

Azad Schools System: An Appraisal

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This paper is based on the historical research of Azad (Independent/free) Schools system, of Khyber Pukhtunkwah¹ Pakistan in the early nineties against the British educational system. The study scrutinises the role of Azad schools for the Pukhtun uplift, the eradication of social evils and un-Islamic customs from the society. After gaining power in the Indian subcontinent (1857) the British Government introduced a new educational system of their own, this was alien to the people of India. Resultantly it created a sense of reaction among the Indians in general and the Muslims in particular, as their old educational system was destroyed by the new ruler. Lord Macaulay (British educationist) gave a death blow to the vernacular languages, when the medium of instruction was changed to English in 1835, to produce the most obedient servants of Indians but English in flavour and propensity. The aim of this study is to explore the Muslims' educational, social and political responses and how far they succeeded against all odds.

Keywords: Azad school, Pukhtunkwah, Pukhtun, subcontinent, vernacular languages.

An abridged analysis of the Azad Schools system narrative was first presented by the authors as a discussion paper for the 14th International Conference, World Congress Comparative Education Societies, Istanbul, Turkey, 14-18 June 2010. This study scrutinises the issues introduced in that paper and widens the discussion about Azad School, Utmanzai. This in depth study extended its boundaries because Pukhtu medium of instruction in Pukhtunkwah schools is a controversial issue till date. One of the aims of this study is to highlight the significance of vernacular language Pukhtu that could be successfully adopted as a medium of instructions in Pukhtu speaking area of Pukhtunkwah following the example of Azad Schools System.

This study can shed more light on the Azad Schools system and its role for the Pukhtun society debate by opening up the discussion to include particular educational perspectives that are linked, directly and/or indirectly, to the study under consideration.

After the War of Independence (1857) the Indian subcontinent came under the direct control of the British army. Muslims were in a state of decay, Muslims leadership started their struggle for reformation of the Muslims, who were facing challenges from their Hindu neighbours and Christian masters. Different educational institutions were established such as; Muhamadan-Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College, Aligarh, Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam and Aligarh, Darul-uloom, Deoband etc. The Frontier Muslims were enthusiastic too about the revivalism of their Islamic values and teachings. The most prominent personalities of the time were; Haji Sahib of Turangzai and Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Popularly known as *Bacha/Badshah* Khan; the founder of Khudai Khidmatgar Movement). This paper will provide a recommence of their efforts and an in-depth historical standpoint of the Azad Schools System with criticism of the Pukhtuns reformists who failed in establishing higher education institutes for the Pukhtuns uplift in Pukhtunkwah.

Azad Schools were the efforts of Abdul Ghaffar Khan (a nationalist anti-British politician) and his companions to educate the people of Pukhtunkwah. Therefore the historical educational setting of the Indian

¹ Formerly known as the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) now it is renamed 'Khyber Pukhtunkwah' in 2010 after the 18th amendment in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

subcontinent until the end of British imperialism with special reference to the native people attitudes towards modern education are discussed first; secondly with the response of the Muslims and why they felt the need of the Azad Schools such as an indigenous school system to counter the one imposed by the British ruler. The study further highlights the salient features of Azad Schools; its curriculum, teaching staff, finances and its role in the Pukhtuns society of that time.

Aims of the Azad Schools

- To reform and eradicate the social evils and un-Islamic practices from society.
- To eliminate the prejudices of Muslims towards modern education.
- To adopt a strategy to seek a middle way between the religious schools and the modern British schools.

Method

The historical research, which are essentially concerned with the problems of selection and evaluation of evidence (Bell, 2005) This method was very useful to analyse the scattered primary data of Special Branch (Police Record) preserved at the Peshawar (the capital city of Pukhtunkhwah) Archives, NDC (National Documentation Centre) Islamabad and India Office library London. Furthermore, my methodology is based on different emerging themes of my collected data, using descriptive and analytical approach. When the research subjects are scarce, analysis of the documentary records and files are significant and immensely valuable (Johnson, 1984: 23 cited in Bell, 2005).

The Status of Education during the British Period

After the War of Independence (1857), the British colonists not only imposed their own system of education but they also started marginalising the native system of education in a much planned manner. A system that had developed throughout India during the Muslim rule in an evolutionary way was a well-developed and was fulfilling the requirements of the society (Gillani, 1983). We can divide the British-rule into the following four developmental phases.

