

Education as Practice of Emancipation: A Critical Study of Educational Approach of Classical Pashto Poet Khushal Khan Khattak

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Abstract

Postmodern discourse on education, learning, and cognitive development of children and adolescents take us back to the fundamental questions of personality ethics, character ethics, skills and knowledge. Before the advent of European colonial system, most of the indigenous oriental communities had a vivid and tangible approach and philosophy of education, which is seldom heard and least discussed in the contemporary discourse. This research paper is going to unpack the educational paradigm of one of the most prominent poets, warrior, strategist, jurist, anthropologist, and nationalist leader known as Khushal Khan Khattak. The ideas, ideals and philosophy of Khushal Khan have been unearthed through various scholastic endeavors including 10 Ph.Ds in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and other parts of the world. This paper takes on the glimpses from the poetry and prose of Khan especially with reference to his endeavors to nurture adolescents and children to cope up with challenges and opportunities. Khushal's 20 traits/habits and 20 skills/arts narrated in his reckoned prose book "*Dasthar-nama*" are analyzed as core determinants of the ideological paradigms of his educational approach.

Keywords: Education, Learning, Khushal Khan Khattak, Character ethics, Leadership.

Introduction:

Learning, education and knowledge have been one of the replete themes in the known human history. The very primitive sources are either religious scripture or the epic poems which

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travelled from generations to generations through an intact oral tradition. Textual tradition to history, philosophy and education is not very old. Evidence of the earliest roots of writing comes from around 3000BC, in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian eras and separately around the same time in China(1). Archaeological endeavors unearthed the reality that ancient civilizations around, the four prominent rivers in Asia and Africa have evidences of formal educational institutions and archives of the knowledge reposition. The Greek city state later on evolved formal institutional setups that later on culminated into city states programs to foster cadres of young soldiers, philosophers, musicians and statesmen(2).

In the South-Asian and Central Asian context the written scripts and the tradition of writing books for educational purposes have been a scarce practice. Although, we have substantial amount of educational stuff, works on sociology, history, and literature that originated from the Persian, Mughal and Uthmani empires, but the languages and cultures which remain in the peripheries of empires with certain turbulent characteristics remain out of the textual tradition. Pashtuns, also known as Pukhtuns and Pathans, Endo-European stock lives around the Pak-Afghan border. An orientalist has described Pashtuns territory in a vivid fashion, "If we imagine the letter V so suspended that its sharp end is up in the north-east and its legs pointing west and south-west... the upper leg of the > would represent the range of Hindu Kush with extremely at Herat, while the lower leg would represent the mountains of the Kunhar River, the Safed Koh, and the Sulaiman range with the extremity at Sibi, at the Indian end of the Bolan Pass (3).

According to 2017 census, Pashtuns constitute 15% to 18% of Pakistan's total population (4) and they also form almost half of the population of contemporary Afghanistan (5).

Khushal Khan Khattak(1613 -1689)is an all-time legendary character in the social, political, educational and religious discourse of Pashtun society. He is one of the most well-known and highly, and untiring warriors, philosopher, scholar of jurisprudence, sociologist, and above all the most well versed and eloquent Pashtun nationalist poet of 17th century Mughal India. His grandfather Akor Khan, had been deputed by Mughal Emperor, Akbar (1556-1605) for the protection of the high way between Khairabad and Nowshera in the region lying on Indian border with Afghanistan. After his death in an encounter with Bolaq, a rival Khattak section, Yahya Khan, his son, was appointed chief of the Khattak tribe. Accordingly, he was assigned the same duty by the Mughals (6).

The Great Khushal, came into the picture by Maj. Raverty in his selection of Afghan Poetry in 1862 and works of Bidlof and Powdin. Allama Iqbal wrote his essay on Khushal with the help of Ravert's selection in 1927 at Hyderabad,...The books written by Khushal Khan were not available in the market, though in 1869, H.W.Belew has printed, *Dewan-e- Khushal*|| from Peshawar and the selection of Khushal's poetry by Dewan Karak Singh from Peshawar (7).

