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Relevance and Values of Gandhi's and Bacha Khan's Moral Education in Negotiating/Addressing Situated Disparities of South Asia

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Abstract: Focusing on the contemporary conflicts and social political complexities of South Asia (specifically, India and Pakistan), this paper explores the roles and relevance of Gandhi's and Bacha Khan's moral education in negotiating/addressing the situated disparities. Drawing from the words and wisdom of Gandhi and Bacha Khan, this paper examines identity issues particularly in the context of (i) gender (disparities and struggles of women (and girls) in the society); (ii) age (situation and contributions of youths and elderly people in bringing about changes); (iii) class (including occupational and caste-based complexities and their negotiations); (iv) ethnicity (struggles of indigenous populations in overcoming situated adversities); (v) religion (tensions and acts of negotiating religious orthodoxies towards creating more secular society); and (vi) regional identities (roles of regional identities in fostering local development). Grounded in their philosophies and pedagogies, the paper discusses the contributions of the two visionaries and their epistemologies/ideologies in studying and/or addressing the issues of contemporary world. This scholarship seems particularly important today when dominant sociopolitical and religious institutions and their agendas often do not value (if not oppose) such moral education, which potentially affects the lives of South Asian populations at large.

Keywords: Gandhi; Bacha Khan; South Asia; moral education; identity

1. Introduction

A girl dressed in a school uniform sits in a “sozoki” (small car/vehicle) with her fellow students, the sozoki starts and at some distance the Taliban stops it and shoots her in the head; now the world recognizes her as Malala Yousafzai, a Pakhtun girl.

The children of at an Army Public School, Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were ruthlessly attacked by terrorists, the death toll reached to the hundreds. Bacha Khan University, Charsadda was attacked where a number of students and teachers were killed by terrorists.

In one 5-year period (i.e., from 2013 to 2017), India has seen more than 3700 incidents of communal violence which caused over 500 deaths, and over 11 thousand people were injured in those incidents.

These scenarios are a few examples of ongoing crises, complexities and conflicts in South Asian region. Increasingly, academicians (from education and from social sciences) and practitioners are calling for reflecting on and embracing the values of universal love, respect, forgiveness, and unity, as well as philosophies of nonviolence embedded in moral education to alleviate social, political, and religious tensions and conflicts.

Scholars have noted that it is crucial and urgent to emphasize sociocultural and moral dimensions that are intertwined with gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and other identity markers to understand and address situated disparities, discriminations, and animosities [1,2]. As identities are deeply rooted in social and moral imperatives and values, it is important to invest and explore education for critical moral consciousness and self-transcendence to bring about meaningful transformations that ensure individual as well as societal growth and well-being [3]. In this embodied and engaged journey towards emancipation, equality, and justice, scholars have talked about learning and achieving humane qualities including empathy, respect, care, trust, kindness, generosity, mercy, and love [1,4]. In doing so, they emphasize the cultivation of reflexivity, an attitude of humility, grace, and service to humanity as essential components of meaningful moral education [2,5].

Like many parts of the global South, South Asia is diverse in terms of languages, philosophies, ideologies, cultural practices, and worldviews. More importantly, spirituality is a fundamental and central element of South Asian moral aesthetics, values, praxis, and social order [6]. Scholars have argued that spirituality in the context of moral education is fundamental for self-development, self-awareness, and reflexivity as well as to understand our relationships and duties in exploring avenues for social and moral transformations [7]. For example, inspired by Sufi and Bhakti philosophies, several spirituality-based moral pedagogical traditions of South Asia envision social reformers as selfless servers or *sevaks*, and as seekers or *sadhaks* [6]. Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) and Bacha Khan (Abdul Ghaffar Khan) are two prominent pedagogues of spirituality-based moral education, specifically in the Indo-Pakistan region (often referred to as Indo-Pakistan subcontinent). These two 20th century visionaries not only inspired and transformed people during their time, but their work continues to do so in this postcolonial era. Espousing a decolonial, de-Westernizing, and feminist lens, their teachings foregrounded the values of selflessness, love, and truthful service in transforming minds and spaces. Although some critiques noted that their lessons fell short in achieving their purpose [8], scholars opined that their pedagogies and lives (as model examples) have been consistently influencing and transforming people and communities, and in turn have abated conflicts and fostered peaceful and humane coexistence both locally and globally. Growing intolerance and conflicts (social, political and religious) in domestic and bilateral domains necessitate further examination and study of the teachings of Gandhi and Bacha Khan to make the region a more peaceful, merciful, and humane space. This paper examines the intersections of moral education and identity, particularly focusing on six identity markers—gender, age, class (and caste), ethnicity, religion, and regional identity—and discusses their contributions and relevance in contemporary South Asian contexts.

