

Abdul Ghaffar Khan

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Although quite a few biographical studies¹ are available on Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as Baacha Khan, they are primarily centred on his personality and the various stages of his relations with the Indian National Congress (INC). In this paper, an attempt has been made to study and analyse objectively, the life, times and struggle of Baacha Khan for its own sake independently, emphasising particularly his role in the freedom movement, the revival of Pashtoon nationalism and the adoption of non-violence in the Pashtoon society. Baacha Khan's role as a social reformer, an educationist and finally as a politician would also be discussed. The present study is distinguished from others as mainly primary source material has been utilised to analyse and discuss Baacha Khan and the part he played in the political mobilisation of the Pashtoons thus creating awareness in them to struggle for their rights during the British rule in India. As stated earlier, the main focus of the present study will remain on Ghaffar Khan's role in the freedom movement, however, for a better understanding of Ghaffar Khan's life and times, a brief account of his post-1947 activities has also been provided at the end of the chapter.

The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) has played a significant role in the shaping and re-shaping of the Indian history. Its crucial strategic location made it not only the Frontier of India

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but also an international frontier of the first importance from the military point of view for the whole British Empire.

The British came late to the NWFP, owing to its geographical location, which was far away from their point of early contacts with the Sub-continent. As it is situated on the 'highway of conquest', majority of the invaders, including the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Mauryans, the Bactrian Greeks, Scythians, the Kaushanas, the White Huns, and finally the Muslims followed their way into the Indian sub-continent through this area. Throughout the medieval period, until the first quarter of the 19th century, the area remained part of the Muslim empires of north India and Afghanistan. The internal feuds between the Pashtoons also provided Ranjeet Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, the opportunity to occupy Peshawar. However, in 1849, after the defeat of Sikhs and the annexation of the Punjab, the British took over NWFP as part of the Sikh dominion. The region remained part of the Punjab till 1901, when Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, separated the five districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, joining them to five agencies namely Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, North and South Waziristan, and formed a separate province, the North-West Frontier Province of India.²

As stated earlier, because of the distinctive character, the province was treated by the imperialists in a 'Special Way'. Security considerations were given priority over reforms: social, economic and political. Unlike other provinces of British India, where reforms were introduced, the NWFP was neglected and intentionally governed through 'Special Ordinances'. The main aim of the colonial government in impeding the pace of reforms was to discourage the local inhabitants to demand an equal status for their province.³

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was born in 1890 at Utmanzai (Charsadda) district Peshawar.⁴ His father Bahram Khan was a well-to-do landowner of Mohammadzai clan. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the fourth child of Bahram Khan. According to the then

popular tradition, Ghaffar Khan was sent to the local mosque to take early lessons in the Holy Quran. The Pashtoons have great respect for religious education and majority of them send their children to mosques. There was hardly any government school in the rural areas and thus, in education, the NWFP was one of the most backward areas in British India. Moreover, unlike the state patronage of *Ulema* in other parts of the sub-continent, in the NWFP the *Ulema* remained at logger-head with the establishment, indeed preoccupied with Jihad to get rid of the British rulers in that part of South Asia.⁵

When Abdul Ghaffar Khan finished the Quranic lessons at the village mosque, he was sent to the Municipal Board High School at Peshawar. He took his preliminary education there and soon after joined the Edwardes Memorial Mission High School at Peshawar. Rev. E. F. E. Wigram, the school headmaster had a profound effect on young Ghaffar Khan. Meanwhile, his elder brother, Khan Sahib went to Bombay to join a medical college. Ghaffar Khan was left in Peshawar with Barani Kaka, a family servant, who used to impress him with the glamour of military service. Eventually, Ghaffar Khan was persuaded to apply for a Commission in the army, which he duly did. During the course of his matriculation examination, he was informed of Commission in the army and was ordered to proceed immediately to Mardan, the headquarters of the Guides. He left the examination incomplete, and as he was about to join the army, an incident occurred which changed the whole outlook of Ghaffar Khan towards joining army or indeed the government service.⁶ He decided to continue his studies. He went to Campbellpur (now Attock), which had a reputation for hosting a good institution. But he did not stay there long enough. After Campbellpur, he went to Qadian, attracted by the fame of one Hakim Noor-ud-Din of Qadian. Not satisfied with his stay at Qadian, he next went to Aligarh.⁷

While still at Aligarh, he received his father's letter asking him to return home. He intended to send Ghaffar Khan to England to join his brother, Khan Sahib who was there since February, 1909, for higher medical education. All the arrangements were

completed. However, soon, Ghaffar Khan found his mother unwilling to allow him to go to England. She felt that she had already lost her elder son and so in no way was ready to say good-bye to the younger one. She believed that a person, who goes abroad, particularly to England, never comes back.⁸ Thus, Ghaffar Khan had to give a second thought to his trip to England. Indeed, he decided to serve his own people, the inhabitants of the Frontier Province, who were backward educationally and remained busy in faction-feuds and many other vices then prevailing in the Pashtoon society. He was convinced that Pashtoons must be educated, reformed and organised.

Ghaffar Khan commenced his social activities as an educationist and came into close contact with another social reformer of the area, Haji Fazli Wahid, popularly known as the Haji of Turangzai. Their combined efforts resulted in opening of educational institutions — the *Dar-ul-Ulum* — at Utmanzai and Gaddar (Mardan) in 1910. Apart from the religious education, students were imbued with the concepts of patriotism. No details are available about the exact number of these Madarris, the number of students, teachers and their source of income.⁹ The two were joined by some other Pashtoon intellectuals, including Maulvi Fazl-i-Rabi, Maulvi Taj Mohammad, Fazal Mahmood Makhfi and Abdul Aziz; majority being the Deoband seminaries.¹⁰ Ghaffar Khan was also in touch with Mahmood-al-Hasan, the chief divine at Deoband and Ubaidullah Sindhi the ‘revolutionary scholar’, a noted pupil of Mahmood-al-Hasan. They even had planned for the establishment of an anti-British centre, deep inside the tribal area, but it did not materialise.¹¹

Meanwhile, Haji of Turangzai continued preaching against the British rule. He urged the Pashtoons to join him in getting rid of British imperialism. The authorities could not remain silent for a long time. They decided to arrest Haji Sahib, but he was secretly informed of the intentions of the government. Before he could be arrested, at the end of April 1915, he made good his escape, crossed over to the independent tribal territory and remained there till his death in December 1937, successfully organised people

against the British rule. After his escape, the authorities banned the 'Madaris' and imprisoned majority of the teachers, thus putting an end, for the time being, to the system of education initiated by the Pashtoon reformer.

The year 1919 saw India in turmoil. Economic situation deteriorated. Industrial workers were resentful at the worst conditions under which they had to work. Peasants were unhappy over the price-hike in daily commodities. Muslims were protesting over the treatment meted out to Turkish Caliph by the Allied Powers at the end of the War and the 'nationalists' in India were agitating over the 'broken promises' made during the course of War to enlist the Indian support to the British War efforts.

Meanwhile, to curb the 'seditious' and revolutionary activities in the country, the Government of India enforced the Rowlatt Act.¹² The nationalist's leaders denounced it. Gandhi termed the Act as 'unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individual on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based'.¹³ On 6 April, a successful all-India *hartal* was observed. In the NWFP, like the rest of India, protest meetings were held against the Rowlatt Act. Ghaffar Khan held a protest meeting at Utmanzai, attended by more than 50,000 people. In the rural areas of the Frontier, this was the first political meeting, with such a large number of participants, convened to express solidarity with the all-India issue.¹⁴

The provincial authorities could not remain silent spectators to such kind of anti-British activities in the settled districts of the NWFP. Ghaffar Khan was immediately arrested and imprisoned, followed by a punitive fine of Rs.30, 000/- upon the villagers of Utmanzai. Over a hundred and fifty notables were kept in confinement as hostages, until the fine was paid.¹⁵ After six months, Ghaffar Khan was released and allowed to join his family.

