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Transforming Socialist Peasant Movement in Mansehra (Pakistan) into Ethno-Lingual Movement & Its Implications: From 1980 to Present

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Abstract

Since the dawn of civilization, no human thought has ever laid deep imprints on human societies around the globe as Socialist thought did so. Socialist thought penetrated in every social movement and thus interpreted and reinterpreted to only serve the just cause of the oppressed classes according to the changed objective realities and geographical contexts. Socialist thoughts, not only, spearheaded urban workers' movements, but also reinterpreted to serve to organize the peasant movements in different parts of the world. However, the leading layers from amongst the layers of the oppressed classes, of both urban and rural social movements, have always been trying to intentionally avoid to develop class consciousness to further the movement according to changed objective realities by concealing the inherent contradictions of a particular phase of the social movement. As a result, the movement is transformed, on the basis of false consciousness, into ethno-lingual at micro and national discrepancies at macro levels. Consequently, this false consciousness proves to be detrimental to the just cause of the social movement as the advance layer of the oppressed classes misleads the lower layers towards obtaining immediate economic benefits by converting social movement into a struggle of trade unionism. The peasant movement of District Mansehra is investigated in this context as Socialist thought travelled from Soviet Russia and diffused through Moscow returnees into peasants of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP, henceforth) in late thirties of the twentieth century. As a result, these thought created a class consciousness amongst the peasantry of KP and thus a peaceful peasant movement was organized against the oppression of feudal lords. The socialist ideologues helped diffuse the socialist thought to create stirrings in the oppressed peasantry by constituting peasants' committees and charting out programme and strategies for their emancipation from the forced labor and various other taxes levied by feudal lords. Though, peasant movement started from Ghala Dher in 1938, however, its impacts had stretched to a completely different ethnographic and geographical society of Mansehra in 1939, however, it also possessed similar mode and relations of production. For the first few decades of the twentieth century this movement remained peaceful in Mansehra, however, it had transformed later on into an armed struggle at Siran and Kunhar valleys of Mansehra during late 1970s and 1980s. Though, it was successfully culminated in abolishing some of the exploitative practices, however, the peasants failed to acquire ownership rights of the lands till yet. Post conflict period of the movement saw another interesting transformation wherein some of the peasant leaders of the upper layer co-opted with the feudal class for obtaining immediate economic benefits. As a result, the feudal productive relations had remained intact as peasant leadership failed to transform the movement into succeeding phase of socialism. On contrary, these peasant leaders adopted the parliamentary way by transforming the vertically polarized

peasant society into a horizontal polarized society, wherein, identity of Gujar (the largest peasant group in Mansehra) was constructed, which began posing a threat to other ethnic groups such as Swati and Syed. Consequently, Gujar leadership emerged to enter into power corridors by building alliances with feudal lords for power sharing in Mansehra.

Keeping in view this historical context this paper revolves around such questions as: how socialist ideas diffused amongst the peasantry of Mansehra? How this class based struggle transformed into an ethno-lingual movement? What were the implications of this transformation? And what are the prospects of revival and resurgence of this movement? The answers to these questions may help in developing a theoretical paradigm for understanding such transformations in other agrarian societies. Although the study by and large relies on primary data, yet primary and secondary sources are juxtaposed to develop arguments and draw conclusions.

Keywords

keywords; Peasant Movement, Class struggle, Mansehra, Ethno-lingual identity, KP

Acronyms

KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KKM	Khudai Khidmatgar Movement
FCSP	Frontier Congress Socialist Party
HPC	Hazara Peasant Conference
CM	Chief Minister

1. Introduction

Early twentieth century experienced migrants in hope of bringing revolution home, from all over India including young nationalist revolutionaries of KP. These young Pashtun were mostly aspirants to go to Afghanistan (Ludwig, W, E., 1980) and beyond, to the Bolshevik Russia, during *Hijrat* (migration) movement of 1919-1920s in order to seek support and assistance to emancipate their mother land from the British bondage (Edemic, W, L., 1980). These prominent migrants included: Mian Akbar Shah (1899-1980) of *Badrashi*, Muhammad Akbar Khan (1895-1972) of Hazara, and Gauhar Rehman *Darveshi* (1897-1931) of Hazara and so on and so forth. Consequently, their politico- nationalist revolutionary thought were converted into progressive nationalism and, on their eventual return, they established a “sub-culture centre at the village of Ghalla Dher in KP” in the periphery of “the socialist culture center-Moscow”. They disseminated their progressive nationalist thought amongst the oppressed class of poor peasants of Ghalla Dher in the context of their socio-economic and cultural realities and thus began working for flaring up a peasant movement against the production relations in vogue in 1938 for the achievement of the democratic and political rights of the poor peasants. They were, somehow, able to ideologically and methodologically diffuse the Bolshevik peasant revolution.

