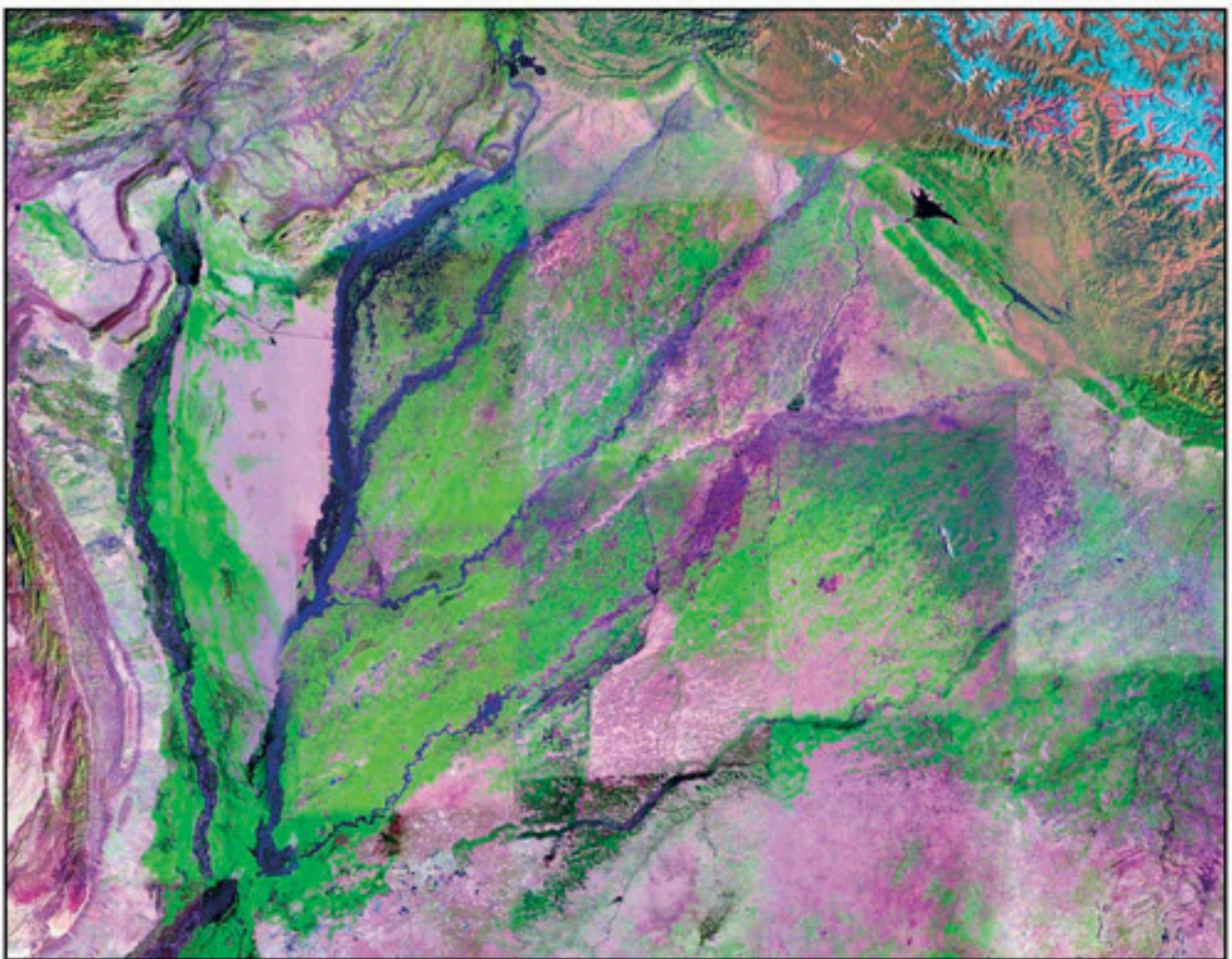


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## JOURNAL OF PUNJAB STUDIES

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## **Narratives of Reform and Displacement in Colonial Lahore: The *Intikaal* of Muhammad Hussain Azad**

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This article examines the story of a city (Lahore) and an intellectual (Muhammad Hussain Azad) that both developed new identities following the political and social turmoil of the Great Revolt of 1857. After 1857, Lahore became an intellectual and cultural center for northwest India, where Indian intellectuals from Delhi and surrounding areas could recreate and transform their lives. One of the most significant Indian intellectuals who migrated to Lahore was Muhammad Hussain Azad. Once in Lahore, Azad worked with British officials and publicly advocated the development of Urdu as a modern literary language - a language of a new cultural framework associated with colonial rule. Yet privately, Azad was a conflicted individual who realized his efforts facilitated the loss of an older Muslim educational and literary heritage associated with his family in Delhi. This conflict resulted in his intellectual and cultural displacement, illustrating the impact of British rule on the city as well as individuals central to Lahore's emerging literary and educational life at the time.

