CHAPTER- 6

GANDHI’S LIKEMINDED ASSOCIATES FROM THE ERSTWHILE PUNJAB

Gandhi was working for the broader objectives and certainly not confining himself to some specific aims. After coming back to India he approached men with mettle to cultivate the ideal of non-violence among the masses. On the other side, men who found potential for various individual reasons supported him in his initial endeavors. Undoubtedly, a remarkable Hindu-Muslim unity supported him in echoing his ideal of non-violence during the Non-Cooperation Movement. After such a reverberation many men were being inspired with his leadership as well as the ideal of non-violence. Erikson observes this kind of inspiration in a psycho analytical manner.

His followers, however, were characterized primarily by the fact of having found this particular unique man among their contemporaries at a crucial moment in their own lives as well as in history- and of having been selected by him. My data (unless the data should prove to be “typically Indian”) may offer a fleeting glance into the mutual assimilation of motives which might take place in a self-chosen group making history together.373

A brief overview of Gandhi’s wider associations
Number of correspondences between Gandhi and the people from abroad helps to clarify the above observation. These correspondences indicate that he was able to create a wider space for a comprehensive dialogue


373 Erikson, pp. 408-09.
regarding the ideal of non-violence after the reverberation of his Non-Cooperation Movement. He shared his thought to the people across the world and encouraged them to think collectively. He placed an alternative to the peace loving populace who were not in favor of the ongoing aggressions. Ones who differed with his approach were also becoming a part of the dialogue. One of his following letters gives an idea of the above argument.

In the course of his letter Erwin Baktay had written: “... there are men very far away from India who have faith in your person and your work. I believe that the work which is done by you has a great importance for the whole humanity; the West does not understand it clearly today what your work represents in human history, yet it can be observed that there are many in the West who have a clear or a less distinct feeling about it.... Even in England and France or America there are men who understood that the Western way of solving great problems by everlasting wars cannot lead but to a general ruin. And the whole world begins to listen more and more to India's message for mankind and this message is yours. Since several years I study Indian religion, philosophy and literature, and I have the conviction that India's thought has a very great importance for humanity. I believe that Rabindranath Tagore was right in saying: 'the greatest event of our age was the meeting of East and West in India.'”

His each move was acutely observed and carefully commented. While exchange of ideas he was constantly faced with the queries which were emerging while experimenting his ideals. Undoubtedly, he provided a space for research in the area of ‘Peace’. Though, foresee to venture with solidarity so to introduce concrete logical aptitude on the issue of peace.


---

At the present moment, I am privileged to receive precious letters from friends all over Europe and America, some of them asking me to still further expound the doctrine of non-resistance. Some others are laughing at me and telling me: “It is all right for you to talk these in India, but you dare not do so in Europe.” Yet others tell me: “Our Christianity is a whitewash, we do not understand the message of Jesus, it has got to be still delivered to us, so that we can understand it.” All these three positions are more or less right from the standpoint of the writers. But I venture to tell you that there is no peace for this world, and to take the name of brotherhood is a blasphemy, until we arrive at this fundamental position. Men there are who ask and so also women who ask: “Is it human to refrain from retaliation?” I say it is human. Up to now we have not realized our humanity, we have not realized our dignity; we are supposed to be, if Darwin is to be believed, the descendants of monkeys, and I am afraid that we have not yet shed our original state. \( ^{375} \)

Gandhi was persistently trying to educate men for having a comparative knowledge of all the religious teachings of the world. He was emphasizing that one should not understand only the ‘literal’ meaning of the religious, spiritual, historical teachings as well as his own writings but interpret independently with modern ethical insights. Still there were men who were trying to confine him in their own realities and casted him in an image of their own culture. Though his devotion as of a cult figure was not only confined to Hindus but Christians too.

A Roman Catholic correspondent: Time and again I have noticed letters appearing under flaring captions in the nationalist Press, drawing a comparison between your life and activities and that of Christ. But writers of these

letters not contenting themselves with this achievement of theirs, have gone one step further and have held up “Gandhiji” as “the modern Jesus” (!) to the people of India. I was wondering how far they would go, and these letters which flooded the Press during your incarceration, stopped awhile; but with your release they have revived. Rejoiners have proved ineffective and that is why I am writing this letter to you.\textsuperscript{376}

Moreover his life and writings became a subject of appraisal for many individuals while some were satisfied including his signatures in the list of famous men of the world. Some group of men named their club on his name while many individuals wanted to place his life and work to their countrymen in their own language. Many men seek to follow him by being his disciples, individuals like C. F. Andrews (England), Richard Gregg (American), Madeleine Slade (England) joined him in his experiments. Various leagues which were working around the globe contacted him. Some of the leagues approached him to join them in their humanitarian activities were International Convention Negro Peoples of the World, Fellowship of Faiths (America), League of Neighbors (America), Union of East and West (America), League against Cruelties and Suppression in the Colonies (Berlin), Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (America), The British Federation of Youth (London), The Council of Justice to Animals etc.\textsuperscript{377}

While his experiments he was receptive for the cooperation of the likeminded men and which certainly assisted him in comprehending certain intricacies which were coming in his way. On the other hand, men were being inspired for having similar traits as like religiously broad-minded, strong ethical sense, sensitive for society, strength of mind and who too believes in self-introspection, self-respect and self-discipline.

\textsuperscript{376} Notes, Young India, 11-9-1924, CWMG 25:116.

\textsuperscript{377} CWMG, Vol. 20-35.
These were the men who gradually became his constant strength for being collective in thought. After having a broader idea of Gandhi’s unique force, I am able to locate few men from the erstwhile Punjab who proved to be great strength for Gandhi while his advancement. Among them two individuals proved the potential of being Gandhi’s likeminded and the third to be an ideal worker by reflecting the strength of their character through their own lives.

**LIKEMINDED**


Rajkumari Amrit Kaur 1889-1964

**IDEAL WORKER**

Bibi Amtul Salaam: 1906-1985

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

“I cannot cease thinking of Badshah Khan even when I have ceased to desire to live up to 125 years,” he remarked. “Badshah Khan is a prodigy…. For such a person there can be no defeat… I am sure he will shrink from no sacrifice… but will die serving the Pathans with his last breath.”

Pyarelal reveals Gandhi’s optimism which emerged gradually for an individual who was once encouraged from him. While Bandyopadhyaya views Badshah Khan as the ‘nearer prototype’ of Gandhi in a distinctive manner through *The Times*.

