Peasant Resistance In Sind (1520 - 1577) A.D.

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"This paper deals with a brief survey of the conditions prevailing in Sind after the fall of Thatta in 1520 A.D. A brief analysis of the uprising of the peasantry during the rule of Arghuns and Mughals (1520-1577) A.D. in the form of resistance offered generally in Sind and particularly in Kaakri Pargana of Bhakar Sarkar in Upper Sind."

Earlier evidence of agriculture taken as main occupation by the common people in South Asia comes from KOT DIJI in Sind. Houses, advance village life, oven and other articles were discovered at this agriculture site. This indicates that agriculture was fairly developed in this region before the foundations of the great City of Moen-jo-Daro were laid down. About 700 years later, agriculture further developed to a high stage in Indus Valley, considerable evidence has been discovered at the famous City of Moen-jo-Daro, a site of highly developed agriculture in the form of charred remnants of seeds and cotton cloth. The main crops included Wheat, Barley, Sesame and Cotton.

"Thus the result of detailed study and synthesis of all the available evidence of the early third millennium B.C. forced the conclusion that Kot Diji related material does infact constitute an early formative, early urban or early development phase of Indus Civilization Culturally."[1]

According to the expert opinion given by an archeaologist, the

whole credit goes to the Kot Dijian people being originators of Indus Civilization and builders of Kot Diji and Moen-jo-Daro respectively.

Thus these people had given two concepts to the world for which Kot Diji stands as an agriculture based village being symbol of peasantry and Moen-jo-Daro a grands city stand as a symbol of urbanity and sophistication which is a distinguished contribution to the World Civilization.

Sammas were last ruling dynasty in Sind as native people. During their rule, agriculture was main occuption of the people of Sind, being a proud ancestral heritage of Kot Dijians. Sammas had taken great efforts for the development of agriculture. During the reign of Jam Nizamuddin his Commander inChief named Darya Khan and Chagla, a Hindu Minister, were deputed to Sehwan Province for the excavation of a canal named *Saavi* which irrigated lands of Gaha tribe. Again, under the supervision of Darya Khan, the peasantry of Bubak built a huge Dam in the south of *Manchar* lake which irrigated the lands of *Kaccho* in Sehwan Province.[2] These are the few examples of the improvements and progress made on agriculture side by that medieval king. Indeed, a great prosperity, happiness, contentment, social justice and peace prevailed in Sind during the time of Samma Dynasty.

After the fall of Thatta in 1520 A.D. Sind went in the hands of Arghun (1520-55 A.D.). Tarkhans (1555-92 A.D) and Mughuls (1592-1700 A.D) respectively, who were all immirgants from Central Asia. Shah Beg Arghun, during his military Campaigns in Sind between 1517-1523 A.D. had committed mass killings and plundered most of Sind, specially Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Larkana, Hyderabad and Thatta districts and destroyed the big villages and towns on both sides of Indus in a width of 10—15 miles between Sukkur and Talhar. Under the leadership of Darya Khan, the masses of Sind stood firmly and offered a long resistance against the army of Shah Beg, they fought courageously as long as martrydom of Darya Khan had to take place. The victorious armies of Shah Beg entered the historic city of Thatta on December 20, 1520 and committed massacre of innocent Muslims and Hindus indiscriminately and plundered the city for nine days.

Immediately Shah Beg brought the forts of Sehwan and Bhakar under his sway. Meanwhile Samma, Sehta and Sodha tribesmen of Sehwan gathered under the banner of Darya Khan's three sons namely Mahmood Khan, Mithan Khan, Sarang Khan and Chief of Sodha tribes named Ranmal Sodho, they converged at the fort of Talti to resist against the Arghun's army. Infact this resistance movement was launched by Makhdoom Bilawal and Syed Hyder Sanai, the two prominent religious leaders of Sehwan Sarkar. "They took a pledge that they would not withdraw from the struggle and will fight as long as they were alive."[3] Thus the resistance movement was deeply rooted throughout Sind against the invaders. At last two armies met on the battle ground of Talti where Sindhian forces of resistance movement fought with reckless courage and as a result large number of Sammas were slain. Paying tribute to the common people, Mir Masoom writes: "In this encounter, the Sodha tribesmen demonstrated great fighting skill and showed great gallantry in the battlefield. Some of them stood firm, and were killed alongwith Ranmal Sodha."[4] The same author contiunes: "Shah Beg then encamped for three days at Talti, consigned the harvest of the existance of the inhabitants of that Village to the wind of destruction."[5] Thus the whole agriculture village, small fort alongwith its inhabitants was rased to the ground.