Khushal's personal life was shadowed with three inflicting factors that were passed on to him at the doorstep of his adolescence.1)His ancestors persisted the four generation war with the most influential and powerful Pashtun tribes of Yousafzais that polarized Pashtun hinterlands and created power pockets that perpetuated violent conflicts for almost 150 years. 2) His family had an opportunity and responsibility to serve the Mughal Empire especially for maintaining peace on the transit way through Khyber Pass to Afghanistan and Central Asian territories. 3) As his predecessors, Khushal Khan Khattak had to lead his tribe as chieftain and fight on two fronts, that is to serve the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and his

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successor, Aurangzaib Alamgir on different fronts and to maintain peace on the edge of the most turbulent terrain of Mughal Empire. Khushal Khan started his poetic journey at the teen age, some of his verses show that he took part in battles at the age of 16 and wrote seasoned verses at the age of 20. This made him one of the towering poets of classical Pashto poetry which rendered voluminous impact on the poetic tradition. Khushal Khan is no doubt the most heard and read voice of Pashtun nationalism in 17th century, his poetry and prose have been relevant on the continuum of last for centuries. The lessons he learnt through his untiring and restless life while serving the Mughals and then turning on Mughal empire point out the innate flaws in the social organization of Pashtun tribal society. Allama Iqbal who went through the translated work of Khushal Khan Khttak in 1930s rightly tagged him a *Hakeem (heeler)* who has a holistic intuition to the solutions (remedies) of Afghans.

Although, the Sufi Poet Rahman Baba is highly popular in the social spheres of Pashtuns, most of his themes and concepts are strongly embedded in the styles of Persian poet like Hafiz, and Sadi. This was no doubt Khushal Khan who strove to cultivate a taste of poetry and scholarship in Pashtuns which by all means was an outcome of his perilous life and untiring effort to learn the ways for the emancipation of Afghans. One of the nineteenth century reckoned orientalist; Elphinston in his voluminous account has shed light on this aspect:

“Khushal Khan appears to me a far superior poet to Rahman, and his productions are highly characteristic of himself and his nation. They are more than ordinarily rude, and are often intolerably flat and prosaic; but the often inspired with unconquerable spirit of their author; and glow with the noblest sentiment of liberty and independence” (8).

Khushal Khan influenced the tradition of Pashtu poetry in terms of contents and style; he has produced more than twenty thousand verses (9). Although, Khushal Khan's life spilled over with countless odds. He took part in more than hundred battles against his fellow Pashtun rival tribes and the mighty Mughal Empire. Henry George Raverty in his account on the classical Pashtun poets confirms that Khushal Khan wrote almost 250 books and the French orientalist James Darmesteter pointed out in his account *Chants populaires des Afghans* that Khan has produced almost 50 books (10). Most of his books are re-explored in the earlier part of 20th century. Dr. Raj Wali Shah Khttak pointed out that “Despite all odds, Khan's wit and scholarship rendered the most precious works that have broken the ice of creativity and expression in Pashto language (11). Afghan scholar Zulmai Hewadmal in his account has searched all the known and explored works of Khushal Khan which make it 24 in both prose and poetry. It also names some of the books that are yet to be explored (12).

The Knowledge-Education Nexus: Models and Perspectives

Educational theories unfold various models and notions which encapsulate varied goals and visions. Educational and social theory and philosophy embodied intellectual assumptions and preoccupation with specified rules of truth. Analysis of educational theories unearths a political agenda of education either as a tool of social control or empowerment to emancipate the people. The idea of a critical theory, however, is not only of the internal politics of schooling, but of the social conditions and historical relations in which schooling is positioned (13).

