

# Anticolonial Discourse in the works of Ghani Khan

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A passionate devotee of freedom and liberty, Abdul Ghani Khan, remained a victim of colonialism and internal colonialism during his life time. Therefore, a sizable section of his works (prose and poetry) reflects anti-colonialism, a protest or struggle against the colonial rulers and their policies during the British Raj. His first book, *The Pathans*, his essays and columns published in the *Monthly Pakhtun*, his speeches in the Parliament of British colonized India and his poetry, have a clear message of struggle against the British colonizers. As an anti-colonialist, he raised his voice and persuaded his people to revolt against the savage policies of the British rulers and get their rights through violence and revolution. Ghani Khan's philosophy of resistance is quite close to Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). His hatred against the savagery of the colonial period reflects his sentiments about the atrocities of the British exploiters. The focus of this research paper is to identify and highlight the anticolonial discourse in the prose and poetry of Ghani Khan.

**Key Words:** Anti-colonial Discourse, British Raj, Prose and Poetry, Ghani Khan.

## Introduction

Ghani Khan is an ardent critic of the social customs and laws and always challenges the flaws of the system, makes a fun of pseudo intellectuals, hollow religious leaders, ignorant and hypocrite politicians and rulers. However, a sizable portion of his works has a vivid message of resistance and revolt against the colonial system. He advocates his people to get unite, topple the British raj and set free themselves from colonial bonds through the use of force and violence. Sahibzada (2001) observes that Ghani Khan is a passionate devotee of freedom and an ardent anti-colonialist and his poetry and prose embody a message of liberty from the British Raj. He has accommodated the themes of anticolonial discourse and the resistance of the Pakthuns against the British rulers. He was born during the colonial period (1914) and experienced the colonial cruelties which hit his educational career and professional talent. The colonial rulers put his father behind the bars and owing to the economic constraints he could not complete his education.

Ghani Khan, as writer and poet has a unique style which he hammered out for his themes and depiction. His creativity touches several literary dimensions and his works can be divided into various phases. He has accommodated his innovative and philosophical themes in the following books:

- *The Pathans* (English, published in 1947)
- *De Panjray Chaghar* (Chirpings of the Cage, 1956)
- *Palwashay* (Beams of Light, Moonbeams, 1960-61)
- *Panoos* (Chandelier) (1978)
- *Kulliyat* (Collected Works) (1985)

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- Khan Sahib (Urdu) (1994)
- Latoon (The Search) (1995)
- Gaday- Waday (Stuff and Nonsense) (2008)
- The Pilgrim of Beauty (English Translation) (2014)
- A Breath of Fresh Air (Compiled by Sahizada Imtiaz)

The study of the works reveals the following themes in his prose and poetry:

- Exploration of human psyche
- The flight of imagination
- Arguments for culture and civilization
- Leadership qualities
- Religious controversy
- Anti-Colonialism
- Human exploitation
- Antagonism to ignorance
- Enmity with Mullaism

Here the main focus is only on the identification of Anticolonial discourse in his poetry and prose.

## Discourse

Discourse is not a grammatical construction rather it always carries an ideology, including sociopolitical and cultural values. Schirffrin et al (2003) identify three main components of the discourse:

- Anything beyond the sentence
- Language in use
- A broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language.

Discourse is a set of meaningful statements about a topic which is conceptually introduced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). He has linked knowledge and power and his logical argument is that powerful people have the ability to exploit and keep suppressed the feeble nations and impose their point of view upon them. Ashcroft et al (2007) while quoting Foucault state that colonial discourse is a bonded area of social knowledge, a system of statement within which the world can be known. Powerful people have the ability to push us to impose their point of view about a reality. Thus discourse has its intrinsic links with language factors, operating through dialogues of the characters and narrators, which do occur in different textual and contextual senses.

## Colonial Discourse

The ulterior motives of the Europeans are shrouded in the colonial discourse. Colonial discourse is, in fact, the social practices and attitudes associated with colonialism. This discourse reflects the strategies, cruelties, jealousies, rivalries, avarice and view point of the colonizers. The basis of the colonial project is that the colonizers are superior and the colonized are inferior. The arrogance of the colonizers creates a gulf

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between them and the native (indigenous) peoples. Some salient features of the colonial discourse are given below:

- The colonizers consider that the culture of their ancestors was extremely civilized and superior.
- They represent native people as savage and uncivilized, inferior and with a primitive culture.
- They think that they set up examples for the colonial people.
- The colonized people are considered 'other' and them.
- The European countries controlled the colonies for economic exploitation.

