

Breaking the Barriers in a Patriarchal Society: Political Leadership and Contributions of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

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Abstract: This study aims to explore Begum Nasim Wali Khan's life, services, political career, and the achievements she made. The political history of Pakistan and the available research establish that hereditary politics is the only source of female political leaders in Pakistan. The main argument of the study is that Begum Nasim Wali Khan is a case in the contrary. Although she had a political background but pursuing and retaining a political position was solely her interest in active politics, adept use of political strategies, and thorough study of Pakistani politics. Begum Nasim Wali Khan demonstrated some rare leadership qualities that won her a prominent place in Pakistan's political fraternity. Her adept analysis of the political situation assisted her in neutralizing, overcoming, and benefiting from the political crisis. Her political foresight gained her substantial popular support and admiration even from her political competitors. The study proves that she was not just a political figure but also a social activist.

Keywords: Begum Nasim Wali Khan, Women Politicians, Patriarchal Society, NAP, ANP, NDP, PNA

Introduction

History has always been biased in recognizing the contributions of half of the population of the world. Particularly, the Pakhtun belt adhering to their Pakhtun code of conduct, traditional gender roles, and a strong sense of family honor does not offer enough opportunities to women to contribute to society. To wipe out this practice and tradition, the role of *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement and their members cannot be underestimated. Abdul Ghaffar Khan (*Bacha Khan*), founder of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement, his close fellow *Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti*, and their followers, encouraged the Pakhtun women to join hands with the male folk of the society, for the social and political uplift of the region. One such lion-hearted woman who defied the established Pakhtun traditions was the daughter of *Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti*, named Begum Nasim.

Begum Nasim Wali Khan (wife of Abdul Wali Khan), who is popularly known as *Moor Bibi* in the circles of her well-wishers and followers. She was born on 24th of January 1936, in Par Hoti (Mardan), North-West Frontier Province (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Sofia Yousafzai, 2019). Her father was a staunch proponent and a close companion of *Bacha Khan*. Hoti remained a stalwart member of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement and later on, remained an eminent political figure in the National Awami Party (NAP) (Hussain Ahmad Khan, interview by author, 2022). He was twice elected as a member of the provincial legislative assembly of NWFP, i.e. in the pre-partition 1937 and 1946 elections respectively (Sohail, 2022). Thus, raised in a political family of the Pakhtun belt, her political background had a profound impact on the political outlook of Begum Nasim Wali Khan. Marriage to Abdul Wali Khan in 1954 opened up new political avenues for her, and she actively engaged in nationalist politics of the Pakhtun belt.

Despite living in the conservative Pakhtun society, *Bacha Khan* had a firm belief in the social, economic, and political freedom of women. This trend was followed by his successors, and the inclusion of Begum Nasim Wali Khan furthered and reinforced it to a new extent. Having the requisite genes of politics in her DNA and the brought up she received in the *Bacha Khan's* family, she was quite capable of playing a vital

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role in the politics of the country, especially when the leaders of National Awami Party were incarcerated, she was able to lead the political workers and keep them united under the umbrella of the newly formed National Democratic Party (NDP). Hence, she became the first woman leader of the NDP and then the Awami National Party (ANP). Later on, she was twice elected as provincial president of ANP North-West Frontier Province and also served as the first woman parliamentary leader of ANP in the Provincial legislative Assembly of NWFP.

Her entry into the active politics of the Pakhtun region strongly aligns with the following historical *Tappa* of the Pashto language:

که د سرو نه پوره نه شوه

کرانه وطنه جینکې به دې ګټینه

(If the male generation failed to prove true your dreams, O, beloved country, the girls will win you).

Then she did not step back from the Secular and Pakhtun Nationalist Politics and got the honor of first elected woman member of the assembly on a general seat from the NWFP during her first attempt in the active politics of the country.

Begum Nasim Wali Khan has always remained a strong proponent of women's participation in the electoral process. She believed that "Women must participate in politics and electoral process as they are a key part of the society. Ignoring women is tantamount to ignoring the majority of the society" (Abdali, 2021).

The present work is an attempt to look over the political role of Begum Nasim Wali Khan, who might play a role as a catalyst for the Pakhtun women to take part in the active politics of the country.

Methodology

The research is based purely on a qualitative method, while using a historical descriptive style. The authors have benefited from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data has been generated from interviews and original reports, while the secondary data has been collected from books, journals, articles, newspapers, and magazines. Moreover, the (APA 6th) style of citation for research and dissertation has been applied for referencing, etc.

Early Life of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

Begum Nasim Wali Khan was born on January 24, 1936, in Par Hoti, a historic village in Mardan District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Her birth was portended as a momentous pleasure of the victory of *Khudai Khidmatgars* in the elections of 1937, which resulted in stabilizing the government of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* in the North-West Frontier Province (Ahmad, 1996). Her father, Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti, was a stalwart activist of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement and a convenient accompaniment of Bacha Khan. While her mother, *Meher Sultana*, was a housewife from a respectable landlord family. Her parents were from the same family and belonged to the *Lakhkar Khel* sub-tribe of Yousafzai (Hoti) Mardan (Bashir, 2012). She stood third among her six siblings. *Amina Bibi* and *Zubaida Bibi* were older than her. Whereas, two other sisters, *Parveen Bibi*, *Surayya Bibi*, and a brother, *Azam Khan Hoti*, ex-federal minister of communication, were younger than Begum Nasim Wali Khan. She was famous in all of her family with her nickname *Chamo*.

She passed her early life as an ordinary Pakhtun girl. At home, she learned to cook, do laundry, sew, and perform other routine household activities. Despite the presence of maids, girls were required to learn these skills due to family tradition. She was very cooperative towards her parents and docile from her early childhood. She used to help her mother with household chores. Whenever her father used to go for processions and demonstrations, she helped him in making his baggage. Her urbanity led her to earn the moniker of "obedient daughter" (Bashir, 2012).

The close ties of her family with the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement gave her a loving nature. Lies, blaming, aggression, hatred, and defective arguments remained inappropriate here. This aided her in

building high ethics, morals, and morale in her upcoming life. Logic, truth, boldness, and fairness became her guiding principles in life (Khan, 2016).

She got her early education from a co-education primary school, *Sanatham Dharam* Primary School, Mardan. However, she had to face problems in getting higher education, as she had expressed in an interview:

After passing my grade-eight examination, my family was not happy with my going to school because of many reasons; my father was in prison, and there were no girls' schools where I could properly study along with other girls, and I had to go to a boys' school, which was not liked by my family. But being a follower of Bacha Khan, my father intended to educate me (Mohmand, 2014).