Towards the end of 1919, the Khilafat movement was launched in India. It received enormous support in the NWFP. Indian Muslims had close religious ties with the Turkish Sultan, who was

also the spiritual leader, the Khalifa. During the Wartime, to enlist the Muslim support to their side, the Allied Powers promised to treat Turkey in a humane way, if defeated. Once the war was over, they went back on their promises, and declared that Turkey would be treated in the same way as other defeated powers. This caused a great resentment among the Indian Muslims, and they started the Khilafat movement.¹⁶ An offshoot of the Khilafat movement was the *Hijrat* movement. The *Ulema* declared India as *Dar-ul-Harb* (Land of War) and advised Muslims to migrate to *Dar-ul-Islam* (Land of Islam). Afghanistan, the neighbourly Muslim country with whom they had religious, cultural, political and ethnic ties, was deemed to be a safe destination. Amanullah Khan, the anti-British Amir of Afghanistan offered asylum to the Indian Muslims. The *Muhajirin*, more than 60,000, were welcomed in Afghanistan. As Peshawar was the main city on the way to Afghanistan, it became the hub of the movement. Soon, such a great number of people from India over burdened the Afghan government. It was unable to facilitate the stay of these religious zealots in Afghanistan.¹⁷

Ghaffar Khan, like many other Pashtoos, to fulfil the religious obligation, also migrated to Afghanistan. After staying for a couple of months at Kabul, he realised that the *Muhajirin* would soon develop differences with the Afghan government. They were aggressive and ill disciplined. Moreover, the presence of a large number of British spies in the *Muhajirin* rank and file further aggravated the situation. They demanded from Amanullah to wage a *jihad* against the British government immediately which he was unable to do. This led to the condemnation of the Afghan monarch. Amanullah was accused of betrayal for not declaring war against the British. Disappointed at the attitude of the Afghan authorities, the *Muhajirin* started their back journey to Hindustan. On their way back to India, they faced miseries and hardships of the journey.

Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afaghana:

After the bitter experience of *Hijrat*, Ghaffar Khan realised

that migration from India alone was not the solution of their problems. He was disappointed with the results of *Hijrat*. He decided to go back to India and organise his people against the illiteracy and social evils then prevailing in the Pashtoon society. He was convinced that the British would not allow him to resume his educational activities in the settled districts. Therefore, he, accompanied by Fazal Mahmood Makhfi, started a school at Khaloona, in Dir. The local inhabitants appreciated their activities in this regard and started sending their children to this school. The popularity of the school alarmed the Nawab of Dir, who, supported by the Political Agent, Malakand, decided for a crackdown on their activities. Ghaffar Khan and Makhfi were expelled from the area and the building was demolished.¹⁸

Appalled at the outcome of their individual efforts, Abdul Ghaffar Khan shifted to his hometown Utmanzai. He consulted the like-minded Pashtoon social workers and intelligentsia. They decided to resume their educational and social activities collectively.¹⁹ They also decided to jointly struggle for the eradication of social evils from the Pashtoon society like blood feuds and factionalism, prevention of crimes and the use of intoxicants. Moreover, they emphasised on creating awareness among the Pashtoos regarding the modern education and revival of Pashto language.

To pursue some of these goals and objectives, on 1st April 1921, the *Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afaghana* (the Society for the Reformation of Afghans) was formed with Ghaffar Khan as its President and Mian Ahmad Shah as Secretary. The stated objectives of the *Anjuman* included: promotion of unity amongst the Pashtoos, the eradication of social evils, prevention of lavish spending on social events, encouragement of Pashto language and literature, and the creation of 'real love' for Islam among the Pashtoos.²⁰ As stated, one of the top most priorities of the *Anjuman* was to educate Pashtoos. On 10 April, 1921, nine days after the formation of the *Anjuman*, the first branch of *Azad Islamia Madrassa* was opened at Utmanzai, followed by many more branches in different areas of the Peshawar Valley. No

accurate figures are available about the exact number of these schools but a careful study suggests the number of such schools as 70. The curriculum included teaching of Holy Quran and Hadith, Fiqha, Islamic history, Pashto, Mathematics, English and Arabic. Moreover, vocational skills like carpentry, weaving and tailoring were also introduced in the school. As there was no educational institute for higher studies in the province, the students were prepared for the matriculation examination of the Punjab University. *Anjuman's* founding members, including Mian Ahmad Shah, Maulana Mohammad Israel and Mian Maaruf Shah were teaching at the *Madrassa* without any remuneration. On 1st December 1923, the *Madrassa* was affiliated with Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. The main source of funding came from the *Anjuman* members, who contributed enormously to finance the educational activities of *Madrassa*. Ghaffar Khan took the initiative by sending his children to the *Madrassa* followed by his elder brother Dr. Khan Sahib. Other members of the *Anjuman* and notables of the area who appreciated Ghaffar Khan's efforts and enrolled their children in these *Madaris* joined them. As education was free and the *Madaris* were open to all communities, without any prejudice of caste or religion, soon these educational institutions got popularity and the number of students increased from 140 to 300.²¹

In the NWFP, the decade of Khilafatist politics (1920-1930), was termed as a 'transitional period from the gun-politics of the tribal agencies to the speech-making and resolution-passing politics' of the urban, educated and professional politicians.²² Khilafat Committees were established almost all-important urban centres of the province. The emphasis, however, remained on Pan-Islamism and all-India politics rather to give heed to the local provincial concerns. The Khilafatists in the NWFP faced a different kind of British administration, running the province on a 'purely personal' rather than 'constitutional basis'.²³ To avoid a direct blow on the provincial Khilafat Committees, the local leaders strengthened their position by approaching and making alliances with the organisations on national level. In the NWFP, soon the Khilafat Committee split into two groups: the anti-British

faction joined the INC and the rest went to AIML (All-India Muslim League).

During late 1921, Ghaffar Khan was invited by the faction-ridden body of the provincial Khilafat Committee at Peshawar to become its President to which he agreed.²⁴ Ghaffar Khan made a whirlwind tour of the province and introduced the Khilafat Committee in rural areas. During his tour, he delivered speeches and emphasised the need of getting rid of British imperialism in South Asia. Distressed, the government decided to restrain his 'objectionable activities'. Ghaffar Khan was arrested on 17th December 1921 and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment. In the process, he suffered the 'tortures of solitary confinement, heavy chains on his hands and feet, dirt and filth and lice and hunger, and most of all, insults and kicks, from the lowest and most loathsome of British lackeys'.²⁵

Ghaffar Khan was released in 1924, and he received a warm welcome back at home. For his selfless service to the community and the sacrifices, which he rendered, he was conferred upon the title of '*Fakhr-i-Afghan*' (Pride of the Afghans). His imprisonment benefited their cause, i.e., unity of the Pashtoons. Soon, he embarked on an extensive tour of the entire province. People gave him a sympathetic hearing and enrolled in a large number as the *Anjuman* members.

In 1926, Ghaffar Khan, his wife, elder sister, and brother-in-law went to perform Haj. This year, the newly-established Saudi monarch, Sultan Ibn Saud, had invited distinguished Muslims from all over the world to Makkah to participate and discuss the important issues regarding Islam and the general attitude of non-Muslims towards Islam. The Indian representatives included Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Ismail Ghaznavi, among others. The discussion, however, centred on insignificant issues, which eventually resulted in discord.²⁶

On his return journey from the Holy Places, Ghaffar Khan resumed his contact with the like-minded people in the NWFP. As

there was hardly any socio-political newspaper/journal in the entire province, Ghaffar Khan decided to publish a journal in Pashto.²⁷ In May 1928, the first issue of *Pakhtun*, a monthly, came out. It contained well-written articles on a variety of subjects including politics, Pashtoon patriotism, Islamic history, gender issues Indian affairs and social problems. Amanullah Khan's European visit was also given importance. It soon became a popular Pashto journal. Initially its circulation was 500 copies but in due course it reached to 3,000 and more.²⁸

The Formation of *Khudai Khidmatgar* Organisation:

During the late 1928, events in Afghanistan changed the outlook of the Pashtoon nationalists/intelligentsia. On his return from Europe, Amanullah launched his second phase of the reform and modernisation programme. Some of the *mullah* under the British pay opposed the modernisation of Afghanistan and started an organised movement to oust Amanullah from power. Compelled under the circumstances, eventually Amanullah abdicated the throne. Habibullah, popularly known as Baacha Saqao, a bandit Tajik, occupied the throne. The Pashtoos were indignant over the overthrow of Amanullah as they saw a British conspiracy behind the recent crisis in Afghanistan.²⁹ *Anjuman* organised anti-government demonstrations. It was also decided to send a medical mission under Dr. Khan Sahib to help their Pashtoon brethren in Afghanistan. In March 1929, Ghaffar Khan and Mian Jaffar Shah were deputed by the *Anjuman* to meet Amanullah, then residing at Qandahar, and to seek his permission regarding the medical mission. But they were not allowed to cross into Afghanistan and had to come back 'empty-handed'. Before the *Anjuman* could do anything, the desperate Amanullah went to Italy and decided to settle there permanently.³⁰