2. About Gandhi and Bacha Khan

2.1. Bacha Khan [Abdul Ghaffar Khan] (1890–1988)

In 1890, a baby named Abdul Ghaffar Khan was born in the home of Behram Khan, a Pakhtun landlord of Utmanzai, Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (Pakhtuns of Pakistan: It is a popularly believed that Pakhtuns (synonyms Pakhtun, Pathan, Afghan) are an approximately 5000-year-old race residing in the northwest of the Pakistan. Pakhtuns are one of the largest tribal ethnic communities of the world [9]. Their total population is approximately 31 million in Pakistan [10], 14 million in Afghanistan, and about 1–2 million among the Pakhtun diaspora.). Behram Khan was not a formally literate person, however, he sent both his sons to Mission High School in Peshawar. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as Bacha Khan, was also called Fakhr-e-Afghan (Pride of Afghans), Sartor Malang (Sufi), Bad Shah Khan (King), and Frontier Gandhi (although some scholars consider this term as reducing his status) [11,12]. In the post-independence era (e.g., between 1948 and 1956), he was frequently arrested by the Pakistani government. In addition, during much of the 1960s and 1970s, Khan was in exile or jailed in his own country for so-called ‘antinational’ activities (e.g., seeking provincial autonomy for the pakhtuns). He died in 1988 in Peshawar when he was under house arrest.

Bacha Khan intimately observed how the British Army mistreated his fellow citizens with disrespect and brutality, which marked the beginning of his involvement and engagement to serve his own people. Bacha Khan wrote in his autobiography that he learned the spirit of serving humanity from his teachers [12–14]. For example, his teachers, the Wigram brothers, whose pedagogy (e.g., the spirit of serving humanity) were exemplary, inspired him in his journey of social and moral transformations [15]. Bacha Khan was a close friend of Gandhi; even if they came from different sociocultural backgrounds (e.g., in terms of religion and ethnicity), they were exemplary torchbearers of peace and nonviolence.

2.2. Mahatma Gandhi [Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi] (1869–1948)

Mahatma Gandhi was a visionary, philosopher, social activist, and political leader of the anticolonial movement against the British. His doctrine was rooted in the principles of Satyagraha (holding onto truth), ahimsa (avoidance of violence toward all living beings), and self-purification (physically and spiritually). Towards achieving sociopolitical and moral progress and making the world a tolerant space, he valued above all truthfulness, discipline, and sacrifice, as well as raising one's conscience and self-respect. In his personal life, he was attracted to austerity and simple living (e.g., simple food, dress, and less dependency on machines)

Apart from Hindu and Jain philosophies, Gandhi was profoundly inspired by the teachings of Christianity (particular by Tolstoy's writings) and Islam (specifically, the translation of the Q'uran). A deep immersion in spirituality, ethics, and morality guided him in organizing and leading social movements, such as the noncooperation movement (1920–1922), salt-satyagraha (1930), and quit-India movement (1942), as well as in fighting against social ills such as untouchability. As an advocate of vocational training and village and cottage industries, he fought to ensure economic self-sufficiency for underemployed peasants.

3. Moral Education in South Asia

India has a long tradition of moral education: some of her great teachers of the 20th century were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Rabindranath Tagore, and Aurobindo Ghosh [16]. In the context of India (and perhaps in all of south Asia), guided by its deep-rooted sociophilosophical traditions, moral education can be seen as an intertwined entity of moral and spiritual education [17]. With some similarities and differences with the aforementioned visionaries, Gandhi's approaches and conceptualizations of moral education uniquely influenced and inspired contemporary South Asia. In the subcontinent, ideological and philosophical foundations of moral education were grounded in spiritual concepts and education. South Asian philosophers, writers, and educationists had deeply influenced the domain of formal and informal moral education in the Indo-Pakistan region. However, the overall reach and quality of moral education is not very promising owing to financial and structural constraints. For instance, in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, moral education has yet to gain legitimacy as an area of study in schools and universities [16]. In addition, the dominant stakeholders, including the ruling parties, oftentimes are not enthusiastic in promoting the values and teachings of moral educators like Gandhi and Bacha Khan.

4. Foundation of Gandhi's and Bacha Khan's Thoughts

4.1. Gandhi and Moral Education

Agentic capabilities in becoming and growing are foundational to Gandhi's philosophy [18]. He believed in service to the people, particularly the underserved and downtrodden populations, in the spirit of love, devotion, and sacrifice [6]. He valued the people's qualities like helping one's self and acquiring strength and willingness in order to serve and transform society. Munshi [19] argued that Gandhi was one of the unique visionaries who never differentiated between spirituality and politics. Grounded in the South Asian spiritual values and philosophies, he stressed inner transformation of people, especially those who are in power; in other words, his aim was not to directly/materially hurt

the oppressors, but he sought to change their mind and hearts through persuasion and appeals [20]. His pedagogy influenced and guided many social and political initiatives in postcolonial India: Baba Amte's work on rehabilitating and empowering leprosy patients, Sunderlal Bahuguna's leadership in saving forests or 'Chipko' movement, and Anna Hazare's anticorruption campaign.

