

Orgins, Growth and Consolidation of *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement

*Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat**

Abstract

Most of the histories written on the independence movement of Pakistan do not properly highlight the fact that this movement was constitutional, political and non-violent. Likewise, these historical narratives rarely, if ever, refer to the unarmed Pashtun resistance against the British Raj in the Pashtun belt of British India in the northwestern part of contemporary Pakistan.

By any account or criterion, the unarmed struggle of the Pashtuns under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan—perhaps the greatest Pashtun of all times and certainly one of the most important nonviolent leaders of the twentieth century—is a very important chapter of the history of nonviolent movement against the British rule. It was, doubtless, a remarkable movement transforming the Pashtun community into a dedicated, nonviolent, progressive nation. It was politically a nonviolent and proactive campaign against British colonialism in this part of the world.

This paper focuses on the unarmed struggle of the Pashtuns, especially in the final phase of Indian liberation movement and assess its importance in the over all context of the struggle for freedom from British colonialism. It is divided into three parts. First part discusses the origin and evolution of this resistance movement under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan; the second part offers a historical account of the Pashtun nonviolent movement during the 1930s and 1940s; and the third and final part discusses the nonviolent techniques and strategies of the unarmed Pashtun resistance and explains why and how this movement got transformed into a powerful mass movement. While deliberating upon different related issues and events, this paper revolves around the leadership and contribution of the great nonviolent leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

Introduction:

What crimes have the gentle Pakhtuns committed that they should be erased from the pages of history, deprived of their land and through serfdom pushed to their doom!... For

* Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, Chairman, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa Text book Board.

centuries they have known no peace. They have been repeatedly ravaged by bombardment, war and massacre. Their territory is a war zone, a training ground for imperialist powers ... All the necessities of life are denied to them ... I wonder what the pathetic world expects of them! I want them to stand on their legs with head erect, and then want to throw this challenge: 'Show me another decent, gentle and cultured race like them!' Faith is a battle. The faithful fights to the end. He needs no weapon.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan¹

During the early decades of the 20th century the world was reshaping itself out of disorder. In the Indian subcontinent, this century opened with a new era of revolutionary liberation movements – Pan-Islamism, nationalism, liberalism, modernism, constitutionalism, reforms and above all political and literary renaissance – with its dual goal of freedom and development. In the North-West Frontier Province of the British India, despite all these political cross currents, the socio-economic set-up of the Pashtun society was traditional, tribal and Islamic, urban and rural, agricultural and pastoral, settled and nomadic, peaceful and violent, motivated by political fusion and fission, conservative and inward looking.

Like other parts of Asia, the dormant Pashtun society was shaken as well by the First World War.² When the war ended India rose up with

¹ D.G Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is Battle*, (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967), pp.8, 9, 530.

² The North-West Frontier Province was separated from Punjab in 1901. In the literary circles it was known as Pakhtunkhwa since the days of Mughals. The demand of the Pashtun nationalists for the change of name culminated in the form of resolutions in the Provincial Assembly (NWFP) in 1980s and 90s but rejected by the central government. Anyhow, Pakhtunkhwa means 'the land of the Pakhtuns' or in soft Pashtu Pashtuns or Afghan or Pathans and is one of the oldest names of the Pashtun land now covering Afghanistan, NWFP, FATA, PATA and the Pashtun area of Balochistan. Bayzid Ansari (Pir Rokhan), Akhuand Darweza, Khushal Khan Khattak and Ahmad Shah Durrani mentioned Pakhtunkhwa in their poems and writings. For more detail see Dost Muhammad Khan Kamil Mohmand, *A Foreign Approach to Khushal Khan Khattak-A Critic of Caroe and Howell* (Peshawar: Maktaba Shaheen, 1968), p.117. *Roh* is an obsolete term signifying a mountain. It was almost invariably used in the Persian writings of the Mughal period, and sometimes the Pakhtuns also used it, as an alternative name of their country and particularly for the southeastern part of Afghanistan, which is mostly mountainous in character. The word

new political consciousness and self-confidence. It was after the war that the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 were introduced in India and not extended to the NWFP.

The Russian Revolutions (1905/1917), the *Ghadr* Party (Rebel Party), the Chamerkandi *Mujahideen*, First World War, Turko-German Mission in Kabul (1915), the Balkan War, rise of King Amanullah in Afghanistan and the third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) created a unique situation in NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) which saw the Soviet Union and Great Britain, as well as a number of Asian competitors with conflicting interests, in another 'Great Game' in South and Central Asia. Khokand, Khiva, Bukhara, Turkey, Iran, India, and Afghanistan were each in search of identity in the new political order. Movements with Pan-Turkic, Pan-Turanian, Pan-Afghanic and Pan-Islamic³ objectives

'*Rohilla*', derived from it, was applied to Afghans, who settled in India. *Ibid.*, p.117. Among the other names, Ariana is perhaps the oldest name used by most of the classical writers for Afghanistan. It means 'the land of Aryans'. Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar, *Afghanistan dar Masir-e-Tarikh* [Afghanistan through History] (Qum: Piam-e-Mahajer, Iran, 1981), p.9. Paktia or Pactiya too is an old term used for the first time by Herodotus, the famous Greek historian of the fifth century BC. *Ibid.*, p.1. Also see Dr. Muhammad Hassan Kakar, *Afghan, Afghanistan*, Kabul, 1978, pp.22, 23; H. W. Bellew, *The Races of Afghanistan*, Lahore, 1976, pp.57-9. The other name for this area was *Khurasan* (the land of the rising sun) was applied to the country by the early Muslim writers. It included the territories to the northwest of the massive range of the Hindu Kush up to Persia, *ibid.*, p.1. Also see Dr. Muhammad Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Development (1880-96)*, Kabul, 1971, p.1.

³ In Ottoman Turkey, the 'Young Turks' were active against the authoritarian regime of the Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid II. The Young Khivans and the Young Bukharans were young radical Turkestanian intellectuals, some of whom had been educated in Istanbul (Turkey) All these were active in Khiva and Bukhara respectively. See Fazal-ur-Rahim Khan Marwat, *The Basmachi Movement in Soviet Central Asia (A Study in Political Development)*, (Peshawar: EMJAY Books International, 1985). In 1920, Hizbi-Tudeh-Iran (Masses Party of Iran), Firqah-i-Adalat (Justice Party) and Firqah-i-Koministi-i-Iran (Communist Party of Iran) were founded by those liberal-democratic nationalist elements of Iran which were active in the movement for constitutionalism in 1906. These socialist parties were suppressed by Raza Khan but re-emerged in 1941, when Raza Khan left his country. Just like the Young Turks, the Young Khivans and the Young Bukharans the educated, nationalist, anti-British Afghans organized in different groups and factions for *Mashroota* (constitutionalism) and independence of the country during the reign of Amir Habibullah and onward. For details see chapter III of Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat,

were contenders which hoped to fill the vacuum created by the downfall of Tsarist Russia.

As a result of forced Anglo-Afghan treaties (Gandamak and Durand Line Agreements) Afghanistan was deprived of its sovereignty, half of its Pashtun population and fertile lands of the Peshawar Valley, present day tribal area, Pashtun belt of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (former NWFP) province of Pakistan. Sovereignty was regained by the Afghans in 1919 but for regaining of Pashtun land and people they started a movement within and outside Afghanistan.