Mian Akbar Shah (1899-1990), an active member of the *Anjuman*, and a former student of Islamia College, Peshawar, who had gone as far as Soviet Union in connection with liberation of the 'motherland',³¹ proposed the formation of a youth league on the pattern of Young Turks, young Afghans, Young Bukharans,

Young Khivans and other similar organisations outside India. Ghaffar Khan appreciated the idea and agreed to serve as host to a meeting for the purpose. The meeting was convened on 1st September 1929, at Utmanzai and the formation of *Zalmo Jirgah*, with its temporary headquarter at Utmanzai was announced.³² Abdul Akbar Khan became the President and Mian Ahmad Shah its Secretary. Its membership was open to 'every youth without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion, provided he is literate', and that 'he should not participate in any form of communalism'. Pashto was made the official language for *Jirgah's* proceedings. Its other objectives included the 'attainment of complete independence for Hindustan by all possible means'. At the end of the meeting, about 70 participants enrolled as members of the Youth League from various parts of the NWFP.³³ An important feature of the *Jirgah* was that majority of the participants belonged to various academic and professional fields. They belonged to the rural areas, some of them had settled in the urban centres for legal practice (majority being lawyers) but still were in touch with their relatives and friends in the villages. None of them was either title-holder or a big landlord.³⁴

To accommodate the majority of the aged and illiterate sympathisers of the Pashtoon cause, another organisation *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God) was formed in November 1929. Sarfaraz Khan became its first President and *Hijab Gul* the Secretary. This new organisation became very popular. Both the organisations worked for the promotion of Pashtoon nationalism and eradication of social evils from the society. They appealed, time and again, for the unity of the Pashtoons and showed their determination for getting rid of the British imperialism.³⁵ The leaders were almost the same. The same group of Pashtoon intelligentsia who was prominent in the *Zalmo Jirgah* was at the forefront of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* organisation. Within a short span of time, they established a network of the organisation in the province, particularly the rural areas, hitherto neglected by other political organisations.

No accurate figures are available regarding the exact number

of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* members and the branches. However, a careful study reveals that the membership reached twelve to fifteen hundred. Many factors contributed to the popularity of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Different sections of the Pashtoon society interpreted its programme in their own way. 'To the Pashtoon intelligentsia, it was a movement for the revival of Pashtoon culture with its distinct identity. To the smaller Khans, it was a movement that demanded political reforms for the province that would enfranchise them and give them a greater role in the governance. Its anti-colonial stand suited the majority of the anti-establishment *Ulema*, who always regarded British rule in the sub-continent as a 'curse'. For the peasants and other poor classes it was against their economic oppressors, British imperialism and its agents the pro-British Nawabs, Khan Bahadurs and the big Khans'.³⁶

From the beginning, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* leaders had put great emphasis on discipline. The volunteers were organised and drilled in military fashion. They were also given military ranks i.e. generals, colonels, captains etc. Before joining the organisation, the members had to pledge that they would abstain from the use of violence, intoxicants, intrigues, family-feuds and other vices then prevailing in the society.³⁷ The volunteers dressed themselves in uniforms, which varied in form and colour. As majority of the volunteers was poor, and thus could not afford any special kind of uniform. They were advised to dip their ordinary clothes in brown or chocolate colour, which was cheap and easily available. This made them 'Red Shirts' in government communiqués, and later on they were popularly known as the Red Shirts.³⁸ The British Indian government made extensive propaganda against the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, and tried to equate them with the Bolsheviks, and even dubbed them as Russian agents, who intended to create anarchy and chaos in the country to destabilise the government, a charge always refuted by the *Khudai Khidmatgars*.

The most significant feature of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was their adoption of the non-violence and strict adherence to it. The volunteers were taught not to resort to violence and also not to carry weapons. More emphasis was given upon the forbearance

and tolerance. They were told not to retaliate, even if humiliated. Giving examples from the lives of Holy Prophet and his Companions provided inspiration. They were reminded of the atrocities of *Makkans* over Muslims during the initial days of Islam and how Holy Prophet and his Companions faced it with forbearance. After the conquest of Makkah, the Muslims could take revenge but following the true path of non-violence, Holy Prophet advised them to leave them unmolested.

Like many other tribal societies, the Pashtoon society was also notorious for factionalism and violence. Ghaffar Khan's main emphasis was on the prevention of blood feuds, particularly amongst the first cousins (*tarburs*). The Pashtoons really were violent exhausted by the blood feuds, after having heavy losses both physically and materially. They also wanted a remedy to these feuds. Moreover, they were told that by adopting non-violence the Pashtoon would never be defeated, as although violence could be countered by more violence. This sense of pride in registering victories over the colonial government gave the *Khudai Khidmatgars* more popularity and people started registering themselves in the *Khudai Khidmatgar* organisation in large numbers.

Ghaffar Khan developed his own perception of adopting non-violence since early 1910s. This being one of the main reasons that he disapproved the armed struggle of the Haji Sahib of Turangzai, launched against the *Raj*. Ghaffar Khan was convinced that the armed resistance would bring disaster and ruin upon the Pashtoons, who were already facing lot of miseries being the inhabitants of a politically and strategically sensitive area. The biographers of Ghaffar Khan wrongly attributed it to the non-violence of Gandhi, and argue that it was a variant of the same non-violence preached by Gandhi in the rest of India. But their emphasis is surely misplaced. Actually Gandhian non-violence had, literally speaking, very little effect on the Pashtoon mind. The number of Congress members in the NWFP, before its merger with the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, was fewer than even required for a separate Congress Committee. Subsequent events during War years and

after proved that the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were the followers of Ghaffar Khan and not Gandhi. Ghaffar Khan's simple methods of preaching convinced the Pashtoons that the only panacea for their blood feuds and factionalism is adoption of non-violence and strict adherence to it. J. S. Bright, a contemporary biographer of Ghaffar Khan, has also supported this argument. According to him:

“Ghaffar Khan is in complete accord with the principle of non-violence. But he has not borrowed his outlook from Mahatma Gandhi. He has reached it and reached it independently. Independently like a struggler after truth. No doubt, his deep study of Koran has influenced his doctrine of love...Hence if Ghaffar Khan has arrived at the philosophy of non-violence, it is absolutely no wonder. Of the two, Ghaffar Khan and Mahatma Gandhi, my personal view is that the former has achieved a higher level of spirituality. The Khan has reached heaven, while the Pandit is firmly on the earth but ironically enough, the Mahatma is struggling in the air! Ghaffar Khan, like Shelley, has come from heaven to the earth, while Mahatma Gandhi, like Keats, is going from earth to the heaven. Hence, I do not understand why Ghaffar Khan should be called the Frontier Gandhi. There is no other reason except this that the Mahatma was earlier in the field, more ambitious than spiritual, and has been able to capture, somehow or the other, a greater publicity. If we judge a person by spiritual qualities, Mahatma Gandhi should rather be called the Indian Khan than Ghaffar Khan the Frontier Gandhi: true, there the matter ends”.³⁹

No other movement had ever received such a tremendous response, as did the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Ghaffar Khan also emphasised the communal harmony in the province. Therefore, the membership was kept open to all, irrespective of any discrimination of caste, community or religion. Hence, a large number of non-Muslims in the rank and were filed of *Khudai Khidmatgar* organisation.

In December 1929, Ghaffar Khan and other prominent *Khudai*

Khidmatgars attended the Lahore session of Indian National Congress. The Congress delegates met at the banks of river Ravi under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and declared its goal as the complete independence for India. One of the main purposes of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* visiting Lahore and participation in the Congress session was to attract the Indian public opinion about the 'cramped Frontier atmosphere'. They met the Congress leaders, apprised them of the latest Frontier situation and sought their help in this connection. The Congress high command promised to send a Committee to enquire into their grievances. Ghaffar Khan was highly impressed by the enthusiasm and discipline of the Congress workers. On their return to the NWFP, Ghaffar Khan and the rest of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* toured the entire province and organised the people on the pattern of Congress organisation. *Jirgahs* had been formed on village level. Ghaffar Khan endorsed the Congress' programme of complete independence and non-payment of taxes and revenues. In March 1930, Gandhi launched his civil disobedience movement against the British Indian government. The Congress after endorsing Gandhi's decision directed the provincial Congress Committees to undertake the civil disobedience movement accordingly.