Due to her willpower and support of her parents, she matriculated from the *Bicket Ganj* (pronounced in Pashto as *Bigarh Ganj*) Boys School, Mardan, in 1952. She was so devoted to her studies that she completed her intermediate (FSc) in 1961, seven years after her marriage. She says about her going to the Home Economics College in Peshawar as:

After I married Wali Khan, I enrolled at Home Economics College at the University of Peshawar. I would go to college with my children, Gulalai Wali Khan, who was in class 2nd, and Sangeen Wali Khan, who was in Play Group (Mohmand, 2014).

After completing her FSc, she went to London with Abdul Wali Khan and was all set to take her Bachelor's (BSc) exams there. "But the college administration did not allow her on the pretext that she was there for a political purpose" (Mohmand, 2014).

Due to her engagements in *Shahi Bagh*, she had to continue her informal studies instead of joining any college or university. As she had to look after her two daughters, *Nasreen Bibi* and *Parveen Bibi*, and one son, *Asfandiyar Wali Khan*, the children of Abdul Wali Khan from his late wife *Gohar Taj Bibi (Tajo Bibi)*. As she died after the *Babrra* massacre, as she was pregnant and gave birth to twins, one *Asfandiyar Wali Khan* survived while the other, along with his mother, died on February 14, 1949 (Faiza Khan, 2016). (May their soul rest in eternal peace).

Wali Khan was compelled by his family to marry for the second time. So that his surviving children could be nursed properly. In this context, Khan Abdul Ghani Khan, the famous Pashto poet and elder brother of Wali Khan, visited Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti and requested the hand of his beloved daughter *Nasim Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti* to become *Begum Nasim Wali Khan* (Khan, 2016).

There was a clear age difference between Abdul Wali Khan and Begum Nasim. At the time of marriage, she was only 18 years old, while Wali Khan was at the age of 37. But due to the close ties of her father with Bacha Khan's family, he was not able to reject the proposal of his peers. Thus, her father and maternal uncle, *Pardul Khan*, accepted the honor (Hewad, 2007). The marriage ceremony was held on Monday, November 22nd, 1954, at Attock, district of Punjab Province. It was because of a ban imposed on her father-in-law Bacha Khan entrance into the NWFP. So, the wedding procession (*Baraat*) was carried to Attock Fort, where Bacha Khan himself solemnized their *Nikah* and sent them back home (Charsadda) (Kashar, 2022).

Begum Nasim Wali Khan entered *Shahi Bagh* not only as a bride, but also as the mother of three children. Later, she gave birth to two children. In July 1957, her first daughter was born, named *Gulalai Wali Khan* (the first-ever female surgeon in Pakhtun history). On June 7, 1959, a son was born named *Sangeen Wali Khan*. Despite the fact that she was a political figure, she compartmentalized her political and household life and did not let her household life be affected. She used to cook a variety of dishes. She was an expert at making the delectable *Pulao* and *Chapli Kabab*. She was affected by baking before entering politics because her husband, Wali Khan, adored her hand-made baking and pastries (Ahmad Paracha, n.d.). She was so fastidious about the Pakhtun traditions. She used to dress plainly and wear a *chador* according to the regional culture. Wearing a *Chaadar* is a long-standing practice and tradition of the Pakhtun women's veil, which is considered a gesture of respect for women (Paracha, n.d.).

Political Ideology of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

Being the daughter of Amir Muhammad Khan Hoti, a prominent figure of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement, we have no logical reason to decline Begum Nasim Wali Khan's involvement in politics because she got political training from her early life. However, she stayed practically far away from active politics. She firmly believed in nationalist political ideology and therefore, from the very beginning, she started to learn about it. The only Pashto monthly magazine, *Pakhtun*, may have been under her study, and it must have influenced her intellect. As she herself says, our parents taught all of our siblings the idea that a single moment of freedom is a million times preferable to a thousand years of slavery. Therefore, every member of our family was affected by this emotion (Paracha, n.d.).

Political affiliation of Begum Nasim Wali Khan with the ideology of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement can be traced in her interview, in which she commented as follows:

One day, policemen raided our house. My youngest sister innocently asked the policeman what would be left with us if you took all things and utensils from us. The policeman replied, "Ok! If you want to get them back, stop fighting the British." My sister then answered bravely, "If it is so, leave nothing here for us. We do not need these things; we need freedom (Khan, 2016).

Political Career of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

Among the great personalities of the world, the role of women politicians cannot be blotted out. Despite many hurdles, women had played a key role in different social and political movements like men. The Mughal emperor Jahangir, while appreciating the superior abilities of his wife, Meher-ul-Nisa (*Noor Jehan*), says that it would have been impossible for him to take over the reins of government without the help of *Noor Jehan*. Queen Victoria ruled half of the world. Fatima Jinnah's outstanding support for her brother, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in political affairs is also a part of history. *Malala of Maiwand*, Afghanistan, is an example of respect and decency (Khan, 2021).

Among the Pakhtuns, there were some courageous women like Begum Nasim Wali Khan. Of course, she was a woman with incredible aptitude. She was nurtured in an enlightened environment, under the shadow of her parents. As her family had remained the rulers of this area for a long time. Therefore for she had inherited political statesmanship from her forefathers (Abdali, 2021).

She was the daughter-in-law of Bacha Khan, whose personality is the source of inspiration for the Pakhtun political, social, and reform Movements. He saw the Political, religious, and reform movements closely across Asia. He had travelled to different countries in the world. From which the grievousness of humanity was created in his thinking. The same virtue came to the fore in the *Anjuman Islah ul Afaghina* and in the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement. He wanted to reform the whole of the society of Pakhtuns; therefore, he began the process from his home. For example, in Pakhtun society, it is considered a demerit that men and women take a meal together. So, he used to sit with the women of the house at dinner and consulted with them in most of the chores (Sajid Abu Taltand, interview by author, 2022). He even held some political meetings in his house, which made this house a political center for the Pakhtun belt. Thus, it was a natural phenomenon that she was influenced by such a political environment, and she opted for a political career. Her qualities were further improved by her relationship with Abdul Wali Khan. It was why, when Wali Khan became a political prisoner, she entered the political arena and demonstrated the skills she had achieved from her political background. By actively engaging in politics, she convinced the world that Pakhtun women are capable of promoting, along with their brothers, and that Pakhtun women are competent enough to lead a democratic and Pakhtun nationalist movement.

