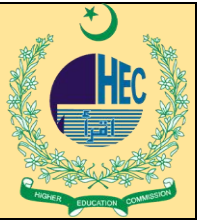




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The British Raj in Sindh (1843-1947): An Analysis of Colonial Policies through the Memoirs of Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the colonial policies adopted by the British Crown during its rule in Sindh(1843-1947) through an indigenous perspective. Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi, a multi-dimensional personality, took up the pen and wrote his memoirs to preserve the historical records for future researchers. As an eyewitness to the period, his memoirs hold the status of a primary source. The study employs qualitative and historical research methods, while textual and thematic analyses are applied for the interpretation of data. Rashdi's memoir Uhe Deh Uhe Sheh(Sindhi) serves as the primary text, supported by various secondary sources. Through the native voice of a journalist, Muslim League activist, ambassador, and writer, the research examines how colonial policies shaped the socio-political and cultural fabric of Sindh under British rule. The study further highlights Rashdi's contribution in portraying the complexities of colonial governance and local responses within Sindhi society.

Keywords: Rashdi, Sindh, British Empire, British Raj, Colonial Masters.

Introduction

The British Raj in Sindh(1843-1947) marked a turning point in the region's history, introducing profound political, social, and economic changes following its annexation in 1843. British colonial policies aimed to consolidate power, restructure traditional institutions, and exploit local resources, leading to significant transformations in Sindhi society. Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi, a distinguished Sindhi writer and intellectual, offers a unique and insightful account of this period through his memoirs, which combine personal reflection with historical analysis. His writings reveal the complexities of colonial administration, the changing relationship between the British rulers and local elites, and the broader cultural consequences of imperial rule. This study, "*British Raj in Sindh: An Analysis of Colonial Policies through the Memoirs of Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi*," examines the impact of British policies on Sindh's political and social fabric as portrayed in Rashdi's works. By interpreting his memoirs as both historical evidence and literary expression, the research highlights how Rashdi documented and critiqued the colonial experience, presenting a Sindhi perspective that blends resistance, memory, and identity within the broader context of British imperialism.

Background of the author

Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi(1905-1987) was an eminent Pakistani politician, journalist, diplomat and writer. Although, he lacked formal schooling; yet, he became a successful politician, foremost journalist, vibrant diplomat and accomplished author. He remained associated with different newspapers throughout his life in different capacities: *Al-Hizb*, *Al-Amin*, *Sindh Zamindar*, *Sitara-e-Sindh*, *Al-Rashid*, *Subuh Sindh*, *Muslim voice* (English). In 1949, he was elected as president of Pakistan newspaper editors' conference and later on in the same year as the president Indo-pak press. He was active member and secretary of Sindh Muhammadan association during 1926-1931. In 1934, he was elected as the secretary of pre partition era Sindh peoples' party. He also worked in Sindh Itehad party in 1936. In 1938, he joined All India Muslim League and worked tirelessly for the conference that was held under leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah the same year. He was a provincial minister revenue, health, information and also deputy CM Sindh during 1953-1955 soon after the establishment of Pakistan. In 1955, he was elected as the member of Pakistan's constituent assembly and served as the information minister of the federal government of Pakistan. In 1957, he was appointed as the ambassador of Pakistan to Philippine. He also served as ambassador of Pakistan to the Peoples Republic of China during 1961-62. In 1972, he was appointed as special advisor to the ministry of information and worked in that capacity till 1977. He wrote weekly columns in *daily jang* from 1963 till his death. His famous books are *Uhe Deh Uhe Sheh*(Memoirs in sindhi language), *Cheen ji diary* (his diary in Sindhi language as ambassador of Pakistan to China), *Rind aen Pandh*(Sindhi columns in daily Ibrat), Letters and Essays (Sindhi), *Rodad-e-Chaman* (Urdu), *Mashriq-o-Maghrib* (Urdu columns in daily Jang). Although, gifted man, Ali Muhammad Rashdi allegedly played a very horrific role against *Hur* movement in Sindh and worked for the British Empire against Pir Pagaro. He wished to be appointed as new Pir Pagaro after the fate of the case against Pir Sibghatullah Pagaro. According to Chand(2010), "Ali Muhammad Rashdi made a number of petitions for himself from 22.1.1943 to 15.2.1943 and continued working on the assumption that he might become the chosen one (as Pir Pagaro). Ali Muhammad Rashdi's efforts on succession, efforts and arguments for retaining the *Gadi* continued while he hoped he might be 'elected' as Pir Pagaro (up to February 15, 1943). However, he was told definitely on the 15th of February that the Government would not consent to his becoming the Pir Pagaro if and when the post fell vacant, he joined Lamberick and his staff at Hyderabad(general Richardson, Cargill, and Young) to provide for justification: 16.2.1943" (p.421).

