

THE RULE OF MIR NASEER KHAN NURI AND ITS SALIENT FEATURES**Mumutaz Ali Baloch**

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Abstract:

The paper revolves around the personality of Nasir Khan the Great who was a visionary leader in the history of Balochistan. He was a devout man, a sagacious ruler, a statesman, a warrior, and a capable administrator who managed his tribal confederacy quite intelligently.

Nasir Khan-1 who ruled over Balochistan for about 44 years, comprising of a vast territory, but highlights and selects the administrative boundaries, administrative set-up Darbār (court) hierarchy, legislature consisting of the Dīwān (lower house) and upper house (elders of Khan's own family). The Khan's taxation policies, his military prowess, agriculture products of his time and trading commodities of his era have also been considered as a golden age of time.

Introduction

Baloch were mostly pastoral nomads, and from the earliest times have remained adventurous and exploratory. The historical record of the Baloch history witnesses to the fact that womenfolk encouraged their children for courageousness and horse riding. However, Baloch never felt to develop a recruitment system or organize a regular army as could be seen in other parts of the world. They had too much of a soldier ingrained in their nature and every Baloch home looked like an epitome of the army. With the

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passage of time, through an evolutionary process, the concept of war changed. Under the command of Nasir Khan-1, the tribal chiefs (*Sardars*) furnished a quota of fighting force, thus, a collective army (*Lashkar*) could be organized. This lightning force not only took part in expeditions in Persia and Punjab along with Ahmed Shah Abdali, but under the command of Nasir Khan expanded its domain very far. Nasir Khan was not only a warrior, but a shrewd administrator and reformer who brought many changes in Balochistan.

Salient features of its confederacy

Baloch confederacy in Kalat came into being during the era of Miro Kambarani in the 15th century. He is considered the founder of Kalat confederacy, but the period (1666-1695) of independence of Khanate started from Ahmad-1 who extended the border of the confederacy. However, Nasir Khan (Khan e Baloch 1749-1817) also known as 'Nasir Khan the Great' a famous and historical ruler of Balochistan. He is remembered as a great personality, reformer, able general, political personality and statesman. He had qualities like a philosopher king was truly representative of his people (Baloch, 1987).

During the era of Nasir Khan, Balochistan developed and many institutions were established. He also managed to establish an administrative set up. He introduced a democratic system with a Baloch parliament and an un written constitution, mainly based on the customs and traditions of the Baloch society (Shah, 2008).

Geography

The territorial land of Nasir Khan Nuri was spread from Makran, Kharan, Sal (Quetta) Kachi, Sarawan, Jhalawan, Lasbela, Karachi, Jacobabad Kirthar mountain from Amirate of Sindh, on the other side Dera Ghazi Khan, Marri, Bugti Areas, Dodai confederacy of Derajat and Seistan (Baloch, 1987).

Administration

Nasir Khan formed an administrative setup which was assigned different duties under his command. To run the matters of state administration effectively, the State of Kalat was divided into four regions, named as provinces. Sarawan province consisted of the plateau starting from

Noshki up to Sibi, emerging into Kaččí. Marri and Bugti area were also made the part of this district. Another province, given the name of Jhalawan started from Surab to Lasbela, the third province was Makran, where Gichki family served as a ruler on behalf of Khan.

Kaččí province was extended up to Harran Dajjal (Shah, 2008). It is difficult to point out the political system of Kalat state. An opinion is that, it was considered as a military confederacy (Shah, p 9 -21), on the other hand, it was considered as a voluntary federation of tribes. (ibid, p, 10, 21). But one thing is clear about it that the political system was democratic, the powers were distributed among the Khan and his provinces. The head of tribes, clans, Sub- clans were free to manage their affairs, internally they enjoyed their power, but externally the subject to the Khanate of Kalat (Mohammad, 1982).

The central government of Kalat had only interfered with the concern of provinces regarding strong legal demand (Mohammad, p-154). Khan of Kalat was the chief executive of Kalat state. Though, he always belonged to one family “Ahmadzai”, but was chosen by the tribal chiefs (Frontiers and overseas expeditions). He ran the matters of the state with the help of Prime Minister and state council. The Prime Minister was hereditary and belonged to the Dehwar tribe (Masson, 1976). The state council was consisted of five members. They were nominated by the Khan and often by the elders of his own family (Pottinger, 1976)

Next to Khan, there were chief of Saráwán and Jhalawan in the administrative setup of the Kalat state, further, forty members of different tribes were taken to the council. They were also Sardars, but below to the chiefs of Saráwán and Jhalawan. The khan was all in all and he had power and authority, but he took in confidence of all the Sardars of the state in the decision making (Masson, 1976).

Darbar

There was a Darbar in the State of Kalat. The Chief of Saráwán and chief of Jhalawan both had important positions and status in the matters of state in Darbar council. The public matters were first to be submitted for the consideration of chief of Saráwán, otherwise chief of Jhalawan was consulted in this regards. (Masson, 1976). The other tribal chiefs or Sardars of different tribes also had an important position in this hierarchy

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administration. Every Sardār had been given representation in the state's Darbar (court) according to his tribal strength. Every Sardār was chosen by his own tribe, but was confirmed by the Khan of Kalat. A Jirga (council of elders) was constituted by Sardars for the consultation of important issues. Takari chief of the clan and 'Moatbar' chief of Sub Clan served as a subordinate to Sardārs.

