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# THE HISTORIAN

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**ARTICLES**

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(1983-2009): EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE**

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For Correspondence

**Tahir Kamran**

Editor, The Historian,

Department of History, Government College University,  
Katchehry Road, Lahore, Pakistan

E-mail: [tahirkamran\\_gcu@yahoo.com](mailto:tahirkamran_gcu@yahoo.com)  
[historian@gcu.edu.pk](mailto:historian@gcu.edu.pk)

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## **SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR AND RECONCILIATION (1983-2009): EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE**

**MUHAMMAD ALI**

UNIVERSITY OF KARACHI

**TAHIRA PARVEEN**

GARRISON UNIVERSITY LAHORE

### **ABSTRACT**

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a Constitutional democracy with a relatively high level of Political, social, and economic progress in the region of South Asia. These developments have, however, been seriously constrained by years of ethno-national conflict between majority Buddhist Sinhalese and Tamil minority. Between 1983 and 2009, a separatist war costing at least 70,000 lives was waged by the government forces against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a rebel group that sought to establish a separate state or internal self-rule in the Tamil-dominated areas of the north and east. The purpose of this research paper is to provide historical, political, and economic background of Sri Lanka's 26-year secessionist civil war and to examine the role of the European Union (EU) in Sri Lankan Peace and Reconciliation Process. The main focus of the EU has remained on human rights violations and war crimes issues in the final stages of the civil war. Presently, the international community, particularly the EU, stress on newly elected Sri Lankan government that they need to address the legitimate accusation of the Tamil minority and work together

with their moderate leadership to establish long lasting peace. It is expected that Colombo can only make progress if it is able to resolve its internal problems, particularly the Tamil-Sinhala differences.

#### **KEY WORDS**

Civil War, Sri Lankan Peace Process, Reconciliation Sinhalese, LTTE, European Union, Human Rights Violations, War Crimes.

The Sri Lankan civil war was a prolonged intrastate conflict in the South Asia which ended in May 2009. Soon after independence in 1948, ethnic tension began to simmer. A full-fledged civil war broke out in 1983 which continued sporadically until May 2009. The belligerents were the Sinhalese-dominated government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers). The latter was a separatist group and wanted to make a separate state consist of the Tamil-dominated eastern and western provinces of the country<sup>1</sup>. The LTTE's strategy was based on conventional and guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks. The roots of the conflict were in ethno-religious nationalism exacerbated by the sense of deprivation in the Tamil community. The civil war spread over two and a half decades claimed thousands of lives and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced since it began. The socioeconomic fabric of the country suffered owing to this civil war.<sup>2</sup> The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has not only affected the country but also regional peace and security and has led to the involvement of international and regional actors such as the America, EU, Norway, Japan and India. Non-state actors like the strong expatriate Tamil community in the West, the Sinhalese expatriate groups,

the extremist Tamil ethnic groups and political parties in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, various UN bodies and NGOs have also been drawn into the quagmire. The western world was highly critical of the government of Sri Lanka in the final stages of the war in mid-2009 which was described by the UN Secretary General as a “blood bath”.<sup>3</sup>

The main Problem behind the study is to examine that whether the western powers are/were really effective peacemakers in Sri Lanka Peace Process or not? .Specifically, the research mainly revolves around the assumption that how the Europeans initiatives can help in promoting confidence building measures conflicting parties in the post-civil war era and achieve the everlasting peace in the country? Apart from the above hypothesis, the main objectives of this study are following:

- To provide socio-economic background of the 26-year secessionist civil war.
- To find out main those factors which responsible for this ethno-national conflict
- To examine the European initiatives for Sri Lankan Peace Process.
- To highlights EU’s policy on human rights violations and war crimes issues in post crisis era.

#### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY/RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is planned as a qualitative method and based on available literature review on the research problem. Keeping in view the nature of research objectives, the efforts have been made to collect material from diverse sources. This research paper is organized in three sections. First part focuses on the brief but comprehensive background of research problem. This research would not only help to understand the comprehensive background of the



nature of Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009), but It would also highlights those main factors and hurdles which were responsible in the way of everlasting peace process in the region. The second part deals with the EU policy toward crisis especially human rights violations and war crimes issue. A summary of findings, recommendations and some predictions for the ever lasting peace would be discusses in the last section of the study. It is expected that the results of this work would not only facilitate the scholars and expert of political science and international relations but it would be also a massive contribution for the students in the field of conflict resolutions.

#### **BACK GROUND OF THE PROBLEM**

In order to analyze the origins of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, it is essential to know the composition of the different ethnic groups in the country and the major events that led to the ethnic crisis. Sri Lanka is an Indian Ocean island near Southeastern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Colombo is the capital as well as the largest city of the country. With total area of 65,610 km, Sri Lanka is situated near strategic important sea lanes that transit the Indian Ocean.



Source: CIA Fact Sheet 2017<sup>4</sup>

These sea lanes link the energy rich Persian Gulf with the economies of East Asia. The West's ability to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government was viewed as somewhat limited due to China's growing involvement in the country. China's aid to Sri Lanka has increased dramatically since 2005. In the view of some analysts and observers, China is seeking to gain influence in Sri Lanka as part of a "string of pearls" naval strategy to develop port access in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean.<sup>5</sup> The Sri Lanka is the 4th largest South Asian country in terms of population, with 21.2 million inhabitants (July 2017 est.) .<sup>6</sup> Although Sri Lanka is a small country by area; it has a heterogeneous society with multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic groups. The majority communities are the Sinhalese (most of whom are Buddhists), Tamils (mostly Hindus), Muslims (a community which speaks the Tamil language but has different ethnic origin) and Malays and Burghers of Dutch or English origin. According to the 1981 census, 74 percent of Sri Lanka were Sinhalese, 18.2 per cent were Tamils, of the latter Sri Lankan Tamils constitute 12.6 per cent and Indian Tamils 5.6 percent of the total population . The main religion in Sri Lanka is Buddhism. Hinduism is the second religion with the Tamils followers, while Islam is the religion of small minority. See the table:

| <b>Fact Sheet of Sri Lankan: At A Glance 2017</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Official Name :                                   | Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, known until 1972 as Ceylon   |
| De-colonized                                      | 4th February, 1948 from the United Kingdom   |
| Location  | Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India.   |
| Territory/ Area                                   | 65,610 km (122th.)   |
| Capital / major cities                            | Colombo, Sri Jayewarden Pura Kotte (legislative capital) Jaffna, Kandy and Moratuwa  |
| Population:                                       | 21.2 million Inhabitants (July 2017 est.)  |
| Population growth rate (%)                        | 0.86% (2014 est.)  |
| Religions (%)                                     | Buddhist (official) 70.2%, Hindu 12.6%, Muslim 9.7%, Roman Catholic 6.1%, other Christian 1.3%, other 0.05% (2012 est.)  |
| Ethnic groups (%)                                 | Sinhalese 74.9%, Sri Lankan Tamil 11.2%, Sri Lankan Moors 9.2%, Indian Tamil 4.2%, other 0.5% (2012 est.)  |
| Languages (%)                                     | Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national) 18%, other 8%   |
| Human development index (2014)                    | 73rd with 0.757points. 'High' rate in South Asia on the HDI  |
| Political/Governance system                       | Constitutional Republic, Unitary and Semi-Presidential President: Maithripala Sirisena (since 9 January 2015) Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (9 January 2015) |
| Literacy (%)Rate                                  | 91.2% male: 92.6%, female: 90% (2010)  |
| GDP   | \$278.415 billion (2017 est.)  |
| GDP growth rate (%)                               | 7.4% (2017 est.)   |
| GDP per capita PPP:                               | \$13010 (2017 est.)  |
| GDP, by sector of origin (%)                      | Agriculture: 8.3% industry: 30.1%services: 61.7% (2014 est.)   |
| Poverty Rate (%)                                  | 8.9% (2010 est.)   |
| Free Trade Zone                                   | South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)  |
| International Affiliation                         | Member of the UNO, SAARC, Common Wealth, G-77 and NAM  |

SOURCES: WORLD BANK, CIA WORLD FACT BOOK 2017, SOUTH ASIA 2016

The division of Sri Lanka into a Tamil north and east and Sinhalese south, center and west is not a phenomenon which emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but is a situation that has existed for several centuries.<sup>7</sup> . The Sinhalese (Indo- Aryan tribes) arrived in Sri Lanka late in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and

introduced Buddhism in the mid of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. They settled in the cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. The Tamils also came from India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and settled in the north of the island. The major differences between the two ethnic groups were language, religion and race. The Tamils were Dravidians (the indigenous people of the sub-continent, who were overwhelmed by the fair skinned Aryan invaders several centuries ago) and the Sinhalese were of Indo-European or Aryan origin.

Tamils were Hindu while the Sinhalese were Buddhist. The ancient caste system of Hinduism in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, which divided descendants of the Aryans and the indigenous Dravidians into the rulers and the ruled, is strongly reflected in the Sri Lankan situation, even though the caste system is rejected by the Buddhist religion. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka was ruled by European powers, and it was part of the British Empire when it became independent in 1948.<sup>8</sup> Political and economic domination by the Sinhalese led to discontentment among the Tamils. Discrimination in employment, culture and language “fanned the flames of ethnic division in the eighties. This division turned into the longest civil war of Asia. The ethnic conflict began because the Sri Lankan state was not founded on a collective idea acceptable to the minority Tamils. At the time of independence from British rule in 1948, the elites of each community were in the forefront, for which a strong central authority was the best way to run a multi-ethnic and multi-religion country. Thus the social and political issues involving the minorities were brushed under the carpet and that became the foremost weakness of the state.<sup>9</sup> Though Sri Lanka has much better literacy and educational standards than most other developing countries, the

second largest ethnic group of Sri Lanka, the Tamils seems to be stuck a generation behind the rest of the nation. The political, social and economic backwardness of the Tamils is owing to their neglect by the Sinhalese, the largest ethnic group of Sri Lanka, which has resulted in intense hostility between the two communities. These hostilities led to the demand by the Tamils for a separate homeland.

The problem started in 1958, when the Sinhalese-dominated government adopted Official Language Act, declaring the Sinhalese language as the only official language. This meant that Sinhalese was to be used in all government matters. The Tamils were angered by this exclusion and protested against the passage of this law on the grounds that this would lead to discrimination against them in civil service. The Tamils thus launched a struggle to gain official recognition of the Tamil language. The struggle exacerbated strife between the two communities and there were widespread riots, turmoil and civil strife, along with trade union-led strikes, and even conflict among Buddhist factions. The constitution made in 1978 made Tamil a national language, but Sinhalese still had the superior-status of an official language. In 1987 an amendment was introduced in the constitution which elevated the status of Tamil to an official language. This measure did not appease the Tamils, who by then had begun demanding an independent Tamil state. The demand for a separate Tamil state in the north east of the island was rejected outright by the Sri Lankan government and this resulted in a long-drawn out civil war, with intermittent periods of truce, in which negotiations and third party mediation were given a chance, but without any solid long-lasting resolution of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> A Tamil separatist movement sprang up, which included a several guerrilla groups which began to use

terrorism for the acceptance of their demands. LTTE emerged as the main Tamil separatist group. The LTTE launched a deadly attack on a military convoy in the north in July 1983 killing 13 soldiers. This sparked ethnic riots in Colombo and other places in 1983. Sinhalese mobs went on a killing spree, resulting in the death of more than 300 Tamils and large scale destruction of Tamil properties. More than 100,000 Tamils took refugees in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nādu. These events mark the beginning of the civil war. In retaliation, the LTTE launched a guerrilla war. They attacked Sinhalese and Muslim civilians, as well as government security forces in northern and eastern parts of the country. Government forces also responded with ferocity against the Tamils. Four years later, the government seeing an acute danger to the safety and survival of the country, sought outside assistance to resolve, or at least suppress the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. Thus, neighboring India was involved in between 1987-90 and Norway from 1994 onwards.<sup>11</sup> India agreed to intervene in the Sri Lankan conflict for a number of reasons. First, the Indian politicians wanted to project their country as a strong regional power and secondly India wanted to subdue its own Tamil population who sought independence. The LTTE was also accepted, albeit with extreme reluctance. The agreement envisaged deployment of Indian forces in the northern and eastern of Sri Lanka for maintaining peace between the both antagonists.

The LTTE's reservation about the treaty became apparent from the moment the Indian troops landed in Jaffna. The Indian intervention failed to bring peace to the island state and in the early 90s numerous main clash occurred between both parties. Indian diplomatic and economic support for Tamil had dipped in 1991, when

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1984-1991) was assassinated by LTTE. Subsequent Indian media reports opined that the LTTE had decided to get rid of Gandhi as they considered him to be against their struggle. India withdrew its forces from Sri Lanka, two and half years later when the new Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa (1989-1993) asked the Indian troops to withdraw and he invited the LTTE to unconditional peace talks to put an end to the civil war. This peaceful phase ended suddenly, when the LTTE ended the ceasefire unilaterally by attacking military camps in April 1995. The state declared a policy called "war for peace," resulting in the most brutal war in the history of the ethno-political conflict. Countless lives were lost, properties destroyed and resources depleted, but the violence was endless. This was a highly sophisticated war ending in a state of deadlock.

#### **EUROPEAN INITIATIVES FOR THE SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR**

The diplomatic relations between the EU and Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) had established in the late sixties. The first Commercial Cooperation Agreement between GoSL and EC was signed in 1975. The Third Generation Cooperation Agreement was signed between the two sides in 1995. The agreement provides greater cooperation in the field of trade, economic development, good governance, human rights and environment.<sup>12</sup> The international involvement in the Sri Lankan civil war did not go further than routine expressions of concern on human rights issues from time to time. The Norwegian government, which had continued to play a low-key facilitation role since 1995, was once again invited by the antagonists to assist in them to resolve the conflict. The GoSL accepted the Norwegian offer of 'good offices' to bring LTTE to political talks. The US, the

EU, the UN and Japan gave full cooperation to Norwegian mediation. There was a brief ceasefire and peace talks in early 1995 under Norwegian mediation. Norway was asked to be a mediator, because of its neutral stand on the conflict. Norway is not a member of the EU but is a member of NATO. Moreover, it was believed especially in the South that Norway did not have an imperial past in the region. Also Norway's experience as a mediator especially in Middle East conflict (Oslo agreement 1993) made it an acceptable third party to both sides<sup>13</sup>.

