

## **SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CULTURAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN PROMOTING EDUCATION IN PUNJAB**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper studies the role of the socio-religious cultural reform movements in colonial Punjab in the expansion and spread of education. As the Britisher's initiated a number of reforms in education by Acts such as Charles Act (1813), Macaulay's Minute (1835), Woods Despatch (1854), Punjab Education Department (1856), Indian Education Commission (1882-1883), Indian University Commission (1902 and 1904) in primary and higher education but reformers of that period were not happy with idea of Christian instruction in the schools and government institutions. The BrahmoSamaj, the Dev Samaj, the AryaSamaj, Singh Sabha Movement, the KhalsaDewan, Anjuman-i-Punjab, Anjuman-i- Himayat-i-Islamiya (society for the defence of Islam) all were directed towards the education of the inhabitants of Punjab; as Punjab was lagging behind than other Presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras etc. With the efforts of reformers and movements, British (colonial) Punjab emerged as the victorious in providing education to its masses with the establishment of Government College Lahore then Panjab University Lahore (1882), Khalsa College Amritsar (1892), DAV college Lahore (1889) and Jalandhar (1918), Guru Nanak Khalsa College Gujranwala (1917), Hans Raj KanyaMahaVidyalya (1918) and a number of primary and high schools were opened in Punjab. There was a great disparity in equity and access among the various communities (Hindus, Mohammedans and Sikhs) residing in Punjab; especially the Mohammedan community was lagging behind in education. The reform movements tried to bridge the gap in access to education among the different strata's of the society and started a mass movement for education.

**KEYWORDS:** Socio-religious cultural reform movements, AryaSamaj, BrahmoSamaj, Dev Samaj, Singh Sabha, Chief KhalsaDevan, Christian Missionaries, Mohammedan Missionaries.

## **Introduction**

The term 'Punjab' emerged during the Mughal period when the province of Lahore was enlarged to cover the whole of the BistJalandharDoab and the upper portions of the remaining four doabs or interflaves. 'Punjab' is thus actually co-terminous with the Mughal province of Lahore, that is, the Mughal Lahore became known as the province of Panjaab (area between the five rivers). The boundaries of Punjab changed several times thereafter, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the British and in independent India (Punjab human development report, 2004, 11). The Punjab encompasses the land west of the Sutlej to the Indus River and from the Himalayan foothills south to the confluence of the panj-nad and Indus River. North of the Punjab are the foothills and the Himalayan mountains that include the Kashmir valley. To the west lies the edge of the Iranian plateau with its sharp hills, tribal groups, and key passes. To the south of eastern Punjab is Rajasthan with its dry, hilly topography that merges to the east with the Great Indian Desert. Beyond Rajasthan, at the lower end of the Indus River, is Sind, a semi-desert land at the edge of South Asia (Jones, 1989, 85). After the annexation of 1849 and the uprising of 1857, Lahore became the premier city of the North-West; the centre of provincial administration as well as a place of social, educational, and religious ferment. Students traveled to Lahore from throughout the province. There they received an education, participated in the culture of Lahore and then disseminated it throughout the North-West when they departed for jobs in other cities and towns (Jones, 1989, 94).

New institutions and technologies had been introduced by British rule in India. The colonial state subscribed to the values of humanism, rationalism and progress. The British replaced Persian language with English in 1835 which not only became the language of their administration but also the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities set up by them. Since most of these institutions were situated in the provincial capitals and the cities, they remained mostly out of reach for the majority of the population in the British India. (Ghosh, 2009, 236).

Sir Charles Woods Despatch (1854) declared emphatically that the main objective of educational policy should be the diffusion of "the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe" through the medium of English as well as modern Indian languages. It suggested that education departments should be created in all provinces, that universities be set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, or in any part of India where sufficient number of institutions needed for their establishment were already in existence, and that below the universities there should be a network of institutions which would include colleges, high schools teaching through English or modern Indian languages, and primary schools, most of which would be indigenous elementary schools assisted by suitable grants-in-aid. The Despatch also emphasized the development of

private enterprise, missionary as well as Indian, through a proper system of grant-in-aid, and suggested the training of teachers in normal schools, the conferment of government jobs on educated persons, and increased attention to the development of education among young girls and women (Chopra, 1973, 656).

