

## Punjab in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Muslim Socio-Political Profile

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### Abstract

The Punjab lies at the gateway of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Its geographical location determines much of its historical significance. The oldest battles of the subcontinent in the pre-historic epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were fought here. Buddhism found its highest expression in this land. The Muslim conquests introduced a new faith of human equality and egalitarianism to counteract the rigid caste system of Hinduism. It was here that the Muslims founded one of the greatest empires of the world. The Sikh religion was the last to find a home here. The Present study briefly deals with the social and political profile of the province of Punjab in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with special reference to the various associations and organizations founded by the Muslims.

**Key Words:** Punjab, Muslim Associations, Anjuman-i-Himayat Islam, Anjuman Islamia

### Introduction

British annexed Punjab in 1849. (Talbot, 1888) The Muslims had lost political power long before that. Under the Sikh rule, they suffered immensely. (Latif, 1889) The Sikhs crushed the Muslims as political power, ruined their property and dispersed them as a religious community. (Scragg, 2017) Once constituting a privileged class and occupying a leading position in the Punjab society, the Muslims were reduced to the level of common subjects under the Sikh rule. (Sadaf Butt et al.) (Calvert, 1936) The changes brought about by the British rule, such as introduction of English, their educational policy, missionary activities and teaching of Western ideas further lowered their position and made the Muslims all the more weary of the British Raj. (P.H.M., 1972) (Ali, 1988)

The British gave recognition to the Sikh aristocracy resulted in Muslim deprivation. The Government protected their hereditary claims to land, which had originated in Muslim deprivation. Indeed, according to one analyst: "The British Government did all it consistently could do to mitigate the reverses of the feudal nobility of the defunct Sikh realm". (Latif, 1889) On the one hand, the Sikhs were allowed the custody and income of their holy places and on the other hand the mosques like Badshahi Mosque (Abbasi, 1981) and the Golden Mosque (Abbasi, 1981) of Lahore, and Eidgah in Multan (Baqir, 1985) suffered desecration. Apparently, the Government policy was to hurt the Muslim sensibilities as much as they could and to weaken and impoverish them politically and economically." (Baqir, 1985) .During the uprising of 1857, the British Government pro-Sikh policy paid off as the Sikhs fully supported the British militarily. The revolts in various areas of Punjab were essentially perceived as Muslim uprisings. (Latif, 1889)

Only to Punjab, politics the Muslim - Sikh problem was peculiar. Tragically enough, there was hardly any sound basis for the growth of leadership among the Muslims of the Punjab. The Sikhs and the Hindus outstripped the Muslims in commerce and education, as they stood low in

Government estimation. Muslim landlords of the Punjab, devoid of education and helpless pawns in the hands of Hindu money-lenders, were the least qualified to give a lead to the Muslims at large. (Salamat, 1997). In contrast to other communities, the Muslim response to the British rule was one of resistance. (Ivermee, 2014) But they soon found their progress thwarted by their poverty and their sullen attitude towards an alien system of education. For nearly two decades, they had stood aloof from the mainstream. (Salamat, 1997)

The Muslim tradition of classical and Islamic culture inclined them to prefer instruction in vernacular rather than western education. But this had little relevance to job opportunities in the government sector. Instead of adapting themselves to English education and availing themselves of the opportunities it offered, the Muslims became inward-looking. Their efforts were mainly devoted to the establishment and maintenance of upper level *Madrassahs* for religious and Arabic education. (Salamat, 1997). The prejudice against the learning of English prevented Muslims from taking advantage of socio-economic progress of the country. Whereas the Muslim children remained pre-occupied mainly with the primary education, the Hindus stole a lead in secondary and higher education. In 1871, there were only 13 Muslims in colleges of the Punjab province compared to 84 non-Muslims. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

#### **Important Muslim Associations of the Punjab and their Role**

The Punjabi Muslims responded to these numerous and diverse pressures following annexation in 1849 by organizing and joining associations which tried to protect and strengthen the Muslim community. (Awan, 2019) Within Muslim society of the Punjab these associations came to fulfil two broad needs or functions: (Edward D. Churchill, 1974). First, they were used as instruments for restoring and perpetuating traditional customs and institutions such as preserving *auqaf*, collecting zakat and sponsoring schools. These had deteriorated as a result of Muslim loss of political power and impoverishment and in some instances had been further eroded by Governmental, judicial, educational and settlement reforms. These associations provided a new organizational base for these activities and represented a renewed interest in these matters by certain groups. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

