

ROSHANIYYA MOVEMENT IN TRIBAL AREAS: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Roshaniyya Movement is named after Pir Roshan or Rokhan, a title given to Bayazid Ansari. He belonged to Kaniguram in South Waziristan. He had started his religious movement (which later on turned into a political one) from his native land. He was able to gather a large following in today's tribal areas of Pakistan, including South Waziristan, Dawar (North Waziristan) and Tirah (Khyber Agency) etc. The people of tribal areas devotedly extended their support to Bayazid Ansari. This paper is an attempt to highlight the evolution of Roshaniyya Movement and activities of Bayazid Ansari in these areas.

Key words

Roshaniyya Movement, Tribal Areas, Bayazid Ansari, Pir-i-Kamil, Tauheed, Pir Roshan or Rokhan.

Ancestry

Before coming to the issue under focus, here some light is being shed on Bayazid Ansari's family background. Researchers have different opinions about the genealogy of Bayazid Ansari. According to some he belonged to the tribe of Barki¹ (Urmur). While other say that he was from the family of Hazrat Ayub Ansari, who provided the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) with shelter when he migrated from Makkah to Madina.² Maulana Abdul Qudoos, opines that Urmur and Barki are one and the same people who once lived near Ghazni.³ They rendered great services to Mahmood Ghaznavi, who according to their wish, got settled a sizeable number of Barkis in Kaniguram.⁴ Some two hundred years after the migration of Barkis from Ghazni to Kaniguram, Shaikh Ibrahim Danishmand, the grandfather of Bayazid came from Iraq to India and stayed with Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zakariya Multani. Shaikh Zakariya requested Shaikh

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Ibrahim to go to Kohistan (Kaniguram), lead the people to the right path and teach them matters concerning the true religion.⁵ This lineage of Bayazid Ansari has neither been denied by the Urmars nor by the Mahsuds among whom the Ansaris live even today.⁶ This indicates towards a strong possibility of Bayazid belonging to the family of Hazrat Ayub Ansari.

Birth and Childhood

Some families of the Ansaris were settled in Jalandhar (India). Shaikh Muhammad, the grandfather of Bayazid Ansari, went to Jalandhar to see his brother Shaikh Abi Bakr. Shaikh Muhammad requested the hand of Abi Bakr's daughter for his son. Shaikh Abi Bakr accepted the proposal on the condition that his son would permanently live in Jalandhar after marriage.⁷ After marriage a daughter was born to them. Unfortunately Shaikh Muhammad's son died soon after. Abdullah, another son of Shaikh Muhammad, went to Jalandhar and married Bibi Amina, his brother's widow. In the result of that union Bayazid Ansari was born in 1525 a year before when Zahir-ud-Din Babar overthrew Ibrahim Lodhi.⁸ Abdullah already had another wife, a son and a sizeable property in Kaniguram. He, therefore, returned to Kaniguram leaving behind his wife and forty days old Bayazid.⁹

After the defeat of 1526, Pakhtuns suffered a lot at the hands of the Mughals.¹⁰ Shaikh Khudadad, brother of Abdullah, lived in Bhera (Khushab). The attacks of Mughals forced Khudadad to leave Bhera and he went to Jalandhar, where he resided with the family of Abdullah. But unfortunately Jalandhar too became the target of Mughal attacks, therefore, Khudadad along with Bibi Amina and infant Bayazid went to Bihar, where Pakhtuns had still some political power. As Bihar too became volatile, Shaikh Khudadad sought special permission from Mughals of making a journey to Kaniguram, on the assurance that Khudadad's family would not be hostile to the Mughals.¹¹ Khudadad went to Kaniguram and handed over Bibi Amina and Bayazid to Abdullah.

As Abdullah had another wife and a son, it became difficult for Bibi Amina to cope with the situation. Besides Bibi Amina did not like Kaniguram for living and wanted to go back to Jalandhar when the political situation got a bit better, Bibi Amina left her husband and went to Jalandhar,¹² leaving behind her son Bayazid at the disposal of his step mother. Mir Wali Khan Mahsud remarks that Bayazid's step mother Fatima hated him. Her grudge and hatred grew further when she found that Bayazid was more intelligent than her son,¹³ Yaqub. The writer of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* claims that even his father Abdullah did not pay any attention to Bayazid.¹⁴

These were the circumstances in which Bayazid Ansari grew up. He would have certainly been affected by the ill treatment of his near and dear ones, which could have affected his personality.

