

**SHAH INAYAT SHAHEED:  
A CAREER REVOLUTIONARY OF JHOK-SINDH**

*Inam Ali Kubar*

**ABSTRACT**

*Since centuries monopolistic patterns of landownership prevail in Sindh, which guarantee unequal distribution of agriculture produce securing lion's share of the produce for those who own land and resources rendering the tillers high and dry. However, in the first quarter of eighteenth century, this peripheral class led by sufi saint Shah Inayat Shaheed under the manifesto Jeko Kheray so Khaey (the tiller has the right to the produce) had established Jhok communes to foil the exploitative manipulations. The local power elites in connivance with some religious mentors conspired against the commune trying to frustrate the struggle for rights. Though movement was overwhelmed but it still reverberates in pockets of Sindh time and again. This paper attempts to highlight the peasants' struggle in Sindh led by Shah Inayat and explores its impact on the social fabric as evidenced from the primary and secondary sources.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The decline Mughal Empire had started in the last days of Emperor Aurangzeb when he was entangled in the Deccan battles for subjugating Marhattas. With his death in 1707, the war of succession started among the successors and the writ of the Emperor gradually evaporated in the far flung regions of the empire. Under these circumstances, Sindh, a tributary province, was mired in countless depredations ranging from natural calamities to repeated foreign invasions, frequent change of governors in Thatta and internal disunity. In this backdrop, the local inhabitants of Sindh were deprived of any semblance of human rights and reduced to penury. The religious scholars and feudal lords ruling the roost were in a nefarious combine to perpetuate their hold over this lower stratum of society. Given the agriculture being mainstay, the most exploited class was the

peasants. There were no rules for controlling the occupational activities of the landlord vis-à-vis the allocation of share of the agriculture yield, in other words might was prevalently right. The peasant of Sindh was living a life of abject Bedouins and had lost any hope of change. The circumstances were ripe for advent of a commune to strive and revolutionize the wretched conditions of the marginalized section.

A catchy slogan of *Jeko Kheray so Khaey* (the tiller has the right to the produce) by Shah Inayat at this point in time channelized their expectations. His popularity peaked when he distributed his family's land and land granted by the Mughal rulers to this dragah in Miranpur among landless peasants without seeking any compensation or share in the yield. He formed a self-supporting society of his disciples who were peasants called *fakirs* based on social and economic equality, in which every member contributed a portion of his income to the common pool. Here he launched the programme of social reform. With his brand of social justice, he declared first that land belonged to God, and that its produce belonged to the tiller. Subsequently, the poor and maltreated peasants came in droves to work on Shah Inayat's lines, and the population of Jhok increased manifold.

#### METHODOLOGY

Primary as well as secondary sources have been referred. In this regard the first-hand data on the incidence of Jhok by Mir Ali Sher Quani written just 44 years after the event, especially *Maqalatal Shuar'a* and *Tuhfatul Kiram*, provide rudimentary information on the martyrdom of Shah Inayat. From the secondary sources, Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi's series of articles on the life of Shah Inayat published in various issues of *Naeen Zindagi* give an idea of sources about this revolutionary. Also Sufi Hazoor Bakhsh (2007) has given outlines on Sufi Shah Inayat but it does not meet the requirements of academic research. In order to collect additional facts and fiction about this legendary figure, the author frequently visited the shrine and the relevant places where the information was gathered on the various aspects of the life of Shah Inayat from his disciples as a matter of oral history.

### EARLY LIFE

Shah Inayat was born to Makhdoom Fazlullah in 1065 A. H/1655 A.D at Jhok near Nasirya. His ancestors had come from Baghdad and settled at Uchch. One of them, Sadhu Langah migrated from Uchch and settled at Nasirya in the Pargana Bathoro, east of Hyderabad (now in district Thatta) (Bakhsh, 2007: 30). He was man of learning and piety. The family tradition of learning and piety was continued by his descendants. This place was called Miranpur after Miran Mahdi Sayyed Muhammad of Jaunpur. Allama U.M.Daudpota (1957:3) has observed that the authentic information regarding the early life of Shah Inayat is missing. So far, he got an early education from his father Makhdoom Fazlullah. Also, Shah Ghulam Muhammad who later became his disciple had instructed Shah Inayat in worldly affairs in Delhi.

