

NONVIOLENCE MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA: THE CASE OF KHUDAI KHIDMATGAR 1929-47

Dr. Malik Hammad Ahmad

Conflict and Development department,
University of Jaume- Castellon, Spain

World, especially South Asia, is facing many problems for its inhabitants. The whole region is under different crises. Either undemocratic governments or human rights issues or injustice or environment problems or gender issues or religious conflicts or the most dangerous and present phenomenon terrorism surround the whole region particularly Pakistan. After September 11, 2001, NATO led by USA launched 'War on Terror' and attacked Afghanistan in October 2001 to pursue hideouts of Al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden, and Taliban. Pakistan, being a front ally state in the 'War on Terror' makes its position and status in a quagmire; which led Khyber-Pukhtoonkhwa (old North West Frontier Province), one of the provinces of Pakistan, and its tribal areas a direct and indirect battleground. Since 2015, *Zarb-i-Azab*¹ has been going on to curb terrorism in Pakistan. The basic objective of these operations is to establish peace in the world in general and in this region in particular. However, spending trillions of dollar on the war, the world is still looking for the peace.

According to Global Peace Index report 2016, war costs the world \$13.6 trillion only in 2014.² According to ISPR³, Pakistan has borne \$106.9 billion in dealing with the violence emerged due to the war; however establishment of peace is still missing, and clouds of fear are still hovering over the country. Hence, violence and warfare do not create lasting peace, nor counter terrorism and extremism but like pouring gasoline on the fire. (Cortright, 2006). The whole human history has proven that neither of these approaches works. There is

¹*Zarb-i-Azab* is a Pakistan's joint-military operation against various terrorists groups, working and hiding in Pakistan's tribal areas. It was launched in June 2014. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) website for further information <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/zarbezab> (Accessed on 6 January 2017).

²https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/the-world-continues-to-spend-enormous-amounts-on-violence-and-little-on-building-peace/?utm_content=buffer91471&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer (accessed 6 January 2017)

³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281352> (accessed on 6 January 2017)

no wisdom in initiating destruction in the name of protection, security or promotion of peace. (Cortright, 2006). Instead of continuously following-up violence to deal with the violence, nonviolent resistance⁴ (interchangeable with civil resistance) has proved better track in success (Chenoweth and Stephenson, 2011) to address key issues of the world including facing violent regimes such as Hitler's, or dictators' such as Chile's Pinochet, Pakistan's General Zia-ul-Haq, fighting against oppressive regimes such as Soviet Union's Communism in Eastern Europe, and anti-colonial movements such as Gandhi's Quit India. This paper, therefore, tries to highlight another important anti-imperialists nonviolent resistance to British imperialism. The movement was launched in today's KPK amongst the nation, which has been tagged as one of the 'violent nations' in the world. The movement was strengthened at the platform of Khudai-Khidmatgar, led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

Nonviolent Movements in India:

It is wrongly said that their demands for independence, and the mobilization of masses against British rule was achieved by the

⁴Gene Sharp defines nonviolent resistance is a powerful way for people to fight for their rights, freedom, justice, and self-determination—without the use of violence,

Nonviolence is seen as an effort to influence, and a typology of influence techniques is developed, based on a simple model of how human actions are decided upon. This typology has as its main axis a distinction between positive and negative techniques of influence, i.e. the distinction between techniques that facilitate the execution of positive actions and techniques that impede the execution of negative actions. Nonviolence is then defined in a negative and a positive sense: negative nonviolence would include all possible techniques of influence short of 'deprivation of biological health' (called violence in the narrow sense) and positive nonviolence would exclude all negative techniques of influence (called violence in the broad sense). (Johan Galtung, On the meaning of Nonviolence, 1965)

Gandhi, who introduced nonviolent resistance for political purposes, coined the terminology called *Satyagrah*. The principle called Satyagraha came into being before that name was invented.[...] But I could not for the life of me find out a new name, and therefore offered a nominal prize through Indian Opinion to reader who made the best suggestion on the subject. As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word 'Sadagraha' (Sat=truth, Agra=firmness) and won the prize But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to 'Satyagraha' which has since become current in Gujrati as a designation for the struggle. (Gandhi, 1957: 318-9)

main political organisations. Nonviolent resistance played a major role in achieving the independence of India in 1947. The philosophical based of non-violence was transformed into action during the whole period of struggle against the *raj*. There were two main leaders of non-violence resistance movements in the period of Indian history who led the people in the whole country of India i.e. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Ghaffar Khan) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Gandhi).

