North West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) was one of the most important Muslim majority Provinces in North India because of its geo-political position. During the early colonial period, the Pakhtun tribes heroically resisted the British advance. They constantly caused concern and irritation for the British till their last days on the Frontier, and the region was ultimately carved into a separate administrative unit with limited administrative authority.

The new province of N.W.F.P. in 1901 was also provided with very limited constitutional power, because to the British, Frontier was not a Province like other administrative units in India and the public demand had not risen here to the level of socio-economic requirement as elsewhere in India. N.W.F.P. was constituted by the British just to serve as a watch tower for events outside India. On the other hand, it sought to serve the defensive needs of the British Empire in the East against expanding Russia in
the North Western India. So, the British were least bothered about the issue of Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. and the people of the province remained deprived of their political and constitutional rights for a long time.

Muslim press like ‘Zamindar’ and the Muslim leaders like Maulana Zafar Ali Khan strived hard for the introduction of Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. However, no independent book or article has been written on the issue and the area remains largely neglected. The research paper focuses on the material presented in the “Zamindar” and by an in-depth analysis of its contents, along with other primary and secondary sources, attempts to highlight its role in bringing about Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). It argues that ‘Zamindar’ through its editorials and articles played a significant role in creating awareness about the issue.

Constitutional Reforms in India

The positive aspects of the war of Independence (1857) were the introduction of a series of Constitutional Reforms in India. It was started with the Government of India Act 1858. The Act marked the end of one era and the beginning of another, as the rule of the East India Company came to an end and India was now directly administered by the British Crown. However, it did not instantly bring about change in the system of government as the local people were not associated with the work of administration. This object was achieved by the Indian Councils Act of 1861 which recognized the need for consultation with the local people in order to get knowledge about the true conditions of the people. The local councils were created for the purpose of advice to the Government. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in his Alzab-i-Bagavat-i-Hind [Causes of the Indian Revolt] had advocated such measures. However, the Act deliberately attempted to avoid the idea of elections and favoured nominations. The creation of the Indian National Congress (1885) and the political awakening of the Indians forced the Government to amend the Act of 1861 and
another Act was enforced in 1892. In this Act, the principle of election was introduced for the first time in India, but the principle of election was disappointing for the Muslims as they, being a minority, were not expected to derive any benefit from this Act.

Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 made the Muslims happy because introduction of the Principle of Separate Electorate in Municipal and District boards was accepted and in this way, their separate identity was recognized. However, the number of seats was not in proportion to the Muslim population, especially in Bengal and the Punjab. No other Muslim majority Province including N.W.F.P. got any benefit from these reforms, as the area did not come under the constitutional imperatives. The reforms of 1909 could not satisfy the Indians generally, due to the demand for self-government.

The political developments in India and in the international arena after the beginning of the World War I (1914) hastened the movement for further progress towards self-government in the subcontinent. The two-fold policy of limited reforms and repression could achieve nothing. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 were more liberal than the previous reforms because the establishment of “Dyarchy” in the provincial sphere was the most fundamental and also the most novel feature of the Act. Under this system, the provincial government was divided into two parts “reserved” and “transferred” as recommended by the Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1918. But the great drawback of the 1919 Reforms was that it was not introduced in all the provinces of India. The Muslim regions, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, were deprived of these reforms, as Frontier was not an appropriate constitutional administrative unit managed under a Chief Commissioner. The basic reason for this deprival, which was accepted by the British themselves was that Frontier was a breeding ground for revolutionary ideas and its war-like and fanatical population did
not allow them to introduce liberal Constitutional Reforms there. The educated and political minded people inside as well as outside the province, even the Muslim leadership of India and Muslim press like 'Zamindar' were disturbed at the exclusion of N.W.F.P. from the reforms. They were depressed while thinking if the Constitutional Reforms were good for the rest of India why these were not good for N.W.F.P.