Bhabha (1994) indicates that the main purpose of colonial discourse is to depict the colonized as inferior and degenerate types on the basis of racial origin. Thus the arrogances of the colonizers create a gap between them and the native (indigenous) peoples. Colonial discourses discuss the relationship between a colonial or imperial power, and the colonized nation.

## Colonialism

The etymology of the term 'colony', according to Verma (2004) is 'colonus' a Latin word which means to cultivate. The colonizers (Europeans) cultivated (settled) themselves in the colonies. The origin of the term colonialism, according to Oxford English Dictionary, is Roman and it has been derived from 'Colonia' which means 'farm' or 'settlement'. The word referred to the Romans who had settled in other lands; however, they had to retain their Roman citizenship as well. In the words of Ashcraft, Gariffiths and Tiffin (2007) the settlers are always the Europeans who moved from their countries of origin to European colonies with the intension of permanent living. The settlers then adopt a policy of colonialism, the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying the defeated nation and exploiting its economic resources. Boehmer (1995) indicates the key points about colonialism:

- The settlement in another territory
- The exploitation of resources and people of that country
- The controlling of the colonized with brutal force and policies.

Said (1994) argues that colonialism is chiefly about political and economic relationships, some of which may or may not continue after a state gains independence. Khrisat (2013) considers colonialism as a practice of domination which involves the subjugation of one nation to another. Thus the main logic behind colonialism is the lust for resources; however, it has far sighted linguistic, cultural and psychological repercussions. Césaire (1955) considers colonialism as the dehumanization of the dominating, colonizing country. Colonization works to de-civilize, brutalize and degrade the colonized. Guven (2013) states that colonialism is a relationship between colonized and their colonizers. Ahsan (2016) observes that colonialism is a strategy for exploitation in which a strong nation extends its rule over the territory of another nation beyond its borders. The subjugated population is then kept in control for exploitation.

Anti-colonial resistance refers to protest against the colonial rulers by the colonized and suppressed nations. Anti-colonial struggle gets its momentum during the twentieth century due to the rise of nationalism and nationalist feelings. The nationalist ideas have very strong impact on the colonies of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Decolonization is understood as an open process which prompted structural transformations of the colonies as well as of the imperial nations after the end of formal colonial rule. As a result of this the scope for anti-colonial movement became wider and stronger. Anti-colonialism denotes opposition to empire and reflects an opposition to formal colonial rule in the British colonized India. This resistance to empire emerged in the colonies and writer rose against the colonial policies of the colonizers through arm and political strategies.

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## Ghani Khan and Anti-colonial Discourse

Ghani Khan has challenged the colonial system through his prose and poetry. The anticolonial discourse speaks itself in a portion of his works. A brief discussion about the anticolonial discourse in his works is given below:

### The Pathans

The Pathans is written in English language, published in 1947 and is dedicated to Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan (Bacha Khan), a great anti-colonialist and reformer. The tone and style of the book indicate that it is addressed to the colonial rulers as in the very introductory chapter, Ghani Khan informs them that the Pathans are living on the most unfortunate side of India which is adjacent to a great power Russia (USSR). He warns that Russia would play a dominant role in the political matters in the coming time. However, owing to the strategic locations they would lock horns with the Pathans before they come to the then British rulers of India.

The last chapter of the book is 'Politics' which tells us about the political struggle of the Pakhtuns against the British Raj. Ghani Khan informs the British rulers that Pakhtuns love freedom and history is witness to it that they never tolerated the foreign aggression. He challenges the policies of the Raj and argues that during the two hundred years rule, the British raj tried to introduce the practice of bribery and corruption in the Pakhtun society. The most vulnerable section among the Pakhtuns, according to Ghani Khan, is the priests, Khans, pseudo religious leaders and intellectuals who supported the colonial policies for the titles and vested interests. However, among the Pakhtuns, there exist great freedom fighters like Bacha Khan. He has discussed in great details the struggle and rise of the Pakhtuns against the colonial rulers. He informs the readers that the first Khudai Khidmatgar and reformer Bacha Khan came forward for the reformation of the Pakhtuns and offered his resistance against the British rulers. He refused to accept a commission in the British army and settled the score with the foreign aggressors who had taken the Pakhtuns into their clutches. He was aware of the talent and strength of his people; however, the local representatives of the rulers could not sense the respect of the human rights. The first violation was the raid of the assistant commissioner at the village of Utmanzai and the arrest of the innocent and respectable people of the village including Behram Khan, (father of Bacha Khan), Bacha Khan and other notables. A heavy fine of sixty-five thousand rupees was imposed upon them and they were treated inhumanly during the custody. However, they decided to accept the challenge of the English rulers. They thought about various strategies to get rid of the cruel rulers and their savage policies.