Like Gandhi he too, was condemned for doing a disservice to his people—for emasculating a valiant race. To the fanatics he was as much a Hindu as Gandhi was a pro-Muslim. Bigoted Hindus counted him a guileful Muslim. His life ran on similar lines to those of Gandhi. In his simplicity, truthfulness, humanitarian activities his

adherence to non-violence as a creed, passion for Hindu-Muslim unity and the one-nation theory, religious toleration and above all devotion to God, Badshah Khan is a nearer prototype of Gandhi than anyone else.379

A strong bonding with his community made him to experiment with the ideal of non-violence and in reciprocity people revered him with the immense stature as of Gandhi. “Frontier Gandhi” is the name that the people of the North Western Frontier Province gave to their beloved leader, Khan Abdul Ghaflar Khan, also popularly known as Badshah Khan. He was given that name because he taught the principle of ahimsa, as propounded by Mahatma Gandhi, to his people, the Pathans, renowned as the “fiercest warriors in the world”, and turned them into matchless soldiers of non-violence. Like Gandhiji, he shuns pomp and power and lives like a fakir, a life of stark simplicity. A devout Muslim, he holds all faiths in equal respect. His heart bleeds for humanity. To serve God’s creatures is his religion.380 One sees him from different dimensions but Ghaffar Khan’s Memoir ‘My Life and Struggle’ reveals his strength of character in itself. Circumstances in his young phase led him to depart from studies as well as to join services but it certainly gave him reason to educate the society around. ‘In 1910, I and Maulvi Abdul Aziz opened a national Islamic school in Utmanzai. Through our continued efforts many schools were opened all over the province.’381 Like the other provinces North Western Frontier Province was also engaged with the political fervor during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and then the Khilafat wave. ‘I used to go to Khilafat office once in a while and as I was on friendly terms with both parties, they both used to talk to me about their differences. Both parties made it quite clear that they had confidence in me, and eventually it was suggested that I take over the presidentship. I was not

379 The Times of India, Mahatma’s Frontier Crusader, Anu Bandypadhyay, 18-10-1953, p. 8.
380 Nayar, p. 3.
381 Badshah Khan, p. 29.
really interested, because I am not, on the whole, a lover of presidentships or other high offices, and I prefer to keep away from them. But in this case I felt that I had to accept it. I made one condition, however. I stipulated that all the subscriptions collected in the frontier province should be spent solely on education within the province.382 His repute offered him some political responsibilities but he acquired it to widen the circle of his endeavors for educating the masses of his province and thus for him politics was just a means to achieve his broader aims. However, he was not able to overlook the conduct of the leaders while being a part of the political conferences. He interestingly compared one of his observations for the leaders like Mohammed Ali and Gandhi.

When the Khilafat Conference had started I began to notice that there was great antagonism between the Punjabis and Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali... I was sitting on the platform with other leaders. One of the Punjabi leaders was speaking. In the course of his speech he criticized Mohammed Ali who was sitting beside me. Mohammed Ali could not bear this and he became very angry. He got up and flung some abusive remarks at the speaker. Whereupon another Punjabi leader who was sitting near us on the platform jumped on his feet and waving about a knife which he had suddenly produced from somewhere began to rail at Mohammed Ali. Pandemonium broke out on the platform. Fortunately a large number of Pathans were attending the meeting. We all got up, and managed to stop the fighting and rescue Mohammed Ali... It appeared that Mohammed was displeased with the Hindus, and in his presidential address at the Khilafat Conference he had said some very unpleasant things about the Hindus and rudely criticized

382 Ibid., p. 57.
their society, their traditions, and their customs. This kind of criticism was very unbecoming of a leader, and it spoilt the conference for me. Therefore I decided to attend the Congress session, which was being held at Calcutta at the same time as the Khilafat Conference. It was the first time I attended a Congress meeting. As it happened, here too, the Subjects Committee meeting was in progress. Gandhiji was addressing the meeting. A conceited young man in the audience kept on heckling him. But Gandhiji did not get angry, he just laughed and went on talking. The young man interrupted again and again, but Gandhiji only laughed. This made a deep impression on me, and when I returned to my lodging, I told my companions about it. “If only our Muslim leaders could remain as calm and unperturbed as Gandhiji, the leader of the Hindus,” I said.383

He was observing the leaders with sensitivity as for him a leader should inspire his addressees with his intrinsic worth and not to offend. Gandhi’s enduring temperament touched him and which altered his attention from the Khilafat to the Congress conferences. It is a human nature to get inspired by a person who had some basic traits as of his own and it seems Ghaffar Khan was being naturally inspired too. ‘Gandhiji had the same respect for all religions, and he believed that they were all based on the same Truth. And that has always been my firm belief, too. I have studied both the Holy Koran and the Bhagvat Gita profoundly and reverently.”384

On the contrary, fanatic outlook use to repel him. I observe that right from the beginning till end he was persistently trying to educate the people to be religiously tolerant and to imbibe the features of a broader religion i.e., ‘ethics’. These are the views which he shared through one of his speech on the Pakhtunistan Day during the later years of his life.

383 Ibid., pp. 98-100.

384 Ibid., p. 194.
We have been insulted and disgraced by religion, but I will tell you this, and I want you to listen carefully. First of all, why do religions come into the world? To teach man to be human. Whenever man has forgotten to be human the Messenger has come and brought religion into the world again. The messenger has always come to remind mankind of the lesson they had forgotten, the lesson of love for one’s country and one’s fellowmen, the lesson of service to humanity. The nation that practices love and brotherhood and self-sacrifice will rise to the skies. A nation that does not know these sentiments is doomed. Religion teaches man truth, justice and virtue, and it awakens in the man the desire to serve. What people call religion in the world today is not the religion of God and his Messengers. The Holy prophet Mohammed came into this world and he taught us an excellent way of life.\textsuperscript{385}

A person who is liberal in thought aspires to see his society on a similar plane. He was contemplating to refine his society too. After being inspired, he was inclined to link the ideal of non-violence for his societal enrichment. ‘All these things were discussed at great length and eventually, in 1929 we were able to found the kind of organization we wanted. We decided to call it the Khudai Khidmatgar movement (Servants of God movement). Our motive for choosing that name was that we wanted to awaken in the Pathans the idea of service and the desire to serve their country and their people in the name of God, an idea and a desire which was sadly lacking among them. Another thing was that the Pathans were inclined to be violent and their violence was directed against their own countrymen, against their own kith and kin, against their closest relations. They were like smoldering embers, always ready to flare up and inflict harm and injury on their own brethren. One of their worst characteristics was their habit of taking revenge. They

\textsuperscript{385} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 231.
badly needed to change their anti-social customs, to check their violent outbursts, and to practice good behavior. And this was what we thought the Khudai Khidmatgar movement could and would do. Before meeting a person only an inspiration can do such wonders and which was effective in Ghaffar Khan’s case. ‘Strangely enough, they had never met Gandhiji all this time. It was only in 1931 at the Karachi session of the Congress that he and his Khudai Khidmatgars (literally ‘servants of God’), whose fame and travelled before them, first came into contact with Gandhiji and fellow workers in the cause in other parts of India.’

Gandhi encouraged the spirit after knowing his initiative but guided only after analyzing the potential of his endeavors. He sent one of his associate and his own son to know the significance of Ghaffar’s mission.

‘Kharshed Naroji over 30 years in age, a woman free of hysterics, full of faith and spirituality, went to the Frontier, lived with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, came in intimate touch with people. Devdas next went and both these told me that they were convinced that there was no guile about Abdul Ghaffar Khan, that he always said what he meant and meant what he said. They admit that he is hot-tempered, hasty in action, but has no belief in violence, is in secret league with neither Amanullah nor anybody else. His sole ambition is to see his people happy and free from terrorism. My own personal experience is that he is amenable to control and discipline. I do not remember his having ever refused to carry out his promises. He has come to me whenever I have wanted him. My own firm opinion is that he is much misrepresented in the official circles and that what they do not want his influence among his people. This he undoubtedly has, because he is self-sacrificing, simple and brave. It is once more a repetition of the old policy of cutting off tall poppies.’