In the NWFP, although the Congress organisation existed since 1922, but owing to the lack of members required for a Congress Committee, it had been amalgamated with the Punjab Congress Committee. On April 15, 1930 the Provincial Congress workers brought special clay from Pabbi and defied the government by manufacturing salt. However, no arrests were made.⁴⁰ Next step was the picketing of liquor shops and April 23 was selected for this purpose. The local workers requested Ghaffar Khan to give them the required support to which he agreed. The annual meeting of the Azad School, Utmanzai, was held on 19-20 April 1930, attended by a large number of *Khudai Khidmatgars*, members of *Zalmo Jirgah* and Frontier Provincial Congress Committee (FPCC). After the deliberations of the meeting, the participants, more than twelve hundreds, were invited to join the Congress civil disobedience movement.⁴¹

On the night of 23rd April prominent leaders of FPCC were arrested. To avoid 'unrest' in the rest of the NWFP, particularly the rural areas of the province it was decided also to arrest the noted *Khudai Khidmatgars*.⁴² Allah Bakhsh Barqi and Ghulam Rabbani Sethi, two prominent local Congress leaders avoided arrest during the previous night and surrendered on the 23rd morning. Many volunteers accompanied them to the prison. This worsened the already tense situation and sparked off the peaceful agitation which led to the indiscriminate firing of the troops on unarmed Congress/ Khilafat volunteers at Qissa Khwani Bazaar, resulting in the deaths of more than two hundred people on the spot. This was only second massacre of such kind after Jallianwala Bagh tragedy occurred in the Punjab in April 1919.⁴³ Ghaffar Khan and other *Khudai Khidmatgar* leaders were arrested and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment and were sent to Gujarat jail in the Punjab.⁴⁴

The Qissa Khwani Bazaar massacre was followed by a second firing incident at Peshawar on 31st May, killing twelve persons. On 16th May, Utmanzai was devastated by troops. On 25th May, the army ransacked Takkar, a village in Mardan; worst kinds of atrocities over the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were committed. On 24th August, a peaceful mob at Hathi Khel (Bannu) was fired upon, killing seventy persons at the spot. A ban was immediately put on the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, *Zalmo Jirgah*, FPCC and *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* (Frontier Branch). On 16th August, Martial Law was declared and for the time being the Province was cut off from the rest of the sub-continent; visits to and from the province were not allowed and all sorts of communication were strictly censored.⁴⁵ Frequent firing and lathi charges on the unarmed, non-violent *Khudai Khidmatgar* became a routine. *Khudai Khidmatgars* were stripped and flogged and forced to walk naked through the cordons of soldiers who prodded them with rifles and bayonets as they passed. They were physically humiliated publicly, then thrown into nearby cesspools. All sort of inhumane treatment was perpetuated against the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. On previous occasions, when the *Khudai Khidmatgars* had not yet pledged themselves to non-violence, all such acts of provocations were avenged by the

Pashtoons, whenever, they got an opportunity. However, now they were told to bear all these atrocities and insults with forbearance and courage, and not to retaliate. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* simply followed Ghaffar Khan and offered no resistance to the government. Ironically, appalled at the attitude of the government oppression and as a reaction to the government atrocities over the non-violent *Khudai Khidmatgars*, a large number of the Frontier inhabitants enrolled themselves in the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement, thus providing a boost to the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Before 23rd April 1930, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were about twelve hundred, but, after the government repression, within a couple of months, their number exceeded twenty-five thousand.

As stated earlier, Ghaffar Khan was sent to Gujarat prison. Mian Jaffar Shah and Abdullah Shah, two prominent *Khudai Khidmatgars*, still out of prison, secretly went inside the jail met Ghaffar Khan and the other *Khudai Khidmatgars* and informed them of the government's oppression in the NWFP. They further told Ghaffar Khan and the other *Khudai Khidmatgar* leaders that the government was trying to prove their connection with the Bolsheviks. To avoid further government's repression, it was decided to affiliate their organisation with an all-India political body. As Mian Jaffar Shah had contacts in the Punjab, since his participation in the Khilafat movement, he met Malik Lal Khan, a prominent Khilafat Committee worker from Gujranwala. Through Malik Lal Khan they met Sir Fazli Hussain, the 'strong man of Unionism' in the Punjab, a prominent member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. But to the utter despair of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, they were refused such help against the British government. Their next choice was the Indian National Congress. As the Congress was at its war path with the British Indian government, they readily agreed and welcomed the *Khudai Khidmatgars* in the fight against British imperialism.⁴⁶

On 5th March 1931, a settlement was reached between the government and Congress known as the Gandhi-Irwin pact. The

arrested Congress leaders and workers were released and the government agreed to withdraw the Ordinances promulgated during the civil disobedience movement. The Congress agreed to stop the civil disobedience movement and end the boycott of the British goods. On 11th March, Ghaffar Khan and the rest of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were released under the said Pact. Soon after his release, Ghaffar Khan went back to the NWFP and resumed his work of organising the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. He described the Pact as a temporary truce and exhorted the *Khudai Khidmatgars* to prepare for another conflict. He addressed a large number of meetings and frequently told his people that:

“One horn of the Firangi is already broken. Now you rise and get ready to break the other horn. This is your land, God has ordained it to you, but owing to your disunity, the Firangis are occupying your land. Your children die of hunger and thirst, while their children are enjoying everything they want”.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was invited to the Congress’ annual session at Karachi. Ghaffar Khan and other prominent *Khudai Khidmatgars*, about seventy in number, reached Karachi on 27th March 1931. On 30th March, Ghaffar Khan was asked to declare publicly his association with the Congress, which he did. On 9th August, the *Zalmo Jirgah* and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were formally federated with the Congress, however, retaining their separate identity.⁴⁸ Ghaffar Khan was appointed as the leader of these organisations in the NWFP, thus putting an end to the faction fighting in urban vs. rural Congress workers.

Ghaffar Khan was accused by some of his close associates including Mian Ahmad Shah, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar and Mohammad Akbar Khadim for merging the *Khudai Khidmatgars* with the Hindu-dominated Congress. They were indignant over it as they saw the *Khudai Khidmatgars* losing their separate identity in their merger with the Congress. Ghaffar Khan told them that he did it as a last resort because the Pashtoons then needed help from outside the province. He could see no harm to the Pashtoon’s interest after *Khudai Khidmatgar* merger with the Congress. He

gave examples from the life of the Holy Prophet, who made alliances even with Jews and Christians to protect and safeguard the interests of the Muslims.⁴⁹ The *Khudai Khidmatgars*, after their merger with the Congress, got popularity on an all-India level. They were now part of the main stream of national politics. The Congress, in its turn, got the support of an overwhelmingly Muslim-majority province, a fact that became more beneficial to the Congress particularly refuting the allegations of the AIML that the Congress was a Hindu political organisation.

In December, after the failure of talks between Gandhi and the British in the second Round Table Conference, there was a general crackdown on the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. On the night of 24th December, Ghaffar Khan, Dr. Khan Sahib and other prominent *Khudai Khidmatgars* were arrested. Ghaffar Khan was imprisoned in Hazaribagh Jail in Bihar. For over six months he was completely cut off from the outside world; confined in a solitary cell. The Khan Brothers were released on 27th August 1934, after completing about three years of imprisonment but still were prohibited from entering the Punjab and the NWFP. The Brothers were invited by Gandhi to stay with him at Wardha till the government allowed them to re-enter the NWFP. After exactly one hundred days of his freedom, Ghaffar Khan was re-arrested on 7th December, 1934, accused of inciting the public against government and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. Eventually on 1st August 1937, he was released but, once again, prohibited to enter the Punjab or the NWFP until 29th November. In the last week of August 1937, however, Ghaffar Khan was allowed to enter the NWFP. By the time he reached there, there were drastic/significant changes on the political horizon of the Indian sub-continent. Confrontational politics had given way to parliamentary politics and the Congress was participating fully in the new developments.