Uhe Deh Uhe Sheh(Sindhi): The memoirs of Ali Muhammad Rashdi

Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi was a distinguished writer of the Sindhi language. Among his numerous works, his most celebrated book is *Uhe Deh Uhe Sheh* (in Sindhi), a three-volume memoirs published by the Sindhi Adabi Board. The first volume appeared in 1966, followed by the second in 1980 and the third in 1981. According to Panhwar(2016), "the able author has like an expert cartographer mapped all the merits and demerits of the colonial period and has not allowed them to disappear from his vigilant eyes"(p.326). Rashdi(1987) has given the purpose for writing the memoirs in the following words: "Nowadays, there is a great interest in the discovery and compilation of the ancient history. Hectic efforts are underway for the reawakening of Sindhi language and literature. Nonetheless, the events that have been taking place before our eyes are being overlooked. It would have been great service to record those events for the posterity...By this endeavour, I don't wish to write the history of Sindh. My effort is to preserve those eyewitness accounts, to write the sketches of the people I met and to lay bare the facts and explore the differences between the past and new traditions. Hence, this is a raw and inconclusive material. The underlying purpose of writing these memoirs is to record and preserve the events of my life. It will devolve on the future historians to bring it into some

valuable work”(p.1). Rashdi is demonized in Sindh for his role in supporting the British Raj in its atrocities against the *Hurs* and Pir Pagaro. But surprisingly, Rashdi has failed to give the biographical sketch of Pir Sibghatullah Pagaro in his memoirs where all the famous contemporary persons find space. *Hurs* find only marginal mention in his memoirs in scattered places.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to analyze Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi’s portrayal of the British colonial administration and its governance strategies in Sindh as reflected in his memoirs. The study aims to identify and examine the major colonial policies discussed by Rashdi, including bureaucracy, land ownership, law enforcement, special laws and loyalty politics etc., to understand their nature and implications under British rule. Furthermore, the research seeks to evaluate how Rashdi’s observations contribute to the historical understanding of British rule in Sindh and offer an indigenous perspective on colonial governance and its consequences.

Research Question

1. How does Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi depict the British colonial administration and its policies in Sindh?
2. What major colonial policies (e.g., bureaucracy, land ownership, law enforcement, education, and loyalty politics) are discussed in Rashdi’s memoirs?

Literature Review

Jamali, S & Ahmed, P. (2021) has undertaken study of the services of Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi towards the Urdu literature. She has highlighted the main works of Rashdi in Urdu and praised him for his extra ordinary command over Urdu. (Laghari & Kabooro, 2018) have studied the contribution of Pir Ali Muhammad and his illustrious brother Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi towards the discovery and historical research of Sukkur.

Research methodology

This study employs a qualitative and historical research methodology to examine the colonial policies of the British Raj in Sindh through the memoirs of Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi. The research is based primarily on textual and thematic analysis of Rashdi’s memoirs, *Uhe Deh Uhe Sheh*, to explore his perceptions of British administrative practices, socio-political changes, and the responses of local elites. In addition to Rashdi’s writings, secondary sources such as historical books, journal articles, and archival materials are consulted to contextualize and corroborate his accounts. By interpreting these narratives within the broader framework of colonial governance, the study aims to reveal how British policies shaped Sindh’s political, economic, and cultural landscape during the Raj.

Data Analysis

The Myth of the British Raj’s ‘Benevolent Rule’