The impact of the Russian Bolshevism had been manifold and it served as a source of inspiration to the oppressed nations of the East including young nationalist revolutionaries of KP who lived under the yoke of British Imperialism. Following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, oppressed people of the entire world including young nationalist revolutionaries of KP viewed the Bolshevik Russia as a fountainhead of support for liberating their land from the imperialists on the basis of the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Surjeet, S, H., 2005). Subsequently, the rise of Young Afghans and a nationalist and progressive King Amanullah Khan (r. 1919-1929) in Afghanistan, further stirred up anti-imperialist, nationalist and progressive thought in KP. Notwithstanding external factors, anti-imperialist and nationalist thought had also been prevalent in embryonic form, for instance, anti-feudal political sentiments amongst the youth of KP. Similarly, nationalist literature and anti-Rowlat Act agitations also further deepened and converted these political sentiments into nationalist revolutionary thought (Gregorian, V., 1969).

Hence, ideological journey of Russian Bolshevism diffused to the peripheries (in this case KP), and established a sub-culture centre at the Ghalla Dher of Mardan in KP adding in the emergence of a peasant movement; which was meant to be the replica of the Bolshevik peasant revolution in Russia. Later on, these new thoughts were also disseminated amongst the poor peasants of Mansehra of KP.

Ghalla Dher peasant movement was a unique movement but remained unexplored and un-researched coherently in the context of Russian Bolshevism. The area proved to be a very fertile ground for the Moscow returnees, such as Mian Akbar Shah because of close proximity of Ghala Dher to his village of *Badrash*, Nowshera. He also had many close friends, such as Mian Mukkaram Shah, Bhagat Ram Talwaar, Dr. Waris Khan and Abad Khan, in Ghalla Dher and around, who constantly kept him updating about ground realities of the Ghalla Dher. Meanwhile, the availability of some progressive literature, such as weekly "The Frontier Advocate" (1905-1910), edited by Amir Chand Bhamwal (1886-1965) and some others, also made invaluable contribution towards creating political awakening and shaping public opinion on national issues and intensified feelings against the British *Raaj* for patronizing the ruthless big landowners (Omer, A., ND). This research not only investigates into the facts that these young nationalists were also influenced by the events happening in the Bolshevik Russia and Central Asian region but also dissemination of socialist thought through these nationalists in other regions of KP. The progressive literature, taking inspiration from Russian Bolshevism, also contributed to educate the literate classes against the cruel "eviction of peasants" policy of the British. The pamphlet "*Halat-i-Sarhad*" (The frontier Situation), in 1922, written by Allah Bux Yousfi (1900-1968) in Peshawar and "*Tarjuman-i-Sarhad*" (The Frontier Spokesman) in 1926-1930, by Malik Amir Alam (1901-1979) of Hazara can be cited in this regard (Omer, A., ND).

During third and fourth decades of the twentieth century, a few progressive, anti-imperialist and nationalist movements or political parties, such as *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement (Servants of God's Movement) (KKM, henceforth) in 1929 (Khan, A. G. K., 2004), led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) (Gandhi, R., 2004) and Frontier Congress Socialist Party (an offshoot of the Indian National Congress, formed in 1934, FCSP henceforth) (CSP, 1934), led by Maulana Abdur Rahim Popalzai, Raam Saran Nagina and Mian Akbar Shah, were also witnessed.

The plight of the evicted peasants led to the emergence of movement for the rights of peasants known as Ghalla Dher Peasant Movement in 1938, initiated by peasant leadership of the FCSP and progressive nationalists (Moscow returnees) of the KKM (Popalzai, J. A., 1994). However, the movement did not succeed owing to lack of enough trained political cadre and weaker organizational structure. Though, the peasants of Mansehra and other parts of KP struggled to organize themselves on the lines of Ghalla Dher peasant movement during 1939 and 1948, however, these movements were brutally crushed by the then authorities.

As there is little documented literature on the peasant movements in KP, therefore, descendents of these change agents would be the respondents of this study, whose views would be juxtaposed with the writings and experiences of their forefathers to reconstruct and reinterpret the history and, hence, derive a new synthesis through the lenses of diffusionism.

Theoretical context

To understand transformation of class struggle of the peasants of Mansehra, from its class-based to ethno-lingual movements, it needs a complex theoretical plain. The juxtaposition of diffusionist thought and opportunistic paradigm best explain the genesis and patterns of peasant movements in the regions, where class struggle against oppression of landowning classes is at a very primitive stage, lacks backdrop of socialist ideology and, consequently, it is often manipulated by opportunistic elements existing within the layers of peasantry by means of depicting themselves as messiah. It creates a personality cult by exploiting the anti-oppression sentiments of the poor segments of the society and thus results in upward movement of these opportunistic segments on socio-economic ladder at the cost of the poor and exploited layers of the agrarian society.

