

SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENT IN NWFP: AN HISTORICAL REVISION

Hera Fida¹

Abstract

The British annexed the Punjab in 1849. This annexation and the system of administration introduced by the British ignited the Frontier tribes, along the border of the Punjab, who confronted them violently. Two decades, before the British withdrawal from India a nationalist movement, non-violent in nature, arose from the Indian North-West Frontier region led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan alias Bacha Khan. With the aim to liberate the motherland from the British imperialist clutches the movement later on got affiliated with the Indian National Congress. To pursue this goal jointly, during the Second World War, Abdul Ghaffar Khan launched the Satyagraha campaign [movement] in the Frontier province that was successfully checked by the British counter strategy to preserve peace, stability and tranquility in the region. This paper will analyse how this movement was launched by one of the most popular political organisations in the Indian North-West Frontier region. Moreover, how did it reflect on the political developments of the region?

Introduction

The British came to India as traders in the East India Company. Later of, they established their hegemony over the whole of the Indian sub-continent following the political fragmentation, instability and decay of Mughal rule.² They introduced the western political system and extended the benefits of their educational and technological advancements to run a swift administration in the sub-continent. English was made the official language and a network of public-works was laid down including road-building, canal irrigation, railway-lines, telegraph lines and postal system, etc. These changes brought about by the British imperialism bore criticism among the nationalist Indians.

Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi—leader of the Indian National Congress representing one of the major communities of India, believed in political *Swaraj* (Self-rule) and wanted to revitalise the Indian national culture by implementing his non-violent policy of *Satyagraha*.³ Soon he raised the slogan ‘back to the village’ to undo what the British had implemented in India.⁴

India’s salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past fifty years. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors ... have all to go, and the so-called upper classes have to learn to live conscientiously and religiously and deliberately the simple peasant life ... a life-giving true happiness.⁵

He soon found an enthusiastic adherent in Abdul Ghaffar Khan of Charsadda (District Peshawar) commanding influence among the *Pukhtun* population of the overwhelming Muslim majority North-West Frontier Province—the most vulnerable spot of the British Indian Empire.

During the Second World War British India was not only preoccupied with the belligerence of the Axis Powers but also by the nationalists who had warned the British to grant India complete self-rule or face a direct action through *Satyagraha* movement. Despite its short comings and weaknesses, the

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of History, University of Peshawar, Email: hera.fida@gmail.com, herafidaphd@uop.edu.pk.

² Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2004), pp. 37-38.

³ *Sat* means truth and *agraha* means firmness, the word as a whole means ‘holding on to truth’. *Satyagraha* meant *non-violent* public protest against injustices, to bring a social and political change and winning over the opponent by persuasion through reason and self-suffering and lastly, by resorting to *non-violent* non-cooperation involving strikes and resignation of offices and titles or civil disobedience involving non-payment of taxes, jail-going campaign etc. Direct action was launched after other efforts to achieve an honorable settlement have been exhausted.

⁴ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge (Taylor & Francis, 2004), pp. 109-110.

⁵ As quoted by Judith E. Walsh, *A Brief History of India* (New York: 2006), p. 183.

movement managed to bring in the *Pukhtun* society a glimpse of hope, awareness, political enlightenment, spirit of nationalism and love for the motherland.

North-West Frontier Province and Pukhtun Nationalism

India had earned wide and unparalleled reputation within the British Empire; her strategic location and enormous military and material resources had contributed a lot to its prosperity. She was therefore 'firmly established as the jewel in the British crown'.⁶ Citing the pivotal role played by India in the empire, Salman Bangash describes:

India became the symbol of alluring, prosperous, profitable, advantageous British Imperial strength... The British Isles and India were centres of their affluence, wealth, and power in the world. Losing India would therefore be a death blow to British prosperity, status and supremacy.⁷

The British deemed the North-West Frontier region of India as the *International* Frontier of their empire 'because here they were pitted against a well matched enemy' i.e. Russia. They therefore extended their rule to the Frontier region in 1849, later made into the North-West Frontier Province in 1901. J. Coatman has rightly mentioned:

The North-West Frontier ... is of peculiar and vital interest, because [it] ... is one of the few spots on the earth's surface where we, the British ... can take a knock-out blow.⁸

Their arrival in the Frontier urged the Pukhtun tribes for a violent resistance in a bid to preserve their tribal and territorial independence. Due to strategic concerns the British kept the Frontier Province under the prompt and direct supervision of a Chief-Commissioner.⁹ While the rest of Indian provinces were enjoying constitutional benefits and demanding a Dominion status for India, this province was denied even the basic constitutional rights till 1932.¹⁰

This sense of deprivation and the political repression under the Rowlatt Act, disasters of the *Hijrat* movement and the forceful step-down of Amir Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan from his throne were enough to open the eyes of the *Pukhtun* intelligentsia and those sympathetic towards the *Pukhtun* cause.¹¹

At this juncture Abdul Ghaffar Khan *alias* Bacha Khan along with his close associates Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar, Abdul Raheem Populzai, Maulana Saif ur Rahman etc., rose to the occasion to get the province its due share from the British but through constitutional means or non-violent resistance. In pursuit of their mission to bring social, cultural, religious, economic and political reform in the *Pukhtun* society they established *Anjuman-i-Islahul Afaghina* (Association for Reformation of the Pukhtuns) in 1921 and the *Zalmo Jarga* (Afghan Youth League) in September 1929 later on merged into the *Khudai Khidmatgar tehreek* or the Red-Shirt movement founded in November 1929.¹²

The *Khudai-Khidmatgar* movement originally was a *non-violent* resistance movement aimed at complete independence of India (in general) and the *Pukhtuns* (in particular). It stressed upon its followers to set aside their personal feuds and forge unity; sacrifice their lives and energies to bring peace and

⁶ Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (USA: Da Capo Press (Perseus Books Group), 2002), p. 132.

⁷ Salman Bangash, *The Frontier Tribal Belt: Genesis and Purpose Under the Raj* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 47-48.

⁸ J. Coatman, The North-West Frontier Province and Trans-border Country under the New Constitution, *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 18, No. 3. p. 335.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068373108725160> (accessed 25 October, 2016).

⁹ H. Caldwell Lipsett, *Lord Curzon in India: 1898-1903* (London: R. A. Everette & Co., 1903), pp. 32-36. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=afghanenglish> (accessed 8 December, 2013).

¹⁰ Brandon Douglas Marsh, *Ramparts of the Empire: British Imperialism and India's Afghan Frontier* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 52. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7h-dd2BPS2XTkhCRV9mNFluYTA/view> (accessed 30 March, 2016).

¹¹ Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2007), p. 62.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 63-66.

prosperity to their homeland and liberate it from the foreign rule through forbearing and non-violent direct action.

In December 1929, the leaders of the movement attended the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress. The non-violent stance of Abdul Ghaffar Khan for liberating the nation from the British brought him close to M. K. Gandhi¹³ that resulted in an affiliation between his organisation with the Congress.¹⁴ Abdul Ghaffar Khan later on became a member of the Congress Working Committee—the highest and more powerful body of the Congress. He was also offered presidency of the Congress in 1934 and 1937 that he declined.¹⁵

The Second World War and the Congress politics

During the 1930s the world's peace was threatened by the Axis Powers. The Congress leaders were disaffected by the British government's failure to 'announce self-governance to the people of India' in lieu of their services during the First World War. They, therefore, were in no mood to lend any support to the British in the approaching World War. At the Tripuri session of the Congress in March 1939, its president Subhash Chandra Bose had threatened the British with an all India civil disobedience and *Satyagraha* if complete *Swaraj* was denied to India.¹⁶

On 3 September 1939, the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared India to be at war with Germany without consulting its Central Legislative Assembly then in session and the provincial ministries then in power. In protest to this unilateral decision of the Government the Congress Working Committee directed all its provincial ministries to resign.¹⁷

First phase of the Satyagraha Movement in the Frontier Province

Under the instructions of the Congress Working Committee Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry formally resigned on 7 November, 1939. Governor Rule was proclaimed in the Frontier Province under Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935.¹⁸