Further the arbitrary division of the lower Pakhtunkhwa into variety of administrative units i.e. tribal areas, Frontier Regions (FRs), settled districts, British Balochistan, and native states (Swat, Dir, Chitral & Amb) led to socio-economic stagnation. This imperialist agenda hampered the nation-building process among the Pashtun and profoundly affected its political structure, social order and contributed to the consolidation of tribalism, *mullahism*, feudalism and conservatism. The shift of power from centralized authority to fanatics and reactionaries caused great harm to the modernization and development of the region.

Throughout the British rule, the aim of government in the Frontier (northern Pakhtunkhwa) was security, not revenue or development. This fact was recognized by Sir William Barton by stating: 'The policy of forcing the Pathan tribal system into the administrative mould of British India accounts in great measure for the British failure to

Evolution and Growth of Communism in Afghanistan: 1917-79, An Appraisal (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1997). About Pan-Afghanism, Dr.Ghani, a contemporary writer and a close associate of Amanullah in his book describes not only the prevailing situation in the country but also the aim and goal of the new Amir by writing: '...He (Amanullah) broke the foreign chains that had bound her (Afghanistan), and is naturally anxious to include in her all the Afghan (Pashtu) speaking races. He has Pan- Afghanic notions, which form the basis of his policy. His ambition is legitimate, though the present conditions of the world may not favour its fulfillment'. See Dr.Abdul Ghani, *A Review of the Political Situation in Central Asia*, Lahore, 1980, p.137. The word Pan-Islamism, in its various forms, is apparently of European coinage and was probably adopted in imitation of Pan-Slavism that was current in the 1870s. In the 19th century, a progressive Muslim scholar, Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-97), launched a movement for Islamic brotherhood - *Kullun Muslimun Ikhwatun*. It was later introduced to English Pan-Islamism. See for more detail Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, *op.cit.*

assimilate the Pathans into the Indian political system'.⁴ Last but not the least, the 'Great Game' followed by the Cold War and 'Iron Curtain' of the Soviet regime if, on the one hand, isolated Central Asia from the outside world, it also detached the Pashtuns from its socio-cultural roots and pushed them towards Indian subcontinent where they naturally faced the crisis of identity. This crisis of identity further developed with the British intrigues, suppression and exploitation of Pakhtunkhwa.

The formation of NWFP

The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) has played a significant role in the shaping and re-shaping of the Indian history. Its strategic location made it not only the Frontier of India but also an international frontier of great importance from the military point of view for the whole British Empire. Field-Marshal Sir Claude Jacob said:

The safety of the Indian Empire and also that of the British Empire depends on whether or not we hold the North-West Frontier of India. If Frontier goes, India goes, and, if India goes, it means serious loss and damage to the British Empire as well. We should always bear that in mind.⁵

Keeping in mind the old security paradigm of the British government, Lord Curzon was appointed as new Viceroy of India in 1899 to deal with two problems of Indian NWFP: reorganization of military defenses, and reform of the administration of the trans-frontier districts. After his arrival, he introduced certain administrative changes to guarantee internal invulnerability of the Frontier. On 9 November 1901 the NWFP, as new province, was separated from the Punjab. However, Curzon not only recognized the military defenses, but also adopted measures for improving relations with the tribes. On the success of his frontier policy Curzon wrote:

My Frontier scheme is finished and done at last, I feel like an Eton boy who has got through trails. Be kind to it and help on. It would break my heart if it were now to fall through.⁶

The British separated NWFP from Punjab due to some reasons. First, the Russian expansion in Central Asia and its advance towards the border of

⁴ Sir William Barton, *India's North-West Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1939), p.83.

⁵ 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.13.

⁶ Lal Baha, *NWFP Administration under British Rule, 1901-1919* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1978), p.23.

Afghanistan alarmed the British. Consequently the defense of India had to be organized.⁷ Secondly, the problem which the Punjab government faced in the so called settled districts was of civil administration. During Punjab government's rule, of over half a century, over the frontier districts, various branches of administration, like the police, justice, land services, public works, and education made slow progress and were less developed than other areas of the Punjab.⁸ In the field of education the frontier districts were by far the least advanced.

In the nutshell, in 1901, at the time of the formation of the North-West Frontier Province under Curzon, all aspects of administration were much less developed in the frontier districts than in the other districts of the Punjab. It was 35 years later that the Government of India Act 1935 was passed on 2 August 1935 and the NWFP province was made a Governor's province under Section 46 of the same Act. Railway lines were laid and roads constructed for the timely and speedy transportation of forces to the troubled spots. Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) was promulgated under which punishment like 'transportation' for life without any trial could be accorded. The political agent or the *jirga* formed by the political agent or deputy commissioner was to hear cases. In these decades, there was thus hardly any educational progress. The percentage of literacy amongst the Pashtuns⁹ fell from 5.5 in 1901 to 5.1 in 1911.¹⁰ The policies served the interests of the colonial authorities and they intentionally countered the introduction of unwelcome political ideas and growth in the province. In brief NWFP was made a police state with no rights for the indigenous populace. In the words of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan 'our fault is that our province is the gateway to India. We were born in the frontier. This is

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁸ Another striking feature of the administration of the province was that it always had a deficit budget. From 1901 to 1910, the revenue and expenditure of the province was wholly imperial. The large excess of expenditure over revenue was attributed to the geographical position and political importance of the province, considerations of imperial policy. See *ibid.*, pp.28,29.

⁹ James W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland* (The Hague: Mouton & Co. 1963), p.125.

¹⁰ Lal Baha, *op.cit.*, p.198. On page 194 of the same book she quotes from British documents that in 1901-2, there were 927 private schools in the settled districts with 13,636 students. Primary schools for boys were 154 in the entire province. 131 of these schools were maintained by local boards.

why we were doomed'.¹¹ In 1922, a special North-West Frontier inquiry committee summed up more than a century of British policy in the frontier and tribal area in the following words:

...the ultimate aim of our whole frontier policy is the security of India. The immediate object of our North-West Frontier policy is to control the trans-frontier tribes as to secure life and property in our frontier districts.¹²

British imperialism used NWFP as a base for operation up north to the Central Asia. Every time, when the British India took a step on the road to constitutional reforms, the NWFP like Balochistan was purposely left out of the scheme. Not a word was wasted on this province in the Minto-Morely Reforms (1909), nor in the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919).¹³ The British knew that Pashtuns were proud people and conscious of the fact that they had enjoyed the freedom to live as they liked, for centuries. Strategically they were the defenders and guardians of all north-western passes or the gateways to Indian subcontinent. This was the reason why the British wanted to subdue them. Their conception of NWFP was that

...the frontier was likened to a gunpowder magazine, and to introduce reforms in such a land as this, it was asserted, was like holding a match to the gunpowder. As explosion was, of course inevitable.¹⁴

¹¹ Farhad Jan, *Khudai-Khidmatgar Movement in NWFP, its Nature and Direction*, M. Phil thesis, University of Peshawar, n.d, p.13.

¹² James W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.123, quoted from Government of India, *Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee and Minutes of Dissent* by Mr. T. Rangachariar and Mr. N.M. Samarth (Delhi: Government Central Press, 1934), p.6.