First Phase (1765-1813): In the beginning, the British East India Trading Company posed an indifferent attitude to the locally educated youth as they found them to unfit to serve their purpose in India and they adopted a policy of training them as per their requirement of serving them with utmost loyalty (Baha, 1978). In 1784, they founded an Arabic official school for Muslims and in 1791, two Sanskrit medium schools for Hindus to train and serve them for the British purpose (Obhrai, 1938). The basic purpose of these institutions was to prepare such persons who could be able to translate and explain Hindu and Muslim laws for their (so called) peace and justice. In 1800, Fort William College was founded in Calcutta for official training of the newly selected civil servants of the East India Company. Fort William College did not last for long and another college was opened in England for the training of Indian civil servants. In the Charter Act, 1813, a sum of one hundred thousand rupees was kept for development in science and modern educational studies in British India (Census of India, 1911 & Sajjad 1990).

Second Phase (1813-1854): During the second phase a visible change of prompting English language and modern education was observed. In 1823, the British East India Trading Company's authority in Bengal devised a plan to develop the educational institutions on lines compatible with the company's interests. James Mill, an officer of Indian affairs, wrote about this policy that the basic requirement is not to develop Hindu and Muslim style of education in Indian but it was to develop the practical and useful education (Sajjad, 1990). In 1827, after four years, the Company made it clear that nothing was more important to them than education of English language and European Science amongst the Indian people. In February 1835, Lord Macaulay wrote his report in favour of Western Education. He proposed that there should be no education and literature should be taught to the Indians other than English. He also proposed that all educational funds, by the government, should be used for the propagation of English and western education only (IOR, 1828-1900 & Iqbal, 1977).

Third Phase (1854-1905): The third phase spreads over a period of forty one years. After the War of Independence 1857, the Company government came to an end and the British Empire accepted India as her responsibility. The Indian Muslims, now, were entirely vulnerable to British and they did their best to suppress

them. Hindus compromised with the conditions and took the advantages and got higher positions. Various universities were founded in this period. English was a compulsory subject as well as it was adopted as a medium of instructions (IOR, 1828-1900 & Ali 1998).

Forth Phase (1905-1947): The last period remained till 1947 and started in 1905 when Lord Curzon adopted strict policy and he not only discriminated between limited higher education and pure English education, but also insulted the highly educated (natively) Indians (IOR, 1900-1930). Which raised a general wave of anger amongst the Indians and they started feeling the need of an educational system of their own national requirements (IOR, 1900-1930 & Qudus, 1979).

The Status of Indigenous Education

After the death of last Mughal emperor, Aurangzed Alamgir (1618-1707), the Muslims were in a state of decay and gradual decline; this was naturally reflected in their education. There were numerous *Maktab/Madris* (mosque-schools) during and in post Aurangzed periods but their courses had become static and the syllabi had become out dated which was not in conformity with the requirements of the time.

Lord Macaulay gave a death blow to the vernacular languages, when the medium of instructions was changed to English in 1835 (Obhrai, 1938). The purpose of which was to produce 'the most obedient servant'. The cardinal principle this system was to quote in the words of Lord Macaulay: 'We want Indians in colour but English men in taste and aptitude (Quddus, 1979:41& IOR, 1900)'. The objectives for giving western education to the people of subcontinent were manifold. First, the English masters were in dire need of clerical administration staff. Secondly, they wanted to expand the educated class through western education (which was in fact secular in nature) to weaken the so-called religious fanaticism, which may cause the down fall of the British imperialism in India (Jacobson, 2004). English secular system of education did great harm of political, social and intellectual level and especially the Muslim community was badly affected. This system produced the rival sects on social, economic and intellectual levels among the Muslims, and their unity and culture, was shattered. Lastly, to westernise the Indian people completely by de-value their own culture and tradition for the supremacy of western knowledge and culture (Jacobson, 2004).

This anti-oriental British policy immensely suffered the Indian Muslims. Muslims were subjected to ruthless discrimination and hostilities. The Hindus had no scruples in taking advantage of the situation. In every department of life, Muslims were discouraged. They were deprived of employment opportunities. The landed gentry were disinherited through large-scale confiscation. Muslim education was ruined through deliberate negligence on the part of British (Baha, 1978: 19). The British had always looked upon the Muslims as their adversaries because they had resented being ousted from power.