British sought the trade permission from the Mughal Emperor Jahangir of India through its envoy Sir Thomas Roe. According to Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta (1978), “Roe remained constantly at Jahangir’s court from end of 1615 till end of 1618, and though certain factors prevented him from concluding any definite commercial treaty with the Mughal Emperor, he succeeded in securing several privileges for the company, particularly the permission to erect factories in certain places within the Empire”(p.629). But the English began the political rule after the battle of Plassey in 1757. According to Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta (1978), “Battle of Plassey was hardly more than a mere skirmish but its result was more important than that of many of the greatest battles of the world”(p.657). The English invaded and conquered Sindh in 1843. After their entry into the Indus Valley, revolutionary changes occurred in administration, society and almost every sphere of life throughout Sindh. The new masters were autocratic, yet they justified their rule by presenting themselves as benevolent rulers. Some of their officers

demonstrated deep interest in the welfares of the people whom they ruled as the subjects of the crown. Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi has mentioned officers with such traits posted in Sindh. According to Rashdi(1993), "Sir Bartel Frere was commissioner of Sindh between 1851 and 1861. During his tenure, major developments works were undertaken in Sindh which included both the construction and establishment of bridges, roads, railways tracks, train service, telegraph, postal service, hospitals, schools, Schools, Colleges, Police Stations, government buildings in districts and talukas, Surveys, etc. These buildings or institutions are remnants of the British rule in Sindh.....with his excellent administration, sympathetic attitude towards the people and justice and fair play, he laid the firm foundations of the British rule in Sindh. He was great fond of Sindh and Sindhi literature. The biography of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was written at his orders for his daughter's study" (p. 498). Besides, Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi has also discussed some reputed British officers who were also men of letters and scholars. Rashdi(1987) writes that, "Certain officers were very learned and had scholarly stature. Otto Rothfield, Collector of Sukkur, and my contemporary was among those bureaucrats. The gentleman had written many books i.e. *Women of India*"(p.201). Rashdi(1987) has also mentioned another English officers with scholarly tendencies. He writes that, "The second collector of Sukkur with scholarly stature was Dr. H.T. Sorley who wrote a book in English on Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. We did not know about his intellectual stature at that time but later on came to know that even during his incumbency in Sukkur he was busy in his research on Shah Abdul Latif" (p.202).

Furthermore, Rashdi has mentioned some native muslim officers who were posted in Sindh and undertook great initiatives aimed at welfare of Sindhi people. Rashdi remembers Shaikh Qadir, a civil servant and minster of princely state of Khairpur in good words. Rashdi(1987) writes that, "with his efforts *"Sindh Zamendar"* newspaper was issued which safeguarded the rights of muslims of Sindh specially the landlords"(p.53). Rashdi further writes that, "his second scheme was to establish a college for the education of children of landlords of Sindh. He collected donations of one hundred thousand rupees...after his transfer from that post the scheme was shelved but Leslie Wilson hostel was constructed from the funds thus collected which was renamed as Jinnah hostel after the creation of Pakistan in 1947"(p.53). Rashdi(1987) has remembered another muslim bureaucrats in the following words, "Ghulam Mustafa Khan was Deputy Collector of Rohri Division. He distributed all the non-irrigated lands in his division among the farmers. Hundreds of people became prosperous due to this largesse of the native officer. After this incident, the government took away the powers of distributing lands to anyone from Deputy Collectors"(p.320). As discussed above, some of the British officials were sympathetic to the local populace and took interest in the welfare of the people but the general policy of empire was aimed at the exploitation of the people of the sub-continent including Sindh and looting their resources. The greatest injustice done against the people of Sindh by the empire was done during the early days of the British rule. According to Lakho (2025), "The British ruled over Sindh for more than a century. The British conqueror of Sindh, Sir Charles Napier became the first governor who after serving a four years term left Sindh in 1847. His departure marked the end of the provincial status of Sindh, which was made a part of the Bombay Presidency and put under the control of a Commissioner in Sindh" (pp.105-106). Deprival of provincial status and illogical merger with the far away Bombay presidency was the greatest, earliest but not the last injustice with Sindh during the colonial period.

The hunting expeditions of the British functionaries in Sindh

The top British officials of India (Commissioners, Governors etc) used to carry out hunting expedition in their far flung colony of the sub-continent. The hunting was not only leisure activity but closely linked with their colonial power, class hierarchy and cultural dominance. Before the