Education

Abdullah, Bayazid's father, was a famous religious scholar. He had many pupils among whom one Painda was very brilliant and enjoyed the confidence of his teacher.¹⁵ Abdullah assigned the duty of educating his sons to Painda. Bayazid was an intelligent young boy who was interested in learning but his step mother would create hurdles in the way of his education.¹⁶

As Bayazid grew up, he realized that gaining knowledge in that adverse atmosphere was difficult.¹⁷ He thus sought his father's permission for performing Haj and attaining proper education. Nevertheless Abdullah refused on the ground that Bayazid was not financially strong enough to perform Haj and in respect of education his father was of the view that Bayazid should first get the primary education locally and afterwards he could pursue further education elsewhere.¹⁸ Bayazid Ansari wanted to gain knowledge according to his own desire and did not want to follow the instruction of his father in this connection.¹⁹ Not obeying his father and choosing a distinct direction for himself indicates towards the fact that Bayazid in coming times, would opt for his own path.

This tug of war between Bayazid and his father damaged a lot the passion of Bayazid for attaining knowledge and he, therefore, could not get proper education.²⁰ Mir Wali Khan Mahsud, on the contrary, holds the view that Bayazid Ansari had acquired sufficient religious knowledge from his father and Mullah Painda.²¹ Akhund Darvaiza, otherwise a strong opponent of Bayazid, praises Bayazid's intelligence and says that "in spite of his wrong beliefs, Bayazid was a sharp minded person having some level of intelligence".²²

His Marriage

Bayazid asked his father to give him his share in property so that he could start an independent life. Abdullah, agreed, gave him his share in property. He, after making a house for himself, married Bibi Shamsu, daughter of his uncle Shaikh Hassan.

The Evaluation of Bayazid's Religious Thoughts

Bayazid Ansari, right from his childhood, was in search of "Truth". He would often ask questions like "The heavens and earth are here; but where is God?"²³ Once Bayazid asked his uncle Khudadad: "O my uncle! everything i.e. the earth, the heaven, the night, the day, the mountains and the trees in the universe have an independent existence; then who is Allah? and where is He? His uncle replied: Allah exists; He is omnipresent; He is the Director."²⁴ This way of

thinking shows that Bayazid was not an ordinary child rather he even in a tender age thought of some serious matters like the creator and the universe.

Bayazid Ansari had heard from some of the *Mashaikh* (Saintly guides) the saying that perceiving the "Truth" is possible through the guidance to a "*Pir-i-Kamil*"²⁵ (perfect spiritual guide). He, therefore, started search for a Pir-i-Kamil but as he was fond of new ways in Sufism he found no guide of his standard except Shaikh Ismail, the son of his uncle Khudadad.²⁶ Abdullah, Bayazid's father, did not want his son to become the disciple of Shaikh Ismail who, according to Abdullah, had less knowledge than him²⁷ and his (Bayazid) so doing would reduce the influence of Abdullah, which could automatically lessen his prestige among the public.²⁸ Abdullah decided to send Bayazid to the descendants of Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zakariya in Multan,²⁹ but Bayazid refused on the basis that the stereo type mysticism had no charm for him.³⁰

His Getting Into *I'tikaf* (Seclusion)

Although Bayazid Ansari did not become a disciple of Shaikh Ismail but he followed his path in mysticism. Bayazid began to eat less, sleepless, avoiding mixing with people, and remember Allah all the time.³¹ He thought that his spiritual development was taking place and his inner-self was purging of impurities with the passage of time.³² Bayazid gave himself the title of *Miskin*.³³ During this interval of twelve years Bayazid found himself in various modes, e.g. "ecstasy knowing that all things praise Allah; seeing that majority of people are suffering from hypocrisy and hidden infidelity, holding fast to wrong taqlid (imitation) and unlawful customs and traditions".³⁴

His Journey to Qandahar

Bayazid Ansari, on the request of wife, went to Qandahar for business and most importantly in search of Pir-i-Kamil,³⁵ but he could not find one. Meantime Mughal officers captured the caravan and took from them five portions (5/6) of their belongings while leaving to them only one-sixth (1/6th).³⁶ Bayazid registered his complaint with Bairam Khan (Mughal Governor of Qandahar) but to no avail, which demoralized Bayazid.³⁷ It is said that this incident made Bayazid anti Mughal. It was after this incident that Bayazid had the divine inspiration suggesting to him to seclude himself at home for a period of five consecutive years, during which he should remember Allah and create nearness with him.³⁸

Bayazid Ansari, on his return from Qandahar built a special compartment in his house for himself. He indulged himself in preaching Allah. He disciplined himself, checked his desires and wishes and eliminated love for temporal things. After an year and a half Bayazid heard a Divine Voice "O Bayazid! if a sincere seeker comes to you and seeks sincerely the path which you have adopted, inform him of the fact that many lamps are illuminated from one lamp and its light is

increased".³⁹ After this, Bayazid claimed himself to be Pir-i-Kamil (perfect spiritual guide) and started calling people to his path (his way of Sufism).