The second need fulfilled was that of helping the Muslim community cope with the new challenges of the late nineteenth century. Most important issues in the minds of most Muslims at this time were combating and refuting attacks by missionary and Hindu groups, petitioning and convincing the British Government of legitimate Muslim interests, promotion of Muslim unity, and introducing reforms, largely cultural, within the community. It is in the late 1870's and 1880's that the urban, educated Muslim responded to these problems by founding these societies in large numbers. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974) (Latif, 1889) These associations played instrumental role in these issues, in addition to publishing activities. An important part of the assessment of the Muslim situation by Muslims was the increasing awareness that their interests and fortunes must be separated from those of the Hindus. (Tutja, 1995) Associations established in the 1860's and 1870's were joint Hindu and Muslim societies, whereas those founded in the 1880's were almost exclusively Muslim and directed more to specific Muslim needs. The fact that there were more Hindu groups than Muslim (see table below) was cause for some uneasiness among the Muslims?

**Table: Societies in different Cities Districts of Punjab**

Cities/Districts	Hindu	Sikh	Muslim	Joint
Julundur	2	1	4	1
Lahore	12	1	6	4
Hoshiarpur	2	1	0	0
Bannu	0	1	1	0
Amritsar	3	1	5	1
Multan	1	0	1	0
Simla	4	1	0	1
Amballa	0	0	2	0
Dara Ghazl Khan	0	0	0	0
Gujrat	2	0	2	0
Dera Ismail Khan	2	0	0	1
Muzaffargarh	1	0	0	1
Sealkotel Sialkot	3	1	0	0
Jhang	3	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>

**Source:** Edward D. Churchill, JR. *Muslim Societies of the Punjab, 1860 - 1890 in the Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. VII, No.15, April 1974, pp.72-73.

These societies\* were founded by different groups to meet different and changing needs. Six types can be identified according to their goals and activities: (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

1. The early literary societies were among the first Voluntary associations of North India, e.g. Anjuman-i-Punjab Lahore (1865), Delhi Literary Society Delhi (1865), and Anjuman-i-Farzandan-i-Gujranwala (1866). Their membership was exclusively open for the elite of all communities and their outlook was secular. Their primary goals were to spread useful knowledge through translations of important works into vernaculars. They sponsored lectures, discussions, founded libraries, reading rooms and museums, promoted scholarship in oriental learning and took interest in industry, commerce and social reforms. They published journals and proceedings in addition to their translations. They also supported the British rule. The literary societies faded in 1870s because of the increased activity of the education department in translating texts from English into Urdu and because of increased communal friction. (Arshad, 2016) Many of the reading rooms and libraries, however, continued to exist after 1870s. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)
2. There were number of comparatively early groups concerned with preserving or restoring aspects of Muslim culture e.g. Anjuman-i-Islamia Lahore (1869), Anjuman Mufid-i-Am Kasur

\* See Appendix for a brief discussion on membership and activities of the Muslim societies established in the Punjab during 1860-1890

(1873), Anjuman Mawahidin Amritsar (1873), Anjuman Rifah-i-Riaya-i-Hind Delhi (1875) and Anjuman-i-Islamia Delhi (1870). Many of their members also belonged to the literary societies and many had received inspiration to attend to Muslim literary tradition from the Muslims involved in classical learning. The Anjuman Islamia had its origins as a society to restore mosques and re-establish *auqaf*. The Anjuman Mufid-i-Am which published a literary journal at its own press also sponsored a handicrafts school to preserve traditional crafts. Both societies provided a new institutional base for traditional activities. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

3. Some associations were founded to promote the interests of a particular community or religious sect, such as Anjuman Ithna Ashar Ambala (1876), Anjuman Numania Lahore (1888) and Anjuman Taid Islam Amritsar (1884), Anjuman Madrasa Islamia Gujrat (1883), Anjuman Miran Juliundar (1880), which represented the Shia Sayyids, Hanafis, Ahl-i-Hadith and the Mir Community. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

