

Revisiting Educational Institutions in the Indian North-West Frontier Province: A Case Study of Contributions for Azad School Utman Zai

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ABSTRACT

The paper is about to explore one of the rustic educational movements of the Anjuman-i- Islahul Afaghina in the British North-West Frontier Province, and charts out the contributions of those celebrities who worked untiringly for the promotion of education in the Pashtun (Pukthun) region. The British Indian government used its North-West Frontier region as a buffer state to protect it from Russian intervention. It deliberately avoided positive reformation in this region. Educational policy revised by the government did not deliver any positive good for this region. This resulted in the emergence of nationalism by the Pashtun leadership which reformed Pashtun Society. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was one among those reformers who established Azad Schools in villages to educate the young generation. The schools were run on a voluntary basis and assisted through a systematic set up of Anjuman Islahul Afaghina-a body which maintained the entire administration of these schools. Various people supported Abdul Ghaffar Khan in his mission and contributed as and when required, namely, Fazal Mahmood Makhfi, Maulvi Tajuddin, Maulana Israel, Abdul Akbar Khan, Kunda Chachi (A widow and aunt of Abdul Ghaffar Khan), Maqsood Jan Khan, Master Kareem and others. This paper will focus as how various people contributed in cash or kind to strengthen the institutional structure of Azad Schools as well as the educational environment in these schools. Furthermore, it will justify the impact of these schools on future politics of this region.

KEYWORDS: Pukhtoon, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Azad Schools, Anjuman Islahul Afaghina

1. INTRODUCTION

The British Raj in India witnessed a tough resistance at the hands of the Indians, yet, to focus among them, the Pashtun land served as an important region to compel the government concentrate on it with a keen eye. This region held its utmost importance due its strategic location and is still considered as cockpit of Asia. The Pashtun leadership managed and resisted against the Raj, but, with two different approaches that emerged from this region, i.e. violent and Non-violent. Yet, the objective, of both these approaches, was to educate the natives of this region, reform their tradition ridden society and revive the very spirit of nationalism among them. In this paper the mass level contribution is discussed which supported the cause of educational development in this region. As the study is focused on the historical analysis, the descriptive and analytical approach has been utilized to understand the theme with the help of some valuable primary sources.

2. Background: The Indian North-West Frontier region was faced with multifaceted issues including those relating to education and society during the 19th Century.¹ The British annexation of the Punjab, in 1849, brought them in direct contact with the inhabitants of Pashtun land. For this region, they devised their policy and initiated the concept of *Tribal* and *Settled* areas with their objectives to ‘civilizing this uncivilized race’ of this region, to ensure their security that was obvious from Russian advance in this direction. The Pashtun race was called as ‘Martial’ but in a time when they needed their services,² yet they were considered ‘Savage’ and divinely ordained with the inability to be ruled by the White Man only, and deprived of education for the only reason to let them be suppressed and dominated for the years to come.

With the arrival of Lord Curzon as viceroy to India, in 1899, the process of re-formation started and the settled areas of Indian North-West Frontier region was grouped into a province in 1901-the region was lagging behind in the educational, political and social fields.³ According to the educational records and census report there were

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only 17 high schools, no middle school and 13 primary schools. Interestingly, all these schools were not under the direct control of the government.⁴ Yet there existed other parallel systems of education in the region. They were affiliated with Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, missionary schools (Christian), the Islamic schools of Haji sahib of Turangzai⁵ and the DB (District Board) Schools run by the district boards-independent from government authority. There were Khalsa schools run by the Sikh community which were established in 1912.⁶ The Islamia College Peshawar had been established in 1913 under the co-auspices of Sahibzada Abdul Qayum (1863-1937) and Rose Keppel (1866-1921) However, the system of education which excelled in quality and quantity in the entire region was of Azad Schools run by Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina (Association for the Reformation of Pashtuns).

