

Resisting State's Nationalization through Poetry: A Case Study of Pashto Poetic Resistance

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The official Pakistani nationalism states that there is only one Pakistan nation integrated through the bonds of Islam and having a national language of Urdu. Thus Pakistani nationalism has two major pillars of Islam and Urdu language. This state nationalism ignores and suppresses the multi-ethnic nature of the country and hence tries to subdue the regional identities and languages. Pakhtun identity and their language also face this discrimination and neglect from the state. The literary people and poets associated with regional languages like Pashto has resisted this official nationalism which is imposed from above. The Pashto poetic resistance has historical roots from Mughal to colonial to the post-colonial Pakistani state. The major wave of nationalistic and revolutionary poetry started with the advent of Pakhtun nationalist movement of Khudai Khidmatgar. The poets associated with this movement played a major role in resisting colonialism through poetry and literature. These poets and their successors continued to resist the unjust policies of the post-colonial state of Pakistan and also its official nationalism in the subsequent years which is considered as the antithesis of Pakhtun nationalism. Pashto poetry has contributed in building Pakhtun identity based on Pashto language and resisted state nationalism in favor of Pakhtun nationalism. Over the years the themes of this poetic resistance have transformed moving from liberationist to autonomous themes. This poetic resistance of Pashtu language along with political and intellectual struggle of other people has contributed in establishing Pakhtun identity, highlighting the problems of Pakhtuns and achieving their socio-political rights.

Key Words: State, Nationalism, Identity, Colonialism, Poetic resistance, Ethnic group, Khudai Khidmatgar.

Introduction

Nationalism means a sense of belonging and a feeling of shared identity with a particular group or nation (Gellner, 1983). It includes a sense of association to a particular language, identity, culture or area. The basis of identity formation varies from one country to another. Pakistani nationalism is based on the assumption of one nation having Islam as the common religion and Urdu as the national language. This policy of the state is primarily based on the denial of regional ethnic identities and multi-nationalities. The ruling elite from the very beginning has supported and propagated Urdu language and this policy has been resisted by the regional ethnic groups (Rahman, 1995). These regional ethnic groups have resisted this homogenization policy of the state and have presented an antithesis of heterogeneity/diversity based on regional ethnic identities and languages. Though the regional language movements started with the advent of colonization in the Subcontinent (Rahman, 1997), it continued after the partition as the post-colonial state was also carrying

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on the old policy of the denial of regional languages and identities. In these language movements the political leaders were mainly supported and assisted by poets and writers. These poets challenged the mighty state's policy and struggled for the revival of their own ethnic identity and language.

The poetic resistance has remained a dominant strategy from very early ages in India and Pakistan. In these areas, the poetry attracts both the educated and the uneducated common people. Historical evidences show that it served as a leading tool in resisting the prevailing unjust social and political structure of the society. Poetry over the years has become a mighty voice against the rulers and foreign aggressors who tried to suppress and subjugate the masses. The resistance theme in Pashto poetry has its roots in Mughal era when Khushal Khan Khattak wrote poetry to resist and fight against the powerful Mughal Empire. The major wave of nationalistic and resistance poetry in Pashto came during the colonial period under the banner of the Khudai Khidmatgar³ movement of Abdul Ghaffar Khan alias Bacha Khan. This movement created many poets and writers who played a major role in propagating Pakhtun identity and resisting the colonial powers. These poets/ political workers faced incarcerations and state brutalities but they remained steadfast. The poets of this nationalist movement were instrumental in spreading the importance of Pashto language as an identity marker and resisting the colonial empire. These poets along with their successors in the post-colonial state of Pakistan continued to resist the "One Nation" and "One Language" scheme imposed by the ruling elite.

In the current study, the poetry of six poets has been focused and the resistance themes in their poetry have been analyzed.

Conceptual Framework

The industrial revolution and print capitalism in Europe was instrumental in the genesis of modern nationalism (Gellner, 1983). Many nation states came into being after this historical development and this wave of nationalism continued to spread all over the colonized world. The basis of nationalism varied from area to area. The waves of nationalism in these colonized areas and the end of World War II resulted in the process of decolonization and the subsequent creation of new State.

Pakistan was created on the basis of "two nation" theory. The basis of it was that Hindus and Muslims were following different religions hence they are different nations. The Pakistani nationalism was based on Islam as a distinctive religion and Urdu as a national language of the people.

According to Hamza Alavi, it was the educated and urban middle-class "salarial" which was enthusiastically proactive in Pakistan movement. According to him these people were focusing on getting jobs in the new state; and after the formation of the new state of Pakistan, this class was promoting and supporting state nationalism. He argues that the "official nationalism" of Pakistan is an identity which is imposed from above by the ruling elite and not created from below or societal level. This official nationalism of Pakistani state is mainly imposed in response to the more effective regional ethnic movements which are capable of getting more widespread response in most of the areas excluding Punjab. (Alavi, 1989)

Muneer Ahmad while talking about the nation building process of Pakistan in his article "Failure of Nation-Building in Pakistan" argues that the founders of this new state and their successors were so engrossed with the European one-nation state model that they overlooked the local ethnic diversities in the country and considered the people from different cultural and ethnic groups as one-nation.