English, Talpur rulers maintained big *Shikargahs* (game reserves) throughout Sindh. The new masters used these *shikargahs* as the tool of propaganda against the Talpur rulers. According to Rashdi(2003), “For this they fell upon these *Shikargahs*: it was given out that the native rulers had, for their own pleasure, converted large areas of their country’s fertile agricultural land into ‘wasteful *shikargahs*’ (game reserves) and thereby caused incalculable loss to its economy”(p.7). After the conquest of Sindh the British rulers realized the importance of forests and “they did liquidate them in name by changing their old title and renaming them ‘Government Reserved Forest’”(p. 7). During their rule top British functionaries paid visit to Sindh for hunting missions annually. Rashdi(1987) has portrayed such visits in the following lines: “The Governor of Bombay Presidency used to visit sindh once annually only for hunting expedition. There were numerous lakes owned by the landlords in Larkano District. These were reserved exclusively for the hunting of the Governor and Commissioner. The landlords used to make elaborate arrangements for the hospitalities of the dignitaries”(p.5). The agriculture and irrigation expert M. H. Panhwar has undertaken deep study of Sindh’s irrigation history. He seems to have similar opinion about Talpur rulers mismanagement of irrigation in Sindh after study of available records and field studies. He writes that, “all the technical reports pertaining to the Talpurs rulers’ management of irrigation unanimously agree that the ruler did not give much attention to irrigation” (p.216). Hence, though the English tried to and greatly succeeded in rejuvenating the irrigation and agriculture of Sindh but still they continued Talpur era hunting expeditions to demonstrate their class, hierarchy and cultural dominance.

The policy of retaining princely states and its implications

The British ruled two third of the South Asian sub-continent areas directly and divided it into presidencies and provinces. But, one-third of the sub-continent was ruled indirectly with the help of the native rulers. There were nearly 600 states in British India in 1858. Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta (1978): “The relations of the British Government with the Indian States underwent a great change after the assumption of the Government by the crown before that the relations were neither uniform nor well defined”(p.833). He further writes that: the policy of the Government under the crown was to ignore these differences in the status of Indian States, and to uphold in theory and practice the paramountcy of the British Crown over all alike. This will be clearly manifest to anyone who studies the attitude of the British Government towards the Indian States since 1858. The most direct enunciation of this new policy is to be found in the act of 1876 by which Queen Victoria assumed the title “Empress of India” with effect from 1st January, 1877. This act at once brought the Indian States within the British Empire, and legally speaking, the rulers and people at the states were henceforth to be classified as vassals of the British Sovereign” (pp. 836-37). Khairpur was one of the states of British India which had accepted British suzerainty. Khiapur was one of such princely states of British India located in Sindh. Rashdi(1987) has portrayed the picture of Khairpur state in the following words: “Mir Sahib did not use to interfere in the administrative affairs. The minister used to run the affairs of administration of the state. The minister was appointed by the British Government of India from its officers. The minister office of Khairpur princely state was much coveted post”.(p.46). Though, these states were retained by the British under its indirect control and the states acted as vassals of the king-emperor of England but the monarchs of these states enjoyed unprecedented luxurious and extravagant life at the cost of their subjects. The author has given an elaborate account of the extravagance during the marriage ceremony of Mir Ali Nawaz Talpur, ruler of Khairpur state, which gives a glance of the court life in such princely states of British India. Rashdi (1987) writes that, “during the ongoing festivities and celebrations the state’s coffers were emptied. For many days, the dancer-girls had to stay in Khairpur for getting their fees”(p.51). The

chiefs of the princely states were rolling in the luxuries and the people (their subjects) had been suffering untold miseries in those days.

Loyalty of the indigenous landed aristocracy and elites towards the British Raj

Apart from Princely state of Khairpur, the local feudal lords demonstrated their loyalty towards the British Masters. Rashdi (1887) has complained the subservient attitude of the local influential chieftains in the following words: "The muslim landlords and the bureaucracy have remained loyal to foreign rulers: Mughals or Pathans, Talpurs or the English for centuries. They have always saluted the rising sun and took gifts and titles from the alien masters. In the early days of the English rule even estates and fiefs were also granted"(p.133).

Rashdi has portrayed a historical phenomenon that some opportunistic people Sindhi people had fished in the troubled waters and taken the side of the foreign empires against their compatriots throughout known history of Sindh. Such historical anecdotes are quite common in the annals of history of Sindh. During the early days of Sindh's Samma dynasty (1351-1520), one of the chieftains of the Samma clan, who ruled over principality of Thatta came out against his own dynasty and compatriots and accepted suzerainty of the Delhi Sultanate(1206-1388). Lakho (2013) writes that, "In order to prove his loyalty towards the the central government, Jam Juno came forward and the Jam (Tamachi) and Makhdoom came to Thatta. Tamachi (the patriotic Samma chief) was arrested with conspiracy and sent to Delhi. This event took place in 1371. Afterwards, Jam Juna was enthroned as new chieftain of Samma clan albeit with backing of the Delhi Sultanate. Whereas, Jam Tamachi and Jam Babina remained virtually under arrest at Delhi till death of Sultan Feroz Tughlaq (1388)"(p.38). Rashdi was a great writer. But while he taunts the 'others' for working against their compatriots at the instigation of foreigners; he himself 'worked' at the payroll of the British Empire as discussed above.

