

***Subaltern Studies or Regional History:
Explorations in Nationalist Movement
with Special Reference to the
Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam***

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For a long time British Indian history had been seen in terms of inter-religion (communal) conflict, which typified a reductionist approach. This presumed the existence of two major religion-based communities whose frequent mutually, hostile interaction was patterned largely by their relationship with the colonial state. Such scholarly interpretations overlooked the ethnic, regionalist, lingual, class- and, caste-based diversities and it is only in the recent years that studies on these issues have started appearing. In the early 1980s there emerged a ‘school’ of history that goes by the name of ‘Subaltern Studies’; this school has now gained a world-wide reputation, and ‘Subaltern Studies’ is beginning to make its influence felt in Latin American Studies, African Studies, ‘cultural studies’, and other arenas.

At the end of the 1970s Ranajit Guha, the founding editor of *Subaltern Studies*, and a group of young historians based in Britain embarked on a series of discussions about the contemporary state of South Asian historiography. From the onset the underlying principle which united the group — Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Parthe Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyandhra Pandey — was a general dissatisfaction with the historical interpretations of the

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'Freedom Movement' in South Asia which celebrated the elite's contribution in the making of the Indian nation while denigrating the 'politics of the people'. History of the modern South Asia and particularly that of the nationalist movement was etched as history of the 'elites'; but now this history is being looked upon primarily as history of 'subaltern groups'. Subaltern Studies viewed as a collective enterprise, represent the most significant achievement of South Asian 'cultural studies'; it has effectively contested what were until recently the dominant interpretations of South Asian history, and more generally it has provided a framework within which to contest the dominant modes of knowledge.¹

Now if we look into the historiography of modern South Asia with special reference to the history of Muslim Freedom Movement, the subaltern aspect is totally missing from it. Very few pure research pieces deal with the issue of 'Muslim masses' even gathered on communal basis for the cause of their independence. There are a number of political accounts available on the mainstream polity of Muslim elites not focussed on their 'subaltern component'. Even in the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab and Bengal which had been important centres of these 'awami movements' the Subaltern component has a very small share in the text of official histories. All work falling in this category, from Aitzaz Ahsan's *Indus Saga* to Omar Farooq's *Maulana Gul Sher Shaheed*, and from Muneer Ahmad's *Press in Chains* to Fozia Saeed's *Taboo*, mainly consist of memoirs, political biographies and accounts.

In the context of South Asian history, the contribution of the Indian nationalist movement may prove to be long- or short-lived. The participants in the movement and their leaders were all human beings and as such fallible: the observer may not admire or approve of anything they did, and those who try to apply their methods to other situations of conflict or discontent may sometimes do so inadequately. But they are not 'apologetic' and as far as its goal of evicting the British is concerned, the history of the Indian nationalist movement is a 'success story'. The Indian

¹ See Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", and "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," both in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, eds., R.Guha and Gayatri Spivak (New York: Oxford, 1988).

nationalist movement earned its place in history alongside the greatest developments in the human organisation.²

As the case of the Majlis-i-Ahrar also belongs to the Indian Regional History or Subaltern Studies, before going into the details of the Ahrar's identity, class and ideology one must know how this party was formed. The general image given by sketchy treatment of this nationalist group in historical accounts of the Indian struggle for independence gives the impression that it was a bizarre group of Muslim political dissidents placed on the margins of the Muslim Nationalism. As far as the origin of this party is concerned, it was formed by a group of Muslims in Lahore on the eve of the annulment of Nehru Report in 1929.³ Its role is depicted in Historiography as a mobilist party mainly active in the Punjab and Kashmir and it was generally known as an anti-British, sectarian party.

Did Majlis-i-Ahrar's efforts to mobilize mass support for different campaigns on socio-political issues have any influence on the structure of society? Why did it fail to become a strong political party in the realm of South Asian politics in which All India Muslim League and Indian National Congress were the main players? Were their arguments well taken? Did it exercise any influence on ordinary Muslims and could they understand it? Could the Majlis mobilizing efforts be described as success? Were anti-capitalist and anti-feudal arguments more effective than religious ones? Were religious leaders more effective than political leaders?