A decolonial and de-Westernizing lens lies at the heart of Gandhi's vision on moral education. Grounded in South Asian epistemologies and wisdoms, his approach fundamentally opposed structures, culture and practices of Western industrial civilization and foregrounded local/indigenous perspectives [8]. However, while opposing West-centric approaches (also in some sense neoliberal practices) he never undervalued the necessity of studying Western languages (e.g., English) and science [21]. In his conceptualization, moral education was fundamentally an ideological and spiritual entity. In his understanding of moral education, he emphasized qualities like character-building, graciousness, truthfulness, perseverance, self-control, courage, kindness, compassion, cleanliness, forgiveness, nonviolence, and harmonious social living, which are reflexive and ethically guided [22]. He believed that the medium of instruction should be in mother tongues, and the curriculum should be guided by local/indigenous knowledge as well as celebrating the diversity and plurality of local values/cultures to make moral education contextually meaningful and humane [8].

4.2. *Bacha Khan and Moral Education*

Bacha Khan embraced moral education as a tool to unite Pakhtuns in order to address their sufferings and pave the way to advance the society. He argued for raising the moral standard of Pakhtuns at both the individual and collective level inclusive of gender, age, occupational class, and religion. His perspectives on moral education were rooted in his ideology of nonviolence extracted from the teachings of Islam (specifically, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)) and indigenous religions and philosophies [14]. His visions were also shaped by local spiritual personalities such as Khushal Baba, Rahman Baba, and Akhun Darweza Baba.

In addition, for achieving the purpose of social and moral transformations, Bacha Khan initiated a multipronged strategy; as a part of the mission, in 1921, he started the organization "Islahul Afaghena" (the Society for the Reformation of Afghans). This society was established with the aim of reformation through moral education to awaken people by infusing among them the sense of unity, self-help, and true understanding of spirituality. This was evident in his establishment of the Azad School that followed the principles of inclusive curriculum providing spaces to all, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion, and class.

Grounded in the philosophies and works of Gandhi and Bacha Khan, the paper discusses the contributions of the two leaders in studying the roles and relevance of their moral education to understand negotiations of identities—more specifically, six markers of identity—i.e., gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion, and regional identities). Such discernment is important to understand how moral education potentially influences the lived experiences of people specifically in contemporary South Asian socioeconomic, political, and religious contexts.

5. Methodology

This research, embracing the guidelines and methods of qualitative research, focused on the intersections of moral education and various identity markers. In doing so, several research papers and chapters, written by scholars and practitioners, were examined closely. Several keywords were used to search online and offline contents systematically, such as moral education, moral identity, Gandhi, Bacha Khan, gender, youth, class, caste, indigenous, religion, regional identity, ethnicity, etc. A comprehensive search yielded approximately 135 journal papers, books and other documents that were used for analyzing the contents.

For analyzing the data, the guidelines of grounded theory were followed [23]. The collected discourses were closely examined using constant comparison process [24]. In the process, associations and relationships within and among various discourses were analyzed, and thereafter they were

grouped by focusing on six identity markers, which are described in the next section. This process helped to understand various theoretical and applied aspects of Gandhi's and Bacha Khan's pedagogies, and their relevance in negotiating various identity markers in South Asian contexts.

6. Moral Education and Identity

The analysis of the various sources revealed that both Gandhi and Bacha Khan were strong advocates of nonviolence, self-discrimination, dialogue, sacrifice, diversity, and ethical reforms, which greatly inspired the South Asian populations and their identities. Identity can be conceptualized as peoples' situated sense of self that emerges from their knowledge, values, aspirations, as well as emotional attachment and relationships with their cultural groups and/or society (at large) [25]. Cultural identities not only are shaped by sociocultural, political, religious, contextual, and historical elements, but they are also dynamic, complex, and multifaceted, and often transmitted from one generation to the next [26]. In order to address the research goal, the paper examines six identity elements: (i) gender; (ii) age-based (particularly youth and elderly populations); (iii) class (specifically lower-caste populations); (iv) ethnicity; (v) religion; and (vi) regional identities.

6.1. Gender

6.1.1. Gender and Gandhi

Unlike some of the prominent reformers of South Asia, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen, who legitimized primacy of empowerment of women (so that they can become similar to men in terms of capacities and potentials), Gandhi tried to transform men to acquire/achieve the qualities of women [27]. For instance, he believed that "nonviolence is the inherent quality of women." However, such moral transformations do not envision men as lacking strength and abilities; rather, embracing feminist values, he called for discovering self in a new light of care, compassion, and reflexivity [27]. Moreover, Gandhi rejected the idea of seeing women as passive recipients of hegemonic activities or as sex symbols, but rather as active emancipatory agencies in both personal and social spheres [28]. In particular, Gandhi strongly criticized the acts of abusing woman in domestic/community spaces as well as customs such as child marriages [29]. In other words, paying attention to women's self-respect, equality, rights, and autonomy in domestic and societal spaces, Gandhi advocated for active and public roles and responsibilities of women to bring about changes [30]. In bringing such changes, he emphasized the importance of meaningfully educating women to help them in finding a new dignity in familial as well as public spheres [29].

