
Asian Writings

Quarterly Publication Of The
People's Research Initiative

LOTUS



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In this Issue

By

Page

- Editor's Note

Qalandar Bux Memon

4

STUDIES:

- What Do We Resist
When We Resist? Peasants' Land Rights Movement and the Emergence of New Social Life in Pakistani Punjab.

Muhammad Qasim

10

- The Genuis of Bacha Khan

Qalandar Bux Memon

44

POEMS:

- A Poor Man's Prayer

Arif Shah

6

- The Days of Golary
Shall Dawn

- The Echo

- So I Never Thought

- On the Deserted Path
of Life

- The Pen Stand

Ashamed

- The Stranger

Mubarak Qazi

62

ART:

- Front Cover: Featured art-work by Anwar Saeed, Roofs were flooded with love in summer nights; Anwar Saeed, 2004, mixed media.

- Back Cover: Featured art-work by Anwar Saeed, Tender burdens I, 2003, mixed media.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Between Yesterday and Today

Half the country now hovers at the edge of poverty. According to the World Bank, around 44.7 percent of Pakistan's population lives below the \$4.20-a-day poverty line. If current trends continue, that number will climb even higher by the end of the decade. At the same time, the distance between the rich and the poor continues to widen; Pakistan's Gini coefficient sits at roughly 0.32, already high in a society where much wealth remains hidden in offshore accounts, informal property holdings, and unrecorded capital. The real gap is almost certainly far greater than official statistics allow.

Statistics are abstractions until you feel them in daily life. The poverty of the poor presses itself into every street and even my classroom. Students increasingly speak of debts, shrinking opportunities, and the quiet humiliation of not being able to continue their education. Some take their own lives under these pressures - in Lahore alone three in the last few months. Meanwhile, another Pakistan glitters at private parties, where imported wine and whiskey circulate freely and abundance appears limitless.



How, then, do we move beyond these structural conditions? How does the working class resist a system so deeply entrenched? The analysis of the situation and a program for resistance and change is the long term aim of this publication, manifested in this first issue.

This issue begins with a poem by Arif Shah, a working-class Punjabi poet who imagines a world in which the wretched of the earth also have a place at the table. It then turns to living traditions of resistance: first, Qasim's detailed study of the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab and its long struggle against military-corporate land control; then a short reflection on the educational and social revolutionary work of Bacha Khan.

We close with the poetry of Mubarak Qazi, the beloved Baloch poet from Gwadar, whose words speak to the labouring masses of Balochi-speaking people. His warning is stark: if things continue as they are, we may become strangers in our own land, and strangers to our own dreams. It is a warning meant not only to unsettle us - but to push us toward learning, organizing, and struggle.

Poem from Punjab

A Poor Man's Prayer

By Arif Shah

Translation from the Punjabi
By Iqbal Qaiser & Qalandar Bux
Memon





God grant me mercy,

Oh God, grant the end to the poverty of my people,

From you I can't hide anything,
From you nothing can be hidden

so, let my children also go to school,
and let them wear beautiful clothes
(as do the children of the rich),
Let them go laughing also, happy
also, and dancing,
Let them go to school,
And let their poor parents see
them going – so they too can gain
a laugh and some happiness.

God, let us get a full plate of food
– for once, without searching all
day for it, without bargaining and
bartering our labour for it, our
souls for it. Let it come to us . . . a
full plate of food . . .

Let us sing songs and have everyone appreciate them and let us also own a house and if not a steady job then grant us a shop – let us see if we have any luck in this capitalist business . . .

Grant us also peace

and new clothes so that we may ex-

change our secondhand ones – for something shiny and new without the sweat or stains of previous owners.

Grant us joys in life

and take us off these gallows and take this noose from our necks – we have had it since birth, grant that we breathe without it . . .

Grant us money also so that we too may look pious and give some to charity – and let us too have time for prayer . . .

Grant that the darkness (poverty) ends so that we the poor may also go on the right path . . .

Let us, the poor, also fight for seats in assemblies and let us also become members of parliaments, let us too travel in airplanes, grant us the admiration of our friends that power begets . . .





And, if you allow me to become a
minister,

I will go to India and end the clashes
between our two countries.

Let us the poor also have a car,
Let it not be too small – go on, let
it be big,
And grant that I ride it on the Mall
Road,
And with me let there be Arif
Shah,

Oh God,
Grant the end to the poverty of my
people.

What Do We Resist When We Resist? Peasants' Land Rights Movement and the Emergence of New Social Life in Pakistani Punjab

by Muhammad Qasim

How can we interpret the peasants' infamous chant of "ownership or death"? Does it merely refer to the ownership of agricultural land, or does it encompass something more profound? Are the peasants willing to choose death solely due to the denial of agricultural land, or is it a deeper denial for which they are prepared to sacrifice their lives? The central argument of this essay is that the peasants' struggles regarding agricultural land extend beyond resisting perceived eviction attempts. Instead, these struggles aim to achieve or safeguard the ownership of the peasants' collective social life within their village community. This fundamental aspect of the peasants' land rights movement is often overlooked or superficially examined in the literature on peasants' resistance.

As Ferguson (2013) argues, the land question is often reduced to an agrarian question in the literature, disregarding the multifaceted role that land plays in the social fabric of a village community. Agricultural usage of



land is just one aspect among many. Therefore, instead of focusing solely on the forms of peasants' resistance, whether they are open/organized or everyday/hidden, this research delves into the content of the peasants' resistance. By examining the political thought and actions of villagers and exploring the relationship between political life in rural communities and the larger political systems they are part of, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of peasants' politics and resistance (Kerkvliet & Benedict, 2013).

Based on 4 months of ethnographic fieldwork and my personal involvement in political activism and solidarity with the peasants' resistance, this essay examines the resistance of peasants in the villages of Okara district in Pakistani Punjab. These peasants raised the slogan "Ownership or Death" (Malki ya Mout) in opposition to military landlordism. It is a unique form of landlordism (Sajjad, 2006) and refers to the control of agricultural land in Okara villages by the Pakistani military under the Okara Military



Farms authority (OMFs). Additionally, these villages are situated on land originally developed as part of the British canal colonies project, a massive infrastructural project (Rizvi, 2019; Ali, 1988) that resulted in significant social engineering of Punjabi society (Ali, 1988) and the consolidation of military intervention in postcolonial Pakistan's politics, economics, and society (Yong, 2005; Alavi, 1973).

In Okara villages, military-landlordism is extended beyond the appropriation of the villages' economy through control of agricultural land; it also encompassed the control of villagers' social life. Therefore, the peasants' resistance is not solely focused on the ownership of agricultural land but also on the collective ownership of their social life. These dimensions of peasants' domination and struggle have received limited exploration and discussion in the existing literature on the peasants' resistance, which I aim to explore in detail.

The struggles of the peasantry to reclaim ownership of their collective social life, rooted in the colonial formation of their villages and the subjugation of their social existence under the neocolonial state of Pakistan, can be better understood through the framework of the four principles of



liberation psychology: “recovering historical memory,” which emphasizes understanding the true history of oppression based on lived experiences and cultural heritage; “deideologizing everyday experiences,” where oppressed people employ critical consciousness to challenge imposed realities; “virtues of the people,” referring to the ability of oppressed people to sacrifice for the collective good and their belief in the capacity to change the world; and “praxis,” which involves collective action by oppressed people to liberate their colonized social existence (Comas-Diaz & Rivera, 2020, pp. 41–47)

The peasants of Okara district, under their collective organization known as Anjumen Muzareena Punjab (AMP), have successfully resisted military eviction attempts and a unilaterally introduced change in the land tenure agreement from *Batiee* (sharecropping system) to *Patadari* (rent-in-cash system) since 2000. Interestingly, the peasants’ resistance erupted in post-colonial Pakistan in response to military-landlordism in the villages following the military coup by Pervez Musharraf in 1999. This coup toppled the democratically elected Federal Government of Pakistan Muslim League without encountering any resistance (Rizvi, 2019).¹ Motivated by

¹ For Rizvi (2019), the emergence of the peasants’ movement in *Okara*, Punjab, immediately following the military coup in 1999 raises intriguing questions regarding the state-society relations in Pakistan.

the principles of neoliberal economic reforms, the military regime made an effort to replace the long-standing sharecropping system (Rizvi, 2017, 2019) with a new rent-in-cash system as a means to enhance land revenue. However, the peasants regarded this new system with great suspicion, as it proposed to alter their status from permanent tenants, who enjoyed protection from eviction, to tenants at will, who could be expelled from the land at any time. The military's attempt to impose the rent-in-cash system sparked the peasants' resistance at OMFs. Not only did the peasants reject the newly imposed rent-in-cash system, but they also refused to cultivate the land under the century-old sharecropping system.

The peasants successfully asserted their complete ownership of the land. While both academic scholarship and the understanding of popular activists view this as the primary goal and achievement of the peasants' resistance, this chapter contends that their resistance and accomplishments extend beyond mere land ownership and the refusal to pay rent to landlords. Under the banner of their political organization, Anjuman Muzareen Punjab, the peasants' political resistance against the ownership of agricultural land has fostered a culture of resistance that has emancipated the peasants' social lives from the grips of military landlordism. Consequently, it suggests that existing scholarship on this movement has overlooked and failed to consider the oppressed social conditions experienced by the peasants prior to the emergence of their movement.