Their identity, therefore, is an appropriate area to address in the first place before examining the roots of their political activism

2 H.F. Owen writes in his article "The Nationalist Movement" in A.L. Basham, ed., *A Cultural History of India* (London: OUP, 1975, p.391) that "the nationalist movement was at once a reassertion of traditional values and symbols against alien intrusion and itself an alien modern and untraditional phenomenon. This embodied the different brands of nationalism represented by several national leaders of India as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school."

3 *Inqilab*, Lahore, 14 July, 1931, "Secret Punjab Police Abstract of Intelligence", 8 August, 1931, Vol 2, pp.498-99., Chaudhry Amir Afzal Haqq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktabah-i-Tabsirah, 1968) pp.25,71,91. This is the only incomplete, censored and extended account available in Urdu on the history of the party; otherwise, there exists no composite history of the party in English or Urdu presently.

and the role played by the Ahrar in Indian Muslim politics between 1929 and 1947, as an ex-ally of the Congress. This will go a long way in elucidating the manner in which this party tried to look after the rights and demands of the Indian Muslim society. So far the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam has not been properly adverted to by the historians dealing with the development of Indian and Muslim nationalism in South Asia. Nationalist Muslim groups or parties like the Ittehad-i-Millat, and the Ahrar have hitherto been studied merely as in the backdrop of the leading mainstream political party, Indian National Congress, the reason being that these two parties rejected those Muslim groups whose ideology was based on Muslim political separatism and who were wadded to the concept of territorial nationalism. However, the Muslim political identity was never in question with them. On the contrary the Ahrar, like other nationalist groups working quite parallel to the Muslim League, tried to convince their co-religionists in India that the League was by no means the only platform for articulating their interests and viewpoints with regard to the protecting of Muslim identity in India.

They believed that Hindus and Muslims as two major components of composite Indian nationalism could share the corporate responsibility of governing India. They opposed the "two-nation" theory. Here, it would also be of interest to find out, who they were and why did they oppose Pakistan scheme? Answering the first question, we find them, through their class, their creed, their published and unpublished writings, that they were not ulema, except for the very few of their leaders who were the graduates of Dar al-'Ulum-i-Deoband. Some of them were close associates of the prominent Deobandi ulema, too. But this had nothing to do with the official policy of the Majlis. They were not theologians like the members of the Jami'at al-Ulama'-i-Hind and Jama'at-i-Islami, who opposed Pakistan because it was not going to be a religious state according to their own interpretation of the Islamic *Shari'ah*. On the contrary, they were remarkably radical and believed in divine dynamic progress of the community. They talked quite radical Socialism, of the emotional and romantic type.

However, it is possible to assume that they did not endorse the idea of Pakistan on purely pragmatic considerations, such as the safeguarding of the interests of their Muslim constituency in the Punjab, whose needs were perhaps better served by coming to terms with that region's nationalist majority. Therefore, Ahrar identified their interests with all the nationalist groups having strong anti-imperialist feelings as can be seen from the presidential address of Habibur Rahman Ludhianwi to the first ever conference of the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam held at Habibia Hall, Lahore, on 31 July, 1931.⁴ Likewise, Mazhar Ali Azhar, General Secretary of the Party also envisioned this new party with a secular agenda. But in their definition of composite nationalism Muslim interests obviously took precedence over the secular nationalism of the Congress. And in their dealings with the Muslim separatists despite being suspicious of the latter's policies, they were ready to cooperate with them in obtaining concessions for Muslim community. In this way they were close to the Congress (though this relationship also suffered from fluctuations) whenever it opposed or challenged the British imperial power. But they opposed the creation of Pakistan because they had strong doubts about the ability of the feudal lords of the League to offer good governance. Consequently, they came to be more identified with communist and socialist elements in the contemporary politics.