6.1.2. Gender and Bacha Khan

Like many spaces in India (especially rural India), Pakhtun society was typically a patriarchal one, where gender disparity was distinctively evident. Women were viewed as no more than property, who had no say and/or power to decide any matter either secular or sacred in the individual or collective realm. More specifically, the educational opportunities for females were almost nonexistent (and mostly prohibited); Bacha Khan challenged the negative treatment of women by drawing from the moral principles of spiritual teachings, historical stories, and ethical appeals. He emphasized that if anyone "wish(es) to know how civilized a culture is," she/he needs to "look at how they treat their women" [14]. He frequently preached that education is necessary for both male and female alike in order to provide the foundation for a progressive society. While noting that women have the same rights as men have, he argued that women are also required to take an active part in national causes [31]. He exemplified his principles of moral education by enrolling female family members in his school in spite of the opposition he faced from his relatives [12]. Today, 15 schools are providing education to females in the province under the Baha Khan Trust Foundation [32]. He called upon literate women to write and encourage other women to educate their daughters in a society where discussion of women's issues in public was taboo (One can find such an example from the writings

of a Pakhtun female published in the Pakhtun journal. A female writer, Alef Jan Khattaka, wrote a letter to Bacha Khan, which was published in the Pakhtun journal; she acknowledged the efforts of Khudai Khidmatgar for the uplifting and protection of the Pakhtuns. In that letter, she emphasized the support for female education throughout Pakhtun society, so that females may then support men in their struggle for awakening the masses and independence [33]. In many ways, Bacha Khan gave voice to the voiceless Pakhtun women.

The teachings of Gandhi and Bacha Khan continue to inspire and shape social initiatives to facilitate emancipation of women in this contemporary era. Following in their footsteps, many scholars, activists, and students are working towards exterminating social evils such as (girl) child labor and their abuses, domestic violence, human trafficking, as well as eradicating the increasingly alarming rape culture in the subcontinent. For instance, women in Andhra Pradesh, India collectively organized social movements to ensure gender rights by opposing liquor businesses. Again, by espousing the values and visions of Bacha Khan, eight new universities and 47 new degree colleges were established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the Awami National Party (political inheritors of Bacha Khan); in their first ever provincial government (2008–2013) they seek to ensure education for both male and female populations (It is worthy to observe this progress in comparison to past development of the province in the educational field; from 1947 to 2008 (60 years) there were only 6 universities and 66 degree colleges in the erstwhile NWFP).

6.2. Youth

6.2.1. Youth and Gandhi

Gandhi strongly believed in the potentials and capacities of youths in nation-building activities. To bring about culturally/contextually appropriate changes he talked about a few qualities that the young should have as future visionaries and leaders [34]. For instance, according to Gandhi, a leader needed to be earnestly self-aware and introspective. He opined that posing questions to oneself is a key attribute of a leader, and also an important marker of their strengths [19]. He further added that the moral and ethical components are critical for a leader who must be devoted to the cause of the people and must work for the good of society. In addition, he valued selflessness as the most precious quality of a leader, who should also embrace the values of creativity and innovativeness to respond to the needs of the time [34]. For Gandhi, it is the moral ownership and engaged leadership, which are instrumental in transforming the society in a sustained way. Calling to the youth, he famously said, “you must be the change you want to see in the world.” On one hand, he argued in favor of experientially realizing/cultivating our own moral strength and qualities and, on the other hand, he called for moral, spiritual, and voluntary transformation of the oppressors, to bring about socioeconomic justice and equity, particularly at the margins [35].

6.2.2. Youth and Bacha Khan

Like Gandhi, Bacha Khan also felt deeply that youths, especially educated youths, need to develop a platform to use their faculties for the unity and empowerment of both Muslims and Hindus. Hence, he established the “Zalmo Jirga” (Youth League) in September 1929. Likewise, in order to elevate/edify the elderly, he established “Khudai Khidmatgar Tehreek” (KKT) (Servants of God) in October 1929, where the elderly people in each village were trained in reading, writing, performing, and promoting hygiene. Espousing his moral teachings, the members took oaths and pledged to renounce violence, enmity, and work toward the eradication of social evils (like lavish spending on customary ceremonies). Addressing potential future leaders, he commented, “If you stand for any truth, be prepared to stand alone like a tree and if you fall on the ground, fall like a seed that grows back to fight again.” Importantly, he trained youths and elderly people and formed an unarmed army (with proper uniforms) to promote nonviolence for serving humanity irrespective of their sect, creed, and religion [36–38]. As an organization, KKT was not only sociopolitically unique, but was also

open and welcoming. Although the majority was Muslim Pakhtuns, Hindus and Sikhs were also members. Bacha Khan reiterated that Muslims and Non-Muslims must live peacefully and equally in their social, political, and religious lives. When the two-nation theory was translated into violent communal politics in the subcontinent, KKT not only countered the propaganda of mass killings and intolerance but also served as volunteer guards to protect non-Muslims in various parts of Pakistan (primarily in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