In the next 50 years the policies laid down by the dispatch of 1854 were slowly and steadily implemented. Education departments were created in the provinces of Bombay, Madras, Bengal, North-Western Provinces and the Punjab in 1855. Their first task was to establish and maintain government educational institutions at all levels. But an even more important responsibility was to supervise and aid institutions conducted by other agencies such as local bodies and voluntary organizations (Chopra, 1973, 657). Schools and colleges multiplied thereafter. In accordance with the recommendations of the Despatch of 1854, the universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were established in 1857. Their functions were restricted to giving affiliation to colleges, holding examinations and granting degrees. Walia (1975), stated that Dr. Lietner founded the Anjuman-i-punjab on 21st January, 1865, a vernacular literary society. From the very outset, the society started a movement to get the colleges of the Punjab dissociated from the University of Calcutta. Dr Lietner summoned a meeting of the chiefs, rais, notable and the general public in August, 1865, and placed before them a proposal for the institution of an 'Oriental University' Lahore for promoting the study of oriental languages and learning and the formation of the vernacular literature. In 1880, circumstances were altered considerably, and the three different agencies for the spread of education came forward. The first was the agency of the mission schools and colleges; the second was that of the educational institutional organized by the education departments; and the third was the small beginning of the private efforts by Indians themselves. The years between 1880 and 1900 witnessed a rapid growth of private schools and colleges established by Indians and in 1901-02 Indian private enterprise was the most important agency for spreading the western education among the people. This marks the rapid westernization of the educational system along with the Indianization of its agencies (Kaur, 1985, 29). The uneven development of a colonial milieu and the persistence of indigenous forms of socio-religious dissent produced two distinct types of movement within the period of British rule, the one 'transitional' and other 'acculturative'. Transitional movements had their origins in the pre-colonial world and arose from indigenous forms of socio-religious dissent, with little or no influence from the colonial milieu. The second of the two types of socio-religious movement, termed 'acculturative' originated without the colonial milieu and was led by individuals who were products of cultural interaction. The founder of such a movement may or may not have been drawn into the world of British culture, but his followers and those who moved into positions of leadership were largely English educated South Asians influenced by the specific

culture of England. The basis of such movements and many of their declared aims rested on the indigenous heritage of social and religious protest (Jones, 1989, 3). Between 1880 and 1900, Indian private initiative had become “the key agency for spreading Western education,” but by 1902 the government still directly ran or subsidized most primary and many secondary schools in north India. Social and religious reform was to a significant extent spurred by Christian missionaries. A reaction and interface with Western Christian thought resulted in many educated Punjabis organizing themselves into such organizations such as the Anjuman-i-Islamia, Lahore (1869), the Lahore BrahmoSamaj (1863), the Singh Sabha, Amritsar (1873) and the AryaSamaj, Lahore (1877). These spread themselves throughout Punjab by the end of the century. Religion became the dominant concern of the reformers. Their other major concern was the spread of education. They were deeply interested in the upliftment of women through education, establishing a higher age of marriage and reforming customs related to marriage and death. Other organizations taking an interest in religious and social reform of some kind were the Namdharis and Nirankaris among Sikhs; the Dev Samaj and the Sanatan Dharm among Hindus; and the Ahmadiyahs among Muslims. However, certain measures adopted as reforms led to communal bitterness and competitiveness for power, position and honours in the colonial context. Most movements of social change had within them a strong desire for approval from the English community/ British administration. The present research paper had focused on the role of the socio-religious cultural movements in the expansion and spread of education until 1920.

### **Educational Initiatives By The Reformers**

The British were lucky to have decided to make Punjab administration shift to the rule of law. By now, a new generation of men was coming of age to rejoice in it. These men who were imbibing modern spirit could not have to lament the rule of men, however good it might have been. The Sikhs were waiting to get into the grip of the Singh Sabha movement, unlike the revivalist Kukas, was forward looking and adept in the use of press. It was soon publishing numerous papers and bubbling with enthusiasm. The educated Hindus were soon to take the AryaSamaj in a way as it had never taken to any other movement for centuries. In spite of the slogan back to the Vedas, it was concerned with ridding the existing Hindu society of its numerous ills than something else. The Muslims were itching for the birth of some messiah to lead them to fame and glory (Bal, 1989, 82).