Begum Nasim Wali Khan had not joined politics at all; instead, she was compelled by the situation created by the political turmoil after the removal of General Ayub Khan. After the elections of 1970 and the debacle of Pakistan, the National Awami Party of Abdul Wali Khan formed a coalition government with JUI and later with JUI and PPP. However, not only was their government toppled, but a ban was also laid upon the activities of NAP, and its leaders were incarcerated in false cases. One such case was initiated against Wali Khan, known as the "Hyderabad Conspiracy Case," which resulted in the entrance of Begum Nasim Wali Khan into active politics.

Hyderabad Conspiracy Case

The Hyderabad conspiracy case (*Hyderabad Tribunal Case 1975–1979*) is the name of a former judicial tribunal used in Pakistan to prosecute the members of the National Awami Party. Wali Khan, along with 51 other leaders of NAP, were tried on the allegation of treason and acting against the ideology of Pakistan. These men were being tried for the assassination of the Governor of NWFP, *Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao*, who was assassinated on February 8, 1975, in a bomb detonation while addressing an oath-taking ceremony in the department of history at the University of Peshawar. NAP was banned and all its assets were confiscated. Since the arrested leaders were detained in Hyderabad, the case came to be known as the Hyderabad Conspiracy or Hyderabad Tribunal Case (Aziz, 2014).

On 10 February 1975, the government arrested Abdul Wali Khan, banned his party (NAP), and sent a reference against him to the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Thus, a new case was initiated against Wali Khan and other party members on the allegation of "conspiring against the state". This case is famous as the Hyderabad Tribunal. At this critical moment, Begum Nasim Wali Khan was forced to step into active politics. According to Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, "I accompanied Bibi to the jail to seek guidance from Wali Khan and to get permission for the political role of Nasim Bibi. Wali Khan gave permission and told us to decide for ourselves what was feasible politically" (Khan, 2021). In an interview, Begum Nasim Wali Khan said about her entry into politics:

My father-in-law, Bacha Khan, has been interned at home, Wali Khan was in jail and my son Asfandiyar Wali Khan was sentenced to 19 years of imprisonment, and my brother Azam Khan Hoti was exiled. My responsibilities being a daughter, wife, mother and a sister made me fight the regime (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interviewed by Eshrat ul Nisa, 1997).

On February 10, 1975, the National Assembly passed two bills, empowering the government to detain any Member of the National Assembly or Provincial Assembly for security reasons. The second bill amended the Political Parties Act of 1962 and empowered the government to declare any political party as unlawful, on the basis of recipient of foreign aid or any other illegal acts (Ziring, n.d.). Under the act, NAP was banned by the central government. A tribunal was constituted for hearing the case against these nationalist and progressive elements. Abdul Wali Khan refused to offer any defense on the pretext that the judges were biased (Newburg, 2002). Despite the use of extensive means to substantiate the allegation levelled against the NAP and its leadership, the government failed to prove the allegations (Niazi, 1986).

After the banning of NAP and the detainment of its leadership by the government, Begum Nasim Wali Khan took the responsibility of leading the Pakhtun nationalist people and staging opposition against the Hyderabad Tribunal Case. In this quandary situation, she got up and launched a strong Movement from Khyber to Karachi for the extrication of her husband (Abdul Wali Khan) and the other party workers, which became a golden chapter in the history of efforts for democracy in Pakistan. The fiery and enlivened speeches of Begum Nasim Wali Khan against Bhutto and his policies gained much popularity among the people. Her strong opposition compelled Bhutto to say that "flames are gushing out of this woman's mouth. We cannot harm the NAP leadership and its workers anymore" (*White Paper on the performance of Bhutto regime*, 1979). On January 01, 1978, after the takeover of General Zia, all of the arrested leaders were extricated (White Paper, 1979).

Formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP).

When NAP was banned and its entire leadership was imprisoned, Begum Nasim Wali Khan and Sher Baz Khan Mazari; a renowned political figure and leader of the opposition in National Assembly of Pakistan formed a new political party, named National Democratic Party (NDP) on the wreckage of NAP on 06 November 1975 with the aim of suspension of the Hyderabad Tribunal Case and the special courts (Waseem, n.d.). Sher Baz Khan Mazari was elected as the President of NDP, while Begum Nasim Wali Khan and Ghulam Ahmad Bilour became vice president and Central Secretary General respectively (Amin, n.d.).

Begum Nasim Wali Khan came to practical politics with the formation of the NDP. Her biggest concern was undoubtedly her husband (Abdul Wali Khan), who was seeking retribution for challenging the "Civil Martial Law Administrator". The people, especially the Pakhtun welcomed her. She gave a new soul to the

deeds of the traditional Pakhtun ethnic political forces. Because she drafted a progressive and democratic program for the NDP; its objectives were to abolish the system of feudalism and to formulate an independent foreign policy. In Later years, she rose to prominence within the ANP and played a vital role in bridging the gap between the previous and current leadership of the party (Kashar, 2021). A Renowned Urdu and Pashto journalist and writer, Ayub Sabir, praised her entry into active politics as:

If you ask me to define the political career of Begum Nasim Wali Khan in ten words, without any thought, I will say that she came, she observed, and she dominated. If you ask me how she came, observed, and dominated? Then I will tell you a long story (Ayub Sabir, Foreword in Ahmad Paracha, n.d.).

In an interview, Begum Nasim Wali Khan said that "she appeared on the political arena during a convention of Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP), which was chaired by her. Then she addressed a gathering of the Pakhtun Students Federation (PSF) at Chowk Yaadgar, which is considered to be a historic speech (Mohmand, 2014).

She admits that her political participation was considered a revolt against her own family and the family of Abdul Wali Khan as well. In an interview, she recalls that I still face resistance from within the party, but women have to play a role in every walk of life (Mureeb Mohmand, 2014). After the extrication of NAP leadership, some senior leaders objected to the activities of Begum Nasim Wali Khan and said that now that all the leadership has been released, she should stay away from party affairs and politics. But Abdul Wali Khan supported her on the pretext that our party (ANP) is a secular party that always talks about the rights and involvement of women in politics. Now, if I order my wife to withdraw from politics, it will be against the party narrative. If she wants to withdraw from political life, considering the circumstances, I cannot forbid her, as she has carte blanche to make her own decisions (Hayat Roghani, interview by author, 2022).