However, after meeting both convinced each other and foresaw better

386 Ibid., pp. 96-97.
prospects for working together so to accomplish the broader objectives which is evident through the following experiences placed by Pyarelal.

On his release in 1936 he stayed with Seth Jamnalal Bajaj at Wardha as his guest but passed most of his time with Gandhiji in his Sevagram Ashram, which continued to be his home till the turn of the wheel enabled him to go back to his province. It was a great and valuable opportunity for both. Many were the heart to heart talks which they had during their stay together, as they shared their respective inner experiences. To Gandhiji, with his passion for communal unity, Badshah Khan symbolized the entire Muslim community. And where else could he found a truer Muslim, more devout, more deeply religious, more transparently sincere or more tolerant than Badshah Khan? On Badshah Khan’s part it was not name or fame or even Gandhiji’s political work which drew him to the Mahatma. The secret of his unquestioning faith in Gandhiji was that he found in Gandhiji a kindered spirit, a man of faith and prayer, dedicated to a pure, ascetic life, who waited upon God and sought to do His will even in the littlest of little acts of his life. “There is nothing surprising in a Mussalman or a Pathan like me subscribing to the creed of non-violence,” he once remarked. “It is not a new creed. It was followed 1, 4000 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. But we had so far forgotten it that, when Mahatmaji placed it before us, we thought he was sponsoring a novel creed...To him belongs the credit of being the first among us to revive a forgotten creed and to
Gandhi initially directed the movement by sending his two associates who had the potential to direct the constructive work which was essentially required to cultivate the basis of his ideal. ‘In pursuance of the plan, which he had hammered out in consultation with Gandhiji, Badshah Khan set up a centre at Sadaryab for the training of the Khudai Khidmatgars. At his request Gandhiji first sent Mirabehn (Miss Slade) and then Bibi Amtus Salam (a Muslim lady inmate of his Ashram who had become like a daughter to him) to help Badshah Khan in the work of education and social reform, especially among Muslim women.’ As always, Gandhi was inquisitive to advance the spirit for the national cause which was now Ghaffar’s mission too. He then visited the province to have the first hand knowledge. Both were passionate to cultivate the ideal of non-violence in the Pathan culture and then to the extended society. Gandhi revealed his own anticipation as well as encouraged the masses with the force of the non-violent movement in one of his speech at Charsadda.

I am therefore anxious to find out exactly how far the Khudai Khidmatgars have understood and assimilated the spirit of non-violence, where they stand and what your and my future line of action should be. In South Africa a small band of 13,000 satyagrahi countrymen of ours were able to hold their own against the might of the Union Government. General Smuts could not turn them out as he was able to the 50,000 Chinese who were driven out bag and baggage in less than six months and that without compensation. He would not have hesitated to crush us if we had strayed from the path of non-violence. What could

---

389 Nayar, pp. 31-32.
390 Ibid., p. 36.
Gandhi always encouraged those men who have strength of mind to arouse and educate the ignorant masses for his ideal of non-violence. Moreover, he was always equipped to channelize the spirited leaders with his expertise and creating a ‘laboratory’ for training men. During the Gurudwara struggle he thought of channelizing the leaders but was not able to due to their constricted approach which has been discussed earlier. Though, in Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s case he was able to create a laboratory to train men with his expertise due to their compatible approach. Mahadev Desai\(^{393}\) shares the spirit of the Khan Brothers through “Be Khudai Khidmatgar” the Gujarati version of ‘The Two Servants of God’ so to inspire the masses for such endeavors. Surprisingly Brown observes Ghaffar Khan and his movement with a constricted approach which is not estimated from an author who distinguishes Gandhi’s leadership skills in an analytical way. Gandhi was

---

\(^{391}\) CWMG, Vol.67, Talk with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Harijan, 22-10-1938, p. 421.

\(^{392}\) Speech at Charsadda, Harijan, 21-5-1938, CWMG 67: 68.

working with him for accomplishing the broader aims and the argument as follows is not considerable to understand him as well as Ghaffar Khan.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan professed himself a devotee of Gandhi’s non-violent methods, and after Lahore linked a Pathan nationalist movement to the Congress name and organization, in a relationship which was always ambiguous and often strained. According to her, “He (Gandhi) was determined not to sacrifice Abdul Ghaffar Khan, partly because he believed him to be genuinely non-violent, and partly because his support provided an argument against allegations that Congress was a Hindu organization…”

Conversely, The Times rationally views the spirit of a leader and the attitude of both the parties towards his movement which Brown overlooks to place.

Frontier politics present a paradoxical picture. While within the province the stock of the League coalition ministry, which was in office during a difficult economic period from May, 1943, to March, 1945, has slumped badly, the growing influence of Muslim League ideas outside the province and throughout the country is beginning to have its impact on the Frontier. The Pathan’s primary loyalty is to his religion, and a Muslim political organization with its emphasis on Islamic ideals and ambitions should in normal circumstances impel his allegiance. Why, then, has the League failed to stamp its imprint more firmly on the Frontier? It is common in some circles to speak of the Frontier Province as

---


395 Ibid., p. 342.
“Congress-minded.” Pathans affirm their basic allegiance is essentially and entirely a Muslim body. Congress Influence: Started as a social reform movement among the Pathans, the Khudai Khudmatgars or servants of God—more are, as everyone knows, the creation of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who significantly first sought for allies in the early days of 1930 from among the Muslim political parties outside the Frontier. Only when they spurned his overtures did he turn to Congress. If the Red Shirt Wagon is hitched to-day to the Congress star, India’s Muslim leaders have only themselves to blame. The radical character of the Frontier movement economically, politically and socially which was anathema to conservative Muslims, attracted Congress which shrewdly realized its political potentialities. Next to his faith, the Pathan cherishes his equality and freedom. If there still lurks in his mind a lingering suspicion of the Muslim League it is because economically and socially he regards it as a conservative organization “dominated—to use an oft-repeated phrase of Abdul Ghaffar Khan—“by Khan Bahadurs and Nawabs”, while politically he suspects it of being lukewarm in the cause of independence. Both these suspicions find frequent expression in the speeches of Red Shirt leaders and are echoed by the rank and file. One significant fact is often over looked. While ideologically the Red Shirt movement is identified with the Congress, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan has always carefully preserved its character as a separate provincial organization under his direct control.396

The way he has been working in unison with Gandhi for the ideal of non-violence in a similar manner he was contemplating the idea of a united