4. A number of societies appearing in the 1880s were formed to promote the interests of professional or occupational groups e.g. Anjuman Islah Zamindaran Baghbanpura (1883). Medical Club Lahore (1885), Muhammadan Union Club Lahore (1886), Majlis Anwar Muhammadia Amritsar, and Union Council Amritsar, Hamalyan Council Club Simla. Some started as joint societies but the poison of communalism eventually affected their membership. The professions they represented included both modern and traditional, and their members included attorneys, astronomers, doctors, feudal and Imams. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974)

5. The most common types of associations were those which supported a wide range of cultural reforms and social change such as Anjuman-i-Islamia (1869), Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam (1884), Anjuman City School Bannu (1884), Anjuman Ghamkhar Islam Jullandar (1885). Anjuman Hami-i-Qaum Kapurthala (1885), Anjuman Hami-i-Qaum Jullundur (1889), Anjuman-i-Ahsan-ul-Akhlaq Lahore (1886) and Anjuman-i-Ittihadia Amritsar (1884) etc. Among many goals espoused was that of Muslim unity. Their activities included founding schools, publications, religious philanthropy, public meetings, petitions, memorials and scholarships. The ideas of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were of great interest and inspiration but they did not always get unanimous support. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974) (Baqir, 1985)

6. Finally, some societies were established primarily for political purposes. These were of two kinds: first which were formed to protest and petition about a particular issue, e.g. Anjuman Hamdard-i-Islamia Amritsar, Anjuman Hazara, Hazara (1883), Anjuman Muhammadia Lahore (1888), Anjuman Rifah-i-Am Amballa (1884), Majlis Islamia Lahore, Majlis Islamia Ludhiana, Anjuman Mufid-i-Am Ludhiana (1884), issues, e.g. Indian Association Lahore (1883), and Anjuman Ghamkhar Islam Jullundur (1888). (Edward D. Churchill, 1974) (Baqir, 1985)

The Anjuman Islamia and the Anjuman-i-Himayat Islam were the wealthiest societies with 7,000 and 10,000 rupees credit respectively. As a result, both were able to carry on impressive publishing programs. They represented the most progressive forces in the province. (Barrier, 1971). The Anjuman Islamia of Lahore was established in 1869. (Ikram, 1977) It was originally set up to take over and maintain the Badshahi Mosque which had been converted, during the Sikh rule, into a storehouse of weapons and gunpowder, etc., but was now being restored to the Muslims by the British. Gradually the Anjuman extended the field of its activities which came to include efforts

"to improve the social and intellectual conditions of the Muhammadans of the Punjab and further Muhammadan interests generally". (Barrier, 1971) In addition to the Badshahi Mosque which was repaired at a cost of one lakh of rupees, the restoration of the shops attached to the Golden Mosque, Lahore, and the custody of the holy relics of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) formerly kept in the fort, it also instituted scholarships for Muslim students. (Barrier, 1971) .

The Amritsar branch (1882) founded an Anglo-oriental school at Amritsar on the lines of M.A.O. College at Aligarh. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974) The Anjuman arranged visit to Lahore by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1873 and 1884. The Lahore and Amritsar branches of the Anjuman Islamia were unquestioning supporters of Sir Syed and served as his most vigorous representatives in the Punjab. The Anjuman affiliated itself to the Muhammadan Educational Conference at Lahore in 1888. (Ikram, 1977). The Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam founded in 1884 (Wasti, 1976) was considered a natural corollary to Sir Syed's movement. (Wasti, 1976) The Anjuman's activities up to 1890 were impressive and included the founding of a number of schools, the publishing of a journal and several educational texts, the founding of two orphanages, one for boys and the other for girls. It seems to have been the only organization at this time that managed to draw the support of the urban middle classes.

Its membership was large, for instance, in Lahore it had 900 members in 1890, and 350 members in Amritsar in 1888. (Edward D. Churchill, 1974) (Barrier, 1971) .The Anjuman was patronized by prominent scholars, religious and political leaders such as Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, Maulana Shibli Nomani, Nazir Ahmad, Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, and Pir Syed Jamaat Ali Shah. Their speeches at its annual meetings, and various writings, stirred Muslim imagination and put new life into the community across the country.