Participation in the Electoral Process from 1977 to 1993

In January 1977, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, announced the schedule for the next general elections in the country, to be held on 07 and 10 March 1977 for the National and Provincial Assemblies, respectively. Soon, the nine opposition parties entered into an electoral alliance against Bhutto, under the banner of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). This alliance was formed to undertake a political campaign as a single block against the left-leaning Pakistan People's Party in the general elections of 1977. The National Democratic Party (NDP) also joined the alliance, and hence, for the first time, the Left and Right political forces joined hands in the electoral history of the country. During these elections, Begum Nasim Wali Khan was serving as a vice president of NDP.

When the voting took place on March 07, the results were not according to the expectations of the PNA leaders. Out of the 200 total seats of the National Assembly, the PPP secured 155, the PNA 36, the Qayyum Muslim League 01, and the independent 08 (Akhtar Rashid, 1980). Thus, PNA refused to accept the outcomes and alleged that the elections had been rigged massively in accordance with a calculated plan. The PNA decided to boycott the elections to the Provincial Assemblies scheduled for March 10, 1977 (Ahmad, n.d.). But the government did not take the matter seriously until the PNA launched a movement across the country for fresh, free, and fair elections under the supervision of the Army and Judiciary. However, after the loss of some life and property in Karachi and Lahore, the PNA leaders agreed to meet Bhutto and seek out a talked settlement (Ziring, n.d.).

Begum Nasim Wali Khan contested the election of 1977 on the ticket of PNA from the constituencies of NA-4 Peshawar and NA-8 Mardan. She got 48653 votes from NA-4 and 36585 from NA-8, Mardan. Thus, she won both the constituency and became the first elected woman in general seat from the Pakhtun belt in the electoral history of the country (Sohail, 2022).

As Begum Nasim Wali Khan was known for her tenacious spirit, Ghulam Ahmad Bilour says that, "When in 1977 the opposition was indecisive on tendering resignations from the National Assembly to mount pressure on Bhutto, Moor Bibi was the first to announce her resignations from both the National Assembly seats (Khan, 2021).

On July 02, 1977, Bhutto reached an understanding with PNA on a number of issues, but on July 05, the Army Chief General Zia arrested Bhutto, toppled down his government, and proclaimed Martial Law in the country for the third time (Ahmad, n.d.).

With the win of 1977 elections, she got the honor of the first ever elected woman member of the assembly from the NWFP. But due to the proclamation of Martial Law, she did not take the oath as a Member of the National Assembly (Abdali, 2021).

In July, 1986, left leaning politicians like Abdul Wali Khan, Muhammad Afzal Khan Lala and Abdul Lateef Afridi from NWFP, Abdul Rahman Khan Kurd from Baluchistan, Hakim Ali Zardari and Rasul Bakhsh Palejo from Sindh, Professor Jamal Naqvi, Imdad Chandio, Aizaz Nazeer, Ihsan Waye and Imtiaz Alam from Punjab, form a new political party with the name of Awami National Party (ANP). The aim of the party was to raise the slogan of equal rights for all citizens irrespective of color, caste, gender, and to struggle for provincial autonomy and for peace in the country. When the party was formed, Abdul Wali Khan was elected as the first president, while Rasul Bakhsh Palejo from Sindh, elected as the first Secretary General (Abdali, 2021).

After discharging the government of Muhammad Khan Junjo, Gen Zia died in an incident at Bahawalpur on August 17, 1988. Therefore for the Martial Law was lifted and fresh elections were announced in the country to be held in November 1988. Begum Nasim Wali Khan contested the election of 1988 from the constituency of PF-13 (Charsadda I) and got 11,288 votes, while her opponent candidates, Maulana Gohar Ali Shah of JUI-F, secure 7,773 and Amjad Khan of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) got 4,940 votes (Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Result files, General Elections, 1988-97). Thus, she was elected for the second time as a woman member on a general seat (Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Result files, General Elections, 1988-97).

After the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto's government on the charges of corruption and misuse of authority by Ghulam Ishaq Khan on August 06, 1990, the Election Commission of Pakistan announced the schedule for the next Elections to be held on October 24, 1990. Begum Nasim Wali Khan participated in the elections from the constituency of PF-13 (Charsadda I). She defeated her male opponent candidates and got 14,419 votes (Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Result files, General Elections, 1988-97).

The General elections of 1993 in the country were held in October. Begum Nasim Wali Khan contested the election from PF-15 (Charsadda III). She defeated her opponents by securing 9,813 votes (Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Result files, General Elections, 1988-97). On November 05, 1996, President Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari used his authority under Article 58 (2) b of the constitution of Pakistan 1973 and dissolved the assemblies. The new elections in the country were announced to be held on February 03, 1997. Once again, Begum Nasim Wali Khan contested the said election from the constituency PF-15 (Charsadda III). She obtained 9,785 votes and won her seat (Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Result files, General Elections, 1988-97).

On October 12, 1999, Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf arrested the Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, knocked down his government, and declared an emergency in the country.

In October 2002, the general election was held in the country for electing the 12th National Assembly under the military government of Gen Parvez Musharraf. But Begum Nasim Wali Khan did not participate in the elections because she was ineligible for these elections. "In an interview, she commented about the said elections, I did not take part in the elections of 2002. Because I am not a graduate, I completed my intermediate (FSc) seven years after my marriage" (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Sohail Warraich, 2003).

In all these terms, Begum Nasim Wali Khan served as Leader of the opposition and parliamentary leader of ANP in the provincial Assembly of NWFP. She won a unique honor in the parliamentary history of the country, due to winning her Provincial seat four consecutive times from different constituencies. She also served as provincial president of ANP for two consecutive times; first in 1994 and in 1998 for the second time (Sohail, 2022).

Rise of the Awami National Party in the Leadership of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

In February 1975, when Abdul Wali Khan was arrested, the nationalist politics in the province (NWFP) were suppressed. Some of their leaders were sent behind bars while some went into self-exile and made their way to Afghanistan. The second cadre leadership stayed on the ground and raised their voices as soon as the temperature dropped a bit. Begum Nasim Wali Khan was closely observing all of these movements by the government and the opposition. She presented the counter-narrative of state-sponsored media in her columns in daily *Shahbaz* (Peshawar). The proceedings of the Hyderabad Tribunal were moving slowly. Her son, Asfandiyar Wali Khan, received a 19-year imprisonment in the said case. On November 06, 1975, with the formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP), she began her active politics in the country. Later, the party joined the PNA against the Bhutto regime. The main objectives of the party (NDP) are as under:

1. The party will not accept any law in the country that is repugnant to the Quran and Sunnah.
2. The party will struggle for the elimination of feudalism and put an end to the exploitation of all workers.
3. The party will struggle for the reinstatement of democracy, execution of law, and will support those who would have been selected on the basis of adult franchise and will demand the rights of the populace.
4. The party will pursue a neutral foreign policy, will oppose all military treaties, and will demand the dislodgment of the foreign aerodromes.
5. The party will also support all those people and movements who are oppressed, sustain friendly relations with all the countries, and especially with the neighboring Muslim republics (Farooq Qureshi, n.d.).