In the current century, when the gaps between the haves and have-nots are expanding exponentially, the relevance of Bacha Khan's and Gandhi's calls are more relevant than ever. Their emphasis on service and mindful actions focusing on the needs of common people (particularly underserved populations) and by embracing the principles of nonviolence is instrumental for transforming local as well as global spaces. A recent example is the Pashtun Tahafuz (or protection) Movement organized by Pakhtun youth in January 2018; in the nonviolent long march the activists (and participants) raised their voices (i) against extrajudicial killing of Pakhtuns, (ii) called for removal of land mines from indigenous regions, and (iii) urged for dignified rehabilitation of the internally displaced people in Pakistan among other demands.

6.3. Class

6.3.1. Class (Particularly of Lower-Caste Populations) and Gandhi

Gandhi sharply criticized social construction of purity and impurity (by birth) and social ills like untouchability, which are intertwined with the caste system [39]. He articulated, "... caste, in so far as it connotes distinctions in status, is an evil." Embracing the essence and the spirit of Bhakti teachings, he used to refer to lower- 'backward'-caste populations as Harijans (children of god). He also fought for the rights of Harijans so that the marginalized populations could openly and freely enter and worship at religious spaces such as temples [40]. In order to empower and uplift the population of the lowest sociocultural strata, he expressed his faith in the willingness, efforts, and internal strengths—the agency—of underprivileged populations to transform themselves as well as underserved spaces; to him, the change must come from within and not be imposed from outside [35].

6.3.2. Class and Bacha Khan

While caste-based hierarchy was nonexistent in Pakhtun society, traditionally, in Pakhtun social structure, the occupational classes, like Dum, Naie, Koolal, and Jola (Musician, Barber, pot maker, cloth weaver), were considered as 'lower-class' populations [41]. Through the organization Khudai Khidmatgar Tehreek (KKT), Bacha Khan, by dismantling existing societal norms (For example, in one of the annual meetings of the Pakhtun society, Drai Yatiman (three orphans), a Pakhtu play was performed by the students of the Azad School to dismantle the upper-lower class conceptualization. This was the first time in their history that Pakhtuns performed a drama [6], which was traditionally performed by the 'lower-class' Dum (singers, performers, actors) populations.), sought to reposition them as sadar, karnail, and jarnail (President, Colonel, and General). In addition, according to him, it was the Pakhtuns' wrong attitude toward economic activities (e.g., they used derogatory terms like "banya" to defame business and businesspersons) that led them to live a poor and nasty life [36]. To dismantle such negative constructs, Bacha Khan started a business himself and introduced some skills-oriented subjects in his Azad Schools like making Pakhtun caps, weaving, carpentry, etc. To make his commitment even more evident, he started sending his own children to the Azad School in order to demonstrate his commitment to wiping out the class differences and/or elitists' hegemony over educational institutions [37,38]. Moreover, his business initiatives promoted a sense of respect and love not only for local products but also for the occupational class of the society [13,37,42]. In such ways, Bacha Khan not only tried to awaken and unite the general masses but also to promote respect for the occupational class in Pakhtun society [36]. Again, owing to Bacha Khan's efforts the landless people

got voting rights (which was previously available only to the male tax payer and/or land owner), and now all adults exercise this right to vote in national, provincial and local body elections.

Both Gandhi and Bacha Khan emphasized open communication and dialogue among various politico-economic sections of the society to unite people and create harmony. For the two leaders, it was therefore crucial to initiate as well as to continue conversations between working class (including lower caste) and the other sections of the society. Swami Agnivesh's initiative for *bandhwa-mukti* (bonded labor liberation) is one such example, which embraces the aforementioned values and ideologies.

6.4. Ethnicity

6.4.1. Ethnicity and Gandhi

In his life and work, Gandhi was mindful about indigenous people and their traditional/cultural rights. In his vision of a village republic (particularly in indigenous contexts), he sought to ensure property, land, forest, as well as human rights for the indigenous populations. He strongly emphasized freedom and autonomy of indigenous communities, and argued in favor of coercion-free empowerment and improvement of indigenous spaces (to protect tribal communities from the nontribal/mainstream society as well as from the governmental/dominant organizations) [43]. He also stressed the importance of empathic listening and dialogue in order to legitimize tribal values and worldviews in the spaces of discursivity. In indigenous contexts, he believed that education is the key to address local problems. Apart from formal education, Gandhi emphasized moral and vocational education in tribal languages/dialects by paying attention to and elevating indigenous knowledge (including science), practices, and aesthetics [43]. In a way, Gandhi encouraged collaboration and cooperation between different stakeholders by maintaining sovereignty, freedom, and autonomy of tribal populations and their agencies.