Initially, the Congress showed a luke-warm attitude while the *Khudai-Khidmatgars* exhibited non-violence.¹⁹ The activities of their leaders Abdul Qayyum Khan, Arbab Abdul Ghafur of Tahkal, Mian Ja'far Shah Kaka Khel, Bhanju Ram Gandhi, Milap Singh Azad, and Hakim Abdul Jalil Nadvi, etc., were restricted to anti-recruitment speeches preventing the audience from contributing to the British war-effort. Instances were given of the British disposition towards the Indians at the end of the last Great War by relating to the Rowlatt Act, and the massacres at the *Jalianwala Bagh* and the *Qissa Khwani Bazar*.²⁰

Instead they were advised to boycott the British cloth and destroy its textile industries by wearing and weaving *Khadi* by spinning Charkha (wheel for weaving Khadar) to promote the local cloth industry that would boost the indigenous economy. The speakers urged them to rally round the Congress banner to liberate their homeland.²¹

The launch of *Satyagraha* movement was seriously considered by the Congress after the Viceroy's August offer 1940 failed to appease its aspirations. In this connection Abdul Ghaffar Khan toured the province to apprise the public regarding *Satyagraha* stressing on *Khadi* wearing and *Charkha* spinning. He

¹³ Sultan-e-Rome, *The North West Frontier (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa): Essays on History*, see p. 257 and p. 402.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹⁶ S. M. Burke and Salim-al-Din Qureshi, *The British Raj in India: an Historical Review* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 336.

¹⁷ Amit Kumar Gupta, *North West Frontier Province: Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976), pp. 109-110.

¹⁸ Stephen Allan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Pakhtuns: the Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), p. 164.

¹⁹ Private Papers of George Cunningham, 'Summary of Events in N-W.F.P. 1937-46: Tribal and Internal', pp. 16-17. Mss/Eur.D.670/17. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

²⁰ *War Repercussions Report, 1939*. File No. 18/9/5 Vol. I, Serial No. 1176, Bundle No. 66. Special Branch List II, War Situation Report No. 14, p. 179. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

²¹ *Congress cum Red Shirt Activities in Peshawar City, 1940*. File No. 8/3/2 B (i) Vol. XVIII, Serial No. 37, Bundle No. 3. Special Branch List I, I. P. S. Daily Diary, dated 9th April 1940, pp. 23-26. Criminal Investigation Department N-WFP. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

converted the Congress committees into *Satyagraha* committees that were readily joined by the followers of *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* (Congress wing), the *Ahrars* and the *Forward Blocists* with the impression that M. K. Gandhi was launching a movement against the government.²²

Training camps were established for the *Satyagrahis* at Sardaryab and Mathra (Peshawar), Baffa (Hazara), Charguli (Mardan), Shabqadr Adezai, Mira Khel and Bazar Ahmad Khan (Bannu), Kohat and Hangu, etc. Here they were taught the main features of *Satyagraha*: shouting anti-war slogans avoiding violent speeches, flag hoisting ceremony, the spinning of *Charkha* for weaving *Khadar*, village uplift works i.e. sweeping of roads, *hujras*, and the *masajid*, etc.

The *Satyagrahis* were to show forbearance at any instance and court arrests if required. They were to inform their respective deputy commissioners about the venue and time before committing the 'breach of law'. The volunteers were daily paraded and assigned distinct duties of training other volunteers, serving the public, and supporting the movement financially.²³

In October 1940, Abdul Ghaffar Khan at a Congress Committee meeting in Bannu verbally signaled for launching the *individual Satyagraha* i.e. to break the law by one person at a time.²⁴ Each district was to provide a *Satyagrahi* daily who was to observe civil disobedience and replaced by others on subsequent days.²⁵ Soon a list of capable *Satyagrahis* was prepared with the approval of Mr. Gandhi.