As a first step, to respond to colonial power, Bacha Khan decided to educate the Pakhtuns. He opened educational institutions and organized an association for reforming the Pakhtuns. The British raj could not tolerate it and he was again arrested and sentenced to three year hard labour. He pleaded to the rulers that establishment of educational institutions and reforming the people was not a crime. But the plea of the rulers was that the education and socialization could unite the Pathans and was asked to give a guarantee that his struggle for education and reforms would not be used against the Government and its interests. The claim of the government was that his preaching for reforms was not a service; it was a rebellion and revolt. The three long years of punishment made the determination of Bacha Khan as strong as steel. His people, friends and relatives warmly welcomed him and the young boys looked at him with admiration and girls sang songs of appreciation. For the Pathans he became a hero, a freedom fighter, an outlaw and a visionary. The British masters could not tolerate all this and decided to remove this tall man at once. The arrest of Bacha Khan was quite easy as he was preacher of non-violence, a reformer and aspirant of education for his people. The British colonizers shut him up in a prison again where he suffered the tortures of the damned-solitary confinement, heavy chains on his hands and feet. He was inhumanly treated by the masters who claimed that they were the civilized people in the world. He faced dirt, filth, lice, hunger, insults, kicks, jeers and sneers in the prison and used to grind his forty pounds of corns daily with the handmill. However, as model prisoner he never complained of the worms in his meals (vegetables) and hardships in the jail. When he

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came out from the clutches he started his first political agitation, a demand for full reforms and freedom for the Pakhtuns. He went from village to village talking and addressing to the Pathans. People used to leave their ploughs in the fields and came to have a look at him and his companions (Kbudai Khidmatgars). Their aim was freedom, their motto was service, preaching, love, peace and kindness. He argued such factors could not be imprisoned in an English prison and love can create more in a second than the atom bombs can destroy in a century.

## Gaday- Waday (Stuff and Nonsense)

This is in fact, a collection of essays and columns which used to be published in Pakhtun, a monthly Journal launched in May 1928 by Great freedom fighter Bacha Khan. Ghani Khan remained a regular contributor from September 1928 to 1947, both in prose and poetry. Ghani Khan's poem Wasiat (The Will), which is considered as an anthem and slogan against colonialism used to be appeared on the title page of the monthly Pakhtoon (Pakhtun).

### وصیت

که خازې شني مې په قبر وي ولاړې  
که غلام مې وم رائي توکړې پرې لارې  
که په خپلو وینو نه یم لمبېدلې  
په ما مې پليتوي د جومات غاړې  
چې قطرې قطرې مې فوخ د دښمن نه کا  
مورې ما پسې په کوم مخ به ته ژاړې  
یا به دا بې ننگه ملک باغ عدن کړم  
یا به کړم د پښتنو کوڅې ويجاړې

In his columns sometimes a segment of a poem has been put whenever relevant with the topic. The first column is without a title. It is a conversation between Raja Abdullah and the narrator. Raja Abdullah informs him about the inhuman attitudes and behaviour he has experienced in the prison and the narrator comments on them in an ironical tone. On one hand, they criticize the savagery and cruelties of the colonial rulers and on the other the differences among the Indian leaders. The weaknesses of the Indian leaders are targeted in a poem at the end. The style, tone and context of the poem reveal that Ghani Khan was disappointed by the then leaders. The poem is translated by Dr Qaisar Abbas in his research article, Poetic discourses in Pakistan. The poem exposes the intellectual level of the hollow politicians and their political unawareness. Some of these politicians remained in contact with the rulers for their vested interests and political survival.

