Islamia Anjumans and Educational Development: Perspectives on the 19th Century British Punjab

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Abstract

This paper seeks to document and interpret the little known but a watershed movement in Muslim renaissance in the British Punjab. It argues that an ever-aggravating sense of adversity, feeding on pre-colonial history and colonial rule, bred community conscious and threw up self-styled community leaders, who successfully touted Muslim identity and considered an ideologically-informed modern education as the panacea for the myriad challenges that the Muslims faced. Building on the officially transmitted social categories and aware of the Raj's responsiveness to organised politics, these public-spirited individuals sired several Islamic anjumans [Urdu: associations] which underscored predicament of the Muslims, stressed communal solidarity and initiated projects of community development. Pivotal to their community-building effort was the provision of modern education conditioned to the twin causes of identity and utility. As well as reacting to the officially pampered Islamophobia of the evangelical Christianity and to the reforming initiatives of the rival Hindu and Sikh associations, their work was slanted by locality and class. As they generally catered to the urban middle and lower middle class Muslims, education of the poor masses had to wait for official patronage following the dawn of the twentieth century when the nationalist upsurge, essentially a middle-class urban-based movement, forced Curzon-led Calcutta to prioritise the neglected pro-poor clauses of the 1854 Educational Despatch, a foundational document of the British education policy in India.

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Introduction

Until recently the focus of historiography of nationalism in India has been national panorama, the presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal or the climactic events preceding Independence. Whereas developments in the ideologically dense and seminally important nineteenth-century have been overlooked or scantily explored, patriotic fervour and nationalist zeal have disproportionally spawned historical writings on the decisive phases of nationalist politics. This scholarly neglect tends to mask a highly instructive and regionally variegated prelude to nationalism. The purpose of this paper *per se* is not to recapitulate the history of nationalism but to revisit the role of ideologically motivated Islamia Anjumans in the Punjab in the cause of community-building through modern education. Answers would be sought in the process to the broad questions like what actually prompted the educated Muslims to think in terms of community and launch community-building programmes to which modern education was so crucial; how official records and reporting were responsible for the felt need among the Muslim Anjumans to prioritise education; how rival Hindu, Sikh associations and various Christian denominations were to sensitize the Muslim community leaders to the primacy of 'safe' education; how adversity facilitated Islamic universalism against intra-faith or ethnic divisions.

The Punjab that fell to the British East India Company in 1849 had a rather unique demography and experience under the Raj. Home to the variegated Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian populations and with territorial boundaries stretching all the way to Delhi (after 1857) in the east and (until 1901) to NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in the north-west, the province was largely a patriarchal peasant society with a fraction of inhabitants forming metropolis. Demographically the largest, the Muslims who held on to nostalgia of ruling the region for centuries mourned the loss of sovereignty to the feudatory Sikh rule derisively nicknamed, save in the Sikh writings, as *Sikha Shahi*. The

Sikh rule, especially during its twilight, aroused an acute sense of fears both among the Muslims and the Hindus.[1] The communal division of 'us' and 'others', fed on its vagaries and flaws. A number of Muslim revolts including the Tehreek-i-Mujahideen of Sayyid Ahmed of Bareilly in (1829-30) were demonstrative of the seething discontent among the Muslims against the Sikh rule. For curious reasons, this pre-colonial baggage of the Punjab history finds little expression in works treating the themes of ethnicity, community and nationalism. Ayesha Jalal's contention to trace Muslim Nationalism in the Punjab to the loss of sovereignty in 1857,[2] to social categorization by the British, to the defence of Urdu, as well as to the supposed modernity of the Raj all tend to mask its powerful nuances in the pre-British period.[3] Jalal, like Gellner before her,[4] regards nationalism a time-bound by-product of modernity occasioned by standardized education, common language, communications, industrialization etc. They are lip-tight on the role of ideology in the construction of community, which, according to Deol, served as the foundation of nationalism in India and the Punjab.[5] Indeed, dating nationalism or unscrambling the complexity forging its course is a gigantic task. Allusion, therefore, to Deol and to influential work such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) would help elucidate, in the instant case, Muslim self-imagining of community.[6] Anderson has underscored the role of ideology, among others, in the formation of

1 For a specimen see, Prakash Tandon, *The Punjabi Century, 1857-1947* (London: University of California Press, 1961).

2 The Punjab Muslims had lost power over half a century earlier and were placed in an adversarial relation with the Sikh rulers.

3 Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London: Routledge, 2001).

4 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

5 See Harnik Deol, *Religion and Nationalism in India: The Case of the Punjab*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

6 Among other forces, Anderson has emphasized the role of ideology in self-imagining of community. See, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

communities. How factors, other than ideology, were also to affect community formation in the colonial Punjab?