### **Hindu Missionaries**

#### **AryaSamaj**

Dutta (1975, 137) stated “The new Punjab which emerged towards the end of the 20th century did not turn to the ideology and programme of the Bramhosamaj but to the Aryasamaj”. At Lahore the AryaSamaj was established in 1877 and it this place became its centre and where its principles received its final shape. From 1877 to 1883, Swami Dayanand spent his time in preaching, teaching and writing books, as well as in establishing and organizing AryaSamaji’s throughout India. Swami Ji regarded ‘Vedas’ as eternal and infallible and laid down his own interpretation of them in his book ‘SatyarathPrakash’ in 1874. He disregarded the authority of the later scriptures, such as the Puranas and considered the epics-the Ramayana and the Mahabhartas as literary treasures and nothing more. The AryaSamaj was a defensive organization for the protection against external attacks. In order to counteract Christian missionary activities, it started the shuddhi movement for the reconversion of those hindus who had been willingly or forcibly converted to Islam or Christianity.

AryaSamaj had a positive approach to Nationalism. Political independence was one of the first objectives of Dayananda. Indeed, he was the first man to use the term Swaraj. He was the first to insist on people using only swadeshi things manufactured in India and to discard foreign things. He was the first to recognize Hindi as the national language of India (Majumdar, 1965, 475). The Christian missionaries were the first non-government agency in the field of education in Punjab. But the DAV institutions played a dominant role in the promotion of education among the people of Punjab. In 1886, the DAV school (in 1889 became College) was established at Lahore. The college taught a curriculum similar to the government, schools, but did so without govt. support or the participation of Englishmen on the faculty.

The DAV which was described by the Panjab Administration Report of 1901-02 as “one of the most interesting educational enterprises in Northern India,” was opened in Lahore in June, 1889 (Chhabra, 1962, 356). The social activities of the Aryas among Hindus, in practice, as commented upon by Mr. Valentine Chirol in 1910, were praiseworthy (Chhabra, 1962, 355). The most interesting programmes of the Samaj was to weld together the educated and un-educated by encouraging the study of national languages of spiritual truth and by insisting on the study of classical Sanskrit, formation of sound and energetic habits by a regulated mode of living, the encouragement of a sound acquaintance with English literature and material progress of the country by spreading the knowledge of physical and applied sciences (Chhabra, 1962, 356). Jones (1989, 101-102) stated that In addition to VedPrachar (proselytism and preaching) and Shuddhi (purify and readmit Hindus who had converted to Islam or Christianity), militant Aryas turned their attention to education. By the early 1890’s LalaMunshi Ram (Swami Shradhanand), Lala Dev Raj had established a girls school the AryaKanyaPathshala, to provide

an education safe from missionary influence. Its success stimulated discussions among its supporters for expansion towards higher education, with the result that on 14 June 1896, they founded KanyaMahaVidyalaya. By 1906, it enrolled 203 students in all grades and ashram housed 105 students, a mixture of unmarried, married and widow women. It published literature for women's education and founded Hindi monthly, PanchalPandita, in 1898, 'to preach and propagate about female education' For the militant Aryas education was intended to produce a new ideal Hindu woman.

### **Dev Samaj**

On 16 February 1887 Agnihotri founded the dev samaj (divine society). At first this organization was considered an extension of the brahmosamaj, but it soon began to deviate from their doctrine. It demanded that its members abandon all castes restraints; they were expected to practice inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriage. The Dev Samaj encouraged the education of women and opened a coeducational school in Moga on 29 October, 1899. The emphasis on a stern moral standard plus considerable social radicalism appealed to educated Punjabi Hindus, graduates, magistrates, doctors, pleaders, money lenders, landlords and govt. servants. Who comprised the membership of Samaj. This acculturative socio-religious movement was always an elite organization drawing its membership from the highly educated upper caste Hindus of Punjab (Jones, 1989, 105-106).

### **Christian Missionaries**

By 1820 the activities of Missionary Societies had expanded considerably but their primary aim was not educational. Even when they took up educational work they paid more attention in the beginning to the study of modern Indian languages than to English. The result was a revolutionary expansion of education, which shattered old ideas and beliefs and created an intellectual ferment that ushered new India (Chopra, 1973, 728).