His Invitation to *Tauheed* and understanding of the Reality / Truth

Bayazid Ansari started to call the people to Tauheed (The unity of Allah), and to understand "The Truth". He pressed upon the people to show indifference to temporal things and invited them to the perception of Allah⁴⁰ (Ma'arifat). Some people accepted Bayazid's call and became his disciples. Some *Ulama* including Abdullah (Bayazid's father) and Maulana Zakariya etc opposed Bayazid because a few of his beliefs. Maulana Zakariya accused Bayazid of claiming himself a perfect spiritual guide and being divinely inspired.⁴¹ According to Maulana Zakariya, Bayazid considered people to be hypocrites and charged them with hidden polytheism.⁴² Bayazid also claimed to have been blessed with the vision of God.⁴³ These type of thoughts and beliefs of Bayazid Ansari turned a few learned people against him. One such person was Shaikh Awria of Sangtui,⁴⁴ who himself was a spiritual guide. Shaikh Awria, after meeting Bayazid charged him with creating disruption among the public by declaring Muslims as disbelievers.⁴⁵

His Nickname - Pir Roshan

In spite of the opposition of the above mentioned persons, Bayazid was becoming popular among the masses. He had gathered followers around him, who considered Bayazid as Pir-i-Kamil, whose inner self was illuminated. Bayazid Ansari is also known by the name of Pir Roshan or Rokhan, which means the enlightened guide. It is said that Bayazid in a dream saw a holy man saying to people that they should not call Bayazid by his name but by the name of Pir Roshan.⁴⁶ His followers also had a divine hint that they should call him *Pir Rokhan*⁴⁷ (the enlightened guide). Afterwards Bayazid Ansari's religio-political movement was known as the *Roshaniyya* Movement.

Thoughts and Beliefs of *Roshaniyya* Movement

- The followers of *Roshaniyya* Movement believed in *Wahdat-ul-Wajud*.⁴⁸
- Bayazid Ansari Claimed himself a Pir-i-Kamil (perfect spiritual guide) and being divinely inspired.
- According to him the true Shaikh guides the disciples by stages to the final destination of union with God. These stages are *Shariat*, *Tariqat*, *Haqiqat*, *Ma'arifat*, *Qurbat*, *Waslat*, *Wahdat* and *Sukunat*.⁴⁹
- *Roshaniyyas* stressed upon *Zikr-i-Khafi*⁵⁰ (secret remembrance of God).
- They believed in transmigration of souls.

Objectives of *Roshaniyya* Movement

- *Roshaniyya* was a religious Movement initiated for the reformation of Pakhtuns.⁵¹
- *Roshaniyyas* wanted to oust Mughals from Pakhtun majority areas.⁵²

His Migration to the Region of Dawar

Bayazid Ansari created differences with his father and left Kaniguram for Dawar (North Waziristan). In Dawar, Muhammad Kamal, his cousin and disciple, welcomed him. Dawar proved a fortunate place for Bayazid, where people began pouring in, taking oath of his allegiance and his sphere of influence expanded day by day.⁵³ Bayazid was given a hint in a dream to go to Sarban (Peshawar) for preaching. He on his way to Peshawar, made followers in Bangash tribe as well. He then spent some time in Tirah (Khyber Agency).

Before the arrival of Bayazid Ansari in Tirah, its inhabitants were involved in a struggle against the Mughals,⁵⁴ because some time ago the government of Kabul had put to death a few innocent Orakzai tribesmen. This cruelty of Mughals sent a wave of discontent among the other tribes including Afridis, Bangash and Tirahi. These people took a sigh of relief at the arrival of Bayazid.⁵⁵ People from far and near thronged to listen to Bayazid Ansari's sermons and got benefitted from him.

Bayazid in Peshawar

Bayazid left Tirah for Peshawar, where he stayed with Malik Shani, a Khan of Khalil tribe. His presence in Peshawar yielded fruits for him and his popularity spread to other tribes and areas including Mohmand (Mohmand Agency), Daudzais, Gigyanis, Yousufzais (Swat, Buner, Swabi and Mardan) and Safis⁵⁶ (Mohmand Agency).

Mir Wali Khan Mahsud is of the opinion that "when the pseudo gnostics in these tribes saw that their disciples were deserting them were taking oath of Bayazid allegiance, they were jealous of him and planned to trap him.⁵⁷ They came to Malik Habib, another Khan of Khalil tribe, and said to him: "A strange man has appeared in our country. He misleads people, turns our disciples against us, attracts them to himself, claims that he is a *Mahdi* and it is not impossible that he will unsheathe his sword against his opponents if he is not checked right now".⁵⁸

Malik Habib approached to Janas Khan, the Mughal Governor of Peshawar, and offered a sum of Rs.12000, for eliminating Bayazid Ansari. But Janas Khan turned down his offer. Habib then went to Kabul and bribed the

Minister of Mirza Hakim (Akbar's brother and Governor of Kabul), Mirza, afterwards, called Bayazid to Kabul.