In May 2000, the EU Parliament adopted a resolution on Sri Lanka expressing its deep concern over the security situation in the country. It urged the LTTE to accept government's negotiation offer to reach a political settlement. It asked EU member state governments to ban those organizations that provide financial or any other support to the terrorist elements in Sri Lanka. It was aimed at securing people from the LTTE. <sup>14</sup>(Bulletin CFSP EU 5-2000) After the parliamentary elections in December 2001 the two sides signed a cease-fire agreement, which came into force on February 23, 2002. The EU expressed full support for the cease-fire between the two sides. On February 27, 2002, the following Presidency statement on behalf of the EU on the ceasefire in Sri Lanka was published in Brussels: 'The EU warmly welcomes the signature of the formal ceasefire agreement between the GoSL and the LTTE, as announced on February 22, 2002. This important agreement is a first step towards ending the armed conflict that the people of Sri Lanka have been suffering for 19 years. The EU trusts that the ceasefire agreement would shortly be followed by measures aimed at national reconciliation and, in particular, at allowing the reunion of the many relatives separated by the conflict and the further



improvement of security conditions across the whole country for the benefit of the civil population. The EU appeals to the parties to avail themselves of this historic opportunity in the interest of the people of Sri Lanka, and to undertake with determination and in good faith a process of constructive dialogue leading to a lasting peace in their country.<sup>15</sup>

Direct talks between the government and the LTTE began on September 22, 2002, with the Norwegian government mediating. Both protagonists claimed that they desired reconciliation, peace and an end to the two decades old civil war. Six rounds of negotiations took place in international venues such as Thailand, Norway, Germany, and Japan Between September 2002 and March 2003. It led some of the critics of the peace process to deride it an international circus.<sup>16</sup> The EU policy regarding to peace process was shown by Council Conclusions on November 18, 2002. The Conclusion read as follows: "The Council confirmed its support for the peace process between the GoSL and LTTE. Union welcomed the positive and conciliatory approach demonstrated by the two parties as well as their strong commitment to end the armed conflict that the people of Sri Lanka have been suffering from over 19 years. The Council expressed its strong support for the Norwegian government's facilitating role in the peace process. Any EU engagement would be closely coordinated with other international efforts, in particular with Norway. The Council recalled its attachment to the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka based on the principles of democracy." As a practical expression of its support the External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten visited Sri Lanka in November 2003, where he met representatives of LTTE as well as the government.

Discussions with the government covered a broad agenda and the Sri Lankan peace process was given a top priority. The EU expressed its support in reconstruction and bilateral trade to Sri Lanka. These meetings provided an opportunity for Brussels to understand the view points of the conflicting parties and to gauge how Europe could provide further support for the resumption of the Sri Lanka Peace Process. The longer term challenges of reconstruction after peace were also not ignored. The European commission coordinated Patten's trip with other members of the international donor community, particularly Norway, which was facilitator in the peace negotiations<sup>17</sup>.

Brussels issued a statement on September 26, 2005 presenting an outline of its revised position in the peace process in Sri Lanka. The EU Presidency stated: "The EU hereby declares its condemnation of the continuing use of violence and terrorism by the LTTE. The pursuit of political goals by such totally unacceptable methods only serves to damage the LTTE's standing and credibility as a negotiating partner and gravely endangers the Peace Process, so much desired by the people of Sri Lanka".<sup>18</sup> The EU also took the opportunity to hint that it was actively thinking of including the LTTE on its list of terrorist organizations. As an immediate step, the EU decided that it would stop receiving delegations from the LTTE. Thus neither Brussels, nor any of the member states would receive individuals or delegations belonging to the organization until further notice. The EU also decided that each member state could, at its own discretion, take further measures on a national level to check and stop to illegal or undesirable activities (including funding and propaganda) of the LTTE, organizations with links to it and known individual supporters<sup>19</sup>. The statement of the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donors Conference that had

asked the LTTE to take immediate public steps to demonstrate their sincere commitment to the peace process and their willingness to abandon violence was highlighted by the EU. It called upon all parties in Sri Lanka to prove the genuineness of their commitment towards the peace process during the forthcoming elections and to eschew actions that could damage prospects for a peaceful political settlement of the conflict. The EU made it a point to express support for Norway as a mediator / facilitator in the peace process. The EU emphasized that the major responsibility of making progress in the peace process was laid on the government and LTTE but not on Norway. The EU acknowledged that Norway had to maintain close contact with both parties and to use its good offices to help them find common ground that would lead to a lasting and just resolution of the conflict. The LTTE suffered a further diplomatic reversal when in May 2006; the EU included the LTTE on its list of terrorist groups and froze its financial assets in member states. A ban was also imposed on fund raising by the Tamil separatist groups within the EU. The LTTE member was not allowed to visit EU countries. In July 2006, Finland Denmark and Sweden chosen to withdraw their ceasefire monitors from Sri Lanka.<sup>20</sup> It is important to be mention that the EU, since 9/11 has drawn up a well-defined policy on counter-terrorism. The EU has decided that all types of terrorist activities, anywhere in the world would be condemned, including the LTTE. After the LTTE was declared as a terrorist organization, fund raising for the LTTE was made an unlawful activity. At the eighth India-EU Summit in November 2007, the leaders of the two sides emphasized that the conflict in Sri Lanka could not be resolved militarily and therefore, a negotiated political settlement was needed which was acceptable to all the

communities. They also urged the international community to promote the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. They were with the view that decentralization and devolution of power could address grievances of the Tamils effectively. They urged both sides to ensure human rights regime and maintain international humanitarian law, and to guarantee humanitarian aid to the masses.<sup>21</sup>

In 2007, a five year strategy (2007-2013) was adopted by the European Commission in its bilateral relation with Sri Lanka .The CSP covering all the matters of assistance to the country. Support for the peace process, the Tamil separatist issue and Poverty alleviation were identified as the priority sectors for 2007-13.The other focal areas are trade and good governance. The paper acknowledge that while trade concession did help in development of a country , but there were several instances and Sri Lanka was one of them ,where countries had not been able to maximize the benefit of the support.<sup>22</sup> On January 2; 2009, the GoSL launched a major offensive against LTTE, in the north of the country. Colombo alleged that the LTTE had violated the agreement more than 10,000 times. Since then, the government has begun a massive crackdown against the Tamil Tigers, and after fierce fighting took control of the entire area that had been under the control of the Tamil Tigers, including Kilinochchi which the Tigers claimed as their capital. The entire highway was also taken over by the Sri Lankan troop .Sri Lanka's government announced that LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakarn ,his family and other prominent rebel leaders had been killed. The LTTE finally admitted defeat on May 17, 2009<sup>23</sup>

The European council met in Brussels, very next day of ending of war, during which it adopted a statement calling on "the GoSL to proceed urgently towards a

comprehensive political process" and "the President of Sri Lanka to outline a clear process leading to a fully inclusive political solution, based on consent, equality and the rule of law". The Council opened that such measures would ensure long-term security, post-conflict reconciliation, reconstruction and prosperity in Sri Lanka. In its statement the EU called upon the United Nations Human Rights Council to set up an independent inquiry to investigate alleged violations of humanitarian and human rights law in Sri Lanka so that those guilty of crime against humanity could be brought to justice. The EU called upon Colombo to remove restrictions on aid agencies and give them full access to people displaced by the fighting. It also asked that the International Committee of the Red Cross should be allowed to monitor the screening of people leaving the conflict zone.<sup>24</sup> A Troika of Vice- Ministers from the EU visited Sri Lanka, on 12 - 13 May 2009. The purpose of the visit was to discuss EU concerns about the prevalent situation of human rights and humanitarian in the country. However, as an influential member of the international community, the foreign ministers of the EU declared that "they were appalled by reports of high civilians casualties" in the final battle with the Tamil separatists. They urged "an independent inquiry into allegations of violations of international human rights law by both sides".<sup>25</sup> In its report released on October 19, 2009 the EU was highly critical about the Sri Lankan government's role in the last phase of the bloody battle with the Tamil separatists. The Union noted with concern the "unlawful killings and restrictions on freedom of movement for people displaced by war". Apparently not satisfied with the human rights situation in the country, on February 15, 2010 the EU suspended the GSP concessions to Sri Lanka for a six month

period. During this period the EU was to monitor the proper implementation of human rights in Sri Lanka. The GoSL explained its position on this EU report on human rights issues and contended that it was in contact with relevant international organizations that are responsible for monitoring implementation. Colombo said that it had already “submitted its periodic report relating to the convention against torture and the convention on the rights of the child”.<sup>26</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in September 2013 that there had been no comprehensive Sri Lankan effort to properly and independently investigate allegations of war crimes. However, the current situation in Sri Lanka does not match the expectations of the international community. The EU officials showed serious concerns and said Sri Lanka had not done enough to address human rights issues to fulfill the requirements for special trade privileges.

## CONCLUSION

After the end of 26-year secessionist civil war, newly elected president, Maithripala Sirisena in presidential election 2015, announced that its government is ready to talk with Pro-LTTE political party Tamil National Alliance (TNA), if it withdraw its demand for a separate state, in favour of a federal solution. The also formed a national unity government supported by TNA. It is a matter of satisfaction that both parties are willing to talk for a viable political solution and devolution of power. The military victory of the Sri Lankan forces against the LTTE is not a permanent solution to Sri Lanka's problems. The GoSL needs to address the genuine grievances of the Tamil minority and work together with their moderate leadership

to establish long lasting peace. Colombo can only make progress if it is able to resolve its internal problems, particularly the Tamil-Sinhala differences. "Power sharing arrangements" can be the solution to the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka, although it will require basic amendments to the country's constitution. The people of Sri Lanka have paid a heavy price for this bloody civil war. The international community, including the EU is deeply concerned about the post-conflict situation and the possibility of the mistreatment or neglect of the Tamil community. The EU which had been apprehensive about humanitarian assistance reaching the war affected areas and in this regard the government's assurances were welcomed. The EU High Representative for CFSP, Catherine Ashton, urged on upon the GoSL "without reconciliation there can be no return to long term security or prosperity. This statement reflected the EU's general concern about the protection of human rights, the rule of law and good governance in all its partner countries, particularly those in the developing world, where political, ethnic and sectarian issues often hinder development. International community, especially the EU still hopes that Sri Lanka will emerge from the horrors of the civil war "as a liberal state with respect for human rights and liberal values".

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## THE *Khānqāh* SYSTEM OF CHISHTI *Silsilah* IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY INDIA

SHEHAR BANO

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY

LAHORE

### ABSTRACT

Historically speaking, the Chishti sufis tremendously contributed to the culture of India and developed it in many ways. Along with other contributions of Chishti sufis through their teachings, the establishment of *khānqāhs* was one of them. The *khānqāhs* of Chishti *Silsilah* integrated as an important element in the popular culture of India. It was a distinctive feature of mystical life of medieval India and it influenced other aspects of life. *Khānqāh* is a place being led by sufis with a purpose of enhancing spiritual prowess. These places were hub of mysticism in medieval India which was a platform to proliferate the teachings of Islam. Besides Islamic spirituality, *khānqāh* was also centre for the moral growth as it was appealing to other religious groups. The present article is an effort to study the organization of the major Chishti *Khānqāh* in sixteenth century. The detail of *khānqāh* system of earlier sufis of Chishti *Silsilah* is also provided with an approach to develop understanding.

### KEY WORDS

*khānqāhs*, *Silsilah*, Mysticism, Chishti Sufis, India.

The *khānqāh* has played multifaceted role in medieval period. The term *khānqāh* means the sufi dwellings. The *Khānqāh* or sufi dwellings are the places which were built to fulfill the needs of the sufis, their followers and visitors.

Along with serving the purpose of sufi teachings and activities, the *khānqāhs* were also made to feed poor and dervishes. The Chishti sufis built *jama'at khāna*, both *khānqāh* and *Jama'at khāna* are synonyms to each other. However *zawiyas* were small places as compared to *jama'at khāna* or *khānqāh*. In *zawiyahs* sufis did not try to establish contacts with outside world, in fact, they performed mystical activities there. The *khānqāhs* were not only the source of religious harmony; it also gave rise to a sublime culture enriched with mysticism and education.