This ruling class failed to understand the ethnic movements popular in the peripheries (Ahmad, 1971).

Against this background, in peripheral/ regional areas the people were involved in resisting this state nationalism through cultural ways. Culture acts as unifying agent of the society and it produces integrity among the members of the society. It also serves as the basis for political activity and hence it is also very

3 Translated as Servants of God or Red Shirts

much political. Culture can also be used by power structure as a mean of control and it can also be used by the people to challenge the dominant political and economic structure or the hegemonic and powerful ruling elite (Duncombe, 2002).

In South Asian context poetry has remained a dominant form of public expression. This form of literature has played an important role against colonialism and internal oppression. In post-colonial societies, poetry according to Nazneen Ahmed has served as a popular style of communication. It may take a national form like in the case of Bangladesh when in 1971 it was used as an important tool in the separation movement (Ahmed, 2014). Nazneen argues that it is the poetic expression that is easily available and understandable to the masses in lesser developed societies where there is dominant role of oral traditions. In South Asia, the social gatherings which involve poetry recitation programs (Mushaira) and musical execution of poetry has remained a widespread public practice where due to illiteracy the reading aptitudes of the people are limited.

This thesis of the author is very much applicable to the local cultures in Pakistan where Mushairas are extremely popular across the different sections of the society.

James Scott in his work „Weapons of the Weak“ discusses cultural resistance in contrast to direct and armed resistance against the powerful people (Scott, 1985). Public transcripts, is a terminology used by the author in this study and it is a conduct or speaking style used to resist the powerful ruling class and is also relevant to the poetic resistance.

This poetic resistance as a cultural tool has been historically also used by Pakhtuns to resist the external and internal oppression. The tool of cultural resistance and poetry was systematically used by the Khudai Khidmatgar movement against the colonial powers and this legacy continues till today.

According to Tariq Rahman, the Khudai Khidmatgar movement played a major role in creating the sense of importance culture and language among Pakhtuns. This non-violent movement was also instrumental in producing several figures like artists, writers, poets who propagated Pakhtun identity and culture through their writings and works (Rahman, 1996)

Mukulika Banerjee argues about the role of Khudai Khidmatgar movement and its leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the formation of Pakhtun identity. According to her, Abdul Ghaffar Khan strived for Pakhtun identity by promoting Pashto language and literature. The Pashto language and literature were also used as tools for Pakhtun nationalism against the colonialists (Banerjee, 2000).

Pashto Poetry and Literature in Colonial Era

Though people were engaged with the poetry and literature before the arrival of the colonial powers but the main influx of revolutionary poets came with the advent of colonization and the subsequent birth of Khudai Khidmatgar movement. This movement strived for the promotion of Pashto language. The poetic resistance became the hallmark of this movement. The poets and writers associated with this movement through their poetry and writings created a sense of identity and nationalism among Pakhtuns and hence resisted the policies of colonial powers. In 1928, Abdul Ghaffar Khan started the Pashto monthly newspaper/ journal Pakhtun, in which the writers and the poets would publish their writings and poetry (Shah, 2007). The dissemination of Pakhtun helped in creating awareness among the literate people about the problems being faced by the Pakhtuns.

Apart from this magazine, the poets would narrate their poetry in the public gatherings of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement which would create enthusiasm among the common people and would prepare them for the fight against the colonial powers to liberate their homeland.

One of the leading figures among that time was Molana Fazle Mehmood Makhfi who was born in 1884. Makhfi was among the pioneers who created a sense of nationalism and unity among the Pakhtuns (Buneri,

2017). This man was also among those few people who laid the foundation of Anjuman e Islahul Afaghina ⁴ with Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The Azad Madrassas (schools) were established under the banner of this organization to spread education among Pakhtuns. The students in these Azad Schools used to sing the anthems and poems written by Makhfi (ibid). It shows that his poetry was a major tool in creating sense of nationalism and patriotism among the youth and school children. Makhfi transformed the Pashto poetry from superficial romanticism to nationalistic revolutionary poetry. The following lines show his love for Pakhtuns.

زه د قوم په غم ژوندے يم
دغه غم مې په زرۀ تل وي
په خيگر سوے له دې يم
سر کنيې اور مې دې نه بل وي
خدايه داسې وخت به راشي
چې زمونږ جهاز به هم وي
زۀ به خپل جرنيل پسې يم
په دښمن به داؤ کول وي
اے زما ننکيال قومه!
وخت د ننک او د سيالی دے
چې خپل قوم نه کړي بدنامه
نن هر قوم په ننکيالی دے (Buneri, 2017)

I am living on the grief of my nation; this pain has always been in my heart;

My chest is injured due to it; fire is blowing in my head due to it;

Oh God, commence the time; when we will have our own aircraft;

I would follow my own commander; to carry out attack on the enemy;

Oh my brave nation; it is a time of the braveness and competition;

Don't denigrate yourself; as every nation is upholding the valor.