On 14 December, the movement commenced with shouting anti-war slogans, the first *Satyagrahi* chosen from the Frontier Province was Dr. Khan Sahib—who was 'the most unwilling to start it'.²⁶

The *Ahrars* and *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* speakers made anti-recruitment speeches declaring British service to be 'unlawful'.²⁷ The *Forward Blocists* had adopted a more violent attitude. In Mardan, they transformed themselves into a war council and asked the public to establish war councils in every village and enlist volunteers for civil disobedience. They spread anti-British propaganda among the public in Mardan and Nowshera by distributing pamphlets titled '*lal jhanda*' and '*the war bugle*'. They hoisted the Congress flag on government buildings and courts etc., and prohibited the public from serving in the army and paying the taxes, revenues, and dues to the Government or to accept currency notes, etc. in order to annoy the Government.²⁸

The movement neither attracted a wider audience nor did it irk the authorities. Only two *Satyagrahis* were arrested at Hazara.²⁹ At other places the police accompanied them to their homes. For showing this much leniency the Government of India warned Governor Cunningham through a telegram on 16 December, reminding him of his duties,³⁰ but, the Governor claimed that repression against the protestors was likely to create political martyrs giving impetus to an otherwise dormant movement.³¹

Owing to *Christmas* and *Eid-uz Zuha* celebrations the movement was paused for about two weeks till 4 January, 1941.³² According to Cunningham the movement showed signs of decline by mid-February

²² *Ibid.*, Weekly Confidential Diary, District Peshawar No. 15, dated 12-4-1940, p. 52.

²³ *Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Activities detailed (History Sheet), 1915-1988*, Serial No. 92, Bundle No. 4. Collection of Sardar Abdur Rashid (Ex-Chief Minister of NWFP), The Sardaryab Camp, History Sheet of Abdul Ghaffar Khan of Uthmanzai, pp. 45-52. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Congress cum Red Shirt Activities in Peshawar City, 1940*. File No. 8/3/2 B (i), Vol. XIX, Serial No. 38, Bundle No. 3. Special Branch List I, C. I. D. I. P. S. Daily Diary, dated 12-12-1940. Criminal Investigation Department N-WFP. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

²⁶ Private Papers of George Cunningham, '*Summary of Events in N-W.F.P. 1937-46: Tribal and Internal*', p. 20. Mss/Eur. D.670/17. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

²⁷ NWFP Governor's Report No. 1, dated 9th January, 1940. Mss/Eur.D.670/ 15. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

²⁸ *Fortnightly Reports on the Internal Situation of N-W.F.P. from 1st half of January 1939 to 2nd half of December 1943* (Political Branch). File No. 3 (A) S.P.I. Vol. I, Serial No. 45, Bundle No. 6, Miscellaneous List I, Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of NWFP from 2nd half of April 1940, p. 72. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

²⁹ Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Pakhtuns: the Independence Movement in India's North West Frontier Province*, p. 167.

³⁰ Cunningham's Diary, dated 16-12-1940. Mss/Eur.D.670/4. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

³¹ Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Pakhtuns: the Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province*, p. 167.

³² Cunningham's Diary, dated 24-12-1940. Mss/Eur.D.670/4. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

1941.³³ Abdul Ghaffar Khan, however, continued his efforts but failed in arousing popular enthusiasm.³⁴ Finally, at the end of April the movement was called off by Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Gupta comments: The individual Satyagraha did not interest the Frontier people, in spite of Abdul Ghaffar Khan's endeavours. The, war, being fought in foreign lands, was still very distant The success of Satyagraha ... depended largely on the high handedness [of] ... the authorities ... and the popular reaction it always provoked.³⁵

When the Cripps Mission, 1942 failed to appease the Congress aspirations amidst the impending Japanese aggression on the Burma front, another phase of *Satyagraha* movement was launched by the Congress infuriated by the vague idea of the 'Pakistan scheme'³⁶ becoming a reality.

On 8 August 1942, the ireful Congressites urged the British to leave their land by resorting to the 'Quit India movement' which was to synchronise with the impending Japanese invasion on east India³⁷ and Subhash Chandra Bose's 'Plan for cooperating between the Axis Powers and India' that involved the Frontier tribes to rise-up in open rebellion against the British Government of India to liberate their land out of its Imperialist clutches.³⁸

The Government of India retaliated by arresting the ring leaders of the Congress like Mr. Gandhi, Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad and all members of the Indian National Congress Working Committee on 9 August, 1942. Serious disturbances broke out all over India and the government declared all the Provincial Congress Committees unlawful organisations.³⁹