Although the Frontier Congress was in office during 1937-1939, Ghaffar Khan kept himself aloof from the ministerial assignments and remained busy in the organisational work of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. One of the remarkable features of Ghaffar

Khan's tours was his vigorous propaganda for the constructive activities. On 3rd September, 1939, World War II broke out. Britain declared war on Germany and asked her Dominions to follow suit. The colonies endorsed the decision. In India, the Viceroy, without consulting the Indian public opinion, declared that India too was at war with Germany. The Congress, at this stage demanded some constitutional concessions in return for their support and assistance in the war on the British side. The British refused and asked the Congress to provide unconditional support, which the Congress rejected. On 22nd September, the Congress high command called upon its provincial ministries to resign. The NWFP Congress ministers tendered their resignations on 7 November. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* were happy over the resignation, as they regarded Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry as 'inimical to their interest since it had curbed their radical politics'.⁵⁰

Unlike the other Indian provinces, the NWFP was calm and quiet. Probably the Frontier inhabitants were not interested in a distant theatre of war. On a very small scale, the provincial Congress remained busy on its 'war path' against the authorities. The Congress Poona Offer (September 1939) of conditional support to the British war efforts had created confusion within the Congress. Ghaffar Khan, a member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), was unhappy over Congress' decision. He had pledged to non-violence and one of the main purposes of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was to serve all humanity alike. 'We have been condemning war and their horrors', Ghaffar Khan remarked, 'and now is the time to prove our sincerity and resist all attempts to be dragged into any wicked combination for that purpose'.⁵¹ He decided to resign from the CWC. Informing Gandhi of his resignation from the Working Committee, he wrote:

"Some recent resolutions of the Congress working Committee indicate that they are restricting the use of non-violence to the fight for India's freedom against constituted authority. How far and in what manner this will have to be applied in the future I cannot say. The near future will perhaps throw light on this. Meanwhile it is difficult for me to continue in the Congress

Working Committee, and I am resigning from it. I should like to make it clear that the non-violence I have believed in and preached to my brethren of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* is much wider. It affects all our life, and only this has permanent value. Unless we learn this lesson of non-violence fully we shall never do away with the deadly feuds which have been the curse of the people of the Frontier. Since we took to non-violence and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* pledged them to it, we have largely succeeded in ending these feuds. Non-violence has added greatly to the courage of the Pathans. Because they were previously addicted to violence far more than others, they have profited by non-violence much more. We shall never really and effectively defend ourselves except through non-violence. *Khudai Khidmatgars* must, therefore, be what our names imply pure servants of God and humanity by laying down our own lives and never taking any life".⁵²

On 8 July, Ghaffar Khan also informed the Congress high command of his resignation from the Working Committee. By his resignation, Ghaffar Khan proved himself to be a firm believer in non-violence. Moreover, this also proved that being a man of strict principles, in no way he was ready even to follow Gandhi blindly. On occasions like this he proved that their organisation, i.e., the *Khudai Khidmatgar*, was a separate organisation, only collaborating with Congress in their joint struggle to get independence from the British yoke. The rest of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and other like-minded people in the NWFP endorsed Ghaffar Khan's decision. After the AICC resolution at Ramgarh, making it clear that in no way the Congress would endorse the British war aims, Ghaffar Khan rejoined the Congress. He was instantly authorised by the Central Organisation to provide guidance and to direct the Congress Satyagraha movement in the NWFP. He began a whirlwind tour of the province, enrolled volunteers and organised training camps at various parts of the province in that connection. His main purpose was to desist the Frontier people from any support to the British war efforts and to tell them not to recruit in the British Indian army until the Indian

problem was solved.⁵³

After the 'Quit India' resolution, passed on 8th August 1942, at Bombay, the Congress launched its civil disobedience movement against the government. On 9 August, Gandhi and other members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested and the AICC, CWC, and the Provincial Congress Committees (PCC) were proclaimed illegal. The arrests of the leaders were followed by widespread disorders in the country. Cases of arson, looting and derailing were reported, which was followed by a general crackdown on the Congress workers.

In the NWFP, in the beginning of the movement, the situation was calm and under the control of the provincial authorities. Despite some 'disorders' created by the local Congress workers, the authorities desisted from the use of force, at least for the time being. Sir George Cunningham was of the firm opinion that harsh treatment meted out to the *Khudai Khidmatgars* would deteriorate the situation. He resisted the Central Government's policy to treat the law-breakers with an iron hand. However, with the passage of time, the government had abandoned its earlier policy. In late October (1942), Congress volunteers were brutally *lathi* charged and their demonstrations fired upon. Ghaffar Khan also was not spared and mercilessly beaten, breaking two of his ribs, and arrested on 27 October at Mir Wais Dheri, a suburb of Mardan.⁵⁴

During the early months of 1945, the War situation improved. As a gesture of good will, the detained leaders of Congress were released. In March 1945, Dr. Khan Sahib, recently released, moved a vote of no confidence against the Muslim League ministry of Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. Aurangzeb Khan and his colleagues tendered their resignations.⁵⁵ On 16th March, Dr. Khan Sahib was invited by the Frontier Governor to form his ministry. One of its first acts was to order the release of Ghaffar Khan and the rest of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, detained since their participation in the 'Quit India' movement.

The events on the all-India saw some rapid changes. After the failure of the Simla Conference, a Cabinet Delegation was sent to

India to solve the Indian problem. The Mission arrived in Delhi on 24th March 1946, and immediately started negotiations with important political organisations. The discussion with the political parties ended in failure, as majority of them were bitterly opposed to each other. On 16th May, the Mission eventually forwarded its own proposals, which they regarded as the best arrangement for the solution of the Indian problem. Under the proposed arrangements, the central Government would deal with foreign affairs, defence and currency. All the remaining powers were given to the provinces, which were merged into these three groups: Section A: Bihar, Bombay, CP, Madras, Orissa and UP (Hindu-majority areas); Section B: NWFP, the Punjab and Sindh (Muslim majority areas); and, Section C: Assam and Bengal (small Muslim majority).

In the NWFP, the provincial Congress leaders were not happy over the compulsory grouping, as they viewed it, in the case of the Frontier Province, to remain under the Punjab's domination forever. Till then they had been following the Congress with its demand of the United India. In the changed circumstances, however, they demanded maximum provincial autonomy within the Indian context, so that they could control their own affairs within interference from any quarter. The provincial Congress also sought the merger of the tribal territories with the settled districts of the NWFP, as the inhabitants of both places belonged to a common ethnic group professing the same religion, divided by the imperialist forces decades ago. Ghaffar Khan opposed the compulsory grouping, as it would force them to join the Punjab. At the same time, he made it clear that the Pashtoons would never join the Hindu-majority provinces, hundreds of miles away from the Frontier Province. The Frontier Congress Muslims, according to Ghaffar Khan, were ready to join Group B, providing, the Punjab gave them assurances regarding better treatment of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. He also proposed to alternate: 'to leave them alone...we are happy in framing our own destiny by ourselves.'⁵⁶ One of the main concerns of Ghaffar Khan was to find a respectable place for the Pashtoons in the future political set up of the sub-continent.

In August 1946, communal riots started in various parts of Calcutta (presently Kolkata) and soon it spread to Noakhali, Bihar and some parts of the United Provinces (UP). The authorities were unable to control the frenzy. Thousands of people were murdered. At an all-India level, the massacres of autumn 1946 destroyed all hopes of Hindu-Muslim unity in the sub-continent, which eventually led to the partition of India. In the NWFP, the riots changed the outlook of the majority of the pro-League Muslims. Earlier, they always gave priority to their ethnic considerations i.e., Pashtoon first and Muslims afterwards, but now they started thinking otherwise. Their sense of belonging to a larger Muslim community became stronger. The Frontier Muslim League exploited the communal riots and sent teams to investigate the details of massacre in the riots-affected areas. They came back with the accounts of rape, torture, murder, destruction of mosques and the desecration of the Holy Quran. The provincial League achieved successes within months, which otherwise it would not have thought of achieving in years.

As any change within the legislature was impossible because 33 members in a House of 50 were Congressmen and their supporters, paying no heed to the ideology and party programme of AIML. The Frontier Muslim League started devising ways and means for un-constitutional methods to topple the Frontier Congress ministry. An organised campaign for Pakistan was started wherein Pakistan was explained as being the only solution which would provide a peaceful settlement between the Hindus and the Muslims. The provincial Muslim League also started a civil disobedience movement against Dr. Khan Sahib. Probably the Muslim League wanted to prove that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population was supporting the League demand for Pakistan.

As detailed discussion of the provincial Muslim League civil disobedience movement against Congress ministry is out of scope of the present study, I will confine myself to Ghaffar Khan's activities. Ghaffar Khan remained busy in touring the riots-affected areas of Bengal and Bihar and tried to build confidence in the

shattered Muslims. He also proposed a non-political Committee to help the riots victims to restart their routine life. He was unhappy over the destruction caused by the worst communal riots. Expressing his views on one such occasion at Bihar, Ghaffar Khan remarked 'India today seems an inferno and my heart weeps to see our homes set on fire by ourselves. I find today darkness reigning over India and my eyes vainly turn from one direction to another to see light'.⁵⁷ He also pointed out that 'India is one single nation inhabited by Hindus and Muslims. There are provinces where Hindus are an insignificant minority. There are some other provinces where Muslims are similarly situated. If what has happened in Noakhali and Bihar is repeated in other places, the fate of the nation is surely sealed'.⁵⁸

Events on all-India level were changing drastically. On 20 February, 1947, Clement Attlee, the British Prime Minister announced that power would be transferred to Indian hands by June 1948 at the latest.⁵⁹ On 22 March, Lord Mountbatten arrived in India replacing Lord Wavell as the Viceroy of India. One of his foremost concerns was the peaceful transfer of power to Indian hands. On 3rd June, 1947, he presented his plan for the partition of India. 15th August was chosen as the earliest possible date for the transfer of power from the British to Indian hands. Apart from many other things, the plan proposed a referendum to decide whether NWFP wanted to join India or Pakistan. Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking on behalf of the Congress, confirmed acceptance of the partition plan. On 14 June, the AICC met at Delhi and approved the proposed partition plan.⁶⁰ In the NWFP, the partition plan aroused mixed feelings. While the Frontier Muslim League was happy over the announcement regarding referendum on the question of NWFP's joining India or Pakistan, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were indignant. Under the changed circumstances, they were probably left with no other option but to adjust themselves to the changing scenario of the current Indian politics.