Community formation in the Punjab was facilitated by the competitive milieu of the Raj which restricted official employment to the English-educated. Largely country-dwellers, the Punjab Muslims had little access to the urban-based education. In ordering the closure of short-lived *halqa-bandi* [Urdu: delimitation of constituencies] schools in the rural Punjab in 1860, the local government closed the avenues of modern education on the rural population greatly affecting the Muslims and the Sikhs. The educational backwardness of the Muslim masses, therefore, owed as much to the official neglect and *laissez-faire* imperial political economy as to the poverty and unawareness among of the advantages of modern education. Not until a small minority of middle and lower middle class, Muslim men received modern education and harvested its gains that they came to stress its utility upon the fellow Muslims. They found colonial rule and demographic divisions in the Punjab as eminently suited to the birth of communal associations seeking protection of class and communal interests. Once formed, these associations systematized social idiosyncrasies, defended Persian-Urdu as marker of Muslim identity and its claims vis-à-vis Hindi-Nagri and Gurmukhi, and aroused community consciousness. Using print and public platforms, they sensitized most segments of the Muslim society to the existing and ensuing challenges. In the process, they helped push the frontiers of ideology to new extremes and set the schismatic trends of future politics in the region with its adverse forebodings for the national politics. Doubtless, the peculiar circumstances and demography of the Punjab[7] had rendered the region socio-politically rent and fit for the gestation and maturity of communalism that fed on a wide body of knowledge transmitted by public education,

7 As of December 1854, the population of the Punjab was estimated at thirteen millions including 7.5 million Muslims, the remainder, Hindus and Sikhs, were classified as Hindus. S. S. Thorburn, *Punjab in Peace and War* (Delhi: South Asia Books, 1987), 186.

government records, text-books, the press, and a selective reading of history.[8] While in service to the community, these anjumans won great applause and demonstrated the effectiveness of religious idiom in community development and mobilization. Eager to showcase real and imagined threats from within and without, they emphasized separate identities and quickened the process of political regimentation, jeopardizing the future of national politics. Two of these Muslim organisations, the focus of this paper, were gainfully active in the transmission of knowledge and provision of modern education largely to the urban middle and lower-middle income groups, who could not compete or pay for the costly education in government and missionary institutions.

By the time the British annexed the Punjab, the metaphor of knowledge-is-power was winning adherents among the upper and middle strata of Indian society as reflected in the growing demand for educational and employment opportunities. Charles Wood's Educational Despatch of 1854 had added formalism to education in India, defined the goals of education policy, and was weighted, as far as its letters go, in favour of primary education in the public sector and the post-primary in the private sector, aided by government grants.[9] The Despatch had emphasised the encouragement and co-option of indigenous schools as well as the promotion of European science and literature through vernaculars. Three universities (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras) had come into being as a result in 1857 along with the provincial Departments of Public Instruction to oversee the educational work in the provinces. Twenty-four years intervened between the Despatch and the Education (Hunter) Commission of 1882 that was appointed

8 Disputing the relevance of classical theories of nationalism to India, Harnik Deol has argued that the nationalist politics in India was based on a religious foundation. See, Deol, *Religion and Nationalism in India.*

9 Primary education was stressed because it was interpreted as the education of the poor masses who could not afford its cost, whereas post-primary education was availed by the moneyed classes who could be demanded to pay for it.

to investigate the system in order to streamline it with the former. The Hunter Report noted with concern the neglect of primary education and disproportionate government patronage for the post-primary. Impressed by the Bengal example, Hunter and Lord Ripon, the liberal viceroy, were led to believe that given its advantages such as jobs and social prestige, post-primary education would progress anyway under *laissez faire* principles and that state withdrawal from this sector was imperative for the growth and development of primary education. How and to what effect did the 'Paternalistic Punjab Government' respond to the stated aims of imperial education policy?

Wary of the educated and his nationalist aspirations, with the Arya Samajists being the earliest seekers of swaraj,[10] the Punjab government placed the existing government schools under the management of local bodies (municipal and district boards),[11] and stopped further opening of schools in the public sector. Once accustomed to the state's role in the provision and promotion of learning, the educated Punjabis viewed the move as detrimental to the cause of education. The move was lambasted by *The Tribune* and by the nationalist press in general. Reaction was not confined simply to editorial comment. To make up for the loss of government withdrawal, a number of religio-reform organisations by Hindus, Muslims, and the Sikhs, stepped forward. They launched educational institutions mainly on self-help basis and in doing so challenged the missionary monopoly of private-sector education in the province. Religious freedom facilitated the work of these organisations and communal concerns placed them in-charge of community development projects. They became self-appointed, communicative agents of communal ethos

10 For an authoritative account of Arya Movement, see K. W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in the 19th Century Punjab* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1976).

11 Presided and swayed by their civilian chairmen, local bodies were generally disinclined to provide necessary funds and they gave preference to police and sanitation work. Their incompetence and insensitivity to the education of the neglected poor and the women was an open secret.

and pushers of communal interests. They perceived Muslims a community in the sense Anderson's would do[12] and showcased what Gellner's would call typology of nationalism.[13] They drew on the sentiment or polarisation that would be caused by competition for jobs and on the resultant majority-minority consciousness, adding in the process to the recrudescence of communal bickering. They scoffed at the methods of the missionary and his virtual monopoly of private-sector education. They looked askance at the work of various Christian denominations including compulsory teaching of Bible in mission schools and colleges. Accommodated by the government and often rewarded with government lands and grants-in-aid for their institutions, Christian missions came to be seen by the learned Punjabis, whether educated in the traditional or the modern mode, as the apparatus of colonial rule which 'first defeated them and next sought to govern and convert them'.[14] To what extent was this indictment of the Christian zealot justified?