Having established the identity of the group and the reason why they opposed Pakistan, it is now appropriate to find out their perception of the place of Muslims in the undivided independent India. In the prevailing political situation, to be in power or out of power looked equal to the Muslims; nor did they have any clear idea as to how to share power with the non-Muslim majority. Though it was a central and exciting issue but generally speaking it had hitherto remained unexplored by the Muslims. The ulema also did not pay enough attention to the issue that how could the Muslim community model their lives in keeping with the Muslim

4 In 1931, the Ahrar President Maulana Habibur Rahman Ludhianwi, addressing the Ahrar in their annual session, declared: "I want to tell all the nations of Hindustan in clear words that the Ahrar do not want to do injustice to any other nation. But, at the same time, they are not prepared to live as a scheduled caste in India. The Muslims are equally entitled to a share in Indian affairs. They will essentially be equal partners in the Indian Government. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 14 July, 1931.

socio-cultural traditions in the absence of the requisite political power? This was of course *the* question facing the Muslim community of South Asia in those days and even today also Muslims all the world over are confronted with this issue.

The real issue then, and more so now, is that what does it mean to be a Muslim in a state, which leaves its citizens to profess and practise Islam whatever way they liked? Is it necessary for the Muslims to have a state, a regime or a government of their own, to fashion their lives according to the basic tenets of Islam? Can religious power and authority be separated from political authority in Islam? All these exciting questions became relevant while dealing with the freedom movement in South Asia. Perhaps Ahrar were not the only ones at fault. Perhaps their case must be examined afresh with special reference to the 'subaltern politics'.

The Ahrar-Congress association was basically a "love hate" relationship. Ahrar had sincerity, devotion and enthusiasm for their cause and had an emotional attachment to it. Besides a sense of defiance was also there which was amply personified in figures like Syed 'Ataullah Shah Bukhari. Ahrar's political activism regarding the attraction of Muslim mass support for the nationalist cause also needs a substantial and critical discourse. An attempt should be made to lay out the complex debate among a wider group of protagonists including the political and religious leadership in the larger context of the nationalist struggle; a reflection of the broader contemporary situation through reference to the historiography of the field. Substantial secondary literature, written by its members and workers can be extremely useful in the achievement of this goal.

Muslims and Nationalism

Currently a dialogue is raging between the nationalists and the separatists regarding the anti-Muslim League or anti-partition views, based on original sources. The debate intends to explore the shared thoughts of all those groups which believed that Indian Muslims had their roots deep in Indian society and that they were the natural inhabitants of this land. Their argument implied that there was no reason why they could not be loyal members of the united Indian nation.

Though responding in diverse and unsure manners in certain cases to the British presence in India, the Muslim nationalists agreed on one basic point that Muslims were going to suffer tremendously mainly because of their cultural colonization, verging on paganization of the Muslim society. It was this brewing anti-British feeling that resulted in the events of 1857.

Nationalists and Ulema

Before we go ahead with this discussion, it seems necessary to understand who these nationalists were? Plain answer to this question is that they were experts in purely religious (*'ibādāt*) aspect of Islam. Being the product of traditional *Madrasah* education, majority of them disdained political activism and were generally apolitical in their relationship to the surrounding political developments. They always opted for status quo unless their “prerogative” to guide laity in religious matters or their control of religious seminaries, the *madāris*, was questioned. This acceptance of their distance from politics was perceived by the society as if they had been co-opted by Muslim governments to support the status quo in return for financial support to their *madāris* and their right to interpret Islamic *Shari'ah*, Islamic beliefs, customs and traditions preserved and practised by their elders. Ashraf Ali Thanavi and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani both belonged to this category of ulema. Thanavi, a Sufi theologian, loathed active participation of ulema in politics, despite the fact that he was an ardent supporter of the demand for Pakistan. On the contrary, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Muhammad Qasim Nanawtawi, Mahmudul Hassan and Husain Ahmad Madani belonged to that group of teachers, preachers and Friday-prayer leaders who stood for active participation of ulema in politics.

Then there were fundamentalists who are generally referred to as literalists, and scripturalists because of their advocacy of rigid interpretation of their faith; establishment of a religious state based on the rigorous implementation of the *Shari'ah*. They can be understood as Muslim “Puritans” who considered any new additions into Islam, despite their usefulness to the Muslims’ progress within the larger context of Islamic principles, as impure because they were not there during the earliest days of Islam.

