

## *Women and Politics in the North-West Frontier Province (1930-1947)*

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The purpose of this article is to examine and explore the role of women in the politics of the North-West Frontier Province, especially in the 1930-47 years. 1930 is an year of active politics in the province, and the women were deeply involved in the struggle for freedom of India, especially under the banner of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Given the considerable social and economic backwardness of the region and given a whole range of social constraints on women's participation in the outside world, this was not a small achievement. These women remained active in the political life of the province till the very end of the British rule in India. In the 1940s, and especially in 1947, they were joined in political activities by the League women workers who campaigned for Pakistan, and in fact, launched a Civil Disobedience Movement against the then Chief Minister, Dr. Khan Sahib. Indeed, the role and efforts of these women contributed in large part to the success of the Muslim League in the referendum of July 1947. This article discusses at length the role of women under both the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and the Frontier Muslim League. The women in the Frontier Province played a much more active and significant role in politics than that is commonly attributed to them,<sup>1</sup> and that too in spite of all the social and cultural

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1. There are nominal studies on women in the NWFP. Rahat Zakheli in late 1920 wrote some accounts on the status of women in Pashtoon society. In 1931 Abdul Khaliq Khaleeq wrote his famous novel *Shaheeda Sakina*, depicting the traditional behaviour of the Pashtoons with their females, giving details how a woman was deprived of her legitimate share in the inheritance after the death of her father. Another book *Pashtaney* by Samundar Khan came out in the mid-thirties giving some thrilling accounts of the bravery and courage of the Pashtoon women. Recently