#### **ORGANIZATION OF CHISHTI *KHĀNQĀHS***

As compared to the *khānqāhs* of Suharwardis, the Chishti *khānqāhs* were not organized aristocratically. The Chishti *khānqāhs* did not have lavish meals but used to have open kitchen where any kind of available food was served. The inmates in *khānqāh* came from mainly three dominant classes. First were the scholars and seekers of mystical truths who came to the *khānqāhs* to seek knowledge. Second category was of merchants, businessmen, and at times nobles, who came to the *khānqāh* for the sake of peace of mind, and for seeking the blessings of the sufi shaykhs. Third category was of the people who were tired of worldly conflicts and oppression. These categories did not impose limits on the visitors and their purpose of visit. The fact is that the *khānqāh* of Chishti shaykhs were open for all and sundry. The people who were staying in the *khānqāh* were of two types, the travelers and the inmates of *khānqāh*. The latter also took the responsibilities of daily chores of *khānqāh* collectively. The sufi shaykhs played the central role in the *khānqāh*. Power structure was based on attainment of spirituality.<sup>1</sup> The most important duty of the Shaykh in the *khānqāh* was prayers, meditation and to

follow their routine scrupulously. Another important duty was to attend the visitors who would come from sunrise to sunset except the prayer timing. The *khānqāhs* of Chishti *Silsilah* had one common aspect and this was the open kitchen known as *langar*, and hospitality.<sup>2</sup> His tradition was maintained according to the sayings of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya: "If someone visits a man and get nothing for eat, it is as if he visited dead man."<sup>3</sup>

Along with the social services, the *khānqāhs* of Chishti shaykhs were also centers for learning. In the *khānqāhs* peace and cooperation was witnessed among the people of different beliefs and religions. The Chishti sufis organized discourses and discussions in which Hindu *yogis* (ascetics) also participated, as it is illustrated in *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*.<sup>4</sup> Sufi devotional music or *samā'* was also performed in these *khānqāhs*. After the death of sufi shaykhs their shrines became important part of *khānqāh*. Decentralization of Chishti *Silsilah* in Dehli as a result of the state measures under Muhammad ibn Tughlaq helped establish *khānqāhs* all over India. It proved to be beneficial in a way that small *khānqāhs* and shrines were established in far flung regions as a result of which local people were not only well versed in name but also in philosophy, teachings and works of these sufis.<sup>5</sup>

Financial support to the *khānqāhs* was provided by the *futuh*, the unasked for charity in cash or kind.<sup>6</sup> As most of the Chishti shaykh were not inclined towards acceptance of land grants from rulers of the time therefore, unlike the Suharwardi *khānqāhs*, Chishti *khānqāhs* did not present a luxurious environment of hospitality. Whenever *futuh*s came in any form, it was distributed immediately. Once Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya came to know about the storage of wheat grains in his *khānqāh*, he advised the

inmates to distribute it before sunset.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of shrine complexes adjacent to the *khānqāh* also led to enrichment of culture, and these also became commercial sites. For example, Ghiyathpur was away from the city but when Shaykh Nizam al-Din settled there, it became a centre to fulfill the needs of a large number of visitors. Because of this popularity and growing urban life, the Shaykh once sought to move to some other place. In the surrounding areas of *khānqāh* urbanization and commercialism occurred with time.<sup>8</sup>

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE *KHĀNQĀH* OF CHISHTI *SILSILAH* IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY**

The organization of *khānqāh* of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi was not different from other sufi *khānqāhs*. It was extremely hospitable and visitors were always welcomed. There were no strict rules about the time and type of visitors. After settling in Gangoh, one part of *khānqāh* was reserved for his family. He used to see his disciples for fixed hours to guide them regarding their spiritual progress and led the prayers for five times.<sup>9</sup> Earlier, Shaykh Abd al-Quddus relied on agriculture to raise his family, but soon he gave it up and completely devoted himself to spirituality. The economic support for this system was based on *futuh*. Grants out of veneration were given in the *khānqāh* and the Shaykh never asked for that. Another important feature of the *khānqāh* was that the *futuhs* were never kept with an intention to use later.

While Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi settled in Shahabad there is no account in his writing that he received any considerable amount of money. Umar Khan Sarwani, the personal servant of Prince Nizam Khan, who later earned the name of Sultan Sikander Lodhi, was a disciple of

Shaykh Abd Al-Quddus. With his efforts Shaykh Quddus settled in Shahabad. In his *khānqāh* he performed the ritual of granting discipleship and *khilafat*. As it has been discussed in the previous chapter, the letters of Shaykh Abd Al-Quddus do not clarify that he himself ever asked for *futuh*. His letters to the political authorities, officers mainly consisted of advices. There is no clear account if he ever asked for financial help from them. His letter to Sultan Bahlol Lodhi envisages that he was advising him to be sincere to the subjects. Most of the *futuh* to his *khānqāh* came from his disciples, *khulāfa* and devotees.<sup>10</sup>

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE *KHĀNQĀH* OF SHAYKH SALIM CHISHTI

Shaykh Salim Chishti had cordial relations with Emperor Akbar after settling in Fatehpur Sikri. His sons were also given official positions. While Shaykh Salim was alive, the *khānqāh* financially depended upon the *futuh* and grants of Emperor Akbar. The *dargah* or tomb of Shaykh Salim Chishti is one of the most aggrandized buildings of the Mughal period. The building consists of a mosque and the shrine complex. Its construction was started during the reign of Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-27). The building is unique and presents aesthetic aspect of the Mughal Empire. None of the sufi buildings can be found on this pattern. The cost of construction was five lacs; it was paid from royal treasure. Qutb al-Din Kokaltash built windows and ground using white marble. In the west there is a big door which is reflection of artistic sense and it is known as *Buland Darwazah*. The hall of the *khānqāh* is supported by pillars. Adjacent to the hall there are eighty four small chambers and some smaller halls. Each hall has a dome on it. People used to visit Shaykh Salim Chishti from far and wide. There are evidences in *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* that the renowned

musician and singer, Tansen Klawant used to visit the *dargah* and sing there. When Shaykh Salim Chishti was on his deathbed, he asked Tansen to organize *Sama'* before his death.<sup>11</sup>

In the *khānqāh* the ceremony of *Urs* (death anniversary of sufis) was held with great enthusiasm. During the nights of *Urs*, also known as *Ayyam e Mutbarakah* (the blessed days) candles were lit in the shrine complexes. At the mid of mosque the *hawz* (water reservoir) was filled with rain water. Financially the system of *khānqāh* was stable enough to support the disciples who were living in the *khānqāh* for the sake of education and spiritual training. Earlier Shaykhs of the Chishti *Silsilah* preferred the life of austerity and they declined to accept land grants from the rulers. Their *khānqāhs* were also simple and disciples had to rely on available sources but this was not the case with the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Salim Chishti.

The graves of family members of Shaykh Salim Chishti are also in the same shrine complex. In the west there are graves of his sons, Qutb al-Din Khan, Islam Khan and Muazam Khan. During the reign of Jahangir, the son of Islam Khan was the in-charge of the *khānqāh*. He was also given the titled of 'Ikram Khan'. From these accounts one thing is certain that Shaykh Salim's family was attached to the court of Mughal Empire and its dependence was to such an extent that the Emperor himself used to take care of his family.<sup>12</sup>

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE *KHĀNQĀH* OF SHAYKH NIZAM AL-DIN BANDAGI**

After getting *khilafātnāmah* from Shaykh Maruf, Nizam al-Din Bandagi established a Chishti *khānqāhs* in Ambetha, a

small town near Lucknow. According to Abd al-Qadir Badayuni, he did not leave his living place very often except when he used to go to the mosque to offer prayers. The tomb of Shaykh Bandagi which was built later is situated within the premises of his *khānqāh* in Ambetha. His *dargah* was not maintained in later period and nowadays it gives the clear glimpse of negligence of the civil authorities. The shrine complex is an eight-sided building, and his mausoleum is built on it. Presently, the *khānqāh* is not well managed, as most of the Muslims of the surrounding areas had migrated to Pakistan in 1947.<sup>13</sup>

#### CHISHTI *KHĀNQĀHS* AS THE HUB OF CHARACTER BUILDING

The *khānqāh* of the Chishti sufis was remarkably different from other sufis *silsilahs*. There is vivid reflection of the life of the Shaykhs in their *khānqāhs*. As Shaykhs of Chishti *Silsilah* preferred the life of austerity and simplicity, their *khānqāh* were also dominated by similar pattern. As most of the Shaykhs declined to accept land grants from the rulers, therefore their *khānqāhs* were not aristocratic. The *khānqāhs* of Chishti sufis consisted of a big hall which provided equality of life to every inmate. The sufi shaykhs used to pray, study and sleep on the ground without discrimination. If food was available it was divided equally among the inmates; in the case of scarcity of food, everyone has to face equal hunger pangs. In the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Qutb al-Din and Baba Farid, food was mostly in scarce. The *khānqāh* of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya was comparatively organized and well maintained, as meat was served there.<sup>14</sup>

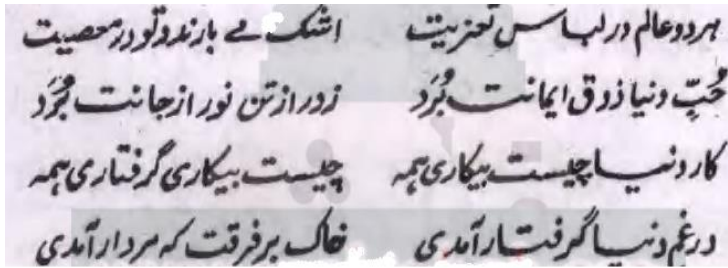
The *khānqāhs* of Chishti *Silsilah* in the sixteenth century more or less, reflected similar features. The Chishti Sabari *Silsilah* which was established by the spiritual descendants



of Shaykh Ali Ahmad Sabir of Kaliyar developed a profound system of *khānqāh*. Shaykh Ahmad Ali Sabir settled in Kaliyar on the advice of Baba Farid, but did not establish any *khānqāh* and lived in a small hut. However, the later Chishti-Sabari *khānqāhs* were established by his descendants. Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Radawli established his *khānqāh* in the fifteenth century.

#### **KHĀNQĀH LIFE OF SHAYKH ABD AL-QUDDUS GANGOHI**

*Al-mu'min mir'at al-mu'min*, "the faithful is the mirror of the faithful" this was a prophetic tradition often quoted by the sufis as they followed it in their relation to the community. The practical application of this maxim can be found in all *silsilahs* of Sufism. Before pointing out any fault in other person, they sought to correct themselves first. The Chishti sufis preferred the life of austerity and stressed on works of piety.<sup>15</sup> The case of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi is not very different. He took *ba'ayt* at the hands of Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq in his dream but he did not move to any *khānqāh*. Once Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq told him in his dream that his house has been burnt and also showed him the place to live near his *khānqāh*. When Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi awoke, he saw his house has caught fire. After this incident he left his house and moved to Radawli where he took *bay'at* at the hands of Shaykh Arif, the son of Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq. He did not only follow the tradition himself but also advised others as it is clear from his letter to the Qazi and ruler of Radawli. In his letters, he wrote:



Two worlds are in mourning and are in tears while you are absorbed in calamity.

Love for world diminishes the enthusiasm for faith, strength of body and light of your soul.

What are these worldly chores except for having nothing to do, which is itself being caught up.

You are arrested by love of world, dust on your head; you are desirous of death.<sup>16</sup>

Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi came in contact with Chishti-Sabari *Silsilah* through Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq's son Shaykh Muhammad Arif. He did not have any direct lineage with Chishti Sabari *Silsilah* and inclined towards the spirituality through communication with the spirit of deceased Shaykh Ahmad. In *Anwar Al-Ayyun* Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi has mentioned about the attainment of spirituality and the direct interaction with Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Radawli.<sup>17</sup> He stayed at the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq for some time. There he used to perform meditation and spend his time in prayers. According Shaykh Rukn al-Din, during the meditation he had to face difficulties. Many a time harmful insects even snakes were seen there but entirely unaware of these he remained preoccupied with his prayers. While living in Radawli at the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Haqq, Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi has to follow very strict schedule. Even his

abolition and washing of clothes were scheduled. Once he sought permission to wash clothes from Shaykh Arif but he was refused with a scorn.<sup>18</sup>

Shaykh Abd al-Quddus had more than one thousand *khulāfaʾ*. Shaykh Hissam al-Din was a *khalifa* of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus. He originally belonged to Baghdad, but left it to settle near Gangoh where he established his *khānqāh*. He also maintained the tradition of *samāʾ* in his *khānqāh*.<sup>19</sup> The letters of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi makes it clear Shaykh Jalal al-Din Thanesari appeared to have occupied special place among his *khulafa*. Shaykh Jalal al-Din got formal education and later on he got inclined towards mysticism. After taking *bayʿat* at the hand of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus he joined Chishti Sabari *Silsilah*. His *khānqāh* followed the traditions of Chishti *Silsilah*. Mostly he spent time in *khānqāh* offering prayers and reciting holy Quran. Many accounts of Shaykh Jalal al-Din Thanesari are available through *Muntakhib al-Tawarikh*. It informs that the Shaykh remained absorbed in spirituality.

#### **KHĀNQĀHS OF CHISHTI SILSILAH AS CENTRES OF LEARNING AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Vernacularization of Sufi ideas into regional languages developed these regions into spiritually venerated centres.<sup>20</sup> The *khānqāh* of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus became a center of learning along with serving the ritual functions. Spiritual activities like *samāʾ* and *dhikr* (remembrance of God) were regularly held, though the authorities tried to raise point on this issue. *Samāʾ* and *dhikr* bestow mystical strength to soul by which a sufi moves on the path towards God leaving behind every worldly concern. Shaykh Abd al-Quddus described this situation to his *khalifa*, Shaykh Abd al-Rehman Shah Abadi in these words: recognizing God

while listening to *samā'* is a luckiest situation, and the one who is saturated with this is blessed.<sup>21</sup> In his letter he also advised him about *samā'* that friends of God listened to *samā'* so that those whose hearts have turned away might get enlightened with the love of Allah.<sup>22</sup> While describing the regulation and necessities of *samā'*, he argued that the sufis participate in *samā'* and also take care of *sharia*. They offer their prayers strictly on time and never give up the congregation of Friday prayers. This is the reason that whatever mystical blessing they possess is because of the blessing of *sharia* as they have fulfilled their duties of *sharia*.<sup>23</sup>

The *khānqāh* was also a source of education. Though there was no formal type of education but some ceremonies was held. At the initial stage the *talib* (disciple) was taught the basic writing and understanding of language which include the books such as *Masādir* (on grammar and vocabulary) and *Miftah al-Lughat* (key to vocabulary). The next stage was education of the Quran. The stage of learning the Quran was followed by education of *sharia*. New comers were helped to learn *Qira'* (recitation); Shaykh Abd al-Quddus wrote *Fawa'id al-qira'* on learning *qira'* and its benefits.

In the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Jalal al-Din Thanasari everyone was welcomed. Emperor Akbar visited his *khānqāh* once. During this visit he was enlightened about the *Wahdat al-Wujud* (concept of unity of being). The Emperor paid homage to him but the Shaykh never preferred the life of royal court.<sup>24</sup> His *khānqāh* was also a great learning centre. The importance of an environment of mystical learning can be inferred from the *Irshad al-Talibin*, which covers many aspects of mystical Islam.