The missionaries, at least some of them, were willing to admit that the evangelization of Indian society was impossible; nevertheless, they elected to advocate "a thorough reform of the existing religious practices to ensure the permanence of empire".[15] Buoyed by conquest and notional grandiosity of white race, they gave vogue to polemical literature and tendentious writings such as Rev. Roger's *Taftish al Islam* [Arabic: Probing Islam] (1870), Ramchand's *The Masih al-Dajjal* [Arabic: Dajjal, the Saviour] (1873), William Muir's *Life of Mahomet* (1878), Rev. Thakur Das's *Sirat al Masih wal Muhammad* [Arabic: Life of Jesus and Muhammad] (1882), Abdullah Atham's *Andruna-i-Bible*

12 For details see, Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*

13 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism.*

14 Kenneth W. Jones, *The Cambridge History of India: Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), 87.

15 Shruti Kapila, "Race Matters: Orientalism and Religion, India and Beyond c.1770-1880", *Modern Asian Studies,* 41, no. 3 (2007): 471-513.

[Persian: Insight Bible], Rev. William's *Muhammad ki Twarih ka Ijmal* (1891). These writings critiqued Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), challenging his spirituality. At times so pugnacious was their attack that the Bishop of Lahore (Thomas Valpy French) had to advise moderation, at others the government had to order a restraint to preserve order. French and Robert Clark of the Church Missionary Society provoked a censor from the British Resident in Kashmir who thought their preaching at sensitive places in Srinagar would provoke a backlash. Missionaries fielded the converts to belittle their former faiths. With the zeal of a convert and like Ramchand and Abdullah Atham, Imad-ud-Din and Safdar Ali subjected Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism to scathing remarks. The evangelicals also used *zenana* [Persian: feminine] teaching not purely for humanitarian considerations but, admittedly, for removing any domestic opposition to male conversion. Efforts to Christianize were palpable in their schools, colleges, medical missions, famine and orphan relief work. In the end, they succeeded to convert many among the poor Punjabis, especially the sweeper community, rendered vulnerable by the stately neglect and antiquarian tradition to egalitarianism of Christianity and Islam, and helped raise the Christian population in the province from 3,912 in 1881 to 37,980 in 1921.[16] Apart from the missionaries, whose quixotic display of Christianity and its supposed superiority set in motion inter-faith disharmony, it was the iconoclastic Brahmos (Hindus and Christian converts), the migrant Bengalis, who stoked religious controversy and reactive Islamism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

In the 1850s and 1860s, English-educated Bengalis entered the Punjab where they availed ample opportunities for jobs and set up Brahmo Samajes at Lahore (1863), Rawalpindi (1867), Amritsar (1873), Multan 1875), and later at Ruper in Amballa district, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Simla.[17]

16 Conversions were confined to lower castes and rarely occurred in schools and colleges.

17 K. W. Jones, "Bengali Elite in Post-annexation Punjab", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 3, no. 4, (October 1966): 376-95.

In 1866, Keshab C. Sen visited the province along with A. L. Bose and U.N. Gupta and reportedly enjoyed warm hospitality.[18] The Brahmos copied the Christian missions, translated works into Hindi and Urdu, set up printing presses and launched a monthly journal, *Hari Hakikat.* Like the missionaries they too were strangers in the Punjab. They had no advantage over the Englishman beyond the boundaries of their own province, as they were handicapped by the use of English.[19] Enamoured with Christianity, they were the first to fight caste taboos, to cross the sea, to extend equality to women, to pioneer liberal political consciousness and Indian nationalism.[20] Soon they learnt, however, that their eclecticism was out of step with the conservative milieu of the Punjab. Except for the Lahore and Simla Samajes, their organisations lacked vitality and had to struggle for survival. Brahmos gave birth to the Dev Samaj of Agnihotri in February 1887, which rejected Brahmo rationalism. The Dev Samaj preached the worship of Agnihotri, the sole savior and source of eternal bliss, opposed sex segregation, encouraged female education, widow remarriage, and flayed cheating, lying, bribery and gambling. With reformist zeal, stressing morality and social radicalism, it appealed to the educated upper-caste Hindu elite.

Eclectic and ahead of their times, Bengali reformists in the Punjab were often the source of Punjabi Hindu's envy and anxiety and their preponderance in jobs at the centre and in the Punjab was grudged as much by the Hindus as by

18 Franz L. Damien, *Crisis and Religious Renewal in the Brahmo Samaj, 1860-1884: A Documentary Study of the Emergence of the New Dispensation under Keshab Chandra Sen* (New Delhi: Dept. Orientalistiek, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1893), 82.

19 J. F. B. Tinling, *An Evangelist's Tour Round India*; With an Account of Keshub Chunder Sen and the Modern Hindu Reformers (London: William Macintosh, Paternoster Row, 1870), 47.