Special discriminatory laws of the British Empire

British had several laws and some special laws in promulgation in India. Besides, as per administrative needs and urgency, the government did not hesitate to promulgate even new laws for the short term. Frontiers Crime Regulation Act, 1860 and Crminal Tribes Act, 1871 were such special laws. The former was for managing the frontier tribes and later for certain tribes (colonial government categorized whole communities as criminals). Similarly Rashdi(1987) has mentioned such a special law was in force in district Jacobabad which bordered kalat state in the coming paragraphs: "A special law was promulgated in the district Jacobabad since the early days of the English rule which was called Sindh Frontier Regulation...that law empowered the administration to arrest any individual without citing any reason and without running the case"(p.260).

Such laws were discriminatory in nature and allowed the empire the unlimited powers to inflict barbarities on the people of some selected people within colonized nations.

No Compromise on the prestige of the empire

The British Administration never made even minimal compromise on the prestige of the empire or its functionaries. Even the minor incidents seen to dent the prestige of the British were dealt with iron fist and those who were allegedly trying to sabotage it were heavily punished. Rashdi(1987) has shared one such incident which reflect the mindset and policy of the colonial masters towards protecting their interest:"Once, a couple of European officers(crook, session judge of sukkur and Titan, then assistant collector and later on commissioner and chief secretary of Sindh) were returning from a hunting expedition. On the way back, some unidentified persons shot gunfires on their car but all survived. The criminals were not traced despite thorough investigation but in order to compensate the dent struck on the prestige of the British Government it was decided to arrest Sardar Sher Muhammad Khan Bijarani under Frontier

Regulation. He was imprisoned in Sukkur Central Jail. After several petitions for mercy, he was released from the jail”(pp.260-61). The British were a foreign nation ruling over the dominion from Britain. Hence, their prestige was well guarded always by its functionaries. If the British was seen as weaker in the eyes of colonized people, their rule could not have survived. Hence, they did not shy away from crossing all the limits and even resort to injustice for restoring or preserving the prestige of the Empire.

Appointment of special magistrates among local elites and its consequences

As discussed above, many landlords and feudal lords were loyal to the British government in Sindh. Hence, in order to please their henchmen and control the masses, the English used to delegate some of the powers formally to their loyal bigwigs to control the masses. Thus, some selected persons from each Talukas were appointed as special magistrates. Rashdi's(1987) memoirs give the glimpse of such special magistrates in following words: “During 1920-21, the government introduced a policy to appoint Honorary Magistrate Benches in Sindh. In every taluka in Sindh, two or three benches of Honorary Magistrates among the respected landlord families were established. The second class magistrate powers were vested in these benches. As majority of those ‘majistrates’ were not conversant with laws, hence; they had to appoint one lawyer as their advisor” (p.386). This policy of the Colonial masters was very dangerous as it gave unprecedented powers to the local feudal lords and tribal leaders who used to misuse them for increasing their own influence or settling scores with the people perceived by them as ‘disobedient’. Rashdi(1987) has himself narrated such incident which reflects the very dangerous side effects of such policy: “But in this case, as the special magistrate saw and recognized the alleged culprit, he (the special magistrate) set aside the formal proceedings of the court and announced the prison term for the accused” (p.487). The colonial state was not the welfare state and hence they used to control the masses through their own influential people and to keep them under their strict control.