Shaykh Nizam al-Din Bandagi was given *khilafat* by Shaykh Maruf. Shaykh Maroof Jaunpuri was also a scholar. He left a treasure of memorable work which includes books like *SharhQafia*, *SharhHadia*, and *SharhBuzdawi*. *Muntakhib al-Tawarikh* confirms that his *khalifa*, Shaykh Nizam al-Bandagi taught these works in his *khānqāh*. Along with this he was also fond of study of books like *Ihyaal-Ulum*, *Awarifal-Ma'arif*, *Risala-iMakkiyya*, and *Adabal-Muridin*. His *khānqāh* was visited by a large number of people.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHISHTI KHĀNQĀHS IN DEVELOPMENT OF SAMĀ'

Shaykh Abd al-Quddus maintained the tradition of *samā'* or the devotional sufi music. He was very fond of *samā'* and most of the time he fell in ecstasy upon listening to it, and thus could not control himself. When the question of *samā'* was brought in front of him, he showed his resilience. *Samā'* was the bone of contention between the *shariah*-minded *ulema* and the sufis. The Chishti shaykhs regarded *samā'* as a strategy for spiritual progress. Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya regarded *samā'* an important element in preparatory steps to the path of spiritualism. Keeping in view the etiquettes of *samā'* he elaborated the fourth types of music and they are as follows: (i) *halal* (allowed), (ii) *haram* (absolutely prohibited), (iii) *makruh* (disliked but not absolutely prohibited), and (iv) *mubah* (permissible but disliked). According to him, if a person is inclined towards spirituality, then *samā'* is *mubah* for him. If he is partially indulged in worldly desires, then music is *makruh* for him. If ones desires are completely occupied by worldly pursuits, music is *haram* for him. *Samā'* is *halal* for those who are absolutely occupied with the love of God. He also described the conditions to those for whom *samā'* was *halal*.

According to which listener should not be forgetful about God. There should be absence of musical instruments; poetry being sung must not be based on worldly infatuation.<sup>25</sup> With time, these rules diminished and till the end of seventeenth century they seemed to be absolutely ignored. This was the reason Shah Kalim Allah (d. 1729) was critical of these practices, and approved of it with reservations.<sup>26</sup> He highlighted the importance of *samāʿ* by arguing that just like the water of a well cannot come out unless it is drawn by some external force. Similarly the secrets of God cannot be revealed to the heart until *samāʿ* provides this spiritual recognition. In short, *samāʿ* was permissible for those who were capable and prohibited for the incapable ones.<sup>27</sup>

Shaykh Jalal al-Din Thanesari was fond of *samāʿ*. Once he was listening to *samāʿ* but he could not bear the enlightenment. Later, he took *bayʿat* at the hand of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus. In *Akhbar al-Akhyar* it has been asserted that when his son died, he abstained from listening to the music until his grief was changed into love for God.<sup>28</sup> Though the tradition of *samāʿ* was maintained by most of Chishti Shaykhs, Shaykh Nizam al-Bandagi avoided it and also advised his followers to do so. He wanted to minimize the conflict between the *ulema* and the sufis, which was often on the issue of *samāʿ*. Therefore, ceremonies at his *khānqāh* did not include the practices of *samāʿ*.<sup>29</sup>

#### VISITORS TO THE CHISHTI *KHĀNQĀHS*

The Chishjti *khānqāhs* were the center where cultural diversity was at its peak. Shaykh Abd al-Quddus attracted people irrespective of religion, class, social and economic status. It has been cited in *Lataif-i Quddusi* that once Shaykh Quddus predicted about a Hindu washerman that

he would have mystical vision, and in a few days it was proved to be true.<sup>30</sup> Visitors came to him from different places. For instance, Shaykh Hissam al-Din was from Baghdad to whom he bestowed with *khilafat*.<sup>31</sup>

The Chishti *Khānqāhs* in the sixteenth century varied remarkably in their characteristics. From the study of *khānqāhs* of different sufi shaykhs, it can be inferred that *khānqāhs* system was not developed on similar pattern. One of the common features of all the *khānqāhs* was that all were center of learning and spiritual guidance. All the *Khānqāh* located in prominent places or in the farthest areas were hub of learning of spirituality and sufi teachings. Some *khānqāhs* were established well and had quite strong financial base, like the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Salim Chishti. On the other hand, there were *khānqāhs* that depicted the life of austerity and simplicity. The *khānqāh* of Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi and his *khulāfa* provide similar pattern. Some Shaykhs strictly followed the practice of *samāʿ* in their *khānqāhs*, while some avoided it absolutely. In conclusion, it can be extolled that the *khānqāh* system varied from sufi to sufi as their views varied.

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- <sup>7</sup> Haeri, *The Chishti: A Living Light*, 112.
- <sup>8</sup> Nizami, *Some Aspects of Khānqāh Life in Medieval India*, 60.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., 188.
- <sup>10</sup> Ijaz al-haqq, *Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi aur Un ki Taalimat*, 160.
- <sup>11</sup> Nur al-Din Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol.2, ed. Siayyid Hassam al-Din Rashidi, Urdu tr. Ijaz al-Haqq Quddusi (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqi-i Adab, 1970), 85.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 86.
- <sup>13</sup> Aslam, *Malfuzati Adab ki Tarikhi Ahhamiyyat*, see chapter on *Mahbub al-Qulub*, 441.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 57.
- <sup>15</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 1975), 101.
- <sup>16</sup> Gangohi, *Maktubat-i Quddusiyya*, letter no.14, 81.
- <sup>17</sup> Gangohi, *AnwarAl-Ayyun*, 211.
- <sup>18</sup> Quddusi, *Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi or unn ki Taalimat*, 257
- <sup>19</sup> Gangohi, *Al-Ayyun*, 553.
- <sup>20</sup> Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell Publishers, 2012), 103.
- <sup>21</sup> Gangohi, *Maktubat-i Quddusiyya*, 111



<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 112

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>24</sup>Al- Badayuni, *Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh*, vol. 3, 20.

<sup>25</sup>Jandar, *Durr-i Nizami*, 233.

<sup>26</sup>Shaykh Abd al-Quddus Gangohi *aur Un ki Taalimat*, 543.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 160.

<sup>28</sup>Muhaddith, *Akhhbār al-Akhyār*, 320.

<sup>29</sup>Badayuni, *Muntakhib-ut-Twarikh*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Shaykh Rukn al-Din, *Lataif quddusi* (Kanpur: Sabai Publishers), 80.

<sup>31</sup> Shaykh Abd al-Quddus *aut Un ki Taalimat*, 552.

## **HISTORISING PREMODERN KASUR**

**RIAZ AHMAD**

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY  
LAHORE

### **ABSTRACT**

This article has something to do with the etymology of the name of Kasur, the genesis, historical evolution, importance and the development of the district of Kasur. Moreover, in an effort to answer the past factors behind the development and decline of the historical city Kasur, several historical events have been described and, to some extent, analyzed in a chronological order. Thus, this article has been compartmentalized into three historical phases. The first phase surveys the period up to the establishment of the Mughal Empire in India. The second phase deals with the developments from 1526 to the years of 1720-21. In the third stage there is a narration of the course of historical events which are really significant owing to its association with the establishment of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's rule in Punjab (1800).

### **KEY WORDS**

Kasur, Punjab, Mansabdars, Mughal, Sikh.

The etymology of the Kasur has been surrounded some sayings and stories. The most celebrated one is the same as that of the Lahore. This is based on the historical tradition belonging to the times of Raja Ram Chandar and Seeta, his wife. By this tradition it is, usually, said by the historians

that the both sons of Ram Chandar and Seeta were named with Lahu and Kassu and the former based in a place later on named after him and with the passage of time converted its name into Lahore and the second son, Kassu, began to live at a placement on be called after his name and ultimately surfaced its name as Kasur.<sup>1</sup>

The second saying about the etymology of Kasur is that the word Kasur is plural of “Kasar” which is an Arabic word means the palace. As the city of Kasur has a number of old palaces so the plural of “Kasar” is Kasur which means palaces. So, it went on being called after this name in the time to come.<sup>2</sup>

#### **PHASE ONE (KASUR BEFORE MUGHALS EMPIRE)**

Now, the question arises that which was the period this place began to be dwelled for the first time and who were the people settled here first. In answer to this question, again, there are different opinions. Some writers and historians opine that this place had been already populated during the times of Amir Khusru of Dehli. They are of the view that Amir Khusru has written about this place in his book, ‘Masnavi Quran-ul-Saadin’. The verse in this book deliberates the fact, in the context of the Mongols attacks in India, that after the barbarous and destructive invasions of the Mongols there was no populated and resided area from the Samana upto the Lahore but Kasur. So, if this verse is spotlighted and interpreted in the context of the case of Kasur, one may conclude that the land of Kasur was already dwelled during the times of Amir Khusru.<sup>3</sup>

Then, the other opinion is that this earth was colonized soon after the invasions on India by Amir Taimur. Ghulam Muhayyuddin, Alius Bootay Shah, wrote in his work, Punjab Di Geografiyai Twareekh’ (The Geographical

histories of the Punjab) published first time in 1850 by Ludhiana Mission press, that in the post Amir Taimur's invasions on India the central government of India was not strong and stabilized enough to control the peripheral areas and states. So, as had been in past, there were established a number of princes and states by power-thirsty chiefs on their own and the sons of Khizar Khan could not be able to keep the whole of India in order. Thus, in the wake of this anarchy, Behlul Lodhi, who was the ruler of Depalpur these days, began to expand his influence in the neighboring regions. He, ultimately, pursued the Afghans to settle in the region of Kasur, about a hundred km distanced place from Depalpur. He also helped them control the agricultural and cultivatable lands encircling Kasur. So these Afghans went on joining militaries and being Mansabdars of the rulers to come in the later times.<sup>4</sup>

Then, according to Mufti Ghulam Sarwar Qureshi, the population of Kasur was much larger in earlier times but as a result of the Mongol attacks and other alien invasions in the region, the old city of Kasur went on devastating. And at the arrival of Ameer Teimur, he allotted the ravaged city along with its uncultivated land to his near and dear ones, the Afghans. Later on Behlul Lodhi, too, helped Afghans settle here and apportioned lands to them. He also allocated them the peasantry and ownership rights of the lands. Moreover in the last quarter of fifteenth century, there eventuated settlement at Shahjra, a town some eight km in east of Kasur.<sup>5</sup>

In the evolution of population settlement in regions of Kasur next time was the Ibrahim Lodhi's. He permitted new townships in this region. The editor of the magnum opus work on Punjab, The Punjab Chiefs, describes:

“The ancestors of Malik Sahib Khan were Bhatti Rajputs, resident in the Sirsa District about the year 1520, Gagu and Naulu, two members of the family, obtained from Ibrahim, the last of the Lodhi dynasty a grant of thirty thousand acres of waste land in the Kasur district, Thither the brothers proceeded with their families, and founded several villages, Harike, Betu and the two Nauls. About this time also, whether from conviction or influenced by the grant of land they became converts to Islam”.<sup>6</sup>

Then, the further evolution of the process of mass settlement kept on happening and in 929 Hijri a landlord Haibat Khan, came from Abdul Malick settled at a town named Islam, on the order of Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi. This town later on renamed as Haibat Noor Patti. This town was one of the neighboring towns of the Kasur.<sup>7</sup>

## **PHASE TWO (1526-1720)**

There are several stories about the population settlement at the old Township of Chunian, now an important tehsil of the Kasur district, but according to Mufti Ghulam Sarwar, it was Syed Kamal Shah Pir Jahanian Bukhari who came from the old city of Uch and resided here in about 952 Hijri.<sup>8</sup> About this town the writer of the “The Punjab Chiefs” remarked that the Bukhari family resided at Chunian, a tehsil of the district Kasur, in about the year 1550, and this family belonged, basically to Uch in the Bahawalpur territory.<sup>9</sup>

Then, there is another opinion which is solely based on the writing of Abdul Qadir Khweshgi. He was the contemporary of Aurangzeb and wrote a landmark book named Akhbar-ul-Auliya Der Ahwal Mashayikh Khweshagian (a history of the Khweshagi Afghan tribe settled in the town of Kasur near Lahore).<sup>10</sup> Originally, this book was written in

Persian but Prof. Dr. Maulvi Muhammad Shafi who was awarded with medals by the Governments of Pakistan and Iran, translated and edited it in Urdu in 1972. Hence, according to this work, it was the Zaheer-ud-Din Babar, the founder of Mughal dynasty in India, who concluded an Afghan Colony at Kasur. According to this scholar, in fact, Babar was preparing for his final expedition on India and he was in Kabul those days. In the meanwhile the state of Pashang in Afghanistan became the bone of contention in betwixt the two Afghan tribes, Jamand and Tareen. A fight was occurred and the Tareen tribe displaced the Jamands who escaped the worst suffering by chance. But after the reconciliation with their fellow tribe, the Khaweshagis, the Jamands again marched towards Tareens and ultimately, as a result of battle, restored their position in the state of Pashang. But as they had to face and be prepared for any sudden attack by the Tareens, they began to be dissatisfied and speculate for some new safe havens. Subsequently, following the advice of their honorable Sheikh and an elder, they left Pashang for India and met Zaheer-ud-Din Babar at Kabul who promised with them one fourth of the revenue of India, if they become succeeded.<sup>11</sup>

To pursue their agreement the Jamands and Khaweshgis fought with great valor in the battle of Panipat against Ibrahim Lodhi as a result of which seven hundred Khaweshgis and Jamands were slain at Panipat. Babar honored his promise with Jamands and Khaweshgis, then Hamayun also maintained it intact but Akbar disrespected it. But when Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi, a steel-hearted commander of Kasuri Pathans, showed to Shah Jahan the written document of the agreement concluded by Babar and Khaweshgis the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan remained surprised but Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi retorted to the

emperor that the document had been displayed not because of the demand written on it but in order to demonstrate the generations-old relationships between the Mughals and them. So in the wake of this development the emperor went on awarding Khaweshgis with mansabdaris and other positions.<sup>12</sup>

Settlement at the city of Kasur further occurred during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great. "The ancient city of Kasur, situated some twenty miles to the south of Lahore was in 1570, by permission of the Emperor Akbar, settled by a colony of Pathans numbering about 3500 souls among these come from Kandahar the ancestors of the Momdot Chiefs of the Hassan Zai tribe and till the fall of the Mughal empire, they lived at Kasur, sometimes traders sometimes soldiers, as suited their inclination or their means."<sup>13</sup>

But the colonization at Kasur by Pathan tribes had to be challenged by a local issue. The masters of the lands surrounding Kasur were local Hindus and they had been plundered and humiliated at times by a notorious raider named Peera Baloch belonged to nearby regions of Chunian, now a tehsil of Kasur. The Hindus offered Khaweshgis lands conditionally that the latter would have to protect them from the dacoits. The Khaweshgis were left with no other choice but to face Peera Baloch. To handle this situation, they did their factions divided and engulfed the old dwellers for their protection from three sides except south which was protected naturally by the river, Bias. After few days, Peera Baloch approached as usual but had to face severe reaction. He was slain along with his hundreds of companions by the Afghans. So there was a new era of peace and order in the region and Khaweshgis became settled there.<sup>14</sup>

During the Mughal Empire in India, Kasuri Afghans had been recognized as good mansabdars unambiguously. They secured jobs in the Mughal Empire throughout the era of the Mughal dynasty. A larger number of them lived for battling for Mughal Military. For a comprehensive understanding of the links between the Kasuri Pathans and the Mughal emperors, a brief account of some Kasuri Pathans' military services is given hereinafter.

