlisting the volunteers continued. During these meetings Pushto poetry was recited which depicted the glories of the country before the arrival of the British, who brought misery and disunity. The poetry of Khan Mir Hilali, Mahmud Makhfi, Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, Tursam, Fazl-i-Wahid Mulla, Amir Nawaz Jalya, Gul Ahmad and Khadim Muhammad Akbar aroused the national feelings of the people very much.

On April 23, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his colleagues Abdul Akbar Khan, Hajji Shah Nawaz, Mian Ahmad Shah and Sarfaraz Khan were arrested in Nahaqi near Peshawar under section 40 F.C.R. and sent to jail. All refused to furnish a bond for their release except Hajji Shah Nawaz, who on his release was treated by his community with such contempt that he committed suicide.<sup>98</sup> After the arrest of the leaders, a meeting of the Youth League was held on April 27, 1930, in which Khushal Khan of Bariqab and Qaim Shah were elected president and secretary of the League, respectively.<sup>99</sup>

An intensive campaign followed the arrest of the aforementioned leaders and the simultaneous incident that occurred in Peshawar city on April 23, in which several people were killed, resulted in the rapid spread of disaffection throughout Peshawar district and the adjacent areas. Every effort was made to expand the organization of the Youth League and to increase the number of its volunteers. Laws of the British Government were defied by holding public meetings and payment of

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95 Hilali, *op.cit.*, p.387.

96 S.S.P., Report, dated: 31.3.1931, S.No.454., D.O.A., Peshawar.

97 Niyaz, *op.cit.*, p.19.

98 S.S.P., Peshawar, F.No.454, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.7.

99 S.S.P., Peshawar, Report dated 31.3.1931, S.No.454, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P., Peshawar.

revenue was withheld to inflict financial losses on the government. In some instances telegraph wires were also cut down.<sup>100</sup> The villagers were instructed to abstain from reporting cases to the police and instead refer them to the *Jirgas* of the Youth League. The accused were brought before *Jirgas* for trial and if found guilty punishments were awarded to them according to the laws of the *Shari'ah*. Sometimes the criminals were rewarded for surrendering themselves for punishment under the *Shari'ah*.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, the Government declared the Youth League an unlawful association on May 13, 1930.<sup>102</sup> The leaders of the organization, however, continued their activities by working in secret and avoiding any overt act that would force the authorities to take action against them and thus effectively remove them from the political arena. Thus they succeeded in keeping alive the organization. The Khuda'i Khidmatgars affiliated themselves with the Indian National Congress in August 1931, after taking assurances of maintaining its separate identity by retaining their constitution, rules and programme and the distinctive name of their party. However, the common people henceforth looked at it as an offshoot of the Indian National Congress.

### Visit of the Indian Leaders to the Azad School

The efforts of the school were appreciated by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan in 1927 but other Muslim leaders neither appreciated nor visited the Azad School. It was the Indian Congress leaders Nehru and Gandhi, who not only visited the institution but also assured it of their supports. In 1938, Mr. Nehru visited the Azad School. According to Jehanzeb Niyaz, a student of the school at that time, Mr. Nehru along with Bacha Khan was welcomed by the students at the corner of the road decorated with flags etc. The students were allowed to chant only three slogans, *Hindustan Azad* (freedom to India), *Fakhr-i-Afghan Zindabad* (Long live the Pride of the Afghans, a title given to Bacha Khan by the people), and *Allah-o-Akbar* (God is Great). After the guests were seated on the stage, a school teacher, Fazl Karim, recited his Urdu poem in which he

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100 *Ibid.*

101 In Katozai village, a person Nur Ali son of Abdul Ali was punished for keeping a woman without having married her. His face was blackened and he was made to wear a necklace of bones and to ride a donkey. He was given one hundred strokes with a baton (*Durra*). As a reward for surrendering himself to the *Jirga* for punishment, he was offered one goat, rupees thirty in cash and three *jaribs* of land. (Special diary, dated 18.4.1930. D.C. Office, Political Diaries, Police Department (April to Dec. 1930, S.No.38, B.No.3., D.O.A., Peshawar, p.137).