Mawdudi, one of the political activists of the twentieth century South Asia, belonged to this latter group. He was opposed to territorial nationalism or united nationalism of the Congress and the Jami'at al-Ulama'-i-Hind; he was equally opposed to the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. In sharp contrast to it, the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam had developed its separate identity as an urban Muslim political party having severed all lines with all these political groups, but still maintaining strongly its roots in the same background. It means that their main objective was to get independence from the yoke of the British imperialism.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century there emerged a number of ulema movements with the aim of guiding their co-religionists in the changed circumstances. They equated the eclipse of Muslim power with Muslim spiritual degeneration. Therefore, their prescription was spiritual regeneration before political rehabilitation. But they failed to realize that basically it was economic backwardness and political disorganization of the Muslim community that needed immediate attention. Generally speaking, the concern for protection of Muslim identity and culture in India was a responsibility assumed with equal solemnity by all shades of Muslim opinion. It was only the differences over the methods to be employed for this purpose because of which the Muslim leadership was divided into many groups.

The Ahrar formed their party to apply their kind of solution to the problems of Muslims in British India. By looking into their 'high ideals' one could easily get a clue to the 'mindset' of the Muslim community in general at that particular point of time.

The objectives of Majlis-i-Ahrar can be summed up as the independence of India, establishment of better relations between different communities, implementation of Islamic system in the country, and social, economic, educational and political development of the masses, with special emphasis upon the Muslims.⁵

5 See Ikram Ali Malik, *A Book of Readings on the History of Punjab* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1970), p.557.

Nationalists and Idea of Pakistan

Emergence of Pakistan as the largest Muslim nation-state opened a new chapter in the history of South Asian. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the complex interaction between Muslim identity and nationalism. After the events of 1857, as the Muslim identity crises peaked up the British interpreted the Mutiny as a “Muslim intrigue” and “a political conspiracy, aimed at the extinction of the British Raj”. Jinnah’s vision of a sovereign Muslim state was based on the primacy of the people rather than of certain regions, pressure groups, classes or sects. It simplified the nature of the Pakistan movement. Jinnah believed in the supremacy of the general will, a principle that is generally considered legitimate by modern political thought as well.

The parties like Jami‘atul ‘Ulama’-i-Hind and the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam supported the Congress doctrine of nationalism and opposed the idea of ‘Pakistan’. In response to the “Pakistan Scheme” the Majlis presented the concept of “Divine Rule” (*Hakumat-i-Ilahiyya*) to the public. It aimed at the creation of a classless society with full religious and cultural freedom, abolition of bureaucratic form of government, and provision of employment, food and free education for all. It was a step farther than Pakistan.⁶ Simultaneously, for their own reasons, regionalist elites such as the Unionists in the Punjab and the Red Shirts in NWFP, substituting provincial identities for ethno-national and sub-national causes, tried to block the trans-regional idea of a Muslim State.⁷

The Ahrar identified themselves with political Islam, which strengthened their position in the Punjabi politics of the time. Although the impact of these efforts was limited, it illustrated the power of political Islam and gave a boost to the Muslim public commitment to be a Muslim political community independent of the structure of the colonial state.⁸ All the nomenclatures used by the Majlis were Arabic in origin, for instance, the volunteer corps of the Majlis was known as the “Jaysh-i-Ahrar-i-Islam” and its

6 I.H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan* (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp.180-81.

7 *Ibid.* p.181.

8 See David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam* (London: Tauris, 1988), p.95.

leader was called a salār, the uniform reflected their affiliation with socialists without having the clear idea what did it mean to the Muslim community. They had a flag of red colour with a white crescent and a star on it. Their volunteer corps held drill regularly with a band and drums and carried hatchets.⁹

The wide base of the Majlis-i-Ahrar's religious leadership during its Kashmir movement turned into a serious ideological challenge to the entire British system of authority.¹⁰ It engulfed a larger proportion of Muslims with a deep personal commitment to Islam. Support from religious leadership played a vital role in the success of the Ahrar. However, because of lack of organized support, Ahrar leaders were increasingly attracted towards their old allies in the Jami'atul 'Ulemā-i-Hind, an avowed ally of the Congress, in clear opposition to the British. This strong, organized and independent political party nevertheless failed to rid the Ahrar of the 'rural' Unionist's political dominance. The cities were subordinate politically to the rural areas, where the power and the ideological roots of the colonial state were based. The ability of urban leaders to express effectively the commitment of Muslims to an Islamic political order was thus circumscribed not only by the strength of patronage networks within the cities themselves, but also by the problems of effective political expression and action in rural and provincial politics.¹¹

