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Research Proposal

The non-violent movement of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North West of British India, led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, more popularly known as Bacha Khan, has received little academic attention despite its lasting significance for the area. Within the broader historical context of South Asian resistance to British colonialism in the twentieth century I focus specifically on this Pashtun resistance movement that started in the 1930's. I would like to supplement the official colonial and anti-colonial literature that is already archived with the literature generated from within this non-violent movement itself. I especially want to look at some texts that are not easily accessible even if archived, or have not yet been archived at all. Specifically, for this research trip, I propose to listen to and transcribe some of Ghaffar Khan's Pashto speeches that the Bacha Khan Center in Peshawar holds, but which are not as yet ready accessible to the general public. Further, and most crucially, I would like to find copies of the *Pakhtun* journal, started by Ghaffar Khan, which was the official voice of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. I would like to try to find copies of the original publication begun in the 1930's, but which were banned and destroyed by the Pakistan government as seditious texts in the 1950's. I will attempt to look for them in the Peshawar City Archives, Peshawar University Libraries, the Bacha Khan Foundation as well as private collections. These are invaluable records, which if I do manage to locate, I would also like to help make into archives more accessible to other scholars, if it has not been done so already.

I think it extremely important that these rare literary and historical records of one of the largest anti-colonial non-violent movements, begun by a people categorized as inherently violent and as one of the martial races, be made more visible and studied for their relevance for the area even today. And to see if these texts, which illustrate an alternate history, also illuminate alternate imaginaries that have been suppressed since British colonialism but which now need to be acknowledged and studied.

I propose to conduct most of my research in Peshawar, affiliated with the Pashto Academy at Peshawar University. I already have several contacts at the Academy and have visited and met with them before. I will be based in Islamabad, but as a native of Peshawar I have means of contacting many people there who maybe able to help me locate the journals if they are available only via private collections. And I am in touch with the Bacha Khan Foundation who will be able to help with my investigations further, as well as allowing me access to the voice recordings of the original Khudai Khidmatgar and Abdul Ghaffar Khan speeches.