20 David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of Modern Indian Mind* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 15.

the Muslims and the Sikhs.[21] Bereft of regard for antiquarian Hindu traditions, they came to be seen as the unwelcome guests who had overstayed and were condescending in their attitude towards the local traditions. Setting in motion Vedantic orthodoxy, these followers of Ram Mohan School helped exacerbate communal schism in the region. Angered by their iconoclastic modernity, the Punjabi Hindus like Shradha Ram Phillauri critiqued Christianity, attacked Sikhism, rejected human reasoning, and emphasized the study of the Vedas. Predictably, he found overwhelming support among the Brahman landowners, princes and merchants. Following Phillauri's death in 1881, the defence of Hindu orthodoxy fell on the shoulders of a non-Punjabi Pandit Din Dayal Sharma.

The reform movements were basically dedicated to the eradication of social evils. While modern education did not feature on their agenda, espousal and articulation of separate religious identities was central to their aim. These societies helped fragment the population into communities encouraging notions of 'us' and 'others', and lending credulity to the charge of divide *et imperia* against the ruler. Within a conservative framework, they sought to fight social evils such as polytheism, profligacy at marriages and misogyny. For the reforms to succeed, the conservative Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs urged the dire necessity of intra-faith unity. They personified both cohesive and divisive 'social entropy', a term Gellner had used to describe the development of a macro culture or nationalism in Europe.[22] A new element, the English-educated Punjabis, was chiefly responsible for causing a paradigm shift in favour of Western knowledge. These Punjabis represented, to borrow Sanjay Joshi's phrase, 'fractured modernity' with loyalties divided

21 Their fears and opposition to Bengali monopoly of jobs was revealed in their responses to the Aitchison Commission (1886) when they pressed for regional quota of jobs but no communal quota within the Punjab.

22 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

between the past and the present.[23] They were the ones who sired Muslim Anjumans, Arya Samajes and the Singh Sabhas, narrowed the supply-demand gap caused by the government decision to cap further expansion of public-sector education, and effectively countered the religious biases of the mission schools. Doubtless, they were driven by religious and mundane considerations. Mustering support in the name of religion was common to all these societies.[24]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt a comprehensive outline of the charitable work undertaken by each and every Muslim Anjuman. According to Edward Churchill, there were eighty-three Muslim Anjumans and societies in the province during 1860-1890, which were either founded by the Muslims or in which they played an important part.[25] Only seven of these were well-known and mentioned in official and non-official sources. The Muslim societies, famed for comprehensive plans of community welfare and literacy, were the Anjuman-i-Islamia and the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam. Formed in the backdrop of missionary propaganda and hypercritical writings on Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), including William Muir's four-volume *Life of Mahomet* (1861), the two societies sought to defend Islam from external and internal threats. They represented Islamic liberalism, reinforcing each other in the defence of Islam or in service to the community. Both advocated social reform with claims to represent all sections of the Muslim population. A combination of ideological and utilitarian considerations defined their work. They promoted the study of English, modern science, modern languages,

23 See, Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

24 Although mobilising people in the name of religion for charitable causes paid dividends, but it gave vogue to communal politics too which survived the secular creed of the Indian National Congress and later the Unionist experiments in consociational government.

25 Edward Churchill, "Muslim Societies of the Punjab, 1860-1890", *Punjab Past and Present*, 8, no 1 (April 1974): 69-91.

and Islamic studies.[26] Established in 1869, the Anjuman-i-Islamia of Lahore began its work by seeking to restore the mosques of Lahore (Badshahi Masjid, Sonehri Masjid, Masjid Taxali Darwaza, and Tabarkat-i-Alia), which had been allowed into disrepair. Within the framework of loyalty, it stated its aims as intra-faith unity, social reform, educational uplift of the community including schemes of *qarze hasna* [Urdu: non-refundable loans] for the poor students, protection and extension of Muslim auqaf, and taking up the Muslim rights with the government through delegations and memorials.[27]

The Anjuman interpreted government policies and articulated Muslim responses.[28] Simultaneously, it lured the Muslim aristocracy to educational and reform work, and offered ordinary membership to *maulvis* [Urdu: clerics] too. The Amritsar branch of the Anjuman, founded in 1882, took over the management of the Anglo-Vernacular school in the city, originally set up by the Lahore branch.[29] Intended primarily for the Muslim youth, the school was open to other religions as well. It was supported by the contributions of wealthy Muslims and the proceeds of the Sabzmandi [Urdu: fruit market) at Amritsar.[30] According to Shah Din, a leader of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, the Anjuman-i-Islamia was an elitist body run by its sole spokesman, Barkat Ali Khan, with its membership and influence confined to well-to-do classes.[31] Sayyid Ahmedan in approach, stirred momentarily Wahabi reaction by the Anjuman Hamdardee-i-Islam.

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26 As missionaries introduced compulsory Bible classes in their schools, while government schools did not offer religious instruction, Anjumans were constrained to introduce Islamic Studies, called *Dinyat*, which was not an examinable subject.