When the above mentioned organization (anjuman) was banned by the colonial authorities, he gave the idea of forming another organization in the name of Khudai Khidmatgar in 1929 (ibid). Abdul Ghaffar Khan in his autobiography has praised Makhfi and argues that I am very much inspired by this man. The poems which Makhfi had written show his love for his nation and the motherland. He wanted his motherland to be liberated from the rule of foreign aggressors.

4 Organization for the reforms of Afghans. It was a predecessor organization of the Khudai Khidmatgar.

کړې	ودانه	ته	خاونده
حجره	والي	يو	زمونږ
کړې	ځانه	د پکښې	يو ځای
خوره	ډله	پښتو	د
کړې	شانې	ساه	يو زرۀ
لره	پښتون	بېل او	دي بېل
پښتنو		تپود	لويو
پرتو درنو	سم	په	په غرۀ
پرگنو	لويو	د	نمسو
لېونو	شو	يو	چې رايي
کړې	ورانۀ	خدايه	يا لويه
دېره	لره	بېلتون	سپېرۀ
دښمنان	نه	ملک	له زمونږ
زمان	دا	لرکړې	يا خدايه
خان	زمونږه	کړې	په مونږه
ځان	د	قام	د زمونږ
کړې	ځانه	له	رنا زمونږ
(Khan,	K.	A.	2012) د پښتنو توره تيارۀ

O“ Lord fabricate; the Hujra of our unity;

Put them together; the group of scattered Pakhtuns;

Make them one heart one soul; these segregated Pakhtuns;

O“ Large tribes of Pakhtuns; occupying plains and mountains with dignity;

The grandsons of great ancestors; let“s be united;

O“ God destroy; the abode of severance;

The enemies from our country; O“ God! take out them immediately;

Give us our very own ruler; from our nation, from our own blood;

Enlighten from your own treasures; the darkness of the Pakhtuns.

There were other prominent poets who were his contemporary and remained alive after partition would be mentioned in the coming lines.

Pashto Poetic Resistance After Partition

The first half of 20th century saw rise of nationalist movements around the world. These movements were very common among the colonized nations. Pakistan emerged as a consequence of “Muslim Nationalism”, the basic pillars of which were Islam and Urdu language. Contradictory to Pakistani nationalism, the Pakhtun nationalism in its nature was secular and was focusing on regional language of Pashto. The Khudai Khidmatgar movement was considered as a regional plot of the Bolsheviks by the colonial powers due to the red color of their uniform.

The political activities of this Pakhtun nationalist movement were closely observed and monitored by the colonial authorities. Pashto which was used as a symbol of Pakhtun nationalism by Ghaffar Khan was also tainted with these disloyal and rebellious perceptions by the ruling class. (Rahman, 1995) This policy of suspicion and mistrust of Pakhtun nationalists and nationalism was inherited by the newly born Pakistani state and this new state continued with the same strategy of its predecessor by suppressing regional identities and movements.

The Pakhtuns have revered liberty as their cultural heritage and a vital quality of their tribal structure. Due to this cultural virtue they opposed the British colonialism and the later oppressive regimes of Pakistan after partition. The Pakhtuns who have remained distrustful of the central government historically henceforth, in Pashto poetic discourse the state becomes a symbol of domination and oppression.

The early years of the Pakistani state proved to be tough and pitiless for the Pakhtun nationalist movement. This was because the reluctance of the Pakhtun nationalist to join Pakistan during partition. A few weeks ago before the partition, the Pakhtun nationalist demanded a separate homeland for Pakhtuns in the name of Pakhtunistan. Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his fellows rejected the partition plan and demanded that a third option of Pakhtunistan⁵ should be included in the partition plan for the Pakhtuns. Failing to compel the authorities, the nationalists boycotted the referendum of 1947 (Shah, 2007). This anger with the new state was intensified when the central government of Pakistan dislodged the provincial government of Dr. Khan Sahib⁶. The subsequent years witnessed the harsh treatment of the state towards Pakhtun nationalists including literary figures and poets. Many of them were incarcerated and tortured by the newly formed state. The Babarra⁷ massacre which happened on 12 August 1948 was a noteworthy event of those days in which many of Pakhtun nationalists and followers of Ghaffar Khan were martyred (Franck, 1952).

Though Ghaffar Khan offered his services to work with the newly formed government but the Muslim League leadership in the province were unwilling to accept him and they continued with the same policy of considering him as disloyal. The poets of this era highlighted the brutality of the state as well as they struggled for the creation of a new state in the name of Pakhtunistan. The poets of this period were mainly those people who were politically active before partition in Khudai Khidmatgar movement.

There were numerous other poets who were active during the period of partition but for the present section only two of them have been focused. These poets were Abdul Malik Fida, and Ghani Khan.