After the Punjab had been annexed, a flood of Christian Missionaries, with the blessings of the British government, established their centres in the Punjab at different places, such as TaranTaran, Amritsar, Lahore and Peshawar. Christian missionaries were not only allowed but also encouraged to undertake educational projects. Often, the evangelical content of their educational programme motivated English-educated Punjabis to devise their own programmes of education (Punjab Human Development Report, 2004, 15). Several religious institutions opened schools and colleges in order to improve the education in Punjab. The first great missionary movement in the Punjab was the establishment of American Presbyterian Mission at Ludhiana in 1834. The Church Missionary Society began operations in the Punjab in 1851 and developed

stations comprising a group around Amritsar and Lahore and a long line of frontier stations strictly from Simla to Karachi in Sind. It established a college in Lahore, which prepared Indians for holy order. The society for the propagation of the Gospel began work in Delhi in 1852. In 1877, its work was reinforced by establishment of the St. Stephen's College at Delhi. Miss Mary Carpenter between 1865-1870 paid more than one visit to India and gave a new dimension to women education, provided encouragement to the employment of women teachers and for their training gave a great stimulus to the education of girls (Gupta, 2000, 110,111). The Christians opened 4 colleges; The Forman Christian College at Lahore, Murray college at Sialkot, Edward college at Peshawar and Gordon college at Rawalpindi. The baring union Christian college was opened at Batala in 1941.

### **Muslim Missionaries**

In the three predominantly Muslim areas of East Bengal, West Punjab and Sind, the majority of the Muslims were illiterate, not so much because of pride of race, religious fears or memories of bygone superiority, but because they were cultivators to whom English education was neither useful nor necessary (Basu, 1974, 155). Ghosh (2009, 236) stated, "As far as the Muslims were concerned, most of them boycotted English education as it considered it to be below their dignity to learn the language of the usurpers".

Majumdar (1965, 79-81) stated that the education commission of 1882 also reviewed the subject of Muhammadan education in India, and made important recommendations in this respect; that the special encouragement of Muhammadan education be regarded as a legitimate charge on local, on municipal and on provincial funds. The July 1883 Resolution stressed that for the attraction of Muhammadans in Higher Education, a liberal provision of scholarships is essential and their wants must not be overlooked in the framing of any general scheme of scholarship in any Province. In 1901-02 there was a slight increase in the number of Muhammadan students in Arts Colleges and Secondary schools. According to Chopra (1973, 645), Islamic influences also reached Punjab and the N-W from the Gangetic plain and particularly from Delhi. Muslim religious movements may broadly be considered as

1. Movements that were religious in form but political in content
2. Religious movements with emphasis on education programmes.
3. Religious movements organized mainly in order to combat Christian missionary activities.

4. Religious movements concerned chiefly with theological controversies within the fold of Islam.
5. Movements for reorientation of religious thought under the impact of western ideas
6. And the movements for purely moral and spiritual uplift.

#### **Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islamiya** (society for the defence of Islam)

In Lahore, It was founded in 1866 by Muhammad Shafi and Shah Din, both the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. It established a flourishing school with college classes. This association published text-books for islamiya school. This society opened schools that included western education and required the study of English. They emphasized female education, loyalty to the British-Indian government and opposed the Indian National Congress.

#### **Anjuman-i-Islamiya**

It was founded in Lahore in 1869 with the object of interpreting the measures of the government concerning the muslim community and to lay before the government the views of mohammedans. Its main aim was to teach muslim youth the principles of islam and elements of western knowledge (Jones, 1989, 95). In 1882 “the instruction of certain backward classes of the community of the community, such as the muhammadans, received special attention from the commission. The general effect of its recommendations is to develop the department of public instruction into a system of truly national education for india, directed and supervised in an increasing degree by the people themselves”.

#### **Sikh Missionaries**

Alfred Margin Davis of Bishops Stratford College London remarked, “the educational system of the Sikhs was fully developed and the most broad-minded of any in the whole of India.”

#### **Singh Sabha Movement**

This movement that was interested in politics, its emphasis was on religious, social and literary activities among sikhs. Some government officials also became members of this Sabha. Sir Robert Egerton, the governor of the Punjab being requested, agreed to be its patron, and some other English officers also started taking interest in it. The Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne himself in speech at Patiala, on October 23, 1890, said: “with this movement the government of India is in hearty sympathy. We appreciate the many admirable qualities of the sikh nation, and it is a



pleasure to us to know that, while in days gone by we recognized in them a gallant and formidable foe, we are to-day able to give them a foremost place amongst the true and loyal subjects of her majesty the queen empress." In 1880, Prof Singh started the Punjabi weekly Gurmukhi Akhbar from Lahore (Chhabra, 1962, 384). The lovers of education among the Sikhs met together and the idea for a separate Khalsa College went on maturing. In Amritsar, the foundation of the Khalsa College was laid down by Sir James Lyall on March 5, 1892. And by 1899, the institution became a degree college (Chhabra, 1962, 386-387). During the 1890's, Sikhs in both wings (Lahore and Amritsar) of the Singh Sabha movement became increasingly concerned with the question of Sikh identity; were they or were they not part of the Hindu community/ competition with Hindu movements had done much to fuel this discussion. Western scholars, involved in translations of different Sikh scriptures, added further stimulus to controversy surrounding the role and meaning of Sikhism. Sympathetic Englishmen organized a committee in London to raise funds and donations were requested from the Sikh ruling families. The institution became a degree granting college in 1899 and the foremost success of Sikh efforts in higher education.