Muslims Response to British Education System

The movement launched against the English secular system of education, instead of making an integrated and unified response made two separate responses, namely, Deoband (the response, was given exclusively to the conservation of cultural heritage) and in the shape of Alighrah, (the response was given to the reconstruction and renewal of this heritage). Among these institutions working for the conservation of cultural heritage Darul-uloom Deoband, Madrassa Rahimiya, Jamia Milliya Islamia were the prominent ones. However all these efforts by the Muslims were their individual pursuits and some were in complete disarray due to the lack of patronage by both the British Government and by the Muslim aristocracy (Khan, 1969).

Institutionalised religious education was started at Madrassa Rahimiya by Shah Abdur Rahim the father of the legendry religious scholar Shah Waliullah. Madrassa Rahimiya was used by Shah Waliullah for reforming the ways and customs of his people of his time. His strategy was to help the people to receive correct understanding of the Holy Quran and by lessening their differences upon minor interpretation of the religion. Shah Waliullah aspired for unity and revival of the Indian Muslims. In the light of Quran, *Hadith* (Sayings of the prophet Muhammad (S) and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) the people were taught in this *Madrassa* (Khan, 1969, Minult, 1982).

Madrasa Rahimiya was followed by Darul-uloom Deoband, where the main emphasis was on the teaching of *Hadith*. It also incorporated some features of the educational system introduced by the British, for example students were divided into different levels, attendance registers were maintained and occasional written examinations were held. The curriculum was spread over seven years but the seminary did not confer any degree (IOR, 1887 & Gillani, 1983). In 1896, Maulana Shibli formed Nadwat-ul-ulema Academy at Lucknow. At Nadwah more emphasis was given to Arabic and modern education. Thus it was an attempt to combine the religious and secular subjects. Jamia Milliyah (1920) was also established with a purpose of integrating religious and secular education. It incorporated many features of Deoband and also made work and dignity of labour compulsory (CID, 1921).

While the scholars of Deoband carried out their plan for maintaining a separate Muslim identity, culture and traditions, another eminent Muslim who was also a pupil of Maulana Mamlook Ali, started thinking on different line. He was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), who realised that it was not possible for the Muslims to throw out the new rulers in immediate future. Thus sensing the need of the time, he laid the foundation of Aligarh Movement. For this purpose, he decided to open a college at Aligarh. The foundation stone of which was laid by Lord Layton the Viceroy of India, on 8th January, 1877(CID, 1921). Classes were started in January, 1878, there were two departments; an English department in which University courses were taught, while in the Urdu department, Urdu and old learning in Persian and Arabic were taught. The latter department could not survive for long because the students realised that the Urdu education could not provide them with means of livelihood (CID, 1921).

The establishment of two separate, instead of one comprehensive institution for achieving these two complementary functions of education, created a cultural gap between the graduates of these institutions, dividing the education class of the community in to two closed groups of 'Maulana' and 'Mister'. Both groups were with complete lack of communication because they spoke different languages and lived in different worlds. Both, Deoband and Aligarh, failed to strike a balance between tradition and change. Both of them deviated from the middle path, the one drifted to the extreme of social stability, the other to that of social change. The one treated the path of revivalism in the name of traditionalism; the other treaded the path of westernisation in the name of modernisation. Circumstances so conspired that the Muslims of subcontinent could not manage to have one unified system of education (Obhrai, 1963).

The Status of Education in Pukhtunkhwah at the Eve of Azad Schools

The province of Pukhtunkhwah is bounded by Afghanistan to the west and north, the territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the north-west, south west is the province of Baluchistan and Punjab is on the south east. Pukhtunkhwah formed part of the Punjab until 1901, when Lord Curzon (1899-1905) decided to separate it from Punjab. But in fact it was in 1932 that Pukhtunkhwah was given the status of a full Province due to the geo-strategic position of the area. It was kept under a chief commissioner who was directly responsible to the Viceroy of India.

Pukhtuns could visualise the chanelisation of their potentialities, once they were tamed with the harness of education. Moreover there was a promising hope of killing two birds with one stone, by alluring the natives towards peace and Christianity while offering them the bait of modern education (Caroe, 1958). Compared to other provinces of the British India, the Frontier Province was the last to come under the British acquisition; hence it has a relatively recent history of modern rather western education.

