

Educational Philosophy of Baacha Khan

Ihsanullah

Pakhtuns were ruled indirectly by Mughals, Sikh and British. Usually invaders found prominent people within Pakhtuns and ruled through them. Most of the invaders tried to impose themselves over Pakhtuns but couldn't succeed. Of all those British was the wise one. They subjugated Pakhtuns through Sikhs and ruled them indirectly. Fear from Pakhtun abilities, British planned to destroy them in every field of life particularly in education.

After capturing most of the Indian Sub-continent territory, British started struggle for spreading Christianity. They introduced missionary activities. Through those missionary activities British aimed conversion of Pakhtuns to Christianity to defend themselves in Indian Sub-continent. For that dirty purpose British used the sacred profession of doctors and teachers. They established missionary hospitals and schools in different parts of the region. They penalized people like Dr. Penal, Dr. Edward Herbert, Dr. Clark and Dr. Pander for those missionary activities. These people used their professions for missionary activities. Herbert Edward (first British Commissioner of Peshawar) opened Edward Mission School at Peshawar in 1853. Sir Robert Croft was appointed its first Principal. Initially it was a primary school but later on given the status of Higher Secondary and then the famous Edward College.

To stop such activities someone has to come forward for the rescue of Islam and revival of Pakhtuns. In such a critical situation a man with charismatic qualities appeared on the hopeless scenario of the region and gave hope to the society. That man was Haji Abdul Wahid popularly known as Haji Sahib of Turangzai. He felt that both Sikhs and British wanted to destroy Pakhtuns socially and economically. Pakhtuns were indulged in un-Islamic activities which disturbed their social life. To get rid of those un-Islamic activities, Haji Sahib started a movement for the reformation of Pakhtun society. During that movement he felt that for the success of this movement it is important to impart religious education in the innocent masses. For this purpose he opened a chain of *Madaris* (religious schools) throughout the region to counteract missionary schools. Haji Sahib couldn't establish those *madaris* himself but common Pakhtuns established those *madaris* with their own funds and Haji Sahib only managed those *madaris*. The number of those *madaris* is ambiguous. The British record suggested it as 34 but other sources place them 72, 120 and 150 respectively. Haji Sahib himself inspected the schools every month. The system was going very well which annoyed the British. And they opened a war against him and his schools. He was arrested in 1910 and sent to Jail. This forced him to leave the settled area and migrated to Mohmand Agency where he lived till his death (1937).

Migration of Haji Sahib disturbed his educational plan. Though his disciples reopened those schools but couldn't maintain the discipline. It was near that the whole system might flop. In the meantime an admirer of Haji Sahib came forward and took the responsibility of

educating Pakhtuns. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the name of that person and world knows him as Baacha Khan. He was a landlord but knows exactly that what Pakhtuns would need? He was a part of Haji Sahib social reforms movement but greatly impressed by his educational plan. In attachment with that educational plan, Baacha Khan and Maulvi Abdul Aziz open a madrasa-cum-school in 1910 at Utmanzai. The mullahs opposed the plan by declaring it as a missionary school but they have no real alternative. They oppose Baacha Khan and his colleagues on different occasions.

After establishing that school at Utmanzai, Baacha Khan indulged in family matters which disturb his educational plan. His business continued till 1920. During that spare of time, Baacha Khan visited the whole region frequently. In his visit he noted ignorance and illiteracy among Pakhtuns. From those experiences he concluded that for the revival of Pakhtun society a revolution is needed. And revolution needs leaders and scholars. Indeed education is prerequisite for producing such type of leaders and scholars. To educate Pakhtuns, Baacha Khan kept the foundation of Azad Islamia School in 1921 at Utmanzai. Maqsood Jan Khan of Bannu became the first headmaster of that Azad School at Utmanzai. His elder brother Amir Mumtaz Khan joins the school as a teacher. Both these brothers left Islamia College Peshawar during Khilafat movement studying in B.A. They were gifted by his father Amir Mukhtar Khan to the Azad School of Baacha Khan. When Maqsood Jan left the school to continue his education, his elder brother Amir Mumtaz Khan became the headmaster of this school. Lack of teaching staff compels Baacha Khan to teach himself in the school. His both sons Khan Abdul Ghani Khan and Khan Abdul Wali Khan were among the first students of that school.

The idea of Azad School became so popular among Pakhtuns which is a pleasing moment for the founder but that shocked the British. They weren't interested in the uplift of the Pakhtuns. To stop Baacha Khan from such activities they used different tactics. They humiliate Khan Teachers, by giving greed of enough salary and offer them better posts in Govt. schools but can't succeed to defame Khan's educational plan. In 1921 they arrested Baacha Khan under 40 FCR when he was busy in making a football ground for school children and sentenced three years imprisonment. His imprisonment works in favour of schools and in no time the number of school branches raises rapidly. Most of those branches were open in Charsaddah, Mardan, Swabi and Nowshera tehsils.