**Zamindar: A Profile**

The publication of weekly 'Zamindar' was started by Maulvi Siraj ud Din Ahmad (father of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan) in 1903. In the beginning, it played an important role to protect the rights of the cultivators of the Punjab and was least interested in political issues of India. However, when Maulana Zafar Ali Khan became its editor, he, like other young graduates of Aligarh College, took keen interest in political affairs of the Muslims. That was the reason that he was present in the foundation session of the All India Muslim League on December 30, 1906. He supported the Muslim demand of separate electorate, which was accepted in Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. The period after 1909 was very critical for the Muslims of India. Many factors, most significantly the rejection of Muslim demand for establishment of Muslim University Aligarh in 1910, the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the beginning of the Balkanisation in 1912 and the Kanpur Mosque Tragedy in 1913 were the most crucial concerns for the Muslims. The British attitude towards Turkey during the First World War and the ensuing Khilafat issue forced the young leadership of Aligarh, including Maulana Zafar Ali Khan to give up Sir Syed's Policy of extending co-operation to the British. It was the time that Maulana Zafar Ali Khan had taken over 'Zamindar' after the death of his father on 6th December, 1909. Its publication began from Lahore in May 1911, instead of Wazirabad.

Under his leadership, a new spirit was infused in the paper and within a short time, it was transformed into a first-rate daily newspaper. At that time, it was the most important newspaper of
the Punjab. The ‘Zamindar’ was launched to struggle for the Muslim rights. It played a significant role in awakening the Muslim masses and in framing their political outlooks. It turned the Muslims from a loyalist to a critic of the British Government. At the end of the First World War, ‘Zamindar’ strongly criticized the British Policy against Turkey. Consequently, the publication of ‘Zamindar’ was suspended and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was detained in his hometown Karambad for five years (1914-1919).

Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. and ‘Zamindar’

‘Zamindar’s’ struggle for the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. started just after the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in 1920 because the Prince of Wales was coming to India to inaugurate the Provincial councils, after the elections, under the Constitutional Reforms of 1919. ‘Zamindar’ tried its best to realize the British Government that there was a province, which was not benefitted by these Reforms. The title of Sarzameen-i-Be-Ain (a land without Constitutional Reforms) was given to the Province by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of daily ‘Zamindar’. A number of articles, editorials, reports of different meetings in different places and Muslim efforts from different corners were given space in the paper under the above mentioned title.

In 1921, a series of twelve articles was published about the discriminating attitude of the British Government in N.W.F.P. with reference to the political and constitutional development. In these articles Rowlatt Act of 1919 was criticized and was compared with the “Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901”, saying that the Indians, who had made heroic sacrifices for the British Government during the first World War, were under the illusion that after war, they would be granted self-Government in return for their sacrifices. But contrary to their expectations, they got their reward in the form of the Rowlatt Act 1919, which was against the fundamental principle of justice. It was supposed to give unlimited powers to the administration and the police. The
accused neither had the right to appeal nor could take the services of a lawyer for his defense. The police could put anyone under arrest without assigning reason.

According to Zamindar of 21st April 1922, the Frontier Crimes Regulation 1901 was equal to the Rowlett Act because it raised the authority of Deputy Commissioner of the N.W.F.P. to such an extent that he was made a brutal and tyrannical sovereign. The newspaper cited the following examples:

1. if a person had been granted bail against payment and the concerned person could not pay the amount demanded, he could be imprisoned for 3 years;
2. if the same person had spent the said period of imprisonment, he might be asked for the guaranteed amount and if for the second time he could not pay it, he could be imprisoned again for the next three years;
3. if the inhabitants of any village, or part of a village, or even a single person committed a crime, the Deputy Commissioner could impose a fine on the inhabitants of such village or part of village as a whole;
4. if an armed person entered in the cantonment area or of any municipality after sunset and before the sunrise, he would be punished with a fine or an imprisonment for a term which might extend to five years, or with both punishments;
5. under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, any person might be arrested without a warrant.

"Zamindar" criticized the Jirga system of N.W.F.P. which caused injustices in many cases because a jirga consisted of three
persons appointed by the Chief Commissioner, not by the will of the concerned parties. It was not compulsory for the representatives of Jirga to know something about rules and regulations. The Deputy Commissioner was not bound to accept the proposals of jirga. On the other hand, the Jirga commonly tried its best to make the high authority happy with their decisions. The Deputy Commissioner had the authority to stop the hearing in any session court and could hand over the case to the Jirga. The Jirga had the authority to punish such a person who had been imprisoned and on completion of their term were released.