At the time of the formation of new province, the schools were divided in to three categories; private munificence maintained schools, communities built private schools but recognised and funded by the government and local boards maintained schools. The Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs established private schools for their communities such as; *madris*, *Patshalas* or *Dharamshalas*, and *Gurmukhi* Schools. Their instructions were confined only to the divine text (Caroe, 1958). The missionaries were the pioneers of modern education in this province. Since early years of the British administration in Pukhtunkhwah considerable official interest has been taken in Christian missions at Bunnu and Peshawar. A Christian mission was first established at Peshawar in 1853, its founder was Colonel Martir (Mahvi, 1972).

Local prejudices and indifference to western education had a considerable effect in retarding its speed. Particularly, the *Mullahs* and other religious men who wielded enormous influence on the local population were hostile to the British scheme of popular education.

Local people were not interested in western education as they considered it for conversion in to Christianity. The clergy (*Mullahs*) played significant role to enhance this hostility prejudice towards western education. They were suspecting British educational schemes of being deliberate attempts to undermine their sacerdotal authority and to destroy the religious faith of the population. The following couplets became a famous slogan and proclaimed in the mosques to warn the people against the western education.

Sabaq da madrasse wai
Dapara da pisi wai
Pa Jannat ki bai zay nawe
Pa Duzakh ki ba ghoppey wai [Pukhtu]

Learning in school is merely for worldly gains and such people will find no place in the heaven and will be burnt in the hell. (Khalil, 2001: 43 cited in Rauf, 2006).

Rauf (2006) commented that religious education was not a priority of the upper and ultra modern strata of the society; therefore, the establishment of Anjuman-e-Islahul Afaghina (AIA) was welcomed by the lower and middle classes of the community.

The Muslims of Pukhtunkwah considered English schools to be the basic centres of the Christian missionaries. But with the passage of time this concept under went a change. During 1861-62 the total Muslim students were seventy; Hindus a hundred and thirty seven and twelve Christians out of the total two hundred and nineteen students (Bareilivi, 1970). In 1868 the Peshawar mission school was upgraded as a High school and a boarding house was built in 1822 to lodge the students from Kashmir and Afghanistan. While in 1874, a primary school for girls was also opened but this experience could not fully-succeed. In the beginning of twentieth century, the following educational institutions were working in Pukhtunkwah; Mission High School; Islamia High School; Hindu National School. According to the Educational Survey of 1907, the situation of literacy was that 29,000 students as a whole were getting education. This number rose to 35,000 in the year 1912. However, the Muslims' literacy rate of the area was only one and a half (1 ½) per thousand (Khalil, 2001 cited in Rauf, 2006).

Establishing Azad Schools

The people of the region fighting for the freedom of their homeland were not satisfied with education arrangements and continued their struggle not only on the political front but also challenged the authority of the foreign rule by taking arms against them. The twentieth century saw continuous attacks in the tribal belt on British military camps. The people of the area have also realised the reorganisation and awakening of the society through education. The man behind all these developments was Haji Sahib of Taurangzai². He not only continued the armed struggle against the British but also adopted new techniques to mobilise masses against them. He organised a movement. To eradicate un-Islamic and unsolicited practices from the Pukhtun society, Haji Sahib organised a movement. He believed that socialisation and reformation is not possible without education.

Haji Sahib of Taurangzai gave immense attention to education and opened a series of schools in Peshawar valley in the beginning of 20th century. Molvi Taj Muhammad, Mavilana Fazal Mohammed Makhfi, Molvi Abdul Aziz and Ghaffar Khan supported him in his movement. The exact numbers of all the schools established by him is unknown. However some sources claim that there were thirty four schools opened (CID, 1929), while other sources claim it to be seventy (Javid, 1982). These schools were known as Azad Islamia

² His real name was Fazl-i-Wahid. He is considered to be the first great Pukhtun 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 Ghaziabad in Mohmand Agency.

Schools. Azad Islamia schools were the first attempt to educate the people with modern and religious education. Haji Sahib of Taurangzai supported the Khilafat movement to put pressure on British government. He could not continue his activities and fled away to Mohmand Agency, a tribal territory. The British administration closed all the schools started by Haji Sahib of Taurangzai and arrested his supporters even the teachers of Azad Islamia Schools were sentenced to jail (CID, 1929). The Muslim leaders of the area particularly Ghaffar Khan reassessed their political programme and line of action with the changing scenario, because he knew his stronger foe (British) and fighting with arms was difficult if not impossible. They realised that the dream of the uplift of their community and freedom of the country was impossible without unity and education. Meanwhile, the people of Pukhtunkwah on the call of the Khilafat committees boycotted the British courts and educational institutions. They decided to establish Azad School and Shariat tribunals for the early disposal of their disputes thus they reactivated the efforts started by Haji Sahib of Taurangzai for the reformation of the society through education.