27 Mohammad Haneef Shahid, *Iqbal aur Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam* [Urdu: Iqbal and the Association for the Service of Islam] (Lahore: Kutab Khana Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, 2009): 23.

28 Punjab Administrative Report, 1901-1902, 183.

29 The school was raised to a High in 1885.

30 *Gazetteer of Amritsar District,* 1883-1884, 55.

31 M.S. Din, "Mohammedan Societies in the Punjab", *The Indian Magazine*, no. 205 (January 1888):186-92.

Fortunately for the reformists, the latter society failed to galvanise any significant support among the largely unorthodox Barelvi Muslims of the Punjab, and was eclipsed by the modernist Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam.

Founded in Lahore in 1884, the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam was a grand version of the Anjuman-i-Islamia with a familiar ring in their method. Its foundation was triggered by an incident that year which took place outside the Delhi Gate. A Christian missionary preacher apparently made some defamatory remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), to which Munshi Chiragh Din, a government official, objected strongly. Silenced and virtually thrown out of the gathering, Chiragh Din approached Munshi Muhammad Kazim (later the deputy post-master general). Together they mobilized a circle of friends including Shamsul Ulema Shamsuddin Shaiq and Haji Mir Shamsuddin. After about six months of deliberations, their efforts paid off when a grand assembly of 250 leading Muslims met at Lahore's Masjid Bakar Khan in Mochi Gate and decided to set up the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam. Qazi Hamid-ud-Din, Ghulamullah Qasuri and Abdur Rahim were appointed its president, general secretary and treasurer, respectively. Chiragh Din gave up his government job and devoted wholeheartedly to the Anjuman's work. The eminent Punjab Muslims to associate with the Himayat-i-Islam were Shahzada Mirza Abdul Ghani Gorkani, Shamsul Ulema Dr Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan Delhvi, Nawab Fateh Ali Khan Qazilbash, Nawab Sir Muhammad Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sir Muhammad Shafi, Barrister Hakim Muhammad Amiruddin, Sir Abdul Qadir, editor of *The Observer*, and his friends, Sheikh Abdul Aziz and Mian Abdul Aziz. At one of its meetings, the poet Iqbal read his poem, *nala-i-yateem* [Urdu: wailing of the orphan] which became an instant hit, with its copies sold at rupees four each. The event catapulted Iqbal into fame;[32] Iqbal attended its annual sessions regularly where he read his poetry and was twice appointed as its general secretary.

32 Shahid*, Iqbal aur Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam,* 25.

The society took on board various objectives like religious instruction, propaganda and education of Muslim boys and girls. It pursued relentlessly the improvement of moral, educational and social conditions of the Muslims.[33] The Anjuman complemented the Aligarh Movement of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, albeit without any formal link with it. In some respects it even went beyond Sir Sayyid's policy. For instance, it forged ahead despite Sir Sayyid's opposition to female education, to elementary education, and to the Anjuman's plans to open an Islamia College in the province. Otherwise a celebrated messiah of Muslim rights, the elitist Sayyid Ahmad Khan viewed modern education of women and the masses as waste of time and dissipation of limited Muslim resources and energies. Perhaps he was not ready for his MAO (Muhammadan Anglo Oriental) College (est. 1877) to share the limelight with another contender for Muslim renaissance. These differences, however, did not degenerate into a conflict and the Anjuman carried on its 'civilizing' mission in tandem with Sir Sayyid's crusade against Muslim backwardness.

The Anjuman took strong exceptions to the work of the Christian missionaries who were accused of exploiting natural calamities or hunger to promote conversion. The missionaries would indulge in polemical debates with the Aryas, Ahmadias and Muslim theologians.[34] They offered food and shelter to the distressed and destitute during famine, scarcity and hunger. In 1887, the Anjuman backed the Muslims of Ludhiana and an aggrieved mother of three orphan boys who had appealed the decision of lower court for the recovery of her sons from the custody of the missionaries who kept them for conversion. The Chief Court granted the mother custody, following which the Anjuman created a *yateem khana* [Urdu: orphanage] at Lahore for sheltering the poor and vulnerable Muslims. Taking a cue

33 A. Waheed, *The Evolution of Muslim Education* (Lahore: Feroz Printing Works, 1936), 93.

34 See, for instance, Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993).

from the Christian missions, the Anjuman appointed Sayyid Ahmad Ali Shah of Delhi for bazaar preaching and set up orphanages, primary and secondary schools in the province. It had already launched a monthly magazine (in 1885) to counter anti-Islamic propaganda and its copies were distributed *gratis* among the Anjuman's members and non-members. In 1886, it also established a madrassa called Talim-ul-Quran, which was renamed as Hamidia Madrassa (in 1897) to commemorate the death of Khalifa Hamiduddin. The madrassa taught *tafseer*, *hadis*, *fiqa* and *kalam* over a period of six years to no less than primary-pass teachers and trained them to become ulema. Its students appeared for various examinations of University of the Punjab qualifying for five categories of ulema with *Maulvi Fazil* being at the top, followed by *Maulvi Alim*, then third-grade, second-grade, and first-grade *Maulvi*.[35]