Abdul Malik Fida was born in village Prang of district Charsadda in 1897. This man was also a proactive member of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Though he was not properly educated in a school but his poetry and thoughts were very much enlightened and revolutionary and it was due to his association and companionship with other members of Khudai Khidmatgar movement (Buneri, 2017). Abdul Malik Fida faced many imprisonments but he remained steadfast resisting the ruling elite through his poetry both before and after partition. Regarding the Babarra massacre which happened after one year of the creation of

5 A proposed name for the separate country of Pakhtuns of the Subcontinent.

6 He was the elder brother of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Chief Minister of the then NWFP.

7 Babarra is the name of a village in district Charsadda.

Pakistan in which hundreds of Khudai Khidmatgars were massacred he wrote a famous poem. In this poem he has mentioned the atrocities of Pakistani state. A few lines of this poem are given below.

کفن په ترخ کښې د سیالۍ میدان له مخه
مرگیه مه راځه درځمه
سر په تلي کښې د الله دربار له وړمه
مرگیه مه راځه درځمه (Fida, 2004)

Carrying the coffin, I am going to the front line;
do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you;
prepared to give up my life, I am going to see my Allah;
Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

په چارسده کښې واویلا ده
د غدارانو پرې صلا ده
په سرفروشو کربلا ده
زه د خپل قام سره په مرگ سیالي کومه
مرگیه مه راځه درځمه

There is moan in Charsadda; agreed upon by the unfaithful;
the fate of Karbala is the fate of sacrifice seekers;
I am following my nation in facing the death;
Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

پیا د وطن په خاوره جنګ دے
ښکلے میدان د نام و ننګ دے
مورې ورځمه زړه مې تنګ دے
په خپله خاوره خپلې وینې توپومه
مرگیه مه راځه درځمه

Once again there is war on our motherland;
it is a magnificent battlefield in the defense of dignity and honor
I am impatient, O' mother!

It is the time to depart for the sake of my homeland, I am shedding my blood;

Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you!

مورې	زما	راکړه	جامې	سرې
تورې	سترگې	کړه	غور	سره
پورې	ما	دے	پښتون	د
قربانو مه	سر	خپل	خاوره	پښتنه
درځمه		راځه	مه	مرگيه

O' mother! Give me my red clothes

adjust my hair through brushing and place kohl in my eyes;

People call me a Pakhtun;

I am going to sacrifice my life for the sake of Pakhtun land;

Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

مشينونه	توپې	ته	خوا	يو
فوځونه	واړه		حکومت	د
لاسونه	خالي	قام	ته	بل
حېرانېد مه	کتل	مې	ته	مقابلي
درځمه		راځه	مه	مرگيه

On one hand there were canons and machine guns;

And the strength of the armies of the government;

On the other hand my nation is empty-handed;

I was surprised to see this battle of uneven forces;

Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

ماشومان	کښې	غیر	خویندو	د
قرآن	وو	نیولے	سر	په
میدان	په	وو	ډې	آواز
مرمه	خپله	په	تا	نخري افغانه!

مرګیہ مه راځه درځمه

Females were holding up their children;
Holding the Holy Quran above their heads;
Chanting the slogans in the battle:

O' Fakhr-e-Afghan⁸, through my own sacrifice I will save your honor;
Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

تالا ئې کړل زمونږ کورونه
بيا ئې ورپورې کړل اورونه
زمونږ پرې نه رسي زورونه
له داسې ژونده راته مرګ ښه دے عالمه
مرګیہ مه راځه درځمه

They ransacked our houses;
after that they set houses on fire;
and were unable to resist;

I would prefer death instead of such disgraceful life;
Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

د پاکستان اوري فوځونو
مره زخمیان اوکړل په زرګونو
دوي د خدا شو د قومونو
يو ظلم نه دے زه به کوم کوم يادومه
مرګیہ مه راځه درځمه

The greedy forces of Pakistan;
Killed and injured thousands of people;
The other nations are laughing at them (Pakhtuns);
There are multiple stories of brutalities which one would I mention;
Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you;

8 Fakhr-e-Afghan (Pride of Afghans) was the title given to Abdul Ghaffar Khan by the Pakhtuns.

په آخرت چې رب قاضي شي
 په شفاعت رسول راضي شي
 وار د شهيد او د غازي شي
 زه به غلبيل سينه د خداے په مخکښې برده مه
 مرگيه مه راځه درځمه

On the Day of Judgment when God will be the judge;
 The Prophet (SAW) will agree to plead;
 When the turn of martyrs and fighters will come;
 I will beg before God to see my bullet-riddled body;
 Do not bother to come O' death! I am coming to you.

عبدالملكه ځان فدا كړه
 پورته د حق يوه صدا كړه
 نوے ژوندون قام له پيدا كړه
 كه خداے راضي شي سفارش به دې كوينه
 مرگيه مه راځه درځمه (Fida, 2004)

O' Abdul Malik, give sacrifice of your life;
 Raise a jingle of honesty;
 Grant a new life to your people;
 If God wills, he will plead for you;
 Do not bother to come, O' death! I am coming to you.

These lines show the brutality of the state that how it killed innocent citizens. This poem also depicts the steadfastness and resistance of the poet who condemned and resisted the mighty ruling elite.