Due to the inhuman clauses of 'The Frontier Crimes Regulation', the N.W.F.P. was called Sarzameen-i-Be-Ain and because of this regulation, thousands of people were imprisoned in different jails of N.W.F.P. The Zamindar analyzed the brutal law and pointed out that the crime rate in the Province was increasing day by day and the Government did not bother to analyze the factors responsible for the unrest in the N.W.F.P. Because the population of the Province was quite different due to the racial and religious characteristics, the Frontier tribes had great impact of their cultural and political development and it was impossible to suppress them under such type of black laws.

According to 'Zamindar' the British had framed the internal and external policies for their own benefits, in India generally and in N.W.F.P. in particular. For example, during the First World War, the Pakhtuns remained loyal to the Government with reference to the Khilafat issue of Turkey. Although they had some spiritual and emotional relations with Turkey but they supported the British and so hoped that their co-operation and material assistance to the British would secure not to severe a punishment for Turkey in case of defeat. But during the war, the sacred places were not protected by the British and after the war, the Ottoman Power was balkanized. They, therefore, felt to be cheated and betrayed by the British Government. So, it was impossible for
them to continue their loyalty to the British and as a revenge to their disloyalty, the Government was not ready to introduce the Constitutional Reforms in the Province.  

As ‘Zamindar’ had made its responsibility to point out the grievances of the people of N.W.F.P., so in its edition published on 16th April, 1923, it pointed out the misuse of the political funds by the Provincial Authorities of N.W.F.P. And when some members belonging to Khilafat Committee of N.W.F.P. agitated against the expenditure, especially spending on the welcome and farewell parties of ex-commissioner, Sir Hamilton Grantt, they were arrested on the charge of inciting the people against the Government. The ‘Zamindar’ raised another issue in its edition, published on 18th April, 1923, that under the section 40 of ‘The Frontier Crimes Regulation’, Islamic Preaching and Publication were banned in the Province, which was against the fundamental rights of the Muslims. It was due to the reason that the Province was being run without any Constitutional Reforms. The ‘Zamindar’ requested the Government to pay attention to those issues. So, Lord Chelmsford, the secretary of state for India, announced the Frontier Policy of British in the House of Lords in June 1923 saying that it was useless to spend in N.W.F.P. But the Government wanted to have some flexibility in their Frontier Policy. He said that the administration of N.W.F.P. was dependent on many affairs, like British relations with Afghanistan, internal and external conditions of the Frontier Tribes etc. According to the Government, the Pakhtuns took refuge in the Frontier Territory and these tribes caused general anarchy in the Province. ‘The Zamindar’ advised the Government that the solution of the problems was hidden in the Constitutional Reforms because a strong Constitutional system could be a solution to tribal anarchy. The ‘Zamindar’ pointed out that the second reason of the anarchy in N.W.F.P. was the election system which was not introduced in the Province and even in the local bodies, the Government itself used to nominate the members and
the people were not given the right to choose their representatives. 19

Muslim demand of introducing Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. was increasing day by day and Dr. Saif ud Din Kitchlow, a prominent nationalist leader, requested the Government in a public meeting in Amritsar held on 1st March, 1925, that the grievances of the N.W.F.P. and the lawlessness of the Province could be solved through the Constitutional Reforms. 20

‘The Zamindar’s’ efforts for Constitutional development were not hidden to any one, including the N.W.F.P. government which banned its editor Maulana Zafar Ali Khan to enter the Province. In a public meeting, Maulana said that he was banned for calling N.W.F.P. as Sarzamaen-i-Be-Ain. He promised if the Government would introduce the Constitutional Reforms in the Province, he would be the first to call it as the Sarzamaen-i-Ain [Land with Constitution]. 21

Muslim League and the Demand for the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P

Although, Muslim League was established in 1906, yet, Mohammed Ali Jinnah started his political career on its platform in 1913. He remained the president of Muslim League from 1919 to 1930. Due to his efforts, a unity pact was signed between Muslim League and Congress in 1916, popularly known as Lucknow Pact, through which the Congress accepted the Muslim right of separate electorate for the first time, introduced by the Indian Government in 1909 in the Minto-Morley Reforms.