396 The Times of India, Frontier election prospects, 11-9-1945, p.4.
India. He was indifferent with the fanatic attitude of the leaders which were dividing India for their individual motives. His idea of Pakistan was logically conceived which is as follows: ‘I was never against Pakistan as such, but I had my own views about Pakistan which were a bit different from those held by the Muslim League. The Muslim homeland of my conception did not admit of the division of the Punjab and Bengal. Besides I never believed, as claimed by many Muslim League leaders, that their demand for Pakistan was in all sincerity based on the interests of the Muslim masses. To me most of them were stooges of the British. Throughout their life they had not rendered any service either to the Muslim people or to the cause of Islam. Nor had they made any sacrifice to achieve these objectives. I knew they wanted to misguide the masses in the name of Pakistan and Islam. These leaders wanted to secure Pakistan only for themselves and they succeeded in their design. In my opinion the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims was not due to religion but wholly to economic factors, and I knew that the British Government had exploited the situation and accentuated this quarrel. I was sure that after the overthrow of the British Government, when the country would be free and a national government would be formed with our own people at the helm of affairs, the whole atmosphere would gradually change and our mutual relations would improve. But if even after that Hindu-Muslim relations did not improve and we were dissatisfied, we could part company with the Hindus, and nothing could prevent us from doing so. The Congress had recognized the principle of provincial autonomy and the provinces had a right, if the majority in a certain province decided to secede from the centre, to do so and become an autonomous State.’

He even tried to convince the Leaguers to think collectively for something constructive for his province as he foresaw the viciousness through League’s tricks. ‘Badshah Khan scented in these developments “a big plot” engineered by the Leaguers and their “departing masters- the British”. He warned the protagonists of the “Two-nation” theory: “We

Nayar, Appendix B, The text of Badshah Khan’s written statement before the high court of West Pakistan, p. 137.
have set fire to our country, a fire from which we ourselves cannot escape. These things can help neither Islam nor the Muslim League nor Pakistan.” He appealed to the Muslim League “to sit down with the Khudai Khidmatgars in a joint jirga (tribal council)” to tackle various important issues that were likely to crop up after the departure of the Britshers from India.” 398 He summed up his thoughtfulness by inviting the Leagues to have a ‘New Deal’ with the force of compassion. He wanted a settlement in which the stance of the masses should be cared for. ‘Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was holding his second press conference at Dr. Khan Sahib’s residence during the day, dealt with the Frontier problem in all its aspects and said: “Tribesman who were the kith and kin of the Frontier people both by religion and culture should be won over by love and not by force. They must have a new deal”.” 399

Unlike Mr. Gandhi, he was open and thus explicitly blamed the Congress as well as League at the time of Partition. Pyarelal intriguingly explains the episode at the time of Partition and the stance of all the players. ‘Mountbatten said he was “definitely committed” to a referendum, that it was a point of honour with him and he would resign if he could not have his way. Privately he dropped a hint that the chances of the Congress winning the referendum were fifty-fifty. The Congress High Command swallowed the bait-hook, line and sinker. They accepted the modified Partition Plan with the provision for holding a referendum in the North-West Frontier Province in the teeth of Gandhiji’s opposition. Khan brother’s and the Khudai Khidmatgars of the North-West Frontier Province, who had unwaveringly stood shoulder to shoulder with us in the freedom struggle for twenty long years, were left to the tender mercies of those against whom they had fought. As Badshah Khan later put it, they were thrown to the wolves. 400 As already explained, Gandhi

398 Ibid., p. 46.
399 The Times of India, Demonstration in Peshawar: Frontier Gandhi’s charges, 18-10-1946, p. 11.
400 Nayar, p. 50.
firmly faced the obdurate behavior of Sir Mohammad Ali Jinnah as well as the British officials at the time of the Partition so to prove the potential of his ideal. Thus, both the Gandhi’s despite being in despair found solace in each others hope and which provided them the strength to move forward and to continue their endeavors. The Times shared the formal agreement between the two which was an unknown evidence for the Government of India till 1968.

On November 17, 1947, Gandhiji suggested openly in a letter to Badshah Khan to leave the Frontier province and develop the non-violent technique. “This you can do here with me or otherwise. What that otherwise can be . I do not know.” In reply Badshah Khan asked only for blessings. In view of all this, it came as a surprise to me when the Prime Minister stated in a written reply to an unstarred question by Mr. Samar Guha, on April 24, 1968, that the Government of India had no record of Gandhiji’s pledge to Abdul Ghaffar Khan on behalf of the nation.

Pyarelal and Tendulkar have written two books on Abdul Ghaffar where this pledge is specifically mentioned... Curiously enough, Mrs. Gandhi herself in her forward to Mr. Tendulkar’s book writes: “As one reads through the pages of Tendulkar book, one is overcome by a feeling of shame-one can only hope that Badshah Khan in his compassion will forgive us our failures.401

Surprisingly, the same discussion between Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan was placed differently by the author himself. Tendulkar explains that Gandhi through the following discussion indicates the continuance of his own endeavors with Ghaffar Khan so to prove the strength of the ideal of non-violence by exposing the aggressive approach of the Leaguers. He wanted Ghaffar Khan to continue the work and also gave a sign of joining him soon.

---

Non-violence knows no despair. It is the hour of test for you and the Khudai Khidmatgars. You can declare that Pakistan is unacceptable to you, and brave the worst. What fear can there be for those who are pledged to do or die? It is my intention to go to the Frontier as soon as circumstances permit. I shall not take out a passport because I do not believe in division. And if as a result somebody kills me, I shall be glad to be so killed. If Pakistan comes into being, my place will be in Pakistan.\(^\text{402}\)

Ghaffar Khan determinedly started the Khudai Khidmatgar wave for widening its horizons to the whole of ‘Pakistan’. He was not able to unite the forces in accordance to his ideal as he was interned for being treacherous. Badshah Khan tried to save what he could from the wreck. He tried in an autonomous Pakhtoonistan. He tried for a place for the Pathans in an autonomous Pakhtoonistan. He tried to form a People’s Party of a Union of Socialist Republics along with other Opposition parties, but all his attempts were crushed. He was humiliated and thrown in solitary confinement for 15 years, with short intervals of freedom for health reasons\(^\text{403}\). However, Gandhi was not able to join him but Ghaffar with his potential continued his movement to expose the Pakistan Government. ‘I have witnessed two martial law regimes… “The martial law of the Britishers had generated an urge among the people to throw off the foreign rule. As a result the struggle for freedom intensified and ultimately the Britishers had to quit. The martial law of Pakistan also has strengthened the feeling among the people that the Government of Pakistan is not a representative government, but it is imposed upon them by force, oppression and fraud. It is necessary to throw them out so that the country may achieve true freedom. As the Britishers were


unsuccessful in maintaining their rule by force for ever, so also the rulers of Pakistan will vanish one day like the Britishers. “It is necessary to have the right faith and right path, and the right people should come forward to follow that path so that they become the crusaders of their faith or creed. The masses are sure to follow them to reach the objective”. He never bothered himself for the consequences and therefore frankly criticized the leaders of both the countries through his speeches. He was persistently trying to educate the leaders to be responsive for the nation.

Speaking with total Gandhian candour, Khan Ghaffar Khan today castigated the selfishness and self-aggrandisement that he saw around him in this country. Few had any sense of dedication to the country, he said, Most were busy grinding their own axe. “Hare ek ko apni pet ka khayal hai,” as he put it in Hindustani.