Second phase of the Satyagraha Movement in the Frontier Province

The Frontier Province Congress Committee was the only committee that was 'not outlawed'.⁴⁰ Governor Cunningham ignored the Government of India's strict orders to 'arrest everyone and notify everything as unlawful association'.⁴¹ According to Rittenberg:

After August 8, they [the Viceroy and Home Department] redoubled their pressure, broadly hinting that unless he acted firmly, Cunningham would be held solely responsible for any problems which might develop in the Frontier. Events, however, proved that his confidence ... was warranted.⁴²

To challenge the Government's repression the Frontier Congress Committee met on 10 August 1942 it arranged meetings and strikes all over the province; six days later it authorised Abdul Ghaffar Khan to launch the second phase of *Satyagraha* movement. He instructed his followers at *Sardaryab*.⁴³

The 'Declaration of Independence' was read out at the Congress meetings in all the districts. Picketing of the liquor shops, schools and law-courts were carried out in the months of August, September

³³ Private Papers of George Cunningham, *Summary of Events in N-W.F.P. 1937-46: Tribal and Internal*, p. 21. Mss/Eur.D.670/17. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

³⁴ Erland Jansson, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan? The Nationalist Movements in the North West Frontier Province: 1937-1947* (Uppsala Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1981), p. 124.

³⁵ Gupta, *North West Frontier Province: Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47*, p. 125.

³⁶ The Cripps Mission proposed for an Indian Union. If any province desired to leave the Union or retain her independent status, she was given the right to prepare a new constitution. His Majesty's Government would be prepared to agree to give this new constitution the same full status as that of the Indian Union—this was dubbed by the Hindu press as the 'Pakistan demand' and the Congress condemned these proposals altogether.

³⁷ Confidential No. G/A 18/43, dated 3rd November, 1943. Extract from the Diary of an officer of this Department, dated 31st October, 1943. *Palestine and Waziristan Affairs and Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband's propaganda to prevent Recruitment and create disaffection in the Army*. File No. 25/1/19 Vol. III, Serial No. 1573, Bundle No. 86. Special Branch List II, p. 155. C. I. D. Special Branch, Lucknow, U. P. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

³⁸ Milan Hauner, 'One Man against the Empire; The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve of and during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* (SAGE London and Beverly Hills, Vol. 16 (1981), pp. 197-198. www.jstor.org/stable/260623 (accessed 21 March, 2015).

³⁹ Jansson, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan? The Nationalist Movements in the North West Frontier Province: 1937-1947*, p. 124.

⁴⁰ *Secret: Congress Disturbances in the NWFP, 1942-43*. (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1943), p. 1. IOL R/3/1/366. India Office Records and Library, London.

⁴¹ Cunningham's Diary, dated 29th July, 1942. Mss/Eur.D.670/4. India Office Records and Library, London.

⁴² Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Pakhtuns: the Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province*, p. 168.

⁴³ *Secret: Congress Disturbances in the NWFP, 1942-43*, p. 1. IOL R/3/1/366. India Office Records and Library, London.

and October, respectively.⁴⁴ The *Khudai-Khidmatgar* batches regularly visited the courts, police-stations and Government offices asking those in Government service to resign. The Congress message was spread across the province through volunteers to which the tribes remained indifferent.⁴⁵

Mian Jafar Shah, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, and Dr. Khan Sahib etc., delivered speeches that mainly revolved around non-cooperation with the government, non-payment of the taxes and revenues, and preserving unity for the liberation of the country from the British.⁴⁶

The Government, however, did not interfere in their activities till the movement went violent.⁴⁷ Usually the police dispersed the angry mobs through the *lathi* charge. In October, violent clashes between the picketers and the police took place. Among them some 376 were arrested at Bannu under Section 341 I.P.C.⁴⁸

Similarly, at Peshawar they threw stones at the police, damaged the trains on the railway line and telephone wires, and looted a post-office. In these incidents some 22 policemen were injured. In Mardan an incident occurred near the courts of Additional District Magistrate, in which three protestors died. Another angry mob of 1,000 persons armed with hatchets and revolvers attacked the police in the sub-Judge's court. The police opened fire and tear gas to disperse the mob. This display of violence also spread to Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Nowshera.