Take a crow's beak,  
a snake's tongue,  
a chicken's brain,  
a dog's throat  
that barks well,  
a mule's stubbornness,  
and deck its pride,  
with mud from the village,

and the city's dunghill,  
 then approach  
 a blind potter,  
 who will prepare,  
 a new leader for you!

د کارغه خوله کړه  
 ژبه د مار کړه  
 د چرکې عقل کړه  
 زړه د سیار کړه  
 مری د سپي کړه  
 چې بڼه غپار که  
 ضد د پکر کړه  
 غرور پرې بار کړه  
 خټه د کلي  
 ډېران د ښار کړه  
 بیا چرته روند  
 کولال یو یار کړه  
 د کارغه خوله کړه  
 ژبه د مار کړه  
 د چرکې عقل کړه  
 زړه د سیار کړه  
 مری د سپي کړه  
 چې بڼه غپار که  
 ضد د پکر کړه  
 غرور پرې بار کړه  
 خټه د کلي  
 ډېران د ښار کړه

بیا چرته روند  
 کولال یو یار کره  
 تاله به نوے  
 لیدر تیار کره

Another column is about Sir Winston Churchill, when he was elected as prime minister of Great Britain. Ghani Khan attacks him in a humorous and ironical manner in his column Chanchanrh (Male Sparrow), a distortion and humiliation of the name Churchill and his policies about the Indian people. This is a dialogue which takes place between a shepherd and the narrator (Lewny Philosophy or Mad philosopher). The shepherded Raja asks the narrator, in an ignorance manner that the English people elected a bird to sit on the throne. Since this is a period of World War II, therefore, he has put his poem, Hau Brigia Hau, in the column, without a title. This is a severe attack on the policy and savagery of the British rule. Ghani khan has criticized the European leaders who were killing the innocent people.

## Kulliyat (Collected Works) (1985) and Latoon (The Search) (1995)

The poems which reflect anti-colonialism are:

- The Will
- Bacha Khan's March on Mardan
- To Gandhi
- Shaheed Dr Khan Saib
- The Beloveds of London
- Mr (Sahib)
- Europe
- It might be a good omen
- Heart Broken
- (The so called) Civilized
- Tamasha
- The Children's Anthem
- Gaday- Waday (Stuff and Nonsense)

Ghani Khan's first poem Wasiat (The Will) appeared in monthly Pukhtoon in December 1928. Marwat (2005) and Sahibzada (2014) have confirmed that Ghani's first poem Wasiat (The Will) used to appear on the title page of the monthly Pakhtoon (Pakhtun).

### Will (Wasiat)

If I were a slave in the grave with a splendid tombstone,  
 Respect it not, spit on it.  
 When I die but not bathed with martyr's blood,  
 None should pollute his tongue by praying for me.  
 O mother! With what face will you wail for me.

If I was not torn to pieces by the British guns?  
 Either I would turn this wretched land of mine into a Garden of Eden  
 Or I would ruin the home and heart of Pakhtun!

This translation is referred by Dr Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat in his research article Abdul Ghani Khan. However, the translation of Sahibzada Imtiaz is quite stylish and logical in his book The Pilgrim of Beauty.

The poem Bacha Khan's March on Mardan, is about the incident of 1931. This March was a protest against the British raj which was led by Bacha Khan in District Mardan. The assembled people were dispersed by the police through a baton-charge in which Bacha Khan was severely wounded and two of his ribs were fractured. In the beginning, as an invocation, Ghani Khan invites the souls of Hazrat Ali, Khushal Khatak, Khalid Bin Walid and Mansoor. Ghani Khan argues that Bacha Khan is not afraid of the gallows and the prison of the British raj and these were qualities which made him a hero of the Pakhtuns.