102 S.S.P., Peshawar, Report dated: 31.3.1931, S.No.454, Civil Secretariat, N.W.F.P., Peshawar, p.7.

described the pathetic conditions of the school building, welcomed Nehru, wished independence for the country and prayed for Nehru to become the first prime minister of India.<sup>103</sup> Nehru in his speech discussed the Indian situation and eulogized the people for their struggle for the independence of their country. Bacha Khan also spoke on the occasion.

The visit of Mr. Nehru was followed by Gandhi's visit from May 1 to 8, 1938 to the province. He also visited the School along with Bacha Khan. After getting a warm welcome from the students and teachers, Gandhi spoke appreciatively of the efforts of Bacha Khan for training the youth of the nation. He said he expected this generation to excel in each and every field of life. He donated Rs.500 from his *ashram* to the students. A part of this sum was allocated for scholarships while the rest of it was used to entertain the students with sweets. According to Jehanzeb Niyaz, such visits boosted the morale of the youth and created self-confidence among them.<sup>104</sup> It is noteworthy that Pakhtuns attached great importance to the people who visited them in their homes and usually did not turn down their requests.

### Conclusion

The formation of the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina was one of the responses of the Pakhtuns to the local, national and international socio-economic and political conditions. No doubt, the efforts started in the beginning of the century were the extension of the thought of Shah Waliullah as reflected in the ideas of the ulema of Deoband. However, a local touch was given to these efforts in the shape of Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina keeping in view the realities of the area.

Activities relating to the spread of education and cleansing of society of unwanted social evils demanded an apolitical leadership. In fact, restraint from politics is one of the prerequisite for all work of social uplift of a society. In the early days of the Anjuman, the leadership successfully carried forward its objective of educating the most uneducated community of the subcontinent. In the words of Jehanzeb Niyaz, "Bacha Khan's movement was not very much political. A large part of it was reformative; that was why it was named *Islahul Afaghina*."<sup>105</sup> Gradually, however, the Anjuman lost its apolitical identity and became a politically inspired movement, which proved a death knell for its existence.

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103 Niyaz, *op.cit.*, pp.23-25.

104 *Ibid.*, pp.25-26.

105 *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

The Anjuman did not succeed in achieving its objective of the development of an indigenous educational system parallel to the British system of education. The skilled and trained personnel needed for such a task could never be gathered and consequently, despite its initial successes, the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina could not reach anywhere near the achievements of Aligarh, Deoband and Nadwa as far as establishing its distinction in the domain of higher education was concerned. Even the very limited number of visionary leaders like Nasrullah Jan, Ahmad Shah, Makhfi and others were eventually dominated by those who attracted more to the political expediencies of the time.

Nevertheless, the Anjuman provided a unique opportunity to the Pakhtuns of knowing how to achieve an objective through collective efforts. This organizational expertise was later on used for political mobilization also. People became active in the freedom movement led by Bacha Khan and otherwise also. In fact, all those people who supported the struggle for Pakistan in the N.W.F.P. were influenced directly or indirectly by the political consciousness created by the independent schools established by the Anjuman.

The post-independence politics in Pakistan showed little independent decisions by the voters; however, the Pakhtuns as an ethnic group showed more maturity and independence in taking their decisions in the elections.<sup>106</sup> The people of the province proved politically more aware than their compatriots in other parts of Pakistan. In elections little blame of rigging has ever been reported from N.W.F.P. as compared to other areas of Pakistan.<sup>107</sup> This difference in political thinking in a more democratic way is the direct outcome of the awareness started in 1920s in this area through the socio-educational reformative movement of the Anjuman.

Teachers employed in the schools run by the Anjuman were mainly those who left their studies in different colleges during Khilafat movement. They taught in these schools on nominal salaries or even without pay. They were not well trained.<sup>108</sup> No doubt, these young teachers served well but for how long could they have engaged in these

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106 The MQM is another ethnic party, which showed its own thinking in choosing its representatives in the 1990s.