His poetry before partition was focused on the liberty of his people from foreigners while after partition he condemned and resisted internal colonization in the name of national integration. According to Dr. Sohail Khan, the renowned academician, Abdul Malik Fida was an illiterate God gifted poet of intrinsic power and strength. As a revolutionary and Pakhtun nationalist he hates subjugation and slavery. He glorifies freedom and refuses to live as a slave.

چې غلام وي په سرو كښې نه شمارېږي
 سكه هندو وي كه پارسي كه مسلمان وي

د فدا عبدالمالك خاوره ترې لر كړئ
چې د كومي زمكې نوم غلامستان وي (Fida, 2004)

Slave is not considered worthy to be called a man;
Whether he is Sikh, Hindu, Parsi or Muslim;
Carry away the land and the dust of Fida Abdul Malik;
From the land that is known as the land of the slaves.

The poets of this time period resisted the first martial law of the country as well as the One Unit plan of the government. During the martial law of Ayub Khan there was censorship in media and poetic expression. Many revolutionary poets were sent to jail for opposing military rule in the country.

Another prominent poet of this time was Ghani Khan. He was the elder son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and is also considered as one of the notable Pashto poets who challenged the powerful ruling elite through his poetry and writings. Ghani Khan was imprisoned for six years in 1948 for his revolutionary poetry and political activities. Though Ghani wrote his poetry on many themes like romanticism and philosophy but his revolutionary and nationalistic poetry went popular among the masses.

Ghani Khan wittily criticizes the Pakistani regimes by terming it identical to the rule of a beloved who spoils and ruins many lovers but soothe no one. This witty approach shows that he was unhappy with the state-citizen relationship in Pakistan.

زما د لالي راج هم بادشاهي د پاکستان ده
اباد ئي كه يو نه وي ډېر برباد خو ئي شته

The rule of my beloved is like the regime of Pakistan;
Benefitting no one and there are many destroyed by it.

Ghani Khan was very much conscious about the identity of Pakhtuns. He glorifies the heroes of Pakhtun nation and urges his countrymen to uphold the glory of their forefathers.

پاخه ننكاليه! نن دلبر او جانان وگته
نوم د پښتون وگته ناموس د افغان وگته
ټول جهان جبران كړه د خپل شان په تماشا
اے د احمد زويه اے بچيه د شير شاه (Khan, 1985)

Stand up O' daring man! Win your beloved;
Win the name of Pakhtun and the dignity of Afghan;
With the gory of your status give a surprise to the whole world;
O' the son of Ahmad⁹, O' the heir of Sher Shah¹⁰

9 Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan ruler who ruled India in the 18th Century

10 Sher Shah Suri, who ruled India in the 16th Century

Ghani Khan hates kings and emperors as they use coercion and violence against the weaker people to sustain their empire. He terms the destruction around the world as an outcome of the power struggle between the rulers and emperors.

بادشاهي	د	دنيا	څه	کړې؟
ځان	له	ولې	زياتې	غم
د	انصاف	تلل	مشکل	دي
څه	به	دېر	څه	به کم
تخت	هم	نه	پايي	زوره
بې	د	تورې	د	جلاده
بادشاهان	چې	څومره	دېر	وي
دومره	وي	دنيا	برباده	(Khan, 1985)

Getting empire is of no use; why one should increase his own sorrows;

To do justice is a difficult job; some will be favored and some will be disfavored;

Throne could not be maintained without coercion; without the sword of the executioner;

As the number of kings increases; so increases the destruction around the world.

Ghani Khan gives hope and optimism to youth and urges them to regain their lost status of glory. He asks them to work hard and be patient to reconstruct your homeland after damage. It is very much evident from the following lines of his poem.

سوے	باغ	تالا	گلشن	دے
مراوے	کل	خاورې	چمن	دے
اے	پښتونه!	ستا	وطن	دے
اے	پښتونه!	ستا	وطن	دے
اے	چې	ښکته	ښکته	گورې
نن	پښې	ابله	سرسرتور	ئې
ته	خبر	ئې	چې	ته
ته	د	نيم	اسمان	وې
اے	د	تليو	سترگو	ځوانه
پاخه	هغه	جهان	جوړ	کړه

د دې باغ خاورې راواخله
 ترېنه نوے بوستان جوړ کړه (Khan, 1985)

The fired up garden, the plot looted; the faded flowers and the looted grassland;

O' Pakhtun! This is your land; O' Pakhtun! This is your land;

Looking embarrassed; barren footed and barren headed;

Do you know your status; you are like a star in the sky;

O' disgraced youth! Get up and re-establish that lost status;

Take the soil of this garden; to make a new plot.

He also expresses his grief and anger over the bloodshed of the people during partition time. He condemns the killings of innocent human beings at that time in the name of religion and argues that human beings have surpassed the animals by killing each other.