To let the readers know about the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina and Haji Sahib of Turang Zai, discussed in aforementioned paragraph, it is shared that the said Anjuman (first ever) had been established in 21st March 1921 outside the premises of Azad School Uthman Zai. It was initiated by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, son of Behan Khan, a landlord in village Uthman Zai, district Charsadda whose father Saifullah Khan was also had good reputation therein. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was supported by his colleagues and friends in this establishment. Muhammad Abbas Khan became the president, Mian Abdullah Shah Secretary Finance, Barrister Mian Ahmad Shah as Secretary General and Khadim Muhammad Akbar as Vice President while school affairs were assigned to Mian Abdul Maarooof Shah. After its establishment, the task of managing the Azad schools were maintained by the Anjuman.⁷

2.1.Reformation of Pakhtun Society: Abdul Ghaffar Khan had inspiration from Haji sahib of Turangzai who was a religious man and respected in the surrounding areas. Haji Sahib of Turang Zai had already established schools called Darul-Ulooms where religious education was imparted to the students. He was against the evil and Un-Islamic practices existed in Pashtun Society. He used to visit different areas and educate public to abandon such practices and receive education.⁸

Abdul Ghaffar Khan, in his youth, had studied the Pashtun psyche and their approach towards life and also their hard nature which was proving harmful to them; they were considered barbarian and Savage by the British mindset. He (Abdul Ghaffar Khan) led to the conclusion that all the un-Islamic customs and traditions and the illiteracy therein were the main hurdles in their way towards progress. Taking the opportunity, Abdul Ghaffar Khan decided to educate the Pakhtuns. For that very reason, he, along with his other colleagues established schools at his own village, Utmanzai, and Gadar, Mardan, in 1910. The fellows and friends of Abdul Ghaffar Khan were Maluvi Taj Muhammad, Maulvi Fazl Rabi, Maulana Abdul Aziz, Fazl-i Mahmood Makhfi, and through their association he was introduced to Shiekh Ul Hind, Maulana Mahmood Ul Hassan and Haji Sahib of Turang Zai.⁹

This educational service was extended to other adjacent areas within the province and Darul Ulooms (schools) got established on the same patterns of Utmanzai and Gaddar. Here, Mathematics and Science were included in the syllabus along with pure religious subjects, and this was an important deviation from the Deobandi tradition.¹⁰ As mentioned in previous paras, Haji Sahib of Turangzai also had spread a network of Darul Ulooms attached to mosques in various areas.¹¹ But the outbreak of World War 1st resulted in the dissociation of the belated company of Haji Sahib of Turangzai who managed his escape to the tribal territory only to avoid being arrested. The movement initiated by Haji Sahib and Abdul Ghaffar Khan suffered a lot and almost all the institutions were closed, their buildings demolished and teachers punished.¹² There are two views about the strength of such schools; a source mentions it as 30 while another source claims that strength was 74.^{13*}

The Indians felt humiliation when, in 1919, the implementation of Rowlatt Act occurred. Public resistance surfaced and the government had to take punitive measures to control them. In the meanwhile, the initiation of Khilafat Movement and, later on Hijrat Movement sickened any opportunity of re-starting those educational institutions.¹⁴ However, in 1919, an Azad school with the same objective and motive of previous Darul Ulooms was established at Khalono-Dir District. Fazl-i-Mahmood Makhfi was the only supporter of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the construction of the school.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the Nawab of Dir with the support of the British authority, banned Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Fazl-e-Mahmood Makhfi, closed the school, and arrested the teachers as well as the students, and beaten, as discussed in previous lines.¹⁶

In coming years, Abdul Ghaffar Khan got himself associated with Khilafat and Hijrat Movement and served in the capacity from supporter and member to the position of General Secretary and participated in the Hijrat Movement but to no avail.¹⁷

2.2. Establishment of Azad Schools Uthman Zai and the Contributions: Abdul Ghaffar Khan gave Rs.7000 to/ Fazle e Rahim Saqi to purchase land for school and 35 *Jareeb*s was purchased.(A *Jareeb* is a term used as a unit for measurement of land; it is equal to four *Kanal* (s)while a *Kanal* is equal to 20 marla(s) and a *marla* is equal to 272 Square feet). The income of the said land was donated to the Azad School Utmanzai. Kunda Chachi, the widow of Saman Khan, an uncle of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, offered to pay permanent annual donation of Rs.500/ along with food thrice a day for the boarding students. She even used to wash the clothes of the boarding students.¹⁸