At public level, education is mainly assumed as practice of empowerment of ordinary people that can create a society where people can thrive with peace, justice, economic, cultural and

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social integrity. In the polemic era, city states and empires created monasteries, schools and academies to foster future generations. During the pre-industrial world mostly relied on the informal educational setups. Industrialization which was erupted in the wake of European Colonialism from the last decade of 16th century did not erupt by the formal schooling systems. Existing historical evidence -- mostly from British textile industries -- however, rejects that formal education was important for the Industrial Revolution... Prussia used a unique school enrollment and factory employment database linking 334 counties from pre-industrial 1816 to two industrial phases in 1849 and 1882 (14). The modes of education in Muslims societies have its distinct features. There are diverse ecologies of formal and informal educational societies witnessed since the advent of Islam from 7th century. These systems ranged from schools of Jurisprudence, informal and mentoring based educational repositories, initiated by different Muslims Sufi-saints, scholars, jurists, and monarchs. Besides the models of education for spiritual aspirations, scholastic and philosophical discourses, there has been models led by monarchs to gain social and political control to legitimize and regulate knowledge and meaning in society (15).

In the post-industrial world, when formal schooling became an integral part of modern nation state, the education became a service to be delivered by the state to craft a society stemmed in the states' ideology and socioeconomic and political ideals, different educational approaches and models have evolved. In the modern world, research increasingly emphasizes on human capital in modern economic development. During the 20th century, plenty of educational theories of motivation have thrived. Freud's belief in motivation by the id, unconscious forces, and sexual stages; Jung and Adler's belief that people are motivated mostly by striving for future goals; Horney's theory that people are motivated by the needs arising from anxiety; McDougall's belief that humans are motivated by instincts; Skinner's behaviorist theories that motivation comes from the environment; Hull's behaviorist theory that humans are motivated by drives; and Maslow's theory that people are motivated as needs are fulfilled(16).

Emancipatory knowledge and education as practice of liberation have a distinct position in the critical theory of education. Jürgen Habermas theory of knowledge-constitutive interests culminates in the idea of an emancipatory interest in knowledge. According to Habermas, every human being and hence every child must be given the possibility by the way of analysis, criticism and self-reflection to develop into freely self-determining and rationally acting person (17). Although critical pedagogy points out towards the deconstruction of the realities painted as objective, and it helps the learners to take an objective distance from reality and interpret the reality with critical apparatus and tools that potentially leads the learners towards a different orientation and world views. As Young concludes: It is our constant attempts to free ourselves from the limiting conditions of each epoch of our own self formation that is the motive force of our history of humanity(18).

Khushal Khan's Approach to Learning and Education:

Although several accounts of Khushal Khan are yet to be traced out, but the work that has been brought to the limelight has phenomenal impacts on the educational, political and nationalist discourse in Pashtun societies living in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other parts of the world. His poetic accounts and narrations have all times relevance to the Pashtuns and

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Afghans. We can easily extract the themes and notions of education from his diverse works, but the most important book "Dasthar-nama" he wrote during his imprisonment by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir carried a sole intent to educate the Pashtun young men. The study of Khushal's life and poetry shows that his philosophical and educational thoughts were rooted in learning through books, rigor, calligraphy, translations and structured mentoring. Commentaries and research on his life show that he not only taught his family, clan and ordinary Afghans the ways to fight in the field, but he also induced several of his sons and daughters to learn the skills of calligraphy, music, art, translations, creative writings and poetics. The Poetic and prose style Khushal Khan introduced in Pashto was later on followed by his sons, most importantly like Ashraf Khan Hijri, Abdul Qadir Khan Khattak, Sadar Khan Khattak, Haleema Khattak, Kamgar Khan Khattak, Abid Khan, Bahram Khan Khattak, and many others. His poetic style and themes were gradually transferred to his inheritors and contemporaries till the late 18th century which rendered the most popular poet of Sabk-e-Hindi, Kazim Khan Shaida.