The cycle begins within the limits of localized context that restricts exposure of peasants to socialist ideas for igniting hatred against the oppression of landowning classes. The diffusion of these ideas develops into a bond of solidarity amongst the oppressed classes by ignoring ethno-lingual divisions and thus oppressive practices are challenged by all the oppressed. At a very rudimentary stage all the possible tools, such as organizational structure of peasant committees, methods of communications and coordination, are utilized to trigger anti-feudal sentiments. Despite activism of peasant class, their inability to understand the basic principles of socialist ideology and dynamics of relations of productions along with nonexistence of socially entrenched ideological parties hamper to diffuse socialist thought. It thus keeps the movement restricted to anti-oppressive measures alone. In this objective reality, some opportunistic leaders appear on the stage by exploiting the anti-oppressive sentiments of the peasantry.

In agrarian societies, the introduction of electoral politics comprising on universal adult franchise, enables the opportunistic elements to find the way to enter into the corridor of power politics. As a result, these entrants develop new relations, in power structure, together with the dominant elites of the agrarian society. It not only leads to transform the role of opportunist elements in the power structure but it also urges them to redefine their relations with the oppressed class they represent. To carry on with the previous 'ideological' position, despite of mounting pressure to bring qualitative change in the lives of their poor electorate, arises contradiction with their new role and position in the power structure. This contradiction needs a transformation in their support base and thus they try to create a new identity consciousness amongst their followers by replacing vertical class consciousness with a horizontal narrow ethno-lingual identity formation.

Historical background

Like Ghalla Dher peasant movement, similar strategies and tactics were also followed in peasant movement in Mansehra. Ram Saran Nagina reports, in his pamphlet titled: “*Presidential Address of Maulana Abdur Rahim Popalzai at Peasant Conference of District Hazara*”, that district Mansehra was also considered the center of peasants’ exploitation after the Ghalla Dher at the hands of *Khans*, *Nawabs* and *Maliks* who had once been occupants of land before the British system of private landownership. Following establishing the system of private landownership by the British, real occupants of land became landless peasants and suffered miserably at the hands of big landowners’ excesses through various ways including: land tax, water tax and unpaid work (Nagina, R, S., ND). With the help of Maulana Popalzai, the poor peasants of Mansehra managed to send some letters to the CM pertaining to their grievances and sufferings at the hand of their landowners. Their grievances included: extraction of undue fines, forced labour and physical harassment together with their forced eviction from land (Letters to Chief Minister, 1939). It was also reported in interview with Abdul Jalil.

Various letters were written in January 16, 1939 by peasants from different areas around Mansehra such as *Seri*, *Sewsan Gali*, *Dabi Mar*, *Hawagar Mahl*, *Rabora of Agror*, *Gandra*, *Dakhli*, *Munda Ghacha*, *Uggi*, *Konash of Buttal*, *Sangarh*, *Balakot*, *Banda Piran*, *Doga of Ghari Habibullah*, and *Giddar Pur*. For instance, president of peasant committee of Giddar pur Abdur Rauf sent these letters along with their blood soaked thumb-impression application detailing the taxes, levied by Khans, on peasants such as: *Lagan* (land lease rent), *Hubbubat* (forced labour), *Halchori* (unpaid work in fields), *Chontra* (exaction of one fourth from the crop), *Baigar* (unpaid work at house), *Chowkidari* (night watching by peasants) and *Pagri* (payment to Khan of two rupees by bride groom and one rupee by the bride at the occasion of their wedding) (Popalzai, J., 1991).

According to Jalil, it was the time, when Malik Amir Alam Awan (a peasant leader at Hazara) (Sabir, S, M., 1990) together with other membership of the FCSP (Government of Punjab., 1929) began demanding, on behalf of the poor peasants, for making amendment in the subsection of section 59 (a, b and c) in Punjab Tenancy Act 16 of 1887 (Aggarwal, P, O., ND), which dealt with succession right to occupancy (Aggarwal, P, O., ND). They urged the government to make amendment, in the provision of succession under the Tenancy Act, according to the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat Act of 1935) (Popalzai, 1991) and the Muslim Law of Inheritance (Government of KP., 1939). Subsequently, their demand for amendment had turned into an organized peasant movement against their landowners later on. Meanwhile, peasant leadership, such as Maulana Popalzai, Umar Farooq of Malikpura (brother of Haji Faqira Khan, MLA), Abdur Rauf Gandapur, Ahmad Ali Shah and Abdul Aziz of Rawalpindi, visited various villages around Mansehra to hold peasant meetings on January 16, 1939 and persuaded them to get organized into peasant committees (Wali, M., 1995-96). According to Jalil, Maulana also took

oath from peasants on the Holy Quran to remain faithful in taking the movement to its end. These villages included: *Chirya, Khokar, Dara Lalaan, Ghanda Pur* and some others (Personal interview with Jalil). On following day, Maulana Popalzai also visited other villages such as *Dotar Bala, Dota Miana, Gali Nehrwala, Babral* and *Panyali* (Popalzai, 1991).