Till recent past, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was confident that Congress would not accept the partition of India. Time and again they were assured by the Congress high command that they would

resist any attempt in connection with the division of India. But on the acceptance of the Third June Plan, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was really stunned. To their chagrin, the Congress had accepted the partition plan, including a referendum in the NWFP, without even consulting the Frontier Congress leaders. There was only a token protest from J. Kripalani, the Congress president, who protested over the holding of referendum without the Frontier Congressmen being given the choice of the inclusion of a third option i.e., an autonomous Pashtoonistan. He informed the Viceroy of the growing demand for Pashtoonistan in the province. The Viceroy immediately rejected the demand and informed the Congress President that it was at Nehru's request that a proposal to allow every province to vote for Pakistan, Hindustan or independence had been dropped. He showed his inability to re-introduce this at that critical time.⁶¹ This was simply to show the Frontier leaders that Congress had exploited 'every avenue of recourse', other wise they regarded the Viceroy's proposal as the best under the given circumstances, and were in no way, going to risk the future of India on the Frontier issue.⁶² On the Viceroy's refusal, the Congress withdrew its suggestions without the slightest protest and dropped the issue forever.

The CWC and the AICC ratified the decision regarding the division of India including a referendum in the NWFP. Ghaffar Khan was unhappy and disturbed over the Congress' acceptance of referendum in the NWFP because, as already stated, till recent past they assured the *Khudai Khidmatgars* that the Congress would not accept partition of India under any circumstances. Ghaffar Khan regarded it as an act of treachery on the part of the Congress as it accepted the referendum plan without even consulting them. 'We Pakhtuns stood by you and had undergone great sacrifices for attaining freedom', Ghaffar Khan remarked 'but you have now deserted us and thrown us to the wolves'.⁶³ Speaking on the referendum issue, he stated that 'we shall not agree to hold referendum because we had decisively won the elections on the issue of Hindustan versus Pakistan and proclaimed the Pakhtun view on it to the world. Now, as India has disowned us, why should we have a referendum on Hindustan and Pakistan? Let it be

on Pakhtunistan or Pakistan'.⁶⁴

On 18 June, a meeting was arranged between Ghaffar Khan and Jinnah. Ghaffar Khan informed Jinnah of the conditional support of *Khudai Khidmatgars* to Pakistan, to which Jinnah asked them first to join Pakistan and then to decide all these matters there with mutual understanding. Ghaffar Khan told Jinnah that he would discuss it further with his party men and then he would inform Jinnah of the outcome.⁶⁵

On 21st June, a joint meeting of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, *Khudai Khidmatgars* and other affiliated organisations was held at Bannu. After giving the detailed information regarding the acceptance of partition plan, Ghaffar Khan asked them about their views. They were indignant over the Congress' treachery, which caused deep resentment and disappointment amongst them. They unanimously opposed the holding of referendum and demanded the establishment of an autonomous Pashtoon state which would have its own constitution, based on traditional Pashtoon culture and values and would be framed on the basis of an Islamic concept of democracy, equality and social justice.⁶⁶ However, despite the boycott of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, the referendum was held between 6th and 17th July, 1947, and the results were announced on 20th July. The Congress did not take part in the polling. According to the official results, the votes polled in favour of Pakistan were 50.49 per cent of the total electorate.⁶⁷ Ghaffar Khan accused the referendum staff of taking sides with the Leaguers. 'As we took no part in the referendum', remarked Ghaffar Khan, 'the Muslim League had no hurdles to cross'.⁶⁸

Pakistan came into being on 14th August 1947. The *Khudai Khidmatgars*, against their wishes was forced to join a state against which till recent past they were struggling. They simply had regarded Pakistan as an electioneering campaign of the AIML but it now became a reality. Under the changed circumstances, on September 3-4, 1947, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and their affiliated bodies met at Sardaryab (Peshawar) and pledged loyalty to the new

country.⁶⁹ The provincial authorities, with Abdul Qaiyum, as the new Frontier Chief Minister, who was notorious for his anti-*Khudai Khidmatgars* attitude, started a campaign of intimidation and torture against the *Khudai Khidmatgars*.

On 23rd February 1948, Ghaffar Khan in his capacity as a member of the Constituent Assembly, attended first session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, held at Karachi and took formally the oath of allegiance to Pakistan. Jinnah was overwhelmed by Ghaffar Khan's positive attitude and invited him for meals. Ghaffar Khan invited Jinnah to the NWFP and requested him to spend some time with the *Khudai Khidmatgars* to which Jinnah agreed.⁷⁰

In April 1948, Jinnah visited the NWFP. However, Jinnah refused to meet the *Khudai Khidmatgars* at Sardaryab and asked Ghaffar Khan to come to Peshawar instead to see him. Ghaffar Khan went to Peshawar, met Jinnah, who invited him to join the Muslim League. Ghaffar Khan showed his inability to do so. Their meeting ended in failure. Ghaffar Khan accused the provincial administration, particularly the Chief Minister Abdul Qaiyum for creating some misunderstanding between Jinnah and the *Khudai Khidmatgars*.⁷¹

In March 1948, Ghaffar Khan met Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai, G. M. Syed, Abdul Majid Sindhi and few other 'nationalists' and tried to bring them on one platform to oppose the Muslim League government's excesses. Their joint efforts resulted in the formation of Peoples Party. It was the first non-communal 'real opposition' party in Pakistan. On 8th May 1948, a meeting was convened at Karachi and the formal announcement for the above-mentioned party was made. Ghaffar Khan was made the President and G. M. Syed the Secretary.⁷² On his return from Karachi, Ghaffar Khan decided to popularise the new party on an all-Pakistan level. He started a tour of the NWFP in that connection. On 15th June 1948, he was arrested near Kohat and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment. His arrest was followed by a ban on the *Khudai Khidmatgar* organisation and a

general crack down on the members of the organisation.

After the expiry of three years' sentence, Ghaffar Khan was held on another charge and sentenced for another three years term. Eventually, he was released in 1954. Soon, he was at the forefront of opposing the 'One Unit' scheme under which the government announced for the merger of the former provinces of NWFP, Sindh and the Punjab into one administrative unit. Ghaffar Khan criticised the integration of the whole West Pakistan into one single administrative unit. On 16th June, 1956, he was once again arrested. On 27th January 1957, Ghaffar Khan announced his decision to join Pakistan National Party. In July 1957, at Dhaka, Ghaffar Khan, Abdul Hameed Khan Bashani, G. M. Syed and Mian Iftikhar ud Din formed the National Awami Party. On 11th October, 1958, Ghaffar Khan and other prominent nationalists were arrested. On 4th April 1959, Ghaffar Khan was released. He resumed his NWFP tour, exhorting people to oppose the restrictive laws under the present regime. Ghaffar Khan was re-arrested on 12th April 1961, was accused of indulging in anti-state activities, 'including the spreading of district-affection towards the Government, causing a feeling of despondency and alarm among the public and creating hatred between various sections of the people'.⁷³ He was released on 30th January 1964, when his health had deteriorated alarmingly. In September 1964, he was allowed to proceed to Britain for treatment. From London he proceeded to Afghanistan, arriving at Kabul in December 1964. He decided to stay in Afghanistan in self-exile and remained there till mid-1970. He came back to Pakistan during Z. A. Bhutto's time.⁷⁴

The remaining years of Ghaffar Khan were spent in social reforms. However, in mid-1985's he started a vigorous campaign against the construction of Kalabagh Dam, which he considered as harmful for the interest of the Pashtoons.⁷⁵

Ghaffar Khan breathed his last on 20th January 1988, and died at the age of 98 years, at Peshawar. His dead body was taken in a funeral procession to Jalalabad (Afghanistan), and on 22nd January 1988, according to his last will,⁷⁶ was buried at Shisham Bagh,

Jalalabad. Millions of people attended the funeral of Ghaffar Khan, thus paying a tribute to one of the most prominent freedom fighter who struggled against the British imperialism and the successive autocratic/dictatorial regimes in Pakistan. Ghaffar Khan left behind million of followers who still dominate the NWFP politics thus providing a boost to his political legacy in that part of South Asia.