نن انسان شو د انسان د وینو ترې
 نن مجنون شو د جانان د وینو ترې
 داسې روند په سترگو روند شولو د تندې
 چې تر پورته شو حېوان د وینو ترې (Khan, 1985)

Today one human being is thirsty of the blood of other human;

Today a lover has become blood thirsty of his beloved;

They became such blind due to greed;

That they have surpassed beasts in sucking the blood.

The democratic transition after the end of the first military rule in the country provided an opportunity to the political forces in the peripheries to work with the central government. Due to these developments, the claim for a separate homeland from Pakhtun nationalists also faded and it also caused a transformation in the themes of the Pashto poetic resistance. Nonetheless, the democratic period of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was also unsympathetic for poets and writers. Most of the poets during this era faced state brutality due to their revolutionary thoughts. The Pashto poetry and literature during 1970s and in the subsequent years after Cold War focused on somehow an autonomous Pakhtun province within the federation of Pakistan. The poets of this time period were mainly associated with National Awami Party struggling for provincial autonomy and for the preservation of regional languages.

The revolutionary and nationalistic poetry of this time period was mainly dominated by Ajmal Khattak. He was born in Akora Khattak in 1925 (Buneri, 2017). As a young man Khattak remained active in politics after partition and became a prominent member of National Awami Party. His poetry book "Da Ghairat Chagha" had left long lasting impact on the young people of that time. A prominent Pakhtun nationalist and lawyer Saleem Khan advocate who was active in students politics in 1970s says that my life was transformed by reading this book of Ajmal Khattak. He says that many young people like me were inspired by this book during that time. The poetry and of Ajmal Khattak focused the economic disparities of the country. He also highlighted the exploitation of the poor people by the ruling elite of the country. Ajmal Khattak was imprisoned many times due to his revolutionary ideas and poetry. As a Pakhtun nationalist he

also strived for the rights of Pakhtun and their specific identity. He challenged the ruling elite of the country who exploited the poor masses for their power and condemned them for their biased and prejudiced policies towards smaller ethnic groups.

دا چې زمونږ د پلار نيکه په څلو
 نن دنګوي د خپل هوس اسونه
 دا د ذاتي اقتدار اوږې سترګې
 چې لګوي مو په هد هد چکونه
 بس د دوي سترګې غړول غواړي
 د کبر جام نسکورل غواړي (Khattak, 1958)

Upon the graveyard of our forefathers; running the horses of greed;
 These greedy people for the sake of personal power; biting the parts of our body;
 They must be taught a lesson; their arrogance must be decimated.

In another poem he states that;

پښتنو! پښتنو! په لېونو پښتنو
 په تس نس شوو پرګنو پښتنو
 رايي په کور کښې مرکه شو سره
 د سيالۍ وخت دے چې جرګه شو سره
 دُنیا بدلېږي ورته ځان بدل کړو
 دغه د ظلم زور جهان بدل کړو (Khattak, 1958)

O' Pakhtuns! O' crazy Pakhtuns; O' scattered Pakhtun clans;
 Let's organize our lines; let's execute a jirga as it is the time of competition;
 To renovate ourselves as the world is transforming; to alter that old brutal epoch.

Ajmal Khattak nationalistic poetry propagated Pakhtun nationalism. He termed the Pakhtuns living in Afghanistan and in different parts of Pakistan as one nation in contrast to Pakistani nationalism. He condemned those powerful people who want to divide the Pakhtuns living on both sides of Durand line.

پېښور دے او که کوټه زما کور دے
 که کابل، که قندهار دے زما ورور دے
 هرغاصب چې دې کښې خنډ اچول غواړي

که د لر دے که د بر دے مخ ئې تور دے (Khattak, 1990)

If it be Peshawar or Quetta, both are homes to me;
 If it be Kabul or Kandahar, both are brothers to me;
 Every oppressor who wants to put a breach in between;
 If he be of afar or highland, will be put to curse.

Another poet who emerged as a young popular poet during this era and who is well-liked till present is Rehmat Shah Sail. His poetry also contained the love for the Pakhtuns and the land of Pakhtuns. He has also resisted the unjust policies and the nationalistic scheme of the state through his poetry. He urges Pakhtuns to get rid of this unjust system through a revolutionary movement. He was jailed both in democratic government of Bhutto and the subsequent military government. Sail propagated Pakhtun nationalism and identity through his poetry in which Pashto language has a central position. He gives a lot of importance to mother language and the dispersal of education in it instead of the official state language. He says that the alien and imposed languages which are usually taught in educational institutions have made Pakhtuns unaware about their history, culture and identity. He argues that Pakhtuns need to be educated in their own mother tongue. He hates slavery and points out that when someone ignores his mother language he becomes slave. In one of his poems he writes the following lines;

کړو پردو ژبو د خپل ځانه پردي
 د خپلي ژبي پوهنتون پکار دے
 غلامي څه وي آزادي څنگه وي

په دې دوه ټکو کښې بېلتون پکار دے (Sail, 2009)

Alien languages have made us oblivious of our identity;

We need a university of our own language;

What is meant by slavery and what do we mean by freedom?

A distinction must be made between these two words.