Badshah Khan, who was answering questions at a reception given to him by newspaper organizations, ruled out any reunion of India and Pakistan. In his eyes, neither Indians nor Pakistanis had any sense of religion or nationalism to be able to evolve the kind of mature understanding which had brought people together in Europe and America.

Whenever he came out he was more spirited and never missed a chance for doing something constructive. Abdul Ghaffar’s detention period was extended every six months. A demand for his release was made in December 1962 by Amnesty International, a non-political organization campaigning for the release of all political prisoners in all countries. It said in a statement: “Non-violence has its martyrs. One of them, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has been chosen by the Amnesty International as the

---

404 Tendulkar, p. 519.

405 The Times of India, Selfishness galore in India: Ghaffar Khan Sad, 8-10-1969. p. 9.
‘Prisoner of the Year’. His example symbolizes the suffering of upwards a million people all over the world who are in prison for their conscious’. \( ^{406} \) However it was not only the Pakistani Government but also his brother who came forward to test his level of patience. ‘It is doubtful if any political leader anywhere has languished in captivity of one sort or another for as long as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the venerable Pathan leader who, appropriately, looks like an Old Testament prophet. Of his 84 years he was spent no fewer than 30 in Jail, half of them during the British raj and the other half after the creation of Pakistan. Ironically, on one occasion he was sent to prison by a provincial government of West Pakistan headed by his brother. Dr. Khan Saheb. To his prolonged sojourn in Pakistani Jails or detention camps must be added nearly a decade of exile in Afghanistan from where he returned home in Peshawar only in December 1972 in the belief-which has, alas, turned out to be mistaken- that he could spend the last years of his life untroubled. \( ^{407} \) He was released due to his physical weaknesses. In that phase, Indian Government realized their sense of duty and awarded him Nehru award \( ^{408} \) for international understanding on November 16, 1969 and Bharat Ratna \( ^{409} \) on August 10, 1987. The Times on the occasion rationally viewed the stature of the individual whose vision was no less than Gandhi.

The award of Bharat Ratna to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan is above all, A tribute to a certain vision of the man, a vision inseparable from his life and times. At his core is the view of the entire-sub-continent, in particular of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as a single cultural continuum, a basically homogenous social entity despite ethnic and

\( ^{406} \) Tendulkar, p. 518.

\( ^{407} \) The Times of India, A Times of India Notebook, 17-4-1975, p. 6.

\( ^{408} \) Ibid., Badshah receives Nehru Award, 16-11-1969, p. 9.

\( ^{409} \) Ibid., Ghaffar Khan awarded Bharat Ratna, 10-8-1987, p. 1
linguistic differences and political disparities. It is impossible to understand Badshah Khan’s concerns and passions except by reference to his vision. Although he had to accept Pakistan as a reality, he did so within the framework of his fight or a free, democratic, secular, internally balanced nation-state which would leave some autonomous space for all cultural-linguistic entities such as Pushtoons, Baluch and Sindhis in Pakistan. It is hardly surprising that he has had to spend much of his life since 1947 in jails. His vision has never been confined to Pakistan either. He has always been concerned to argue for an altogether different, non-antagonistic relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the one hand and between them and this country, on the other. Given the way politics in the region has evolved, such an arrangement has not become possible. However it is undeniable that Badshah Khan’s vision is a grand one. It is a legend in itself, just as much as is the man himself.410

Ghaffar started his life with a vision to enrich his society and for which he progressively worked by ignoring his physical self. While working he found a finer inspiration in the form of Gandhi who believed in refining a wider society. Likewise, Gandhi too found in him the potential to develop the idea of non-violence. State of affairs did not permit them to evolve the ideal of non-violence. But Ghaffar with his strong will power tried to sustain the spirit of the ideal which was essential for its progression.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
‘A Social reformer, humanitarian, associate of Mahatma Gandhi for many years and closely connected with supports, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was one of India’s most extraordinary women. Born in 1889 in the ruling family of Kapurthala, she was the only daughter in a family of seven

410 Ibid., Honouring A Legend, 11-8-1987, p. 8.
sons, all of whom have distinguished themselves in public life. She was sent at an early age to England.\textsuperscript{411} She came back to India and gradually occupied her in the social activities. Initially she observed the presence of the Gandhian zeal through her society. ‘She saw him become “the idol of the people.”’ Millions followed him. Friends of hers, men and women both, became his disciples. But she herself never went further than to help him with funds when he needed them, as during the Salt Tax struggle. She had grown absorbed in the cause of freedom for India’s women, accepting the office of secretary in the All-India Women’s Conference. In 1932 she gave evidence, in London, as president of the organization. She retained the office through 1933. But she had not been one of those to battle publicly as had the women in their khadi gowns. She had remained apart. It took more than twenty years, before she was prepared to become his disciple. When he opened Sevagram, she decided not very long after its establishment to enter as a member. She saw in the colony a means of creating a promise of freedom for her sex, and of teaching the people how to live healthier lives, through the use of medicine and modern sanitary measures. She gave an address before Indian National Congress, urging that every man and woman in the country volunteer a certain number of hours every week to teach the peasants of his or her nearest village. The men might instruct the villagers in first aid, cleanliness of public roads, reading or writing; the women could teach sewing and weaving, cooking, the care of children, the care of a home. There must be, she said also, provision for education of the women in India. Although schools for boys were “pitifully inadequate,” those for girls were all but nonexistent. There must be an end to child marriages, and to polygamy and to the bearing of children by child wives. All these things in which she had come to believe were part of the program of Sevagram. She put aside her palace life, and enrolled as member.\textsuperscript{412}

\textsuperscript{411} The Times of India, A Humanitarian & Social Reformer: Amrit Kaur, 7-2-1964, p. 9.
Gradually she was imparted with the responsibilities in which she was resourceful. Gandhi was in search of an active social worker for his new venture i.e., All India Village Association and Amrit Kaur was also keen to help him which worked well for the A.I.V.I Punjab Branch. She actively worked as an agent of All India Spinner’s Association and the A.I.V.A. She helped in educating the Harijan in Punjab; increasing the sales of Khadi with her creative skills, educating the Punjabis for Devanagiri script and was appreciated too. Gandhi guided her right approach to educate the Harijans in the following manner. ‘Here is my message or the Harijans who are troubled about child-marriages. “In these days of self-purification, Harijans ought to know that they are to avoid all the bad customs of caste Hindus. They should therefore avoid child-marriages. But reformers may not be impatient. Sarda Act is, in my opinion, a wise step. But it may not be strictly enforced against Harijans when it is very laxly enforced against caste Hindus. There should be effective enlightened propaganda by Harijans among fellow Harijans on the evil of child-marriages and the bearing of the Sarda Act on them. And then when it is made certain that people willfully ignore that Act, a few prosecutions may be undertaken. But even then they must be the sole concern of Harijans. They may not ask for or receive even financial assistance in this matter from caste Hindus. In any case at least one year should be given to concentrated propaganda”.’