Muslim League felt its sympathy for the province of N.W.F.P in May 1924, when Muslim representative from the Frontier, Barrister Abdul Aziz, participated in the meeting of P.M.L in Lahore and spoke eloquently for extension of reforms to the Province of Frontier. 22 He proposed a resolution, which was
seconded by Abdul Majid Qureshi of Lahore on 25th May 1924, that “The All India Muslim League strongly urges upon the Government the immediate and the paramount necessity of introducing reforms in the N.W.F.P and placing this province in all respects in a question of equality with the other major provinces of India.” 23 Now the demand for the full status of the N.W.F.P was moved from this gathering onwards to the national agenda of the Muslim League. The issue was referred to the Central Muslim League and those of its provincial committees. In the 17th annual session of the Muslim League at Aligarh in 1925, it warned the Government of India that “any territorial distribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and North West Frontier Province.” 24

It was also decided that the Muslim demand in favour of N.W.F.P should be presented in the Central Legislative Assembly. Sheikh Sadiq Hussain, a member of the CLA, raised the question in the assembly in the session of February 1926 that “The province of N.W.F.P should be treated like the other provinces of India”. 25 On 26th February, under the presidency of Hajji Jan Muhammad (Vice President of Khilafat Committee of Frontier) along with the members of CLA like Sheikh Sadiq Hussain, Sahibzada Abdul Qayum, Syed Murtaza Bahadur, Dr. Khan Haider and Ahmad Khan requested the Government to introduce Constitutional Reforms in the N.W.F.P. 26

The daily news paper ‘Zamindar’ had made its objective to get the support of the Muslims from all parts of India in favour of N.W.F.P. So it was noted that the Muslims of Bengal were constantly pressurizing the Indian government for the introduction of Constitutional Reforms in the Frontier. However, it was surprisingly noted that no local organization and no public efforts were seen from the Punjab on this issue, although it was also another Muslim majority province. The ‘Zamindar’ requested the Muslims of the Punjab to support their Pakhtun brothers. 27
So, in a meeting held in the Punjab University, a large number of prominent Muslim leaders favoured the case of N.W.F.P. 28

The years 1927 and 1928 were politically the hectic ones. With the break of Khilafat Movement, the Hindu-Muslim riots had started throughout the country due to some extremist Hindu organization like Shudhi and Sangathan. The Hindu-Muslim unity was evaporated in the thin air and the Hindu political lobby propagated and regularly challenged the right of separate electorate for the Muslims. It also strongly opposed Constitutional Reforms and attainment of the desired provincial status for N.W.F.P. 29

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was also called an ambassador to the Hindu-Muslim unity agreed to forego the right of separate electorate on 20th March 1927 on the basis of the following proposals, which later came to be known as “Muslim Delhi Proposals”, that:

1. Sindh should be separated from Bombay and constituted into a separate province;

2. reforms should be introduced in N.W.F.P province and Baluchistan on the same footing as any other province;

3. in the Punjab and Bengal, the proportion of representation should be in accordance with the population and Muslim representation should not be less than one third in the Central Legislatures.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan disliked the Delhi Proposals due to the withdrawal of the right of separate electorate. He believed that India was a country where the Muslims were in minority and the Hindus in majority and both of them considered each other as their enemies. The Hindu majority did not trust the Muslims and
when every decision was made in favour of the Hindus, then it was impossible to protect the rights of the Muslims without the right of the separate electorate. He presented some proposals against the Delhi Proposals in which right of separate electorate was to be continued along with the equal status of N.W.F.P with the other Muslim majority provinces.

Hindu Reaction and the Introduction of the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P