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After the Great Revolt of 1857, and the subsequent physical and emotive destruction of Delhi as a political and cultural capital for north India, Lahore developed into a new intellectual and cultural center for northwest India. Lahore provided opportunities for a variety of individuals, both British and Indian. Perhaps most importantly, it was location for Indian intellectuals to recreate and transform their lives after the loss of Delhi as a viable intellectual center.

One of the most significant Indian intellectuals who migrated to Lahore after 1857 was Muhammad Hussain Azad. Although there have been studies of Azad's poetical achievements and monumental work *Ab-e Hayat*, there has been little focus on his early career in Lahore. Yet, his writings and work in Lahore help to elucidate the impact of British rule on the city as well as individuals central to the intellectual life of Lahore. Therefore, instead of viewing his work in Lahore as the work of a loyal subject eager to please his British patrons, this paper will use his writings and ideas from early career to examine a more complex and forlorn Azad.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is vital to evaluate Azad's early career in Lahore in order to examine him as an active intellectual who wrestled with the meanings and implications of his work (supported by the British), he was not simply as a servant of the British. By doing this, we will have a clearer view of his concerns and the changing fabric of Azad's life and Lahore in the 1860s and 1870s.

Azad came from an important literary family from Delhi that was part of a Perso-Islamic cultural milieu that existed throughout north India.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he held connections to the people, cultures, and systems of power when he moved

to Lahore. Yet, if we evaluate Azad through a more complex multifocal lens that also examines his work in Lahore, we can view him as a 'member' of the larger Perso-Islamic cultural milieu of his Delhi childhood as well as 'outsider' to his community in his new city of Lahore. Indeed, as an outsider, Azad never quite fit within the larger social and cultural world around him.

This status as an outsider was not only due to the fact that he was an Urdu speaker living in the capitol of Punjab, where many people mainly spoke Punjabi.<sup>3</sup> This paper analyzes his status as a part of a physical, intellectual and personal displacement. I use the term 'displacement' somewhat cautiously. The term often is associated with migrants and immigrants, especially with the growth of Diaspora studies in Europe and the US. When linked to Diaspora studies, writings often discuss the displacement of individuals from Asia who migrate to Europe or North America and undergo cultural, religious, social, and personal transformations.<sup>4</sup> Although such analysis has proven valuable academically, these studies can contain problematic constructs such as the construction of an East-West divide. I do not wish to build such a divide between Delhi and Lahore. What I seek to do, however, is to apply the notion of displacement historically, to evaluate how historical experiences and events can result in similar forms of displacement. To state it another way, we will not simply concentrate on physical distance as a form of displacement; we also will examine intellectual and emotional displacement as a result of cultural transformation associated with the development of Lahore as a colonial city in the later nineteenth century.

To develop this point, it is important to first examine the historical background of Azad and Lahore.

#### *Azad, Lahore, and Educational Reform*

Muhammad Hussain Azad was born into an important literary family in Delhi around 1830.<sup>5</sup> His father, Moulvi Muhammad Baqir, was educated at Oriental College, Delhi, and worked for the British colonial government before running the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* press. The press published 'Oriental' books and translations of English books for Delhi College and other colonial schools.<sup>6</sup> Baqir also founded the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, the first Urdu newspaper published from Delhi, in the 1840s after he separated the press from direct affiliation with Delhi College. He served as the editor of the newspaper in the later 1840s.<sup>7</sup>

Azad was well-trained in the Persian and Urdu cultural milieu of mid-nineteenth century Delhi. He attended Delhi College after receiving some education in religious matters at home. At Delhi College, he was exposed to the educational reforms, including the development of Urdu, as he was a student in the "Oriental" section. He devoted himself to his studies, and he won awards for his essays in Urdu. After his studies, Azad assisted his father with the printing press, eventually serving as printer and publisher.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately for Azad, 1857 interrupted his life and changed it forever. His father aligned with the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, against British rule, publishing articles that were critical of the British in the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*.<sup>9</sup>