The example of Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi, the valorous commander of the Mughal army, in this regard is very prominent. He had been amongst the personal servants of Prince Pervaiz. Then, he was awarded with position of one thousand mansabdar by Jahangir. But his sky-rocketing position was raised during the reign of Shah Jahan. He demonstrated his bravery and lion-heartedness in the siege of Daulatabad. His untiring and courageous services lifted him in the position of three thousand infantry and twenty five hundred cavalry in the light of his services in the expeditions of the fort Meu, Chukta and Tara Garh. It was the undoubted services of Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi that he was entrusted with the task for expedition to Balkh and Badakhshan accompanied by Murad Bux. Ultimately, he was elevated to the mansab of 4000, cavalry and artillery.<sup>15</sup> Nazar Bahadar received titles of Nawab and Deendar Khan.<sup>16</sup>

After Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi, his sons, Qutub-ud-Din and Shamas-du-Din, were remained the jointly commanders of Junagarh Sorrat. But in the wake of their consistent quarrel, Shah Jahan appointed Shamas-ud-Din as commander of Deccan and Qutub-ud-Din was entrusted with commandership of Gujrat. And, after the ailment of Shah Jahan, when the Murad announced himself as emperor, Qutub-ud-Din, like other officers in Gujrat, came



to heel before Murad. Later on, he had also accompanied him in his war against Darashako. But, when Aurangzeb did triumph over his brothers, Qutub submitted his services before him and was given a Khilat and was appointed faujdar (commander) of Junagarh Sorrat by him. Moreover, in the war of Ajmer, Qutub had escorted the Aurangzeb against Darashako. After this war he was ameliorated in his mansab and was given with the title of Khan. Furthermore, he did himself proved steel-hearted commander in the battle against Rai Singh, at Jaam, peripheral area of Junagarh. Rai Singh had challenged the royal authority there. Qutub headed 8,000 troops then and killed Rai Singh along with his 300 companions. It was then when this town, Jam, was renamed as Islam Nagar. Qutub was entitled with the subedari of Dakkan in the twentieth year of Aurangzeb's ruler ship. And, at last, Qutub was slain dead in the fight against Bejapuris, while accompanying the Baghal Khan. After him, one of his sons, M. Khan, too, joined the Mughal Army and was slain in the war of Malkher. Qutubpura, a newly populated town was named after Qutub-ud-Din Khan in/near Aurangzebabad. Qutub-ud-Din Khan was a valorous and daring commander. His lionhearted services in the battle fields and heroic soldiering had been the central themes in the regional ballads in the years to come.<sup>17</sup>

The second son of the Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi, Shamas-ud-Din Khan, too accomplished creditable and praiseworthy military services. He fought well in Daccan fights and contributed a good deal of services in conquering the fort of Chakna during Aurangzeb's tenure. He acquired the mansab of three thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry.<sup>18</sup>

In the fourth generation of Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi many members of the family had been connected with the

Mughal forces and Bazeed Khan was in particular another Kasuri mansabdar. He was the great grandson of Nazar Bahadar. He joined Muazzam Shah Alam Bahadar Shah against M. Azam Shah. He was entrusted with a good deal of mansab and was entitled with 'Qutub-ud-Din Khan'. He was designated and dignified as the commander of Jammu. He was very valorous and bold commander. He fought bravely against the Sikhs at a place somewhat north-west of Raipur. He had become injured there and ultimately died after three days of the fight.<sup>19</sup>

Then Noor Khan who as the son of Pir Khan and grandson of Sultan Ahmad Khalafzai belonged to the same family (He was the great, great grandson of Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi) remained mansabdar of the Mughal army. His father Pir Khan also entered the Mughal army and held an illustrious mansab during the times of M. Muazzam Shah Alam Bahadar Shah. When Sikhs raised their rebellion and challenged the Mughal Empire from Lahore to Delhi, he prepared a military of 5,000 swars and waged war against them near Sultanpur. He had won the battle. He, later on too, battled twenty two local fights. He was too like Bazeed Khan, cut down in battle against Sikh at North-west of Raipur. He was certified with the form of address as the 'Shamas Khan'.<sup>20</sup>

Next was the Abdul Raheem who was the brother in law of Shamas Khan. It was he who was ennobled mansab of 6000. Emperor Muazzam Shah Alam Bahadar Shah qualified him with name of Shahdad Khan. In his earlier soldiering, he had been subservient of Shamas Khan in Jammu. He cultivated a good score of fame while he was the faujdar of Lakhi Jungle. He had also remained under the Abdul Sammad Khan, the Nazim of Lahore. On the invasion of Nadar Shah he was dispatched. After his death, his sons

also kept them attached with Mughal Army and were posted at high mansabs.<sup>21</sup>

Among the Khaweshgi Afghans at Kasur Hassan Khan Khaweshgi was another who lived servicing the royal forces. He was a commander in the army of Prince Shuja and was sent to Jannpur to lesson Mukkarim Khan Safvi, the faujdar of Jannpur. Then, another Kasuri was the Rehmat Khan who was a very bold commander and was entitled 'Mathoor Khan'. He was also known as Alla Dad Khan. Nazar Bahadar was his maternal great grandfather. He had been the faujdar of Lucknow, Beswada and Daccan. He held special rank under the service of Prince Izzud Din (Muiz ud Din).<sup>22</sup>

If someone analyze the whole history of Kasuri Afghans he will be clear-minded that till the time of Hussain Khan Khaweshgi all the Chiefs and Khans of Kasur had remained in the services of Mughal military but it was the Hussain Khan Khaweshgi, the Chief of Kasur who floated his head against the Mughal writ and challenged the royal authoritarianism in the region. He, too, was the great grandson of Great Nazar Bahadar Khaweshgi from his mother side. He went on be continuous defaulter of the revenue. He was fearless and paid no attention to even senior Mughal Officers. He had ousted the Mughal Jagirdars from the region. He was the murid of a blame-worthy named M. Khan Batakzai. It was the years of about 1720-21 when the Nazim of Lahore, Khan Bahadar Abdul Sammad Khan, was assigned and empowered to subjugate the unbridled chief. With about 70,000 swars, Abdul Samad Khan left Lahore and met the Kasuri forces at Chunian, an important and historic town in the region of Kasur. Hussain Khan Khaweshgi had the command of nearly 8,000. He had with him commanders like Mustafa Khan, his nephew Jani Khan, Khawaja Rehmat Ullah and Hafeez Ullah Khan. On the

other side, Abdul Sammad Khan was escorted by Kareem Kulli Khan Bakhshi as his right wing, Arif Khan Cheela and Aaghar Khan. In the beginning of battle, the Kasuris had overwhelmed the royal forces and Kareem Kulli Khan the commander of the right wing of Abdul Sammad Khan was slain which resulted the state of panic amongst the royal forces but Aaghar Khan Succeeded in maintaining order and his soldiers fired unstoppable arrows at the Kasuri Army which had concluded the deaths of the Hussain Khan's elephant's driver and his spiritual teacher M. Khan Batakzai, following the slain of Mustafa Khan, Hussain Khan's commander and nephew. The death toll of the battle was outnumbered of both sides. Hussain Khan was slain down in this fight and Abdul Sammad Khan was given the title of Saif-ul-Daula. Aaghar Khan was also upgraded 500 mansab and was awarded with a sword and an elephant.<sup>23</sup>

During the period of the great Mughals, the people and city of Kasur astronomically progressed and reached the climax of the prosperity and well-off of its inhabitants, solely on account of its people's association with the court of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal rulers got constructed, on Lahore-Multan road, various rest houses, too. Srai Mughal, srai Alamgir, etc, in the regions of Kasur, are the instances of this fact. So, till here, the various evolutionary developments of the settlements in the regions of Kasur district have been accounted. In addition, sundry political and administrative aspects in medieval era of these areas, too, have been discussed, more or less. Now starts another phase of the history of Kasur, the times of destruction and desolation.

### **PHASE THREE (1720-1800)**

After the fight at Chunian (1720-21), the circumstances of the land of Kasur began to be going from bad to worse. The land which reached at its golden period during Mughal dynasty now had to usher in the times of Sikh Pugnacity. Scarcely did it pass any decade when this land had not faced any armed belligerence and combativeness from the Sikh armed groups in this phase.

Jasa Singh Ahluwalia (1718-1783) a celebrated leader of the Ahluwalia Misal and notorious antagonist to the Muslims was a very high profile Sikh plunderer and depredator. He, at times, combated with the rulers of Lahore. In the year of 1747 this Sardar, accompanied by several others ones, assaulted the city of Kasur but he had to split away from the city sooner, owing to be informed about the arrival of Ahmad Shah Durani in Punjab in about January 1747.<sup>24</sup>

So this was the first storm by Sikhs at Kasur which was to experience a series of more charges worse than this one. The second assault at Kasur was a much more earth shattering by virtue of its toll of bloodshed, volumes of plundering and colossal sack of Kasur. Banded together the Bhangi Sardars and Sardar Tara Singh Gheba raided the city of Kasur in 1758.<sup>25</sup> This is the affiliated attack by two noted misals. Here a brief introduction of these two misals (groups) is essential to comprehend the discourse in the next stages.

About the Bhangi Misal, the writer of the "The Punjab Cheifs" says, "Bhama Singh an inhabitant of Kasur may be considered the founder of the powerful Bhangi confederacy. He was however little more than a robber and his followers did not exceed three hundred. He was succeeded by his nephew Hari Singh Son of Bhup Singh, a

zamindar of Patoh near Wadni, who was a man of great ability. He developed a band of robbers into an army and overran a large portion of the Punjab. It was his addiction to bhang (an intoxicating preparation of hemp) that gave the name 'Bhangi' to the Misal. Some indeed say that this name originated with Bhama Singh who was of so arrogant a disposition that he was called by the Sikhs Bala-Bash (High Head). This being a Turkoman title, annoyed Bhama Singh so much that he begged his comrades to change it for some other. Accordingly he was appointed when in attendance at the Darbar Sahib of Amritsar, to pound bhang for the Khalsa, and was himself called Bhangi. The former account is the one commonly believed".

"Hari Singh whose headquarters were at the village of sohal in the Amritsar District seized much of the neighboring country Sialkot, Karial, Mirowal. He ravaged Chiniot and Jhang Sial, and attached Jammu which he rendered tributary and Multan without success. In 1762 he attacked the village of Khawaja Sayed Ka Kot, two miles from Lahore, where Khawaja abad the Afghan Governor, had his arsenal and carried away with him much booty, arms and ammunition."<sup>26</sup>

About the second group, the Daliwali Misal, Syed M. Latif authors that Gulab Singh was the first framer of this missal and Tara Singh Gheba was his successor. He further illustrates that Tara Singh was his original name and Gheba was his Alias or a supplementary name given to him due to his mastery of the art of transporting grains from the hills. Basically he was a goatherd. He also joined some other Sardars in the sack of Sirhind. At times, he enjoyed the command of armed personnel varying from 7,500 to 10,000 numbers.<sup>27</sup> About him the writer of the "The Chiefs of Punjab" states:

“One of Tara Singh’s first exploits was to rob a detachment of Ahmad Shah’s troopers of their horses and arms when crossing the river Beyn, close to his home at Kang. Thus enriched, Tara Singh soon became a leader of importance. He visited Amritsar and allied himself with the Ahluwalias and Singhpurias, who were plundering, wherever plunder was to be found.”<sup>28</sup>

After analyzing the backdrop and activities of these two Sikh misals, one may straightforwardly conclude that only the looting was the objective and mass butchery was the labor of love of these misals. So this was happened with the land of Kasur which saw the bloodbath resulted by the attack of Sikhs, time and again. So in the raid of 1758 the city of Kasur was not only ravaged and plundered but also mass killing was eventuated there. It was nearly midst of the eighteenth century that the Sikhs went on growing in power and conquered more land in Punjab in general and in District of Kasur in particular.

About the escalating growth of the Sikh power in the areas of Punjab in general and in the regions of Kasur in particular manifestations are explicit from the following two paragraphs.