In his work on AMP, Mubashir Rizvi (2017, 2019) delves into the question of how tenants framed their struggle for land rights against the Pakistani military. According to Rizvi, the tenants achieved success in resisting the powerful military institution of the Pakistani state by invoking the logic of land rights grounded in the moral economy of subsistence. Rizvi's framework for comprehending the peasants' land rights struggles is centered around the concept of the moral economy. Shozab Raza (2020) studied AMP struggles in the context of global land-grabbing literature and mafia bosses of South Asia. He explores the afterlife of the AMP movement and shows that land-grabbing attempts from the superordinate entities in the form of state and corporation do not only give birth to accumulation

It is perplexing how the peasants managed to resist and construct a potent counterhegemonic discourse against the Pakistani military, an immensely powerful institution with Punjab as its main spatial ideological stronghold. The paradox lies in the fact that while the military exhibited enough power to overthrow the democratically elected government without encountering any opposition, it failed to suppress the resistance put forth by the peasants.



from above but also accumulation from below. As many leaders of AMP garnered immense economic and social capital through AMP struggles owing to their leadership roles in the peasants' organization. The top-tier leadership of AMP acts now both like peasants' militant and mafia bosses. Asim Sajjad (2006), in his study of AMP, makes a point that the peasants' struggle over land rights is a struggle for their livelihood and culture, and the peasants' access to the land is a condition of their "very existence itself." Sajjad did not explore this dimension of the struggle further and reverted to the usual debates of the scholarships on the peasants, whether peasants' class has consciousness, whether are they revolutionary, how peasantry is internally differentiated, and how the AMP tenants are different from the typical peasantry discussed in the Marxists literature because AMP tenants are the tenants of a state institution. All three studies on AMP are situated on the three different scholarly traditions of peasants' studies: the



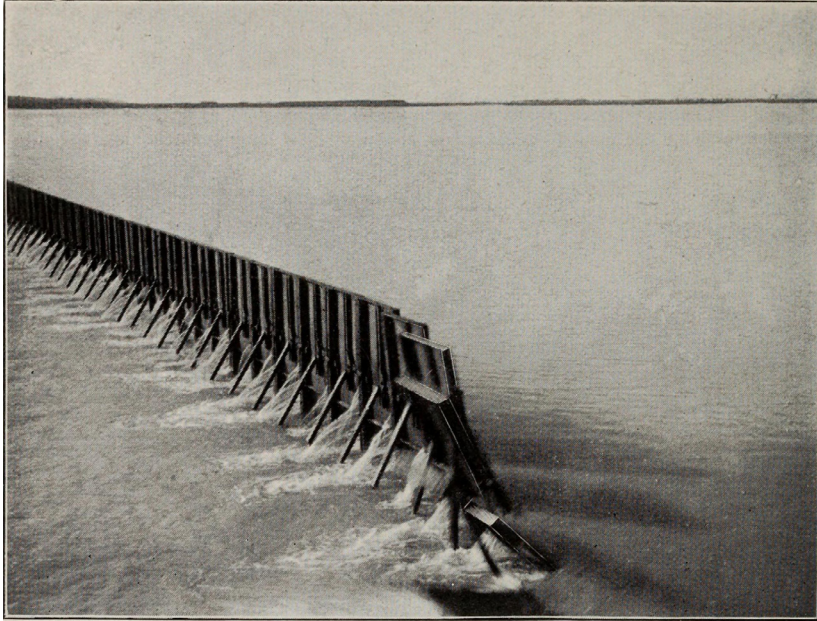
moral economy approach, global land-grabbing literature, and Marxist scholarship. All three studies though have very different focuses and points of contentions nevertheless have one fundamental agreement that the peasants' resistance and struggles are for the ownership of their agricultural land. Therefore, these studies fail to talk about those acts of resistance of AMP struggles that are aimed at decolonizing the peasants' social life.

In contrast to the above studies, through the abovementioned framework of liberation psychology, this chapter explains that both before and after the eruption of peasants' resistance against military landlordism, the nature of social and political life in the peasants' villages is very different from the social lives of other villages of Punjab. Peasants' social life under the military-landlordism was a life that was colonized. There was social and cultural apartheid in practice in the peasants' villages. Similarly, the social life of the peasants after the emergence of their successful resistance is very distinct compared to other villages of Punjab that never lived under military landlordism. The social life after the peasants' movement in the villages is politically charged and socially self-engineered. The peasants' culture of resistance, which this chapter would talk about at length in the coming sections, consists of a repertoire of radical actions which ranges from typical non/confrontational acts such as roadblocks, sit-ins, rallies,



and skirmishes with law enforcement authorities and symbolic acts of resistance such as poetry, jokes, slogans, slang, anecdotes of resistance and stories of suffering and subjugation, etc. and social- ontological acts of resistance that is taking charge of their own collective social life by building paved houses, mosques, graveyard, schools, playground, cultivating, and distributing the agricultural land, destroying the symbols and practices of domination. This paper tries to explore these novel forms of the social lives of the villages with the peasants' culture of resistance to draw insights on how peace is possible in the Global South that is delinked from its colonial past and neocolonial present alike.

Barbalet contends relations of power, in particular, can be completely comprehended only when the social context is specified. The significance of the acts of resistance can only be understood when the social characteristics and social location of the agents are fully evident in the power relations (Barbalet 1985). The struggle of AMP if studied in an accurate historical and political context would shed light on aspects of domination (colonized social life) and resistance (culture of resistance that aims to liberate the social life) that have evaded the scholarly attention of the researchers in



the field. To understand the peasants' struggle, this ethnographic study aims to explore British colonialism's violent state-making processes and their continuation and sustenance in post-colonial Pakistan, and the new possibilities of liberated and decolonial social life in which the people are the active collective agents to reengineer their social life from a humanist perspective. The research will delve into the historical context by drawing upon secondary literature, conducting in-depth interviews with peasants, and gathering data through participant observation and my own political activism within the movement. The following key historical aspects will be encompassed:

- i Construction of canal networks in eastern Punjab by British colonialism
- ii The settlement of the peasants' villages on canal colonies land, resultant social engineering of Punjabi society under the British colonialism



ii Consolidation of state landlordism and the military power in postcolonial Pakistan

Within this contextual framework, the study will discuss the peasants' culture of resistance, contributing to the exploration of a grassroots perspective on the concept of peace.

Colonization of Peasants' Social Life

Recovering Historical Memory

The history of the peasants' movement is intertwined with the construction of canal networks by the British Raj during the early twentieth century. The establishment of canal colonies in Western Punjab, initiated in 1885 and

completed in 1913, triggered significant migration from the eastern part of the province and brought about substantial economic development in the region. However, the process of land distribution among Punjabis was not driven by economic development considerations; instead, it favored feudal lords and tribal leaders who held political and social control over their respective areas. These individuals were recognized as the “martial races” of India by the British due to their substantial contribution to the British Indian Army (Ali, 1987, p. 112; 1988, pp. 110–111; Yong, 2005, pp. 79–81). The process of land distribution was very uneven and paternalistic under the aegis of British authorities that increased the polarization between rich and poor to the extent that Ali has called it the “development of underdevelopment”²

Apart from general land grants to migrants from East Punjab and pastoral tribes, the British government allocated a significant amount of agricultural land to the British Indian Military for cavalry horse runs and fodder production for military animals (Ali, 1988). Following the partition of India in 1947, this land, initially granted to the British Indian Military, was inherited by the Pakistan army. Consequently, the largest landowner in Punjab is not a feudal landlord but the military institution, which currently possesses approximately 68,000 acres of agricultural land. District Okara, the epicenter of the peasants’ resistance, is located within this region of Punjab where the military holds de facto ownership of extensive agricultural farms known as Military Farms Okara. The presence of distinct forms of landlordism, both British and Pakistani military, before and after the partition of India has given rise to a unique social fabric in the villages of Okara, setting them apart from other villages in Punjab in various aspects. As Asim Sajjad highlights, the sociological dynamics of social life under military landlordism differ from the impoverished peasantry depicted in many Marxist studies (Sajjad, 2006, p. 479). The British distribution of land grants in canal colonies engendered two types of feudalism in Pakistan, which directly inherited these colonies: “feudal landlordism” and “institutional landlordism.” Gaining an understanding of the distinct social conditions experienced by the peasantry under the institutional landlordism of the military will aid in comprehending the subjugation of peasants and

2 See Ali, Imran. (1987). *Malign Growth? Agricultural Colonization and the Roots of Backwardness in Punjab*, for more debate on canal colonies and the roots of backwardness in Pakistani Punjab.



shed light on the nature of their resistance against military landlords and land grabbing.

The district of Okara, which has been the epicenter of the peasants' movement against the Pakistan military since 2000, is situated 134 kilometers away from the provincial capital, Lahore, along the national highway and the Lahore-Karachi railway line. In Okara, the Pakistani military inherited a total of 17,000 acres of agricultural land from its British predecessors. Out of this land, 12,000 acres have been occupied by the peasants since the year 2000.

Following Pakistan's last military coup against the democratically elected government, the peasants of Okara established an organization called Anjumen Muzareena Punjab in the year 2000. The formation of AMP aimed to resist the military landlords' attempt to change the land contract from sharecropping to a rent-in- cash system. The tenants perceived this new contract as an effort by the military to permanently expropriate them from their land and village. Their suspicions were confirmed by incidents of actual eviction attempts by the military and local civil land authorities like the patwari (land record officer) when the new contract was announced. Instead of immediately evicting the tenants from their agricultural land, the

military introduced the new contract that downgraded the peasants' status from permanent tenants connected to the land through labor, cultivation, and settlement to mere leaseholders who would be required to vacate the land once the lease expired or if they failed to pay the rent.

This form of land grabbing involved not only denying the peasants' access to their agricultural land and the natural resources associated with it but also threatened to dispossess them from their villages. It reflected conflicting views on the relationship with the land, with the military-landlord perceiving it as an economic asset to maximize profit, while the tenants viewed it as an attempt to evict them not just from their agricultural land but also from their villages.

This unique form of landlordism not only exerted control over the social life of the villages before the movement but also posed a threat of dispossession from the villages during the land-grabbing attempt. Therefore, I contend that the resulting peasants' resistance against these land-grabbing attempts goes beyond stalling capital accumulation by denying rent and refusing to sign the new contract system with the landlord.



Peasants' sit in before Punjab Assembly Hall for the ownership rights of agricultural land. 25th November 2014. Participants' faces are blurred to protect their identity. (Source: Author's photos)



As we lay hungry and naked, GHQ (General Headquarters Pakistan Military) stole and left us disrobed. (Peasants' chant)

The slogan coined by the peasants' resistance movement under the AMP banner vividly portrays the hardships endured by the peasants due to direct military intervention in their villages. During my interactions with the tenants in their villages and at their political rallies, their discussions about the movement consistently revolved around their experiences under military control. Each interviewee emphasized the oppressive and marginalized nature of their lives under military domination, seeking to justify and establish a moral basis for their right to resist the army. The aforementioned slogan sheds light on two significant aspects of the peasants' lives prior to the emergence of the AMP movement. Firstly, it highlights the economic marginalization faced by the peasants, as the military was involved in appropriating the surplus generated by the village economy. Secondly, it explains the loss of self-respect and a loss of social identity as members of a village community. In addition to economic exploitation,

under military domination, peasants were also suffering from an ontological crisis. As Scott very rightly observed in peasants' communities, poverty is not a simple matter of shortage of food and cash but it includes a threat to peasants' modest standing in a village community too (Scott, 1985, p. 236). In the same way, the peasants of OMFs understand their marginalization both in terms of economic and social exploitation under complete servitude of military landlordism. Therefore, the question of land possession, for the tenants, is a prism through which they evaluate the relationship between property and propriety, servitude and freedom, and state and society (Rizvi, 2019). The possession of agricultural land is not only a material security to tenants in terms of food and shelter but also conforms to their modest position in a village community; without it tenants cannot stand to a normative life in a village.