Azad personally wrote a poem that attacked British arrogance in May of 1857, reveling in their losses.<sup>10</sup> In the poem, Azad viewed the Revolt as a religious conflict, and referred to the British simply as Christians. Once the British retook Delhi, they were quick and ruthless in their quest to reassert control. Blame rested upon the Muslim elite, especially those who had supported the last Mughal emperor.<sup>11</sup> The entire social fabric of the city was completely changed. While the circumstances about how Azad left Delhi are not fully clear, and he rarely discussed this episode, he did briefly mention the horror of the situation in *Ab-e Hayat* (1880). He stated how, “the soldiers of the victorious army suddenly entered the house. They flourished their rifles: ‘Leave here at once!’ The world turned black before my eyes.”<sup>12</sup> As the British executed his father, Azad and his family were forced to flee from the city.

Azad eventually made his way to Lahore, a city full of promise and opportunities, in the early 1860s. This was a Lahore that was on the cusp of radical change as the British only recently asserted direct political control over the region. In addition, Azad was part of the movement of intellectuals that left Delhi and found sanctuary in Lahore, helping to advance Lahore as a new center for learning and culture. Although Azad’s family was from Delhi, the literary and intellectual background of his family helped him greatly in his new city. Azad’s background and abilities were unique, and British officials quickly realized that they needed Azad’s talents and knowledge. In 1861, Azad found employment in the Post Office, and he soon entered into correspondence with the Director of Public Instruction, Captain A.R. Fuller.<sup>13</sup> Fuller, recognized Azad’s abilities, and Azad eventually found employment in the colonial educational system of Punjab in 1864.

At that time, Azad quickly entered the emerging debates about educational and social reform; Lahore became a center for advocacy and development of “vernacular” (Indian-language) education.<sup>14</sup> As an employee of the colonial state, he soon worked with many officials including the colorful G.W. Leitner – the first principal of Government College, Lahore as well as the founder and President of the Anjuman-e Punjab. The Anjuman was an association that included British officials (including the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab from 1865-1870, Sir Donald Mcleod<sup>15</sup>) as well by many important members of the Punjabi elite drawn from the three major religious communities of the Punjab -- Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh. With this diverse membership, the Anjuman became a center for debates about educational and social reform at the time.

Leitner and many British officials, including Captain Fuller, sought to develop a new colonial educational system that drew from both European and Indian educational systems. The goal was to establish colonial schools and universities modeled after Europe; yet Leitner sought to utilize the official ‘vernacular’ (ie Indian) language of the Punjab – Urdu – to communicate to students.<sup>16</sup> Education reform was central to Leitner’s movement to “revive” the language, literature, and culture of elite society. His goals became intertwined with the Anjuman’s basic objectives: the “revival of ancient Oriental learning,” and the “diffusion of useful knowledge...through the medium of the vernacular.”<sup>17</sup> “Useful knowledge” in the context of colonial education was

another term for European knowledge associated with secondary and higher education in England. European knowledge came to represent ideas of “modernity,” progress, and the promotion of “western” values. This knowledge was privileged above indigenous knowledge, as European science and technology was associated with the “advances” of European powers, helping to justify and facilitate imperial expansion in Asia and Africa.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, educational reformers (and increasingly the Indian literati) argued that European knowledge was necessary for the development of education.

In order to conduct this large-scale reform, Leitner needed Indian intellectuals to help him reach his objectives of reviving learning. Leitner quickly developed a close relationship with Azad, and he became central to Leitner’s efforts.

#### *Azad’s Displacement*

Although Azad quickly found employment in his new city, he was an outsider to Lahore; the Lahore that Azad arrived in the early 1860s was not at all like Delhi. Azad was part of a Persian and emerging Urdu cultural milieu in Delhi prior to 1850, supported by both Mughal and British patronage. Although such developments did have some influence beyond Delhi, colonial reforms and debates had not fully permeated Lahori society by the early 1860s as the British only took direct control of the city in 1849. Indeed, this is why Azad found employment quickly, as the British valued his knowledge and experience. Yet for Azad, Lahore was a city of landed local elites and privilege - with the remaining vestiges of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s state.<sup>19</sup> He was not a member an elite Lahori family, and he also was a minority Shi’a Muslim who lived in a Shi’a area of the city. In addition, it was a Lahore where Punjabi played an important role in cultural life, for all religious communities.<sup>20</sup> Although Azad certainly was welcome into this society, as an Urdu speaker, he never quite fit within it. His public persona, and his public addresses all were in Urdu, and he often spoke about a larger heritage that centered in Delhi -- not Lahore, as we shall examine shortly. Moreover, his colleagues and acquaintances were either British or Punjabi as well.