Hira Singh, at the time that the Sikhs grew powerful about the middle of the eighteenth century took possession of the Naka Country lying between Lahore and Gugera, and which has given its name to the family of Hira Singh and to the missal which he commanded. He took Chunian from the Afghanis and joined the Kanhayas and Bhangis in their attacks upon the falling Mughal power.<sup>29</sup>

Hira Singh was the leader of the Nakai missal whose founding fathers belonged to the place of Behrwal, a village town in Kasur District. And it was in the second half of the sixteenth century that the small town of Bahrwal was

settled down by a man belonged to originally, Arora caste, named Bahr. This was the very town Guru Arjun accompanied by some followers visited it and stayed there for some time. So this village town was among those settlements established in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Now, this Township is an important town in the Tehsil Chunian of the Kasur District.

The next Military attack on the Kasur was a shared and confederate invasion by several Sikh misals which had been come to pass in the year of 1763. This event was to later on be placed indispensably in the history of Punjab in general and in the annals of Kasur in particular. To understand the exact situation created in this raid, one should be introduced by the members of that coalition which attacked this historical city.

#### **COMPOSITION OF THE CONFEDERATE SIKH MILITARY**

The united Sikh Army was the grouping of six distinguished Sikh misals and the number of allied forces was categorically conclusive and overwhelming. Hari Singh Bhangi (d.1764) was leading the Bhangi misal in this campaign. He had twenty thousand troops under his command and had been fought with Ahmad Shah Abdali, stripped full-fledged ammunition from the Kot Khawaja, where an astronomical number of arms, weapons and ammunition was stored on order of Khawaja Ubaid, the Afghan ruler of Lahore, in 1762. Moreover his profile encompassed the conquering of Rawalpindi, Malva, and several areas of the Manjha. It was this misal which not only had ravaged Jammu but also rigorously disturbed the Najeeb-ul-Daula of the Jamna.<sup>31</sup>

The second military section was of Ramgarhia which was leading by the renowned Sikh warrior Jasa Singh



Ramgarhia (d.1803) who was a carpenter by profession, and was one of the five sons of Bhagwan Singh Giyani. Three of his brothers, Mala Singh, Tara Singh, and Khushhal Singh, were very eminent fighters of this misal. Their original village town was Sarsing locating in the Lahore District. Through the foundation of this (Ramgarhia) association was established by Khushhal Singh and Nodh Singh in Amritsar yet it was Jasa Singh carpenter who did it consolidated. Control of a lot of areas lying betwixt and between Sutlej and Beas and construction of a garrison at Batala having 30 feet high and 21 feet width walls in that time demonstrate the power of this misal.<sup>32</sup> This Misal could bring in battle field upto eight thousands personnel.<sup>33</sup>

The Third unit was the Kanhaya misal piloted by Jai Singh (d.1789) a resident of a town Kahna near Lahore. Jai Singh used to be always escorted by a large number of pillagers and depredators. So this wing was no back in any way in activities of looting and killing as compared to other blocs.<sup>34</sup>

The fourth detachment of this formidable alliance was under the banner of the Ahluwalia misal guided by the much celebrated by the Sikhs and notorious for the Muslims Jasa Singh Ahluwalia (1718-1783), the past arch rival of Kasur for he had once charged upon Kasur in 1747. So, now he again resolved and joined other misals against Kasur. This wing had been ranked at distinguish status among other such groups. This high profile unit had snatched treasure by the Dewan Lakhpat Rai, the deputy of Nawab Zakria Khan, the Governor of the Lahore. Moreover, Jasa Singh defeated the Lahore forces in a fight in 1745. In 1749, he stood beside Koramil, the dewan of Mir Munno, against the Multan Army where the ruler thereof, Shah Nawaz Khan was cut down. He got various check posts

constructed in Ferozpur and controlled sundry parts of Jullandar Hashiarpur, Ambala, Bheroz and Narayan Garh. The power and influence of this misal was clearly irrefutable and beyond question and this was the very Sikh bloc who enjoyed its political clout from the very outset of the Sikhs influence in Punjab to its declining position after the death of Ranjeet Singh.<sup>35</sup>

Fifthly, the Daliwalia misal was also a component of this multi-bloc alliance. Originally this missal had been predicated by some Gulab Singh but soon after him Tara Singh Gheba (-1807) became its warlord who fortified it more and more. In this alliance Gheba was heading this grouping. At this time, he was commanding his soldiery numbering from 7,500 to 10,000.<sup>36</sup>

The Sixth misal was the Fazalpuria misal heading by Khushhal Singh. At its infancy, Kapoor Singh (d.1753) was the leader of this wing as well as its pioneer who used to head troops ranging twenty five thousands, the most brutish and dangerous ones, as compared to other Sikh warlordisms.<sup>37</sup>

So, the total number of the mutual Sikh armed forces was unquestionably in five digits. And, certainly, it was very seldom that any six Sikh-misals had conducted their combined attack. On the contrary, the attacked army was in no way equivalent to the assailant. The ransackers were too outnumbered to be halted by the defenders. It had been a one-sided game, from the very beginning, without a doubt.

After the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali from Punjab, in 1763, these united armed forces of six misals attacked the age-old city of Kasur, besieging and encircling it from all sides, blocking each and every road and walkway, for one month.<sup>38</sup> Alif Khan, the leader and head of the Kasur, was a poor battle strategist and he demonstrated the

inconsistency in fight tactics. His commanders, defending themselves in their fortified houses and forts in the beginning of the attack, struck their camps and began to charge upon the invaders, resulting the butchery of a lot of their troops including Kamal-ud-Din Khan and Hassan Khan, his deputies. A substantial number of Afghan army began to flee from the battling scenes following by assaulters subsequently concluding the carnage of hundreds of Kasuri Afghans. An outsized portion of raiders entered the city, after one month's besiegement, and went on sacking the houses and ruining the palaces for several days. By and large monumental sites of the city were made to burn down. The magnitudes of the devastation and torching were very high and by virtue of swaging and plundering for days, the course of incinerating and burning up the buildings went on lasting for many days, too.<sup>39</sup>

The volumes of plundering in this sack were of epic proportions. In reality, Kasur had been a very rich and prosperous city for centuries. Many families were well to do and several tribes and clans were well off for generations in this city. There were three major factors behind this prosperity. Firstly, since the establishment of the Mughal dynasty, a considerable part of the inhabitants of this conurbation had been in the military services of the Mughal Empire. And, as they were also at significant mansabs and ranks and were allotted with larger lands and handsome remunerations yet this element was an undeniable reality for their prosperousness. Generations of this faction of the community went on joining the military of the rulers of the day which went on consolidating their financial positions.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, a substantial part of the community had been connected with the enterprise of horse-dealing which was a lucrative business of medieval times for hundreds of years,

participating in the good times of the city.<sup>41</sup> Last but not least was the factor that the commercial and mercantile activities in Kasur had been flourished for a long period. The weaving industry in this city had been developed top to bottom in the middle of eighteenth century and this reality has been undisguisedly revealed by the great anthropologist of the Punjab, Syed Waris Shah, who explains away in poetry the quality and peculiarity of the cloth used to be made in Kasur.<sup>42</sup>

So, these things participated in the pecuniary boom of the township of Kasur. Thus, the magnitudes of the booty and spoils were of astronomical proportions. In past, no such day came when this city had faced such titanic level sack. The First battle the people of Kasur directly faced was at Chunian in 1720-21 which was escaped any plundering and looting. Then, in the year of 1747, when Jasa Singh Ahluwalia had raided, it was a partial attack. And in 1758, too, the Bhangis and Tara Singh Gheba remained successful but partially. Now, only the Daliwalia warlord, Sardar Tara Singh Gheba seized a huge amount of ready money, a colossal quantity of expensive goods besides only gold ornaments of Rupees four lac worth.<sup>43</sup> And the Ramgarhia chief, Sardar Jasa Singh bagged too much gold ornaments, pearls etc assembled on a Palang, a big bed used to sleep in India, to be lifted by four healthy men easily. All the warlords of this allied expedition had been ameliorated financially after this sack.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, in the post-sack days the politico-cum-administrative control of the palaces was divided amongst the Sikh war-chiefs, initially, but was given under the sole charge of the Bhangi misal, ultimately, who after taking heavy tribute, transferred its management to Ghulam

Muhayyuddin Khan, a local lord, but under their supervision.<sup>45</sup>

It was shortly after the sack of the town of Kasur when there developed a quarrel between the Jai Singh Kanhaya and Jasa Singh Ramgarhia, over the money they plundered from Kasur, as a result of which there happened their separation. So, Jai Singh Kanahiya joined Ahluwalia and Bhangi chiefs.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, there also developed tussel in between the Jasa Singh Ramgarhia and Ahluwalia missal.<sup>47</sup>

The fourth Sikh attack on the historic town of Kasur was conducted by Jhanda Singh Bhangi (d.1774) the son of Hari Singh Bhangi the old enemy of the township of Kasur. Under the leadership of Jhanda Singh the confederacy had been much powerful. Due to the joining of various noted warlords like Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, Tara Singh, Sher Singh and Rai Singh Buriawala, Sudh Singh Dodia, Sahib Singh Sialkotia, Nadhan Singh Atu, Gujar Singh and Lehna Singh, two Bhangi Chief, etc the misal, now had demonstrated its potential might. This misal had been accomplished a significant campaign against Multan in 1766, though without any clear winning. The second charge against the Multan was done in the year of 1771 producing the treaty concluded between Jhanda Singh and Multan rulers which held the Pakpattan as a boundary between the Sikh state and the Afghan one. In this battle against Multan Jhanda Singh became much successful. But, in between the two battles against Multan and just a couple of months prior to the second battle, Jhanda Singh with his outnumbered armed forces, inflicted a fresh assault on the masses of Kasur, who had been surviving wounds of previous assault and bearing a nerve racking conditions. The attackers were too much outnumbered to be checked by the attacked

ones. Thus, making tributes updated and afresh, the Bhangi Chief made the supervision on the town renewed.<sup>48</sup> This time not repeating the mistake last time made, the Kasuri Afghans defended themselves remaining in a fort which was besieged by the raiders and after some days, was captured following by a large amount of blood bath of the Afghans in this fort which was to be known as the 'Qila Qatal Garhi', the fort of massive carriage, afterwards. In the end, now, the city was passed under the direct administration of the Bhangi Bloc.<sup>49</sup> During this invasion, again, the town had been looted markedly and the looting was deployed in the campaign of Multan.

It was after about a decade, when after the death of Desa Bhangi (d.1782), the grandson of Hari Singh Bhangi, Gulab Singh Bhangi succeeded to the Chiefship of the misal at a minor age, Muizz-ud-Din Khan, the first in his family, utilizing the window of opportunity on account of underage Bhangi Chief's inability to tackle the misal's issues, supported by a considerable number of Pathans, vigorously ousted the Sikh administrators from the town.<sup>50</sup> But, unfortunately, this self-administration was transient and short lived and no sooner did Gulab Singh Bhangi reached to his adulthood then he mightily stormed the Pathan population, havocked infrastructure, despoiled what was left in past attacks, subjugated the townsmen. Nizam-ud-Din Khan and Qutub-ud-Din Khan, the two sons of the Pathan Chief Muizz ud Din Khan, were quelled and entered the services of Gulab Singh, the conqueror. They remained in the soldiering of Gulab Singh till 1794. But, as a result of Zaman Shah's arrival and his targets against the Sikhs in Punjab, the clutch of Bhangi confederacy began to weaken providing Nizam-ud-Din Khan and Qutub-ud-Din Khan a golden opportunity to undermine the Bhangi control and to

bounce back for re-establishing their own authority. So after availing with the right time they got their urbanites together and expelled the Sikh officials from their land in 1794. Repeated attempts were made by Gulab Singh after this to recover again the control of the township by the newly Pathan chiefs who had been proved invulnerable and unconquerable, now.<sup>51</sup>

Now, Nizam-ud-Din Khan became the chief of the township who with the assistance of his brother, Qutub ud Din Khan, started efforts for the consolidation of the chieftain. He enlisted the towns of Chunian, Khudian, and Shamkot.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, He extended his relationships with the Afghan ruler, Shah Zaman, who was in search of suitable allies in Punjab. In his external relations Nizam-ud-Din preferred and based on the principle of real politik. So, he liked better to be a component of the camarilla formed by several Sikh blocks and other chiefs against the newly strengthened sackarcharkia leader, Ranjeet Singh. Nizam-ud-Din, taking no account of the past of his tribe and disregarding the facts what happened a couple of decades ago with the city he was the leader to, shacked hand with those who had inflicted barbarous destruction upon his city. Jasa Singh Ramgaria, Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amratsar, Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat and Jodh Singh of Wazirabad were the Sikh warlords Nizam-ud-Din Khan made a handshake with. The combined forces of these leaders marched against Ranjeet Singh in the year of 1800 and met him at Bhesin, a place some km distanced in the East of Lahore. Nearly two months passed unfolding various small sorts of fights resulting ultimately dispersion of the united armies, without any harm to Ranjeet Singh. In this stay Gulab Singh Bhangi lost his life due to madly drinking.<sup>53</sup>

In summary, the study finds various facts based evidences which profoundly demonstrate the past progress, prosperity, and prestige experienced by the old city of Kasur earlier but experienced a lot of tragedies in the wake of a series of internally lack of discipline by the Pathan chiefs of the city and externally attacks mounted by the Sikh missals. The city and its regions have had their past roots in the mainstream socio-political conditions of the society as a whole.



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**CONCEPT NOTE**

**POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN**

**TAHIR JAMIL**

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY  
LAHORE

**ABSTRACT**

Having so many natural resources, Pakistan is one of those countries where political instability badly affects the economic development. This paper examines the interaction of national economic growth and political decisions in Pakistan. The main objective of the research is to give a discursive sequential study of political instability in Pakistan how it exaggerated the economic growth. This paper shows that the lack of vision, will and capability of the political leadership in Pakistan resulted in the economic mismanagement. Another thing which would be concluded in this paper is that Military Governments performed better than the civil ones in Pakistan. Paper also conclude that the messed up of commercial cities due to population influx is the result of the nature of the Pakistani federation its tag of war for power with federating units in Pakistan.