The Times notices that she once tried to learn the technique of fast for resolving some complexities in the Sikh society which was questioned for its futility but I am not le to find any evidence in which she reciprocated for its advantages.

The following statement has been issued by Sardar Sant Singh, M.L.A.:– For some time news has been appearing in the press that forty Sikh ladies have resolved to fast till death if the faction elements in the Sikh Community do not come to any understanding. “A statement of Bibi

Amrit Kaur has now been published confirming these reports and giving reasons for the grim resolve taken by them.... “Every sane man will agree with them that this shameful exhibition of unscrupulous personal warfare should be brought to a speedy close, but the question is:- will the remedy suggested prove efficacious? “ Bibi Amrit Kaur and her noble band of comrades should give dispassionate thought to the question before taking such an irrevocable step. I will venture to point out to Bibi Amrit Kaur and her selfless workers that some such remedies, when applied by the noblest of living souls (I mean Mahatma Gandhi), did not produce lasting results, though for the time being success was achieved in patching up the differences.414

However, she was better at doing things to which she has been personalized. Gandhi found her to be apt for the chosen work. ‘Only idiots can think of idiotic interpretation and because you are such a brilliant specimen and agent of the A.I.V.A. naturally you will like the rest to belong to your species.’ She surprised him for her efforts too. ‘Your sales of Khadi certainly went beyond even my expectations.’416 However, the admiration of Gandhi for Amrit Kaur was instantaneous as he was seeking a woman associate like her from long. He shared his thoughts with her through a letter which is as follows.

My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make woman realize her dignity. I was once slave­holder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission. Her task was finished.


Now I am in search of a woman who would realize her mission. Are you that woman, will you be one?  

There were certain other things which were common in them and due to which they both encouraged one another’s thought. She was religiously broad minded like him and her views for all religions were appreciated by him. ‘Rajkumari was proud of being considered a Sikh, a Hindu and a Christian and had chosen to throw in her lot with those who were downtrodden. He would invite the audience to give thought to the best from Christianity which he had selected from Rajkumari’s collection.’

They started sharing their sensitive thoughts and gradually both developed natural affection for each other and therefore use to discuss the matters with wholesomeness.

You have to apologize about women. I could not organize intellectual women as such. I have not organized intellectual men as such. But this thing does not lend itself to argument. I simply cannot subscribe to the charge that there has been any neglect on my part about organizing women. It may be that I have not had the qualifications for doing better. But that would be no charge against me. However I do not mind your complaint. I rather like it. It shows that there are things in which we look at things differently. And why not? True affection does not demand identity of outlook. But I do not even on this point despair of convincing you that I could not have done better than I have. My passion for brahmacharya has that meaning. I must be holly pure, if I have true love for womankind.

After such an understanding Gandhi has given her the crucial responsibility to handle her important correspondences. ‘The job

---


419 Gandhi, 23-7-1938, p.147.
The work given Amrit Kaur was a challenge. To visitors particularly from United States and England, it was unbelievable, when they were told that the woman kneeling reverently before Gandhi—taking down every word he spoke with utmost deference—was “a princess.”* It was not only the correspondence but other crucial responsibilities were also anticipated by Gandhi for her resoluteness.

The purpose of keeping Rajkumari here is that when all, including myself, have gone to jail, she will remain outside and look after routine matters. She has the capacity for it. She will remain here. If the Government starts shooting, she should face it and be prepared to die. I believe that she has the courage. Even if she does not, there is nothing to lose.*

Knowing her potential he channelized her at the front which needs to be strengthened by the determination of a women like her. He encouraged her to be an inspiration for the women of India and then for the World. In reciprocity she also resolved to accomplish his vision which is common to read in most of her speeches in The Times. In one of her speech she shared her aspiration for Gandhi’s ‘Ram Rajya’. ‘India through her Constitution she emphasized, had granted equal rights and privileges to women and it was therefore necessary for every individual to realize his or her responsibility. “Unless we are able to rise to the height of responsibility thrust on everyone.” She remarked, “we shall not be contributing our share to the progress of India.” Political independence, she said, was only the first step towards the goal of Ram Rajya as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi.* She was determined to

---

*420 Morton, p. 226.

*421 CWMG, Vol.73, Note to Vallabhbhai Patel, before 17-11-1940, 1978, p.182

*422 The Times of India, “Unity vital in building up India”: Minister’s call to people, 14-1-1952, p.5.
As Minister of Health the Raj Kumari decided to give first priority to maternal and child-welfare problems. During her tenure of office she was responsible for initiating a number of schemes. The setting up of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences was a matter of special pride for her. Besides being the Health Minister till 1957; she held charge of the Communication portfolio in 1951-52. As an M.P. she led the debate in the Lok Sabha against the budget in 1957 and made a fervent plea to scrap prohibition," which step ever Gandhiji would agree to."

The Rajkumari was deputy leader of the Indian delegation to UNESCO in 1945-46 in London and Paris as a leader of the Indian delegation to the WHO meetings on four occasions as president of the World Health Assembly in 1950; and the president of the All-India Conference of Social Work in 1948-49. She was associated with the Red Cross Society for almost two decades being the chairman of the Indian Red Cross Society since 1950, and vice chairman of the Board of Governors League of Red Cross Societies, since 1950. She was also closely associated with St. John Ambulance Associater (since 1948) and numerous other welfare organizations. She was awarded the Count Bernadotte gold medal in 1957 and gold medals by the Red Cross Societies of 14 countries in Europe, Africa and Asia including those of Russia, Portugal, Poland and France.\textsuperscript{423}

She persistently focused herself for being an inspiration to the women of India as well as internationally. All her endeavours were to achieve what Gandhi has aspired out of her and the women in general. She made

\textsuperscript{423} \textit{The Times of India}, A Humanitarian & Social Reformer: Amrit Kaur, 7-2-1964, p. 9.
An Ideal Worker: Bibi Amtul Salaam

A Punjabi, Bibi Amtul Salaam was inspired by Gandhi in her young phase. "She joined the national movement at the age of 15. Her brother, Abdul Rashid Khan also gave up his practice and joined the freedom struggle. Amtu Salaam became more active when Abdul Rashid Khan was arrested during Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) and started attending meetings of the Congress. Along with Mrs. Duni Chand and her brother's daughter, Amtu Mazid, Amtu Salam carried bundles of khaddar on her tiny shoulders in a door-to-door sale campaign at Ambala. She also participated in the picketing of foreign cloth shops. She went to Sabarmati Ashram in 1930 and till 1947 remained in close-contact with Gandhi." Mr. Gandhi distinguished her commitment little differently. He sent her on his own behalf to Sind after observing her receptiveness for constructive activities. 'Behn Amtul Salaam has been with me for the last ten days. She came to me for the last ten days. She came to me of her own free will. She is thirty six. She is the daughter of the late Col. Abdul Majid Khan Saheb, Mir Munshi of Patiala. From her childhood she has been devoted to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. The murders that are taking place in Sind are worrying me no doubt, but Amtul Salaam also is worried. I am, therefore, sending her to you on the strength of our relations during the Khilafat movement. I think you can play a big role in stopping these murders. I am not thinking at the moment of the political aspect. It is a question of humanity. Behn Amtul Salaam does not know anything of politics and is not interested in it. She is a staunch Muslim. She is never irregular in reading the Koran. When she is not ill she observes the Ramadan strictly. She has been silently serving a good many Muslims. She is brave. She intends to lay down her

life if these murders are not stopped, and I have fully encouraged her to
do so. I hope that you will not misunderstand her or me in this
connection. I do not have with me a stauncher or nobler man or woman
than she. And when she wishes to sacrifice her life to save the honour of
Islam and serve the Hindus, I consider it my duty to give her my
blessings.425

