

Cultural Impacts of Khudai Khidmatgar

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By and large, considered as a political movement, Khudai Khidmatgar, under the leadership of Abdul Ghafar Khan, initially started as a cultural reformist movement in 1929 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the movement diverted to politics later on. The idea behind the creation of the movement was to fight against the societal problems among Pashtuns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reform their lives and restore their cultural identity. However, the movement later changed its trajectory and was forced to resort to politics.

Most of the existing studies on the movement discuss political dynamics of the movement, but there have also been studies that focus on cultural footprints of Khudai Khidmatgar. This tilt towards political aspect of the movement has created a situation where majority of the people consider the movement solely a political movement and ignore its cultural aspect. Given the strong cultural footprints that the movement have had, it is important to carryout investigation about the cultural impacts of the movement and highlight them for scholarly as well as curiosity purposes.

Qualitative in nature the book mainly relies on primary and secondary resources. Borrowed from Professor Najib, I have relied on the definition of culture as manmade environment for this study. The whole discussion about culture revolves around the above definition. Under this umbrella definition, I have discussed the impacts of the movement on the Pashto prose and poetry, Women, Economy, drama and music, their schooling and education, journalism, and more importantly Pashtun's attitude about power, politics, violence, and their customs and etc.

The book tries to respond to the fundamental questions of whether the movement have had any impact on the Pahtuns' culture, and if yes what were they? How did the movement affect Pashtun way of life, their language, their literature, their attitude towards power, their politics, towards each other, their cultural identity and so on.

Just like studying impacts of every other social movement, studying cultural impacts of Khudai Khidmatgar is also associated with methodological challenges. There is no such yardstick that can measure intentensity of the impact from one side and cover all such impacts from the other side. Since some of the impacts that were triggered by the movement are still felt and seen after 90 years, therefore defining a timeframe that covers the era understudy also poses challenges to the study. Moreover, scope of the study to define limits of the study is another serious methodological problem associated with the study.

In order to overcome some of the stated problems, I relied heavily on anecdotes in the secondary sources. However, the book will help to a greater extent in addressing the methodological intricacies in studying the cultural impacts of Khudai Khidmatgar in future and will serve as a reference for those who are interested in digging the topic further.