Though nonviolence movement did not have its origin within the geographical boundaries of India yet, an Indian in a foreign soil of South Africa led it. Gandhi was born in Kathiawar, India, is a founder of civil resistance for political change. It was not imagined at that time that a timid person who was unsuccessful in his own country, would be a pioneer of such a movement that gave a new direction to the voice of oppositions in the world. As Fischer (1982) mentioned that a small incident of discrimination by an English person in the booked apartment of a train was the birth point which conferred him to lead thousands of people in his rest of life.

Khilafat Movement (1919-24), Bardoli March (1928), Salt March (1930), and many small movements under the banner of Civil Disobedience and Quit India (1930-47) were those prominent demonstrations of Gandhi and his companions who not only created awareness among the people of India for their rights but also paved the way for the Independence of India from British Colonialism in 1947 non-violently.

Amidst such movements which were piloted by world fame person, another movement was started in a very far region of the India, called North Western Province which is now a part of Pakistan since its independence. It was started in a very small village of Utmanzai, Peshawar in 1910, which was thousands of miles away from Gandhi's hometown. In the beginning, it was an education and social reform movement. The movement was led by a more than 6 feet long and strong muscular man, called Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He is also known as Bacha Khan. He was born in 1890 in Utmanzai, Mardan. The movement was named *Khudai Khidmatgar* which established in 1929 after over passing multiphase (

Emergence of *Khudai Khidmatgars* (the Servants of God):

Current Khyber-Pukhtoonkhwa where the "War on Terror" is being fought today is the birthplace of *Khudai Khidmatgaran* (KK). Including the tribal belt, it is said that Taliban and leaders of "Al-Qaeda" have their hideouts in this region. Council on Foreign Relations (2008) declared that the Bush administration had already

spent \$200 billion⁵ in Afghanistan war by October 2007 but still all in vain. This is the same battle ground of 1987 when United States of America defeated Soviet Union with the allies of “*Mujahidin*”⁶, Pakistan and some others. At that time, the war was fought for saving the religion of “Islam” from the communist while the present war has been fighting for saving the humanity from “Islamic Extremism”. But, some history back, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Ghaffar Khan) started a war to fight which did not cost at all, which was fought without any violent weapon to kill the opponent, which was fought by the People who were known for their violence; as William Crook (1896) mentioned *Pathans* in his work that they were the barbaric and fighter nation. They loved to prolong their vendetta and felt honoured on such behaviours. Instead, he took his principles from the religion Islam and showed to the whole world what the true meaning of Islam is.

Ghaffar Khan, though, launched his nonviolent movement, called Khudai Khidmatgaran (KK) as Gandhi led on the other part of the country but philosophical background and the nation was so different. According Banerjee (2000), his philosophy of the movement was not only based on the ideology of *Pashtun*'s tribal code (*Pashtunwali*) but he also introduced the Islamic concept of non-violence. Once he said to his soldiers “I am going to give you such a weapon that the police and the army will not be able to stand against it. It is the weapon of the Prophet, but you are not aware it. That weapon is patience and righteousness. No power on earth can stand against it (Johansen, 1997:58). Though some aspects of Ghaffar Khan had reflection of Gandhi's style yet he came to his belief independently of Gandhi, rather than as a result of contact (Banerjee, 2000: 56-59). Though, it is a fact that the philosophy and practical form of non-violence of Khudai Khidmatgar was not borrowed by Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* yet he is famous in the pages of history as Frontier Gandhi (*Sarhadi Gandhi*). Dr. Waqar Ali Shah quoted J.S. Bright, a contemporary biographer of Ghaffar Khan:

⁵ <http://www.cfr.org/publication/15404/#2>

⁶ Mujahidin are called to those persons who fought during 1980s against the Soviet Union aggression in Afghanistan. See for details: Lester W. Grau, and Michael A. Gress (eds) (2000) *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a superpower fought and lost*, Kansas, University Press of Kansas. Steve Coll (2004), *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York, Penguin Groups. Gregory Fremont-Barnes (2012) *The Soviet: Afghan War 1979-89* Osprey Publications a few of them.