¹³ In the same year in April at Jalianwala Bagh, Amritsar, the British army killed 379 and wounded 1208 as a result of the countrywide agitation against the Rowlatt Act. On the other hand, the Muslims of India were perturbed by the war against Turkey and the pending peace negotiations. The result was the emergence of the historical *Khilafat* movement, a unique experience for the political *pundits* of India. Consequently, it took form of the *Hijrat* movement. The *Hijrat* movement was one of the significant events of Indo-Pakistan history. It developed out of internal and external political crosscurrents in the region including the *Khilafat* agitation in British India in 1920. Thousands of people migrated from India to Afghanistan. Contemporary writers have written many books and articles in Urdu, Pashtu and English, with their own perspective and experience, on this mass migration from India.

¹⁴ Abdul Qayum Khan, *Gold and Guns on the Pathan Frontier* (Bombay: Hind Kitab, 1945), p.26.

Origin and evolution of *Khudai-Khidmatgars* (Servants of God)

The years 1918, 1919 and the 1920 were the most important in the history of NWFP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), India and Afghanistan. During these years many new political movements were launched with new strategies of protesting against the high handedness of the British officers and of fighting for the freedom of their country.

In the NWFP the response to the British and other challenges was in the form of the *Khilafatists* or Black Shirt movement.¹⁵ Radical nationalist like Haji Sahib of Turangzai and Faqir of Ipi,¹⁶ the Marxist-Leninist movement of Maulana Abdur Rahim Popalzai and Sanobar Hussain Kakaji,¹⁷ the *Woror* Pashtun (Pashtun Brotherhood) of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai in southern Pakhtunkhwa on non-violent principles¹⁸ and the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Makhfi Sahib.¹⁹ The political situation of the world and that of the NWFP greatly inspired Ghaffar Khan and motivated him to participate in political activities.

To understand the origin, evolution and various other dimensions of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement, it seems pertinent to know about the person, and his struggle in various spheres, who initiated it and remained as its moving spirit. Abdul Ghaffar Khan popularly known as Baacha Khan or Badsha Khan (King Khan) and *Fakher-i-Afghan* (Pride of Afghan) devoted his whole life to the service of humanity in general and to the Pashtuns in particular. He was born in 1890 at village

¹⁵ The *Khilafatists* in our province were mostly wearing black shirts.

¹⁶ *Faqir of Ipi*, Mirza Ali Khan, was born in 1901 in a hamlet called Kurta (Maddi Khel) at a distance of about one kilometer from Khajuri Camp on the Bannu-Miranshah Road. He remained a controversial figure and legendary character throughout the history as his life had many facets, both overt and covert. While the local tribes believed, as they believe even today, that he was a pious man with all the qualifying attributes of a *pir*, *faqir*, *ghaus* and *qutub*,¹⁶ to the British he was a 'devil incarnate'. To a Muslim Assistant Political Agent he is a 'Saint Warrior', but to his detractors he was a plunderer, hypocrite and a 'Pseudo-saint who sold Islam down the river at the altar of Pukhtun jingoism'. See Fazal-ur- Rahim Marwat, 'The Faqir of Ipi-A Mystic Warrior of Waziristan', *Pakistan Perspectives*, Karachi, 11:2 (July-December, 2006), pp.45-68.

¹⁷ See for details Dr.Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat & Dr. Parvaz Toru, *Celebrities of NWFP* (Peshawar: Pakistan Study Centre 2005).

¹⁸ For *Woror* Pashtun see Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim's Pashtu article '*Khan Abdul Samad Khan Shaheed: Da Pakhtanu da Milli Shinakht Pa Talash Kee*', *Pakhtun*, July, 2007, pp.13-7.

¹⁹ For Maulvi Fazal Mahmud Makhfi see *Celebrities of NWFP*, pp.37-57.

Utmanzai (Charsadda), situated at a distance of about 30 kilometers in the northeast of Peshawar.²⁰ He started his movement in his own village as a social reformer in 1912. He wanted to educate the people, as they had the lowest ratio of literacy. But on this front he faced a strong opposition from the local *mullahs*, Khans and the landlords. There was a verse which blocked the way of mass education:

Those who study at schools, do it for the love of money. There is no room for them in paradise; instead they will find themselves in hell.²¹

The British had implanted this idea that if the Pashtuns were to become educated, conscious of identity and aware of economic and political exploitation of the ruling class, the *mullahs* would lose their businesses which were used as leverage by the British in controlling the masses, for making or breaking of government in Afghanistan and all Pashtun/Afghan areas. In order to combat these formidable fronts i.e. the British government, the *mullahs* and the landlords, Ghaffar Khan established on 10 April 1921, the *Azad* (Independent) Islamia School at Utmanzai and then established similar institutions throughout the province.

To enlighten the Pashtuns and to eradicate bad habits like telling lies, slandering, backbiting and using obscene language, religious, ethical and cultural education was made an integral part of the curriculum of Azad schools. Pashtu was the medium of instruction in all schools. Vocational education, like tailoring, shoemaking, handicrafts and weaving, was compulsory in these schools.²²

²⁰ Abdul Ghaffar Khan's character was shaped and molded by rich cultural heritage. His own hometown was once the cradle of Gandahara culture and civilization; Buddaha's temples, stupas and universities at Taxila and Adda (near Jalalabad, Afghanistan), giant statues of Buddaha in Swat and Bamiyan, the birth of Zoroaster in Balkh (Afghanistan). Pannini who wrote Sanskrit grammar was born in Swabi not very far from Ghaffar Khan's village and in his own words 'when Islam reached to this place it had already lost its true spiritual light and the divine fire. The result was that our splendid culture was taken away from us, but they did not give us, in its place the true spirit of Islam'. Ghaffar Khan also took inspiration from his grand fathers, his father, teachers of mission school, Haji Sahib of Turangzai, Makhfi Sahib, Amir Amanullah Khan and Enver Pasha etc. See for more details his auto biography in Pashtu.

²¹ Abdul Ghaffar, *Zama Zhawand-Aw-JadoJuhid*, Kabul, 1983, p.15.

²² Monthly *Pakhtun*, December, 1948, p.40. See also Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, *Da Bersaghir Pak-wa Hind Pa Azadi Kay Da Pakhtanu Brakha* (biography) (Peshawar: University Publishers, 2009), pp.18-9.

Anjuman-i-Islahul-Afaghina (The Afghan Reformation Society)

In 1924, Abdul Ghaffar Khan established *Anjumani-Islahul-Afaghina*.

The motto of the organization was a verse from the Holy *Quran*:

You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoying what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God.²³

The Journal *Pakhtun* records the following verses about this reformation society:

Those sacrificing their lives and property in the way of Allah, are the ones upon whom Allah has his blessings. Those who joined this association were to subscribe to its monthly journal, The *Pakhtun*. The objective of this association which was based in Hashtnagar in the name of Afaghina was to selflessly work and strive for the sake of Allah.²⁴

The *Anjuman* not only worked to induce Pashtuns to acquire education and avoid evil social practices but it also conveyed the grievances of the people to the government. It appraised the government of the inability of people to pay for the land revenue on account of bad harvests in 1928; the increase in the land revenue on account of land settlement of 1895-96, and the tax imposed on walking by canals banks.²⁵

Dr. Abdul Karim Khan quoting British secret intelligence abstract of the 17 August 1929 quotes that ‘the *Anjuman* helped Afghan students returning from Europe *en route* to Kabul’. About 13 students were reportedly accommodated in the Azad High School at Utmanzai.²⁶

The *Pakhtun* journal – 1928

The formation and activities of *Anjuman-i-Islahul-Afaghina* irritated the British government and as a result Ghaffar Khan was arrested and imprisoned for three years. After his release he realized that only tours and meetings were not sufficient to revitalize the social organism. Therefore in 1928 he started the monthly journal *Pakhtun* in Pashtu language. The journal touched upon every aspect (moral social, political, religious, economic, cultural, current events, personalities, national and

²³ 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.53.