He remained very critical of the Cold War in Afghanistan and the ongoing War on Terror. He terms these wars as alien wars imposed on Pakhtuns in which our own state is also responsible. These wars have brought miseries and harm to Pakhtuns on both sides of the Durand line. He sees the people living in Peshawar and the people living in Kabul as same people and it hurts him equally if someone is killed on both sides of the Durand line.

په خپل وطن کښې جنک راپه سر دے هلته زه مرم دلته هم زه مرم

پردے غوبل دے پردے اشر دے هلته هم زه مرم دلته هم زه مرم

کوڅه کوڅه مې د زړه په وینو روزانه لامبي زه ورته گورم

ماپه ما وژني کافر هنر دے هلته هم زه مرم دلته هم زه مرم

يو شان پښتون دے يو شان وجود دے که کابلے دے که پښورے دے
(Sail, 2013) يومې زړکے دے بل مې ځيگر دے هلته هم زه مرم دلته هم زه مرم

In my own homeland, I have been loaded with war;

I am being killed here in it and I am being killed there in it;

It is the rivalry and the combativeness of alien people with each other;

I am being killed here in it and I am being killed there in it;

Every street of mine swim in the blood bleeds of my heart as I see it daily;

With what shrewdness they kill me through my own brother,

I am being killed here and I am being killed there;

They are same Pakhtun in identity and like one body whether they are from Peshawar or from Kabul;

One is my heart, the other is my darling;

I am being killed here and I am being killed there;

Rehmat Shah Sail is very much critical of the rulers of Pakistani state. According to him this wealthy ruling class is not sympathetic to poor people. He considers them as plunderers who could not be trusted.

رقيب کلمے نه شمه د زرونو څوکيدار
قاتل به د گل څنک شي د کلونو څوکيدار
مالک د محلونو خو لوت مار وي د جونگرو
کيدے نه شي د خاورو د کورونو څوکيدار (Sail, 2013)

I can't believe the emulous as a caretaker of hearts;

How come a slayer of flowers can become the caretaker of flowers?

The owner of the palaces happens to be a plunderer of cottages;

He can't be the caretaker of the muddy houses.

Rehmat Shah Sail terms the Pakhtuns living in Afghanistan and Pakistan as one nation. He calls Peshawar and Kabul as friends and the abode of Pakhtuns. He states that until and unless the peace is not attained on the land of Pakhtuns, the world cannot achieve development and prosperity.

پښور او کابل دواړه دوه ياران دي
لکه دوه سترگې په يو مخ د جانان دي
د دنيا د ابادي دعوي دروغ دي

چې تر څو د پښتنو کورونه وران دي (Sail, 2018)

Peshawar and Kabul are two comrades;

Like two eyes on the face of beloved;
The claims of progress of the world are lie;
Since the houses of Pakhtuns are ruined.

A young Pakhtun writer and poet Sami-ud-din Arman terms the poetry of Rehmat Shah Sail as the poetry of optimism, revolution and struggle. According to him, the poetry of Sail gives hope to the young people of Pakhtun land, saves them from the clutches of pessimism and prepares them for struggle. Sail sings the song of freedom, the song that could not be silenced through the use of violence and coercion.

Contemporary Poetic Themes

The 21st century brought new geo-political developments around the world. The current poetic Pashto poetry was also impacted by these developments. Pashto poetry got a new track after the commencement of American War on Terror in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda⁴ and the subsequent violence associated with it. This war has resulted in the death of thousands of Pakhtuns living in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thousands of people have been injured and millions have been dislocated. The war has impacted the economy of Pakhtun region. The social fabric of the Pakhtun has been broken and the people are facing multiple socio-economic problems. Although, the Pakhtuns are facing multiple miseries and hardships on both sides of the Durand line however, the poets are giving them sanguinity and hope. The contemporary poetry resists war and violence on Pakhtun land. In the views of Pakhtun poets this war is not their own war rather their land has been made a battlefield for this war by alien people or international powers. The present-day poets consider Pakistani ruling elite and establishment equal responsible as foreign powers for their miseries and bloodshed. This war is destructing the identity, language and culture of Pakhtuns. These poets and writers are also striving for the preservation of Pakhtun identity and Pashto language which has not been supported by the state. These poets have countered the state's narrative about terrorism and violence. The state considers militancy and terrorism in the country as a product of foreign interference or a cultural product in the country while Pakhtun poets proclaim it as a state's policy of harboring militants. The poets of modern times on one hand are condemning violence on Pakhtun land and on the other hand they are trying to preserve the distinct Pakhtun identity and culture. These poets are doing this job on many fronts like publishing books, arranging poetry sessions (Mushaira) and active political participation. A prominent poet in the present times is Amjad Shehzad whose poetry is full of resistance themes. He terms the present violence in Pakhtun society as imposed by the ruling elite of the country. This wave of violence has brought destruction to Pakhtun society and he urges Pakhtuns to get united against this oppression of the state. He argues that thousands of Pakhtuns have been martyred by this wave of violence and Pakhtuns are now going to offer more martyrs for the policies of international and local powers.