Khadim Muhammad Akbar offering his own services for the Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina and served as its vice president. He had resigned from the government office where he served as Patwari. He belonged to Akorha Khattak, Nowshera and posted at Charsadda where he left government service after associating with Abdul Ghaffar Khan's cause of serving Pakhtun community.¹⁹

Mr. Husnuddin Durrani, a Tehsildar in the Government of British India, resigned from his post and started teaching at Azad School Utmanzai. This was his love for his motherland and the development of Pakhtun students.²⁰

Amir Nawaz Khan Jalya sold his wife's ornaments to pay the school expenses. He was the secretary of Azad School Utmanzai. When all members of the Anjuman got arrested in 1934, he used to collect 1 kg corn flour from each house in district Charsadda and also collected Rs.1500/ to bear the school expenses. Another valuable service was done by Akram Khan; he gifted his house for school building and hujra for boarding house of the school while he himself along with his family members migrated to another adjacent village Khan Mai. Moreover he donated adjacent land to his house for school expenses in future.²¹

Mr. Amir Mukhtar Khan of Bannue, during prison in Lahore with Bacha Khan discussed the socio-educational service for Pakhtuns and he encouraged his two sons to teach the students in Azad School Utmanzai. They were Amir Mumtaz Khan²² and Maqsood Jan Khan.²³ They had given up their education as a protest in favor of civil disobedience. Maqsood Jan Khan was appointed as the first Head master of Utmanzai Azad School.²⁴ After the nationalization of Azad School Utmanzai, in 1946 by the Dr. Khan Saib's government, Maqsood Jan Khan occupied the same post as he held previously. Ameer Mumtaz Khan was second after his brother to supervise the school as head master-this was due to the leave taken by Maqsood Jan Khan to complete his education.²⁵

Barrister Mian Ahmad Shah of Qazi Khel Charsada left Ali Garh for Charsadda in favor of Non-Violence and started teaching at Utmanzai Azad School voluntarily.²⁶ The schools were primarily run through a systematic approach. Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina had been established by Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his colleagues-friends in 1921, which had three objectives; i.e. to generate funds for schools, to teach the students in schools and establish branches of the Anjuman in schools' catchment area, i.e. Tappa /Mohallah but its main focus was on school administration.²⁷ This Anjuman kept and maintained the finances and other school record. Everywhere the membership campaign was run and members registered in two types, the youth/volunteers and the elderly personalities who organized/maintained the *Anjuman* activities. These branches of *Anjuman*, as discussed earlier, were run through the donations of the *Anjuman* members and of public. Here, a detail of various donors is shared.²⁸

The members of the first Anjuman (1921) who registered themselves as permanent members with the obligation (donation) to pay annual contribution to run the expenses. The detail is as follows:

Names & Contribution	Names & Contribution
Abdul Akbar Khan (Umerzai)...Rs.500	Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan) Rs.500
Ghulam Muhayyuddin (Tangi)...Rs.200	Muhammad Abbas Khan (Utmanzai)...Rs.500
Kunda Chachi (Uthman Zai).Rs.500	Haji Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Utmanzai)...Rs.250
Adil Shah (Turangzai).Rs.50	Mian Abdullah Shah Qazi Khel Rs.500
I.Inayatullah Khan (Umerzai)...Rs.100	Faiz Muhammad Khan (Utmanzai) Rs.250
Zareen Khan (His village named after him as Zareen Abad)...Rs.50	Fakhr-i-Qaum Mian Shib Ziarat Shah (Kaka Sahib)...Rs.50
Ghandal Khan (Charsadda Khas) Rs.250	Taj Muhammad Khan (Charsadda Khas) Rs.250
Muhammad Akbar Khan...Rs.50	Haji Shah Nawaz Khan (Utmanzai)...Rs.50 ²⁹

Apart from this, there were other contributors who were not members of this Anjuman and were consulted at various occasions who made themselves obligatory to contribute in cash and kind, and participated in annual sessions of the *Anjuman*. They paid annual amount in the following manner:

Names	Contribution	Names	Contribution
Madad Khan (Turangzai)	Rs.50	Inayatullah Khan (Umerzai)	Rs.50
Adil Shah (Turangzai)	Rs.50	Ghulam Muhayyuddin (Tangi)	Rs.250
Zareen Khan Turangzai	Rs.50	Abdul Rauf Khan	Kind
Abdullah Khan Zareen Abad	Rs.100	Maulana Khalil Ur Rehman (Tangi)	Kind
Hakeem Khan (Garhi Hameed Gul	Rs.50	Bahadar Khan Umer Zai	Kind
Mian Fazle Lateef (Tangi)	Rs.250	Maulana Shah Rasool (Bhar Garhai)	Kind
Pyari Bhabi W/O Saadullah (Charsadda)	Rs.50	Muhammad Shah (Khyal Garvi)	Rs.100
Maulana Mir Zai (Mir Zai)	Kind ³⁰		

The teachers who taught in Azad schools without getting any salary or with less than government school teachers were:

1. Maqsood Jan Khan and his brother Amir Mumtaz Khan of Banu, 2. Master Abdul Karim of Utmanzai, 3. Maulana Muhammad Israel of Utmanzai, Fazal Mahmood Makhfi of Dir who resided in Charsadda, 4. Maulan Arifullah of Utmanzai (Cousin of Maulana Israel), 5. Hastam Khan of Tangi, 6. Iltaf Gul Utmanzai, 7. Maulana Khalil Ur Rehman Utmanzai, 8. Malik Hazrat Gul Utmanzai, 9. Husnuddin Durrani Utmanzai, 10. Muhammad

Islam of Nowshera, 11. Mian Peer Saib, Abdul Maarooof shah Mian Saib 12. Ahmad Shah Mian from PrangCharsadda, 13. Amir Nawaz Khan Jalya of utmanzai. 14. Mohammad Jan of utmanzai. 15. Abdul Kafi 16. Abdul Rauf of Rajjar 17. Mohammad Ismail 18. Bhae Jan 19. Akbar Khan. 20. Salahuddin of Charsadda. 21. Mohammad Anwar of Charsadda. 22. Maulvi Shakirullah 23. Maulvi Asmatullah 24. Aziz Khan of Munna kili.³¹

While at the time of constructing new rooms to accommodate the over loading strength of the students, the mason's and labor's job was contributed voluntarily by teachers, students, *Anjuman* members and even the cook of Utmanzai school's boarding house contributed. Amir Mumtaz Khan (Head Master) and Husnuddin (teacher) worked as mason, Mian Ahmad Shah, Khadim Muhammad Akbar and other students along with the mentioned cook worked as labor. Muhammad Faheem, a carpenter by profession, also did his job of wood work and partly served as mason but without taking any compensation in construction of the said school.³²

Mr. Ghulam Haider Khan of Tangi paid one month salary to all the teachers of the Azad school utmanzai. It was the time when salaries were not paid to the teachers and it reconfirmed the self-support mode of the organization. The mother of Abbas Khan Utmanzai and widow of Shahbaz Khan donated Rs 500 for purchasing books and stationary for all students of the Azad school utmanzai. Mr. Abdul Majid Khan and his sons had given proclain of 75 jarib of land for the Azad school Tangi. Azizula Haq of Barazai, Badiullah of Barazai, Ghulam Mohyiddin of Nusratzai and Karimullah of Nusratzai contributed Rs. 357 for the Azad School Tangi.³³

2.3. Cash Contribution Donated by Pakhtuns from USA: The Pashtuns who had been living in the United States of America, had the access to journal 'Pukhtun' and as a gesture of love for their mother land and support to the Pashtun Struggle for Independence they contributed accordingly in cash accordingly; one of its volume listed the names of 43 Pashtuns who had their permanent residence in Indian North-West Frontier Region but for some reason they lived in USA.³⁴