### SPIRITUAL WANDERINGS

Shah Inayat travelled around in India in search of a spiritual guide. He found one in Bijapur near Hyderabad Deccan in Shah Abdul Malik Qadiri, who died in Bijapur in 1111/1699. Shah Abdul Malik was saint of Qadiriyya order pioneered by Abdul Qadir Shah Jilani of Baghdad. After a vigorous meditation of one year in the Deccan and perceiving maturity in his learning, he took leave from his *murshid* (spiritual guide) (Quani: 1957). Before his departure, Shah Abdul Malik offered him four items (Daupota, 1957:4): *tasbeeh* (rosary), *musala* (prayer mat), *karaa* (toilet pot), and *talwar* (sword). Shah Inayat chose the sword, to which his *murshid* asked : ‘o *fakir* : what price will you pay for this gift?’ He replied: ‘The price is my head.’ (*Ibid.*).

سر در قدم یار فدا شد چه بجا شد  
این بارگران بود، ادا شد چه بجا شد

However, his stay in Deccan coincides with the Aurangzeb Alamgir’s invasion on Deccan with an ulterior motive of subjugating the rebels and expanding the empire. Shah Inayat had manifestly witnessed the casualties and cruelties inflicted on the fellow Muslims by the Muslim army. This episode left deep imprint on his life (Rashdi, 1981:355).

### START OF THE CAREER

Back in Sindh, he stayed in Thatta along with the disciples who had accompanied him on his return journey from India. Of them, his former teacher-turned-disciple Shah Ghulam Muhammad of Delhi was so impressed by him that he publicly prostrated before him, whereupon orthodox theologians of Thatta took objection and declared Shah Inayat and his friends heretics (Quani, 2004: 344). On this, Shah Inayat advised Shah Ghulam Muhammad to return to Delhi and Shah Inayat himself moved to Jhok, where he possessed land granted free of tax to his ancestors by the Mughal Emperor (*Ibid.*). Here, he formed a self-supporting society of peasants functioning on the principle of social and economic equality and every member was obliged to pay voluntarily in the common kitty (Rashdi, 1981:356). Thereupon he mobilized the society vigorously for social reformation. In his manifesto land belonged to God, and its produce belonged to the tiller thus *Jeko Kheray so Khaey* (the tiller has the right to the produce). At the start of his movement, he started doling out his own agricultural land among the landless peasants without seeking any compensation or shares in the yield and thus initiated a revolutionary step in the stagnant society. The peasants thronged his camp to work on Shah Inayat's mission, and the landlords felt threatened.

### FIRST ATTACK

As his followings grew in number and strength, the so-called spiritual healers and religious scholars in collusion with the local Zamindars sharpened propaganda machine against this sufi saint. From his staunch influential opponents, Sayyid Abdul Wasiu of Bullri complained to Nawab Lutf Ali Khan, governor of Thatta. Nawab in the spirit of conciliation did not intervene and asked the complainant to settle the matter on his own by fair or foul means (Quani, 2004:344). Eventually, Sayyid Abdul Wasiu of Bullri, Noor Muhammad Palijo and Hamal Jat—all powerful landlords, attacked Jhok with their mercenaries and killed a number of the followers of Shah Inayat in c. 1715 (Daudpota, 1957:5). Perturbed by this design, the fakirs of Jhok complained to the Emperor Farrukh Ser (1124 A.H/1712 A.D– 1131A.H/1719 A.D) in Delhi.

The Emperor ordered the usurpers to give land as compensation to the families of martyrs (Quani, 1957). This benevolent decision though brought temporary respite to the commune of Jhok, but incurred wrath of the local elites of Thatta.

### CONSPIRACY

When Nawab lutf Ali Khan was replaced with Nawab Azam Khan as the new Mughal Governor of Thatta in 1128/1716, the same league of conspirators started convincing the new governor that Shah Inayat was planning to rebel against the Mughal Empire. On their insistence, Nawab Azam Khan ultimately directed Shah Inayat to pay tribute money to the Mughal Empire (Quani, 2004:344). As expected when Shah Inayat refused, he raided Jhok. Notwithstanding heavy assault on the headquarters of the movement, the schemers were not content with the grave losses sustained by the fakirs. Soon, a plot was hatched by the local power brokers close to the court of Delhi in connivance with the local religious scholars labeling the fakirs as infidels and a message was sent to the Mughal King, Farrukh Ser, alleging that Shah Inayat was planning a revolt against him (Quani, 1957). So much so that the royal poets were hired to compose couplets blaspheming the struggle for rights of peasants in Jhok. Of them, the most notorious Atta Thattawi wrote:

چگو نہ سند بستا باز سکھه سون  
'عنادي' گرميان جھوک ربتا

Atta Thattawi compared Shah Inayat with Shivaji, the Hindu Maratha rebel and thus branded the commune of Jhok an ominous threat to the Mughal Empire (See Rashdi, 1981: 344).