This status as an outsider was not only due to the fact that he was an Urdu speaker living in the capitol of Punjab, it was part of his physical, intellectual and personal displacement. Azad faced physical displacement similar to people we would now name refugees. Although his situation cannot be fully compared to one of the world’s longest refugee crisis -- the Palestinians, their documented experiences can help us to evaluate Azad’s life. After 1948, the large numbers of Palestinian refugees that were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated in Gaza have sought to regain some of their lost lives. Although these refugees live relatively close to the area where they once lived prior to 1948, they could never return to their homes in what became Israel, or reclaim them.<sup>21</sup> Instead, it is their memory of these lost places that has served to reinforce displacement, loss, and anger.

Although Azad was still in north India, his forced migration out of Delhi (the physical displacement) after political upheaval and the murder of his father, coupled with the inability to return to a Delhi that existed prior to 1857, reinforced displacement and loss. Although he could visit Delhi, there were little opportunities for him and the city was radically altered. This dislocation provided Azad with a desire to actively participate in educational and social reform in Lahore, although he did long for Delhi in his writing.

Azad's dislocation is best illustrated by a paper he wrote in 1864, aptly named, "Delhi." In the paper, Azad clearly shows his love and longing for a city that had been forever altered by the events of 1857. He purposely began the paper with a specific reference to his physical dislocation when he refers to the "dreadful destruction of the life of Delhi" in 1857 and states with poetical allusion how "building upon building fell and from grave to grave everywhere there was desolation."<sup>22</sup> He even marks the physical space that was destroyed when he states that a 3 mile wide area from Shahjahanabad south to the Qutb Minar was "all ruins." Additionally this loss was not only Mughal Delhi, especially Shahjahanabad, but the remains of older empires were, "in ruins, and you cannot tell where they existed."<sup>23</sup> In fact, much of his concern was the loss of history, especially the historical buildings and remains that came to define the city at that time. He also showed concern about the destruction of the physical space of Muslim and pre-Muslim rulers.

However, the majority of his paper did not poetically mourn the loss of Delhi, it served to help memorialize his love of the city and its history. He sought to replace the physical evidence with a written description of the city. To support his paper with additional evidence, he used the travel writings of people who visited Delhi centuries earlier to help recreate and perhaps re-imagine the city. For example, he refers to the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta who arrived in Delhi in the 1300s in order serve as a magistrate. In addition, he used the writings of the English traveler William Finch, who visited Delhi in 1611. The paper served as a memorial to heritage of Delhi, and the role it has played for succeeding empires.<sup>24</sup>

This longing for a Delhi that he saw as a "paradise" was always part of his memory of a place that no longer existed. Indeed, much later in his life, he briefly discussed his forced migration from Delhi in *Ab-e Hayat*. He indicated that, as he left Delhi in 1857, "the words fell from my lips, 'Hazrat Adam left Paradise; Delhi is a paradise too. I'm his descendant--why shouldn't I leave Delhi?'"<sup>25</sup> Whether he commemorated Delhi and its history in 1864, or he discussed this Delhi of his childhood as "paradise" in 1880, this was a Delhi that clearly was at the forefront of his tragic personal memory.

In addition to his longing for Delhi, Azad's displacement was also intellectual and very personal. Azad was a complex individual who cannot be classified easily. Partly because he fled Delhi and relied on patronage in Lahore from Leitner and the Punjab Education Department, Azad was not closely affiliated with important contemporary movements of Muslim intellectuals, such as the Aligarh Society of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (located outside of Delhi).<sup>26</sup> Still, Azad maintained contacts with Sir Syed contemporaries. For



example, while Azad was in Calcutta in 1866, he became interested in Nawab Abdul Latif's Muhammadan Literary Society.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Azad worked with fellow Delhi intellectual Altaf Hussain Hali in the early 1870s in Lahore, before Hali returned to Delhi and became an important associate of Sir Syed.<sup>28</sup> Sir Syed valued and defended Azad's efforts to reform Urdu poetry in the 1870s, when Azad's poems were harshly criticized.<sup>29</sup> Although Azad was not directly part of additional north Indian movements, he held connections with several leading Muslim intellectuals and he identified with their concerns.