Railway incident involving discriminatory treatment of the colonized people

The colonial masters used to consider themselves as the superiors and the colonized as the inferiors. Such policies instigated the natives for struggle against the western nations around the world. Even in the sub-continent the British rulers had adopted several policies whose sole purpose was to humiliate the locals and thereby retain them under control and inferiority complex. Said in his famous work ‘Orientalism’ deplores that let alone laymen even the most liberal writers of Europe considered Indians as the inferior. According to Said (1994), “Here it seems to me there is a simple two-part answer to be given, at least so far as the study of imperialism and culture (or Orientalism) is concerned. In the first place, nearly every nineteenth-century writer (and the same is true enough of writers in earlier periods) was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire: this is a subject not very well studied, but it will not take a modern Victorian specialist long to admit that liberal cultural heroes like John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle, Newman, Macaulay, Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens had definite views on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing. So even a specialist must deal with the knowledge that Mill, for example, made it clear in *Considerations on Representative Government* that his principles could not be applied to India (he was an India office functionary for a good deal of his life after all) because the Indians were civilizationally, if not racially, inferior”(p.14). The excerpt from the book of Said gives the idea that the most distinguished liberal writers of Europe had such parochial views about the colonized nations. Consequently, it is relatively easy to surmise about the mindset of the European officers in the colonized nations. Rashdi(1993) has also mentioned one the famous incident involving Mohandas Gandhi: “The first event that instigated fire of hatred against the English was because in those days on each

operational passenger train in South Asia certain bogies were reserved for Europeans and 'only for Europeans' was inscribed outside them. When Mohandas Gandhi tried to sit in such a 'reserved' bogie in South Africa, he was kicked out instantly. Gandhi himself was the greatest proponent of the English till a couple of years ago (he recruited the soldiers for the English during the first world war) and got the medal of *Qaisar Hind* from the government due to his services for the British Raj. But now the same Gandhi became the greatest adversary of the English and assumed the new role as revolutionary and took sigh of relief after expulsion of the English from the Indian sub-continent" (p.34). The colonial powers who colonized much of Asia and Africa regarded the native as 'others' and uncivilized and themselves as superior and civilized. Hence, apartheid and injustices were noticeable everywhere in the empire. Resultantly, hatred gave way to freedom movements in colonized nations around the globe.

Inhuman investigation methods and no concern for human lives

The English functionaries during British Raj were very strict and resorted to most inhumane practices towards the accused in criminal and political cases (even if he was innocent). If any crime occurred the investigation phase was very ruthless. Rashdi(1987) has given the account of the procedure of investigation in the following words: "In the first round of investigation began with pulling out locks of hairs from beard successively. But if someone failed to confess the crime he was hanged upside down and kept him awake for long time durations....second round was even worse. The women belonging to the accused were held and naked before the group of people" (p. 201). Besides, while suppressing the political protests, the administration could cross any limit and human life was of no value for the. Rashdi(1981) has mentioned one incident in which one man was martyred during Khilafat movement on the orders of an English magistrate in the following words: "Pir Ghulam Mjadid himself shout out at the head of a protest. The sacrifice of the first human life came from his village Matari. In those days, murder of one human being was a great tragedy. The English themselves were stunned. The action of the government was condemned from the nook and recess of the empire. Finally, a judicial inquiry was ordered and the accused magistrate was suspended from the job" (p.226). Let alone criminals, even the political activists used to suffer at the hands of the colonial functionaries. They were routinely imprisoned, tortured and implicated in false cases. Rashdi(1987) has given several incidents demonstrating callous incidents where excesses were done against the political activists in sub-continent. One such incident which involved Maulana Abdul Kareem Chishti is narrated here: "he remained on the forefront in freedom movement. He suffered imprisonments. When the congress and muslim league parted ways and khilafat movement ended, Maulana also entered in the field of preaching and publishing" (p191). The British government in India had one core objective of ruling over the people by hook or crook. For this, they did not restrain themselves from introducing and implementing the harshest laws conceivable.

Bribing the political activists: a policy tool

The British Government had elaborate policy to divert the natives from the political activities. In order to distance people from the political activities they used carrot and stick policy simultaneously. One such policy was bribing the active people through different means and using them for the benefit of the empire. Rashdi(1993) has mentioned several such incidents in his memoirs. One such incident is given below:

"One of the famous ICS officer who served as Commissioner of Sindh during the later days of the British Raj was Sir Henry Lawrence. He took notice of rising political movements (Congress, Khilafat, Hijrat etc) in Sindh and tried to retain Sindhi muslims at bay from these movements by trying to purchase them through offering them the government jobs" (p.499). The empire was

very cautious of the political movements and tried their best to ensure the loyalty of the people by hook or crook to extend their colonial rule in the sub-continent.