## KEY WORD

Pakistan, Development, Political Instability, Military.

Pakistan history reveals strong correlation between the politics and economy. But due to the change in the Governments and politics the relationship between the two never remained on the same speed. In this research, the causes and impact of politics in economy of Pakistan is discussed.

The economic decision-making has been dominated by the politics in the Pakistan. Since the birth, Pakistan experienced different military and civil rules but even during the civil rule military had its influence in the process of decision-making. Pakistan army control 23% assets with two foundations, the first one is Fauji Foundation and the other one is army Welfare trust, which represents two of the largest conglomerates in the economy of Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

This is also the fact that economy of Pakistan is also improved during the Military rule in the country. During the periods of Ayub Khan (1958-1969) and Pervaiz Musharaf (1999-2008), Pakistan's economy remained extraordinary. During the Military rule, fiscal gap was reduced and country's manufacturing, industrial and agricultural sectors performed vigorously.

During the army rule in the country, capital investment, infrastructural development and mega projects were at their peak. Interesting thing is that Military is always welcomed by the people of the Pakistan throughout the history of the country. This is because during the Civil Governments they

probably had seen some remedy from the gross mismanagement of economy, bad governance and unrestrained corruption.

Pakistan army has an instrumental role on the political process and its continuous intervention in the politics of Pakistan made it an evitable institution of the state<sup>2</sup>. These politico-economic trends are due to the Pakistan society's nature. Different classes like elite, middle, lower middle, and socially excluded are divided among themselves on sharp lines. Middle class is change agent according to Zaidi<sup>3</sup>. He is of the opinion that the middle-class revolution underway in Pakistan has taken place side by side with the failure of governance. Middle class attributed this failure to the elite class of Pakistan. In this elite class, the representative of feudal and industrialist clad from the nexus that developed close bond with Pakistan Arm. Middle class in Pakistan does have sense of economic agenda but they could not find way to the corridors of power in Pakistan<sup>4</sup>. These different classes are further confined into the ethnic and biradari levels.

The federating units turned into ethnic-centered entities in Pakistan and due to it the negative effects of ethnic diversity were not eliminated by efficiently operating institutions in the country. Social classes find ethnic diversity a useful tool for promoting their self-interests<sup>5</sup>.

Now have a look on the economic side of the Pakistan. According to a closer analysis, though, reveals that the market and state's role that are necessary elements for the success of market-friendly strategy of development leading to

impartiality and sustainability have in fact been reversed in Pakistan case. Private entrepreneurs' mostly large scales have been protected from the market competition and have been given ample rent-seeking opportunities by government policies in Pakistan. Number of studies has documented the evidence of high rates of effective protection, negative value added at world prices and high domestic resources costs<sup>6</sup>.

There is another observation about Pakistan's economy is that the development was not holistic. Between the developed and underdeveloped areas, there is big gap. Economic managers of the country did not pay attention to the pattern of growth which was necessary for the speed of growth. In the other cases than Pakistan it is proved that on income distribution and reduction of poverty, in the sectorial and regional pattern of developmental strategies, had great influence. If public policies favor labor-intensive activities such as labor-intensive exports, small scale industries, and agriculture and assist the development of neglected, highly –populated regions, poverty faster than otherwise<sup>7</sup>. Institutions responsible for economic growth take balance initiative between urban economy and rural economy that ensures greater equality in wealth, human capital and political power<sup>8</sup>.

It is clearly indicated from close scrutiny of PRSP papers that there is great influence on economic decision-making. In the case of Pakistan as discussed above, the main stakeholders of economy are military, industrialists and feudal who are also parliamentarians, exercise stakes more than the

state itself. Therefore, the political economy provides a framework of analysis to state and civil society. A misdirected Marxist model adopted in certain sectors of economy and state structure during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's period that utterly failed<sup>9</sup>. The line and length of Pakistan's economy is badly affected by the political instability. In this research, the relationship between politics and economy is explained by political economy framework of analysis.

#### **POLITICAL INSTABILITY AT A GLANCE**

Efficient and independent institutions did not facilitate by the military and civil rules in Pakistan. Due to the Indian fear conditions had established the viability of Pakistan military in the state affairs, mainly in foreign policy matter from the inception of the country. By each passing day weakening of the state was happened by the land reforms, sub-nationalization, provincial identities and language controversies. The biggest problem happened in the very next year of the birth of Pakistan, by the death of father of the nation, Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in way from Ziarat to Karachi.

The assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan, finished the doubts in the Minds of Pakistan's people that colonial rule fell into the neo-colonialist class i.e. land-owning class. The political tables in the country was turned by the feudal-military nexus, it was proved by the Khawaja Nizamuddin's dismissal. The problems between the institutions and the state departments delayed the constitution making in the early years of the country. Being a close associate of

Governor General Ghulam Muhammad, General Ayub Khan had good exposure of state affairs. Ayub Khan introduced a number of new experiments that had great impact on the future policies like he shifted the capital from Karachi to Islamabad. By this shift, the focus on politics is shifted from Karachi to Punjab. He also introduced the system of basic democracies. A big boost to economy is happened by his agriculture and industrial reforms, but later on they totally failed. In this period, the political trends had been changed by the patronization of new industrial and land aristocracy. Under mounting pressure Ayub Khan had to hand over the power to another General Yahya Khan who did not comprehend the magnitude of uprising in the East Pakistan and Pakistan broke up just because of denial of democracy and administrative mismanagement.<sup>10</sup>

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto wanted to implement an 'Islamic Socialist' regime that was neither religious nor Socialist. He was hanged by Military in 1979, then came the Zia ul-Haq 11 year's regime (1977-1988) and was ended in a mysterious plane crash. Then for next 11 years, four Governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto (both for two time each) came. Then the Nawaz's second regime was by bloodless Military regime of Pervaiz Musharaf in 1999. Then in the Military supervision a nominally civilian Government was created in the elections of October 2002. Then the president Pervaiz Musharaf brought a number of steps in order to improve the economic conditions of the country.



Eighteen years voter age increased the size of Electoral College, increase number of women seats, new electoral constituencies, and the openings of number of independent news channels, are some of the steps taken by the Pervaiz Musharaf's Government. Then after the general elections of 2008, a democratic Government of PPP under the President ship of Asif Ali Zardari and Yousaf Raza Gillani was elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Then in 2013 first time ever in the history of Pakistan, a democratic Government completed its tenure and was replaced by a democratic Government of third time elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the general elections of 2013.

Due to this political instability, our country was not able to establish a functioning constitution or hold regular elections. In sixty-five years has had three constitutions created in 1956, 1962 and 1973<sup>11</sup>. Dirty role played by number of stakeholders not to strengthen the state but to strengthen them was insinuated by the inconsistencies and misdirected democracy in Pakistan.

#### **IMPACT OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY ON PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY**

The analysis of Pakistan's politics divulges inconsistencies in economic policies and planning. The personal interest, provincial biases and economic beliefs of the leadership was the main reason behind these inconsistencies. The decade of 1950's earmarked with the institutional infrastructure of rapid industrialization. During this decade, the planning board, Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation and Pakistan Industrial

Credit and Investment Corporation was established. State institutions that run the state affairs of a nascent State were established in spite of political instability during 1947-1958.

As the Ayub Khan took over in 1958 and he set the new standards of economic development. He supported the public institutions and reformed the industrial and agricultural sector in Pakistan during regime. Single- Minded focus on economic development was possible only because the large-scale military assistance which started in 1954. Tensions with India slow down the process of development process. For the Ayub Khan, the economic results of the war of 1965 were even more disastrous and resulted in deep distrust. During that very period, the main reasons behind the failure were the perpetuation of the industrial and trade policies of the 1950's and an excessive reliance on the external assistance. But overall, the guided democracy produced healthy income in the first half of 1960's<sup>12</sup>.

In spite of major economic failures, the era of Ayub was very successful period of economic management. Good management include large investments in water and power, generally effective use of public resources, conservative monetary and fiscal policies, focus on family planning, genuine attempt to reduce regional disparity between east and west Pakistan, and forceful efforts in support of green revolution. Foreign assistance used in development projects, monetary and fiscal policies remained conservative and development in East Pakistan was also greatly quickened. However, the

strategies adopted to reduce the regional disparity between East and West Pakistan were unrealistic and proved futile<sup>13</sup>. There was 10% growth rate of manufacturing during 1960's market oriented policies and foreign aid gave huge pace to economy, but on the other side the nature of capitalism practiced assent to the huge development in the country which provided non-competitive and weak economic base for future.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, got power in 1971, he de-concentrate capital and ownership. All major sectors of industry, banking and financial services in Pakistan were nationalized, which result in big disaster. Flow of private investment was stopped, and due to absence of competition industrial growth halted. A small group of bureaucrats run state-owned enterprises which led to the fiscal imbalances, weak monetary policy and domestic debt burden. Bhutto was opposed to the liquidation of feudalism emphasized by Meraj Mohammad Khan, a rebel PPP leader. He opposed it because imperialism is dependent on the capitalism and not feudalism.

Bhutto's apparent support to feudal lord can only be explained in the light of State traditions of favoring rich farmers through consistently increasing allocation of resources for provision of facilities like irrigation and power<sup>14</sup>. Nationalization policy of Bhutto resulted in low production less competitive enterprises, persistent unemployment and meager foreign investment. For the Pakistan's economy Bhutto's policy initiatives and style of government had extremely negative and lasting consequences

and have sternly delayed progress towards balanced economic growth in the country.

Zia Ul-Haq was the next ruler after Bhutto and he hauled the pendulum of economy once again towards market economy. Privatization and deregulation and market determination of key macro prices such as interest rates and the exchange rates, were the key policies introduced by the Zia. He used bureaucracy for economic management and good short term economic management was introduced under the able guidance of Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Climate for the private investment was improved by the flexible exchange rate policy, which also strengthen the export incentives. That high economic growth was partly because of the influence of exogenous economic developments, notably the boom in workers' remittances did not detract from steady and more or less consistent day to day management of economic policies during the 1980's<sup>15</sup>.

With the death of Zia Ul-Haq in August 1988, slow economic growth and foreign exchange crises started once again. The 1990's was proved to be a lost decade for Pakistan as till 1980's Pakistan was among few of the developing countries that had gained an average growth rate of 5%. Growth in per capita income was decreased to little over 1%. Poverty was recurred and 1/3 population came under poverty line of 1 US Dollars daily income. Pakistan was turned into one of the heavily indebted countries and was also among the most corrupt countries of the world in 1996.

Then the instability in politics during 1990's was ended up with Sharif quo by Pervaiz Musharaf in 1999. 9/11 incident brought the international hostilities to Pakistan borders. The agriculture sector, which was the back bone of Pakistan's economy, was affected by unprecedented drought.

Musharaf took these challenges with the reforms anal sector including governance. He also implemented the new local government system which aims to empower the people at the grass root level. He also introduced the civil service, judicial and reforms in the police department. These reforms were not implemented completely due to the strong resistance within the departments.

Removal of chief Justice, steel mill case and right but mishandled case of Lal Masjid gave birth to a movement against the Musharaf. His party's defeat in 2008 elections was not due to economic policies nut due to above mentioned movement.

The next Government was of Pakistan Peoples Party, led coalition government whose economic policies were not so good and country see the most miserable economic and political conditions during the regime. After the success in 2013 elections PML (N) again came in power and their Government is in progress now a day.

## CONCLUSION

In the past years Pakistan seen 25 Governments; including sixteen elected or appointed Prime Ministers, five interim Governments and thirty-three years of Military rule in the country. In our country socialist, economic model and Liberal economic

Models have been experienced, but the Liberal capitalist model survived successfully in Pakistan. History of Pakistan is filled with the different Governments failures. Under state patronage, the parliamentarians by chance, in general aimed to increase their own wealth. There is also not any trend of elections within the parties. The country's future is still under shadow of the corruption, bad governance and misdirected foreign and economic policies.

Political instability and bad management of the national economy appear to be manifestations of a high degree incompetence and inefficiency of the political leadership in the country<sup>16</sup>.

Analyzing political situation of Pakistan, there is no true either left or right in Pakistan. Elites, pressure groups, Army, families, and huge mass of deprived people amalgamated the Pakistani society. The analysis at national and International levels shows that the economic manager of the country could hardly triumph over industrialist and feudal elites in the parliament. There is not any radical change in the system, even in the Military rule. In his early years, Musharaf tried to break the nexus through devolution of power, civil service reforms and police reforms and promotion of independent media. But at the end he was also failed.

The political instability and mismanagement had greatly influenced the economic development in the country. And due to not continuation and stability in the Governments, there was not any continuation in the economic policies.

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- <sup>12</sup> O. Noman, *The Political Economy of Pakistan, 1947-85*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Associate (London: Book Publishers, 1988).
- <sup>13</sup> L. Ziring, *Pakistan in Twentieth Century: A Political History* (Boulder, CO: Boulder Press, 1997).
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- <sup>15</sup> S. R. Khan, *Fifty years of Pakistan's Economy: Traditional Topics and Contemporary Concerns*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

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**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**1857: THE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES RAGES ON**

**BASHARAT HUSSAIN**

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LAHORE

**BOOKS REVIEWED**

1. *1857: War of Independence or Clash of Civilizations (British Public Reactions)* by Salahuddin Malik, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2008.
2. *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity* by Masood Ashraf Raja, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2010.
3. *1857 Kay Ghaddaron Kay Khutoot (ghulami kay khilaf musallah jidojehd ki dastaan)* edited by Syed Ashoor Kazmi, published by Anjuman Taraqi-i-Urdu, (Hind), New Delhi, nd.
4. *Mangal Pandey: Brave Martyr or Accidental Hero* by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, published by Penguin Books India, 2005.