Instead, Azad became closely associated with the Orientalist scholar G.W. Leitner shortly after Leitner arrived in Lahore. Azad began to work with Leitner on the Anjuman's Education Committee in 1865.<sup>30</sup> At this time, a partnership was fostered early in their careers in Lahore, as Leitner recognized Azad's potential. Their close relationship helped Azad to prosper under the Anjuman and reclaim his status following 1857, as he was appointed secretary to the organization in 1867. Azad also became a prominent paid lecturer for the Anjuman at that time, an appointment that Leitner was eager to fill since 1865.<sup>31</sup> Azad used the lecture series as well as lectures to meetings of the Anjuman to discuss many aspects of reform for the Anjuman. His lectures were published in the *Akhbar-e Anjuman-e Punjab* as well as the *Risala-e Anjuman-e Punjab* (Magazine of the Anjuman-e Punjab).

It was through this role that we can see Azad's intellectual and personal displacement began to take shape. Soon after he joined Leitner and the Anjuman, Azad gave speeches that articulated the key aspects of the Anjuman's program for reform. His early speeches illustrated how his views of the British had radically shifted (at least publicly), from his critiques of British rule and his support of the last Mughal ruler in 1857 to accepting and supporting the social reforms sponsored by the British in north India. For example, in October 1865, he wrote an essay delivered to a meeting of the Anjuman in praise of British rule.<sup>32</sup> In the essay, he believed that British rule brought with it notions of progress and opportunities for Indians to prosper. Thus, he stated that the objective of government was to help its "loving subjects" obtain "civilization" and "good character."<sup>33</sup> He also justified government institutions and reforms, including prisons and the land revenue reforms. He concluded that, "it is a matter of pride that our rulers...are thinking of our progress."<sup>34</sup>

This radical shift from criticism (in 1857) to optimistic praise of British rule (in 1865) is important for understanding Azad. Although it is difficult to ascertain the reasons for his overt British support, Lahore was a sanctuary for him after 1857 – Lahore provided safety and patronage. Indeed, the Anjuman provided an important source of patronage for Azad, where he served as a speaker for the organization. In other words, his support of the British was very practical; he was an employee of the government and received government patronage. In addition, as we shall see, Azad had a genuine interest in the promotion of language and education reform and the development of his fellow Indians. Certainly, such a positive view about British rule facilitated his association in Leitner's project to develop Urdu as an educational vernacular.

As Azad developed his partnership with Leitner, Azad also began to serve as an agent for British geo-political concerns. When Azad accompanied Leitner on a political mission to Central Asia in 1865, Azad assisted Leitner in promoting British interests in the region. This was the time where the region became central to the "Great Game," as Britain sought to extend its sphere of influence against any Russian expansion.<sup>35</sup> Although Leitner also was researching the languages and people of the Himalayan areas (later published as part of Leitner's work on Hunza and Gilgit<sup>36</sup>), the political objectives of the mission were clear, further illustrating Azad's fundamental shift from criticism of British rule in 1857 to support of British rule by the 1860s.

Leitner valued Azad's talents and abilities during his travels up north, and he continued to rely upon Azad in Lahore throughout the 1860s. Azad became a spokesperson for Leitner in Lahore, advocating the use and reform of Urdu in the region to the Punjabi elite. For example, Azad began to promote the use of Urdu as a scholarly language in a series of lectures in Lahore in 1865, published under the title "Zaban Urdu."<sup>37</sup> In the lectures, he argued that languages had two basic purposes.<sup>38</sup> First, a language had to provide a clear articulation of knowledge, especially facts and ideas. Information had to be clearly expressed in texts, whether they originally were written in Urdu or translated into Urdu. Secondly, a language's grammar should allow writers to express ideas in novel ways. While Urdu had these capabilities, Azad stated that they had not been fully realized because the British only recently sought to develop it as a "national language." In addition, Urdu newspapers only began to form in the 1830s (a reference to his father), and scholarly books began to be translated into Urdu in the 1840s. Otherwise, he viewed Urdu mainly as a poetic language, while Urdu stories often contained many grammatical errors.