Anwar³ is a peasant activist of AMP. He has written several poems that articulate the peasants' social life under military domination. Two of his poems lament the military oppression in the following ways:

Poem 1

“This land of ours, this nation of ours”
These are all lies, oh friends of ours!

This land of the lords, of the men in khaki and boots.
Whose bodies are hidden under the façade of medals and metal loops. Somebody should these peasants ask, empty stomach and forced to fast, How long has it been since their families starve?

“This land of ours, this nation of ours”
These are all lies, oh friends of ours!” (Anwar)

(Poem translated by Raza Khan from Urdu)

In another poem, Mustafa explains the tenants' grievances under the military landlords in the following way:

Poem 2

“It has been so long since the mounted division grabbed our land.
Why hasn't anybody, since then stopped their hand? Outsiders have become the lords of our

3 Pseudonyms are used for the peasants to protect their identities.

land.

This long denial of our rights I don't understand.

In 1947 we too were freed

Why does the army then treat us like a different breed?" (Anwar).

(Poem translated by Mariam Dogar from Punjabi).

These two poems of simultaneously explain the memory of the suffering of peasants and also the type of social lives that peasants had to live under military domination.

Deideologizing Everyday Experiences

Fanon's experience of French colonialism in Algeria led him to the conclusion that the colonial world is compartmentalized. For him, "it is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of 'native' towns and European towns, schools for 'native' and schools for European, as it is to recall apartheid in South Africa." Compartmentalization is a division of the native and European lives in the colony. The dividing line between them is represented by the barracks and the police station. In the colonies, colonial agents of violence, the police, and the army display and demonstrate violence in the homes and in the minds of colonial subjects. We see the colonists use the language of pure violence against the colonized openly and without any secrecy. The compartmentalized life in the colonies, which is established by the colonizer through the use of pure violence, showed two different kinds of lives of two different kinds of "human species": the prosperous sector of Europeans and the shanty towns of natives. Fanon sketched the life of natives in the following way: "You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light" (Fanon, 1963, p. 3, 4, 5).

The life of colonized villagers in OMFs was not different from the compartmentalized life sketched by Fanon under French colonialism. Haji Asghar, who is a resident of Renala Military Farm, explained what kind of life they had under military domination before the eruption of the peasant



movement. He explained that “we were like animals for them, in fact, we were treated more badly than Fojis’ (soldier’s) animals. They had some respect for their animals but we the humans, who do all work for them without asking anything in return were treated very disgracefully” (Asghar, interview, Dec 25th, 2015). Military Farm authorities’ employees used zoological terms for the tenants whenever they interacted with each other in routine matters. Tenants were being called by the names of animals that could lift heavy weight. Farm employees used to call tenants by the name of Baru⁴ whenever they needed unpaid labor. Fanon is of the view that colonized became a dehumanized subject in colonies. “In a plain talk, between colonizer and colonized, they are reduced to the state of animals and thereby when colonizer speak about colonized he uses zoological terms” (Fanon, 1963, p. 7). I found from the peasants’ stories that farm authorities despised tenants

⁴ Niamat Ali told me that the word ‘Baru’ is a zoological term for all those animals which are used in tedious and arduous work. “Farms’ employees used to call us ‘Baru’ because we did a lot of unpaid work for them.

with rude names. The marginalization of tenants was not limited to only the economic sphere. Thereby, under military landlordism, I understand the relationship between the landlord and tenants as a relationship of colonizer and colonized and the differences between the two manifested in many spheres. Materially, this was a difference between poor peasants, who lived in shanties, and prosperous military men, who have clean marvelous bungalows to live in and clean offices to work. Culturally, this difference was expressed between the educated, well-mannered, legally empowered, and disciplined soldiers with the ignorant layman and dehumanize tenants.

Peasants were not allowed to have paved houses. There were areas specified in each village about four acres by the military farm authorities where all the villagers lived in little shanties. Kaleem dweller of Walter Gunj 14.A.1.R of Renal Military Farms showed me small settlements where all the peasants of villages used to live before the eruption of the peasants' movement. He told me that almost a hundred years ago their ancestors came here and turned this barren land into lavish green fields of wheat, rice, corn, and fodder. Then farm authorities reserved this little piece of land for the village's residence, but with time "our families grew and it was impossible to live in this small piece of land for the whole village. In spite of our perpetual demand neither Angraz (British) Ma'am nor military officers permitted us to use more land for tenants' abode." Kaleem lamented military greed for agricultural land and expressed his grief with a deep sentiment that "in these shacks, we had no privacy of our families. He said, believe me, we lead a life of animals who do not have proper abode to live" (Kaleem, interview, Dec 29th, 2015). None of these villages had a place reserved for a school, mosque, and graveyard. Tenants of these villages used to bury their dead in the other villages. Siddique told me that "this was our biggest problem to bury our dead people. We did not have graveyards in our villages and therefore we used to go to other villages in search of a graveyard. Sometimes people of other villages turned up very generous and we got the place of a grave and sometimes they turned up otherwise and that left us with no option. Therefore we always tried to build good relations with people of other villages so we can exploit their generosity in a time of need" (Siddique, interview, Jan 2nd, 2016). Dil Bhar showed me a place where military authorities built a check post on Main Boulevard that led to all villages of Renala Military Farms. Every villager was used to search out by military soldiers when they left and entered villages. He told me that

our relatives from other places eschewed visiting our places because they abhorred this disgraceful attitude of farm authorities. We were directed by the Military Farm Authorities (MFA) to register a person who came to see us. This process was very distasteful for our relatives. He told me a story of one marriage procession that came from another village to pick up the bride but the bride's family forgot to inform MFA and could not get permission on time for the guests. When the marriage procession reached the check post to enter the village, military authorities stopped and asked them to show the certificate of permission to enter the village.

After a little disceptation between soldiers and the groom's family, soldiers started beating up the people including the groom and forced them to flee. This was a great degradation for the whole village, but we were not in a state to resist the military. After that, people of other villages eschewed accepting the marriage proposal of our daughters (Dil, interview, Jan 1st, 2016). "Baba Aleem from MFO told me that under the military we were used to working from morning to night without food and water. Military people summoned all the men of the village every morning before the office of the village supervisor. Everyone was required to sit on the earth in a few straight lines, and each day we were used to sitting in line almost an hour before the village supervisor appeared before us. He used to pick up people of his choice for corvee. First, we work for them. We clean their houses, their offices, and the roads where military mobiles rode, and on these roads, we were not allowed to walk. After completing their tasks, hungry and thirsty, then we rush to our fields to cut the fodder for our hungry animals and to water our fields. He also told me that we were not even allowed to eat or pluck food from our fields. He said this was a great zulum (brutality) on us. We cultivate a crop with arduous work, and these crops are ready to be reaped because of our blood and sweat but we were not allowed to even pluck a single grain to even taste what kind of crop we have produced. The village guard of MFA used to keep sight on each villager and if someone was found "thieving" from their field, they were charged with heavy fines. He told that our lives before our tanzeem were not different from the lives of slaves. We were never allowed to celebrate any Eid or any other national day. He said that on both Eids we were asked by military people to clean the whole villages and paint the roadside to decorate trees and their offices. Our whole day passed doing work without food and water, and each night when we returned to our home I went to my charpai (bed) without seeing a single person of my



family because, after a whole day of arduous work, I used to lose my sanity” (Aleem, interview, Jan 7th, 2016).

Besides that, military economic exploitation of peasants was intense. Jabbar Khumbo told me that under the share-cropping system, tenants and the military have to divide the production equally among themselves, but the military always took up more than 50%, and sometimes, according to his estimate, they snatched almost 70% of their production (Jabbar, interview, Jan 3rd, 2016). There was a system of “evaluation” of the production of fields. This system was imposed by farm authorities on the tenants’ crop production. According to that evaluation system, farm authorities used to estimate the expected production of each peasant’s land, and tenants were required to produce at least that estimated production. Abid cursed the evaluation method of the military. He was of the view that “this is a rapacious method. Fouji always deliberately estimated the expected production of our fields higher than the average production land normally produced.” He said it was a rapacious act of military authorities and they were always busy planning to grab the tenants’ crops⁵ (Abid, interview, Jan, 9th 2016).

⁵ Mubbashir Rizvi (2019) also discussed the MFA’s crop evaluation method. He also recorded the stories of the tenants in which they cursed this method as a rapacious method of soldiers.

Jameel from Colayana State's village also sketched their life under military landlordism more or less the same as Fanon sketched it in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. He told me that we remained Ghulam (slave) even after 1947 when the British landlord left our country. He wished that "how good it would be if the Angraz (British) also took Pakistani Fouj (military) with them so that we can genuinely get freedom from servitude." He asked me: "Tell me. You are an educated man. What type of freedom is this when the British left our land and the Pakistan Army seized them again, so we remain slaves, now of Pakistan army and before them of Colonel Cole?"⁶ He also said "now our conditions are much better after the successful resistance to the military but before that there were no Chudary (landlord or Yeoman) in the village and every one of us was Kammi (landless laborer class) for them regardless of their caste and the size of landholding. He said, you better tell me, a village peon who is a grade 4 employee in farm authorities and he is not an officer, but in fact, he must be poorer than us in his home. But when he used to take a round of our villages, all tenants hold their breath and everyone was required to salute him. These village peons were used to summon us and also used to write our attendance before the village office and they used to call our name with a derogation and did not even care to respect our elders." He told me that "military officers asked us to send our daughters and wives to their homes for work in their home." He said "they deliberately asked for our women for services in their houses and this was a most disgraceful thing for us. He also told me that to penalize the alleged lazy woman worker, officers order her to stand the whole day outside his office without dobata"⁷ (Jameel, interview, Jan 16th 2016).