The context of the manifesto was the same as that of NAP. So, it seemed that if NAP was renamed. Because Begum Nasim Wali Khan and the NAP influence were perceptible behind the point. She could take part in decision-making because she was now a "working politician". She attended the public meetings with zeal and zest and played an energetic role in reuniting workers who had scattered after the actions of the government. On March 11, 1977, protests against the government were started across the country. She attended a public meeting in Peshawar and presented her stance as:

We still recall the promise of the Chief Election Commissioner for free and fair elections, but the government has not made public the actual results. The public must speak up and force the government to stay impartial in polls. We fight for an ideology, not for an individual (Paracha, n.d.).

She attended a public gathering (*Jalsa*) in *Chowk e Yaadgar*, Peshawar, on the same day and showed her resolution as:

Chowk e Yadgar may have witnessed this greatest gathering for the first time since 1930. We have not been suppressed by the British imperialists, who is this 'Wadira' to suppress us? (Paracha, n.d.).

On March 14, 1977, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, along with Maulana Mufti Mehmood, were incarcerated, but they were released after eighteen hours of detention. On the very next day, she spoke at a press conference in *Bilour House*, Peshawar and said that "the government is trying to make a rift amongst the opposition parties based on regional nationalism. But this is not a regional issue, in fact, this is the issue of Pakistan. When called upon, the workers and people will come to clear their way if the government sends their leadership behind bars. We say let the people vote first, while the government says that people have voted them" (Paracha, n.d.). She used to wear a "black shawl" as a symbol of protest till the ouster of Bhutto. However, she replaced her black shawl with white one in December 1977 (Khan, 2021).

National Democratic Party marked March 26 as "Black Day" and scheduled protests across the country. Begum Nasim Wali Khan was interned by the government for three months at her home. The workers of NDP raised a slogan for her release and threatened the government that if the government did not release Begum Nasim Wali Khan till May 15, they will offer themselves to be detained. On June 03, the situation got worse and government called for dialogue with PNA leadership. The alliance had rejected Ministerial-level dialogues. On May 04, the alliance presented its demands in the shape of a detailed draft. In the said draft the demands of alliance were the dissolutions of national and provincial Assemblies, the new free and fair elections, recall of army from Baluchistan province, termination of all Special Tribunals and

release of all imprisoned opposition leaders. Government accepted demands like the release of the Opposition leaders and an end of hostile propaganda against the alliance. Both, government and opposition agreed to put an end to processions and rallies against each other (Raza, n.d.).

On June 03, 1977 Bhutto invited the united opposition for the resolution of issues on table. On June 12, the government presented its own proposal to the alliance. Begum Nasim Wali Khan, Sher Baz Mazari and Asghar Khan were considered hardliners in PNA. There for Bhutto wanted to meet these leaders separately, but they refused (Rafi Raza, n.d.). The negotiations started in the Prime Minister Secretariat in Islamabad. But both sides failed to reach any conclusion till June 15, 1977. Prime Minister Bhutto held a press conference at midnight to announce that the agreement would be finalized the next day. But unfortunately, the next day was not to be on Bhutto's terms; at 1.30 am, "Operation Fair Play" was put into action by General Zia, and Bhutto was removed from office (Raza, n.d.).

From the first day, entering into active politics, Begum Nasim Wali Khan had turned the soul of the coalition of the opposition political parties. She did not step back from her stance and never considered engaging in political compromise.

In January 1979 in an interview with anchor Mr. Khalil on Pakistan Television (PTV), she commented about her role in Pakistan National Alliance as:

Our leadership played a significant role in the formation of Pakistan National Alliance, and without any hesitation I am proud that we gave such a great forum to the democratic political forces of the country to resist a feudal-minded dictator for democracy. It is an honor for me, because I played a vital role in maintaining the alliance (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Khalil, 1979).

In December 1977, General Zia released the incarcerated leaders of NAP, including Wali Khan, and withdrew all cases against them (Khan A. Wali Khan, n.d.). When her husband Wali Khan came after 34 months imprisonment, Begum Nasim Wali Khan had constructed "Wali Bagh" in the honor of his name.

Being a democratic and secular politician, Wali Khan remained incarcerated for several times. Therefore, Begum Nasim Wali Khan led the party for years. She endorsed the culture of political coalitions with the mainstream political parties of the country. The party politics were introduced with newer trends after the joint politics with other rightist and leftist political forces on the platform of PNA. Because, now the ideology did not remained the only concern of the party, but they become aware from the dynamic of power and willing to make adjustment to gain and use it for political purposes. Thus, the experience of coalition building took the party far away from the provincial outlook and philosophy. In its journey through the National Awami Party (NAP) and National Democratic Party (NDP), it has increasingly played a role in national politics, calling for secular and progressive goals as well as provincial autonomy. Begum Nasim Wali Khan used all of her capabilities to promote and protect the vision of Wali Khan's politics in the party, after he resigned from electoral politics.

After the general elections of 1988, the Awami National Party formed an alliance with the Pakistan People's Party at the provincial and federal levels. In 1989, the alliance was ended when political differences arose over provincial autonomy and financial distribution. After the elections of 1990, when PML (N) won and Nawaz Sharif became the Prime Minister, the party allied with him. The alliance was signed by Begum Nasim Wali Khan on behalf of ANP, while Sardar Mehtab Ahmad Khan Abbasi from PML (N).

During the alliance with the PML (N), the Bank of Khyber (BOK) was established. Begum Nasim Wali Khan, being a coalition partner of PML (N), made it possible for the Bank of Khyber to be established in 1991 by securing passage of Act No. XIV by the Provincial Legislative Assembly of NWFP. In 1994, the BOK received the designation of a scheduled bank (official website of BOK).

In 1997, the alliance could not continue further due to differences over the issues of Kala Bagh Dam and the issue of changing the name of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview with Khyber TV, 2012). In an interview she expressed her views about the coalition with other political parties as:

Nawaz Sharif was willing to rename the province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. I rejected that as we were promised the name Pakhtunkhwa. Because our party believes in democracy. We have certain principles and while joining any political alliance, those principles are kept in mind. Because, coalitions are always based on give and take. If a companion denies a written contract, we have the right to quit and leave coalition (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Khalil, 1979).