Azad School of Utmanzai

The first 'Azad School' was established in April 1921 at Utmanzai (CID, 1930) by Ghaffar Khan, who was assisted by his close associates; Qazi Attaullah, Main Ahamd Shah, Khadim Mohammad Akbar, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, and Taj Mohmmad Khan (Rauf, 2006). The school was opened in the house of Akram Khan of Preach Khel a branch of Utmanzai tribe. Muhammad Akram Khan donated his mud-house. The house contained few rooms without furniture for students. Students had to sit on the floor in the rooms or grass in the open field. Couples of cotton-mates were available for teachers. Most of the Tribal Areas (especially Dir and Bajawar) students were enroll because of the school boarding facilities. Ghaffar Khan's paternal uncle's widow took the responsibility to prepare meals and breakfast for hostelites students (CID, 1931 & Rauf, 2006).

The school merged its curriculum in-between Islamic and contemporary education. Pukhtuns, who remained backward educationally due to their strict resistance to the British rule and system of education, were always concerned about the education of their coming generations. Thus the establishment of Azad School Utmanzai was a welcomed one. The school was also inculcating the spirit of *Jehad* (Holy war) among the people of the area for the liberation of their home land from the foreign rulers (CID, 1931).

Learners at Azad School, Utmanzai

Soon after the foundation (1921), Azad School, Utmanzai became an attractive centre for learners. Initial strength of students was forty five, according to a report of May 19, 1921(CID, 1931). While in July 1921, the number rose to one hundred and thirty five and in April 1922 the school had two hundred students enrolled (CID, 1931), the number soon reached to two hundred sixty three at the end of the same year. The numbers of students at the middle section of the school were fifty two, while at the primary level there were two hundred eleven students (CID, 1932). Following the example of Azad School, Utmanzai, numbers of its campuses were opened in other parts of the province prominent districts were; Mardan, Charsaddah, Nowehera and Swabi. There is difference of opinion about the total number of these schools; Abdul Akbar Khan claimed a hundred and twenty (120) schools while Mian Jaffar Shah and Abdullah Shah quoted eighty (80) schools (Rauf, 2006). However, Special Branch official record, listed fifty one (51) schools in 1924. And the total number of students were 3,212 (CID, 1932).

Teaching Staff

In May 1921, four honorary teachers and a headmaster all qualified from MAO College Aligarh (such as: Abdul Karim, Molvi Ihsanullah, Abdul Karim, Main Abdul, Qadir Khan, Qari Abdul Ghaffar) were nominated as teaching staff for Utmanzai Azad school. Following are their names and salaries:

1.	Abdul Karim. (B.A)	Rs. 30 P/month
2.	Molvi Ihsan Ullah	Rs. 25 P/month
3.	Abdul Karim	Rs. 25 P/month
4.	Main Abdul Qadir Khan	Rs. 20 P/month
5.	Qari Abdul Ghaffar	Rs. 20 P/month (CID, 1935).

Among them Abdul Karim was headmaster of the school and Molvi Ehsanullah was the second master, while Qari Abdul Ghaffoor was the teacher of religious subjects. The number of teachers was raised to seven in

July 1921, and in April 1922, there were nine members of teaching staff as the number of students has considerably increased by the time (CID, 1935). Shah Muhammad Khan of Rajjar and Abdullah Khan's were recruited as teachers.

In May 1921, at the time of its establishment there were four honorary teachers and a headmaster all qualified from MAO College (Mohammedan Angle Oriental College) Aligarh.

Curriculum

In 1923, the Azad School was affiliated with Jamia Millia, Delhi. Therefore, after matriculation students were successfully enrolled in the Jamia Millia to continue their studies. Similarly the Jamia Millia curriculum was adopted with some additional subjects such as Pukhtu language and literature. Mathematics was also taught in English because of the non-availability of Pukhtu textbooks. The curriculum of the school which was prepared under the guidance of Ghaffar Khan was designed in such a way to fulfill the requirements of students, as both religious and modern education was imparted at Azad School, Utmanzai. Following were the main curricula of the School:

Theology Segment

This section included the study of the Holy Quran, Saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) *Hadith*, Islamic Jurisprudence *fiqh*, Islamic history. Ghaffar Khan is reported to have said that apart from Pukhtu, Arabic language would also be taught at primary classes (Rehman, 1996: 138). Theology was one of the core subjects of the school to familiarize students with the basic knowledge of Quran and *Sunnah*. Maulana Muhammad Israel and Maulavi Shah Rasul were notable teachers and in-charge of this section.