6.4.2. Ethnicity and Bacha Khan

Unlike Gandhi, Bacha Khan was an indigenous leader who led his community from within. Being a proponent of moral education, he criticized his own Pakhtun community for developing hostility and hate towards their own community members. He condemned all the evils associated with the customary practices (such as the custom of *Tarburwali* (agnatic rivalry) and lavish spending on ceremonies [42]) and 'backwardness' of the Pakhtun ethnic group [36]. In that era, he saw that Pakhtuns were not realizing their strength and potential, as they were divided into tribes and subtribes, which further paved the way for intra- and intergroup disputes and rivalries. Furthermore, the Pakhtun society was divided by the colonial power into different geographical areas and was not provided facilities for opportunities of social interaction with other tribal Pakhtuns. Even Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, once said, "(alas!) Afghans are divided into tribes; once they overcome their tribalism, they will reach the high status as a nation on the world map." In order to awaken self-consciousness among Pakhtuns, he started a monthly journal in the Pashtu language in 1928 focusing on indigenous sociopolitical issues (e.g., national unity, independence, and eradication of social evils), along with references and discussions of international affairs [38,44] (It should be mentioned here that this journal was banned many time by the Colonial power and later by the Government of Pakistan. In January 2019, its 134th issue was published).

In indigenous contexts, Bacha Khan's and Gandhi's concerns about growing humiliation, exploitation, victimization and dehumanizing of tribal communities are still relevant in the subcontinent. To address Bacha Khan's one such observation—i.e., pakhtuns "becomes stranger in its own nation"—the Awami National Party fought for tribal and provincial autonomy, and finally created constitutional provisions and renamed the Northwest Frontier Province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (refer to 18th amendment of the constitution of Pakistan in 1973). On the other hand, Gandhi's vision of 'village republic' in rural and tribal regions gives birth to present panchayati raj system (local self-government) in India (and other part of South Asia), which not only celebrates the essence of

decentralization and ‘unity of diversity’, but also is instrumental in strengthening democracy and sovereignty of the country.

6.5. Religion

6.5.1. Religion and Gandhi

Gandhi’s conceptualization of religion and religious freedom was grounded in South Asian religious traditions (e.g., Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain principles and teachings) [45]. Once he commented, “For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree.” On one hand, he talked about renunciative (moksha/nirvana) freedom and, on the other hand, he was deeply committed to secularism. In his work, he never maintained a watertight boundary between politics and religion/religious sensitivities. More specifically, he emphasized two aspects—sarvadharmā sambhava (tolerance, acceptance, and equal treatment for all religious faiths and practices) and dharma-nirapekshata (going above and beyond the silos and barriers of religious orthodoxies) [39]—which are still valued and practiced in postcolonial India. He believed that every person has the right to find the Truth, in her/his own ways/approaches/preferences. In other words, he demonstrated his commitment to spirituality by transcending the religious differences and sectarianisms. For instance, in his ashrama, during every day prayer meetings, chapters from different religious scriptures, such as the Bible, Koran, Vedas, and Upanishads, were read and discussed [40].

6.5.2. Religion and Bacha Khan

Like Gandhi, Bacha Khan also considered spirituality as the foundational element of moral education and transformation. Love, truth, and humanitarian service were integral components of his conceptualization of religion; he said, “those who are indifferent to the welfare of their fellowmen, whose hearts are empty of love, they do not know the meaning of religion”. One of the aims of Bacha Khan and his organizations (e.g., KKT) was to let the Pakhtun understand the true values and teachings of Islam instead of following the wishes and whims of less literate mullas [13,44]. A separate division was envisioned in the Azad School (established by Bacha Khan) for theology where the students were taught Q’uran, Hadith, Arabic language (in addition to the English language), and technical skills [37] (Notably, he invited religious leaders to lead the division. For example, Maulavi Shah Rasul and Maulana Muhammad Israel were two important members of this section in the Azad School of Utmanzai). The students were trained and encouraged to dialogue about religious and liberal education to understand and represent Islam in its true spirit [42,44]. Use of local language in religious activities was a key aspect of his work; he appealed to the Ulema to write Friday sermons in the Pashto language, which were also published in the Pakhtun journal. Such a move, he believed, would guide Pakhtuns to unite and understand better (as previously sermons were only in the Arabic language, which was not comprehensible) [14,36,46].