Ghaffar Khan is in complete accord with the principle of non-violence. But he has not borrowed his outlook from Mahatma Gandhi. He has reached it and reached it independently. [...] 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. (Shah: 14)

His nonviolent concept started when he had established his reformist action in the shape of refusal of joining the Commission Guides, the most prestigious army corps in the royal British defence in 1906, and opening of *azad* (open) school in his hometown Utmanzai in 1910 and by joining a reform movement of Haji Abdul Wahid Sahib of Turangzai in 1911. Having culturally and tribally 'violent' blood, Ghaffar Khan managed to demonstrate non-violent behaviour, attitude and actions in his life and successfully led series of protests in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s.

KK, initiated from the *Anjuman-I-Islahi Afghan* (Reformation of *Pasthuns*) society, was formed in 1929 as a non-violent army to secure the rights of the people of the region. As Ghaffar Khan told the objective of the army "An army of non-violent soldiers could be drilled, disciplined, and pledged to fight, not with guns but with their lives. Therefore, he decided to create an organisation specifically committed to using only non-violent action to achieve political, social, and economics reforms" (Johansen, 1997: 58). He was very well versed about religious sentiments and ties amongst *Pushtuns*. He successfully launched his movement by highlighting the religious elements and tribal code of ethics to mobilise and motivate them towards non-violent struggle against British suppression. He orated the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) for being peaceful and spread the message of love to all humanity.

He set up an army of those youth who finished their studies in his schools. The procedure of the recruitment of the army was alike as the traditional recruitment of forces. The army needed to be trained for increasing their patience, for bearing the hardships so that they could not retaliate in a violent way towards any kind of harm by others. There were physical as well as psychological exercises for the cadets. He also awarded titles and ranks e.g. general, captain, lieutenant, to the members of the army and adhered strict disciplines and principles. This training not only consisted on such activities but they had to take a pledge before getting accepted into the army and oath after the successful training (Benerjee:73-102).

The following *pledge* points basically defined the recruiter how one had to pass through one's life to become the soldier of the army:-

I put forth my name in honesty and truthfulness to become a true Servant of God.

I will sacrifice my wealth, life, and comfort for the liberty of my nation and people.

I will never be a party to factions, hatred, or jealous with my people; and will side with the oppressed against oppressor.

I will not become a member of any other rival organisation, nor will I stand in an army.

I will faithfully obey illegitimate orders of all my officers all the time.

I will live in accordance with the principles of non-violence [adam Tasha dud].

I will serve all God's creatures alike; and my object shall be the attainment of the freedom of my country and my religion.

I will always see to it that I do what is right and good.

I will never desire any reward whatever for my service.

All my efforts shall be to please God, and not for any show or gain. (Johansen, 1997: 59)

The following *oath* mentioned the prominent features of the organisation:-

I am a Servant of God, and as God needs no service, but serving his creation is serving him, I promise to serve humanity in the name of God.

I promise to refrain from violence and from taking revenge.

I promise to forgive those who oppress me or treat me with cruelty.

I promise to treat every Pathan as my brother and friend.

I promise to refrain from antisocial customs and practices.

I promise to live a simple life, to practice virtue and to refrain from evil.

I promise to devote at least two hours a day to social work (Ghaffar Kahn, 1969. 97).

I shall expect no reward for my services.

I shall be fearless and be prepared for any sacrifice. (Johansen, 1997: 59)

In 1940's the Khudai Khidmatgars reached in its peak of more than 100,000⁷ of its members and had its offices in all over the province. He also had established close relationship with Gandhi and worked together on their idea of civil disobedience and noncooperation movement against British colonialism. Gandhi cherished after finding such non-violent movement which belonged to Pathan tribe. Explaining the meaning of fighting, Gandhi once said,

“If I do not infer from this that India must fight,” he explained. “But I do say that India must know how to fight. [...] A nation that is unfit to fight cannot experience prove the virtue of not fighting”. [...] In 1930 Gandhi heard about the heroics of Khan's Khudai Khidmatgars and he must have known that he had found what he was looking for. (Flinders, 1990: 188).

He started to strengthen his Khudai Khidmatgars movement in all over the country. The distinguish element of this force was that it was completely volunteer army; from highest rank's officers to the lowest soldier of army was recruited without any compensation which was also mentioned as one of the pledge points.