Muslim demand for the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P was so genuine that the Sikh community of the province joined hand with the Muslims on that issue. Some members of the Hindu community in the region also had sympathies with the Pakhtuns and they were supporting the Muslims of the Frontier province by issuing provocative statements. Some of the Hindu members in the CLA showed their support and sympathy with the cause of the Pakhtuns of N.W.F.P. Among them, Dr. Anand Pal asked the government, “Why was the N.W.F.P kept away from the benefits of the reforms?” The official reply was that at the time of the introduction of the reforms, it was decided that the administration of the Frontier should remain in the hands of the government. But the Hindu community of the province, which was about five percent of the total population, was opposing the Muslim demand. According to them, the province had some covert revolutionary organizations connected with Afghanistan. They requested the Indian government not to introduce the Constitutional Reforms to avoid the communal tension. Sir Sadiq Hussain criticized the attitude of the non-Muslims in regard with the matter of reforms introduction in the N.W.F.P. He said if such a small minority could dictate that the progress of the country should stop, it was unjustified. They had every right to demand full protection for their rights and these must be granted to them but a minority forming five to six percent of the population certainly had no right to bar the progress of the whole population.
The Hindu Mahasabha, had organized itself under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1923 in an All India Conference of the Hindus held in Banaras. Its manifesto was to work for the safeguard of the political, religious, social and economic rights of the Hindu community. It opposed the Muslim demand in the CLA and its members warned the government that the Frontier was a place which had to be especially guarded if India had to be properly defended. A member of the Hindu Mahasabha, P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, also made a speech against the Constitutional Reforms stating that, “In the Frontier Province, the conditions necessary for the introduction of proper control over the government of the Province did not exist.” But the Central Legislative Assembly passed a resolution accepting the Muslim demand in the province. Although that acceptance did not mean for the guarantee from the government, yet, it satisfied the Muslims for the time being. The members of the Hindu Mahasabha of CLA walked out of the assembly in reaction that the Hindu population of the province was afraid due to the Islamic Madrasas and its neighbour Afghanistan. The ‘Zamindar’ in its edition, published on 24th March 1926, criticized the Hindu Mahasabha’s attitude and pointed out that Muslim Madrasas also existed in Bihar, Bengal, Bombay and many other cities of India and the Hindus considered themselves safe in those areas but they felt unsafe in N.W.F.P. It meant that the Muslims were unsafe in Hindu majority province and it was just natural that Afghanistan was its neighbouring country. The ‘Zamindar’ also criticized Motilal Nehru’s attitude that did not show any reaction against the walkout of the Mahasabha’s members from the assembly. He also presented three proposals to the problems of N.W.F.P that:

1. it should be given the status of autonomous province;
2. it should be amalgamated with the province of the Punjab;
3. the above mentioned two proposals should be mixed. The ‘Zamindar’ criticized the proposals as well that these were against the good will of the Muslims and it was just to accept the dyarchy system under the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919). It was also against the calibre of a politician such as Motilal Nehru.

On the other hand, it was promised in the Montague Chelmsford Reforms that after ten years, the British Government would again consider the question of Indian Constitutional Progress. So, on 26th November 1927, a Statutory Commission was appointed known as “Simon Commission” with six Englishmen but no Indian representative. It annoyed the Indian Political Parties and the commission was badly boycotted. The Congress appointed a commission on its own under Motilal Nehru and submitted a report known as “Nehru Report” in August 1928. The report recommended the provincial status to N.W.F.P and Sind but it denied the Muslim right of separate electorate. Muhammad Ali Jinnah rejected the Nehru report. All the Muslim newspapers of the Punjab including ‘The Daily’, ‘Siyasat’, ‘Inquilab’, ‘Paisa Akhbar’ and ‘The Muslim Outlook’ were in forefront of sustained opposition campaign. The ‘Zamindar’ was the only newspaper which favoured the Nehru report on the condition that one third Muslim representation in the centre should be accepted and in the Punjab and Bengal, Muslim representation should be on the basis of population. It also included separation of Sindh from Bombay and the introduction of the reforms in N.W.F.P, which was also recommended in the “14 points of Muhammad Ali Jinnah” (25th March 1929).

The long awaited Simon Commission Report was published in May 1930, in which the demand of equal status for the Frontier was neglected. The Commission recommended a council, with elected and nominated members in about equal proportion. The
elected members would be chosen by a special constituency of big land holders, the Khans, the members elected by municipalities, district boards and of ex-soldiers. The members were nominated by the Chief Commissioner, and would consist partly the officials and partly of non-officials. In addition, due provision be made for the representation of the minorities including the Hindus and the Sikhs. The legislative powers of the council were to be limited. The Chief Commissioner was given the power to preside over the provincial legislative assembly. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan had already criticized the government attitude for the Frontier which was stated in the Dennys Bray Committee (1922) and its Report, submitted in 1925. It was announced that the full constitutional status of the N.W.F.P would be postponed for the time being. Maulana compared the Simon Commission Report to the Bray Report, which also denied that the people of that province had any right to reforms.