On another note, he and his organizations condemned and discouraged the custom of skhat and khirat (alms giving by the bereaved family to clerics) on the death of relatives [42]. On the death of Bacha Khan’s father, he announced that he donated money to the Azad School, and so broke the old customary practice of giving that money to mullahs [14]. In response, the conservative mullahs said, “Those who learn in schools are none but money’s tools. In heaven they will never dwell: They will surely go to Hell” [14,42,47]. Bacha Khan, through his acts and messages, believed strongly that people should understand their religion and it should be used to unite and not to divide the impoverished and illiterate Pakhtuns.

Embracing the principles of humanity, truth and service as well as the religious and spiritual consciousness, both Gandhi and Bacha Khan legitimized the values of brotherhood and love. Bacha Khan and Gandhi ideologically and practically showed to people that following the nonviolent way in confronting any adversaries and atrocities can lead to a peaceful resolution of the issue; doing the contrary would only escalate more conflicts and create more tensions. Gandhi’s and Bacha Khan’s

approaches are fundamentally guided by in the teachings of Sufi, Bhakti, and related philosophies, which are drawn from the humanist and reflexive principles of South Asian religious and spiritual traditions. Although it is undeniable that many religious conflicts have taken place in several parts of postcolonial India and Pakistan, scholars have noted that inspirations and influences of their teachings remain instrumental in deescalating religious tensions and building peace in the subcontinent [48].

6.6. Regional (and Local) Identity

6.6.1. Regional (and Local) Identity and Gandhi

Gandhi identified poverty and lack of access to employment/sustained income as some of the major issues for underdevelopment of South Asia, specifically India. He argued that while welcoming and adopting modern technologies, they should not undermine the potential of traditional sectors such as cottage industries, agriculture, as well as upgrading traditional technologies to address local/situated needs [49]. He believed that meaningful education and dedicated scientific research are the precursors to solving endemic socioeconomic problems at the margins. Villages and the rural populations remained at the center of Gandhian ways and imaginings of nation-building. In his conceptualizations, he situated villages as an alternative to, and critique of, urbanized/Westernized civilization [50]. He envisioned the panchayet system (local self-government) as a means to ensuring people's ownership and control of social/cultural affairs in building an equal, just, and humane society [51]. For Gandhi, growth and empowerment are a consistent and never-ending process: once he said, "glory lies in the attempt to reach one's goal and not reaching it," which are also applicable in the contexts of regional (and local) development of the Global South (specifically, India).

6.6.2. Regional (and Local) Identity and Bacha Khan

Local-centric development (socioeconomically and politically) was also evident in Bacha Khan's teachings and calls for reform. Based on his deep understanding of the Pakhtuns' situation, Bacha Khan designed strategies for the eradication of social ills rooted in local practices; these practices not only hampered local development but also provided room for others to exploit the community. He believed in uplifting Pakhtuns through education, volunteerism, and utilization of local/indigenous resources such as hujra (Pakhtun sociocultural hub). After deliberation with friends, he established the Society for the Reformation of Afghans in April 1921 [14,37,44] to initiate reformation in the society through sociocultural reconstruction and through awakening the Pakhtun ethnic group. To ensure educational uplift, economic activities, pragmatism, collective wisdom, a national sense of unity, and an understanding of true religion, the Azad schools were established in different areas of the province under the auspices of the Society [37]. The society members extensively traveled to villages of the Pakhtun region, and were welcomed in rural areas of the province [44]. His organization preached Pakhtun unity, tolerance, and discipline. Khan (37) noted that through the process, a unique sociopolitical, psychophysical, formal and informal moral and educational training model was promulgated for the development of the people of the region.

Ideologies and approaches of Gandhi and Bacha Khan influenced several aspects of regional (and local) development of South Asia. While Bacha Khan is widely respected in educational and social spaces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gandhi's teachings shaped various policies and programs in contemporary India, including gender equality, secularism (i.e., the country is not identified with a particular religion), and various rural and regional (including local) development programs targeted for underserved communities.

7. Relevance of Their Teaching in the Contemporary World

In their moral pedagogy, Bacha Khan and Mahatma Gandhi shared many similarities in terms of epistemology, ideology, as well as the implementation approach. Both of them, in their works and teachings, emphasized the importance of transformation in both individual and societal realms.