²⁴ The *Pakhtun*, October, 1928, pp.14-20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.23-9.

²⁶ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.54.

international affairs) of the Afghans/Pashtuns life.²⁷ Freedom from the British rule was the clear clarion call of the *Pakhtun* journal and Ghaffar Khan wanted to infuse a new sense of political awareness among the Pashtuns. Through this journal Ghaffar Khan achieved two objectives: he championed the cause of Pashtuns/Afghans and provided a literary platform for the poets and writers on both sides of the Durand Line to promote the cause of Pashtu and Pashtuns.

Suba Sarhad Zalmo Jirga (the Frontier Youth League or the Afghan Jirga)

The *Anjuman-i-Islahul-Afaghina* and *Pakhtun* journal were followed by a more coherent organization known as 'Frontier Youth League' on first September 1929 at Utmanzai. According to Syed Wiqar Ali Shah Kaka Khel, Mian Akbar Shah (1899-1990), an active member of the *Anjuman*, and former student of Islamia College, Peshawar, who had gone as far as Soviet Union in connection with the liberation of motherland, proposed the formation of a youth league on the pattern of the Young Turks, Young Bukharan, Young Khivans, Young Afghans and other similar organizations outside India. Abdul Akbar Khan became the President and Mian Akbar Shah its Secretary. Its membership was open to every youth without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion, provided he was literate, and that he had not participated in any form of communalism. Pashtu was made the official language for *Jirga's* proceeding.²⁸ The aims and objects of this organization were to work for complete independence of India, Hindu-Muslim unity, reformation and political awakening of the Pashtun society.²⁹ The *Jirga* soon gained a large number of followers in the rural areas around Peshawar as well as at several places in other districts. These *jirgas* were linked together through a network of *jirgas* for the areas, *tappas* and districts and at the top was the *Loya Jirga* or grand assembly for the whole province. The Frontier Youth League later on assumed the name of *Khudai Khidmatgaran*.

Women participation

No civilization or society can thrive unless its women folk are reformed and empowered, and women can be empowered only when they are educated. Ever since the first issue of the *Pakhtun* in May 1928, Ghaffar Khan had been encouraging women to participate in 'national affairs'

²⁷ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.69.

²⁸ Maulvi Fazal Marwat Mufti, *op.cit.*, p.109.

²⁹ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, pp.33-4.

and speak up for their rights. For the first time in the history of the Pashtuns, about 400 women participated in a mass meeting of 2,000 people on 23 August 1928 at Tangi (Charsadda sub-division).³⁰ He also encouraged women to write for the *Pakhtun* journal to highlight the women's problems and solutions.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan had long lamented the traditional *purdah* system which restricts Muslim women from playing a useful role in society. He encouraged them to discard the veil, as the women in his own family had done. His sister became increasingly active in his movement. He also stressed female education and encouraged Pashtun to do so. Ghaffar Khan first sent his own daughter to school, despite the strong opposition of their relatives. She was the first women from NWFP to graduate herself from Allahabad University.

The noticeable role of Pashtun women in the 1930-31 movement (among women who addressed meetings were the sisters of the Khan brothers) was connected to the non-violence movement. At a meeting organized by women, in June or July 1931, in the frontier village of Bhaizai, Ghaffar Khan said:

Whenever I went to India and saw the national awakening and patriotism of the Hindu and the Parsi women, I used to say to myself, would such a time come when our Pashtun women would also awake? Thank God today I see my desire fulfilled.³¹

Economic strategy and reforms

To encourage economic improvements in the Frontier, Khan Sahib particularly stressed upon the Pashtuns to adopt professions other than agriculture, since 83% people were dependent on agriculture and there was not enough land to support them all as farmers. He even opened a shop at Utmanzai to set an example to his fellow people.

He encouraged the use of local cotton and country spinning wheels. He prohibited the people from unnecessary extravagance in marriage, circumcision and engagement ceremonies. He educated the Pashtuns to wear simple dress and home spun *khaddar* and to adopt the profession of trade and commerce.

Moreover the movement attracted the illiterate and hard-heated Pashtuns towards manual labor through examples from the lives of the

³⁰ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.54.

³¹ Rajmohan Ghandi, *Ghaffar Khan Non violent Badshah of the Pukhtuns* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking Group, 2004), pp.97-8.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who said that ‘Allah befriends workers’.³²

Stage dramas and literary circles

Ghaffar Khan was the pioneer who started stage dramas in schools. He taught that the real cause of the slavery of Pashtuns was their disorganization, foreign rule, the Khans (here referred for landlord and chief) and the *mullahs* etc. He aroused the independent spirited Pashtuns against slavery of foreign rule, cultivated in them zeal for freedom of speech and expression, hatred against the agents of foreign rulers and their autocracy and to develop amongst them love for democracy and justice. It was no use to beg before British for anything. Sacrifices were necessary to attain self-government and liberty. He inflamed the Pashtun’s honour through various political dramas like ‘*Dard*’ (Pain), ‘*Shaheed Sakina*’ (Martyr Sakina), ‘*Dree Yithiman*’ (Three Orphans) etc. which quite often irritated the government. *Dree Yatiman* (Three Orphans) drama was written in 1928 by Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar. Khan Akbar was a close companion of Ghaffar Khan and was amongst those who went to Afghanistan in *Hijrat* movement and later on to Taskent and met with M. N. Roy and all other Indian revolutionaries based in Tashkent and other cities of Bolshevik Russia. It should be noted that eminent poet Abdul Ghani Khan and Khan Abdul Wali Khan (both sons of Ghaffar Khan), played with another boy the role of the three orphans which moved the audience to such a degree that, at the end, an old man came on to the stage and patted Wali Khan on his head and, while still wiping his tears, he offered two rupees to Wali Khan, saying, ‘Don’t be distressed son! Take flour for yourself with this money’.³³

In one drama a conference between the governor and his officials were shown to discuss measures to deal with the civil disobedience movement. A Deputy Commissioner was shown paying large sums of money to a *pir* and Khan to quell the movement. The final scene shows the struggle between the police and *Khudai Khidmatgars* in Peshawar and Mardan on the occasion of the arrest of Ghaffar Khan.

In a letter dated 9/3/1938 to the Inspector General of Police, NWFP, A.I.G, C.I.P. requests to ask the Chief Minister: ‘to persuade the Red shirts not to enact a number of dramas depicting various phases of civil disobedience movement, such as manufacture of salt, the picketing of liquor shops, *lathi* charges by the police and various scenes in Haripur Jail. Such things as depicting *lathi* charge by the police can do nothing

³² Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Zama Zhwand au Jaddu Jihid*, Kabul, p.92.

³³ *Pakhtun*, August 1938, p.10. Interview with Dr. Sher Zaman Taizai, Peshawar, 2 April 1995.

but harm'.³⁴

Pashtu *mushairas* (literary gatherings) were organized on various themes, and literary circles (*Adabi Toleny*) were formed in different villages and towns to promote the cause of the movement and Pashtun language and literature. Study circles for reading of newspapers and other literature were other popular methods of propagating awareness among the masses. Common Pashtun *hujras* (where guest are served) and weekly *melas* were also used for propaganda.