Bayazid and Mughals

When Bayazid arrived at Kabul, Mirza Hakim received him with great respect. He then sent him to his prominent jurist, Qadi Khan for discussion and debate. Qadi Khan said to him: "O Shaykh! it is said that you have claimed that you are a Mahdi". Bayazid replied: "I do not claim that I am a Mahdi; I rather say that I am guide, directing people towards *tauheed* and understanding of the Being of Allah; but my ill-wishers have changed "Hadi" into "Mahdi" and "Wali" into "Nabi".⁵⁹ then Qadi Khan asked him: It is said that you claim divine revelation". Bayazid replied: "I do not claim divine revelation: I rather say I receive inspiration".⁶⁰ After the discussion Qadi Khan took Bayazid to Mirza Hakim and said to him that all the allegations levelled against Bayazid were incorrect and that he was a good person.

Bayazid arrived at Peshawar but realized soon that further stay here was difficult for him due to his opposition by certain influential people. He, therefore, left for Hashtnagar (Charsadda) and stayed with Muhammadzai tribe. They welcomed Bayazid and many of them took oath of his allegiance as well. It was in Hashtnagar that Bayazid decided to propagate his call for *Tauheed*. He, through his Khalifas, sent his message to influential personalities like Jalal-ud-Din Akbar and Syed Ali Shah of Tarmez, popularly known as Pir Baba. It is said that Akbar accepted Bayazid as his Pir⁶¹ (guide) on the other hand Pir Baba not only rejected his call but held a few debates with him on different religious issues.

War between Bayazid and Mughals

The relations between Bayazid Ansari and Mughals remained cordial as far as his religious thoughts were concerned but the situation aggravated due to an incident. A caravan returning from India to Kabul, halted at a village peopled by Bayazid's followers. The residents of the village noticed some un-Islamic practices of the Caravan. Therefore they stormed at the Caravan. The villagers plundered the property of the caravans, which brought upon them the wrath of the authorities in Kabul.⁶² From there onwards started a tussle between *Roshaniyyas* and Mughals which continued till 17th century.

The incident was reported to Mirza Hakim, who ordered an immediate action against the followers of Bayazid. He sent his cavalry of 500 men to punish the culprits. Mughals soldiers not only killed men but took women and children as prisoners of war. Bayazid made a request to Mirza Hakim for the release of the captives but instead of releasing the innocent people Mirza Hakim issued orders

for the arrest of Bayazid.⁶³ When he came to know, he fled to Yusufzai area and stayed near Kalpani.⁶⁴

Musum Khan, the then Governor of Peshawar, pursued Bayazid to Yusufzai and besieged him at the foot of a hill. There took place a battle between *Roshaniyyas* and Mughals in which the former emerged victorious.

Bayazid after defeating Mughals, went to Tirah. According to Akhund Darwaiza, he started dacoities in Tirah.⁶⁵ He, along with his followers, would loot caravans passing through Tirah. The raids of Bayazid on caravans was a constant source of trouble for Mughals, who at any cost wanted to keep the route secured between Kabul and India.

Mohsin Khan, the Mughal Governor of Kabul, took action and came to Tirah. After a toughly contested battle Mohsin Khan was able to defeat the *Roshaniyyas*. Bayazid escaped from Tirah and once again sought the shelter of Yousufzais. He stayed in Yousufzai for some time where he died in 1572.

Conclusion

Roshaniyya Movement of Bayazid Ansari had taken birth in Kaniguram (South Waziristan). The people of today's tribal areas of Pakistan vehemently participated in the aforementioned Movement. Although the religious beliefs of Bayazid were controversial but still Pakhtuns in general and the people of tribal areas in specific accepted his call. Tribes like Orakzais, Afridis, Mohmands and Safis joined hands with Bayazid and stood by him in every thick and thin.

In the beginning *Roshaniyya* was purely a religious and reformative Movement and it had nothing to do with politics. Even Jala-ud-Din Akbar and Mirza Hakim showed respect for Bayazid and his religious thoughts. But later on the situation changed suddenly and *Roshaniyya* Movement turned into a political struggle. As mentioned earlier the tussle between Mughals and *Roshaniyyas* started when Bayazid's followers attacked the caravans frequently moving between Kabul and India and posed a threat to Mughal authority. One cannot hold the Mughals responsible for the above mentioned tussle because as rulers it was their responsibility to provide protection to the caravans. But still it was a courageous act on the part of Bayazid and his followers to challenge the authority of Mughals and defeating them on a several occasions.

After the death of Bayazid, his sons and grand-sons led the *Roshaniyya* Movement and the tussle carried on till 17th century. The Movement ended in the initial years of Shah Jahan's reign but only after infusing political awaking in Pakhtuns and showing them how to fight for their rights.

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