### **Conclusion**

The Muslim community was politically side lined after the annexation of Punjab in 1849 under Sikh rule. There was no denying that the Muslims of the Punjab were socially, economically and politically backward and were in a state of despair. This was all the more important, given the threats it faced from a host of sources. The Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand, posed the greatest threat to the Muslim community of Punjab. The activities of the Arya Samaj created bitterness among the Muslims, and indeed led to the communal tension and riots.

To meet such challenges the Punjabi Muslim community organized and joined various associations to preserve their cultural and religious legacy and advocate for their rights. However, Muslims were still preferring their traditional instruction system and reluctant to embrace Western education which greatly contributed to sideline them from modern society and progress. The Christian missionaries and Qadianis were also active in their anti-Islamic preaching which caused further distress and hurt to the Muslim community. Regardless of all the challenges, the efforts made by the Muslim associations laid the basis for a renewed sense of identity and purpose, setting the stage for future political and social movements in Punjab and beyond.

### **Appendix**

#### **Organizations of the Punjab (1860-1890)**

'J' Stands for joint Muslim and Hindu 'M' Stands for Muslim only

- Anjuman-i-Punjab, Lahore (1865) 'J'. 240 members 1865, 300 members, 1888.

- Delhi Literary Society Delhi (1865) 'J'. For the diffusion of useful knowledge in the vernaculars.
- Anjuman-i-Farzan-i-Am Gujranwala (1866) 'J'. Library, reading room Museum.
- Anjuman-i-Amritsar (1867). Journal, Risalah-i-Shashmahi edited by Sheikh Ghulam Hussain.
- Anjuman Islamia Lahore (1869) 'M'. Restores Mosques, petitions government, school, donations to the Turko Russian War, Scholarships 125 members, 1888, 177 members, 1892.
- Anjuman Islamia Delhi (1870) 'M'. Literary activities, translations affiliated with CNMA in 1888.
- Anjuman-i-Batala Lahore (1872). Journal Risalah-i-Anjuman-i-Batala.
- Anjuman Mufid-i-Am Kasur (1873) 'M'. Handicraft school, library, printing press, journal, research grant in aid for Government 1880, 322 members 1880.
- Anjuman-i-Mawahidin Amritsar (1873) 'M'. Islamic maktab, in 1882 merges with the Anjuman Islamia.
- Anjuman Rifa-i-Riaya-I-Hind Delhi (1875) 'M'. Muslim Reform Association.
- Anjuman Arabi Sarae Delhi (1875) 'J'. Medical Society Journal.
- Anjuman Ithna Ashar Ambala (1876) 'M'. School for Shia Sayyids.
- Anjuman Miran Jullundar (1880), 'M'. For the Mir Community, scholarships, 135 members, 1888.
- Anjuman Peshawar, Peshawar (1880) 'J'. Persian Journal.
- Anjuman Hamdardi Islamia Lahore (1881) 'M'. Managed by the Ahl-I- Hadith.
- Anjuman Rafah-i-Am Ludhiana (1882) 'J'. Journal, 80 member, 1884.
- Majlis-i-Akhaqia Amritsar (1882) 'M'. Social reform.
- Majlis Islamia Lahore 'M'. Memorial to Education Commission.
- Majlis Islamia Ludhiana 'M'.
- Muawanat-i-Urdu Amritsar (1882) 'J'. Promotion of Urdu Language.
- Anjuman Akhwan-us-Sufa Gujrat (1882) 'M'. Memorial to Education Commission.
- Anjuman Akhwan-us-Sufa Gujrat (1882)' M'. Memorial to education commission.
- Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Urdu Gurdaspur (1882) 'J'. Memorial to preserve the states of Urdu.
- Anjuman Madrasa Islamia Gujrat (1883), 'M'. Managed by Ahl-I- Hadith School.
- Anjuman Hazara, Hazara (1883) 'J'. Raja Jahandad Khan, Memorial to the education commission.
- Anjuman Islah Zamindaran Bagbanpura (1883) 'M'. Zamindar's reforms society, issue of indebtedness, scholarships memorials, Miyan Nizam-ud-Din.
- Indian Association Lahore (1883) 'J'. A National Association to guide public opinion started 1877, Muslim join 1883 begin to leave 1885.
- Anjuman Rafah-i-Am Amballa (1884) 'J'
- Anjuman Mufid-I-Am Ludhiana (1884) 'M'. Greeted Sir Syed on his tour of the Punjab.
- Anjuman Taid Islam Amritsar (1884) 'M'. Managed by Ahli-Hadith school, 100 members, 1884.
- Anjuman Hamdardi Islamia Amritsar 'M'. Lectures, petitions to the government.
- Anjuman City School Bannu (1884) 'M'. School for elite.