The police then resorted to arrest the leading Congress and *Khudai-Khidmatgar* workers of the province.⁴⁹ Thereafter, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's activities were restricted. He was barred from entering Kohat and Mardan and was ultimately arrested on 27 October under Rule 26 of Defence of India Rules. His 126 volunteers were detained under Section 107/ 151 Cr. P. C.⁵⁰

In the Hazara district Faqira Khan, M. L. A. of Malikipura⁵¹ and Abdul Qayyum of Baffa were arrested⁵² and in Mardan, Qazi Ataullah, an ex-M. L. A. was arrested under the Arms Act for carrying unlicensed revolver.⁵³ About 2,550 volunteers including eight Congress Members of Legislative Assembly were arrested.⁵⁴ The arrests of the leaders gradually weakened the movement. By February 1943 it ended completely.⁵⁵

Analysis of the Satyagraha Movement

The *Satyagraha* movement was a joint effort of four parties but could not find much enthusiasm. The *Khudai-Khidmatgars* over emphasis on *Pukhtun* nationalism won popularity only in Bannu, Kohat and Peshawar district alienating the non-*Pukhtun* Muslims of the other two districts.⁵⁶

The dissensions and divisions within the organisation gave the movement a serious set-back greatly affecting her influence over the masses. For instance, the emergence of a rift between Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Ghulam Muhammad Khan of Lund Khwar over the issue of political ascendancy on the eve of the war,⁵⁷ differences between Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his nephews Obeidullah Khan and Rab

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Private Papers of George Cunningham, 'Summary of Events in N-W.F.P. 1937-46: Tribal and Internal', p. 29. Mss/Eur. D. 670/17. India Office Records and Library, London.

⁴⁶ *Congress cum Red-Shirt Activities, 1941-43*. File No. 8/3/2 B (iii), Vol. XII, Serial No. 40, Bundle No. 3. Special Branch List I, I. P. S. Daily Diary, dated 24th November 1942, p. 39. Criminal Investigation Department N-WFP. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁴⁷ Gupta, *North West Frontier Province: Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47*, p. 130.

⁴⁸ *Secret: Congress Disturbances in the NWFP, 1942-43*, p. 1-4. IOL R/3/1/366. India Office Records and Library, London.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁵¹ *Faqira Khan son of Ghulam Khan Swati of Malikipura, Police Station Mansehra, District Hazara*, File No. 2496 AF-16, Vol. II, Serial No. 84, Bundle No. 6. Special Branch List III, Government of NWFP Order, Peshawar, dated 19th November 1943, p. 10. Criminal Investigation Department N-WFP. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁵² *Secret Cress Disturbances in the NWFP, 1942-43*, p. 7. IOL R/3/1/366. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁴ Gupta, *North West Frontier Province: Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province*, pp. 99-106.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

Nawaz Khan and their subsequent formation of another party lowered the prestige of the organisation,⁵⁸ the diverse outlook of the Khan brothers over the Frontier politics resulted in a split within the Congress-cum-*Khudai Khidmatgar* organisation which was believed to be the only anti-British political party in the Frontier Province.⁵⁹

Despite being a nationalist movement aimed at the revival of the Pukhtuns and sharing common cultural and ethnic ties, the movement found little following among the tribes because ‘politics were forbidden in the tribal territory’.⁶⁰ The British attempted to isolate the tribes from contact with the *Khudai-Khidmatgar* organisation whose message was not always applicable to the tribes as it resisted the colonial structures i.e. non-payment of taxes or revenues, socially boycotting the British or their services.

On the contrary, the atmosphere in the tribal area was quite unique as the tribes did not pay any tax or revenue rather received subsidies from the British government, they were governed by *jargas* and were not answerable to British courts because their cases were dealt under the Frontier Crimes Regulation.⁶¹ They also possessed no alternative jobs to offer to the masses while asking them to resign government services. So the masses at large remained un-impressed by the *Khudai-Khidmatgars’* motto.

