



# The Frontier Gandhi

## My Life and Struggle: The Autobiography of Abdul Ghaffar Khan

### Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada

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Affectionately known as 'Bacha' Khan or 'Badshah' Khan amongst his people, Khan Abdul Ghaffar's life was dedicated to the social reform of the Pukhtuns, who traditionally adhere to a strict code of life called 'Pukhtunwali', which is governed by rather rigid tribal norms. Bacha Khan is an acknowledged leader in the hearts of the Pukhtuns across the world, due to his life long struggle to modernize Pukhtun society and his teachings of non-violence, adopted by his Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) party, during the struggle for independence against the British. He stands tall in the pantheon of leaders of the movement for independence. A close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, his success in mobilizing the Pukhtuns of the North-West Frontier Province and the Tribal Areas through a non-violent struggle, had significant bearing on this movement, in which the Khudai Khidmatgar allied with the Indian National Congress.

The Pushto edition of Bacha Khan's autobiography was first published in 1983 in Afghanistan, when he was 93 years old. Nearly four decades later the book has been translated and published for the first time in English. This translation was painstakingly done by Sahibzada at the request of Shandana Humayun Khan, to whom he has dedicated the book. Shandana's maternal great-grandfather was Qazi Ataullah, a close lieutenant of Bacha Khan's and a key figure in the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Before the translation process started, Sahibzada and Shandana visited several members of Bacha Khan's family including his grandsons Nasir Ali Khan, Asfandayar Wali Khan and Saleem Jan. The translator shared a close friendship with Bacha Khan's son, Abdul Ghani Khan, the greatest Pukhtun poet of the century.

The book is a result of the participation of several members of his family and those who have spent their lives studying Bacha Khan's philosophy. For the first time Bacha Khan's thoughts on Pukhtun society, his vision for a more equitable world achieved along the lines of non-violence have been researched, translated and made available for the world in his own words.

Born in 1936, **Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada**, joined the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan in 1959. After serving in a number of assignments in the Provincial bureaucracy of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which included that of the Chief Secretary, he was transferred to Islamabad in 1987. There he served as Secretary to the Federal Government in different ministries and superannuated in 1996 as the Cabinet Secretary. Thereafter, he went on to become a member of the Federal Public Service Commission, a member of the National Security Council, Chairman of the Federal Lands Commission, Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) of Pakistan and Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tribal Affairs. He finally retired from public service in 2008. He is the author of the *Pilgrim of Beauty* and *A Breath of Fresh Air*. The former contains translations into English of selected poems of the famous Pukhtun poet, Ghani Khan, who was Ghaffar Khan's son. The latter is a compilation of the speeches and interventions of Ghani Khan in the Central Legislative Assembly of India, 1946. Imtiaz Ahmad had a close friendship with Abdul Ghani Khan, who is the greatest Pukhtun poet of the century, was an artist and also a Member of the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1946–47. He first met him in 1947–48 and remained closely associated with him until his death in 1996.