غواړي	کول	به	حوصله
غواړي	کول	به	فېصله
وي	رانبکل	به	کړبنه
وي	وئیل	به	ډاکه
مړے	ریاست	نا کام	د
گرځومه	نه	اوبرو	په
پاره	د	بېرغ	شین
			د
			نور

(Shehzad, 2017) شهيدان نه ورکومه

Courage should be attained; a decision must be made;
A line must be drawn, and a blunt announcement must be made;
To the dead body of the failed state, I am not offering my shoulder;
For the sake of green flag, cannot offer martyrs anymore.

This poet believes in the importance of mother tongue in contrast to the one language policy of the state. He argues that those nations around who have forgotten their mother tongues have become slaves.

هېره كړې د خپلې مور خوره ژبه
جور شي د سړي نه غلام خامخا
سترگي چي دې خپلې وي نظر پردے
خان ساته له داسې مقام خامخا (Shehzad, 2017)

Whosoever forgets his mother language;
Turns him into slave without reason;
Lie the sight of the other in the eyes of the your;
Avoid necessarily of yourself from such position.

The poet also criticizes the ruling class for discouraging the freedom of expression. He argues that those states who suppress citizens and halt the liberty of the people do not progress.

چې د اولس سترگي تري امجده
هغه قامونه خامخا ډوبېري
چرته چې خم گنډلې شونډې گرخم
په دې وطن كښې مې اوس سا ډوبېري (Shehzad, 2017)

When the eyes of the people are tied O' Amjad;
Nations like such would eventually sink;
Wherever I go my mouth is sealed;
I am suffocated in this country.

He urges Pakhtuns that you have been deceived by the State's narrative and the slogans of patriotism. This narrative of state has done nothing good to your land instead it has destructed your land. In the following lines of his poem he is pointing out these disparities occurring on Pakhtun land.

پښتونه ترانې جالندھري رانه اوده کړې
 دې شين بېرغ دا ستا په وطن څه چارې ونه کړې
 (Shehzad, 2012)

O' Pakhtun! You have been deceived by the Jalandhari¹¹ anthem;

What has done to your land by this green flag.

The above discussion shows that the Pashto poetic resistance has evolved through different stages from colonial era to the present times. The shift in themes of the poetry may be witnessed in every time period but the main focus is on the preservation and promotion of Pakhtun identity which is present in all phases of recent history. The basis of this identity is the Pashto language, Pakhtun culture and history in contrast to official nationalism of Pakistan based on Urdu language and Islam.

Conclusion

Poetry has remained a popular form of resistance in Sub-continent. As a cultural product and activity, poetry has been liked by both the literate and illiterate people in this region. It has remained a strong tool of the weaker people and nationalities to resist the mighty rulers and foreign oppressors.

The resistance themes in Pashto poetry became dominant during colonial era when Pakhtuns faced the domination of the colonial powers. The emergence of Khudai Khidmatgar movement as a non-violent nationalist movement provided a platform to poets and writers. This movement produced numerous poets and literary figures in Pakhtun belt. These people remained politically active both before and after partition period. These poets educated and informed the people in simple and clear language about the importance of their language, culture, liberty and independence. These poets faced many brutalities and incarcerations from the state and consequently became national heroes. The trend of resistance in Pashto poetry continued after the creation of Pakistan because the newly formed state also continued with the same oppressive and unjust policies of their predecessor colonial rulers. The Pashto poetic resistance after the creation of Pakistan has three major themes. First one is the quest for a distinct Pakhtun identity as opposed to Pakistani identity. The basis of this identity is Pashto language and cultural similarities to Pakhtuns living in Afghanistan as opposed to Pakistani identity on the basis of religion and Urdu language. The second theme is the perception of Pakistani state as an icon of repression and injustice, denying cultural pluralism and discouraging regional languages. The third theme is condemnation of violence, bloodshed and consistent quest for peace on Pakhtun land. The violence and terror in Pakhtun belt is termed as imposed from above and not the product of Pakhtun culture. This violence and bloodshed of Pakhtuns have been considered as an outcome of the policies of the regional and international powers.

The Pashto poetry during the partition time and the subsequent years contained the themes for the creation of separate homeland of Pakhtuns. With the new geo-political developments in the region in the form of Cold War, War on Terror and the cooption of Pakhtuns in different sections of the Pakistani state, the poetic themes of resistance have also transformed. The Pashto poetic themes have evolved from separation to autonomy seeking themes. The contemporary Pashto poetic themes consist of a struggle for the preservation and propagation of Pakhtun identity, autonomy within the federation of Pakistani state and condemnation of war and violence in Pakhtun areas. The poetic resistance in Pashto which was in full move during partition time is still alive in present times. Though the themes have transformed nonetheless this poetic resistance has contributed a lot to the existence and progress of Pakhtun nation. It has played a vital role in mobilizing and organizing the masses with other political and intellectual people and has been fruitful in achieving the economic and political gains for Pakhtuns in the country.

11 Referring to Hafeez Jalandhari, who has written the national anthem of Pakistan.

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