107 It was again the leadership of a political party from N.W.F.P. who resigned after failure in elections and thus upheld the democratic traditions in the country's polity.

108 It sometime created problems for the students also. Ahmad narrates his own story of harsh treatment meted out to him by an untrained teacher (Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp.33-37).

schools with negligible or no remuneration. On the other hand, the financial constraints of the Anjuman did not allow it to hire highly qualified and trained teachers. In the later stage, semi-skilled teachers in the schools hardly attracted good students. The donations and sponsorship of the Anjuman was badly affected after some of the leaders left the Anjuman. For example, Abbas Khan was a regular donor of Rs.500 per annum but he left the Anjuman after differences with Abdul Ghaffar Khan and stopped his financial assistance.

The Anjuman was ostensibly apolitical and no doubt it was successful in achieving its objectives to some extent. But the plea of the leaders particularly Abdul Ghaffar Khan that the British rule was the cause of all miseries of the Pakhtuns was a simple explanation to a very complex social phenomenon. Such syllogisms did provide direction to the energies of people to strive for independence from the British, but as this hypothesis was not correct the Pakhtun society even after the departure of the British still continued to be afflicted with the same evils as it suffered during the British rule. The reformation of a society calls for a far more serious attention than the Anjuman's leadership was prepared to quit it.

The Anjuman with the passage of time tilted to Pakhtun ethnocentrism and nationalism. The interaction of some of its leaders particularly Abdul Ghaffar Khan with Indian National Congress diverted the Anjuman from the task of social and educational reformation to political mobilization against the British in coalition with the Congress. This development caused a rift among the top leadership of the Anjuman.

In the late 1920s Indian political scene was dominated by agitational politics. The Shuddi and Sanghtan movements, Sarda Act, Rajpal Case, Cripps Mission, Nehru Report and reaction of Muslims thereto, Jinnah's 14 Points, the British reluctance to extend reforms to N.W.F.P., Indian National Congress' declaration of independence in its Lahore Session and the subsequent civil disobedience movements of Congress all affected the minds and actions of the leaders of the Anjuman. The constantly inculcated longing for freedom since 1921 among the students of the schools and others now found a suitable occasion in rising against the British. The involvement of some of the leaders of Anjuman in politics thus stopped the growth and development of the Anjuman, particularly in the field of education and thus, set the Anjuman on a downward slide and finally after the establishment of Frontier Youth League and Khuda'i Khidmatgar Party in 1930, all its activities came to a stand still. The Khuda'i Khidmatgar movement which was finally affiliated with the Indian National Congress in 1930 was, in a way

erected on the debris of the Anjuman.<sup>109</sup> According to Prof. Jahanzeb Niyaz, one of the very famous students of the Azad School, when Dr. Khan Sahib ministry was formed, he issued the orders of the merger of the school into the local government school. Consequently, on one Friday, all the students in white clean uniform came to school, filed up in rows on the basis of seniority and started moving. First of all, the students heralded the Congress flag and another student raised portrait of Bacha Khan and entered in a government school in Utmanzai and hoisted the flag on the school and hang up the portrait of Bacha Khan in the office of the headmaster. And we happily sat on the desks with other students.<sup>110</sup>

The growth of the Anjuman's school system stopped when Bacha Khan instead of sticking strictly to social and educational activities involved himself in politics. The wrath of the British Empire over the politics of Bacha Khan cast its reflection on the school system, which he had started, and the politics of his brother Dr. Khan Sahib ended the school system, which was thought to be producing anti-government students.

In the beginning of this century Hashtnagar became a centre of social, educational and political activities and at the end of the century it was considered to be the hub of political change at least in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

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109 The All India Muslim League refused to extend a friendly hand to the organization in order to protect itself from the British onslaught.

110 Niyaz, *op.cit.*, pp.29-30.