Thus the political consciousness created through multi-dimensional methods turned the ferocious, illiterate, hard-headed but hot blooded and freedom loving Pashtuns in to an organized and non-violent fighting force.

Formation of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement

The *Anjuman-i-Islahul-Afaghina* was converted into Afghan Youth League, a semi-political party with its branches established throughout the province. When the Afghan King Amanullah Khan was deposed, the Afghan Youth League stirred the Pashtun ethnicity by staging demonstrations and criticizing British 'Forward Policy'.³⁵ Later the replacement of Nadir Khan (father of King Zahir Shah) as new *Amir* (King) in Afghanistan was followed by celebration and jubilation by the Afghan Youth League on the annual day of the Azad Islamia School, Utmanzai. This close ethnic linkage was watched by the civil military oligarchy with grave concern. But as far sighted nationalist, Ghaffar Khan, in the light of the existing situation, introduced a novel change in his organization in December 1929. The Afghan *Jirga* was reinforced by 'troops, uniformed but unarmed, as the *Khudai Khidmatgar*, or servants of God'.

Aims and objectives of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement

Although the ultimate goal of the movement was to get freedom from British rule, its leaders mobilized their Pashtun followers towards their goal through socio-religious reforms and economic modernization.

³⁴ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.86.

³⁵ To counter Russian expansion in Central Asia and advances towards Afghanistan British changed its policy from 'close-border' to forward policy. After Second Anglo-Afghan War Khyber Pass was controlled and in 1878 Khyber Agency was created and in 1890 Gomal Pass in South Waziristan was opened for traffic. The British called it 'scientific frontier' based on the Kabul-Ghazni-Kandahar line. See for more details, Lal Baha, *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.

Ghaffar Khan, in almost every speech, untiringly emphasized certain fundamental objectives of the movement (a) ‘Pashtun’ national unity,(b) Hindu- Muslim brotherhood,(c) service of humanity, and (d) freedom through non–violence’.³⁶

Some of the aims and objectives summarized in the *Pakhtun* journal, a mouthpiece of *Khudai Khidmatgars* were:

- 1: To inspire love for education amongst the Pashtuns. This education should include both theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge towards the understanding of science and religion.
- 2: To inculcate and foster amongst the Muslims in general and the Pashtuns in particular, the feeling of unity, love, affection and sympathy.
- 3: To persuade the people to give up un-Islamic customs, rites and traditions.
- 4: To settle their disputes in the light of *Shariat* than to go to the British courts.
- 5: To instil amongst the Pashtuns love for freedom.³⁷

Some other objectives were highlighted by Muhammad Yonus in his book as under:

- 1: The real objective of the movement was the unity and organization of Pashtuns and to infuse in them the sense of selfless service of their people and country.
- 2: To educate the brave and chivalrous Pashtuns in the philosophy of non violence.
- 3: To teach them to act fearlessly and steadfastly in the face of force whenever it might be applied against them.
- 4: To refrain from the habit of taking revenge.
- 5: To restrain them from anti-social customs, practices and evils and to live simple life.
- 6: To build good character and good habits.
- 7: To refrain from internal feuds and personals rivalries.
- 8: To forgive the oppressed and treat them kindly.³⁸

However, it was a multidimensional movement and its objectives and agenda, embodied diverse element from Islamic exhortations, social

³⁶ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.359.

³⁷ *Pakhtun*, October 1928, pp.14-20.

³⁸ Muhammad Yunus, an eminent *Khudai Khidmatgar* was shifted after independence to India and died in Delhi. He was the relative of Ghaffar Khan. He in his book *Frontier Speaks* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1947), pp.150-51 mentioned the above cited objective of the *Khudai Khidmatgar*.

ethics, women, peasant, and minorities rights, national reconstruction, religious moderation and harmony, to universal brotherhood based on love, care and service of humanity irrespective of any condition or consideration. For Ghaffar Khan social responsibility lead to political freedom and this was the reason that he interchanges his means with the ends, achieving political freedom through social-reforms. He always said ‘thou shalt not kill thy brother and the British’.³⁹

Ghaffar Khan mobilized the *Khudai Khidmatgars* towards political power on the basis of their training in personal piety and social responsibility:

- 1: *Insan Khidmat Aw Meena* (service and love of humanity);
- 2: *Sabro-o-Salah* (patience and prayers);
- 3: *Ittihad Aw Adm-i-Tashaddud* (unity and non violence).⁴⁰

He considered all people living in Pashtunkhwa as Afghans/Pashtuns whether they were Hindus, Sikh, Christian, *mullah*, Mian, Khan, barber, rich or poor. In this new brotherhood, he was trying to unite all tribes and clans of Pashtuns i.e. Mohmands, Khalils, Muhammadzai, Marwat, Wazirs, Masud, Kakars and Khattak etc.⁴¹

Structure of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement

Since there was no organized political party in the NWFP based on mass support, the association of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was the first of its kind to emerge as coherent and disciplined body. Shaped exactly as an effective and democratic organization, this association started from the grass root level. In every village there was ‘village *jirga*’ (village council) and many villages together in an area formed *tappa jirga*. The representatives of *tappa jirga* elected a *tehsil jirga*. The members of *tehsil jirgas* elected the district *jirga* and the district *jirga* elected the provincial *jirga*. Each *jirga* from the bottom to top elected from its own members the following office bearers: president (*Loy Mashar*), vice-president one or more as the case may be, general secretary (*Mashar Nazim*), joint secretary (*Kashar Nazim*), one or more as the case may be and treasurer.⁴²

Volunteer corps or the army of God

The leaders had put great emphasis on discipline. The volunteers were organized and drilled in military fashion after winning 1936 elections

³⁹ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.265.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.270.

⁴¹ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.41.

and formation of Congress ministry under Dr. Khan Sahib. It was a semi-military wing of the organization of *Khudai Khidmatgars*. The volunteers had their own red colour flag, in the beginning, later tri-colored, and bands, bag pipe and drums. They not only drilled with the beat of the drum and danced like a snake with the sound of a bag pipe, but they took long military style marches into the hills and rivers and were given training to lie before the vehicles.⁴³ It reflected somewhat a military hierarchal structure as is shown by the ranks in it i.e. lieutenant, captain, major, colonel and general etc. When they marched, of course without arms, weapons and even without *lathis* they sang:

We are the army of God by death or wealth unmoved. We
march our leader and we ready to die. We serve and we love
our people and our cause. Freedom is our goal our lives the
price we pay.⁴⁴

With such a training and discipline the illiterate, rough and the hard headed Pashtuns plunged into the field of independence movement. One could see how Ghaffar Khan, as early as the 1930, was trying to combine factors of history, geography, culture and language to transform the relatively backward, divided and disorganized Pashtuns into a national community.

The uniform of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* was of red colour but the British authorities in its propaganda drive called them as Red Shirts (*Surkh Posh*) and tried to equate them with the Bolsheviks, and even dubbed them as Soviet agents.⁴⁵

The pledge

For communal harmony in the province, the membership of *Khudai Khidmatgars* was kept open to all, irrespective of any discrimination of caste, community or religion. However, Abdul Ghaffar Khan clearly told that no one should call himself a *Khudai Khidmatgars* unless he considered all the Pashtuns as one nation, discarded social ills and adopted non violence as way of life.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.41-2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.288. Speaking to a woman' unity club in Bombay on 29 October 1934, Ghaffar Khan castigated the Frontier authorities false propaganda about the *Khudai Khidmatgars* whom the British called the 'Red Shirts'. He said: 'I want to tell you that our movement is unique and you will not find a similar movement with the same creed and principle anywhere in the whole world. Our *Khudai Khidmatgars* movement is based on universal brotherhood and service of humanity'.