Umar Farooq reports, in his work “*Eik Ishtraki Aalim-e-Din* (A Socialist Religious Scholar)” that he sent a letter to Maulana Popalzai and invited him to Balakot on February 14, 1939 for the formation of a peasant committee according to the manifesto of INC (Farooq, U., 1970). Hence, Maulana came and succeeded in constituting a peasant committee at Ghari Habibullah on February 24, 1939 (Popalzai, 1991). Malik Amir Awan reports, in his article titled: “*Hazara Kisaan Conference* (Peasant Conference of Hazara)” that they organized a meeting in the honour of Maulana Popalzai at *Parao* of Mansehra for seeking way to resolve issue of peasants at 10:30 am on February 25, 1939. However, this meeting turned into a big rally, which came to be known as first Hazara Peasants Conference (HPC, henceforth) later on (Awan, A. A., 1945), owing to the huge number of participants, mostly peasants, ranging from 2000 to 2500 (Directorate of Archives., ND). It was also reported in interview by Abdul Jalil. Awan further reports, in his another article titled: “*Maulana Popalzai Aur Hazara Kisaan Tehreek* (Maulana Popalzai and Peasant Movement of Hazara)” that this Conference continued for two consecutive days from February 25 to 26 under chairmanship of Maulana Popalzai (Awan, A. A., 1945).

Waving red flag with hammer and sickle on it, Comrade Abdul Aziz proudly announced that this flag represented those oppressed peasants, who had been tortured and oppressed by Khans. He urged peasants and urban workers to become united under this flag to emancipate themselves from oppression of Khans. Also, he encouraged them to form peasant committees in their respective villages and begin working together for the achievement of their objectives (Directorate of Archives, ND). According to Jalil, the Conference aimed at seeking ways and means to put an end to the plight of peasants. Meanwhile, in his address, Malik Amir Alam Awan {(president of reception committee of HPC) president of District Congress Committee, Hazara and Vice-President of Provincial Congress Committee, KP} (Govt. of KP, 1939) asked the Khans to surrender occupancy right to peasants (Personal interview with Jalil). Referring to miserable lives of the peasants, such as *gujars* at Kaghan, Bhogar Mang, Gidarpur, Kounsh and Khanpur, he asked the government to annul the unjust rule of the Khans and accept the charter of peasant demands forthwith (Directorate of Archives, ND). He also asked the government to introduce amendments in Tenancy Act 16 of 1887 for make improvement in the lives of poor peasants. According to Jalil, unlike radical demands of the Russian Bolsheviks, peasant leadership mapped out the charter of peasants’ demands/ programme for obtaining socio-economic rights to a certain extent at the end and advocating that (Personal interview with Jalil):

1. The Peasants shall pay land lease-rent, in cash and not in kind and, that shall not be increased to more than two annas per rupee of the land revenue;
2. Members of the peasant family (male and female) shall inherit land as legacy and government shall not confiscate it in lieu of ownership dues;
3. The *Girdawar* shall resolve issues of crop-sharing without taking any fee;
4. *Baigar* shall not be increased;
5. Peasants shall be declared as occupancy tenant (small landowner);
6. Complete ban on peasants' eviction;
7. Big landowner shall provide payment receipts of land lease-rent and;
8. At every village, peasants shall have a village council together with a school for children of the peasants.

Following address of Amir Alam Awan, they elected Maulana Popalzai as president of HPC, which was endorsed by Faqira Khan and Maulvi Abdul Qayyum of Baffa (Secretary of Municipal committee, Buffa). Abdul Jabbar, a peasant, recited a poem focusing religious youth to wake up and unite under the red flag for accomplishment of their genuine rights. Similarly, Ghulam Rabbani asked them to join hands together on basis of their grievances and create right of inheritance for their mothers, wives and daughters by joining struggle to amend section 59 of the Tenancy Act (Directorate of Archives, ND).

The Peasant leadership held the second sitting of HPC on the same day, under presidency of Maulana Popalzai at *Parao*, Mansehra. A huge number of peasants participated in it, ranging from 2500 to 3000, including 40 KKM peasants. Comrade Ram Saran Nagina read the messages of the prominent personalities, who wished success of the Conference. These included: Sobhash Chandra Bose (President of the INC), Yousaf Mehr Ali (Secretary All India Socialist Party), M.R. Masani (GS of Socialist Party, Bombay), Professor Manga (MLA, Bombay), Comrade Mubarik Saghir and Acharia Narpandar Dev (MLA) (Directorate of Archives, ND).

Subsequently, Musa Khan, a peasant of KKM movement, narrated an Urdu poem, in which he referred the peasant as person sitting on a heap of troubles with scorched hands and unclothed body, and was deprived of every blessing of the world owing to the policies of the government. Moreover, Fazal, a student of Mansehra School, recited a poem, in which he forbade the peasants to serve their oppressors, who were not delighted at their political awakening. Also, he urged the peasants to create unity amongst their ranks to fight together against common enemy for accomplishment of their rights.