It was very natural phenomen on that *Macchi* tribe of *Baghban* refused allegiance to the oecupation army of the Arghuns. "They killed all the *Machhi* tribesmen who had resorted to rebellion and had turned their heads from obedience and submission, plundered their property and cattle and rased their houses and castles to the ground."[6] Thus resistance movement also flaredup in other parts of the country,

The tyrannical acts of Shah Beg did not escape the resistance movement which spread like fire throughout Sind. Obviously, the people of Bhakkar Sarkar (Province) reacted against this tyranny and came in the direct confrontation with Arghuns. Prominent among them, the Dhareja tribesmen were in the forefront, supported by local peasantry who raised arms against the Arghuns. During that time Sultan Mahmood was Governor of Bhakkar and the "great

Sayyids of Bhakkar" were running his administration. The ruthless exploitation, injustice and excesses of the administration, frequent destruction of Agriculture settlements had disturbed the peaceful village pattern and every day life of common man was. Thus local population was annoyed and they refused to pay taxes and tributes to *Bakhar Sarkar*. Moreover, local peasanty sent back revenue collectors with disgrace and humiliation and prepared themselves for battle near Rohri.[7] *Dhareja* tribe alongwith local population assembled twice in great numbers to face the armies of Arghuns but fighting could not take place. The common man was fighting against Arghuns in every nook and corner of the country in order to restore freedom of their homeland. The peasantry of *Sehwan* and *Bhakhar* made great endeavours and offered tremendous sacrifices to break the yoke of colonial imperialism. At this critical moment, the resistance suffered heavily when an influential local chieftain named Lala Mahar alongwith number of his tribesmen offered their allegiance and support to the Arghuns. As a result the movement was weakened and its 47 prominent leaders were arrested. Qazi Qadan (a prominent classical poet of Sindhi Language) a local religious leader and adviser of Shah Beg recommended their execution. Immediately the orders were carried out and 47 leaders of the resistance movement were assasinated.[1]

The life and property of common man was absolutely unsafe during the rule of Arghuns. The cattle, crops, property and even the village where the peasantry lived were destroyed for the reason that these people were unmanageable. *Jatoi* Pargana was one among the Parganas of Bhakkar Sarkar where *Mahar* and *Jatoi* tribesmen both lived together in majority. (It may be mentioned here that Jatoi Pargana of sixteenth century is identical with the present District of Shikarpur.) Though one tribe had already offered its allegiance, the remaining Jatoi tribemen did not compromise and were fighting courageously against occupation armies of Shah Beg. Meanwhile Shah Beg had given orders for the construction of Bhakkar fort. On the eve of its completion, all the landlords and elites of Bhakkar who had supported Arghun's regime were invited on the occasion. Shah Beg spoke about the so-called rebellious attitude of *Jatoi* tribemen, on hearing this, all the participants unanimously decided that "Jatoi tribe should be

punished severely." Immediately orders were carried out and "42 villages were rased to ground and 20,000 people of Jatoi tribesmen were massacred in Jatoi Pargana."

Shah Beg and his son Shah Hassan ruled Sind (1520-1555 A.D.) for 34 years. During this period the people of Sind and Multan had extremely difficult times. Arghuns wanted to establish their power at the cost of mass killing of thousands of innocent people. Countless villages were rased to the ground, towns and cities were burnt and looted. Crops, cattle and other property were frequently plundered. Arghuns had established eventually a reign of terror throughout Sind, as a result peasantry left their crops and cultivated lands to take refuge elsewhere. Food and other basic needs of daily life became scarce commodities. In such a state of starvation and misery peasantry fought for their very survival with reckless courage against tyrants.

Sultan Mahmood Bhakkary was independent ruler of Bhakkar (1555-1574), after the death of Shah Hassan Arghun. He entered Sind with Shah Beg at the age of 14 years. During the year 1543-44 he was Governor of Sivi (part of *Bhakkar Sarkar*) where he was directly involved in a mass killing of Baluch tribes.

When the historic city of Thatta was being burnt and looted by the Portuguese (1557 A.D), at the same time Sultan Mahmood was engaged in destroying the *R'abi* crops of Sehwan Province on both sides of the Indus. He also wanted to destroy the gardens of a province, *Siwistan* (Sehwan), but on the recommendation of Mir Kala'an (grand father of Mir Masoom) he changed his idea.

On the request of Sultan Mahmood his daughter was to be married to emperor Akbar the great Mughul. For this purpose, the emperor had deputed *Masnab-e-Ali I'timad Khan* to fetch daughter of Sultan Mahmood. He arrived in *Bhakkar* and presented to Sultan Mahmood the royal robe of honour with many presents including four elephants. Sultan Mahmood made arrangements for the royal dowery and provided a large variety of precious materials, several kinds of jewels, and golden ornaments and other varieties; *I'tmad Khan* was presented with thirty thousand rupees in cash and in kind. On the occasion of happy

celebrations at *Bhakkar*, the dinner-carpet was spread twice daily and 500 cattleheads were slaughtered daily for 15 days continuously. The bride was sent by way of Jaisalmer in the company of Zainal-Abdin Nouroze Khan alongwith royal ladies and other trusted courtiers. At the time when this party arrived at Jaisalmer, the emperor Akbar had come to *Nagar* (a town in Jodhpur State, Rajputana) where he was engaged in hunting. (12)

Thus he lived lavishly, such extravagance was living proof of the mis-use of bublic money. Mir Masoom has portrayed the character of Sultan Mahmood Bhakkary: "From his early days till the time of his death he lived in prosperity and contentment. The violence of his temper was over-powering. When he was in rage he could not control himself in any way. He had no scruples in shedding blood. He would destroy the houses and the families of the people on the slightest suspicion. He always practised tyranny. He had read Quran a thousand and one times." (13)

Such was the character of a man who ruled people of *Bhakkar* for 24 years.