Decolonized Social Life: A Perspective and Practice of Peace from Below

Wheat Water Knead the Dough, Do Not Let the Pak Army Go.
(Peasants' chant)

6 Sir Colonel Cole was a British cavalry officer who received a grant of 7500 acres under horse breeding schemes. See Ali, Imran. (1988). pp. 156–157.

7 *Dobata* is a garment that is used by females to cover their heads and faces.

Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: The 'thing' colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation. (Fanon, 1963, p. 2)

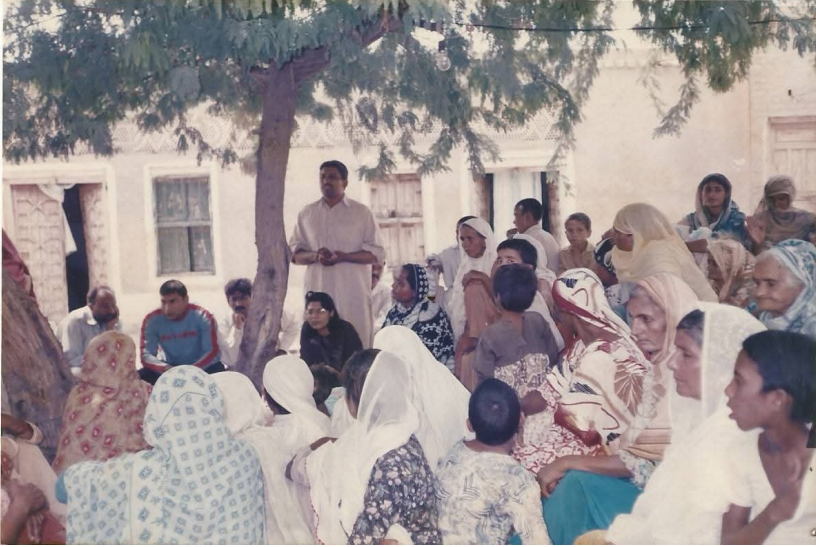
Following Fanon's analysis about decolonization, this essay sheds light on the inception and the struggle of Anjuman Muzareen Punjab, which reclaimed peasants lost self and identity, their distorted social existence, and their infiltrated economy from military domination. All in all, the whole struggle of tenants under the united banner of AMP was a struggle for the decolonization of tenants' colonized life from the domination of the military. The tenants of OMFs inflicted a collective resistance upon the army in the year 2000 when the military posed a threat of permanent eviction to peasants from their lands and villages.

The initial events of decolonization of peasants' life started in late 2000 after the formation of AMP. That was a time when in all villages of OMF, striking events of resistance by peasants and coercion by military⁸ were happening in several forms.

Virtues of the People

Dil Bhar Khombo told me the stories of how the people of Ranala Military Farm united to resist military domination to get freedom from military rule. He told me that chak Kurd 20.1.R played a central and significant role to unite and give courage to people of other villages of RMF. In the year 1996, Iqbal's house collapsed, and the resident of Kurd 20.1.R village, because of heavy rains that year. He rebuilt his house afterward many times because it used to collapse or be heavily damaged due to each rain of the season. Dil Bhar told me that they were never allowed by Military Farm's authorities to get their houses paved. They were not allowed to get bricks inside the village, and if someone was caught carrying bricks inside the village, "even a single brick," then that person was called by the farm's authorities the very

8 Pakistan Rangers (a paramilitary force) made two military campaigns in the year 2002 and 2003. The tenants' villages were sieged, electricity and telephone contentions were cut and the free movements of the villagers inside the village and to leave their villages were barred. For a detailed account of these paramilitary campaigns to suppress the tenants please see Human Rights Watch report: Ali Dayan Hasan (2004), Soiled hands: The Pakistan Army's repression of the Punjab farmers' movement and see Murphy, E. (2013). Class conflict, state terrorism and the Pakistani military: The Okara military farms dispute.



next day to see Colonel Ali (the then presiding officer of RMF).

People of RMF shared collective feelings of agony towards him. According to the tenants, he used to penalize them severely on petty mistakes such as if you were caught with even a single brick carrying inside the village, then he used to give certain kinds of punishments to tenants such as the convicted person was ordered by Colonel Ali to stand on one foot the whole day in the scorching sun before his office. Iqbal was very downhearted because his mud house was unable to stand for a long time before a rain or a storm and he had to make and repair his house many times after it first collapsed because of heavy rains in 1996. For each new construction or repair of his mud house, he had to bribe farm authorities to dig mud from his fields. In 2000, when the whole village united under the banner of AMP to struggle against the “servitude”⁹ under which their ancestors and they were living for several decades, they said to Iqbal: “Iqbal, go and get bricks for your house

⁹ Tenants used the word *ghulami* (servitude) very frequently whenever they explain their social conditions under military landlordism. It is very striking that life before the formation of AMP was a life of *ghulami* and life after the formation of AMP is a life of *azadi* (freedom) for tenants.

and the whole village will stand with you.” That day Iqbal purchased bricks for his house and the whole village gathered before the military check post. They together let the tractor trolley full of bricks pass into the village, and the military soldiers on the check post lowered their guns down in front of hundreds of villagers. The next day military farms authorities asked Iqbal to show himself to Colonel Ali. The tenants decided that they will not let Iqbal go alone to see him, but rather the whole village would go with him to see the Colonel. Hundreds of villagers went along with Iqbal to see Colonel Ali. When they reached outside the Colonel’s office and when the Colonel saw a huge mob of people, he got furious. He said, “I only called Iqbal. Why the hell are you all here”? They replied, with one voice, “we are all Iqbal. Tell us why you called us (Iqbal) here.” That day, they all returned to their village with victorious feelings. Afterward, they all started to get bricks and paved their houses, and “nobody dared to stop us,” in Dil Bhar words (Dil, interview, Jan 2nd, 2016). Later they all refused to pay corvee to the military too.

Along with this, I also heard many other stories from the peasants that after their organization was built, they refused to give fodder from their fields to military dairy farms. As Anwar Ariyan residents of chak 4.4.L MFO told me after the formation of their tanzeem, people of villages felt some courage inside them, and they openly refused to obey farm authorities. He told me that tenants refused to give a portion of fodder of their field to military dairy farms.

Besides sharecropping tenants were also obliged to surrender a half portion of the fodder of their fields to the military dairies.

Anwar told me that when tenants refused to surrender a portion of fodder for dairy farms, then military officers started to beseech tenants for a very small portion of fodder, but they blatantly refused to do that. Anwar derisively said to me that “this refusal was like a starvation message to greedy soldiers who never did little chores before and now they have to produce fodder themselves for their animals” (Anwar, interview, Jan 8th, 2016).

Dil Bhar told me that after Iqbal’s episode of “bricks” in Kurd 20.1.R, people of other villages of Renala State contacted them and asked them whether they may be part of this organization which was welcomed by the villagers and leaders of AMP warmly. People of four villages Khurd, Kala, Devisarabad, and Lewis Pura in RMF got united under the AMP except



for two villages of RMF Hazel Pura and Walter Gunj, which joined AMP early in the year 2007 when the tenants of Colyana State also joined the AMP. The entire Colyana state and the two villages of RMF unlike the other four villages of RMF and MFO villages were tilling land under the rent- in-cash system since their incorporation by the military after the partition of India. The land of Colayana State and the two villages of RMF are allotted to retired military officers who charge annual rent to tenants. Dil Bhar told me that when the RMF united under AMP, then every tenant started to pave their houses in RMF. He told me that farm authorities and Colonel Ali were helpless before their organization. Whenever the tractor trolley full of bricks reached the check post of the military, the tenants of four villages together let it pass in the villages and with time no house in these villages was not paved, Dil Bhar told me (Dil, interviewed by the author, Jan 2nd, 2016).

The paving of houses by tenants informs us about the process of decolonization of tenants' life. This decolonization started with the paving of houses and ended with the complete expulsion of the military from the social lives of tenants' villages. Colonization is the control of the social lives

of colonized (tenants) by the colonizer (military), and contrary to that the process of decolonization subverts, this phenomenon and instead of the colonizer (military) the colonized (tenants) themselves completely control their lives and repel the colonizer (military) from their territory.

Praxis

The process of decolonization that started with the paving of houses continued, and it took more robust forms with time. The tenants started to challenge and remove all signs of domination and colonization from their villages.

In January of 2002, Colonel Ali sent his private ruffians to Kala village of RMF to expropriate the land of a tenant late Shaheed Shabir,¹⁰ who was killed by a bullet of the military in a skirmish between tenants and the military over the appropriation of his land by the Colonel's private hooligans (military authorities used this tactic of private thugs on several occasions to intimidate villagers. A similar case happened in Colyana State after their articulation with AMP in the year 2007. A retired army officer sent private hooligans, who were notorious for their criminal activities in that region, to grab the land from the tenant's control. In that skirmish, tenants of Colyana state as usual were defenseless before the armed hooligans of retired army officers. During the confrontation of both parties, three tenants get murdered and several, including women, were injured). Many people from all four villages gathered to retake possession of the land. The tenants were confronted first by Colonel Ali's private hooligans, and when the Colonel's hooligans observed that the situation is getting out of their hands, then they called the army for their assistance. Then tenants were confronted directly by military soldiers who came to help their private hooligans. Rafique told me that tenants of four villagers came to encounter the worse situations including him and nobody had any type of gun; rather the tenants' weapons were tilling instruments which they use to dig mud. The army opened fire on the defenseless villagers, and in that fight, four to five villagers got injured by the army's fire. One of the villagers died on the spot, but Colonel Ali could not snatch the land from the tenants, Rafique told me. When this conflict was over, the furious villagers destroyed the

10 Human Right Watch (2004) also recorded this incident in their report.

military check post that was on the main road which leads to all villages of Renala Estate, where military soldiers used to search out each villager when they would enter the village and where the tenants' relatives from the other villages needed permission before from the farm authorities to enter in the villages. As Aslam told me that, "this check post was a border for us like India and Pakistan and each time when we entered in our villages soldiers used to stop us then search out our body and checked our national identity cards and then let us enter in our villages. When tenants demolish the check post then the Army soldiers on duty fled from the spot. Later, District Police Officer Okara and Rangers came to harass people but we were standing united and never get scared again," Aslam said in a robust voice.