Some happenings become the defining moments of history. The Indian uprising of 1857 was one such happening. It became a defining moment because it replaced the centuries old Mughal rule with the authority of British Crown. There are always stakeholders in such defining moments with vested interests, who try to construct narratives by explaining and interpreting the past in accordance with their interests. Often these narratives generate historical controversies and the histories written about the 1857 uprising are no different.

The four works under review written almost a century and a half after 1857 try to grapple with the controversies associated with that uprising. For example, how much of the land and how many people of the Indian subcontinent were involved in it? Was the uprising planned or spontaneous? Was it the outcome of a native or international conspiracy? Was it just a military or both civil-military rising? Who were the 'culprits' behind the upsurge? What treatment was meted out to them and why?

The uprising that raged for well over a year spanned almost one-sixth of the subcontinent primarily in northern and central India and affected the lives of about one-tenth of the total population. As the history written immediately after the events is mostly penned down by the victors therefore the histories of the 1857 uprising till the beginning of the twentieth century were mostly written by the British who termed the uprising as a 'revolt'; however, by the mid of the twentieth century, after digging the archival sources, the Indian writers began to question the British interpretation by branding it not a 'revolt' but a 'war of independence'. Tauseef Tabassum's book *"Jang-i-Azadi 1857 ka Mujahid Shair- Mir Muhammad Ismail Muneer Shikohabadi"* as is evident from the word 'mujahid' in the title depicts the Muslims as the 'freedom fighters' and the words 'Jang-i-Azadi' suggest that this uprising was neither a 'revolt' nor 'mutiny' or 'rebellion' but a 'war of liberation.'

Salahuddin Malik's *"1857: War of Independence or clash of civilizations- British public reactions"* as is evident from the sub-title explores how the British public perceived, understood and reacted to the happenings in India during the uprising. The worth of this book lies in its reliance on the primary sources of that time; these being the newspapers and magazines published in the major cities of

Britain and is unique in the sense that it analyses the literature produced by the missionaries and the Church about the conflict in 1857, which, as is visible from the title of the book was thought by them to be neither a 'revolt' or a 'war of Indian independence' but a clash between Islamic and Christian civilizations, the echoes of which can also be heard in the present day 'war on terror.' This was the grand theory of the narrative weaved by the British ecclesiastics. By delving into these primary sources, Salahuddin lays bare a number of conspiracy theories upon which this grand theory was built. One such conspiracy theory was that there was a Russian conspiracy to uproot the British power before it fully entrenched itself in India. Another was that there was a 'Brahman' plot. Yet another was that it was the revolutionary Indians who struggled to restore the sagging native authority, however the most popular conspiracy theory that caught the imagination of the British public was that the world of Islam had waged a 'jihad' against the Christian world.

Once the conspiracy theories were floated, the next step was to highlight the ways by which the Indians were instigated to rise against the authority of the British East India Company. There was the talk of the lotus flowers that mysteriously found their ways among the Indian soldiers in the Company's army. Moreover, it was propagated that the unrest in the rural areas was created through the circulation of pancakes. Since the grand conspiracy was about 'Islamic jihad' therefore it was propagated that typical Muslim fighters wearing green turbans and rings with the Quranic verses engraved on them and called 'ghazis' were waging a relentless war with the battle cry of 'The Faith!' 'The Faith!'

A large number of British newspapers sold the idea that the 'revolt' was nothing more than a 'military revolt' as

the civilian population from the north to the south of India had kept aloof whereas the rulers of the princely states stood solidly with the British. In the midst of this journalistic jingoism, a few British papers such as 'The People's Paper' cautioned the readers to be careful against the one-sided news fed by the British government. The Irish nationalists held that the struggle of the Indians was 'sacred', 'holy' and 'glorious' and instructed the Irish youth not to enlist in the British forces that were to fight in the subcontinent, however, such voices were few and far between.

The conspiracy theories aside, the reality was that a large scale war did take place. The question is why? Salahuddin's work takes into account several causes yet focuses on the meddlesome policies of the Company in the Indian life, particularly against the Muslims under the Evangelical pressure that was throttled by the press run by the missionaries and the Church of England. The author traces the roots of this hostility towards the Muslims and their religion in the Crusades, the hostility of the Popes particularly of Pope Urban II who branded the Muslims as 'infidels' as well as in the oriental European scholarship such as the works of William Muir on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the first English translation of the Holy Quran by George Sale in 1734 in which he introduced the Muslims' creed as the religion that "subjugated more millions of mankind than Christianity ever liberated." (p152) The bias against the Muslims became venomous in some Islamophobic British magazines such as 'The New Monthly Magazine' which shrieked that not only "Islamism has raised the standard of revolt in the old capital of India..." but the Muslims had "by misrepresentation and falsehoods, seduced the plain and superstitious Hindoos... the hopes of better days... have caused the pulse of Islamism to vibrate

from Delhi to Tehran and Bokhara and from Constantinople to Cairo, to Algiers and to Morocco.” (p155) This excerpt points finger towards the Muslims as the ‘culprits’ and projects the Hindus as plain and simple people and those of them who fought this war were actually ‘seduced’ by the Muslims. The words ‘pulse of Islamism’ in the excerpt refers to the call of ‘jihad’ that incited the Muslims of south, west and central Asia as well as north Africa and near eastern Europe (Constantinople/Turkey) to overthrow the British authority in India .

While Salahuddin identifies the main cause behind this war in the missionary zeal of the British civil and military officials to Christianize India, Rudrangshu Mukherjee’s book *“Mangal Pandey-brave martyr or accidental hero”* focuses on the ‘cartridges controversy’ that became the immediate cause of the uprising in the Bengal Army of the East India Company. Although the British politician Benjamin Disraeli dismissed the ‘cartridges controversy’ as the cause of the upsurge in 1857 by arguing that “The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of adequate causes” which is true to a great extent, however, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar who was heading the ‘rebel’ Indian camp insisted in a couplet: *“Na Iran ne kiya, na Shah Roos ne, Angraiz ko tabah kiya Kartoos ne”* (what Iran and the Tsar of Russia could not do to the British, was achieved by the cartridge).

The cartridges became an issue because the Muslim and Hindu soldiers thought that the grease used in their making was of cows and pigs fat and it became a controversy because the British historians insisted that it was just a ‘rumor’ and a part of a grand conspiracy to cause

‘rebellion.’ Mukherjee’s work is significant because it is based on an archival research of many years that included the study of the proceedings of the trial of Mangal Pandey. He has established beyond doubt that the ‘rumor’ about the grease was true and in this regard has quoted two authoritative sources such as Governor General Lord Canning who admitted in a letter that the apprehension about the grease proved to be ‘well-founded’ and the Inspector General of Ordnance, Colonel Augustus Abbot, who, too, acknowledged that the grease could “have contained the fat of cows or other animals.”

Mukherjee’s work is groundbreaking in some other respects, as well. History of the war of 1857 has been ‘prostituted’ by both the victors and the vanquished. Not only have the British, the Indian historians have also indulged in myth-making and legend-creation in hagiographical accounts of this war. To create a nationalist discourse, the Indian nationalist historians required a native hero who sacrificed his life in resisting the British colonists and Mangal Pandey seemed a perfect fit in this role so none other than the widely acclaimed Hindu nationalist VD Savarkar, celebrated Mangal Pandey as a ‘shaheed’ and “the first rebel of 1857 who lit the spark” in his oft-quoted book “The Indian War of Independence, 1857.” Mukherjee has punctured this myth with some convincing arguments: one, the uprising started on May 10 and not immediately after Mangal Pandey was hanged on 8 April. Two, the war was started by the Indian soldiers at Meerut which was far away from Barackpore where Mangal Pandey’s 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry was stationed. Third, throughout the uprising, the rebellious soldiers looked for inspiration not towards Mangal Pandey but the last Mughal Emperor, and lastly, throughout the “rebellion,” its nerve-centre remained Delhi

and never Barackpore where Mangal Pandey was hanged. The author concluded his arguments in a startling revelation which stated that on the fateful day of March 29, 1857, when Mangal Pandey defied the British military authority, he was actually 'high' under the influence of the 'bhang' intoxicant, which he admitted in his trial: "I was not aware at the time of what I was doing." The author seals the case by arguing that if Mangal was such a great patriot who hated the British then why was he serving in the British army for seven years with good conduct?

As Mukherjee rightly pointed out that the fate of the uprising was tied with the fate of Delhi and not Barackpore, the third work under review entitled '*1857 Kay Ghaddaron Kay Khutoot--Ghulami Kay Khilaf Musalah Jidojehd Ki Dastaan*' edited by Syed Ashoor Kazmi deals with the crucial struggle between the British and 'rebels' for the control over the capital city of Delhi. This book is exclusive because it credits the British victory in Delhi over their deep and intricate espionage network. Not only had the British planted spies in the office of Mughal army's top General Bakht Khan to remain informed of his war plans but had also compromised several figures of the inner circle of the Emperor to betray the Indian cause such as Zafar's most trusted advisor Mirza Ilhai Baksh, who was also his "samhdi" by being the father-in-law of his son Mirza Fakhro. The other influential 'traitors' included 'Mir Munshi' Molvi Rajab Ali, Hakeem Ahsanullah and Sadar-us-Sadoor Mufti Sadaruddin Azurda, to name a few.

This book mostly comprises of the secret messages (letters) exchanged between these 'traitors' and their British handlers providing vital intelligence that enabled the British strategists to plan their moves and neutralize the efforts of the Mughal Emperor and his generals. It was on

the instructions of the British paymasters that Hakim Ahsanullah destroyed the boat-bridge on the Jumna River so as to cut-off the reinforcements from reaching the Emperor whereas Molvi Rajab Ali, who was a member of the Emperor's Consultative Council and had got himself appointed as the "Darogha" of the ammunition factory, had the same factory blown off that caused five hundred deaths for which he was handsomely rewarded, later on (pp 7-8). The 'treacherous letters' exchanged between the British spooks and the 'Indian traitors' that have been dug out by the editor of the book have been preserved for posterity in the archives of the India Office Library.

After the city capitulated, its inhabitants were meted cruel treatment particularly the Muslims. Salahuddin writes that not only every Muslim quarter was ransacked but the Muslims were banished from the city for six months while the mosques of Delhi were converted into barracks. A more detailed account of what happened in Delhi from May 1857 to July 1858 can be found in Masood Ashraf Raja's book *'Constructing Pakistan- foundational texts and the rise of Muslim national identity (1857-1947).'* The author being a professor of post-colonial literature and theory at the Kent State University in the US is a literary critic and not an historian. An effort is being made in this review to understand the war of 1857 from an inter-disciplinary perspective of history and literature, as well. He has analysed the diary of the notable poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib entitled 'Dastanbuuy: a diary of the Indian revolt of 1857" which despite being a first-hand account has not merited the due attention of the historians for some inexplicable reasons.

There is no denying the fact that Ghalib was as popular as well as influential literary voice of that time.



Unlike his little known contemporary poet Muneer Shikohabadi, who praised the 'rebels' as 'heroes' and castigated the British as 'villains', Ghalib eulogized the colonists as 'great men' embodying 'wisdom' and personifying 'justice' and vilified the 'rebels' as 'faithless' people, who looted and plundered Muslim 'shurafa' and British noblemen with impunity. So, to Ghalib both the Muslim and the British 'privileged' classes were sufferers at the hands of the 'rebels' who were nothing more than the riff raff among the Muslims, whom he condemns for their barbarity and hopes that the British would treat the Muslim 'shurafa' and the 'rebels' in different ways in the post-'Mutiny' period. Ghalib's narrative synchronizes with what the British historians later churned out in the name of history of the 'Mutiny.' The author exposes the moral bankruptcy of the Muslim 'ashrafia' of the time to which Ghalib belonged to (he was not only the poet tutor of Zafar but was also awarded the titles of "Dabir-ul-Mulk," "Najm-ud-daula" and 'Mirza Nosha' by the last Emperor) because in his capacity as the court poet not only did he frequently attend the Mughal court during the upheaval of 1857 but also celebrated the jubilations at the court when the city of Agra fell to the 'rebels'. (p18)

While Ghalib identified himself with the British, Muneer Shikohabadi fought against them. The latter's author Tauseef points out that after winning the war of 1857, the British resorted to a systematic campaign of character assassination of all those who fought against them. Muneer's person is a case in point. He was hunted by the victorious British in 1859 and despite being in public knowledge that he was a 'freedom fighter,' he was degraded by being falsely implicated in the murder of a 'tawaif' Nawab Jan and sentenced for seven years to 'Kala

Pani' (the penal colony at the Andaman Islands). The author adds that the British even did not spare those princely rulers who opposed them and cites the case of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh, who was maligned by the British as an incompetent ruler given to singing, dancing and debauchery whereas in actuality the Nawab was a patron of learning and arts, an author of nearly a hundred books, who took keen interest in governance of his state and personally commanded a bolstered military and was thus looked upon as a potential threat by the British.

While Tauseef has pointed to a systematic British campaign to vitiate the Indian 'heroes' of resistance as 'villains', the editor Syed Ashoor Kazmi has identified several British historians that created the 'British narrative' of the uprising such as T Rice Homes and John Williams Kaye who presented it as merely a revolt of the rebel soldiers whereas others like Cave Brown, Sir Alfred Lyall and William Muir held the Muslims for being solely responsible for this war. As if all this was not enough, in order to provide further legitimacy to their narrative, the British employed the services of Indian historians such as Shams-ul-Ulema Khan Bahadur Munshi Zakaullah whose 'Tarikh Arooj Sultanat-e-Inglishia' vilifies the Muslims and presents the colonial usurpers as the rightful rulers of the Indian subcontinent because, asserts Ashoor Kazmi, most of the raw material of Zakaullah's history was furnished by the British including the references to the then debates in the House of Commons to which no Indian writer could have access at that time. Though, the war for the supremacy in India ended way back in 1857, the battle of narratives rages on.

### **Notes for Authors**

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