The oath of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was: In the presence of God, I solemnly affirm that:

1. I hereby honestly and sincerely offer myself for enrollment as a *Khudai Khidmatgar*.
2. I shall be ever ready to sacrifice personnel comfort, property, and even life itself to serve the nation and for the attainment of my country's freedom.
3. I shall not participate in factions, nor pickup a quarrel with or bear enmity towards any body. I shall always protect the oppressed against the tyranny of the oppressor.
4. I shall not become member of any other organization, and shall not furnish security or tender apology in the course of the non violent fight.
5. I shall always obey every legitimate order of my superior officers.
6. I shall always live up to the principle of non-violence.
7. I shall serve all humanity equally. The chief objects of my life shall be attainment of complete independence and religious freedom.
8. I shall always observe truth and purity in all my actions.
9. I shall expect no remuneration for my services.
10. All my services shall be dedicated to God; they shall not be for attaining rank or for show.⁴⁶

Non-violence and *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement

The violent method, before the birth of *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement, adopted about three or four decades ago, as a means for achieving independence added to the agonies of the people.

The violent movement created hatred in the hearts of the people If a British was killed, not only the culprit was punished but the whole village and entire region suffered for it.⁴⁷

Therefore, the radical ideology of non violence was followed in the light of peculiar socio-politico and religio- psychological background in the NWFP. Because Ghaffar Khan was convinced that armed resistance would bring disaster and ruin upon the Pashtuns, who were already

⁴⁶ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.269-70 quoted *Harijan*, 15 October 1938 with translation by Gandhiji. See also E. Eknath, *A Man to Match his Mountains*, Nilghi Press, second Printing, 1985, pp.11-2. S. Fida Younas, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Pashtunistan and Afghanistan* (Peshawar: Hayyatabad, 2003), p.7 gives another version of the pledge.

⁴⁷ Farhad Jan, p.43. See for more details D.G Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is Battle. op.cit.*, pp.61-2.

facing lot of miseries being the inhabitants of a politically and strategically sensitive area.

Non violence created a sense of identity and pushed the ignorant Pashtuns out of darkness. Moreover, since its proponent in the 20th century was Gandhiji, a Hindu, it was presented by All India Muslim League as one more of his tricks to rob Indian Muslims of their fighting strength. The Frontier Muslim League leaders blamed Ghaffar Khan for preaching non violence as nothing but to convert the Pashtuns to Hinduism. They call him ‘Abdul Kufur’ (slave of the infidels i.e. Hindus) and the Frontier Governor Sir. George Cunningham’s favorite pejorative name for him was ‘Gandhi *Chela*’ (sheepish follower of Gandhi).⁴⁸

Most of the non-Pashtun biographers of Abdul Ghaffar Khan wrongly attributed Khan’s non violence to Gandhiji, and argue that it was a variant of the same non violence preached by Gandhiji in the rest of India. Actually Gandhian non violence had, literally speaking, very little effect on the Pashtun mind. ‘Abdul Ghaffar Khan had 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.’⁴⁹ Ghaffar Khan was convinced that the armed resistance would bring disaster and ruin upon the Pashtuns, who were already facing a lot of miseries being the inhabitants of a politically and strategically sensitive area. He claims it to be an original concept as he says:

It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet (PBUH) all the time. He was in Makkah, and it has since then been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressive yoke, but we have so far forgotten it that when Gandhi Ji, placed it before us we thought he was sponsoring a novel creed.⁵⁰

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

⁴⁸ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.274-75.

⁴⁹ Dr. Syed Wiqar Ali Shah in his article states ‘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’, Maulvi Fazal Marwat Mufti, *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁵⁰ Dr. Hayder Lashari, *Safeer-Insaneet* (Karachi: G.M. Syeed Studies Board, 2008), p.81. See also Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.43.

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.⁵¹

Even Gandhiji himself says:

I do not know how for the Khan Sahib (Abdul Ghaffar Khan) has succeeded in carrying his message to his people. This I know that with him non violence is a matter not 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 doesn't worry him. He was to do his duty which he owes his *ahimsa* from the Holy Quran. He is a devout *Mussalman*. He offered his *Namaz* (prayers) and his *Ramzan* fast except when he was ill. But his devotion to Islam doesn't mean disrespect for other faiths.⁵²

The concept of non violence had two clear aims

First, non cooperation with the alien rulers and second, constructive social program comprising achievement of communal unity, abolition of un-touchability, prohibition of liquor, propagation of *khadi* and other cottage industries.

The *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement struggled against the

⁵¹ J.S. Bright, *Frontier and its Gandhi*, Lahore, 1944, pp.103-04.

⁵² Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.243.

theocratic approach to Islam and tried to acquaint Muslims with its true spirit. It demanded selfless service only in the name of God because all Prophets declared in unequivocal terms: ‘I ask for no reward in return of these services. I ask compensation from none except God’.⁵³

This religious call rekindled the religious emotions of the Pashtuns and thus guided them towards *Khudai Khidmatgars*, but the British declared it a ‘fanatical hostility’ and an attempt to overthrow the government. No other movement had ever received such a tremendous response, as did the *Khudai Khidmatgars* of Ghaffar Khan. It raised more than 100,000 non violent *Khudai Khidmatgars* in reaction to the policy input of the British military and civil bureaucracy. The British had come to India, not only for the institutionalization of the western liberal values but also for thorough going economic and political exploitation. The British, right from the inception of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* movement sensed ‘that it aims at political revolution and not at religious and social reformation’. But infact, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement was in reality a kind of salvation army raised by Ghaffar Khan for the religious, moral and social uplift of the Pashtun nation.

However, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* for obtaining these goals suffered untold miseries under British rule. The gruesome and woeful stories of *Khudai Khidmatgars* can form the subject matter of long and voluminous books. In a population of twenty six lakhs there were three lakh *Khudai Khidmatgars*. However, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement was ostensibly a reformation movement, it strived to get its covert goal of independence through multidimensional reforms package.

Although the ultimate goal of the movement was to get freedom from British rule, its leader mobilized their Pashtun follower towards their goal through socio-religious reforms and economic modernization. It was a multidimensional movement and its agenda and aims embodied diverse elements from Islamic exhortations, social ethics, women, peasant and minority rights, national reconstruction, religious moderation, and harmony to a universal brotherhood based on love, care and service of humanity irrespective of any condition or consideration.

The year 1930 – a period of repression and civil disobedience

The year 1930, nostalgically remembered by the late Ghaffar Khan and his followers as *san-tees* (the year 1930), is a watershed year in the history of the Indian subcontinent. But *san-tees*, in the Frontier stands for ‘sacrifice’ which the people offered in Qissa Khwani Bazaar (Peshawar city), Utmanzai, Hatikhel (Bannu), Kohat, Takkar (Mardan) and tribal

⁵³ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.74.

belt against the British. Before 1930, no political party had raised their voice to demand complete independence. They only wanted dominion status for India.