As Spartan used to train their generations through a rigorous state-sponsored educational system, military training and socialization program, known as the Agoge, a system which emphasized duty, discipline and endurance (19). Khushal Khan had a different approach to engage young men in his rows. He was a role model not only for his family but also for all the people of his time and in his contact. He preferred to educate both men and women, while comparing the 17th century Pashutn tribal society with the contemporary traditional societies; it is evident that Khushal Khan earned a distinction of engaging all the factions of society through his poetics and personal contacts. Unlike the Spartans reliance on the slave labors, Pashutn society of his time had to create a family structure that could render both warriors, peasants, crafts men, scholars, mystics, musicians, calligraphers, scholars and the most importantly women with specific skills and knowledge of medicines, housekeeping, resource management, and child rearing. Although, it puts the woman at the margins, but all his educational philosophy was an outcome of the coercive policies and consistent imposed wars on the land of Afghans. In his poetry, Khushal directly addresses the ordinary Pashtuns to take responsibility of changing the coercive political and social conditions. He takes on both the inherent social structure that embedded in the cousin rivalries, subjugation to the orthodox and irrational customs, norms, and value system, and also problematizes the political situation that has conditioned Pashtuns to be ruled, humiliated and excluded from the power structure and rule on their land and resources. Through his verses, Khushal strives to educate his fellow Pashtuns to know, learn, write, reflect, analyze, plan and act in right direction and at the right times.

Some of his verses carried the lessons of different wars waged against the Mughal Empire which could not bear fruit due to lack of strategy, training, organization and war tools. Although he pins down the values, traits, skills and wisdom through all his poetry and prose which tends to inculcate 20 traits and 20 skills elaborated in his phenomenal account. We will take some glimpses of his poetry then will focus on the prose book "Dasthar-nama".

Action-reflection-planning and consistent review of the path to reach the goal is one of the cross cutting themes in the poetry and prose of Khushal Khan. Based on his scholarship, he opined a strong position on denial to Fatalism and inaction. The ideal man "Nangialai" he has described in his poetics and prose (Dasthar-nama)is deemed to prove the essence of his

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human agency. Although, he does not deny the fate but assure the new generation that giving up hope and taking refuge into inaction or living with a passive hope immerses collective and individuals consciousness.

Khpal tad'beer da lassa ma prezda Khushalla
Ka Karoo'na hawala di pa taq'deer

Translation:

Even if the fate decides the ends of our deeds
Don't give up your path to the goals, O' Khushal

Countering oppression and culture of silence are the two core determinants of Khushal's poetry and his teachings in *Dasthar-nama*. Like Brazilian educationist Paulo Friere describes that, "education is the cultural action for freedom, an act of knowing and not the act of memorization" (20). Friere also opined that, education is the practice of liberation because it frees the educator from slavery of silence". Khushal's approach to teach and educate is stemmed in truth, bravery, righteousness, action, dedication to reality and taking responsibility. Khushal's emphasis on critical thinking is pervasive in all his verses and the prose works.

Che da bal thar la'sa wa'ra'ghlai da ball shoo
Mard pa khpa'l la'ri da khpa'l fi'kar za'mam (21)

Translation:

A man must always owe the reins of his thoughts
Otherwise, it could be in the hands of nobodies.

Although Khushal was amidst several internal and external hostilities, and he had more than 62 sons and 31 daughters, yet he concluded that increasing number of men and offspring does make the difference, if you educate a single person with all possible skills and knowledge, that is far better than having a herd of thousands of sons.

Yao la'yaq zoya, tar za'roo zoyo sha dai
Der ba sa ka sok chi na vi dil'pazeer (22)

Translation:

There is no need to increase scores of ill-mannered men
A competent son is far better than thousands.

As Stephen R Covey opined that the concept of successes has shifted from character ethics to personality ethics especially after the Second World War. But Khushal puts character ethics of humility, courage, truth, generosity, love, passion and hard work as the core determinants of education. Khushal educates ordinary men and women to prove their human agency and dignity (*sharaf*) and demonstrate their ability to work for the collective good of society.