3. Conclusion. The overall spirit of contribution by the Pashtuns showed their love for motherland which, to some, looked obvious because of they had Pashtun blood in their veins. Yet, what they needed, and which stimulated their inner self, was the true and dynamic leadership of the Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his fellow leaders; they seemed like sincere devotees to the uniform and gigantic cause to serve Pashtuns. This very spirit of putting their loyalties towards the achievement of targeted objectives resulted in bringing the so called 'SAVAGE', 'UNCIVILIZED' and 'BARBARIAN' Pashtuns to establish a uniform platform- *the Anjuman-islahul Afaghina* (Society for the Reformation of Afghans-Pashtuns). The aforesaid establishment was reflection of the maturity in the minds of the Pashtun leaders who studied the then prevailing situation and felt the need for Pashtuns' survival with the influential element of the *Pashtun revivalism*. This revivalism was the brave and

courageous deeds their forefathers had performed in past and which had been remembered as *Historical legacies* and which had received acknowledgment.

The Pashtun leadership also felt (analyzed) the socio-educational and economic deterioration of Pashtuns at the hands of fellow non-Muslims as well as the rulers-government machinery. Consequently, they initiated the struggle to change their approach towards life and the British Indian Government. The British Indian Government was dealt with accordingly. Yet, the spirit and service of Pashtun leaders under the esteemed leadership of Abdul Ghaffar Khan proved helpful in reviving the nationalist spirit in the minds of Pashtun population who supported their leaders positively and contributed a lot to serve their cause to changing the prevailing socio-educational structure which was focused to boost up freedom struggle.

This contribution of the Pashtuns, discussed in this paper, occupies a central position due to many reasons which guided and supported the Pashtun struggle for independence. They are, the creedless and sincere love for Pashtun land, the dedication for the true cause, the strength for survival of Pashtun nation, the need to own a collective responsibility in uplifting the educational structure of the coming generation (of Pashtuns), the spirit to serve, the courage to motivate and impress (influence) fellow Pashtuns, the ability to perform using every possible effort, the sense of understanding the logic behind the establishment of Azad School Uthman Zai and understandability to know the value of education, analyzing the deteriorating position of Pashtuns and lastly, devising tactics to make up the tools to counter the existed evil practice-it was the famous saying which was utilized to keep the Pashtuns lag behind in field of education from other fellow communities (nations), i.e. to suppress them and to ignore their progress rather not to allow them (Pashtuns) to get proper education. It was done due to the fear that they (Pashtuns) might have gone upward and develop themselves, and so, they were deliberately deprived of getting education; they were made prey to observe the fake religious obligation of “not to get education because it had been imparted by the English People” and that “those who get education will go to hell rather than heaven”, as it was a common practice being persuaded by the British Indian Government using the most influential stakeholders in Pashtun Society. The weapon used for deteriorating the educational status of Pashtuns and to mobilize them not to receive education was spreading of the message,

“Sabaq Da Madrasey Wayi Da Paara Da Paisey Wayi

Pa Janat Key Ba Ye Zai Na wee

Pa Dozakh Key Ba Ghuttey Wayi”

The service as well as contribution, in cash or in any kind, offered by the Pashtun leaders and public alike, proved fruitful and made the Pashtuns progress in field of education which enabled them (Pashtuns) to participate in the struggle for their independence from the British Raj. This change, from narrow understanding regarding rejection to get education, was replaced by the adherence to the notion of getting almost every child enrolled or at least persuading every Pashtun to enroll the children and supporting the *Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina* in its cause to establish Azad school, contribute to it either in cash or kind with the sole objective to raise the status of un-educated Pashtun to educated Pashtun who could, and who in later years, understand what was good for them (Pashtuns) and what wasn't. This contribution of almost all the native Pashtuns made this movement of educational reformation successful as it was witnessed (proved) in the coming years when most of its graduates availed the opportunities to serve the freedom struggle, to participate in the political sphere of their province with dedication and rendered valuable service.

To sum up, the fact remains, which no one can deny and which is time tested, that this sense of contribution for the cause of strengthening the educational status of the Pashtuns was not possible without the un-tiring efforts of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his colleagues-companions-who, if had not initiated the idea of establishing the school, would be valueless. Anyone when turns the pages of history regarding the educational reformation in Pashtun Society will agree to acknowledge without any hesitation the true services rendered by Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his fellows.

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