په مردان مارچ د باچا خان

راشه اے خوشحال بابا

اے خالده اوگوره

پاخه علي مرتضى

دا تماشه اووينه

جنګ له دے منصور روان

توپه او نه توفنګ لري

نه د تورو پړق لري

نه د زغرو شرنګ لري

زور د دښمن نه ويني

داسې لېونې روان

دار او رسن نه وي

دا د مستانو خان

دا د پښتنو ملنګ

خه بادشاهي رنګ روان

جنګ له دے منصور روان

توپه او نه توفنګ لري

سپين مخ د ليلی ويني



دشت پيايان نه ويني  
 زړه ئې د يو ارمانه ډك  
 غم او رامن نه ويني  
 سرې د باتور سترگې ئې  
 مينه رنگا رنگ لري  
 جنك له دے منصور روان  
 توپه او نه توفنك لري  
 تاج ئې د ازغوپه سر  
 مست لكه مجنون روان  
 نوم د پښتنو گتي  
 زوے دې د پښتون روان  
 نر، دا د نرانو خان  
 خه غېرت او ننگ لري  
 جنك له دے منصور روان  
 توپه او نه توفنك لري  
 سر ئې كېښود خاورو كښې  
 مرگ له ئې سينه وركړله  
 د پښتون د سر صدقه ئې  
 خپله وينه وركړله  
 وے هر خه مې د قام دي  
 والله، هر خه چې ملنك لري  
 جنك له دے منصور روان  
 توپه او نه توفنك لري  
 اے د پښتنو پچو  
 دا مېدان مې هېر نشي

سپين سرے د وینو ډک  
 هغه خان مې هېر نشي  
 پروت دے دلته خاورو کښې  
 دا مکان مې هېر نشي  
 پاشی ننک پرې اوکړی  
 خدائیگو ډېر په تاسو ننک لري  
 جنک له دے منصور روان  
 توبه او نه توفنک لري  
 نه د تورو پرق لري  
 نه د زغرو شرنک لري

The poem, Shaheed Dr Khan Saib, is in fact an elegy about his uncle Dr Khan Saib, elder brother of Bacha Khan and the former chief minister of NWFP (Khyber Pakhunkhawa). Ghani Khan has paid a tribute to his struggle against colonialism.

The poems like The Beloveds of London, (The so called) Civilized, Mr (Sahib), Europe, It might be a good omen, Heart Broken, Tamasha, A visit, Non Violence, A Pukhtun without honour, The Children's Anthem, Gaday- Waday (Stuff and Nonsense) are the examples of a critique of the attitudes of the Occidentals and Orientals, their systems, culture and civilizations and, history. Their critical discourse analysis the merits and flaws of their ways of life and every poem has a specific textual and contextual approaches.

## Conclusion

The study of colonial discourse is the study of the resistance, opposition and revolt on the part of the colonized. In 20th century European nationalism was associated with fascism and colonialism. In the third world countries nationalism was considered as anti-colonialism. Europe and America linked nationalism with religious fundamentalism and bigotry. However, the prominent concepts attach with Anti-colonialism are resistance, opposition, protests, mimicry, hybridity and sub-alternity. These themes and their effects are accommodated by Abdul Ghani Khan in his prose and poetry. He argues that colonialism always brings violence and cruelties with it. His struggle indicates that a colonized is always in the control of the colonial chains and thus he finds his freedom in and through violence. His works encourage the subjugated to revolt against the subjugators and advocate the revolutionary ideas and the use of force and violence. The reaction of Ghani Khan is quite close to Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon. The basic philosophy of Fanon is the relationship of colonialism and violence. He argues that colonialism always brings violence and terrorism with it and a colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. His two books, Black Skin, White Masks (1952) and The Wretched of the Earth (1961) inform the readers about the cruelties and savages of colonialism. The main focus of these books is the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the native subject and a message to the colonized people. His works also encourage to revolt against the colonizers and advocate the revolutionary ideas and the use of force and violence. Alabert Memmi has closely observed the attitude and problems and helplessness of the colonized. In his book The Colonizers and the Colonized, he

has classified the settlers or colonizers and colonized into various categories. According to his classification there are two subcategories of the colonizers: Those who accept and those who reject colonialism. On the basis of this sub classification the native colonized can also be divided into further subgroups.

- Those who believe in the nonviolence struggle against the subjugators
- Those who adopt violent struggle for freedom
- Those who are supporting the colonizers and their view point.

In the case of India, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), Bacha Khan (1890-1988) were the leaders who advocated the philosophy of nonviolence, however, the Indian nationalist leaders who adopted a violent struggle are Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945), Bhagat Singh (1907–1931), Mirza Ali Khan (Faqir of Ipi (1897-1960) and Ajab Khan Afridi. In India some of the natives supported the policies of the British rulers and thus became their blue eyed Khans and Nawabs. Ghani Khan severely criticizes such colonized and considers them as traitors of their own community. The main objective of this discussion is the identification of anticolonial feelings and sentiments in the works of Ghani Khan.

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