The recommendations were criticized by a number of the Muslims leaders. Yameen Khan, a member of Central Legislative Assembly from U.P. condemned the recommendations and stressed the need for the introduction of the same Constitutional Reforms in the Frontier province as was given to the other provinces of British India. Sahibzada Abdul Qayum, a prominent Muslim leader from N.W.F.P., considered it “most disappointing, which had created great discontent in the already serious situation of the Province. Instead of securing the co-operation of the people, it had strengthened the hands of the administration”. On the other hand, in the session of the All India Muslim League held at Allahabad on 23rd to 30th December 1930, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal said in his address that he would like to see the Punjab, N.W.F.P, Sindh and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state and the formation of a consolidated North West Indian Muslim state appeared to him the final destiny for the Muslims of at least North West India. In the same session, he criticized the Simon Commission Report regarding the reforms in N.W.F.P. Opposing the idea of reforms in the Province, the Commission had argued
that since its people lived in a “Powder house,” they could not be granted “the right to light the cigarette”. According to Iqbal, political reforms were like “light rather than fire”. He said that no one could deprive of the right to acquire light, even if he lived in an ammunition depot or a powder house. At the end of the session in Allahabad, the Muslim League adopted a resolution that “the Muslims of India will not be satisfied with any constitution that does not guarantee

a. full Muslim representation on population basis in the Legislatures of the Punjab and Bengal;

b. the constitution of Sindh into a separate province forthwith and without any condition;

c. the conferment of full powers on the N.W.F.P and Baluchistan.”

Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Struggle for the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was one of the Muslim leaders of the Frontier, who did a lot, not only for the political awakening of N.W.F.P but also for the constitutional rights of the Province. He was a prominent social worker of Charsadda and was inspired and supported by Hajji Turangzai, who was well known for the Anti-British Movement for about two decades. In 1921, he established “The Anjuman-i-Islah-i-Afghania” and in 1929, he started ‘Khudai Khidmatgar’ movement, aiming to create political consciousness among the Pakhtuns, to promote unity among them and to encourage the Pashto language and literature. He also demanded complete independence of Hindustan by all peaceful means. He was against the “Frontier Crimes Regulation” of 1901 and wanted Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P. at par with other provinces of India.
The daily ‘Zamindar’ gave full coverage to the struggle of Abdul Ghaffar Khan for the province of N.W.F.P. On 20th February 1929, Khan Abdul Ghaffar in a public meeting in Peshawar pleaded the constitutional case of Frontier. Syed Jaffar Shah, Abdul Rub Nishtar and Qazi M. Aslam also addressed and warned the Indian Government to be fair with the people of N.W.F.P for their political and constitutional rights. 49

In December 1929, Abdul Ghaffar Khan attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Lahore, along with many other leaders of Khudai Khidmatgar. The Congress pledged itself to the attainment of complete independence. 50 In the same session, the Congress hoisted the flag of independence on the bank of river Ravi. 51 The main purpose of attending this session was to introduce their movement and to gain sympathy for their province. On his return from Lahore, Abdul Ghaffar toured three thousand villages of the Province to popularize his movement. In 1930, the Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement against the British government for the complete independence of India. Abdul Ghaffar was asked to welcome the movement in the Province and as a result, he was arrested along with many local leaders. After his release in March 1931, he openly joined the Congress but ‘Khudai Khidmatgar’ organization retained its separate identity. Now he strived for the Constitutional Reforms in the province of N.W.F.P., along with the Muslim League, the members of the Central Legislative Assembly and the Muslim Punjabi press like ‘Zamindar’ that also struggled for the rights of the people of N.W.F.P.

Round Table Conferences and the Constitutional Reforms in N.W.F.P

There was immense confusion with reference to the future Constitutional Reforms for India because the Simon Commission had satisfied none. Same was with the Nehru Report as its proposals were not acceptable for the Muslim League and the
Congress was also not in the mood to accept Jinnah's proposals. So, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India announced the convening of the three Round Table Conferences at London from 1930 to 1932.