Looting of historical relics and manuscripts

The British were fond of books and knowledge. Their universities led the world in terms of education. Hence, they collected manuscripts and artifacts from the world over and stored them in libraries and museums of England. Rashdi (1993) has deplored the looting of Sindh's literary resources at the hands of the British in the coming words: "Maulana Sahib(Mualana Din Muhammad Wafai) started his research work at a time when the scholars had to cope with very serious obstacles in their work. The local libraries had suffered serious damages over time. Some important books and manuscripts were carried by the English out of Sindh and before them some books and manuscripts were carried out of Sindh by Nadir Shah(Persian) during his invasion of Sindh during reign of Mian Noor Muhmmad Kalhoro"(p.323). Wherever the European colonizers occupied the foreign lands, they not only looted financial resources but also the manuscripts and artifacts and took them away to their capitals. They took keen interest in the study of the language, culture and history of these nations. After the establishment of their rule in India, they founded and patronized the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1823 for study the South Asian languages, history, culture and archaeology etc .

Policy of Controlled Journalism

The British for the first time introduced the concept of journalism and newspapers and established printing press in major cities of British India. However, they had very tricky policy and granted limited freedom of speech with respect to political matters. Rashdi(1981) himself a journalist has given following account demonstrating the British policies towards journalism in India: "It was the principle of the government that everyone should have ample opportunity to express his thoughts freely. So that ideas of bloodletting and insurgency may not enter in anybody's mind."(p.303). The sub-continent was densely populated region. Hence, the government provided people opportunity to express their voices in humble way rather than resorting to violating means.

Prevalence of Corruption throughout the empire

Although, the colonial masters were excellent administrators and were generally non-tolerant towards corruption; yet, it was pervasive in the state machinery since early days of the British rule. Rashdi(1981) has pointed out to such an incident of a an official taking bribes from the people: "Following the conquest of Sindh(1843), when General Napier was renewing the allotment of fiefs by studying the previous records. He had assigned this work to his *mir munshi*(possibly equivalent to secretary in modern times) Ali Akbar. The said official was openly taking bribes from the feudal lords for renewing the contract for estates"(p.308).

Efforts aimed at reduction of powers of bureaucracy by the elected representative

Sindh emerged as separate province on April 1st, 1937 due to promulgation of the Government of India act 1935. Due to this act, elections were held at the provincial level and as a result a responsible provincial government came into power in Sindh. Rashdi has narrated the natives' attempt to reduce the powers of bureaucracy during chief minstership of Allah Bux Soomro. Rashdi(1987) writes that, "during the initial days of his ministry Khan Bahadur Allah Bux, some great positive initiatives were taken. The old practice of convening 'courts'(Darbar) were stopped. The authorization letters of sitting on the chairs in the offices of the collectors and commissioners were discontinued. The practice of nominating official members in the local boards and municipal councils was also terminated. Otherwise, bureaucracy used to interfere in the affairs of local bodies through officially nominated members"(p.251). Besides, the old practice of appointing special honorary magistrate was also ended. Rashdi(1987) further writes

that, “earlier some ‘selected’ landlords were given the powers of special magistrate through which they used to threaten people residing in their areas of influence. But Khan Bahadur Allah Bux stopped this practice at once”(p.252). Rashdi claims that he was a reformer and wanted to reduce the influence of the bureaucracy. On this count he writes that, “During the ministry of Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah I had contracted serious differences with him.” The first reason for difference was that I wanted to curtail the powers of bureaucracy following separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency. It was one of the foremost causes of movement of the separation of Sindh from Bombay and I had been on the forefront in the struggle for such agenda” (p.296). Rashdi was no doubt a worthy intellectual and may have guided his contemporary politicians to reduce powers of the bureaucracy at least at the grassroots level. Though there is insufficient material or the record to substantiate his role on this score except his own claims.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the memoirs of Pir Ali Muhammad Rashdi provide a valuable indigenous perspective on the British colonial experience in Sindh. His writings not only document the political and administrative policies of the British Raj but also reveal their deep social, cultural, and psychological impact on Sindhi society. Through his keen observations, Rashdi exposes how the British manipulated local power structures, secured the loyalty of landlords, and established control through political and economic dependence. His firsthand narrative bridges the gap between colonial records and native realities, offering a nuanced understanding of colonial governance and its long-term consequences. By re-examining Sindh’s colonial past through Rashdi’s memoirs, the research highlights the importance of local voices in reconstructing history and challenges the dominant colonial narratives that often silenced or marginalized indigenous experiences. But, when it comes to Hur movement, Rashdi’s observations may be deeply biased as discussed above. Hence their careful reading is essential.

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