The Anjuman also introduced religious primers in its schools, encouraged female education, organised Tibbia [Persian: medical science] classes and followed the general course of instructions prescribed by the Education Department and University of the Punjab.[36] In 1885, the Anjuman's membership stood at 6,000. Churchill refers to some twenty-one different schools by Muslim societies during 1874-90, including the two High Schools of the Anjuman-i-Islamia, Amritsar, and Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore. Spatially, Muslim Anjumans covered most parts of the Punjab with branches and schools at Qasur, Amballa, Amritsar, Jullandar, Ludhiana, Jhang and Bannu. Most of these schools had specific orientation and programmes. They schemed to equip the youth for public jobs and leadership roles and injected the leaven of Islam to their curricula and the ambiance of schools.[37] An instant success,

35 "Annual Report of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam", vide, *The Risala Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam*, Lahore, 1904, 35.

36 G. M. D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj: Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1941), 138.

37 *Golden Jubilee Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam*, 46.

the Himayat-i-Islam's school at Sheranwalla Gate in Lahore was raised to Middle School in 1888, to High School in 1889, and to college in 1892.[38] Under headmaster Hafiz Ahmed Din, the Anjuman's High School at Lahore became a thriving institution with a teaching and administrative staff of 64 and 1324 scholars on roll in 1903. The Anjuman also played a significant role in the development of female education and its High School at Lahore had some 501 girls on rolls in 1902;[39] the Anjuman's sister organisation, the Anjuman Islamia also took part in the educational uplift of the community and had a flourishing High School at Amritsar. Adjudged by Sime, inspector of schools, as the first-rate Islamia School, it was availed by Hindu and Sikh students, too. For instance, it had 344 Muslim, 125 Hindu, 41 Sikh and 1 Christian scholar on its rolls in 1888.[40] Standards set by the government were generally followed and certificated teachers were appointed in the schools run by the Muslim Anjumans. How does one explain this vivaciousness of Muslim awakening that apparently removed some of the clouds over their progress?

For years, the educationally backward Punjab Muslims had watched the Nirankaris and Namdharis, Brahmos, Dev Samajists, and the Aryas champion the rights of Hindus and the Sikhs. The 1857 rebellion had taken a heavy toll on the Anglo-Muslim relations. Fuming with anger, the Anglo-Indians ridiculed the 'soft-hearted advocates of pardon' and demanded exemplary punishment for the Muslims, including their expulsion from public offices.[41] Although such counsels were neither heeded by Lord Canning, derisively nicknamed by the Anglo-Indians as 'mercy canning', nor by the 'Punjab School', no serious effort was made to bridge the widening

38 In 1906, it was moved to its new building on Branders Road which was inaugurated by Ameer Habibullah of Afghanistan, one of the Anjuman's patrons who honoured it by naming the college's Habibia Hall after him.

39 *Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ki Salana Report* [Urdu: The Annual Report of the Association for the Service of Islam], Lahore, 1903. i.

40 Churchill, "Muslim Societies of the Punjab".

41 *The Lahore Chronicle*, Lahore, July 8 and August 1, 1857.

psychological gulf. After years of soul-searching, tiny Muslim elite, the product of government and missionary institutions, undertook the regeneration of its members through educational advancement. Facing isolation and marginalisation, it aspired to linkages and organisational networks adjusted to the colonial milieu. Like Sir Sayyid, it shunned militarism and laid the educational path to Muslim progress. The government acknowledged this cooperation from the influential classes and offered its leadership public employment, fellowships in the university senate, membership of the PTBC, and of the Punjab legislature upon its inauguration in 1897. Official enquiries and commissions solicited their opinions as representative of Muslims and official durbars welcomed them as state guests.[42]

For about four decades, the Punjab Muslims depended on government and missionary institutions. These institutions were not modelled after the ideal, sacrosanct tradition of Muslim madrassas. In these, pupil-teacher intimacy was lacking and denigration of non-Christian beliefs a normal practice. Although Calcutta and Lahore shared common-place anxiety over 'godless' education provided by the government institutions, they refused to intervene. Also, government and missionary schools were unaffordable for most Muslims. Add to this, the intransigence of the Punjab government to follow 'the leaning toward generosity' that was recommended by the Hunter Report to lure Muslims into public schools and colleges. Sensitive to the tri-polar Punjab population and politics, the local government stood its ground against the proposed communal balancing.