On one hand, they stressed reflexivity and self-awareness as well as building internal strength and agentic capabilities towards nurturing/fostering individual moral development. On the other hand, in wider societal contexts they called for ascertaining human rights and equity, diversity, unity, and freedom, as well as building/enhancing societal health and eradicating social ills. Nation-building, local-/self-governance, and empowering/uplifting people, especially those who were from the margins, remained at the core of their pedagogy and ideology. In terms of gender identity, they both expressed concerns about gender disparities and negative treatments/stereotyping of women; in their teachings of how to change society in meaningful ways, they emphasized raising women's voices and actions in discursive spaces as well as exploring emancipatory potentials of women. In promoting leadership qualities in youth, their pedagogy underscored human qualities such as selflessness and devotion as important in making meaningful changes in society. To address socioeconomic class differences and caste-based disparities (like issues of untouchability), they both necessitated dismantling social norms and negative constructs, and facilitated social and cultural exchanges as well as creating alternatives to awaken and unite people. In the context of ethnicity, they gave prominence to traditional and cultural rights and stressed preserving indigenous knowledge and self-consciousness as well as ascertaining freedom and autonomy (such as establishing a village republic) to facilitate coercion-free development. Spirituality and religious secularism remained at the heart of their moral teachings; they prioritized religious freedom, religious tolerance, truthfulness, and renunciation to question orthodoxy and taken-for-granted customs, and went beyond religious silos. In transforming regional spaces, they talked about multiprong approaches; on one hand, they called for economic self-sufficiency, village-centric development (e.g., promoting cottage industries), and local-governance, and on the other hand, they accentuated sociocultural reconstruction through dismantling language and literacy barriers and promoting dialogue and resolving conflicts.

Visions and principles of Gandhi and Bacha Khan are not only applicable to wider religious, ethnic, and regional contexts, but their teachings are also instrumental to address emerging intolerances, conflicts, inequalities and complexities in the contemporary world. Previously furnished instances demonstrate that scholars, activists, as well as common people, by espousing their pedagogy, made efforts to (i) ensure social justice, (ii) eradicate social evils, (iii) reclaim human rights, (iv) build peace by resolving conflicts, and (v) formulate meaningful policies and programs to bring about transformation. In other words, the moral teachings and visions of Gandhi and Bacha Khan continue to influence various decision-making spaces (including academic and policy-making spaces) as well as to give birth to new leaders, thinkers, and change-makers. However, in meaningfully transforming the 'global' spaces, the teachings, values, and approaches of both visionaries need to be constantly revisited and rediscovered in new lights.

While embracing largely similar pedagogical stances, some of their approaches did differ. For instance, rooted in the principles of nonviolence, Gandhi called for voluntary transformations of the oppressors, whereas Bacha Khan established an unarmed moral army to empower and unite community members to uplift and develop society. They both raised anticolonial and democratic arguments, and also advocated for plurality, diversity, and ethical and moral openness. In their nonviolent battle against the hegemon and the oppressors, they secured their psychological victories by espousing reflexive dialogue, accommodation, and compassionate communication.

The aforementioned thoughts and moral measures are particularly relevant in contemporary South Asian contexts as the region is suffering and on the verge of war due to engineered radicalization. It seems reasonable to suggest that the gloomy current portrayal of South Asian contextual realities in terms of lack of human rights, and security, religious extremism as well as gender disparity, inter and intra state conflicts all demand that we look back into the moral teachings and lessons of the nonviolent leaders of the region for their relevancy in the contemporary world in general and India and Pakistan in particular. It seems evident that if the philosophy of nonviolence, social reformation, and education, as initiated, studied, and acted upon by Gandhi and Bacha Khan, would have been followed in South Asia, specifically in India and Pakistan, the people of the region would have built/developed a

society where the rights of everyone are more respected, protected, and promoted. In order to protect future generations from the wave of extremism and radicalization, we need to educate our youth by promoting the philosophies and pedagogies of Gandhi and Bacha Khan, including developing such attitudes as respect for difference and intellectual humility where we can admit our own errors. We hope that this may eventually lead to a peaceful, progressive, and inclusive society in South Asia for all (that is, by abandoning the notion of identity groups based on ethnicity, religion, etc.), irrespective of their gender, creed, religion, or nationality. In addition, it is important to note that the two visionaries, from different sociocultural (including religious) backgrounds, advocated for similar approaches and pedagogical wisdom. In-depth engagement with their moral education values and approaches might guide/lead us to develop a model through identification of some key aspects of their teachings (e.g., spirituality as a foundations construct to moral education), which can be followed as well as applied in other parts of the globe (e.g., in the West).

8. Future Direction

There is a need to conduct more in-depth research on available discourses of the contemporary prominent leaders of the subcontinent like Mahatma Gandhi and Bacha Khan as their visions and teachings continue to inspire and influence the spaces of discursivity. This will not only enhance existing knowledge on their leadership and pedagogy but will also help devise creative and innovative measures to address contemporary (and emerging) complexities.

More comparative research is necessary to study the contributions and services of Gandhi and Bacha Khan as well as of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) in order to establish an approach/methodology that could help empower and mobilize oppressed communities in a nonviolent and emancipatory way. Similarly, peace-building and conflict resolution models could also be developed out of studies such as these, towards inculcating humane spirits of sacrifice, love, respect, and forgiveness. Therefore, their moral pedagogies are relevant more than ever for building peace, ensuring human rights, eradicating injustice, and transforming society by walking in the path of morality, truthfulness, respect, humility, forgiveness, renunciation, self-introspections, and self-confidence.

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