She shared her involvement in the progressive movements of Gandhi
after devoting her in his services. ‘In 1933, Amtul Salaam was arrested
from Sabarmati in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement. In
Jail, her health deteriorated due to bad food. But again, she was arrested
in 1940-41 from Sevagram and sentenced for one year. She was again
arrested for the third time from Bombay during the Quit India
Movement.426 After the death of Kasturba Gandhi she strengthened the
Kasturba Seva Mandir, Borkamata, East Bengal venture with her hard
work with Gandhi’s advice.

She managed to stay with Gandhi for the longest period to which Gandhi
himself admitted. She used to discuss her delicate thoughts and thus got
enough attention from Gandhi while she was being infatuated for his
grandson Kanti. Being physically sensitive she got ill very soon. Gandhi
made her to learn certain therapy’s of Nature Cure which they use to
discuss like two open minded people through their correspondences.
Gandhi carefully guided her by training her in the constructive activities.

Despair has become the refrain of your letters. But there is
hope behind your despair. You could work a lot if you
gave up this refrain. What would you gain by staying with
me? You have had the maximum advantage of staying
with me. That is what I feel. You alone can do the work

---

that you have to do. No one else can do that for you. So stay on there till I come.⁴²⁷

Through their correspondences I observe that she instinctively push herself whenever something immoral occurred around her. ‘Your behavior upsets me. You are full of anger and also pride. You think you know a lot, but in fact you are a fool. You talk of principles, but understand nothing about them. You do not act on principles or, maybe, you have only one principle, viz., to stay near me and to serve me. This is no principle. It is a matter of affection. If I allow you to do some service out of love, you start flinging principles at my face. When you understand the simple thing? Your going to Sind would be futile till you do not understand this. Think over this letter. Cast away anger and pride and learn.’⁴²⁸ Many a times she showed her responsiveness by going on indefinite fast and every time it was Gandhi who had to counsel for her behavior. However, sometimes she refused to listen to him and for which Gandhi once responded in a following manner.

At Sirandi, Amtusslaam had decided to go on a fast from December 26 in protest against some local Muslims who had stolen three khadags (sacrificial swords) belonging to Hindus. At Gandhiji’s instance, she broke her 25-day fast on January 20th.⁴²⁹ According to Pyarelal, “a large gathering of local Muslims had met Gandhiji at Sirandi on the day of his arrival and told him that they had tried their utmost to recover the sword but had failed. They had asked what assurance on their part would satisfy Amtusslaam and induce her to give up her fast. Gandhiji drafted this pledge for them to sign.”⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Letter to Amtussalaam, 16-12-1940, CWMG 73:240.
⁴²⁹ Fn: to Letter to Amtussalam, 18-12-1946, CWMG 86:240.
She joined Gandhi for pacifying the violence led by the ‘Direct Action Day’ of the Leaguers but seeing her zeal she was encouraged afterwards. ‘At a great personal risk, she went to Sindh and Naokhali during the communal riots to stop the bloodshed of innocent people. At Noakhali, inspite of her ill-health she undertook a fast for 21-days.’ During Partition she was perturbed with the family’s decision to leave India. She at her own resolved to continue her dedication towards Hindu- Muslim unity by being in Punjab only. ‘You are needlessly finding fault with your brothers. When all had lost courage they too did not risk their lives. It is enough if we ourselves stand firm.’ Chaman Lal through The Tribune shares a piece of information about Amtul and her family at the time partition.

Amtus-Salam, a quiet nationalist, was with Mahatma Gandhi in Naokhali in 1946 when the worst riots took place in Bengal. Gandhi went on a fast unto death to bring back peace. Gandhi treated her like her own daughter and wrote to her as frequently as he wrote to his own granddaughter, Kanu Gandhi... She had her maternal relations near Rajpura and was so dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals that the latter even scolded her for her idealism. When her brothers and other family members left for Pakistan, she was enraged and expressed her disappointment to Gandhiji, who had arranged for the safe journey of her brothers to West Pakistan. Amtus-Salam wanted to return to Patiala, from where the Muslims, including her family, had been evacuated to Pakistan. Bibi established the Kasturba Seva Mandir and other institution in Rajpura, where she helped Hindu

---

431 Verma, p. 224.
432 CWMG, Vol. 89, Letter to Amtul salam, 1-11-1947, 1983, p. 451, fn: The addressee, who was working in Naokhali to establish communal harmony, had written to Gandhiji that she felt it was her duty to go and live in Patiala since her brothers had come away from there and hardly a Muslim was left there.
migrants from Bhawalpur Pakistan, to settle down. She wanted to go back to Patiala (from Naokhali where she was coordinating Gandhi’s work of re-establishing communal harmony) to demonstrate by living there, all by herself as a young Muslim woman, that she could dare the worst, perhaps even die, by way of exemplifying her absolute commitment to the cause of peace and communal amity.  

Chaman Lal also shares her anxiety to pacify the oppression around her and which made her more active than before. She with other activists actively supported the constructive work required during the Partition. ‘During the period between 1947 and 48, she along with Lajjawati Hooja, who was also a prominent Congress worker of All-India Women’s Congress, evacuated thousands of kidnapped Hindu and Muslim women from their respective homes in India and Pakistan. Lajjawati Hooja, who was very active in Jallandhar and associated with K.M.V. College, worked in three districts of Pakistan, including her native place Dera Ghazi Khan, While Bibi worked in Bhawalpur district. Both worked in unison under the guidance of Rameshwari Nehru, a close relative of Jawaharlal Nehru, to mitigate the sufferings of thousands of innocent women.’  

Her concern took her to Pakistan so to appeal to the authorities at her own. ‘Amtu Salam also visited Pakistan along with Dr. Parkash Kaur to bring back abducted girls from Bahawalpur and rehabilitated them at the Kasturba Ashram Rajpura.’ For not being satisfied with the efforts of the investigation agency, she announced her line of action which she has been doing impulsively earlier too. ‘Miss Amtus Salam a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, has it is learnt started a “fast unto death.” Since, yesterday morning, as a protest against alleged

433 Chaman Lal, On the lesser known freedom fighter from Punjab, An article, The Tribune Archives online, 31-7-2005.
434 Ibid.
435 Verma, p. 224.
“disregard of the authorities of Bhawalpur state in the work of recovery of abducted women. Miss Amtus Salam has been for the past few months engaged in rehabilitation work in different States and she is at present at Dera Nawab Sahib in Bhawalpur State.”436

However, she stood firm not only with the Bhawalpur authorities but took the similar line of action with the Government of India too. She was not satisfied with the help assured by the Rehabilitation Ministry of India. As she has been experiencing the working of ‘Kasturba Seva Mandir, Borkamata’ so she utilized her understanding in contemplating the same kind of arrangement in Rajpura to shelter the refugees from Bahawalpur.