The death of her husband Abdul Wali Khan and son Senator Sangeen Wali Khan, utterly weakened and suppressed her. Therefore, she left active politics for about seven years. Her husband died in 2006, while her son, a patient of cancer, died in 2008 ("Veteran Politician Begum Nasim Wali Khan," Dawn.com, 2021). In 2012, she announced her return to active politics on recovery from the trauma of the grief of these two losses.

Establishment of Bacha Khan Markaz Peshawar

Bacha Khan, a visionary leader and founder of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement, aspired to establish a central hub for the Pakhtun community, a platform where they could seek guidance, engage in political discourse, and collectively work toward socio-political empowerment. This envisioned centre was to play a role similar to *Sardaryab* (Charsadda), which historically served as the nerve centre of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement during the anti-colonial struggle. However, this idea could not be materialized during his lifetime. To materialize this vision, the movement's successor, Abdul Wali Khan, along with Begum Nasim Wali Khan, undertook a series of organized and persistent efforts. Consequently, a five-member committee was formed in the mid-1990s, with Begum Nasim Wali Khan serving as chairperson and prominent political figures such as *Shaheed Bashir Ahmad Bilour*, *Syed Bilal Shah*, *Farid Tofan*, *Engineer Ijaz Yousafzai*, and *Engineer Zard Ali Khan* as members.

The groundwork for the centre was laid in Peshawar in 1996, marking the beginning of its construction. By 1998, the structure was completed, and it was formally inaugurated by Abdul Wali Khan. This centre, officially known as the *Bacha Khan Markaz*, has since evolved into the central secretariat of the Awami National Party (ANP), serving as the nucleus of the party's organizational and strategic operations. The establishment of the *Bacha Khan Markaz* is widely regarded as one of the landmark achievements of Begum Nasim Wali Khan, reflecting her unwavering commitment to fulfilling Bacha Khan's vision. Beyond serving as a party secretariat, the *Markaz* has also emerged as a symbol of Pakhtun political unity and progressive struggle, hosting key deliberations, policy-making sessions, and commemorative events that continue to shape the socio-political discourse of the region. (Ijaz Yousafzai, interview by author, September 03, 2025)

Formation of ANP (Wali)

In January 2014, some political disagreements between Begum Nasim Wali Khan with her son, and the president of ANP, Asfandiyar Wali Khan, developed to the extent that she launched her own political party with the name of Awami National Party (Wali). Therefore, she became the first woman politician from the Pakhtun region to establish her own political party (Lawangeen Wali Khan, interview by author, 2022). She went to all lengths in opposition to ANP and her son, Asfandiyar Wali Khan. She not only regarded Asfandiyar Wali Khan as corrupt, but also accused him of burying the ideology and political approach of Bacha Khan and Wali Khan. During the government of ANP (2008–2013) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she remained a fierce critic of ANP policies and its political approach.

According to Rashid Yousafzai, former Pakistani civil servant and author, PTI took advantage of the internal differences of ANP leadership therefore, before the general elections of 2018, PTI started negotiations with Begum Nasim Wali Khan through its leader Shah Farman, later the Governor of KP. On behalf of Imran Khan, he offered Awami National Party (Wali), tickets of ten constituencies, two provincial ministries, and two Senate seats in case of merger, and in case of alliance support in these areas. Initial negotiations were almost successful, because Farid Tofan, Secretary General of ANP (Wali), Aman Khan, and other leaders were in favor of benefiting from the popularity of PTI (Rashid Yousafzai, interview by author, 2022). Annoyed with the situation and frightened by the cogitation of the hoisting of the flag of PTI on Wali Bagh, Jan Alam Mohmand; president of Pakhtun Students Federation (Wali) Group Mardan, requested Rashid Yousafzai to bring senior politician Maulana Sherani (Maulana Muhammad Khan Sherani

is a Pakistani politician, leader of Jamiat Ulama e Islam Pakistan and Ex-Chairman of Islamic Ideological Council) as a Jirga to mediate in ending the differences between the mother and the son. Because Maulana Sherani and Begum Nasim Wali Khan worked together in the political field of the past. On the invitation of Rashid Yousafzai, Maulana Sherani agreed to see *Moor Bibi* in this regard. Maulana Sherani, along with Rashid Yousafzai, Jan Alam Mohmand, and Babar Yousafzai, son of former caretaker Chief Justice Shah Jahan Khan Yousafzai, held a meeting with *Moor Bibi* and tried to convince her. They stressed to her to suspend the talks with PTI. Maulana Sherani told Begum Nasim that all her political life was spent with Wali Khan and merging her party with PTI will be analogous burying her ideology under the flag of Imran Khan (Rashid Yousafzai, interview by author, 2022).

Apart from all these efforts, some of the ideological and well-wisher of ANP also tried their best to reconcile both the leaders. In this regard, Amir Haider Khan Hoti, Ex Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and nephew of Begum Nasim Wali Khan, and his brother Amir Ghazan Khan Hoti made a vigorous effort and were able to convince her. Thus, in 2019, she announced the merger of her faction, Awami National Party (Wali), with Awami National Party (Hayat Roghani, interview by author, 2022).

Stance of Begum Nasim Wali Khan as a Political Leader on Different Issues

Begum Nasim Wali Khan Tee off her active politics at a critical juncture. Therefore, her political stances and goals were defined. She struggled for democracy and for the rights of the Pakhtun nation. Some of her stances are given below as an example on different political issues of the country.

The Name Issue of the Province

Begum Nasim Wali Khan was a strong proponent of changing the name of NWFP to Pakhtunkhwa. In a program, Sohail Warraich; a senior journalist of Geo News, asked Begum Nasim Wali Khan about "Pakhtunkhwa" and said that people of other nationalities besides Pakhtuns also live in the province of NWFP. Why do you want to ignore these people and name this province as Pakhtunkhwa, won't it be a unilateral decision? To which she replied that other nations do not live in other provinces of the country, are there no nations other than Punjabis in Punjab, Sindhis in Sindh, and Baluchis in Baluchistan? If there are, then why have these provinces been named after these names? But the thing is that the province is named after the nation that is in the majority. We fully admit that other nations besides Pakhtuns are living in this province, but Pakhtuns are in the majority, that's why we want to change the name of this province from North West Frontier Province to Pakhtunkhwa (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Sohail Warraich, 2003).