Nagina reports that in his presidential address, Maulana Popalzai criticized the British to support the class of big landowners for securing their imperialist interests. Referring to the evolutionary history of private landownership in KP, he claimed that it had been a peasant-based province, who earned their livelihood from land (Nagina, ND). However, the British created a class of big landowners,

who usurped the land and enslaved poor peasants (Directorate of Archives, 1939). Nagina reports that Maulana also urged the government to improve the lot of peasants in the Province (Nagina, ND). Also, he urged peasants to organize peacefully into peasant committees and struggle to get rid of the oppression of big landowners according to programme of INC (Directorate of Archives, ND). Similarly, Faqira Khan emphasized the importance of HPC in awakening consciousness amongst them and urging them to unitedly struggle for overcoming their hardships and obtaining their rights through peaceful means (Directorate of Archives, ND). Later, Mohammad Umar Farooq moved a resolution, which appealed and persuaded all peasants of the districts for establishing peasant committees at their respective villages. It also encouraged them to organize peaceful struggle to improve their economic condition. HPC passed his resolution unanimously later on. Hazara peasant struggle had also been following the principle of non-violence. Also, it incorporated law of inheritance, under Islamic law, according to their socio-cultural context. Following successful sessions of the first day, the peasant leadership held more sessions of HPC on February 26, 1939. According to Jalil, Maulana Popalzai chaired the first session of the second day's Conference. Around 3000 people, including 80 KKM peasants, wearing formal red uniform, together with Abdur Rab Nishtar, MLA, Faqira Khan, and numerous persons from Rawalpindi, attended the Conference. Comrade Nagina recited a poem to stress importance of peasant conference and red flag (Personal Interview with Jalil). Meanwhile, Mehdi Zaman Khan of Khalabatt proposed a resolution in the strong support of amendment in section 59 of Tenancy Act 1939, which was proposed by Abdur Rab Nishtar in the Assembly (Directorate of Archives, ND). According to Jalil, Abdur Rab Nishtar urged proposing of the amendment to secure female inheritance right. Moreover, he requested government to fulfill their promises, which they made during election campaign, to protect rights of peasants. Similarly, Maulvi Mohammad Ishaq (Khatib of Jamia Masjid, Abbottabad) together with Maulana Abdur Rauf supported the proposed amendment in Tenancy Act and declared occupancy tenant as owner of land according to Shariat Law. Mehdi Zaman proposed a resolution to support peasant struggle, which was unanimously passed later on (Directorate of Archives, ND). After prayer break, the Conference started the second session of HPC at 03:00 pm, which lasted up till 04:45 pm and around 2500 people, including 20 KKM peasants, wearing red uniforms, attended second session. Umar Farooq moved a resolution, which referred plight of the peasants due to various kinds of heavy taxes and land lease rent. They passed the resolution unanimously and requested the government to pass a law for implementing the following suggestions (Directorate of Archives, ND):

1. To remove *hububaat* (unpaid work);
2. To limit *lagan* to two annas per rupee and to introduce amendment to forbid confiscation of land in case of not-payment of *lagan*;

3. To inherit the right to tenancy, by their legal heirs after death, of an occupant tenant according to the Shariat and;
4. To give payment receipt of *lagan*.

Nagina reports that at the end the sessions Maulana Popalzai warned the oppressors to stop committing such atrocities against the poor peasants. On the other hand, he also urged the peasants to stop tolerating the oppression of their brutal landowners and organize into peasant committees. He also promised to revisit their villages for providing them all possible support. However, he asked government to either approve the proposed amendment or the peasant leadership itself would adopt the eventual way out (Nagina, ND).

According to Jalil, as a result of peasant conference, peasant leadership formed a combined peasant committee of some villages, such as *Dera*, *Maira Saidan* and *Venkrian*, on March, 1939. It nominated: Mohammad Ismael s/o Abdullah of *Dera* as president, Maulvi Mohammad Younas and Rahim Gul marchant of *Chob* as vice president, Mohammad Younas of *Plan Barri* as secretary, and Maik Samundar Khan of *Plan Barri* as treasurer (Personal interview with Jalil). Moreover, peasant leadership formed another peasant committee of *Maira Swabi* on March 16, 1939. It nominated: Syed Habib Hindi as president, Wali Ahmad as vice president, Mir Afzal as general secretary and Faiz Alam as treasurer.