Moreover, the philosophy of *Satyagraha* itself found no precedence in *Pukhtun* traditions and norms. Weaving of *Khadi* through *Charkha* spinning—an activity exclusively associated with the weavers’ class and sweeping of roads and hujras were construed inappropriate for *Pukhtun* men thus bore criticism. Moreover, Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s ‘non-violence’ was declared by the mullas as un-Islamic labeling him *Kafir* for continuing the legacy of Hindu-dominated Congress.⁶² This propaganda was widely believed when both the Khan brothers married their off-springs to non-Muslims⁶³ that harmed their reputation as *Khudai-Khidmatgars*—Servants of God and nationalist leaders, alienating not only his supporters e.g. Arbab Abdul Ghafur who founded the Afghan Jirga in 1942⁶⁴ but also provided a chance to their political rivals to conduct a vindictive propaganda against them and the Congress. Cunningham recalls:

Mullahs in Peshawar and Mardan intensified their anti-Congress propaganda in July-August 1942.⁶⁵

Thus, the internal dissensions of the organisation, its leaders’ shortcomings, weak contacts with the tribes, and the counter propaganda campaign not only damaged the organisation’s reputation but also greatly facilitated the British in the critical and decisive phase of their rule over India. Governor Cunningham’s wit at this point of Indian history was much appreciated by Christian Tripodi in the following words:

Although Congress ... view[ed] effective support for British India during the war as the primary condition for post war independence. By the time this sentiment changed ... [during] the Quit India Movement, the Frontier had been largely pacified by the combination of an effective propaganda campaign allied to a traditional Muslim mistrust of Congress objectives.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Serial No. 92, Bundle No. 4. Collection of Sardar Abdur Rashid (Ex-Chief Minister of NWFP), Secret Supplementary History Sheet of Abdul Ghaffar Khan of Uthmanzai, p. 42. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁵⁹ Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North West Frontier Province, 1937-1947*, p. xix.

⁶⁰ Khan, *The Pashtoon Resistance against the British Raj: 1897-1947*, p. 119.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Leake, *The Defiant Border: The Afghanistan Pakistan Borderlands in the Era of Decolonization*, p. 31.

⁶² Private Papers of George Cunningham, *Summary of Events in N-W.F.P. 1937-46: Tribal and Internal*, pp. 20-21. Mss/Eur. D. 670/17. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

⁶³ Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Pakhtuns: the Independence Movement in India’s North-West Frontier Province*, p. 173.

⁶⁴ Tuesday 6th October, *Khyber Mail* 1942, Vol. 11, No. 49, p. 2. Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁶⁵ Secret: Note C, Cunningham Papers, *Correspondence with the External Affairs Department Regarding Propaganda through Mullahs*, dated 6th July 1942, p. 18. Mss/Eur. D. 670/19. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

⁶⁶ Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North West Frontier, 1877-1947* (England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2011), p. 203.

Conclusion

Despite its shortcomings, and weaknesses the *Satyagraha* movement in the Frontier Province partially succeeded in promoting patriotism and *Pukhtun* nationalism; popularising the use of the local made goods among the populace and denouncing the British rule. The movement magnified the image of the Congress-cum-Khudai Khidmatgars as was obvious from the outcome of the 1946 election (in the province). But the party itself could neither attempt for nor preserve the notion of absolute *self-rule* (as envisaged by Mr. Gandhi no 'English rule' without the Englishmen).

The Congress-cum-*Khudai Khidmatgars* government, however, proved to be short lived. Independence from the British was on the way. Under the 3rd June Plan 1947, Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy, not only announced the partition of Indian sub-continent into two sovereign states of India and Pakistan but also, holding of a referendum to decide the fate and future of North-West Frontier Province. The *Khudai-Khidmatgars* whose sole aim until then was the independence of a united India were left in utter bewilderment by the Indian National Congress's acceptance of the plan. Consequently, the ensuing communal riots, the *Khudai-Khidmatgars*' boycott of the referendum, the Muslim League propaganda and tours of Amin-ul-Hasanat, the *Pir of Manki Sharif* along the length and breadth of the province and his propaganda in favour of Pakistan ultimately gave way to the rise of the Muslim League in North-West Frontier Province. And the Congress-cum-*Khudai Khidmatgars* government in the Frontier Province was dismissed by the Governor under the orders of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.