In addition to this, a lot of other things happened that further assert the decolonized self of tenants. By demolishing different symbols of military domination, the tenants reaffirmed their decolonized selves. There were farm authorities' offices in each village of military farms where tenants were forced to sit on their feet in line for hours waiting for the farm officer, wondering when will he come and assign them their duties and penalize the convicted tenants for their transgressions and at night they took attendance of each tenant with their work progress. All in all, these offices were a major symbol of military domination upon tenants, and these were sort of military headquarters from where they used to control the tenants' social lives. When the process of decolonization started by the tenants under the banner of AMP, they broke many symbols of domination and among them was one of these farm's offices in each village. In some villages, offices were occupied by homeless tenants, and in some, they remained emptied and wrecked and used as a bin for a whole village to dispose of their wastes.

Under military domination, the thing that made tenants less human was the structure of their collective social life. They used to live in shanty towns in little mud shacks. Their villages were without graveyards, mosques, playgrounds, and schools. Tenants were not allowed to observe any religious, cultural, or national days. Inshallah, a resident of Hazel Pura, pointed with fingers at one house and told me that "where now one family is living in this house before the formation of AMP twenty families were used to live in this small place." Therefore, the process of decolonization for the tenants was to reclaim those things which are part of the collective social life of the village from which they were deprived under military domination or colonization of their lives. As Fanon contended, it is the very process of

decolonization that makes the colonized subject a complete human being. After the tenants' successful resistance, in which they repelled the military from their villages and took a control of their own social lives, they rebuilt the structure of their social lives. This reconstruction of decolonized life of tenants included many things such as building big paved mosques, having playgrounds for children, and having a place for a graveyard, to re-scheme the residential areas, distributing land to landless tenants who were evicted from their lands or had no land at all; to make barren land cultivable; and to celebrate or observe religious, social, and peasants' tanzeem (organization) days. Nazeer Khokar from Walter Gunj told me that after tanzeem they allocated more area for residences. He pointed toward one side and said, this was the old settlement, he pointed to another side, this is the new settlement that we made after AMP. He told me that the district officer came many times to intimidate us, saying that we cannot do this, it is illegal. He said, "In response, we told him each time very gently that this is our land and our village so you do not need to intervene" (Nazeer, interview, Jan 29th, 2016).

The other major difference that we noticed in the tenants' villages of military farms with other villages of Punjab after the peasants' movement is the social life of villages that is very much attached to tenants' tanzeem AMP. Decolonized life of tenants' villages is dependent on the tenants' organization AMP. Kinship structures (biradries) that are a very fundamental social unit of village life were absent/non- functional in these villages before the eruption of the movement because the preconditions that are necessary for kinship ties were absent due to institutional landlordism of the army. The literature on Punjab villages' societies delineates at least three economic classes in the Punjab villages as follows:

1. The landlord class which is the major economic class of the village consists of a few families who own major portions of village lands and also control the politics of the village. Often, two landlords from the same economic class, but from different castes or patti and sometimes from the same castes, even compete in the political arena.
2. The artisan and small businessman class¹¹ of society, who normally do not hold any land and in some cases very little piece of land. Artisan class's economic activity depended on their profession and occupational caste, like Nai (hairdresser and cook), Tarkhan (carpenter), and Dhaba

11 S. Ahmad in his study "peasant classes of Pakistan" categorized villages' classes into two categories of 'Zamindar' and 'Kammis'. He did have another class of small businessmen in the villages who run their small businesses like general stores, cloth shops, etc. and he also put the artisan class in the 'Kammis' category.

(tailor), and also little business classes also exist in the villages who do have small shops of cloths, departmental stores, or sweets shops.

3. Landless land laborer caste, the most impoverished class of villager. They do work on the land of the big landholding class of the village (Ahmad, 1972, p. 61).

These all classes in the villages are tied around their biradries.¹² This social network of villages also has profound effects on the political alignments at the time of elections. According to many studies during elections, the major landholding class who also dominate the political sphere gather votes based on kinship ties and clientelism. All in all, the biradries network are central social units of villages that actively influence the process of politics at the time of elections.¹³ On the other hand, we find very different social hierarchies in the villages of AMP before the emergence of their movement. There was one landlord in these villages which is a central dominant institution. Under its ascendancy, no social hierarchies in the villages could be established. Unlike our above derivation of three economic and social classes of villages, under military landlordism, there was only one economic and social class, and these were tenants. Biradries network ceased to exist in these villages even though there were all castes present in these villages from landholding to artisan and land laborer, but there could not be established any social hierarchies in these villages. Aniyat Ali, a tenant from the MFO, explained this phenomenon very interestingly: “In the military time there was no distinction of Muslim and Christian, there was no division of Ariyan and Mousali (land laborer) among peasants for the military because we were all slaves for them. They treated all of us very derisively without any distinction of whether he is a fellow Muslim or not, and whether he is Jat (land owning class of Punjab) or Mousali (landless laborer)” (Aniyat, interview, Jan 20th, 2016). Similarly, after the formation of the AMP movement in these villages, the social and political structures that emerged there are yet outright different than the other villages of Punjab. The social structures and hierarchies that emerged after the peasants’ movements are also very different than the typical villages of Punjab. Tenants’ tanzem AMP perform all those social and political functions that are performed by kinship ties or briadires in other villages. It is not to say that people are completely free from their

12 For example see, Alavi, H. A. (1972). Kinship in west Punjab villages. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 6(1), 1–27. For more discussion on the kinship structures of Punjab’s villages. 13 For example see, Mohmand, S. K. (2014). Losing the connection: party-voter linkages in Pakistan. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 52(1), 7–31.

primordial loyalties of caste, religion, and briadries but rather that their manifestation in social and political structures of villages is different from the other villages of Punjab. AMP as tanzeem of tenants plays the role of a major mediator in routine conflict of peasants. These conflicts normally come for mediation to the symbolic headquarters.¹³

Along many social statuses like caste, briadries, and religion, there is another status of tanzeem's leader that is a major source of social capital and prestige in these villages. People's day-to-day life gatherings and sittings occur as tanzeem members like to organize a game tournament with the name of tanzeem and then call tanzeem's leaders as chief guests. The social places of tenants' gatherings are also built around tanzeem, and major bhetaks (community gatherings) of tenants also occurred on tanzeem headquarters. In addition to this, tanzeem also celebrates and observes several days. These events are exclusively attached with tanzeem like the 10th Dec day of Shaheed Bashir day is celebrated in RMF each year. On this day, tenants from all over RMF gather on Ch. Nadeem Ashraf dehra to observe the death anniversary of Shaheed Bashir. According to tenants, Bashir was the first person who sacrificed his life for the cause of tenants, and thereby they observe his death anniversary each year on 10th Dec. Such events and tenants' gatherings are a permanent source of their radical politics, and this also keeps fresh tenants' collective history of suffering. In mosques and especially in Juma prayers, Imam-e-Masjid talks about tanzeem, and prayers are offered for arrested tanzeem leaders and other members of AMP. Furthermore, AMP is a prevailing political force in tenants' villages. However, other competing political forces do exist in these villages too, who do politics on the base of kinship ties or clientelism, but they have never succeeded in the local body elections against the tenants' tanzeem AMP. AMP tenants call their opponent tenants, who participate in the anti-tanzeem activities through competing elections, and by becoming police informants, "Amen group" (peaceful group), this is a derisive term for those who are ready to compromise with the military and always try to win military generosity through fawning military and police, according to AMP tenants. I observed in tenants' villages that people who are labeled with Amen group in villages, because of their presumptively anti-tanzeem activities, have been ostracized by tenants of AMP from the village community. In the last local body elections Oct 2015, AMP candidates score all the seats in all

13 These places are usually houses of leaders of AMP in each village.

military farms of Okara against the candidates of Pakistan Muslim League (N), the leading party in the national and provincial assembly of Punjab at that time. Local body elections consist of one union council (UC) chairman for each UC and four to five general councilors in each UC. AMP scored all the chairman and general councilor's seats against the then leading party of the province Muslim League (N) except one seat of general councilor. AMP won total of eight chairmen of three military farms of Okara and almost 18 general councilors in local body elections of 2015. One UC chairman seat was contested and won by Christian tenants of AMP against a Muslim contestant of the Muslim League (N) party. We can observe an underlying tension between kinship ties, castes, and Religion with the tenants' tanzem AMP as one AMP candidate lost his seat in local body elections in 2015. I asked Rifique why AMP candidate Ikram lost the elections of general councilors against his opponents, who had a ticket of Muslim League (N), while all the other candidates of AMP won the elections. He told me that Ikram was chosen as a candidate for general councilors by AMP, but another fellow tenant also wanted to contest this seat, and he rejected the decision of AMP leadership he also contested elections on the AMP ticket.¹⁴ Therefore, both candidates have a photo of Nadeem Ashraf (who was in Jail at that time) on their election campaign banners, and thereby according to Raifque, the votes of AMP tenants divided in apparently two candidates of AMP which gave leverage to Muslim League (N) candidate who was mobilizing tenants on caste, biradrie, and clientelism. Rafique told me that he only won by 14 votes, and this means that our tanzem is still dominant and not weak. This specific case depicts the underlying tension between kinship ties, biradries, caste, and religion within the AMP. The tensions between the two candidates of general councilors also rested on the briadrie, caste politics, and the opponents who are so far losers in every local body election since the formation of AMP also score substantial numbers of votes, though not enough to defeat their opponent candidates of AMP.

14 AMP is not a registered party with the election commission of the country, in these villages AMP tickets for elections mean that the chosen candidate of AMP wrote on his campaign banners the name of *tanzem* and also print the photo of the leader of the respective military farm.

Conclusion

Tenants were very proud of what they have achieved through their collective struggles. As Aslam, a peasant activist of AMP pointed his finger toward a playground where children and teenagers were playing volleyball and cricket. He said this is for what we have resisted and this is what we have achieved. Our children can play, go to school, offer prayers, and host a guest at our houses. He further said, Look at us we are having a very friendly and emotional conversation something we could never imagine having under the military (Aslam, interviewed by the author, 27th March 2016)

This essay analyzed the land rights movement of the peasantry of Punjab to show that the peasants' movement for land rights is aimed at liberating their social life not just the agricultural land. In so doing, the essay theorized and highlighted social-ontological acts of resistance, such as building paved houses, playgrounds, schools, and mosques and destroying the symbols of dominations. Further, this essay highlights and analyzes that these acts of resistance would only be visible if we understand the social, political, and historical context of the peasants' subjugation. Peasants' subjugation was not limited to the control of their agricultural land, but it was just one aspect of their social subjugation under military landlordism.