Meanwhile, the political organ i.e., *Tarjuman-e-Sarai Saleh* of Amir Alam Awan published the news on March 18, 1939, which contained news of holding Second Peasant Conference of district Hazara on December 20-21, 1939 at *Sarai Saleh* of district Hazara. It advised the oppressed peasants of KP to stand united for obtaining their rights (Awan, 1939). According to Jalil, in the meantime peasant leadership succeeded in organizing peasants into more peasant committees, such as a peasant committee at *Sarai Niamat Khan*, on April 02, 1939. It nominated: Malik Gul Aman s/o Mehr Ali of *Manza Tiras* president, Mohammad Sultan s/o Gul Zaman of *Mauza Nilor* and Malik Baz Gul s/o Mehr Ali of *Mauza Bakhtor* as vice presidents, Comrade Ram Lal s/o Devi Basai of *Mauza Tir* as secretary and Ram Chand s/o Devi Das of *Mauza Tir* as treasure. Moreover, they also formed another peasant committee at *Mauza Seri* and *Sal Gal of Agror*. It nominated: Qudratullah s/o Ghaus Ali of *Seri* as president, Khan Zaman s/o Shah of *Sal Gal* as vice president, Hazrat Khan s/o Hayat Khan of *Seri* as secretary, Sikandar Khan s/o Bakhshali of *Seri* as vice secretary and Saifur s/o Awal Khan of *Seri* as treasurer.

Following four months of HPC agitation, government of KKM/INC recommended "the proposed amendment" in Tenancy Act and constituted an Enquiry Committee to patch up relationships between big landowners and poor peasants on July 18, 1939. Members of the Enquiry Committee included: Raja Behadur Ishar Das (MLA of Nawansher, Abbottabad) and Abdul Ghafoor Khan of Charsadda (Parliamentary Secretary to the Hon'ble CM). Though, big landowners of Mansehra boycotted the Committee, however, government of

KKM/INC recognized peasants' demands unilaterally (Directorate of Archives, ND).

According to Jalil, following the refusal of the landowners of recognizing rights of the peasants, Maulana Popalzai organized the second HPC at *Sarai Saleh* on December 20-21, 1939 (Directorate of Archives, ND). Nagina reports that in his presidential address, Maulana Popalzai asked the peasants to carry on struggle under the slogan of non-violence and adjust themselves according to the situation (Nagina, ND). Though, government of KKM/INC asserted to follow the principle of non-violence, however, it resorted to violent ways and means against poor peasants of Ghalla Dher in 1938. Thus, the purpose of KKM/INC's government lost its meaning owing to make compromises with big landowners' class and, hence, served their party interests (Wali, 1995-96). He elucidated that their peasant programme aimed to emancipate peasants by following principles of socialism and of INC (Popalzai, 1991).

Following the second HPC, government of KKM/INC constituted an Agricultural Inquiry Committee, under the supervision of Abdul Ghafoor Khan, personal secretary to KKM/INC government, to investigate the issue of peasants and landowners'. Following thorough investigation, he submitted report of the Committee in favour of peasants (Farooq, 1970). Hence, sincere efforts of Maulana Popalzai and his fellow comrades succeeded in achieving objectives of the peasant struggle. Consequently, KKM/INC's government approved the proposed amendment in the Act at district Hazara under a government gazette notification on December 22, 1939 (Wali, 1995-96). Though, KKM/ INC government took time to accept the genuine demands of the peasants, however, peasant leadership had remained steadfast in its political and non-violent struggle and, hence, it finally succeeded in the achievement of peasants' objectives.

Some members of the Legislative Assembly endorsed the amendment in Punjab Tenancy Act including: Secretary of Anjuman-i-Haidria, Jamaat-i-Fuzala-i-Deoband, Maulana Popalzai, Tarjuman-i-Sarhad of Peshawar, Abdul Ghaffar, Faqir Mohammad, and Mohammad Ashraf Zamindar of Mansehra, Malik Amir Alam Awan, president of District Congress Committee, Hazara. Whereas, some of the members opposed the amendment such as Qazi Mohammad Aslam of Peshawar, Nawabzada Mohammad Akbar Khan, Nawab Hameedullah Khan of Toru, Khan Mohammad Aslam Khan of Mardan, and Abdul Qayum Swati of Mansehra (Govt. of KP, 1939).

In 1939, the peasant movement of Mansehra resulted in special amendment in favour of poor peasants enabling them to live a responsible life and savour the fruits of their labour. In the beginning of 1949, the Mansehra peasant movement had aroused so much awareness amongst the peasants that it forced the then Chief Minister, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, of NWFP to announce the abolishment of feudalism in NWFP (Popalzai, J, A., 2016).

Subsequently, Pakistan Muslim League (PML, henceforth) held a meeting under the supervision of Khalil ur Rehman on April 27, 1949 and unanimously endorsed the abolishment of feudalism in NWFP. Various resolutions were passed in the meeting including (Popalzai, J, A., 2016):

- The meeting lauded the abolishment of feudalism by the government calling it honouring the public sentiments; and
- The meeting demanded that the government should take immediate steps to eradicate the growing restlessness between landlords and peasants.