The first session of the Conference opened on 12th November 1930 to 19th January 1931. It was attended by fifty eight Indian delegates including M. Ali Jinnah and Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan, a representative of N.W.F.P. The Congress boycotted the Conference because Gandhi was in jail due to the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Conference dealt with critical issues through eight sub committees - on Federal Structure, Provincial Constitution, Franchise, Sindh, the North – West Frontier Province, Defense, Services and Minorities. The sub-committee No. V was appointed under the chairmanship of Arthur Handerson to give proposals for the N.W.F.P. Its members advised the government to give the Province the status of Governor's Province like other provinces in the British India. It also proposed the legislative council with elected as well as nominated members with due representation of the minorities. The governor was to be the executive head of the Province assisted by two ministers. In May 1931, the Indian Government appointed another sub-committee (The Haig Committee) to give proposals, especially about the financial matters between the Province and central government. The Haig Committee submitted its report on 23rd June, 1931 and recommended a full-fledged province for N.W.F.P. 53

The Congress did not like the recommendations. When Gandhi was released under the Gandhi – Irwin Pact on 4th March 1931, Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan requested him to support the Frontier reforms. The latter replied that when India would be given independence, the Frontier would be able to get complete autonomy.
The long awaited demand of the Muslims about the full-fledged provincial status of N.W.F.P was fulfilled on 1st December 1931 by Ramsay MacDonald at the concluding session of the Second Round Table Conference. Now, it was a Governor’s Province of British India. Sir Ralph Griffith was the first governor of the Frontier Province. Under the Government of India act of 1935, it was invested with Provincial Power for the first time.

The credit must go to the efforts of many people belonging to the N.W.F.P like Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan as well as to the outsiders, like, Dr. M. Iqbal, and M. Ali Jinnah, Khan Abdul Ghaffar khan and his Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, which also played a significant role especially during the Round Table Conferences when he remained in connection with local British authorities and pressurized them for the welfare of Frontier Province. The Muslim League as the Muslim representative political party of the sub-continent played an important role in this connection. The services of the Muslim members of the Central Legislative Assembly cannot be ignored in this regard. And above all, the Muslim press from the Punjab like ‘Zamindar’ constantly highlighted that issue to make this province from “SirZameen-i-Be-Ain” to “SirZameen-i-Ain” from 1920 to 1932. Now, there was a Muslim province prepared to play its role in the freedom struggle for the Muslims of India.

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32. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 13th February 1926, 2
33. The Central Legislative Assembly Debates, 16th February 1926, 1305 - 1306
34. The All India Hindu Mahasabha sprang up in Lahore in 1882 and by 1906, it was established in each district of the Punjab. Some of its regional branches were established in 1918. In the post-Khilafat period, when India was in the grip of communalism, the Hindu Mahasabha had a large following and considerable influence on the Hindu mind. It also patronized anti-Muslim Movements like Shuddhi and Sangathan.

Qalb-i-Abid and Musarrat Abid, Communalism in India: The Role of Hindu Mahasabha (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 2008), 7 - 8
35. The Indian Annual Register, Vol II, 1923, Edited by, H.N Mitra and Bipen Chandra, (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1990), 9
37. The Central Legislative Assembly Debates, 1st January 1926, 1334 - 1341
38. Ibid, 8th March 1926, 2736 - 2737
39. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 24th March 1926, 2
40. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 31st March 1926, 2
41. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 1st April 1926, 2
42. In 1922, the Indian government announced a committee with eight members, headed by Dennys Bray, Joint Secretary Foreign Affairs, to solve the constitutional issues of Frontier. It submitted its report finally in 1925 after visiting the important areas of N.W.F.P and interviewing the prominent personalities of the province.

43. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 30th January 1929, 3

44. The Central Legislative Assembly Debates, 12th July 1930, 103 – 104

45. Ibid.

46. Ahmad Saeed, Trek to Pakistan (Lahore: Pakistan Historical Society, 2009), 206

47. G. Allana, Pakistan Movement, Historic Documents 86 – 87


49. Daily Zamindar, Lahore, 20th February 1929, 2


52. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, The Struggle for Pakistan (Karachi: University of Karachi), 60