### SIEGE OF JHOK

Being well connected in Mughal Court, the conspirators were able to influence the King to order for crackdown on Jhok. It is worth mentioning here that it was the time of decline of Mughal empire during which lawlessness was order of the day and the Emperor lent ready ear to the counsels of the courtiers. After soliciting the orders of crackdown, Nawab Azam Khan called upon all the influential landholders of Sindh to join the ranks against the “rebellious socialists” of Jhok (Quani, 1957). Accordingly, a

combined militia of local *zamindars*, the Kalhoras and the Mughal army launched crackdown on Jhok under Nawab Azam Khan.

To counter this huge force of the Mughals, the fakirs excavated a ditch on all sides of Miranpur as a war stratagem, which worked and the Mughal army was made to put a siege at a distance of two kilometers from Miranpur on 13 October 1717 (Bakhsh, 2007: 139). The fakirs defended themselves vehemently under guerrilla tactics of camouflage and the siege continued for four months. Eventually, Shah Inayat agreed to attack the invaders on 9 Safar 1130 A.H/ 1 January 1718 A.D. The strategy was working well but during the course of fight suddenly a fakir fell down in the stampede and raised the slogan Ya Allah which was responded by Allah Allah by all fakirs (*Ibid.*). The Mughal army immediately took advantage of the incident and came heavily on the fakirs. Soon after the defeat and beheading of Shah Inayat, Nawab Azam Khan imposed ban on the raising slogan Ya Allah connoted with the comrades of Jhok (*Ibid.*).

#### ARREST AND TRIAL

When the war situation was getting in favour of the fakirs, Yar Muhammad Kalhoro sent his son Khuda Yar Khan and commander Mir Shahdad Khan Talpur with a copy of Holy Quran to Shah Inayat as an assurance of his safety and he was asked to come to the rulers' chambers for negotiation. When Shah Inayat reached the chambers for talks, he was arrested, brought to Thatta and presented to the Mughal Governor (Quani, 1957). Shah Inayat was questioned by the governor about his seditious activities and Shah Inayat replied his queries with the verses from the Holy Quran and the couplets of Hafiz Shirazi. The complete dialogue is recorded by Quani (1957).

Finally, the soldier was summoned to carry out the beheading. Shah Inayat gave his sword (which was given by to Shah Inayat by Abdul Malik Qadri mentioned above) and paid a few gold coins to the soldier saying: "These are the wages for your labour". During the entire trial, Shah Inayat appears to long for death and his last words to the executioner were in the form of couplet of Hafiz Shirazi from *Divan e Hafiz*.

رهائیدی مرا از قید هستی  
جزاک الله فی الدارین خیرا

Sufi Shah Inayat Shah was decapitated on 15 Safar 1130/ 7 January 1718. On his martyrdom, Mir Ali Sher Quani (1957) writes:

منه پابوالهوس در عشق کين ره بس خطرناک است  
درين منزل سر عاشق قتاده بر سر خاک است

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was twenty-eight when Shah Inayat and his followers were killed in 1718 A.D. Though Latif never directly mentions the martyrdom of Shah Inayat in his poetry, but Quani (2004: 344) believes that the following verse from *Sur Ramkali* of *Shah Jo Risalo* refers to that incident

اڄ نه اوطاقن ۾، طالب تنوارين  
آديسي اٿي ويا، مڙهيون مون مارين  
جي جيءَ کي جيارين، سي لاهوتي لڏي ويا.

Sufi Shah Inayat along with his several thousands of his followers killed in the battle of Miranpur is buried at Shah Inayat's shrine in Jhok.

## CONCLUSION

Sufis of any creed have always fought, though pacifically, against all forms of discrimination and injustice, yet the mode of Shah Inayat is singularly spectacular that he was the first known leftist leader to work for the rights of the subjugated and oppressed peasants in an open revolt. It may be summed up that Shah Inayat attempted to convert the feudal set up into an egalitarian agrarian society. This was a major threat to the status quo, and expectedly all the vested interests— landlords, courtiers and bourgeoisie, leagued to eliminate this movement. As always, the religious leaders left no stone unturned to suppress and malign by issuing *fatwas* against this progressive movement for genuine rights.

In case Shah Inayat had yielded one way or the other compromising with the times, his message might have died with him but his commitment to the cause has given permanent tenor to the slogan *Jeko Kheray , so Khaey* (The tiller has the right to the produce). It reverberates when the abuse of the peasants touches its

extremes as was evidenced during 1960s in Sindh. Though the tenants in Sindh even today are undergoing the same misery, yet the slogan of Shah Inayat has not taken practical shape and remained dormant given the contemporary established monopolistic pattern of land ownership and disproportionate mode of sharing the produce. However, if history is any guide to learn from mistakes, it is unlikely that the Shah Inayat's universal teaching would not resonate any time among the marginalized peasants anywhere in the world.

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