Nationalism and the Ahrar

The Ahrar were nationalists in its true meaning and never had compromised on it. That is why the elites, the Muslim League and the feudals disowned them. The Ahrar's main contribution was their persistent opposition to the imperial rule. Wherever and whenever they got an opportunity, they tried to sabotage the '*farangis*'. For that reason they had to suffer a lot. Most of their leaders spent best part of their lives as political prisoners in jails. A commonplace saying about the Ahrar leader 'Ataullah Shah Bukhari went around in public was that he was either in "jail or in

9 See Jānbāz Mirza, *Kārwān-i-Ahrār* (Lahore: Maktabah-i-Tabsirah, 1968), 150.

10 CID Secret Report on the Ahrar Movement in the Punjab, Lahore, No. S 358, 1039, p.13, National Document Centre, Islamabad.

11 See David Gilmartin, p.98.

rail” i.e., travelling for the canvassing of the Ahrar cause. The Ahrar enthusiastically participated in electoral politics but failed to play the trickier business at large. They basically belonged to the generation of Khilafatists and never came out of the phenomenon of civil disobedience as ‘the last resort’. But their enthusiasm always found expression into a variety of social services. Whether it was Bihar famine, Quetta earthquake of 1934, or the relief work for the Muslim and Hindu emigrants during 1947, they plunged themselves selflessly into the aid of fellow Indians.

Like most of the Deobandi ulema the Ahrar, in fact opposed the territorial nationalism of the Pakistan movement, because, although the demand for Pakistan was made in the name of Islam, it failed to enlist the support of the overall ulema community.¹² Maulana Abu’l Kalam Azad, the Godfather of the Majlis-i-Ahrar, is reported to have remarked that the Muslims should merge themselves into a “whole”, the second majority Indian nation, i.e., Hindus. He thought that the Muslim culture was under no threat of extinction because of its unique distinctive features. He exhorted ulema to try to forge some rapport again between the people and themselves, the class that had formally come to be looked upon as the custodian of their faith and ideology.¹³ That was the major reason for the emergence of Muslim groups like Majlis among the Nationalists.¹⁴

Two main Ahrar sources — *Kārwan-i-Ahrar* and *Tarikh-i-Ahrar* — could be referred in debate on the class and ideology of this misunderstood party of middle class urban Muslims, who dedicated their lives and resources to eradicate the darkness of imperialism and feudalism flourishing under the protection of the British Raj. The party believed in the fact of being the “party of the poor”. Jānbāz Mīrza, Shorish Kāshmiri and Mazhar Ali Azhar did their best to justify the emergence, principles and political ideology of the party, but it still failed to get a suitable place in the mainstream historiography of India and Pakistan.

12 Ian Talbot, *Inventing the Nation: India and Pakistan* (London: OUP, 2000), p.94.

13 See I.H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics* (Karachi: Ma’aref, 1972), pp.308-309.

14 See Chaudhry Amir Afzal Haqq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p.70.

Most of its members were petty traders and commerce people but it was overwhelmingly renowned because of its orators like 'Ataullah Shah Bukhari who could transmit magic charm upon his audience. In a short period it became one of the strongest political parties of the Punjab. They had a large following and the vernacular press was always full of their news.¹⁵ By the same token the British CID registers were full of intelligence reports about its leaders, campaigns and meetings. From 1931 to elections 1937, the Punjab was the foremost playground for the Ahrar activities.

The first and most important political campaign in 1931, launched by the Majlis was the movement for political reforms in Kashmir. The Ahrar sent 45,000 volunteers to court arrest in order to mobilize public opinion on the issue of human rights violations in Kashmir.¹⁶ The Ahrar's campaign significantly awakened the Kashmiri Muslims from their political torpor.

The Ahrars were anti-capitalists, anti-British, anti-Muslim League and anti-Unionist to the core and they publicly condemned the Unionist's favour for feudal and big landlords and did not hesitate to show their hatred for moneylenders in the Punjab.¹⁷ The leadership of the party openly opposed the imperial politics and policies. Unaware of the modern techniques of using media in politics, their speakers never thought of addressing any press conference.¹⁸ They believed in their community as a separate entity in British India and took the caste system and the element of 'untouchability' (*achhout*) in Hinduism as an obstacle to the

15 *Ibid.* p.127. On 11 December 1932, when the organ of the Majlis, "Ahrar" was launched, a poem of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan eulogizing the new party, was included in its first issue. For the text of the poem, see Jānbāz Mirza, *Kārwān-i-Ahrār* (Lahore: Maktabah-i-Tabsirah), 1975, p.233.