Vocational Segment

Agriculture was one of the most popular professions of the Pukhtun. There were no business opportunities or commerce training available for the Pukhtuns in the area. Pukhtunkhwah is till date famous for production of raw material. Hindus and Sikhs were the most dominated communities of trade and commerce. Therefore, some vocational subjects and skills were included in curriculum i.e. *kulahs* (a special Pukhtuns' hat), tailoring, carpentry and weaving.

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 (Rauf, 2006:44).

Propaganda Segment

This section was for students training to persuade people for freedom struggle. Rauf (2006:44) highlights; Students were trained (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 Azad schools for education.

The school had a very well-harmonized occupational policy with other core subjects; Mathematics, Geography and General Knowledge etc. Thursdays afternoons were reserved for students' co-curricular activities; public speaking and *Mushaira* (poems writing and reciting) etc.

The independence schools offered a nine-year course which was equivalent to Matriculation from the Punjab University. Each academic year included a Quarter, Mid-year and Final year examinations. The teachers were responsible for the supervision of these schools and they regularly reported on their performance (Rauf, 2006:44).

Finances

The school was started on the basis of self-help and the financial needs of the school were fulfilled with the help of the local community. Also the local Khans (landlords) and wealthy people were asked to contribute in the school by giving financial support and scholarships to the students, which was unfortunately not very encouraging; still the School managed to function and with the efforts of Ghaffar Khan and other devoted men the School income reached to Rs.18,000 (CID, 1935). Ghaffar Khan also managed to get grants sanctioned from the government of Rs.1,115 (Zamindar, 1935).

Medium of Instructions

Azad School adopted Pukhtu as medium of instructions. However, Urdu and English languages were also taught. Students were encouraged for Urdu and English speeches in their annual function to present their viewpoints to non-Pukhtun audience. Moreover, students used to sing famous Urdu patriotic and freedom loving poems. According to Abdul Ghaffar Khan,

a nation is known and recognized by its language and without a language of its own a nation cannot really be called a nation. A nation that forgets its language will eventually disappear from the map of the world altogether and mother tongue is the best medium of instructions (Easwaran, 1985:72).

Co-curricular Activities

The students of Azad School Utmanzai were also provided the opportunities of co-curricular activities. Physical exercises and other sports activities also formed part of the curriculum. Different tournaments were arranged on the local level at Utmanzai Azad School. Abdul Wali Khan the sports Secretary of the School took great interest in arranging tournaments. The school arranged a tournament of volleyball on 1st February 1922, which was the maiden activity at the school.

After the end of the tournament a silver trophy worth Rs. 20 and silver medals were awarded to the winning team. A team, which paid Rs.5 to the organizing committee, was eligible to participate in the tournament (CID, 1936a).

A part from sport, the School authorities started arranging dialogues, debates and staging dramas right from its establishment. The first drama was staged on the first anniversary of the school on 27th April 1922. A large number of people i.e. about 800 hundred were present on the occasion (CID, 1936b). Teachers and students of the school were active participating of the co-curricular activities.

Efforts for Societal and Political Awareness

The Azad School, Utmanzai gave a founding stone to a social organisation called Anjuman-e-Islahul Afaghina (AIA) (Society for the Reformation of Afghans) in 1921 (CID, 1925). The governing body of the Azad School wanted an affiliated association that could propagate the message of freedom and establish a chain of such schools around the region for the Pukhtuns uplift. AIA aim was to propagate the old Islamic customs and Pukhtun traditions, as well as the message of non-violence (CID, 1925). The AIA also worked for the unity of Pukhtuns and for the reforms in their social order.

The Utmanzai Azad School also gave a political base later on to the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement (Anti-British, pro-Congress movement) was launched in 1929 under the leadership of Ghaffar Khan). Different gatherings and meetings of the movement were arranged in the Utmanzai Azad School with help of students and teachers of the school. The main objective behind these activities was the mass awareness regarding their rights. The annual meeting and session of the Frontier Youth Organisation were also held at the Azad School of Utmanzai (CID, 1929). The AIA enormously influenced the Pukhtu Literature, particularly Pukhtu drama and poetry.

