

Khudai Khidmatgar — Taking the Message of Inter-faith Harmony to More and More People

By [Bharat Dogra](#)

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Khudai Khidmatgar, an organization founded in memory of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in India in 2011, has been organizing several meetings for inter-faith harmony in various parts of the country in collaboration with various like-minded organizations with continuity.

Important roads and markets named after him still remind us of the invaluable legacy of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in India. Also called Badshah Khan and Frontier Gandhi by his admirers and followers to convey their affection and respect, Ghaffar had set up the original Khudai Khidmatgars (KK) in 1929 in and around Peshwar. The name of this organization means 'those who serve God or the creation of God in the form of humanity'. An interesting part of the understanding of KK which links secular and religious thoughts goes something like this—it is our duty to serve God but God does not really need our service so the best we can do is to serve his creations (human beings and all forms of life) and particularly those who being in distress need this most. KK soon established a well-established reputation of serving the poorest and most distressed people, and made a very impressive contribution to the various constructive programs started by Mahatma Gandhi. The same high commitment was visible in their participation in the freedom movement. When Mahatma Gandhi visited the KK area in and around Peshawar, he was so impressed by the commitment of KK volunteers that he said—this area is like a place of pilgrimage for me where I'll like to come again and again.

Badshah and KK volunteers continued to have many admirers in India and it is not surprising that over the decades several efforts to revive his legacy were made. One such effort had its formal beginning at a function at a Gandhian institution in Delhi in 2011 when Tara Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, administered membership to about 50 KK volunteers. As Faisal Khan, the convener of this effort explained, the mobilization efforts had started much earlier. I became involved in this at an early stage when along with my daughter Reshma Bharti I was asked to prepare some literature for this effort. We also donated several of our other books also for this effort which attracted a lot of readers at the various meetings organized by KK.

Following this I tried to remain in touch and after every few days I would hear of some meeting or some initiative of KK for inter-faith harmony. Some of these were bigger meetings and some were quite small ones but even small steps in the right direction are welcome.

Such efforts are continuing at present too. Thus recently there was one meeting on the occasion of the martyrdom day of **Mahatma Gandhi** in Bhopal, then a meeting on the birth

anniversary of Badshah Khan, another gathering in Saharanpur followed by more meetings in and around Tamil Nadu, all devoted to spreading the message of inter-faith harmony. The Bhopal meeting was organized with the help of Madhya Pradesh Sarvodaya Mandal who along with KK organized “Sadbhavna Samvad” on the day of Gandhi Shahadat Diwas 30 January 2025 at Gandhi Bhawan. This samvad (dialogue) began with Kabir’s bhajans by Youth of Bhopal. Khudai Khidmatgar National Convener Faisal Khan expressed his views on the need to promote humanity and harmony. He paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi’s commitment towards the cause even at the cost of his life. Gandhiji always stood for truth with his uncompromising stand of satyagraha and now in these difficult times we need to stand un-compromised with and spread the “satya” ie truth of unity, diversity and love. The infinite power of our light is only experienced during the time of darkness. Today we all need to carry light of compassion and harmony in our normal lives, Faisal said, wherever we go and in everything we do, keeping in view that hate can only be countered with love.

Khudai khidmatgar leader Kripal Singh Mandloi said “humanity is natural to human beings, not hate.” In 1857 British rulers pledged a lot of money just to create disharmony between Hindus and Muslims after revolt in Meerut. They saw unity as big challenge to their “raj”. Now in present times we again see that big money is being used to spread disharmony. Any fake or unnatural thing won’t last long as we all have tendency to return to our natural being in a very short span. So all in all we just need to be natural “human beings” filled with humanity to be stalwarts for peace and harmony.

Ankit Mishra from Madhya Pradesh Sarvodaya Mandal said that youth are the future of the country and have a very important role in making inter-faith harmony stronger. He reminded people about what Mahatma Gandhi had stated “if there’s one cause for which I can give my life it would be Hindu Muslim unity” and he actually sacrificed his life for this.

The program was concluded with all religion prayer and observance of 2-min silence at 5:17 pm time when Mahatma Gandhi was shot.

Eminent editor Nikhil Chakravartty had once stated that during the freedom movement several small gatherings and meetings had appeared to be not so significant in themselves but taken together they helped to create very significant momentum for the freedom struggle. One hopes that many such small or big efforts for inter-faith harmony will continue and help to create a much stronger base for harmony, non-discrimination and unity.

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Bharat Dogra is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include *When the two streams met*, *Man over Machine*, *A Day in 2071* and *Earth without Borders*. He is a regular contributor to *Asia-Pacific Research*.

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