16 Punjab Secret Report on the Ahrar Movement, Lahore, No. S358, 1939, pp.15-16, National Documentation Centre, Islamabad.

17 In the All India Ahrar Political Conference held at Batala on 23-25 October, 1937, Mazhar Ali Azhar denounced "the Muslim League, Mr. Jinnah, the Unionist Government and the British policy in Palestine". He also condemned the liaison between Unionist party and the Muslim League which according to him, aimed at "driving the cart of the British prestige."

18 See Haqq *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*; Mirza, *Kārwān-i-Ahrār*, 8 vols., Mirza, *Hayat-i-Amir-i-Shari'at and Shorish Kāshmiri*.

bridging of gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims.¹⁹ They launched an anti-recruitment campaign in 1939 when the Second World War broke out and in order to frustrate the British drive for the recruitment of local people for fighting an imperialist war, spread a network of local branches in rural areas, which formed a fertile ground for recruitment.²⁰ The strong opposition of recruitment by Ahrar orators had an effect on already frustrated masses affected by economic depression and scarcity of consumer goods during the War. They were also distressed by forced conscription ('*lambandi*'). Ahrar exploited that point, and were severely treated by the government because of the sensitivity of the issues involved.

Another important element of this party was their encouragement and appreciation for the women's participation in politics. During their struggle for political reforms in Kashmir, women took active part in fund-raising and opinion-making. Consequently, the concrete help provided by the womenfolk mostly fulfilled the deficiency in the financial resources of the Ahrar leadership.²¹ In their writings and speeches also the Ahrar leaders showed concern for the betterment of 'womenfolk' and lauded their significance in the task of nation-building.²² Jānbāz Mirza, a renowned Ahrar member recollects in his memoirs that during Kashmir movement when 'Sialkot Day' was observed on 30 October, 1931 all women engaged in logistics for Ahrar volunteers were clad in red shirts and *dupattas*, the colour of the Ahrar flag, a colour which was selected in the memory of the

19 See Haqq, *op.cit.* p.78.

20 Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab 1849-1947* (Lahore: Vanguard), 2005.

21 Surprisingly members of the Majlis acknowledged the women's share in the struggle for independence. Ch. Amir Afzal Haqq gave the details of women's sacrifices during the Kashmir movement for the Kashmir cause and their enthusiasm to send their sons and husbands to court arrests. He especially mentioned the women of Sialkot, Gujranwala and cities of the East Punjab. He mentioned an incident of Ahrar member Ch. Abdus Sattar from Ferozpur, who accompanied by his wife and other women, was determined to go to jail for the Kashmir cause. Ulema in the Majlis encouraged women's contribution and a woman Branch of Majlis was also established at Ferozpur by the wife of the same Ch. A. Sattar. See *ibid.*, p.122.

22 *Ibid.*, p.133.

Khudai Khidmatgar who sacrificed their lives on 23rd April, 1930.²³

Conclusion

The history of this party needs a serious placement in the mainstream historiography of Modern South Asia like all other religious Muslim political groups of 1930s and their cases must be analysed using theoretical models of Identity, Nationalism and Political Islam. The Social History of the Punjab would not be complete without the study of the impact of the Majlis-i-Ahrar, Ittehad-i-Millat and Khaksars, a decade before the emergence of Pakistan. It is only by an unbiased research on these 'subaltern groups' in politics of the Punjab, the contribution of the B line Muslim leadership in provincial politics could be understood in its true perspective. Only then the "history from below" could be started and a holistic approach obtained. Another comparatively less researched area is the partition of the Punjab on the eve of the creation Pakistan. As the emphasis on suchlike non-stereotyped topics gains momentum, the policies of the Majlis and other similar parties of the Punjab would also become better appreciated.

23 See Mirza, *Kārwān-i-Ahrār*, pp.150, 228.