Role of women in the society was one of the prominent and exceptional features of the movement. There were hardly any thought among the people of the region at that time and (still today) that they allowed their women to participate in the world outside of their homes; he made it visible that women actively took part in his army and played a successful role side by side the men. He talked publicly about the equal rights of women with reference to Islamic teachings. “In the Holy Quran, he told women “you have an equal share with men. You are today oppressed because we men have ignored the

⁷Dr. Muhammad Raqib, *The Muslim Pashtun Movement of the North-West Frontier Of India-1930-34*: 124.

commands of God and the Prophet. Today we are the followers of custom and we oppress you” (Johansen, 1997: 61).

In most of the movements’ history, there is one particular incident that flourished and popularised the movement quickly at larger scale. So did in the life of Khudai Khidmatgars, remembered as *Qisa Khwani Bazar* incident. After the massacre of April 1930, popularity of the nonviolent army and their struggle was spread out all around the country as well as at International level. Including Allah Bakhsh Yousfi, the big critic on Ghaffar Khan, mentioned the event promoted KK as well as Ghaffar Khan from a province to a popular movement and the National Leader respectively. Before the massacre, the numbers of the KK were a little more than 1000, but it increased to 25,000 in the subsequent year after Qissa Khwani (Benerjee, 2000:60).

The anecdote is that after the call of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements for Independence of India by Indian National Congress in 1929, Ghaffar Khan joined hands with Congress and started whirlwind tour around the province for spreading the message. So, on 23 April 1930, British Police suddenly attacked with the armoured vehicles, and opened straight-fires at the unarmed protestors who were gathered in protesting in Qissa Khwani Bazar on the arrest of Congressmen at the KPK’s entrance point. They were on the promotion tour of Congress in this region on the invitation of Ghaffar Khan and others’. However, once the violence erupted in the square, according to Yousafi, Ghaffar Khan left Utmanzai’s school meeting to proceed to the spot. But he was arrested on the way. His arrest ignited the protest further. In that result, 200 demonstrators were died (Benerjee, 56).⁸

The claim Yousafi made that Ghaffar Khan became prominent leader of the region after his arrest during the incident sounds weak as the news of the arrest of AGK spread like a fire in a jungle and many more people came to join the protest at the Qissa Khwani square. Moreover, except Shah, and Benerjee, the other sources barely carry significant primary references to the event. Claiming that the protestors were violent is weak on the basis that not a single government official but one was killed in the incident. However the killed numbers of the protestors are even mentioned in the government reports. The impact of the incident as well as the work of Ghaffar Khan was in the region can be judged that the British government had to impose Martial Law in the Province, and

⁸ Benerjee copied the numbers from the Peshawar Enquiry Committee’s report which was appointed by the Indian National Congress.

the ban of Congress members to the province (Benerjee, 59). However, doing a comparison between Jallianwala Bagh and the Qissa Khwani Massacre in historiography as well as the response of British Government and the political parties of that time demonstrated the regional discrimination towards Pashtun's province. Benerjee and Shah claimed that the incident moved the KKs to join a national political organisation so that their voices could be heard at national platform. After the refusal of All-India Muslim League, the KK, hence, joined INC officially (Benerjee: 68-71).

Seeing the discipline and the growing strength of the organisation, British launched defamation campaign against the organisation and Ghaffar Khan including tagging their red uniform to the communist ideology. They also ignited Muslims on that reason. Having the atheist ideology, communist is an enemy of Allah and Muslims. They propagated with the help of pro-government *Mullahs* ("religious persons") to run campaign against Ghaffar Khan as an ally to Hindu and rebel to Muslims and Islamic faith. By observing the popularity of Khudai Khidmatgars and its leaders, Muslim League was also in the campaign of British government. On the issue of red shirt, Ghaffar Khan explained the reason for the uniform and said that fabric of this colour was very cheap and readily available in the area. The British used many tactics including violence for disrupting the movement in the region. During the civil disobedience movement, Khudai Khidmatgars boycotted the foreign goods including liquor and fabric. They stopped paying taxes to the government and asked revenue collectors to resign from their jobs. The government handled them with iron hands but the popularity of the movement continuously increased. They suppress them with the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act (FCR 1901). Despite their hard actions, arrest and killings of many followers of the movement, British government could not hinder them rather it gained more popularity among the concerned people and authorities. Their affiliation with Congress was the major reason of opposition of Muslim League before and after partition of India in 1947. The mismanagement and chaos during the Khilafat Movement, Ghaffar Khan separated himself from the League and affiliated himself with Congress (unlike Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah).