In December 1929, Ghaffar Khan and other prominent *Khudai Khidmatgars* attended the Lahore session of Indian National Congress. In this session, the Congress adopted complete independence for India, as their objective. On their return to Peshawar, Ghaffar Khan along with other *Khudai Khidmatgars* visited almost every village of the province, and organized the people on the pattern of Congress organization.

Since the Congress in its Lahore session had already declared complete independence as its immediate goal, therefore to achieve this goal through non-violence and non-cooperation, 'freedom day' was observed all over India on 26 January 1930. Ghaffar Khan also endorsed the Congress program of 'complete independence', non-cooperation and non-payment of taxes and revenues.

On 15 April 1930 the provincial Congress workers brought special clay (salty clay) from Pabbi and defied the government by manufacturing salt. Next step was the picketing of liquor shops and April 23 was selected for this purpose. To intensify the struggle Ghaffar Khan summoned a large representative gathering of the eminent leaders of Congress committee at Utmanzai from 19 April to 21 April, ostensibly to celebrate the anniversary of *Azad* schools. The main items of the meeting were the performance of a seditious play calculated to bring government into hatred and contempt, and a *mushaira*.⁵⁴

Two days after the meeting at *Azad* School was over, the authorities decided to arrest all the prominent leaders of provincial Congress working committee and the news of their arrest spread like a wild fire in the city and it seemed as if the whole city had burst out before the gate of *Kabali thana* (police station), Peshawar. These people were shouting *Inqilab Zindabad* and asking for the release of the arrested leaders. This worsened the situation and led to indiscriminate firing of the troops on unarmed Congress/*Khudai Khidmatgars* at Qissa Khwani Bazaar (Peshawar) which continued from 11:00am to 3:00 pm.⁵⁵ The death toll, according to Ghaffar Khan ran into 200 to 250, the Jalianawala action was replayed. The list, furnished by Farigh Bukhari

⁵⁴ Khan Abdul Wali Khan, *Bacha Khan Awe Khudai Khidmatgari*, Vol.1, Peshawar; 1993, p.94.

⁵⁵ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.32. See also Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.100; Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.100-03 for both official and non-official versions of the tragedy, Anwer Khan Dewana, *Kia ye loogh Pagal Tee*, Peshawar, 1995.

57 persons were found dead on the spot, 38 corpses were buried by the hospital authorities, 24 bodies including a woman were taken to different villages and about 500 injured were admitted into different hospitals in the province.⁵⁶ Ghaffar Khan, on his way to Peshawar on 23 April, was arrested at village Naqi on charge of subversive activities and sentenced to three years rigors imprisonment and was sent to Gujrat jail in the Punjab.

The Qissa Khwani massacre was followed by a second firing incident at Peshawar on 31 May, killing twelve persons. On 16 May, Utmanzai was besieged by eight hundred British soldiers who set on fire the office of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and ravaged the whole village. The siege of Utmanzai was followed by similar sieges of village Prang and Charsadda, where curfew was imposed. The people were not even allowed to go to the mosques for prayer. The 24 day siege not only created food shortage, but also many cattle also died out of hunger.⁵⁷

On 28 May 1930, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* held a protest meeting at Takkar which was given a blood bath in the wink of an eye. The machine guns silenced 20 persons and injured 40. The army then set ablaze the *hujras*, houses and destroyed the grain stocks.⁵⁸ On the 16 June 1930 village Swal Dher was besieged and villagers brutally handled. Grain stores were totally destroyed. On the 29 Jalbai area (*Tehsil* Mardan) was besieged and the inhabitants received the same fate as their other village brothers. Such was the case with the village Lund Khwar.

On 24 December 1930 the British fired at a meeting at village Tugh, Kohat, which resulted in killing and injuring many *Khudai Khidmatgars*. On 24 August, a peaceful mob at Hathikhel (Bannu) was fired upon, killing seventy persons on the spot. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* and Frontier Provincial Congress Committee were banned. Martial law was declared and the province was cut off from all sorts of communication with the rest of the subcontinent. Frequent firing and lathi charges on the unarmed, non violent *Khudai Khidmatgars* became a routine. Besides killing, all sort of means were used to root out the movement.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁵⁷ Farigh Bukhari, *Tehrik-i-Azadi Awe Bacha Khan* (Lahore: Fiction House, 1991), p.55.

⁵⁸ Allah Bakhsh Yusafi, *The Frontier Tragedy* (Karachi: Mohammad Ali Education Society, 1986), p.45.

⁵⁹ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.108. The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* reported that fifty-four expeditions were undertaken against the frontier tribes between

***Khudai Khidmatgars* affiliation with the Congress**

The mass popularity of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* movement, led the British government to perpetrate unimaginable brutalities upon its leaders and their workers. The British also tried to prove their connection with the Bolsheviks. The Deputy Commissioner's 'note on Red Shirt' dated 30-5-1930 states that modeled on the Bolshevik Soviet systems, the movement 'was known to be in strict accordance with instructions received from the Bolsheviks themselves'.⁶⁰ Severity of repression and lack of outside help obliged *Khudai Khidmatgars* to seek affiliation with a party. Two prominent *Khudai Khidmatgars* Mian Jaffar Shah and Abdullah Shah met with Ghaffar Khan in jail and informed him about government repression. To avoid further government repression it was decided that the organization should be affiliated with an all India political body. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* first choice was All India Muslim League but the latter refused such help against the British government; their next choice, the Indian National Congress, readily agreed and welcomed them in the fight against British imperialism. Ghaffar Khan justified this affiliation with the Indian Congress on political as well as religious grounds. He contended that the British were common enemy of both the Hindus and Pashtuns alike, the Hindus would 'catch one of the legs of our powerful enemy and we catch him by his second and in this way tear him in two'.⁶¹

This decision of Ghaffar Khan to affiliate with the Congress was questioned by some of his colleagues, but he defended his decision in these words:

Hindus as well as Muslims, to guard the deceit and diplomacy ...of the mischief mongers (the British) whose Raj survived due to their divide and rule policy which resulted in Hindu Muslim disunity.⁶²

On another occasion he said:

If you can point out any other party like the Congress, I am prepared to cooperate with it. We want freedom; we want to drive out the British from our country because they have exhausted our patience. We would, therefore, side with a

1849 and 1902. A similar number of expeditions took place between 1902 and 1947, J.W. Spain, *op.cit.*, p.176.

⁶⁰ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam*, p.33; J.W Spain, *ibid.*, p.110.

⁶¹ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.230. See also Muhammad Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, pp.158-59.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.231.

party which has the same goal as we have.⁶³

The *Khudai Khidmatgars*, after their merger with the Congress, got popularity on an all-India level. Furthermore, Ghaffar Khan assured his critics that they would not lose their national identity in the Congress and that the old names and terms of *Jirga* and *Khudai Khidmatgars* would be remain unchanged. And if the Congress betrayed them he would be the first to leave the Congress. He also explained that the relationship of Congress with the *Khudai Khidmatgars* would be only of friendship (*dostanah*) and would not subordinate or replace the latter.⁶⁴

On 5 March 1931, Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed between the Government and Congress. As a result of the pact, all the political prisoners were released except Ghaffar Khan because the government wanted a separate deal with him. But he refused on the ground that Gandhi was the sole representative of both the Congress and *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Thus all the political prisoners in NWFP were released on 11 March 1931.