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Mard Ha'gha Che Hi'math-nak Ba'raka't nak we
Da Aa'lam'a sa'ra khwa'x pa zeesth o zwak we

Makh ey makh ,qawl ey qawl ehd ey ehd
Na darogh, na ey farib, na thash tapak
Laz Wayal, Der eykwai pa Khamoshai ki
Da Ghunchy Ghwandi Khula pora, Sina chaak
Che Khabari d pasthai da bulandai shi
Pa loi laka asman pa pasthai Khak
Pa tamkin ki laka sarwa , papasthai ki
Par har lori zangy zngor'ey la'ka tak
Laka gul shuguftha roy pa taza bagh ki
Hamisha da xo blbulu pry bulghak (23)
Translation:

A man is but the only one who is courageous and blissful
Who shows his concerns and lives with people in odds and pleasures
A man ought to remain steadfast and keep his words
He cannot contempt with lies, cheating and mere show of his character.
Like a flower bud with sealed mouth and unsealed breast
An ideal man speaks less and does more in silence
When it comes to the chats on high and low status
The man's height touches horizon and yet act with modest like soil
He is tall like palm tree rooted in his mud,
Yet his modesty is like grapes plant which spread branches all around
Like flower in a blossoming garden of roses
He entertains the nightingales of all good stocks
This *ghazal* of Khushal Khan consolidates his vision of educating the ideal man,
"Nan'gia'lai". An individual who crafts his world with his ability and competence. Khushal
teaches to remain steadfast, righteous and yet courageous. In order to reach vantage position,
he has to take risks, and keep his struggle in all odds. One of his most quoted verse
summarizes this notion.

Ka Assm'aan di da zma'ri pa Khu'la ki war'ki
Da mzari pa khu'la ki ma prex'da hi'mat (24)
Even don't give up your struggle

If fate entrust you in the jaws of tiger
Khsuhal intertwines goals with vision. He uses the metaphor of "eagle" is consistent in his
poetry. Eagle is famous for its high flight and an instinct of farsightedness and providence. He
himself had a vision to create his world and did never strive to enlarge his statue through
standing on other's shoulders. In his deewan he narrates:

Laka baz pa loi loi xkar zama nazar dai
Na chi garzi , gongat nissi, bad Khwrak yam (25)

Translation:

My sight always hunts the great hunts, like eagle

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I don't get away with insects like a crow does

Khushal emphasizes on shifting the oppressing objective realities. His poetry consists of all the themes that educate young persons to search-research and understand their conditions and positions. His philosophy of learning and education is best reflected in his account "Dasthar-Nama" which is written for the sole purpose of educating young generations and particularly the leaders who envision leading the people.

Dasthar-nama: An Educational Paradigm

"Dasthar Nama" is one of Khushal Khan's land-marking accounts to Pashto prose, is mainly written for future generations. The study of his life and struggle shows that Khushal Khan's worldview took a radical shift in the wake of his forced detention and solitary imprisonment in Gwoliar, a central Indian city of Madiya Pardesh. After the death of the Mughal emperor Shahjahan in 1666, Aurangzaib Alamgir (1618-1707) appointed governor of Kabul created a binary opposition to Khsuhal Khan, which resulted in Khushal's detention for four years.

As narrated by Khushal Khan in the preface of Dasthar-nama, it was solely aimed to foster and educate generations of leaders to come. Like eleventh century Persian classic account "Qabus-nama", mirror of Princes written by Keikavus, the Ziyarid ruler of parts of Tabaristan, and was dedicated to his son Gilanshah. Quite contrary, Dasthar-nama is dedicated to the ordinary Pashtun man who has to craft his social and political goals through consistent struggle with and within people to change the imposed coercion and oppression.