It ignited the flame when Khudai Khidmatgars not only boycotted the referendum of 1947 for either joining of Pakistan or India or remained Independent but also worked for giving the safe passage to Hindus and Sikhs during the independence massacre of 1947-8. In that return, Khudai Khidmatgars had to pay for that

decision when after independence; Muhammad Ali Jinnah sacked his brother's ministry and replaced with Abdul Qayum Khan. Although, Khudai Khidmatgar passed a resolution of acceptance of the creation of Pakistan in September 1947, and Ghaffar Khan also attended first session of Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and met Jinnah who invited him for the meal; Jinnah and Ghaffar Khan had built their positive relationship yet the refusal of Ghaffar Khan not to join Muslim League engulfed their links. Ghaffar Khan found that the right of individuals was not met in Muslim League. However, his influence continues to be a powerful in his province. Afterwards, the government of NWFP under the new chief minister crushed the movement and its leaders. They used every means to suppress them. The govt. killed and imprisoned thousands of its workers and closed its offices. They continued with the propagation of anti-Islam and Pakistan slogans against them. That's why, it can be examined that history of Pakistan does not give due credit to that Man of Truth, and its world-renowned movement Khudai Khidmatgar.

Conclusion:

As Gandhi (1953) said "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. (Gandhi, 1953: xiii). There is nothing new to write on the topic but it might see the issue with different perspective and bring renaissance period for non-violence in the region in particular and the rest of the world in general.

As Islamic extremism and fundamentalism has become an enemy of peace in the world after communism, such heroic Muslim personality who based his organisation on the teachings of Islam, would be helpful to change the thoughts of the people. He once said "There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to the creed of non-violence. It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet all the time he was in Mecca, and it has since been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressor's yoke. [...] it is my utmost conviction that Islam is *amal, yakeen, mohabbat* [work, faith, love] (Johansen, 1997: 60). His movement is an existing example for transforming a whole violent nation into a practical non-violent preacher. He proved with his hard work and the force of truth that violence is not a pathway of any nation. They just need a leader to guide them towards right direction. In 1896 William Crook wrote: "The true Pathan [Pashtun] is perhaps the most barbaric of all the races with which we are brought into contact. Pashtuns are 'cruel,

bloodthirsty, and vindictive in the highest degree...” (Johansen, 1997: 56). I do not know whether Crook was alive to see the *Qisa Khwani Bazar* massacre where the same *Pashtuns* faced the barbaric act of British forces against them but they did not even spit on them. They rather chose the way to fight against their colonial rule with bravery of non-violence. Inclusion of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s history in Pakistan’s national history, as an opponent at least, would certainly rich the diversity in the history of the country.

As the “war on terror” is being fought in this region and two nuclear countries are actively taking participation, it is a threat to more than a billion human beings of the region. According to SIPRI report 2008, Pakistan and India have 60 and 60-70 nuclear deployed warheads that make the situation more turmoil. India should lead to follow the teachings of Gandhi rather providing help to the neo-imperialist forces in the “war”. As far as the United States of America (USA)’s concern against terrorism, they should arrest those persons who were involved in the heinous crimes against humanity instead of following collateral damage policy. Rather, provision of long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living to the residents of those areas where they have solid proof that terrorists has their hideouts can dramatically alter the situation in the region. They should transfer the whole Afghan’s and Iraq’s military budget to the social and human development sector of these countries which could cost around \$2.4 trillion⁹ through the next decade. Resultantly, the common people of the region, themselves, break the silence and help them out to unmask the culprits. The victory of Barrack Hussein Obama is also the biggest example of the success of non-violence in the history of nonviolent resistance. He should realize that his presidency could not be achieved if Martin Luther King Jr. had not been fought for the civil rights of (African) Americans. Martin Luther King Jr. did not win that battle of rights by armed troops and heavy bombardment over the white people of America but with patience, love and dialogue.

As Shelley describes the characteristics and norms of non-violent brave person in his poem:-

Stand ye calm and resolute
Like a forest close and mute,
With a folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.
And if then the tyrants dare,

⁹ http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2007-10-23-wacosts_N.htm: 12th March 2009.

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Let them ride among you there, Slash, and stab, and maim
and hew, ---

What they like, that let them do.
With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay,
Till their rage has died away. (Fischer, 1932:49)

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