Further, this essay sheds light how colonial violent state-making processes shaped state-society relationships in post-colonial Pakistan. The peasants' subjugation sheds light on that how the colonial structures are continued and sustained by the postcolony. Formal independence from the colonial master is not a liberation but a continuation of the same violence in new forms and disguises. Further, this chapter highlights and theorizes through the peasants' struggles that how peace is possible from the perspectives and the agencies of the subaltern that is delinked from our colonial past and neocolonial present.

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The Genius of Bacha Khan

by Qalandar Bux Memon

Most geniuses have one masterwork for which they are famous. For Che and Fidel, that work was surely the Cuban Revolution and its international humanism, just as it was for Lenin, the Russian. For CLR James, we can list “The Black Jacobins” as an extraordinary work of genius, as well as the underground Marxist group he co-led, known as the Johnson-Forest tendency. For Selma James and many other women of the 1970s Marxist Feminist movement, it was about recognizing

the economic contributions of housework and children and establishing organizations that advocated for fair compensation for caring and reproductive labor. Their slogan, ‘invest in caring, not war’, remains the blueprint. For Spivak, it has been to chart a path for activism while working beyond Eurocentric Logocentrism.

The list is long, but I never thought that a tall, six-foot-three, broad-shouldered, soft-spoken Khan from Utmanzai, Hashnagar,



a mere graduate of King Edward's School, Peshawar, would, before he turned 30, have three works of genius to his name. Abdul Ghafar Khan, honorifically known as Badshah Khan (King of the Khans) and also Bacha Khan, a title bestowed upon him at the mere age of 27, created three masterpieces. In order of creation,

they were: Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina (The Society for the Reform of the Afghan), Pakhtun magazine, and the greatest non-violent organization the world has yet known, the Khudai Khidmatgar. Here I want to write only of the first, Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina.



Bacha Khan was born in 1890; by then, the Pakhtun areas had been conquered, divided, and society had been socially engineered to serve the purpose of British imperialism.

The British did not arrive in the Pakhtun lands all at once but

through stages. First, they inherited the Pakhtun lands that Ranjit Singh's Sikh armies had earlier conquered. Singh had taken Attock in 1813 and Peshawar in 1823. The British gained control of these areas after the Treaty of Lahore in 1846 and solidified it by 1849. From that point, they gradually took over more Pakhtun

areas. By 1879, they had control over Dir, Swat, Bannu, Khurram, and the Tirah Valley, and shortly after, they imposed the Durand Line, cutting the Pakhtuns off from their historical lands.

Once in military control, they set up a divide-and-rule administrative structure. Pakhtun regions were split into settled districts, tribal agencies, and the so-called “Frontier,” each governed by different laws and authorities. The Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1872 legalized collective punishment and institutionalized the state of exception, ensuring that Pakhtuns were doubly colonized – not only were they colonized like the rest of British India, but they were also subject to different laws compared to the rest of British India. This was made possible by ‘racecraft’ (a racial discourse upon which is fixed a governance structure of hierarchy), that discourse that even today follows Pakhtuns and renders them into non-being.

At the social and economic level, the British dismantled the egalitarian wesh system of land distribution, created loyal “big khans” through land grants, while peasants slipped into dependence. They also elevated mullahs,

turning them into tools of propaganda to denounce reformers or neighbors as kafir. Ghani Khan, the great poet and Bacha Khan’s son, notes of them: “The colonial state supplied the tribes with divine-looking priests who perverted the tribesmen’s love of God into hatred of his brother.” Bacha Khan would oppose this colonial system.

Bacha Khan was born into a land-owning family headed by Behram Khan, and was set on becoming a collaborator until he experienced racism firsthand. A friend advised him to apply for a commission in the British army. He did, was interviewed, approved, and on his way to a ‘good life’ – until he saw a British official mistreating a Sikh friend in a friend’s room and making it clear that the ‘darkies’ in the Empire would never be equal to whites. The experience of ‘racism’ or ‘racecraft’ led Ghaffar to give up on joining the British in any capacity. From that point on, he became a sworn enemy of British imperialists. Someone who understands their culture rejects the imperial ‘racial’ hierarchy that puts them down. Ghaffar Khan, unlike Gandhi, had no trouble rejecting the British idea of civilization and white superiority.

He did so easily, already knowing from Pakhtun and Islamic history had contributions in science, art, poetry, and culture. He was not intimidated by an upstart 'farangi'. His brother, studying in the UK at the time, arranged for him to join him, but Ghaffar Khan's mother refused permission, fearing she would lose another son to foreign lands. Ghaffar stayed in his village with his mother, got married, and had two sons, Ghani and Wali Khan, while managing the family's farmland. Ghani, in his book *The Pathan*, continues the story:

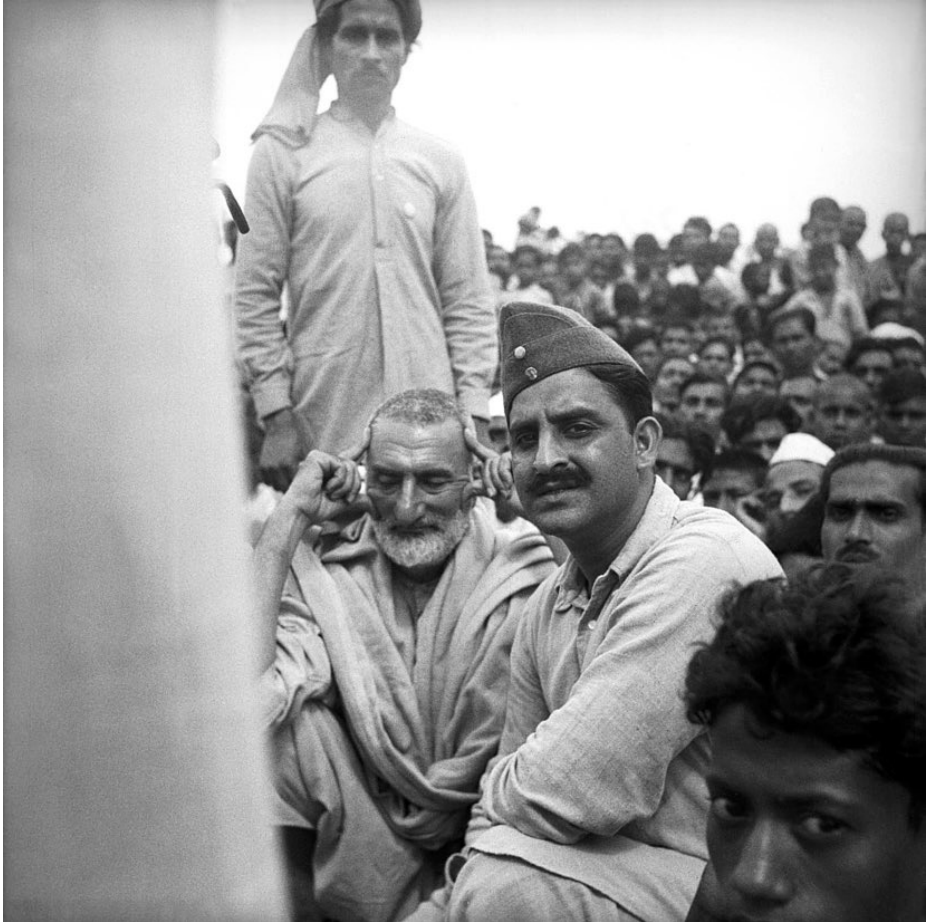
The young man [Bacha Khan] adored his wife—a whimsical, lovable, generous creature, well-bred and from a fine old family. But still he wandered. He worshipped his children, two sons, but very often when he sat by the fire he would stop cuddling them and a far-away look would come into his eyes. His lovely wife knew these moods and hated them. For every woman likes to possess all of a man. She realized that there was something in this strong, handsome husband of hers that made him forget her beautiful eyes and the twitters of

her children by the fireside.

She did not live long to see those long silences and dark moods turn into strength and action. She died before she was twenty-five. They covered her with flowers and took her to the burial ground in her wedding robe. She left behind two baby boys with a bewildered, terrified look in their eyes. They sensed the horror of death though they did not understand or know what it meant.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan's restlessness increased. The European war had brought to India a hypocritical promise of advance at its beginning and an influenza epidemic in the end. He left his children in the tender care of his old mother and drowned his sorrow in work and Service.

He had found his profession in life. He had found a new love—his people. Pathans must be united, educated, reformed and organised.



An educated Pakhtun was of no use to the British and today to the Pakistani state. His destiny for the empire is to be either a cheap soldier or collateral damage in drones, military operations, or other acts of the Pakistani state or imperial violence. In 1901-2, there were only 154 schools at all levels in the NWFP. Meanwhile,

in Punjab, there were 2257, and Bengal had 45922. In 1911, only 25 males of 1000 could fit the criteria of literacy. The British saw the Pakhtun lands in India as a buffer zone, and rather than the pen, wanted Pakhtun children to have the gun and be susceptible to the ideas they whispered in the ear of paid mullahs. That

way, they could be directed to fight at the whims of the British. The riyasat of Pakistan still uses this tactic, with their American backers, they want them as either Mujahideen or Taliban, but never educated and self-reliant. This tactic is now commonly known as the 'mullah-military nexus'. For such a strategy to succeed, you must eliminate the 'pen' and educated people. That is precisely what the British attempted, but Ghaffar Khan had different ideas.