Also in 1949, the NWFP government passed Tenancy Act and under article 05 of this act the rights of landlords and peasants were already defined including (Popalzai, J, A., 2016):

- After harvesting the crop the first payment would be made towards the land lease rent;
- No peasant would have the right to cultivate and reap the crop without permission of the landlords;
- After paying the land lease rent, the peasant would be the sole possessor of the land thus putting an end to forced eviction;
- The peasant was bound to leave the crop untouched till the proper distribution of the same. When the crop was ready for harvest, the peasant or the landlord was bound to ensure the proper distribution of the crop under the supervision of any revenue officer;
- After the distribution of the crop both the landlord and the peasant were free to take possession of their portion of the crop; and
- Under this act, the forced eviction of peasants without any valid reason was strongly prohibited. The peasant could only be evicted if they failed to pay their dues or cultivate the land.

In 1950, another Tenancy Act was passed and under article 12 of this act provisions included (Popalzai, J, A., 2016):

- The peasant was granted relief from making any undue payments and forced labour;
- According to article 14 of this act, the peasants were granted a relief in payment of land lease rent due to drought or crop failure;
- Also according to article 15, if a peasant was forced to pay full land lease rent despite the relief given through court orders, the landlord was bound not only to return the rent but also pay a fine equal to that of land lease rent;
- According to article 31, if a peasant was under the threat of eviction due to his inability to fulfill the legal requirements but if he agreed to pay a particular amount during a specified period he would not be forced to evict the land;

- If a landlord had valid reason to evict a peasant but the crop was ready for harvest eviction would only take place after distribution of the crop;
- According to article 32, if a peasant, who had been evicted from one portion of a landlord's land but also had also cultivated, was bound to pay a reasonable amount to peasant for the same;
- Under article 36, no peasant would be evicted without any valid reason. If such thing happened the peasant was given the right to file legal petition for the repossession within span of one year; and
- According to article 41 of this act, if a peasant was evicted legally but he had made barren land cultivable due to his efforts he would not only be paid for it but also for his hardships.

The then government of NWFP announced Act of abolishment of feudalism act declaring those estates, except military estates, which had been awarded at any time in the past declared null and void. This act also announced in article 02 including (Popalzai, J, A., 2016):

- No more estate would be awarded to any one hereafter; and
- Sub-section of article 03 declared all rights of holding those estates null and void;

Hence, the peasant movement, which was started against the excesses of landlords proved quite successful, however, it was later on subverted by the PML at the time of independence. The leadership of PML included land reforms in their manifesto to attract the poor peasantry. Due to absence of any strong ideological peasant organization in NWFP, all the peasants started looking at the centrist party such as PML for their support. However, PML being centrist organization could not promise any radical land reforms. At the most they could only provide the peasants some marginal economic benefits.

Genesis, evolution and organizational structure of Kisan Mahaz (Peasant Front) in Mansehra, KP

Notwithstanding tenancy act of 1950 that relieved the peasants from offering unpaid work and forced eviction from land, the relations of production existing between peasants and landlords had not yet changed altogether. Various oppressive practices, such as *Baigar*, *Partola*, *Pagrri* etc., had still remained in vogue. In these material conditions, a known socialist Lala Abdur Rehman of Mansehra used to travel in every nook and corner of Mansehra, during early 1950s and late 1980s, with the purpose to disseminate ideas amongst children of peasants' families against the oppressive practices of the landlords. In 1970-71, he also contested general elections for the seat of National Assembly but could not make any success in this regard. This was the time, when no prominent peasant rebellion could be seen except one at *Jhacha* (Mandaghucha) of Siran Valley in 1971-72 in Mansehra. A peasant, Said Khan,

became vocal against the oppressive practices including *baigar*, *pagri* and *halchori* etc. Eventually, he succeeded to obtain some of the limited goals, however, the impact of his uprising could not make any headway in any other part of Mansehra (Personal interview with Said Khan).

Meanwhile, peasant movement of North Hashtnagar was at its heights and a considerable level of awareness was also felt amongst the peasants of the *Kaghan* Valley about the peasant struggle of North Hashnagar and objective conditions leading to it (MKP, ND). The First peasant, who became aware of North Hashthnagar peasant movement, was a person named Maulvi Gujar Khan, led him to organize the peasant women of the area by providing each of them a knife for self defense. According to Professor Zafar, Afzal Bangash (North Hashtnagar peasant leader) also sent Sher Ali Bacha, Professor Zafar Ali Khan, Professor Anees Alam and his wife to *Kaghan* Valley in the guise of tourists. They developed contacts with local peasants for setting up peasant committees at Kaghan (Personal interview with Professor Zafar).