It was during one of the annual gatherings of the AIA that for the first time a Pukhtu drama *Dree Yatiman* (three orphans) by Abdul Akbar Khan was staged by the students of the Azad School (Rauf, 2006:47). Different themes of dramas were selected for students and public awareness. In 1928 another drama was staged about

general social and educational backwardness of the Pukhtuns. However, gradually the themes of dramas switched to political tone in 1930.

From here on, Pukhtu poetry came to imbibe anti-imperialist sentiment more than ever before. The activists of the AIA 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 (Rauf, 2006:48).

A Pukhtu pamphlet and '*Pukhtun*' Journal were started publishing regularly in May 1928, from Iqbal Stream Press, Peshawar (CID, 1929). The subject matter (of the pamphlet) was about the mass awakening regarding their political rights (CID, 1930), while the *Pukhtun* Journal had articles, stories and poems about every field of life for the awareness of the people. Thus Azad School Utmanzai was an active participant in the mass awakening of the people of the area. The teachers and students of the school were the torch bearers of the rights of the Pukhtun nation. The role of *Pukhtun* Journal is incredibly significant. The journal attracted far and wide national and international readers of Afghanistan and US. Ghaffar Khan getting encouragement from the experience at Utmanzai, visited different parts of the province to extend these activities. These tours were successful and a number of Azad Schools were established at different parts of the province like Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar, Swabi and Nowshera (CID, 1929, 30).

Azad Schools of Mardan and Swabi: The founder of Azad Schools in the Yousafzai area was a young man Sayyad Nasrullah Jan (Rauf, 1988:27 & CID, 1930). His frequent visits to the area persuaded number of people for their children education. He established fourteen schools in Mardan and Swabi districts with the support of local influential landlords (CID, 1931a). The locations of these schools were: Ismaila, Turlandi, Garyala, Khadi Kali, Shabaz Gari, Sawaldere, Katlang, Adina, Nawa Kali, Baja, Bamkhel, Kunda, Yar Hussain Dagi and Manda (Rauf, 1988: 30). The Daily Zamindar Lahore (1921) also reported inauguration of the Azad Schools of Mardan and Swabi. Sahibzada Midrarullah was another education lover of the area who set up a well-known branch of Azad School in Asota, Swabi (CID, 1938a).

Initially the Azad Schools systems was a primary schools chain, however later on in districts Swabi and Mardan middle school were established on a high demand of the people of the area. Schools inspection committee members were nominated for quarterly inspections. The schools' advisory and management committee, 'Islamia Board', were responsible to review the standard of education and infrastructure.

Students' moral up bringing was given special emphasis, and the latter took part in preaching in villages to reform the common people. These tours had a considerable effect in removing the un-Islamic practices at the time of marriages and deaths (Zamindar, 1921 cited in Rauf, 1988).

Azad Schools of Nowshera: An Anjuman-i-Taleem-ul-Quran organisation was established by a well-known scholar, Maulana Sultan Muhammad on 30/1/1921 at Nowshera (CID, 1935a,b). Actually the Khilafat Movement sponsored Azad Schools of Nowshera. This was a free school. For money collection, vessels were kept at every house of Nowshera, for people convenience to deposit handful of flour for each meal. The students regularly collected it. The number of students in this school was a hundred and fifty. Two more schools were established under the supervision of the AIA, one in Rashkai by Kala Mullah (CID, 1938a & Rauf, 1988). Another important school was established in Ziarat Kaka Sahib by the AIA. The head of this institution was Maulana Abdur Rab, a great religious scholar of the area (CID, 1938b & Rauf, 1988).

Azad Schools of Peshawar: Two schools were founded in Peshawar; Azad Muslim High School in Mufti Ibrahim's house, and the other was Madrasa-i-Rafiul-Islam. The latter was founded in 1923 under the supervision of Sahibzada Fazl Samadani and Fazal Khaliq of Bhana Manri. The students' enrolment was a hundred and forty, which included fifteen orphans (CID, 1936a & Census, 1931).