At first, Ghaffar Khan worked with the Haji of Turangzai on this. The title Haji refers to someone who has performed the Hajj. He was a popular preacher, educationalist, and anti-imperialist revolutionary inspired by Deoband. Photos of the Haji show a middle-aged man with a white beard and spectacles. Ghani noted that he was handsome, sturdy, and effectively violent in guerrilla warfare. In exile in the Mohammad Agency, he married a wealthy, beautiful widow who was drawn to his looks and also provided him with the material wealth to support his revolutionary zeal. After marriage, he performed the Hajj twice, and from then on, he looked and behaved as a religious man, just like Ghaffar Khan. The

Haji was religiously educated and came from a nearby village of Ghaffar Khan's in Charsadda. Like Ghaffar Khan, he wanted to end British rule and had joined a guerrilla war against the British in 1897 during his youth. That effort was unsuccessful, so he turned to social reform for a while. Along with Ghaffar Khan, he visited villages and preached for the construction of community and educational institutions, as well as unity among Pakhtuns. He established about 34 Azad Islamia Schools, which were set up in mosques. He urged Pakhtuns not to send their children to British missionary schools, but instead to Madrassa schools. Still in his 20s, Ghaffar Khan was honored with the title 'Badshah Khan' (the King of the Khans) for his anti-imperialist activities and social work with the Haji. At these schools, they preached anti-imperialism. The British, always watchful to keep a society ossified and scared of any element that brings life to society, acted in 1915, banned the schools, arrested the teachers, and searched for the Haji. He escaped to the tribal areas and remained there until his death. Ghaffar Khan now led the resistance with new tactics.



The Anjuman of Resistance

‘Today, The Pakhtun nation does not need the Gun, indeed they need the power of the pen. We want to take freedom of the country by pen rather than by guns.

Ghaffar Khan

Ghaffar Khan continued along similar lines as the Haji. He traveled on foot from village to village, met the people there, and worked to establish his first school: The Azad School of Utmanzai. The school was a collective effort. In the 1970s, Ghaffar

Khan dictated an autobiography. Regarding the school, he writes: ‘We founded the Azad School Utmanzai in 1921, with the help of the Qazi Attaullah, Mian Ahmed Shah, Haji Abdul Ghaffar, Mohammad Abbas Khan, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, Tag Muhammad Khan, Abdullah Shah and Khadim Mohammad Akbar.’

I learned more about the school from the book ‘Bacha Khan’s Alternative Vision of Education’ by Dr. Mohammad Sohail Khan. I also had a phone conversation with Dr. Khan. He mentions that the school was set up in the house of Akram Khan, and boarding



was set up in his guest house (Hujra). It was situated near Dhab Bridge, called Dhab pul in the local accent, at the entrance of the village of Utmanzai, coming from Charsadda. There were five classrooms initially, besides the three boarding rooms and an office for Anjuman in the building.

I decided to find the school and set out from Peshawar, which I was visiting at the time. Sohail Khan had told me that it no longer existed, but that its old location was opposite the shrine of Sheikh Jalal-e-Bukhari Baba. I headed to the shrine of Jalal-e-Bukhari Baba by car. I asked around for the shrine and was sent to it by locals. I parked the

car and walked up to the shrine. It is a small shrine with little else but the saint's grave and a sacred ancient tree rising at least 30 feet above it. I say ancient because, being confined within the shrine and therefore serving as a sanctuary of sacredness, it has survived at least from the time of Bacha Khan from defilement – there were few other large trees in sight. The shrine was adjacent to Tangi Road. The road is dusty but cooled by the nearby flow of the Jindi River and a smaller canal channel that flows a few hundred yards away. The school was opposite the shrine, so I crossed the street and now saw a mosque, commercial buildings, a sanitary store, many houses, and a gener-



al store. The area is littered with one-story commercial buildings with steel shutters at their front. What I was looking for was long gone. A few hundred yards further up the road, I found Quetta Chaye shop and went in, sat on a bright red plastic chair, and a similar red plastic table became my workstation. I ordered a paratha and a pot of cava, then I got out of my ransack. Dr. Sohail, A few hundred yards further up the road, I found Quetta Chaye shop and went in. I sat in a bright red plastic chair, and a similar red plastic table served as my workstation. I ordered a paratha and a pot of chai, then I took out Dr. Sohail Khan's book from my bag and started learning about the

school and the organization that was set up to run it.

Sohail Khan notes that to run the school and further the ideological work, Ghaffar Khan and his comrades founded the Anjuman-I-Islamhul Afghani (Society for the Reformation of Afghans). Bacha Khan, in his autobiography, notes the aims of the Anjuman: 'We also established an Anjuman to create love, non-violence, nationalism, and to promote unity amongst Pakhtuns with the eradication of social evils.'

The Anjuman consisted of an advisory board of 50 members, which was to meet twice a month and bear the costs of the schools

and the Anjuman. The members had to refrain from enmity with the people. They had to avoid using British courts of law and refrain from working for the British. They were asked to use and promote their native language. To this end, the Anjuman was constitutionally tasked with holding an annual poetic competition (Mushaira) in Utmanzai and covering the travel and other expenses of the poorer poets. The Anjuman also aimed to publish a newspaper in Pashtu. It was to have one president, two vice presidents, one general secretary, one assistant secretary, and one treasurer. The constitution established an inspector to oversee the schools and their examinations. The first meeting, many later meetings, and the annual poetic competition all took place on a vast ground outside the Azad school of Utmanzai, a few hundred yards from where I sat. At the inaugural meeting, leadership positions were allocated, and the membership also established three bodies: one to increase membership, another to disseminate their ideas, and a third to generate funds. The Anjuman, well organized, with funds and motivated by anti-imperialism, started off with zeal and never

stopped.

At its founding, the school had 70 students, and Ghani was one of them. In an interview later in his life, he didn't appreciate the conditions of the school. He was sent to it, as was his brother, Wali, because, I quote Ghani: 'Father said that people would say he built a wretched school if he put his sons in a good school. That is why we attended this subpar school. What a horrible little school.' Ghani was a boarder, and he notes that the classrooms were often turned into their bedrooms at night, and their bed sheets sometimes had scorpions in them. There was no toilet, and they would have to go outside for such matters. There was corporeal punishment for misbehaving, and the teachers were often mullahs with no passion and a danda (stick) in hand (for caning the children). Boarders paid 3 rupees per month, which was a small amount even back then, so the food they received was never enough. While Ghani considered it a 'wretched place', he understood why he was there. In the same interview, Ghani notes:

There was a crowd of them, and the Haji of Turangzai was one



of them, my father was one of them, they were mostly priests [mullahs]. And they said that we have to educate the children to be anti-British from childhood. In [British] school they used to make us read ... Ye Badshah Hamara [this King of Ours, a pro-British chant], this sort of thing. They said that from childhood they [the British] teach them loyalty and everything. But we should make a school where we can produce revolutionaries and workers. They made this one big school in our village and little schools here

and there and everywhere, usually in the mosques.

He also notes that the headmaster was an idealist:

He had he left Aligarh [Muslim University] and had an M.A. He was the son of a Khan of Bannu [District in NWFP]. They were two brothers. They were all right, but the rest, we had mullahs and this religious education. There was no science because they could not afford it. And then there was my father's usual economy.



I mean, he used to sit on the ground!

The Anjuman consisted predominantly, at its founding, of members of the Khilafat movement. They were religious people, reformers, and anti-imperialists.

Ghani was not the austere saint

that his father was, but he was the beneficiary of the revolutionaries. He didn't like being in the 'wretched' school but understood why he was there and the message of the revolution his father worked selflessly for.

I called up Dr. Sohail to ask him about the school and Anjuman.

Dr. Sohail Khan interviewed many of those who had attended the school and those who had been members of the Anjuman. I told him I could not find anything of the school building. He replied, 'Yes, it isn't there anymore, it was merged along with the rest of the 134 Azad schools that the Anjuman built into government district schools in 1946/7. The location was also changed; that land too was given by Ghaffar Khan. Look, the teachers were not paid too well, the aim was to get rid of the Farangi – when that end was met, these schools could be merged and the teachers could get better wages, a pension, and security of a government job.

What Professor, I asked, was the curriculum.

It was taken from Islamia College School, Peshawar, so you had English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Urdu, Islamiyah, and vocational subjects. Over time, it was refined, and technical knowledge was imparted. Skilled artisans were hired to teach the students such things as tailoring, hosiery, carpentry, cap making, and weaving. The school aimed to form students intellectually, techni-

cally, and morally. Co-curricular activities were essential for the last. The students had a weekly Bazmi Adab – a literary session. They also played sports. Football, Volleyball, and badminton were the most prominent sports. In fact, when Ghaffar Khan was arrested in 1921, he was busy preparing a football field for the students.

Ghaffar Khan continued to face arrests. First, in 1919, he was detained for six months for holding an assembly against the Rowlatt Bill, which granted oppressive powers to the police, but was still less harsh than the FCR, which applied in the NWFP. Bacha Khan had protested it in solidarity with the rest of India rather than for its impact on him and his people – FCR was applied in NWFP, so the Bill would not affect the Pakhtuns. Later, he was arrested again for founding the Azad Schools and sentenced to three years of hard labor. The chains were too small for him, and they cut into his ankles; in prison, he had to grind wheat daily, and he was mainly kept in solitary confinement. He endured his hardships patiently each time. In total, he spent about 37 years

in jail out of his 93-year life. Despite his arrest in 1921, the schools continued to operate.

Every year, the school held an annual meeting. These were historic gatherings. The meetings openly discussed the financial affairs of the Anjuman, the progress of the schools, and their shortcomings. Students delivered speeches, recited poetry, and performed plays. Over the years, these events evolved, and attendance grew from hundreds to hundreds of thousands. By 1924, the meetings included daytime theater performances and nighttime national poetry competitions. Dr. Sohail recounted the 1927 gathering, saying,

That year Ghani gave a speech on the necessity of female education. Later, the students staged a play titled 'Orphan'. The play aimed to portray society from the perspective of the oppressed and highlight the structures of power that enable their exploitation. The 'orphan' in the play receives no sympathy from the Khans. The mullahs offer no assistance and are shown to be more interested in profiteering than in helping the poor.

The patwari (government land revenue official) is corrupt and offers no help to the orphan. The courts, controlled by the Khans, deny justice. Ultimately, the Pakhtun intellectuals are depicted as disconnected from the poor and the land, as their education alienates them from the people.

The play, by looking at society bottom up – the perspective of a poor orphan, demonstrates the sectors above the orphan and the need for change if justice were to return. After the play finished, later that evening, 100 or so poets recited their poems, and awards were given to the best poets. The following year, the play was again performed and was viewed by more than 50 000 people.