### **Chief Khalsa Dewan**

On October 30, 1902, the Chief Khalsa Dewan was established, which had a similar programme as that of the progressive Sikhs in the two old bodies.

- To strengthen and develop the khalsa college into a premier institution to impart higher education.
- To organize an educational movement among the Sikhs, and to establish more schools and colleges,
- To improve Punjabi literature.

A few high and low caste Sikhs were converted to Islam and Christianity and there was a fear that many more would follow the same. The Sikhs being educationally backward began to play in the hands of the Arya Samajees. They started criticizing the Sikhs, their religion their culture and their gurus.

A Sikh committee was established under the Chief Khalsa Dewan in 1907, which later held many conferences and opened Khalsa schools at several places in the Punjab. From 1908 onwards, annual education conferences were held in different parts of the province, which resulted in the establishment of several new Sikh institutions in the Punjab, notable among them being a Khalsa

college at Gujranwala in April 1908, KanyaMahaVidyala, the girls school at Ferozepur. Chanrda (1989, 202), stated, "The development of intelligentsia in Northern India deserves several studies". The first session of Sikh education conference was held at Gujranwala in April 1908 under the leadership of S. Sunder Singh Majithia. The conference had certain definite aims and objectives before it. It wanted to foster love for knowledge and education among the youth. It aimed at enlightening the people and making the synthesis of the best of western education and the best of Indian education with religious flavour in it. Apart from stressing the importance of primary education the conference pointed towards the defects and shortcomings of the college and university education and aimed at its amelioration or to make it better. The conference was to reform the entire system of the education where foreign language should be replaced by the mother tongue. Side by side with the education of the boys the conference wanted to lay special emphasis upon female education. Kaur (1975, 205,206) stated that the conference wanted to foster love for knowledge and education among youth. It aimed at enlightening people and making the synthesis of the best of western education and the best of the Indian education with religious flavour in it. Barrier (1970), "It achieved an impressive record of attainments to its credit and rendered yeoman's service for the cause of education. The Sikhs had difficulty in adapting themselves to the circumstances accompanying the British rule and fell behind in education and official employment".

By the year 1915, as many as 8 kanya middle schools, 36 kanya primary schools, 5 boarding houses and 1 widow ashram were established. In these female institutions special subjects were taught which could meet the requirement of the girls in their future careers; such as cooking, handwork, stitching etc. Arrangements were made by the Conference for the training of the female teachers. Junior and senior vocational training classes were started in the Sikh KanyaMahavidyala at Ferozepur. By the year 1919, the number of Sikh recognized schools had risen to 48. The Conference attained a great success in starting Khalsa schools. Lt. Governor of Punjab once remarked, "I have been much struck on my return to the province after an absence of some years to see how generously the sikh community supports the cause of education. Wherever I go, I see Khalsa Schools almost all quite well-built and well-founded which have been provided by the liberality of the members of the panth".

Punjab University Lahore was requested to grant scholarship to students studying Punjabi in Oriental College, Lahore as was the practice for Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

## **Conclusion**

The socio-religious cultural reform movements during the period of 1880-1920 brought a new revolution in Colonial Punjab by educating the masses and which made a way for political nationalism. Because of the spread of education and press the various groups residing in Punjab formed their own organizations based on the element of religion and tried to engulf more and more people under their banner by improving their education and orienting them towards their own religion. There was a birth new educated class of people in Punjab as LalaHardayal, Bhagat Singh which lead the Punjabi's in the freedom struggle or movement. In Punjab in the field of education the major influence of AryaSamaj, Singh sabha movement and khalsadiwan was seen in Lahore, Peshawar, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Jalandharand Hoshiarpur (mainly the areas and cities around the cities of Lahore and Amritsar). These areas were developed as educational hubs and today also these towns of India's Punjab are having number of educational institutions developed at that period by the missionaries. The khalsa colleges, dev samaj institutes and DAV's established by missionaries and Singh sabha say their own success stories today.

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