After the death of Sultan Mahmood (1574 A.D.), Bhakkar was annexed with the Mughul Empire. Kesu Khan was first Governor of Bhakkar, appointed by the Mughuls in 1574 A.D. After a short period of one year he was replaced by Syed Mohammad of Amroha the *Mir-e-Adl.* He was appointed to the *Mansab* (rank) of one thousand, and conferred on him the government of Bhakkar. Since he was Sayyid and a religious scholar, therefore the Emperor also bestowed the leadership of the *Imams* of Bhakkar on him, so that he should assign means of subsistence to them according to their needs. (14)

He arrived in Bhakkar on the 14th December 1575. In the first instance he allocated nearly 50,000 acres cultivable lands as grant to the *Sayyids* of Bhakkar and Rohri, the *Ulema*, the *Shaikhs* and their dependents and others, each according to his needs. (15)

As a result thousands of farmers were directly affected or either ejected, and immediatly unrest was created among the peasantry of different *Parganas* of Bhakkar especially of *Kaakri* Pargana. (*Kaakri*

Pargana identical with the present District of Khairpur). The cultivated lands were distributed among the bureaucrats, clergy, relatives of Mughuls, sycophant courtiers and supporters of the Mughul Empire, who were already well off. The decision taken by the Governor was unjust which further deprived peasantry of the means of subsistence and they had been facing untold miseries since the fall of Thatta.

The Mughuls adopted other methods to oppress peasantry, Mir-e-Adl enforced rigorous rates of assessment on the peasantry and of assessing the produce of *Kan-kut* ("*KAN*" means "grain and *Kut* means "estimate"). This was a form of assessing the revenue. He fixed the revenue at five maunds per Bigha, he then appointed overseers over all the cultivated lands. These Mughul officials misbehaved with peasantry. As a result the peasantry of *Kaakri* Pargana revolted against the Bhakkar Sarkar. Most of them were already deprived of their lands. When the men of Mir-e-Adl entered the fortress which lay between *Gambat* and *Buchrah*, the *Mangneja* tribesmen discharged arrows at the soldiers and revenue officers. In this encounter, "many soldiers and people of Mir-e-Adl's were killed. Then the corpses were thrown into the well which lay inside the fort and filled up with earth." (16) Most probably this place was located somewhere in the *Gambat Taluka* of *Khairpur* District where large number of *Mangnejas* are still living. Thus the *Mangneja* tribesmen, the peasantry of *Kaakri*, revolted against the injustices and exploitation of the Mughals and came in the direct confrontation with Bhakkar Sarkar. The first peasent revolt of Kaakri took place some time in the year 1576.

Mir-e-Adl was worried by the revolt of Kaakri in which his many good men alongwith a large number of soldiers were also killed. Mir-e-Adl, assessing the strength behind the Kaakri revolt, summoned troops from the fort of Siwi and under the command of Sayyid Abdul Fazal, his son, the Mughul forces marched to wreck vengeance on the people of Kaakrl. (17) On heaing of the sudden demise of his father Mir-e-Adl, he withdrew from the fighting which was still undecided and immediately rushed back to Bhakkar.

The Emperor Akber assigned the Governorship of Bhakkar to Sayyid Abdul Fazal in succcession to his father. In the following

year (1577) the peasantry of Kaakri repeatedly refused to pay revenue taxes and challenged the authority of Bhakkar Sarkar. This was the second revolt of Kaakri in which fierce fighting took place between the peasantry and Mughul forces with heavy losses on both sides. The large number of peasantry was captured alive and put into prison, atleast two prominent leaders of the movement were trampled to death under the feet of the Elephants. (18)

Thus Arghuns and Mughals never assimilated with their subjects. The differences of language and culture were predominant factors between the people of Sind and Central Asia. They took efforts to consolidate their power at the cost of the life of common man and his belongings which created hatred against the colonial hordes. The rulers came with a huge army, relatives, friends and supporters and they took total control of the means of subsistence depriving local population of their livelihood. A country of small resources could not meet the needs of large number of people emigrating from Asia. The corruption of administration, social injustices, excess of ruling class, exploitation, tyranny and the tyrants were main causes of resistance movements pioneered by the peasantry of Sind who had suffered under the heals of the Mughuls.

The rulers could not encourage agriculture which was the main occupation of the common people, rather they destroyed crops and demolished thousands of villages of the peasants.

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