- Anjuman Ittihadia Amritsar (1884) 'M'. Union of Muslim Sects.
- Medical Club Lahore (1885) 'J'. 35 members, 1888.
- Muhammadan Union Club Lahore (1886) 'M'. Lawyers association 20 members 1886.
- Anjuman Faizan-i-Am Gujranwala (1886) 'M' Memorial to public service commission
- Anjuman-i-Ahsan-ul-Akhlaq Lahore (1886) 'M'. Social reform
- Anjuman Numania Lahore (1888) 'M'. Restored Mosque Hanfi School, scholarships, lectures, journal (1889) 318, members, 1888.
- Anjuman Ghamkhwar Islam Jullundar (1888) 'M'. Islamic unity support for Govt. philanthropy, technical and religious education.
- Dress Reform Society Gujrat (1888) 'M'. Change dress of Muslims to economies 30 members 1888.
- Anjuman-i-Muhammadiya Lahore (1888) 'M'. To select a delegate to the Indian National Congress.
- Majlis Anwar Muhammadin Amritsar 'M'. Organization of Imams.
- Anjuman Islahi Amritsar 'M'.
- Union Council Amritsar 'J' Lawyers association.
- Himalyan Union Club 'J'. Scientific, primarily astronomy, Muslim left when Islam insulted.
- Anjuman Hamdardi Jivanat Patiala 'M'. Haji Ghulam Muhammad
- Anjuman Khadam Islam Delhi 'M'.
- Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam Simla 'M'. School.
- Anjuman Hami-i-Qaum Kapurthala (1888) 'M'. Reading room night school.
- United Indian patriotic Association Aligarh (1888) 'J' Political Society opposed to the Indian National Congress.
- Anjuman Hami-i-Qaum Jullundur (1889) 'M'. Literary, social, moral reforms, journal (Muhazzab Qaum).
- Anjuman Rifah Islam Lahore (1889) 'M'. Advancement of the Muslim Community.

#### **Branches of the Anjuman Islamia and their activities**

- Amritsar (1882). Anglo-oriental school, Islamia unity social reforms, publications, affiliated with CNMA.
- Gujrat (1883). Affiliated with CNMA.
- Multan (1888). Primary School 150 members 1888.
- Amballa (1888).
- Abbottabad Primary school
- Amroha Shah Bahauddin Society
- Shahpur
- Peshawar
- Jhajari Rohtak Quran Maktab
- Hissar Amir Mujid Ali

- Rupar, Ambala Sheikh Ghulam Nabi School
- Sialkot
- Sinha, Gurgoan
- Ferozepur (1887) Quran Maktab.
- Gurdaspur Scholarships
- Gujranwala
- Jalapur, Gujrat (1889) Primary school
- Hagani, Ludhiana School
- Wazirabad (1882)
- Jullundur (1883). School, debating club, merged with Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam.

#### Branches of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam

- Lahore (1884). Girls Schools, College (1892), Islamic unity, defense against Christianity, philanthropy educational texts 807 members 1888, 1515 members, 1892.
- Amritsar (1888). Islamic unity, defence against Christianity, school 350 members, 1888.
- Jang (1889). School, merged with Anjuman Islamia.
- Patiala Maulvi Qadratullah
- Dera Ismail Khan. Hafiz Saifullah
- Ferozepur Munshi Waliullah
- Montgomery Munshi Muhammad Nurullah

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