Azad Schools was affiliated with Jamia Millia, Delhi, on December 1, 1923. Jamia Millia conducts its examinations and a number of students after passing matriculation in Azad Schools joined Jamia Millia for further education. The schools mainly followed the Jamia syllabus with necessary modification required by the local environment. Pashto was adopted as medium of instruction but certain subjects were taught in English. The curriculum also included teaching of the Holy Quran, Hadith, Fiqah, Arabic language and Islamic history to impart religious education in the Pakhtuns.

Successful experience of Azad Schools boosts Baacha Khan Confidence. He starts thinking about the establishment of a society for the reformation of Pakhtuns. In 1921 he established the society with the name of 'Anjuman-e-Islah Afaghina' (Society for the reformation of Afghans). The society aimed to encourage the economic, social and

educational uplift of Pakhtuns. He stressed upon the Pakhtuns to take on professions for earning money despite using their valid time in useless activities. To set an example, Baacha Khan himself open a shop at *Gur Mandi* (sugar cane market) and start working by himself in his own fields. The establishment of this association also aimed that it would take the responsibility of supervision of Azad schools chain and work for the opening of other schools.

During his tours he observed that Pakhtuns were not even conscious that Pashto was their language, and wherever they went, they adopt the local language and forget their mother tongue. They don't teach their language to others and did not care to read and write in Pashto. For propagation of Pashto language, Baacha Khan started 'Pakhtun' journal in May 1928. He was the editor of the journal. Yearly subscription of the journal was Rs. 4 rupees. To attract the attention of the students, its yearly subscription was reduced to two and half rupees. Journal is of medium size having forty pages. Initially the journal was published in Rawalpindi, then in Amritser and finally at Peshawar. The journal contained well written articles on different subjects like politics, Pashto literature, Pashto poetry, Islamic history, gender issues, Indian affairs, social problems of Pakhtun society, Afghan affairs and etc. In no time Pakhtun journal became a mouth piece of the Pakhtuns. People not only in Pakhtunkhawa but abroad also demanded for the journal. Its circulation was reached from 500 to 3000 which show how famous is this journal among Pakhtuns. The main reason of its famousness was that there is no Pashto journal in the region till 1928. Other reason was its topics which mostly cover all fields of the region.

British were first feared from the Azad Schools and then from Pakhtun magazine of Baacha Khan. That's why he was continuously involved in one or other matter and banned the journal. After release Baacha Khan starts republishing that magazine. This was even continued after the creation Pakistan but they all don't shake Baacha Khan from his educational plane. He continued his struggle of educating Pakhtun till his death. His mission was carried on by his disciples even after his death.

In 2007 Baacha Khan Trust (BKT) reorganizes chains of Baacha Khan Azad Schools under Baacha Khan Trust Education Foundation (BKTEF) label. Round about 14 branches were open. Among those Mathra Branch is the pioneer which was opened on 1st September 2007 at a place donated by Muhammad Hashim Babar, former Awami National Party leader. This was followed 13 more branches which were open in different parts of the region. Among those 2 branches were open in Peshawar, (Mathra and Nautia), Malakand (Totakan and Dargai) and Karak District. A branch in Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Dir upper, Landi Kotal, Chitral, Thal and Kohat were also opened later on.

BKTEF was under supervision of board of directors which comprise 11 members. Presently Dr. Khadim Hussain is working as its Managing Director. With promotion of primary education BKTEF also working for Youth leadership and Culture Development. Beside this it also worked in civil society and environmental projects as well. BKTEF follow Oxford syllabus with necessary modification according to the environment. The schools mainly focused on development of Pashto in addition with I.T and religious

knowledge. Medium of instruction is Pashto and English. BKTEF used to give free of cost education. Foundations provide books, uniforms free of cost and its fee structure is nominal.

Establishment of BKTEF is a great achievement of BKT. The system not only educates Pakhtuns but it also promotes Non-violence philosophy of Baacha Khan. In current context Pakhtuns need this philosophy badly to shake off the label of violent and terrorist. BKTEF play its part by promoting primary education and other projects like community development and youth leadership. Beside these projects foundation should start a project focusing non-violence philosophy and find specialists in this field to deliver lectures on it and aware masses of its importance.

The foundation achieves their goals but needs more improvement. Foundation can improve it further if they follow the disciplines of Baacha Khan for which he struggle in his entire life. Those disciplines are to live simply, be punctual, trust worthy, avoid useless activities and work hard. If they follow these very principles then a time will come when this system will rule over all other education system that was followed in the region.