Legislature

A bi-cameral legislation formed in Kalat state which was known as "Baloch Parliament" (Harrison, 1981) lower house was called Diwān; the members of Diwān were chosen by indirect methods and upper house was nominated by Khan which served as an advisory body. There were five members in the upper house hailing from elders of Khan's own family. The Khan was head of this council (Khan, M.A. Y, 1987) the status of council was like a state council of present time. The council shared guidance to Khan on important issues. All the Sardārs of Baloch tribes were taken for the lower house and there were forty representatives of each tribes. They were always present in Kalat (Ibid, p-89-90).

During any national crisis when the opinion of the people was required, the Diwān was consulted which could be the final decision for Baloch nation. Diwān also provided ministers and officials to the state (ibid, p-24-26).

Taxation

Nasir Khan Nuri introduced a moderate system of taxes, to fulfill the financial requirement of his state (Pottinger, 1976). The amount which was collected by taxes was used for daily requirements of the state suppose, salary to military personnel allowances were given from the treasury. Camel load charges were five rupees while entering the city. Those Hindus who managed the trade were charged one rupees. The Bazar tax at the rate of one and a half percent was charged, but there was no sort of tax on the transportation of horses and cattle in Balochistan. Agricultural tax was charged for the land cultivated by trench water or by well at the ratio of one twentieth ($1/20$) of the produce while, the cultivation by rain water at $1/6^{\text{th}}$ or $1/10^{\text{th}}$. Sardār and head of the clan performed their duty as tax collectors but

they did not deposit all these amounts in the State account which were collected through taxes. They kept some amount for themselves as their share.

Military

Mir Nasir Khan Nuri himself was a highly skilled fighter and officer of his army. He had faced Indian rebels, like Marhattas and Sikhs by following the Persian and Afghan techniques of fighting. He wanted a well-organized military for his Khanate, hence he placed a permanent military unit of 1200 men in his capital called '*Dasta-e- Darbar*' (Palace Regiment). In case of any emergency, the khan was entitled to take three divisional forces from the different tribes of the Khanate. These were called Dasta-e- Khas (Special Division), Dasta-e-Doem (Second Division) this division was also called Sarawán Lashkar and Dasta-e- Soem (Third Division) was called Jhalawan Lashkar (Khan, p, 88-89). Nasir Khan Nuri was himself commander in chief of this whole Division of Khanate. Even in the battle field, they all had their own different flag. The Khan Army had red color of flag, Sarawán green and Jhalawan had yellow flag. (Shah, 2008)

The military of the Khanate participated in different missions along with Ahmed Shah Abdali, and in some battle he had the commanded of the joint forces. They fought chivalrously and successfully against the Sikhs. At one occasion, Ahmed Shah Abdali could not control his feelings and said that "Khan you once helped us, the Afghans, to become free from the slavery of the Persians by giving them a crushing defeat, and now once again on the battle field of the Punjab you have earned our gratitude for the selfless and chivalrous fight against the Sikhs for which we are proud of you.." (Khan, 1977).

He was always ready to fight for Islam. Therefore, he was given the title of Ghazi-e-Deen (Hero of Islam) and Nasir-e-Millat-e-Mohammadiya(the supporter of the followers of prophet Mohammad, P.B.U.H.) by the Caliph of Turkey. (Khan, S., p-85)

Agriculture and trade

Wheat and Jawar were the staple food of the people but the dates were consumed on a large quantity in the coast of all areas of Makran. Rice, Barley, Millet, Tobacco, Potatoes and melons were also cultivated but on a

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comparatively small scale. Pomegranate, Apricot, Almond, mulberries, grapes and apple were grown and exported. Sarawan, Kachi and Marri areas were famous for excellent breed of their cattle and horses. Sericulture was also experimented at Mastung but could not thrive. Coarse wool of the dark colored sheep and goats were exported in large quantities. Among forest products were some medicinal drugs and gum Arabic. All these commodities were exported but not on a large scale.

Cultivation of land, continuation of a few old cottage industries and breeding of animals were the means of livelihood. The people of Makran coast were fishermen and seamen. All these people were organized into tribes who usually paid their revenues. Barter system was prevalent.

Conclusion:

The role Nasser Khan played in establishing of the Baloch confederacy was paramount and his reign could be definitely called as the golden age of Balochistan. His relations with Ahmed Shah Abdali despite some problems, were cordial and Abdali very much appreciated his support, valor and fighting spirit against Persians and Sikhs. His military bravery, organization of a tribal force and expansion of Baloch Confederacy could well be remembered in the annals of military history of the region.

Naseer Khan's tribal administrative set-up, formation of a political hierarchy, a bi-cameral legislative system and revenue collection depict that full-fledged government in kalat existed with all its essential parts. Although it was a loose confederation, but he was trusted and tribes volunteered for allegiance.

Economic activities like irrigated agriculture and horticulture, livestock breeding though a small scale were evolving. Barter system was prevalent and there were trade ties with neighboring countries. This indicates that the economy was vibrant to some extent according to the standards of the time.

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