In Rajpura refugee resettlement eminent social worker and close associate of Gandhiji, Bibi Amtus Salam, was giving a helping hand in rehabilitation of Bhawalpur refugees. She found that her greatest source of problem was not the suffering humanity but the Rehabilitation Ministry itself. When she failed with the Ministry, she sent word to Nehru of the betrayal by the Ministry of his assurances to Rajpura refugees and her decision to go on an indefinite fast.437

She with her experiences nurtured the idea of Kasturba Seva Mandir in Rajpura, Punjab and continued her zeal to serve the society. ‘Kasturba Seva Mandir, a self-contained community development centre named after Mahatma’s Gandhi’s wife, serves 35,000 artisan families in Rajpura, a new township in Punjab. The centre began as a tent-colony of displaced persons from West Pakistan, at the time of the partition of India in 1947. Since then, India has been experimenting with village planning development.”438 With the passage of time changes emerged in the

436 The Times of India, “Fast Unto Death”, 5-5-1948, p. 7
development of the institute in the following manner. 'When the government adopted its decentralization policy, administrative control was handed over to these units. With this expansion, the centre has concentrated its efforts on educating the villagers, by opening a rural institute adjacent to the centre. The institution has 75 acres of farm land with a fine stock of pedigreed cows, and serves as a training ground and laboratory for students in training... There are young and old women busy carding cotton, spinning on *ambar charkhas*—hand spinning wheels—curing leather and doing a host of other things. Their daily wages are based on their output. Their children are looked after in a nursery school inside the block, so they are freed from household work early in the morning and can utilize the rest of the time for gainful purposes. Kasturba Seva Mandir also has a nature-cure clinic where the workers are given free examination and treatment. Within the precincts of the block, a life-sized model of Mahatma Gandhi’s house reminds the rural workers of the ideals of self-help and self-sufficiency which he taught.'

Prasad provides little information about the activities which were aimed to accomplish through this project. 'Kasturba Sewa Mandir, apart from running training-cum-production centres in Match Box industry, Pottery, Handmade paper, Soap etc., also runs a Post- Basic School, a Home Science College for girls and a Rural Institute for Boys. Khadi Vidyalaya of the Khadi Gramudyog Commission and the Panchayati Raj Training Centre are also managed by Kasturba Sewa Mandir.' She was active in the progression of its development and therefore chose to instill the basic skills which are essential to maintain the dignity of the rural children. 'The Kasturba Seva Mandir has set up a Rural Institute of Higher Education at Rajpura, 16 miles from here. The Institute, the first of its kind in the Punjab, will be run by a seven-member governing board with Dewan Anand Kumar, former Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University, as a

---


Chairman and Mr. Brish Bhan, former Chief Minister of PEPSU, as Honorary Director. The other members of the Board are: Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, Kaka Kalekar, M.P., Prof. V. Malkani, M.P., Bibi Amtus Salam and Mr. Sushil Kumar. The Institute has been set up under the guidance of the National Council for Rural Higher Education. The object of the Institute is to bring within reach of the people in villages the type of education suited to their basic requirements it aims at producing self-reliant and progressive young men and women with adequate general education and knowledge of special techniques of work to enable them to make a vital contribution in building up a fuller, richer and happier life in the rural areas. . . .Seventy-five per cent of the cost of the project will be met by the Union Government and the rest by the Kasturba Seva Mandir.441

Bibi Amtul has preserved Gandhi’s idea in a unique way by creating Gandhi’s ‘Kutia’ for exemplifying the idea of Community Development for self-sustenance. However her idea has not been encouraged the way she had thought of. The present state of the Kasturba Seva Mandir is not similar to what I observed through different sources. Certain changes which came to my notice are like: the land under farming is reduced to 48 acre; cold storage was not in a working state; limited sale of Khadi Gram Udyog products; Kasturba Industrial unit is now condensed to a Kasturba Girls College for encouraging the rural girls with the art of handicraft, painting; beautification course, stitching and embroidery.442

The institute maintained her individuality by generating majority finances at its own which I get to know after interacting with the managing staff and is self-explainable through her gesture which has been shared through the following lines of The Times.

441 The Times of India, Rural Institute of Higher Education; Kasturba Seva Mandir Venture in Punjab, 3-8-1959, p. 6.

442 The information is gathered by personally visiting Kasturba Seva Mandir, Rajpura and while interacting with the managing staff.
As asked about the recent reported refusal to accept a Government of India grant of Rs. 4,000,000 to the institution. Dr. Maeda (Japanese, inspired by the ideals of Gandhi chose the site for his activities) smiled and said, without a tinge of malice in his voice: We must agree with Bibiji (Bibi Amtus Salam). Gandhiji would not have liked us to accept any such gift. After all, this only means a little more hard work for us, and we are well prepared for it.443

It was not only the grant but she refused to take the appreciation for her efforts as for her it was the determination and the devotion to advance Gandhi’s idea in her own capacity. ‘She also worked for the upliftment of the Harijans and donated her 300 acres of inherited land….She was awarded a Tamra Patra by the Government of India but she refused politely. She died on 29 October, 1985.444 A simple woman, who with her strength of mind dedicated her services for the welfare of the society. She was inspired with the Gandhian ideals and which led her towards Gandhi for guidance. Gandhi occupied her in accordance to her potential. Initially he made great efforts to guide her for being healthy physically as well as mentally. She was sensitive and due to which she endeavored instinctively. Gandhi gradually made her to learn his way of working for the constructive activities patiently. Thus, after Gandhi she stood firm and utilized all her understanding in a positive manner especially in cultivating Gandhi’s vision of Community Development. She dedicated herself selflessly in a modest manner which certainly has no parallels. Kasturba Seva Mandir certainly epitomizes an essence of Amtul Salaam self-commitment for the society and of an ideal worker of Gandhi too.

It’s a brief view of Gandhi’s likeminded associates from the erstwhile Punjab as there is much more to understand in a similar manner. It is


444 Verma, p. 224.
interesting to notice that Gandhi was closely attached to these three individuals. In reciprocity these individuals were also attached with him and which worked well for their progression. They in their individual capacities tried to sustain the spirit of Gandhian ideals throughout their lives in a distinctive manner. A common characteristic which differentiates them is their spirit to work for the constructive activities. The impeccable individuality of these likeminded men reflects Gandhi’s positive distinctiveness in a finer way. So it is essential to understand the perspectives of his likeminded to form a real picture of Gandhi. Gandhi’s manifestation cannot be analyzed only by studying the political leader’s equation with him. Thus, Gandhian movements rise and fall should not be gauged only with the dissociation of the sub-contractors or with the estrangement of certain leaders rather should be analyzed with the strength of Gandhi’s likeminded associates for being a constant support while his progression and for the advancement of his ideas after his death too.