While comparing Qabus-nama and Machiavelli's "The Prince", with Khushal Khan's Dasthar-nama, it will be interesting to note that the former two books primarily focused "the art of war" to strengthen and sustain the rule of hires of a dynasty and empire. It is more or less an approach to create a "leader from without" While Khushal Khan has inside-out approach towards nurturing of new cadres of leaders that can rule through their wisdom, knowledge, skills and above all the contents of their character. Purdal Khan Khattak, in his preface on Dasthar-nama compares "Qabus-nama" and "The Prince" with Khushal's "Dasthar-nama" and concludes that, "the former two accounts mainly focus on how to strengthen monarchies while Khushal Khan has focused on cultivating traits, skills and knowledge in the ordinary Pashtuns and leading figure heads of Pashtun tribes" (26).

Dasthar-nama was written by Khsuhal Khan during his years of solitary imprisonment. It is interesting to note that he wrote the book without having access to secondary sources that he has mentioned in the book. *Dasthar* literally means "turban" which in Pashtun's tradition is a symbol of individual's honor, modesty, pride and egalitarianism. In its essence and context, the book tends to teach cadres of motivated youth who are ready to step in the arenas of social service and political struggle for bringing autonomy, pride and self-reliance. As German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche painted an ideal status of a superman, who justifies the dignity and distinction of human race on the earth. Similarly, Khushal Khan came up with the character of "Ideal Pashtun" narrated in his prose and poetry "*Nangialai*". Khushal's ideal man contain both the virtues of righteousness, bravery, autonomy, gallantry, and self-respect but it also counts necessary skills which are described in Dasthar-nama with elaboration. The book starts with an introduction and significance of "Dasthar" specifically its essence in the context of the holy Quran and Islamic traditions. The core theme of the book

Dasthar-nama comprises of 20 traits – virtues and 20 skills-arts for an ideal person entitled to "Dasthar". Khsuhal Khan has elaborated all the skills and traits which build the

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individuality of a person. In the preface, Khan unpacks the theme with one of his famous verses:

Che dasthar thari hazar di
Da dasthar sari pa Shmar di (27)

Translation:

There are thousands who tie *dasthar* (turban)
But, the persons worth *dasthar* are few (28).

It is interesting to note that Khushal's ideal man is a person who earns entitlement through his personal capabilities rather getting it through inheritance (Khattak, 1991,8). Dasthar-nama starts with the theme "Understanding thyself" which constructs his narrative on the very famous Ahadith of the prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H), "He who knows himself, knows Allah".(29)

He stems his educational philosophy from individual's journey of exploring the "self" to the "world". It pins down the connection between learning the 'word' to the "world". This theme is connected to an individual endeavors to seeking "Knowledge", learning and mastering the skills of writing and calligraphy, cultivating ones poetic taste and creative expression in poetry. His account further focuses the essence of cultivating aesthetic sense through painting, music and arts. A person with passion and endurance can lead the people with all his skills, values and knowledge that are rooted in a firm belief in the religion. In skills domain, Khushal gives importance to self-defense, planning and the skills that were highly important in the battle-field and ambushes. It includes archery, riding, hunting, swimming, playing chess, etc.

Dasthar-nama's second part mainly covers character ethics, traits and habits for a politician and leader who can lead; he proposes a value system which contains contemplation, consultation, righteousness, modesty, ethics, courtesy, forgiveness, justice and equity, taking risks, management and training, hope.

Conclusion:

Khushal Khan Khattak's philosophy and approach to learning and education in the 17th century has a great relevance even in our contemporary social, political and cultural contexts. He stems his principal of education in character ethics rather than personality ethics. He takes on learning as a spontaneous process of exploring and knowing oneself that further stretches to knowing and experiencing life as whole. He does not limit learning, education and intuition to the lineage or inheritance but flatly describes that all human possess equal cognitive capabilities of creation, growth, and finding the ways to become a person of high moral and professional caliber. Khushal's approach to learning and education has contents of both formal and informal education. As mentor, he nurtured iconic poets, translators, warriors and statesmen. Interestingly, he also engaged his daughters in the scholastic projects particularly for translation of Arabic scripts into Pashto that proves him as successful mentor, teacher and educationist in various fields of scholarship, gallantry, leadership and character ethics.

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