References and Notes

¹ It included D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan* (Bombay, 1967); Mahadev Desai, *Two Servants of God* (Delhi, 1935); Eknath Easwaran, *A Man to Match His Mountains* (California, 1985); Girdhari Lalpuri, *Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan* (Delhi, 1985); M. S. Korejo, *The Frontier Gandhi: His Place in History* (Karachi, 1994); G. L. Zutshi, *Frontier Gandhi* (Delhi, 1970); J. S. Bright, *Frontier and Its Gandhi* (Lahore, 1944); Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, *Meet the Frontier Gandhi* (Bombay, nd); R. S. Nagina, *Gandhiji Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan Ki Nazar Mein* (Urdu) (Delhi, nd); Hari Bhao Joshi, *Badshah Khan* (Urdu) (Hyderabad, 1968); and, Farigh Bokhari, *Bacha Khan* (Urdu) (Peshawar, 1957)

² Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Province 1937-1947* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1999-2000), p. 4.

³ For details see Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'Redefining Constitutional Politics: the NWFP and the Raj, 1901-1932', *The Calcutta Historical Journal* vol. XXI and XXII, 1999-2000, pp. 115-137.

⁴ It was not a common practice among the Pashtoons during those days to keep birth records. That's being the main reason no exact date and month of Ghaffar Khan birth is available. The only evidence, according to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, which his mother told him, was that when his elder brother Khan Sahib married he was eleven years old. Khan Sahib's marriage took place in 1901. so one could say that Abdul Ghaffar Khan was born in 1890. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand au Jaddo Jihad* (Kabul, 1983), p. 1.

⁵ They used to say that the modern education was un-Islamic. The following verse was often repeated at mosques and the like-wise places:

sabaq da madrasse wai dapara de paisey wai

janat ke ye baye zai na wi dozakh ke be ghasey wai

(Those who learn at schools, they do so for the sake of money. They will have no place in Paradise and will find themselves in the hell). Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 15-16.

⁶ Ghaffar Khan narrated that after getting the appointment letter, he went to see one of their in-service family friends, a cavalry officer then posted at Peshawar. While they were busy in a chat, a young newly-arrived British lieutenant came there and on seeing Abdul Ghaffar Khan's friend bare-headed, who had parted his hair in the smart western-style, insulted Abdul Ghaffar Khan's friend and remarked: 'Well, damn Khan Sahib, you too aspire to be an English man'. Abdul Ghaffar Khan's friend had no courage to retort back in the same way. On seeing this, Abdul Ghaffar Khan resolved not to join the army.

⁷ While still not yet registered as a student, Abdul Ghaffar Khan had a bad dream at night. He saw himself approaching to a deep ditch, he was about to fall in, when an old grey-beard man came and warned him of the danger ahead. Abdul Ghaffar Khan left the place immediately and proceeded to Aligarh. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 58-62.

⁸ Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan au Khudai Khidmatgari I*, (Pashto) (Peshawar, 1993), p. 47.

⁹ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 18.

¹⁰ D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan* (Bombay, 1967), p. 22.

¹¹ Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 94-107.

¹² A Committee was appointed under Justice S. A. T Rowlatt. Other members of the Committee were: B. Scott, C. V. Kumarswami Sastri, H. V. Lovett and P. C. Mitter. They, after long deliberations presented some suggestions which were accepted and enacted. They were known as Rowlatt Bills.

¹³ Gandhi, quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 27.

¹⁴ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 19.

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- ¹⁵ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 138-160.
- ¹⁶ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'NWFP and the Khilafat & *Hijrat* Movements', *Central Asia*, No. 20, Summer 1987, pp. 121-128.
- ¹⁷ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'Khilafat and *Hijrat* Movements', pp. 128-136.
- ¹⁸ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 177-180.
- ¹⁹ They included Mian Ahmad Shah, Abdullah Shah, Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, Mian Jaffar Shah, Mohammad Abbas Khan, Mohammad Akbar Khadim and Maulana Mohammad Israel.
- ²⁰ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 22; Abdul Akbar Khan, 'Autobiography' (Pashto) (unpublished), pp. 8-10.
- ²¹ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 23; Akbar Khan Akbar, 'Autobiography', pp. 18-21.
- ²² Abdul Karim Khan, 'The *Khudai Khidmatgar* (Servants of God)/Red Shirt Movement in the North-West Frontier Province of British India, 1927-1947', (unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1997), p. 38.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- ²⁴ Farigh Bokhari, *Bacha Khan* (Urdu) (Peshawar, 1957), pp. 58-59.
- ²⁵ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 44. for more details see Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 190-304.
- ²⁶ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 320-323.
- ²⁷ 'The Pukhtun then had no love for their own language', observe Abdul Ghaffar. 'They were not even conscious that Pakhtu was their language, and wherever they went, they adopted the local language and forgot their mother tongue. They did not teach their language and forgot their mother tongue. They did not teach their language to others and did not care to read and write in Pakhtu. Leave aside the illiterates, when I appealed to the educated Pakhtuns to subscribe for and read a Pakhtu journal for the Pakhtuns, they remarked, 'What is there in Pakhtu worth reading and learning?' 'Surely', I asserted, it is not the fault of the Pakhtu language. All the existing languages of the other countries were once undeveloped. Men of calibre and dedication nurtured their own languages and raised them to great heights. Has any of us ever made an effort to nurture and to

develop the Pakhtu language? On the contrary, the mullahs propagated that Pakhtu was the language of hell, spoken by the people in hell. The Pakhtun community was so ignorant that they did not ask the mullahs, how they got this information and when did they come out of hell'. Abdul Ghaffar Khan quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 50.

²⁸ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 25. The *Pakhtun* was first published from Rawalpindi, then from Amritsar and finally from Peshawar. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the editor and Mohammad Akbar Khadim was the co-editor. In 1931, when Khadim developed differences with Bacha Khan, co-editorship was given to Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq. In April 1947 Sarfaraz Khan became the co-editor. The journal appeared and disappeared several times. Its appearance as a monthly continued till April 1930, then it was banned; it re-appeared in July 1931 for a very short period and banned in December 1931. In May 1938 it re-appeared (three in a month) and was again banned in December 1940. In July 1945 it re-appeared and was again banned in August 1947.

²⁹ 'Da Arabistan be Taja Badshah', *Pakhtun*, Utmanzai, November 1928, pp. 33-34; Mian Ahmad Shah, 'Afghanistan', *Pakhtun*, December 1928, pp. 5-15; Syed Rahat Zakheli, 'Da Shinwaro Ghobal au da Spinmakho Murad Bal', *Pakhtun*, January 1929, pp. 43-50. For more details see Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'Fall of Amanullah Khan as Seen by His Own Contemporaries', *Central Asia*, No. 43, 1998, pp. 109-126.

³⁰ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 25.

³¹ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'Some Indian Travellers in Central Asia', *Central Asia*, No. 25, 1989, pp. 73-101; Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, 'Mian Akbar Shah A Profile', *Central Asia*, No. 27, 1990, pp. 113-126.

³² Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 350-351.

³³ *Pakhtun*, October 1929, p. 14. The participants included: Abdul Ghaffar Khan; Mian Akbar Shah, Advocate (Nowshera); Maqsood Jan, Advocate (Bannu); Abdur Rahman Khan, Advocate (Dera Ismail Khan); Ali Asghar Khan, Advocate (Hazara); Qazi Ataullah, Advocate (Mardan); Mian Ahmad Shah, Barrister (Charsadda); Mian Qaim Shah, Advocate (Charsadda); Nausherwan Khan, Advocate (Charsadda); Ghulam Sadiq Khan, Advocate (Nowshera); Sher Bahadur Khan, Advocate (Nowshera); Khushal Khan of Bariqab, President of the *Jirgah*; Pir Gauhar Shah (Kohat); Amir Mumtaz Khan, Head Master Azad

Madrassa Utmanzai; Abdul Akbar Khan Umarzai (Charsadda); Mian Abdullah Shah (Charsadda); Sher Mohammad Khan, B. A. (Charsadda); Abdul Quddus Khan, B. Sc (Charsadda); Mohammad Alim Khan Gandapur (Dera Ismail Khan); and, Mohammad Aslam Khan (Charsadda).