Azad School of Ghazi (Hazara): In the Jamia mosque of Ghazi a grand meeting was held under the Presidentship of Maulana Hafiz Ghulam Rabbani Lodhi; they expressed the necessity of opening an Azad School. An Anglo vernacular middle school was opened in Ghazi on 5/4/1935 (CID, 1936b). The school was having thirty students at that time (Zamindar, 1925).

Azad Schools of Kohat District: An Azad School was opened by Anjuman-i-Khilafat Taleemat-i-Islam on 7/8/1923 (Zamindar, 1925 & CID, 1935a). The number of students was eighty and teachers were only three. Some local dignitary conducted the school inspection usually once a year and prizes were distributed among the talented pupils (CID, 1935b). All Azad Schools were run by the people independent of any government authority. The management and teaching staff usually consisted of local religious scholars and educated youth and the alumni of Aligrah College or Islamia College Peshawar. The annual gathering of these schools provided an opportunity to the people to come together and discuss matters of common interest. On these occasions, the people of different areas of the province could meet each other. They trained the youth and imparted to them instruction in the religion of Islam, awareness of changing situation in the country, the lesson of freedom, self-reliance and confidence. These students later became the torchbearers of the freedom movement. The British suspected these developments and considered these schools as centres of undesirable activities (CID, 1935c & Rauf, 2006).

British Policy towards the Azad Schools

When the chain of Azad Schools system spread all over the province, the then Chief Commissioner of NWFP, Sir John Maffi, complained to Ghaffar Khan's father (Behram Khan) and asked him to stop his son from participating in such activities (CID, 1935b & Rauf, 2006:46). 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 (Khan, 1969; also cited in Rauf, 2006). The AIA, 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 AIA. However, whenever the British got opportunity they did not hesitate to take a stern action against leaders and workers of the AIA. When the drama of Amir Nawaz Jalya was staged in one of the annual meetings of the AIA, the British arrested and imprisoned all those who took part in it (Rauf, 2006:50). The British observed closely all the activities of the AIA 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 (CID, 1935a: 51). They offered temptation of employment in government department to the teachers of the school but did not succeed. The British were confident that due to scarcity of funds, these schools would not survive and would ultimately close down. But history shows that it was not scarcity of funds but unhealthy internal politics which shattered the AIA (CID, 1935c & Rauf, 2006).

Conclusion

The role played by the Azad Schools in the sphere of education and in creating 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 organizers succeeded to some extent in establishing a network of schools in the entire province and in the eradication of social evils prevalent in the shape of *riwaj* (customs) in Pukhtun 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 AIA and they were encouraged to organize different activities, particularly to inspire and unite the people for the community welfare activities (Rauf, 2006). The students started to learn vocational subjects and thus the hatred of Pukhtuns for these professions decreased. Before that, Pukhtuns considered business and all related professions inferior to farming and almost all business in the province was dominated by the Hindus and Sikhs. To sum up the discussion, Azad Schools were structured like Islamia Schools of Taurangzai that were traced back to the movement of Shah Waliullah and Syyad Ahmad Shaheed because it had totally religious objectives. As far the aim of Azad schools was religious as well as

modern, social and political education. In addition, the schools provided free educational facilities to the Muslim students which improved their economic status.

Pukhtu has been taught in Azad schools as an ethnic identity marker by the Pukhtun nationalists to promote a distinct identity that the Pukhtuns should fight for their freedom. Azad schools successfully adopted as a medium of instruction that can be followed in the present education system at primary level otherwise Pukhtu will remain a spoken language only in the province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwah (Khattak & Hussain, 2011). Teachers and students of the schools also promoted Pukhtu as the marker of Pukhtun identity and exhorted the people and the authorities to use it in informal as well as formal domains of power (Rahman, 1996). Journalistic literary activities of the teachers of Azad Schools were significant for the development of *Pukhtu* prose and poetry. Such as Ghani Khan, Makhfi of Charsadda, Abdul Malik Fida, Abdul Akber Khan contributed in nationalistic literature. The teachers and the students of the Azad schools themselves conducted their daily affairs-writing letters; maintain business records and accounts, conversation-in Pukhtu. Therefore later on in 1955 higher education was possible in Pukhtu when a Pukhtu Academy and department were established in Peshawar University.

Indeed the efforts started in the beginning of the 20th century were the extension of the thoughts of Shahwaliullah manifested in the thoughts of the *ullemas* of Deoband. Activities related to the spread of education and elimination of social evils from the society were their main objectives. We include the Azad Schools system in the same category.

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