In an editorial of *Daily Shahbaz*, she stressed the change of the name of the province by saying that:

After 44 years of independence, our province is still deprived of a name and its real identity. Why are we not given our historical names, if renaming historical cities in Punjab Province is acceptable? We will rename our province as Pakhtunkhwa instead of NWFP. We will also establish our own Provincial Bank and Television Channel" (Daily Shahbaz, 1990).

Provincial Autonomy

Provincial autonomy is an important aspect of federations. As the federating units are united under certain conditions, certain provisions were inserted in the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 for safeguarding provincial autonomy. There is a clear division of power between the Central and Provincial governments. As the politics of ANP revolves around provincial autonomy, she also had a clear point of view regarding provincial autonomy. As she says, "Political parties always work on the grass-roots. We have close ties and links with our people since the 1920s. We have worked for the formation of the nation and demand guarantees for Provincial autonomy" (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Khalil, 1979).

ANP and Anti-Punjab Politics

Generally, in the politics of Pakistan, the ANP is considered anti-Punjab, which is not understood by the common people. According to Begum Nasim Wali Khan, when we talk about Punjab, we do not talk about the common and oppressed people of the province, but about the civil and military establishment and

bureaucracy. Who has taken the entire country under their control (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Khalil, 1979).

Traitor

In Pakistan, apart from Individuals, political parties as a whole have also been accused of sedition. NAP was banned, and its leadership was prosecuted for treachery and conspiracy against Pakistan. ANP, the successor of NAP, earned the title of traitors and "Indian Sponsored" political organization. In an interview, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, when asked about the accusations of Treason and Sedition, responded:

Traitors...! Oh, we love this title because we deserve it. We are proud of this title because it is a symbol of the ceaseless resistance of our elders against the occupational powers of Britain. Personally, as our forefathers, I prefer this title given to us by Britain than the titles of the real traitors of the soil, "Sir, Nawab or Khan Bahadar". Today, those who call us traitors want us to compromise on our constitutional right of provincial autonomy. Unfortunately, the unabated practice of spotting and declaring traitors and challenging the patriotism of people has never proven useful to the nation. We never learned from our history, not even from the East Pakistan debacle of 1971. In Pakistan, factions earning the title of "Traitor" have always been on the right side of history. I would like to stand and strive for our constitutional right of provincial autonomy even at the expense of my good name or to be called a traitor (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interviewed by Eshrat ul Nisa, 1997).

Pak-Afghan Relation

Being a leader of a nationalist party, she believed in the unity of Pakhtuns, but instead of combining Pakistan and Afghan Pakhtuns. She stressed upon having good relations with Afghanistan. She believed that, as Pakistan advocates relations with other Muslim countries and nations, why not Afghanistan? We share the same ethnicity, culture, socio-economic environments, and religion. Why not friendly relations with Afghanistan? (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interviewed by Eshrat ul Nisa, 1997).

Media and NWFP

Begum Nasim Wali Khan always mourned the negative propaganda of the press against the party, especially while highlighting the role of the party against the British and the oppressors in present-day Pakistan. She claims that:

It is not right that the tempo of agitation had less heat in Sarhad than in other provinces. You can blame the press for not giving coverage to rallies in Sarhad. Basically, you can't compare administration in Sindh and Punjab with that of Sarhad. They have different socio-cultural values. In Punjab, the daughter of Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi was beaten by the police in a Lathi-charge; but in Sarhad, when my daughter was leading a rally, the folks and even the DSP and other police forces were mourning, alas! We are witnessing the day the daughter of Wali Khan is protesting on the road. That is the basic difference. We played our role in the movement. However, if you intend to compare our role in the movement, count the detainees (Paracha, n.d.).

Kala Bagh Dam

Building the Kala Bagh Dam on the Indus River in the district of Mianwali has been a recurrent moot point among the nationalist leaders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the center for four decades. Proponents of the Dam touted it as a way to address the water and energy crisis, largely in the most industrialized province, Punjab. While opponents argued that the Dam would violate the "riparian rights" of the smaller provinces. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most likely to be the worst-affected province, the ANP opposed the said Dam since day one. Since then, the issue of the Kala Bagh Dam has found its place in every manifesto of the ANP. In an interview with renowned political analyst Sohail Warraich, Begum Nasim Wali Khan puts the party's stance on the question of "Kala Bagh being a path to prosperity and its opposition by the ANP" in the following words:

Kala Bagh Dam is no doubt a path to prosperity, but to the prosperity of Punjab only at the expense of the agriculture and water resources of the smaller provinces. Although it ensures the prosperity of Punjab but you cannot ignore the prospective devastation it brings to the smaller federating units. It will be synonymous with arranging a procession of wedding on someone's funeral (Begum Nasim Wali Khan, interview by Sohail Warraich, 2003).

In a recorded documentary, "The Iron Lady Begum Nasim Wali Khan, Unheard Biography" of Awais Ghauri, a senior journalist based in Lahore, Ghauri claims that Begum Nasim Wali Khan had been approached by the US authorities for a bargain on the issue of Kala Bagh Dam. She was offered a hefty amount of one Billion Rupees. But she refused, saying that Kala Bagh Dam is a "Dead Horse" and it will never serve the purpose of the people she represents (Ghauri, n.d.).

18th Constitutional Amendment

The passage of the 18th Amendment may be termed as the second Grand National political consensus after the passage of the 1973 constitution. It introduced several changes in the constitution of Pakistan. One hundred and two (102) articles out of two hundred and eighty (280) were either amended, deleted, or added (Rabbani, 2012). This brought a major decentralization in the country. The amendment bill was passed by the parliament on 18th April 2010 and was signed by President Asif Ali Zardari the next day. It was a major constitutional reform package that aimed to devolve power from the federal government to the federating units. The amendment made significant changes to the distribution of legislative and executive powers between the federal and provincial governments, and also abolished the concurrent legislative list.

Begum Nasim Wali Khan was not directly involved in the drafting or passage of the 18th amendment, but as a long-standing demand and major part of the party manifesto of ANP, Begum Nasim Wali Khan warmly welcomed and supported this giant step towards provincial autonomy. Her party, the ANP, was one of the major political forces behind the amendment and supported its passage in the National Assembly of Pakistan (Dr Khadim Hussain, interview by author, 2022).

In a nutshell, Begum Nasim Wali Khan pioneered active politics by any female politician, not only in the most conservative *Pakhtun* belt but also in the larger patriarchal society of Pakistan. Her rational approach to politics appealed to the general public, lending her unprecedented popularity in nationalist politics. Her contribution towards preserving the nationalist political ideology of her father-in-law (Bacha Khan), effectively advocating the provincial rights and autonomy, will be remembered in golden words in the political history of Pakistan.