On his release Ghaffar Khan had declared Gandhi-Irwin Pact as temporary truce and this was confirmed by the hanging of Sardar Bhagat Singh which sent waves of resentment in the length and breath of India.⁶⁵ In NWFP, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* resumed their work to organize and discipline the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. The government broke the truce by arresting two of them in Deh Bahadur. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* once again raised voice against the government and as per Congress program started propaganda against the Round Table Conference to be held in London. The British government therefore arrested Ghaffar Khan on 25 December 1931 and declared that, in the NWFP, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and Congress with all its affiliated branches were unlawful associations.

In December 1931, in the Second Round Table Conference, failure of talks between Gandhiji and the British was followed by mass arrest which roughly sent about 17 thousand *Razakars* (voluntaries) to different jails. The British government wanted to crush the Red Shirts. As thousands of arrested *Khudai Khidmatgars* were not only beaten, thrown into icy cold water but put in such filthy cells that they refused to take food in such conditions.⁶⁵ The arrest of Ghaffar Khan and Nehru in December 1931 was followed by the declaration of civil disobedience movement by the Congress. The arrest of Gandhiji on 4 January 1932

⁶³ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁶⁴ Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.232.

⁶⁵ For biographical sketch of Bhagat Singh see Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

added fuel to the already inflamed situations. In order to divert the attention of the people from their national struggle, the government declared elections in April 1932. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* boycotted the elections. The boycott almost everywhere in the province was so successful that the whole Charsadda sub-division recorded only one vote.⁶⁶

On 27 August 1934, Ghaffar Khan was released but banned to enter the Punjab and NWFP, therefore, he was invited by Gandhiji to stay with him. The significant event of the year 1934 was government's decision to elect only one member from NWFP to the Central Legislative Assembly. Earlier, the Pashtuns of NWFP were represented in the assembly by a nominated member. In pursuance of the government decision, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* formed a delegation to go to Wardah for consulting the disbanded Khan brothers (Ghaffar Khan and his elder brother Dr. Khan Sahib) and convince Dr. Khan Sahib to contest the election. Ghaffar Khan agreed to contest the election and won. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* also obtained grand victory in the district board elections.⁶⁷

On 7 December 1934, Ghaffar Khan was re-arrested and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment on charges of inciting people against the British Raj. On 1st August 1937 he was released but once again prohibited to enter Punjab and NWFP until 29th November. However, in the last week of August 1937 he was allowed to enter these areas. When he arrived in his home province, the NWFP, the political horizon was totally changed. The confrontational politics had given way to parliamentary politics and the Congress was participating fully in the new developments. However, the most significant aspect of the civil disobedience movement in Frontier during this period was the strict adherence of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* to non violence.

Elections of 1937

Under the 1935 Act in 1937 elections were announced. In NWFP election for a 50 member's provincial assembly was held in February 1937. The *Khudai Khidmatgars* won 19 seats out of 35 (contested seats) in 50 members legislature. The Hindu-Sikh Party got 8 seats, the Independents were 16 and the Azad Party had 3 seats.⁶⁸ Despite being the largest party, the Congress did not command an absolute majority and thus was not in a position to form the government. Seeing the

⁶⁶ Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.115.

⁶⁷ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *op.cit.*, p.37. See also Farhad Jan, *op.cit.*, p.120.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.134.

uncertain position of various parties in the assembly, Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan succeeded in forming the government. However, the ministry of Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan could not survive for long. At the session of the Legislative Assembly on 3 September 1937, a motion of no-confidence was passed by 27 votes to 22. Cunningham, therefore, asked Dr. Khan, on 4 September, to form a ministry, and two days later, on 7 September, Dr. Khan Sahib handed in the list of his cabinet.⁶⁹

The *Khudai Khidmatgars* in office

The *Khudai Khidmatgar* and Congress ministries were in office for a little less than two years, but during this short period several important issues were settled. The objective of the government should be the service of the people. The functionaries of the government, including the ministers, should be their servants and not masters. This declaration went long away in the removal of fear from the hearts of the long suppressed Pashtuns and made them bold and daring. Once a young fellow held Dr. Khan Sahib by his collar and asked him what he had done for Pashtuns. The police constable jumped at that excited young man and pressed his throat in order to release the Chief Minister from his grip. Dr. Khan instead held the police constable from his neck and cried angrily, ‘wretched! I strive to create and develop courage amongst the Pashtuns so that they may put their hands into the collars of those who usurp their rights even if that be the Chief Minister, and you suppress that courage’.⁷⁰

Many repressive laws were withdrawn. The principle of nomination in the municipal committees and other local bodies were replaced by the principle of election. In the field of services and scholarships, status was replaced by merit. During this period in Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, communal violence occurred. Gandhiji paid a visit to these panic stricken areas in order to restore confidence amongst the Hindus and Sikhs. The ministry, on personal assurance, persuaded those Hindus and Sikhs who had left their homes to their return home and settle peacefully.⁷¹

On 3 September 1939 Second World War broke out. Britain declared war on Germany. The *Khudai Khidmatgar* authors condemned the Europeans for not learning any lesson from the First World War’s destruction and were again preparing for another terrible destruction.

The irony is that all this is done for peace. Hitler and

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.135.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.136.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.139.

Mussolini too are talking peace but through guns. The British are killing Palestinians and bombing Wazirs (Pashtun tribes of Waziristan) for peace. The Japanese are attacking Chinese for peace. If this is peace, burn it... world peace can be established only with love and not guns.⁷²

On 11 September, the Viceroy made the declaration of war without consulting Indian leaders or legislatures. The Congress, at this stage demanded some constitutional concessions in return for their support and assistance. The British refused and wanted unconditional support which the Congress rejected. On 22 September the Congress directed the provincial ministries to resign. The NWFP ministry ultimately resigned on 7 November 1939.

In September 1939, the All India Congress' Poona offer of conditional support to the British war stuck Ghaffar Khan badly. He resigned the Congress working committee by saying:

The Congress party has thus discarded the sacred path of non violence and set on the dirty path of violence which is completely against the Khudai Khidmatgar principles. Our way is that of peace and love. We don't believe in war and hatred. We have no quarrel or enmity with any nation of the world. Our task is to serve and love all the people of the world ... that is why I resign from the (Congress) working committee.⁷³

By his resignation Ghaffar Khan proved himself to be a firm believer in non violence. But when the all Indian Congress committee adopted a resolution at Ramgarh, opposing Indian war efforts, Ghaffar Khan rejoined the Congress.

This was a brief story of the struggle for freedom from British of the *Khudai Khidmatgars* through non violence from 1929-1940.

Conclusion

The British objective in Frontier province was just to use its people as tool and fodder of war and its land as base or frontline against its overt and covert designs in the region in general, and against Russia (later on Soviet Union) and Afghanistan, in particular. They never tried to introduce the liberal, pluralistic value system of the West based on democratic norms in the new province but rather old colonial political and economic exploitative structures were sustained.

Ghaffar Khan spent 34 years out of 98 in the British and

⁷² Abdul Karim Khan, *op.cit.*, p.490.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.240.

Pakistani jails, solitary confinements and house arrests because of his non violent struggle against the British Raj, pseudo-*mullahs* and saints. In the 1930-31 disturbances in the NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), the *Khudai Khidmatgar* emerged as the main opponent of the British Raj and powerful champion of Pashtun nationalism and identity. Even in the 1980s Afghan War, Ghaffar Khan was preaching non violence and peace and declared the war as *super powers rivalry* and proposed Loya Jirga (*grand assembly*) for the resolution of the conflict.