The subject of Muslim education which prefigured the Hunter Report continued to be one of the most debated topics among the officials and the Muslim community leaders. As late as 1929, the Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission lamented the educational backwardness of 'this large community with its great historic culture and

42 This was a *quid pro quo* gesture of the government and it sprang from its desire to conciliate the Muslims who had been opposed or were slow to adapt to the Raj.

traditions'.[43] Beside Sir Sayyid and his Muhammadan Educational Conference, the National Muhammadan Association (1877) of Syed Ameer Ali and its Lahore branch, and the Anjuman-i-Islamia of Lahore and Amritsar had been exhorting the colonial regime to raise Muslims educationally and empower them through membership of representative bodies. The political importance of the community and its pre-British ascendance were cited as valid reasons for seeking special treatment. Hunter's testimony that Muslims were ruined as a race under the British rule, called for policy intervention to reconcile the Muslims.[44]

On August 7, 1871 the government of Lord Mayo invited the opinion of provincial governments on its proposals for encouraging education of the Muslims. The Punjab Government was asked to ascertain the expert advice of the University Senate on the subject too. The proposals suggested, *inter alia*, the promotion of secondary and higher education through the vernaculars; encouragement of Arabic and Persian literature; the appointment of qualified Muslim teachers in Muslim districts; and access to grants-in-aid. In January 1872, the University Senate approved these proposals. The figures provided by the Registrar showed that Muslims who formed 53 per cent of the provincial population had a share of 38 per cent in primary schools, 30 per cent in higher vernacular schools, 20 percent in middle (English) schools, and only 5 percent in the Government College at Lahore. Also the Medical School at Lahore, the Registrar added, there were only ten Muslims against thirty-five Hindus in the English class, and fifty-one Muslims against forty-two Hindus in the less popular vernacular department for indigenous medicine. Even in the sixteen predominantly Muslim districts,[45] the number of Muslim

43 *Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission: Review of Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee* (London: 1929), 4.

44 W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (London: Trubner & Co, 1882), 144.

45 They were Sialkot, Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat, Shahpur, Peshawar, Hazara, Multan, Jhang, Montgomery (now Sahiwal), Muzaffargarh, D.I. Khan, D.G. Khan, and Bannu.

students in Government Middle (Vernacular) Schools, understood to be popular with them, was 359 as opposed to 480 Hindus and 91 Sikhs.[46] The Registrar, however, tried to play down the Muslim disadvantage by alluding to their majority as statutory civilians (37 against 25 Hindus), and in the police department, the non-merit-based appointments by the government. He also pointed to their preponderance in indigenous schools with their number of scholars at 29,280 against 16,282 for others.[47] The employment figures he gave did not mention ministerial offices, judicial, educational, postal and railway departments. To de-emphasise special safeguards for Muslims, he mentioned thirty-seven Extra-Assistantships held by them compared to twenty-five by Hindus.

On February 6, 1882 the National Muhammedan Association drew a memorial to the Imperial Government expressing their concern about the neglect of Muslim representation in educational institutions and public offices. Ashley Eden, lieutenant-governor of Bengal, disagreed with the memorialists but passed the memorial to the Imperial Government for the consideration of the Hunter Commission.[48] The Hunter Report disappointed the Muslims as it recommended nothing specific to redress their grievance. In response, the Association demanded a separate commission to consider the question of Muslim education. Following the Hunter Report, the Punjab government reconsidered the matter and refused to introduce special measures. In its view, the Jubilee scholarships for Muslims as well as for others were a sufficient incentive.

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46 Punjab Public Instruction Report, 1881-1882, Statements, xxii-xxvii.

47 Selections from Records of the Government of India: Correspondence on the Subject of Education of the Muhammadan Community in British India and their Employment in the Public Services generally, Home Department, No. ccv, Ser. No. 2, Calcutta, 1886, 200-201.

48 C.S. Bayly, officiating under-secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the officiating secretary to the Government of India, India Education Proceedings , IEP, March 1882, Proc. 37A.

Disappointed by the Punjab Government which was committed to *laissez faire* political economy and outnumbered by Hindus in educational institutions,[49] the leaders of Muslim reform persuaded the community leaders that religious education alone would not suffice unless combined with the knowledge of Western sciences, European and Indian literature. MAO College at Aligarh, founded in 1875, had already set an example and emulative responses in the Punjab. Aligarh, according to J. N. Farquhar, was 'the first college by an Indian that followed the missionary idea that education must rest on religion'.[50]

Considering the enormity of the task, Muslim societies had very limited funds to undertake community uplift programmes. To store up funds, the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam charged four annas as monthly membership fee.[51] It also collected animal hides on the occasion of Eid and received private donations in cash and kind. Earthen skillets were kept at homes wherein ladies would put a handful of flour before kneading and twice daily toward the Anjuman fund. Such was the fervour for community service that the founders of the Anjuman would personally go around with flour-carrying bags and chanting, *ata pa chitori, sadqa-jaan-piari da* [Urdu: put flour into skillet as charity of precious life). Muslim writers, such as Maulana Ghulam Dastgir Qasuri, gave to the Anjuman (in September 1884) the manuscript of the book he had written in defence of Quran and in response to *Tahriful Quran* [Arabic: Tempering the Quran] a missionary polemic. K. B. Sayyid Muhammad Hussain, Prime-Minister of Patiala State, donated three hundred copies of his *Ijaza-ut-Tanzil* [Arabic: Miracle of Revelation] with an expected return of Rs. 975. Muslim shop-owners displayed money boxes for collections. Sheikh Mehar Ali of

49 Of the 102 students at the two government colleges at Lahore and Delhi in 1870-71, only six were Muslims.

50 J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1929), 91-94.

51 Razi Wasti, "Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore: A Brief History", *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, iii, 1&2 (January-April 1966): 63-73.