As a result, different groups of peasants were organized into peasant committees and become ready to get proper training from North Hashtnagar. For instance, the peasant elders of *Kaghan valley* managed to send first group of four peasants and later another group of twenty five peasants to North Hashnagar to get required knowledge and training. It organized and armed *Kaghan* peasants for starting a struggle for their rights. Consequently, it became obligatory for each peasant to carry an axe, failing which made them liable to pay fine to peasant committee (Khamosh, ND). However, no successful armed struggle of Mansehra peasants could be seen at larger canvas of Mansehra during Martial law regime of Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, Lala Abdur Rehman continued his struggle and thus succeeded in getting to elect some of the representatives of the Gujjar ethnic tribe as members of District Council in 1979. These included: Sardar Mohammad Yousaf, Sardar Malik Jan, Mian Wali Rehman, Mohammad Ismael Dandri and Sardar Abdul Aziz (alias Soba member). In 1983, material conditions were cultivated insisting to form Kisan Mahaz (front) under the supervision of Sardar Mohammad Yousaf. Kisan Mahaz was comprised of mostly members from amongst gujjar ethnic community, however, it also included representation from every ethnic nationality, such as Swati, Awan, Quraishi and Mughal (Personal interview with Sher Afzal). The leadership succeeded in setting up a network of peasant committees, ranging from village to district level of Mansehra and followed the principle of democratic centralism (Personal interview with Said Khan). For instance, peasant committee of Mandaghucha comprising Malana Aziz-ur-Rehman as president and Malik Aman alias Malka as general secretary (Personal interview with Badri Zaman).

Moreover, peasant leadership decided to have a class based organization which could be able to work for the interest of poor peasants alone. They opted the way of armed struggle and began their political activities for the rights of poor

peasants. Thus, they started organizing peasants into peasant committees by diffusing idea of peasant struggle in the lines of North Hashtnagar peasant movement. For instance, it began to disobey their feudal lords by denying offering *baigar* and land-lease rent. A press organ, *Risala Kisan Mahaz*, appeared to publish articles depicting plight of the poor peasants at the hands of their landlords of Mansehra. It was also urged to raise class based consciousness amongst different layers of peasantry (Personal interview with Sher Afzal).

Transformation of Peasant struggle into ethno-lingual movement

After a fierce armed struggle against landowning classes in 1990, *Kisan Mahaz* was successful in eliminating *baigar*, peasant eviction and undue fines, however, it could not sustain for a longer span of time. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf emerged as a charismatic peasant leader in 1980s. His charisma helped the peasants belonging to different ethnic groups unite under one umbrella. After winning elections of Provincial legislature first and later National Assembly he divorced his previously held ideological position. His own ethno-lingual group (Gujjer) served as his primary constituency in his electoral victories. Being a new entrant in traditional elite circle he adopted the opportunistic strategy of exploiting the sentiments of the poor peasantry. In 1988, defunct *Kisan Mahaz* leadership contested election of local bodies in alliance with small landowners against big landlords of Mansehra but remained unsuccessful. From 1990 to 2018 he contested and won seven consecutive elections for provincial and national legislatures as candidate of different political parties.

The successes of Sardar Muhammad Yousaf little helped the poor classes in establishing their rights on the lands they tilted. He entered into various alliances with landlords. The peasant movement not only lost its fundamental character of a class based struggle but it also transformed into an ethno-lingual movement. Gujjers being the largest ethno-lingual segment of peasantry in Mansehra developed a new identity consciousness based on ethno-lingual characteristics. During the past few years this deviation from the character of the peasant movement has become part of the discussion among peasant groups belonging to other ethno-lingual groups. This new ethno-lingual formation resulted in the defeat of Yousaf's son in elections for the national legislature in July 2018 General elections, where Awans (another ethnic peasant group) brought their own candidate for the National Assembly seat. Emergence of new competitors from peasant class has most recently shattered the control of Yousaf on the politics of Mansehra.

Discussions and conclusions

An analysis of genesis and evolution of peasant movement in Mansehra leads to following conclusions:

- Peasant uprisings in KP, in general, and Mansehra, in particular, were the outcome of dissemination of socialist thought from Soviet Russia to young nationalists of KP during late 1930s.
- Socialist thought initially inspired a few individual ideologues who worked hard to create class consciousness among the peasantry in Mansehra.
- The untiring efforts of these ideologues finally culminated in the genesis of Peasant Front that challenged the decades old oppressive practices through armed struggle.
- Introduction of universal adult franchise in the general elections of 1970 was an important step that begun a process of transformation in the dynamics of class struggle in Mansehra where peasant leadership started thinking of taking parliamentary road to achieve their goals.
- Formation of Peasant Front, unity and coordination among peasant committees and a successful arm struggle in late 1980s allowed some opportunist educated individuals to take the driving seat of the movement.
- In the post 1980s period slowly and gradually the class character of the movement transformed into an ethno-lingual struggle where peasant leadership started appealing its electoral constituency to vote in the name of ethno-lingual identity i.e. Gujjer.
- This transformation resulted in establishment and consolidation of a new status quo. The peasant leaders entered into traditional elite circle, built alliances with the landlords and deviated from challenging the relations of production in Mansehra.
- The annulment of 1950s Tenancy Act and indifference of peasant leaders towards this annulment may cause a new surge in peasant movement that up till now is very localized and disunited.

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