Different Titles of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

Begum Nasim Wali Khan has been awarded different titles by different people and organizations at different times. Some of the famous titles are as under:

Moor Bibi

The Pakhtun nation has a tradition of honoring a man by calling him *Baba*, while women are called a *Moor* or *Abai*. Therefore, for Begum Nasim Wali Khan, one of the greatest honors bestowed on her was the title of *Moor Bibi* by the sub-organization of Awami National Party, Pakhtun Students Federation (PSF), when she was just starting her parliamentary politics during the 1970s. According to her:

I still feel happy being called by this name; I definitely prefer it over the title of Begum (Mureeb Mohmand, 2014).

Chand Bibi

Afrishia, a weekly magazine of Lahore, published an article with the title of *Siyasi Jang Ki Chand Bibi*, in which called "*Chand Bibi*" to pay tribute to her political contributions after she fearlessly confronted the atrocities of Z.A Bhutto (Ahmad Paracha, n.d.).

Iron Lady

In the 1970s, when NAP was banned by Z.A. Bhutto and all the leadership of NAP was put behind bars, Begum Nasim Wali Khan appeared on the Arena of Pakistan's active politics for the first time. She bravely agitated against the Hyderabad conspiracy case and the political victimization of the NAP leadership. Because of her bravery despite her natural weaknesses, the Pakistani Press bestowed upon her the title of *Iron Lady* (Dr. Khadim Hussain, interview by author, 2022).

Maadar e Jamhoriyat

After the formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP), she became the "soul" of the democratic Movement in Pakistan. She gathered the people from every region and language into the center of her party, reuniting those members of NAP who had been dispersed outside the jail owing to the scolding. She was interned, because she became a symbol of democratic struggle and national solidarity. With her kind and gentle manner, she entices the people of Pakistan. According to the renowned journalist Abrar Bakhtiar, Pakhtuns referred to her as *Moor Bibi* due to devotion, while democrats referred to her as *Maadar e Jamhoriyat* (mother of democracy) (Kashar, 2021).

Pathani

According to the weekly Journal of Karachi, *Akhbar e Khawateen*, many people would turn out to hear what *Pathani* was saying when she first began to address political gatherings. In her speeches at different gatherings, she tried to dispel misconceptions about Bacha Khan, Wali Khan, and their party in the country (Weekly journal, "Akhbar e Khawateen," 1978).

Fakhr-e-Naswan (Pride of Women)

On June 26, 1977, leaders of the National Democratic Party (NDP) visited Lahore. The visit was part of the rally against electoral rigging by the government. In this public meeting, she was given the title of "*Fakhr-e-Naswan*" (Pride of Women) by the people because of her enlivened speech (x Paracha, n.d.).

Death of Begum Nasim Wali Khan

Begum Nasim Wali Khan's relentless struggle for the constitutional rights of her province against the powerful elements of the state made her name to the list of great leaders of the twenty-first century. She was one of the few prominent nationalist leaders who pioneered and popularized the provincial cause to the extent that it deeply affected and shaped the national politics of Pakistan. This unrelenting fighting lady who never surrendered to the powerful establishment of the country finally surrendered to the Divine will of God on May 16, 2021. Undoubtedly, her death was no less than a crushing blow to the Nationalistic politics in the country. Lawangeen Wali Khan, her grandson, in an interview with the author at Wali Bagh, narrated the story of her last days in the following words:

Asthmatic Moor Bibi developed Hypotension (Low Blood Pressure) in the last few years of her life. In Ramadan, the aged and feeble Moor Bibi, when she fell in her washroom, not only broke her head but also deteriorated her medical condition. And it was for the last time she stood on her own.

Thus, the life chapter of the Iron Lady of Pakhtun Nationalist politics closed (May her soul rest in eternal peace). Her eternal abode (as per her wish) is next to her husband, Abdul Wali Khan at Wali Bagh, Charsadda.

وہ لوگ تم نے ایک ہی شوخی میں کھو دیے
پیدا کیے تھے چرخ نے جو خاک چھان کر

(Meer Taqi Meer, *Miriyaat*, Diwan No 01, Ghazal No 226).

Conclusion

Belonging to the Royal family, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, despite being unaware of any harsh events in her life, was capable of leading her people if they were left clueless at any time. This characteristic of leadership persisted in the genes of her family history, which was later glorified by the family of Bacha Khan.

She was a teenager when she saw the courage, devotion, and commitment of her father and other *Khudai Khidmatgars* for freedom. She learnt and adopted a lot of knowledge from those celebrated and splendid personalities. There for her career does reflect those characteristics of devoutness, political wisdom, decision making, and enthusiasm. When her husband Abdul Wali Khan was incarcerated by the then government, and left no stone unturned to disengage the real opposition from the assemblies and political scene. She entered electoral politics from the confines of *Shahi Bagh* (Charsadda), and her voice rebounded around in almost every corner of the country. The people pay their attention by listening,

watching, accepting, and appreciating her. Thus, she suddenly appeared on the canvas of politics, and her best speeches bestowed her with acceptance from the people wherever she visited. She, with her logical and reasonable speeches, made more of the misconceptions and misunderstandings prove false regarding the politics and ideology, her family and party worked for.

She bestowed the politics of that very era new slogan and a determined spirit. She campaigned to counter the propaganda of the state against her husband, her political party, and her political ideology. She even became part of various alliances to ensure the consistency of democracy convenient. She fueled the movement for provincial autonomy and struggled for the rights of the federating units within the constitutional framework.

To demoralize her, the regime launched a campaign against her from *Spenser Stores, London*. This case was highlighted in all leading newspapers, speeches, and every possible means of communication. To respond to this cheap and immoral move of the regime, she sued in the *London* courts. The court decision granted her a clean chit from all those fictitious allegations, and the regime stepped back with the real Pakhtun spirit. She has the honor of electing the first-ever female member of the National Assembly in the general elections. This motivated other women to come forward and take part in the practical politics. She soon became a symbol of nationalist politics and paved the way for party politics in other provinces. NAP, PNA, and other opposition alliances and movements were incomplete without her presence. She proved herself to be an unbiased politician and always kept herself austere. Therefore, she knew no compromise. Though some of her political colleagues and allies reproach a form of dictatorship in her decisions, she kept on moving forward and reorganizing the party discipline. She, with her whole political dignity, didn't let the legacy of *Bacha Khan*, *Wali Khan*, and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* go down at any cost.

Although she was at the age of 80, her political acumen is still fresh, enthusiastic, and active. The political history of this country will always remain incomplete without her.

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