Hoshiarpur gave Rs.1100 in 1886, whereas Sheikh Miran Baksh, private secretary to the Maharajah of Kashmir, gave Rs. 700.[52] Shah Jahan Begum of Bhopal donated Rs. 2,000; Nawab of Rampur promised an annual grant of Rs. 300; the Amir of Bahawalpur gave a yearly grant of Rs. 600 (enhanced to Rs. 2,000 in 1908); and Prince Nasrullah of Afghanistan expressed his solidarity with the Anjuman by donating Rs. 5,000.[53] The Anjuman started publishing and selling text-books too. It deputed agents to collect donations from within the Punjab as well as from the Muslim rulers of the princely states. It organized events for fund-raising at various places. In 1887, a leading Muslim from Ferozepur donated a house to the Anjuman fund. Others promised land or construction of one or two rooms for the Anjuman's schools.

The Anjuman paid nominal salaries to its teachers. Sheikh Abdul Qadir, editor of *The Observer*, and two of his friends, Sheikh Abdul Aziz and Mian Abdul Aziz, lectured *gratis* at its college. Although Jubilee scholarships were admissible to Islamia schools and colleges, as unaided institutions they did not seek government grants and thus escaped mandatory compliance with plethoric rules under the Punjab Education Code. They cherished their autonomy: freedom to design curriculum and selection of textbooks. From their point, the propagation of Islam was as important as education itself. Defending Islam from the encroachment of Christian missions was central to Muslim Anjumans both within and outside schools.[54] The Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam published a *dinyat* [Arabic: religious] series to instruct the pupils in religious tenets and observances of Islam, which became the basis of religious teaching in Islamia schools; it also published religious primers to inculcate the fundamental principles of Islam. The Anjuman gave importance to Urdu and published Urdu, Persian and Arabic booklets. Girls' schools were also maintained, while adhering to strict

52 Wasti, "Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam".

53 *Golden Jubilee Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam* (Lahore, 1938), 18.

54 Din, "Mohammedan Societies".

purdah [Urdu: veil] demands of the *shareef* [Urdu: genteel] as those from upper class families rarely attended secular government schools. However, driven by patriarchy and notions of superiority, such families would neither seek paid work from daughters nor look for their education that might create 'spoiled brides'.[55] Despite concern for Islamic identity and particularism in education, schools by the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam discouraged narrow spirit of bigotry and reactionary feelings.[56] Craving for Islamic solidarity, they avoided sectarian disputations by hiring separate *maulvis* for the religious instruction of Sunni and Shia students, and also admitted non-Muslims to their schools.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, Muslim Anjumans played a crucial role in meeting the challenges posed by the competitive milieu of the Raj in which the community was placed in a position of disadvantage. Their work, emblematic of liberal Islamism, was helped by the heightened sense of insecurity that engulfed the community. As pioneers of proto Muslim Nationalism,[57] they used modern education as vehicle of self-expression, social transformation and political empowerment of the community. They set up Islamia schools and colleges which in turn mitigated diminutive effect of British *laissez faire* education policy and produced community leaders fit to shoulder future responsibilities and challenges. To serve the Muslim cause, they vied to building a nexus between the government and its Muslim subjects. With excesses of *sikha shahi* embedded in their memory, they appropriated European ideas of infinite progress and popularised the same in the community. Like their Hindu and

55 Clarinda Still, "Spoiled Brides and the Fear of Education: Honour and Social Mobility among Dalits in South India", *Modern Asian Studies*, 45, no. 5 (September 2011): 1119-46.

56 G. S. Chhabra, *The Advance History of the Punjab Ranjit Singh and Post Ranjit Singh Period,* Vol II (Ludhiana: Parkash Brothers, 1962): 393.

57 To name a few, Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of Pakistan, Nawab Fateh Ali Khan Qazilbash, and Barkat Ali Khan were its prominent members and sponsors.

Sikh counterparts, they cared the least how concerns for identity and communal approach to resolving problems would undermine nascent nationalism. However, unlike the Arya Samajists, they worked from the framework of loyalty exhibiting, at times, passive rancour against the rulers. Despite the fact that the nostalgia of a bygone glory still echoed in their discourse and dealing with the government and adversaries, they were cautious not to alienate the official goodwill.

By the close of the nineteenth century, Islamia schools and colleges, along with their counterparts by the Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha, covered large ground on the educational landscape. As popular variants of government and missionary institutions, they were met with a huge success provoking jealousy of the latter. Their success was demonstrative of Muslim elite's resilience and awakening in the face of adversity. How they (Muslims) responded to and compensated for the alien ruler's growing disenchantment with and drawdown from the provision of colonial education has left to posterity a powerful tradition of self-service and perseverance against odds. All said, a powerful lacuna still stigmatised their work, as they prioritized elite education over education of the masses. The sad fact remained therefore that neither the rulers nor the elites, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, ever wished to weaken social hierarchy and cause social realignment through defence of widespread education. Preservation of the caste and class was an unwritten law governing the provision of literacy in the region, whatever its source.