³⁴ Abdul Karim Khan, '*Khudai Khidmatgar...*', p. 60.

³⁵ 'An Appeal to the *Khudai Khidmatgars*', Hijab Gul, *Pakhtun*, Utmanzai, November 1929, p. 38.

³⁶ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, pp. 27-28.

³⁷ The volunteers had to take the following pledge before getting enrolled in the organisation (translated from Pashto):

'I call on God as a witness, and solemnly declare on oath that I will abide by the following principles:

1. With sincerity and faith, I offer my name for *Khudai Khidmatgar*ship.
2. I will sacrifice my wealth, comfort and self in the service of my nation and for the liberation of my country.
3. I will never have 'parajamba' (party feeling), enmity with or wilfully oppose any body; and I shall help the oppressed against the oppressor.
4. I will not become a member of any other rival party nor will I give security or apologise during the fight.
5. I will always obey every lawful order of every officer of mine.
6. I will always abide by the principle of non-violence.
7. I will serve all human beings alike, and my goal will be the attainment of the freedom of my country and my religion.
8. I will always perform good and noble deeds.
9. All my efforts will be directed to seeking the will of God and not towards mere show or becoming an office-holder'. Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 44.

³⁸ The name "Red Shirts" was purposely introduced by the North-West Frontier Province administration as a popular substitute for the name "*Khudai Khidmatgaran*" or the "Servants of God", remarked the Viceroy. 'We obviously could not have used the latter phrase in official

references, as it would have implied some kind of admission that we were dealing with an association of the pious and godly. Although it may be true that the Red Shirts movement was not inspired by the Bolsheviks, there was a good deal of communistic doctrine (including the use of sickle and hammer badges) connected with it. So the “red shirt” was not entirely an inappropriate term and I think it served its practical purpose pretty successfully’. Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 44.

³⁹ J. S. Bright, *Frontier and Its Gandhi* (Lahore, 1944), pp. 103-104.

⁴⁰ Akbar, ‘Autobiography’, p. 111.

⁴¹ For details see Ahmad, *Khudai Khidmatgar Tehreek* (Peshawar, 1991), pp.182-193; Khaleeq, *Azadi Tehreek*, pp. 63-65.

⁴² Secret Report on the Situation in Peshawar, F. C. Icemonger, IGP, NWFP, May 1931, F. No. 54, Special Branch Peshawar, p. 16.

⁴³ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 32. For more details see *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee* (Allahabad, 1930), pp. 6-28.

⁴⁴ *Civil & Military Gazette*, 28 April 1930.

⁴⁵ For details see Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, pp. 32-33; *The Frontier Tragedy* (Khilafat Committee Report) (Lahore, 1930), pp. 1-57; Ahmad, *Khudai Khidmatgar Tehreek*, pp. 182-426; Mian Jaffar Shah, Abdullah Shah, *A Statement of Facts About the Present Situation in the NWFP* (Lahore, 1930), pp. 1-12; ‘Report of Devadas Gandhi on the NWFP’ (1931), F. No. P-16 (1932), pp. 165-199, AICC Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi; ‘Annual Report of Congress Working Committee’, December 1931, F. No. 85 (1931), pp. 11-13, AICC Papers, NMML; Warris Khan, *Da Azadi Tehreek* (Peshawar, 1988), pp. 82-84; Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan au Khudai Khidmatgari* (Peshawar, 1993), pp. 95-105; and, Abdul Karim Khan, ‘*Khudai Khidmatgar*’, pp. 89-157.

⁴⁶ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 78.

⁴⁸ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 34; Khaleeq, *Da Azadi Jang*, pp. 100-107.

⁴⁹ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 'Za au Congress', *Pakhtun*, June-July 1931, pp. 5-10 and *Pakhtun*, 1 August 1938, pp. 22-23. For full details see Appendix 1, Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, pp. 251-259.

⁵⁰ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 83.

⁵¹ *Pakhtun*, 11 March 1940, pp. 4-9.

⁵² 'Khan Sahib's Ahimsa', *Mahatma Gandhi Collected Works (72)* (Ahmedabad, 1978), pp. 277-278. According to Gandhi, 'In the storm that shook most of the members of the Working Committee Khan Sahib Abdul Ghaffar Khan stood firm as a rock'. Gandhi further remarked that 'It is worthy of the Khan Sahib (and all that he has stood for during the past twenty years) he is a Pathan, and a Pathan may be said to be born with a rifle or sword in his hand. But the Khan Sahib deliberately asked his *Khudai Khidmatgars* to shed all weapons when he asked them to join the Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. He saw that this deliberate giving up of the weapons of violence has a magical effect. It was the only remedy for the blood feuds which were handed down from sire to son and which had become part of the normal life of a Pathan. They have decimated numerous families, and non-violence seemed to the Khan Sahib to have come as a longed – for salvation. The violent blood feuds would otherwise have no end and would spell the end of the Pathans. He saw as clear as day light that, if he could persuade his people not to retaliate, the suicidal feuds would cease and the Pathans would be able to give a better account of their bravery. They took up his message and put into practice what with them became non-violence of the brave.

Being so clear about his own faith and that of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, there was for him no escape from resignation of his membership of the Congress Working Committee. His continuing on it would have been anomalous and might have meant an end of his life's work. He could not ask his people to join as recruits in the army and at the same time forget the law of the tribal retaliation. The simple Pathan would have argued with him and the argument would have been irresistible that the present war was a war of retaliation and revenge, and that there was no difference between it and their blood feuds.

I do not know how far the Khan Sahib has succeeded in carrying his message to his people. This I know that with him non-violence is a matter not of intellectual conviction but of intuitive faith. Nothing can therefore shake it. About his followers he cannot say how far they will adhere to it.

But that does not worry him. He has to do his duty which he owes to them. The result he leaves to God. He derives his ahimsa from the Holy Quran ...'. *Ibid.* pp. 277-279.

⁵³ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 129.

⁵⁴ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 670-672.

⁵⁵ For details on the formation and working of Muslim League ministry see Shah, *Muslim League*, pp.

⁵⁶ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, pp. 172-173; Abdul Ghaffar Khan on Compulsory Grouping under the cabinet Mission Plan, *Pakhtun*, 17 July 1946, pp. 6-8 and *Pakhtun*, 9 September 1946, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 403.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1947, I, pp. 37-38.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

⁶¹ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 219; Mountbatten to Earl of Listowel, 3 June 1947, *Transfer of Power*, XI (London, 1982), pp. 104-105.

⁶² Minutes of Viceroy's Tenth Misc: Meeting, 8 May 1947, *Transfer of Power*, X, pp. 670-675.

⁶³ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 221; Pyarelal, *Thrown to the Wolves* (Calcutta, 1966), pp. 96-97.

⁶⁴ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 221.

⁶⁵ Ghaffar Khan informed Jinnah of the readiness of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* to join Pakistan provided he accepted: (a) complete provincial autonomy; (b) the right for the province to secede from Pakistan if it so desired; and (c) the right to admission to the NWFP of contiguous territories inhabited by the Pashtoons. *Pakhtun*, 1st July 1947, pp. 13-15; *The Pakistan Times*, 19 June 1947.

⁶⁶ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p. 222; Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand*, pp. 735-736.

⁶⁷ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, p.226.

⁶⁸ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 448.

⁶⁹ On the 3-4 September, 1947, at a large gathering of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and its affiliated bodies, the following resolutions were passed:

(a) the *Khudai Khidmatgars* regard Pakistan as their own country and pledge that they shall do their utmost to strengthen and safeguard its interest and make every sacrifice for the cause.

(b) the dismissal of Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry and the setting up of Abdul Qaiyum's ministry is undemocratic, but as our country is passing through a critical stage, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* shall take no step which might create difficulties in the way of either the Provincial or Central Government.

(c) After the division of the country the *Khudai Khidmatgars* sever their connection with the All-India Congress organisation and, therefore, instead of the Tricolour adopt the Red Flag as the symbol of their party'. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, pp. 450-451.

⁷⁰ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 453.

⁷¹ Farigh Bokhari, *Bacha Khan*, pp. 271-272; Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 461.

⁷² Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan 1947-1958*, I (Islamabad, 1998), pp. 139-140.

⁷³ Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, p. 517.

⁷⁴ Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan and Khudai Khidmatgari*, II, (Peshawar, 1994), pp. 604-612; and, *Ibid*, vol. III, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁵ For more details see *Herald*, November 1985, pp. 33-43 and 45-48.

⁷⁶ For details see Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan au Khudai Khidmatgari*, III, (Peshawar, 1998), pp. 393-396.