At this point, Dr. Sohail excitedly mentioned that Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, had been a student at the school, 'his father was stationed in Charsadda and he was looking for a place to send his son and knew that other Hindu and Sikh boys were studying at the school, so Manmohan was also sent here'. Not only that, but Nehru and Gandhi too had visited,

given speeches, and spent time at the school – Nehru in 1937 and Gandhi in 1938.

Nothing but the glorious old tree over the shrine of Jalal-Bukhari Baba suggested the historical nature of the area I was sitting in.

Dr. Sohail went on:

The important intervention of these Azad schools was that they were the first school to impart education in the mother tongue, in Pashtu. The Anjuman was aware of the importance of taking charge of the curriculum. In my book, in chapter 6, I have summarized Ghaffar Khan's view on education.

After our conversation, I turned to chapter 6 and found Ghaffar Khan's views.

Ghaffar Khan tells us,

The illness of our nation is illiteracy. The prisons are full, the hanging ropes are worn out and the lands are confiscated. The slavery life makes us mourn every day. We are mourning every day due to slavery life, with new worries, hardships, hitches,

complications and snags. We have not identified our disease, if made by someone, he hesitates to consult his physician

The Anjuman is institute purely for your service and reformation. If you assist the Anjuman, it will be able to serve you better. The present movement of Azad national education initiated by the Anjuman, is successful to a large extent. This phenomenal movement will enable you to stand on your own feet, strive for the autonomy, realize your self-esteem and encourage your will. It will enhance the passion for Islam, nation, tolerance and sacrifices.

The curriculum is in the hands of foreigners, it will enable you to obey their own agenda. It is producing the idle youth having no vocational training, moral integrity, ethics and nationalism.

...now imagine, if the government and education both are captive, how much the national will be degraded and demoralized. It is the intense need that we shall arrange education by our own according to our own needs to make the national

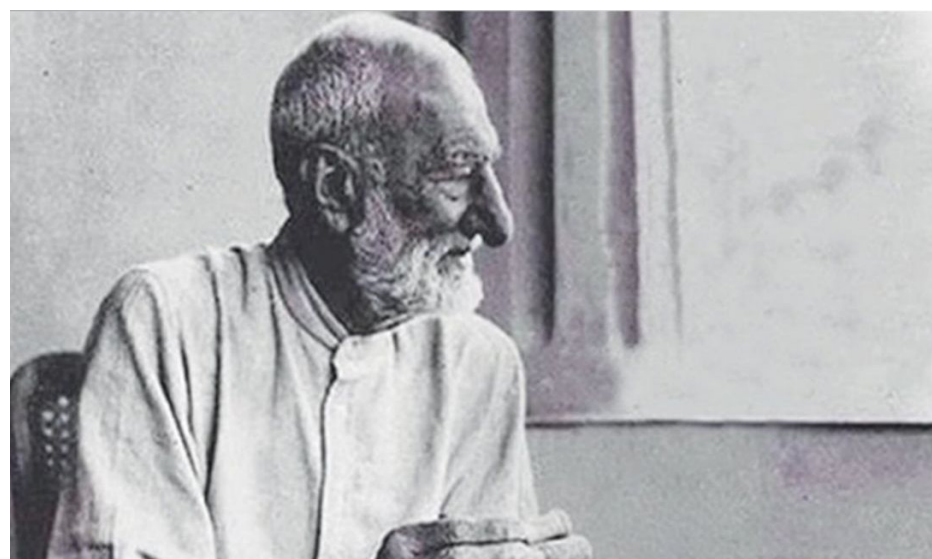
self-reliable.

After my phone call with Dr. So-hail, I decided to walk a little and find something about the school and its grounds. I walked back to the shrine, crossed the road from it, and wandered further into the streets opposite. There were houses, steel shutter doors, garages, but nothing of the school or its grounds. Wandering around, I soon found myself next to a water channel that was merging into the Jindi River and a large, makeshift, lush green cricket ground. Maybe, I thought then, but now I am pretty sure, this was part of the grounds where thousands of anti-imperialists had gathered, where Badshah Khan had been arrested while busy creating a football pitch for students to play on, and where Ghani had first recited his poetry. I sat on the ground and reflected on what I had learned that day.

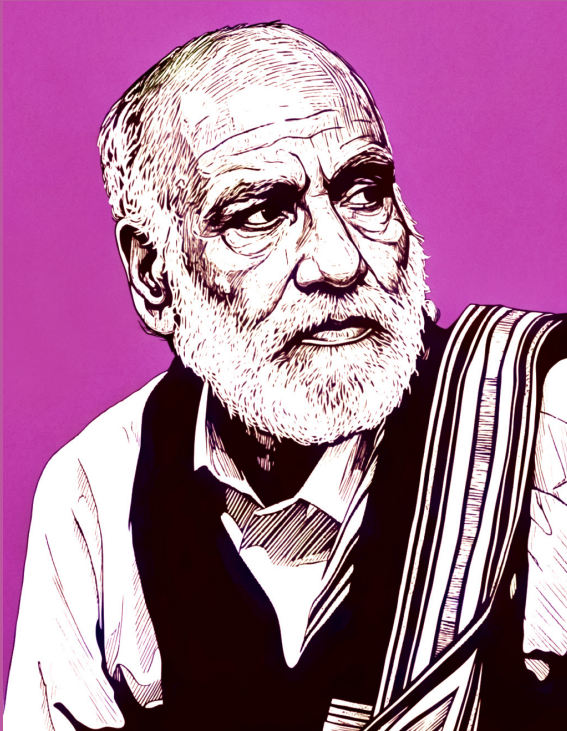
I began to realize that I knew little about decolonial history. I had believed that Fanon, Memmi, and Aimé Césaire were pioneers, and that decolonial concepts and ideas had become solidified through their work, which they wrote in the 1960s, while Bacha Khan was working on his anti-colonial ped-

agogy in the 1920s. While sitting by the water channel on the edge of what was once the Utmanzai Azad School, thinking of the writings of Ghani Khan and Ghaffar Khan. It struck me that the legacy of decolonial thought and action (praxis) passed through exactly this place. The idea I held dear – that Western-educated, metropolitan brown sahibs had returned to lead decolonial movements – didn't hold up when faced with Hashnagar and the Anjuman. Ghaffar Khan and his many companions and co-creators were neither secular nor 'Western'-educated. There's nothing borrowed from Western thought in Ghaffar Khan. He refused to go abroad but, using indigenous practices and sources of knowledge—the Quran, Hadith, Islamic history, and Pakhtun culture—he developed an educational philosophy, an anti-colonial organization, and restructured Pakhtun society away from enmity and toward non-violence.

An educated, nonviolent, united population serves no interest for imperialists, which is why Ghaffar Khan chose these paths. He was a proud, strong Muslim farmer from Hashnagar, who knew neither Sartre nor the sophistication



Poetry from Balochistan



**By Mubarak
Qazi**

**Translated By
Fazal Baloch**

THE DAYS OF GLORY SHALL DAWN

These mountains,
The stalwart guardians of our land,
Our sky and earth,
Gorges and abysses,
Rocks and trenches
Meadows and pastures
Musk-exuding fields and plains stretched far and wide,
Qanats, rivers, streams, the flowing guide.
Emblem of our pride, of sovereignty's reign,
They chant our freedom and dignity's refrain:
"As long as stars twinkle,
As sun shines bright,
As moons glow softly in the night,
As dawn breaks,
As lightning strikes above, I'm sure,
I'm certain,
The days of glory
Shall dawn upon the Baloch.



THE ECHO

No trace, no mark, no sign.
One day, all living souls will fade,
I, too, will vanish from sight,
And you, from memory's embrace.
Trust me—no echo of us will remain,
Only the world endures.

SO I NEVER THOUGHT
(A Ghazal)

My soul torn apart, my heart ablaze—so I never
thought,
That I'd lose faith in myself one day—so I never
thought.

Burdened by life's woes, drowned in grief and de-
spair,
A lover would abandon love's way—so I never
thought.

This journey of love with you was like a beautiful
dream,
Petals would fade, flowers wither away—so I never
thought.

I believed it would last just a day or two, not more,
That I'd be silenced forever and always —so I never
thought.

Qazi, these bitter days, this harshness will pass away,
But on every word, the heavens you'd raise —so I
never thought.

ON THE DESERTED PATH OF LIFE

On life's deserted road,
As barren as Gwadar,
Longings, unyielding like Batel,
Tighten their grip around my heart.
Sighs rise, by the tides,
Only to shatter within my crumbling soul.

The musky soil of my homeland,
Its stones, its pebbles —
Like collyrium, soothe my eyes,
Yet are traded away for mere coins.

Fallen on harsh days,
Our mothers, sisters,
Elders, and children,
Beg for crumbs in their own land.

Our wise and well-learned youth —
The proud sons of the soil —
Wander helplessly,
Searching for means to survive.
Who will hear their silent cries?
Who will wipe their tear-filled eyes?
Who will heal their pain and agony?



THE PEN STANDS ASHAMED

Blossoms of blood bloom in the mountains,
And roses sprout from youthful corpses.
In each cave and cavern, on every stone and
rock,
Lies the lifeless body of a young sunflower-alas.

Saplings of tender green fruits
Lie crushed beneath the coward enemy's boots.
Thunderous clouds of bombs roar,
And bullets rain down and flames leap forth.

My homeland has turned into a hell,
Where cattle stand frozen, fearing death's spell.
The youth, courageous beyond compare,
Are beckoned by horses and camels everywhere.

These youth -the valiant swordsmen
The royal steeds, they deserve to ride
To uphold their motherland's glory and pride.
Yet in their midst crawl the traitors and spies

The wicked players in power's filthy game,
Like leeches, draining the homeland's veins.
Roaming freely through fields and plains,
They remain blind to their people's pain.

THE STRANGER



Behold! Gwadar slipping away
from our hands.
Tomorrow, in my own city,
I will wander like a stranger.

The days of affinity will fade,
These homes, huts, and abodes
will vanish,
Lanes and alleys will disappear.

Ships from foreign lands will
arrive,
Pollute and poison my sea.
Like me, Batel will cry out in
despair,
Like me, Medi's eyes will be
filled with tears.
The bustling lanes of Sur will
grow still.

I'll be cast away from the ancient
streets,
Mounds, alleys and lanes
Helplessly I wander
Yearning for the cold fragrance
Of fishermen's wet fishing vests.

LOTUS