Advocating the use of Urdu was hardly radical for Azad, although it may have alienated him from some of the Punjabi elite and further contributed to his role as an 'outsider.' What was more radical was his call for reform. In this lecture, he supported Leitner by arguing that authors could not simply utilize the historical connections between Urdu, Arabic and Persian. Although Persian and Arabic terminology and grammar were a central part of Urdu, Azad associated European knowledge with English language terms, techniques, and ideas.<sup>39</sup> He argued English words and phrases could express contemporary concepts and terminology, especially technological innovations associated with colonial rule such as the railways. Thus, he believed English provided an important model to reform Urdu. He also sought to use English to reform the grammar of Urdu -- especially the Persian poetical heritage and similes that influenced Urdu -- in order for Urdu to "blossom."<sup>40</sup> He even advocated using "translations of idioms and similes" from English.<sup>41</sup> For example, he explained how English authors utilized notions of time, anger, and love, and beauty. Thus, he hoped that this would help to revive the age of great Persian-Urdu poets, such as Mir and Saada, and bring the "spirit of Shakespeare" to India.<sup>42</sup> Lastly, he emphasized that English was "methodological," an ideal characteristic of an educational language.

The belief that English was an appropriate model for the development of Urdu was influenced by his work with Leitner and the Anjuman-e Punjab. However, Azad's arguments were developed alongside Leitner, and they predated Leitner's more formulated ideas expressed in *Sinin-e Islam* (discussed below). For example, Azad analyzed the ideas of logic and knowledge, and the use of reason to develop an opinion on a particular topic in an essay given as a lecture to the Anjuman in 1867.<sup>43</sup> This essay, "*Ilm-e Mantaq par Not*" (A Note on Logic), was a significant step in the development of Azad's beliefs about the purpose of language reform, illustrating his role in the developing theories to reform Urdu and establishing him as an important intellectual in the Anjuman.

Azad used "*Ilm-e Mantaq par Not*" to demonstrate the importance of supporting and debating ideas. In the essay, he wrote that people had a right to express their opinion during discussions. However, he believed that it was incorrect to forcibly argue one position, as people often became angry, exchanged words, or quarreled.<sup>44</sup> In these cases, people did not consider alternative opinions, and they were not familiar with the opposing arguments. To provide a proper debate of ideas, Azad wrote that the use of logic allowed a writer to justify and explain his arguments as well as to understand counter arguments. Intelligence and knowledge were vital to providing a logical argument. This essay also could be viewed as a subtle critique of Punjabi, a language the British considered 'vulgar.'<sup>45</sup>

As Azad helped to formulate a philosophy on how to reform Urdu, he began to develop a history of the language in the form of lectures for the Anjuman. These lectures detailed his understandings about Urdu that predated the publication of his monumental work, *Ab-e Hayat*, in 1880. They began in 1867 and became popular amongst Anjuman members. One important lecture in April 1867, entitled "Zaban-e Urdu," discussed the early history of Urdu.<sup>46</sup> He used the lecture to argue that Urdu was the "language of Hindustan," shared by Muslims and Hindus. In order to support this claim, he provided a brief historical timeline, stating that Urdu originated in the eleventh century when Muslims and Hindus began to live together in India. He termed the language *rekhta* (mixed language), and argued that it became more prominent during the rule of the Mughal emperor Akbar, when Hindus began to enter government service in large numbers.<sup>47</sup> This understanding was significant, as Urdu was the language of administration and education in the Punjab under British rule. Thus, he used his lecture to promote Urdu as an inclusive language, important to Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, whereas he described Persian and Arabic historically as the "language of the rulers." Although Azad accepted that Persian language and culture were part of Mughal rule, he sought to justify the use of Urdu to a diverse audience of Anjuman members who were considering proposals for an Oriental university at that time.

These lectures on the history of Urdu were one of the early attempts to offer a linear history of the language, influenced by European notions about the historical growth and change of languages and cultures as well as European literary analysis. Indeed, well before the publication of *Ab-e Hayat* in 1880, a work that provides a historical background and analysis of Urdu poetry,<sup>48</sup> these

early lectures about Urdu begin to provide similar historical and literary analysis. In addition, they demonstrate Azad's wider conceptions of an Urdu literature that could be used for educational purposes and his thoughts about the British. This is partially because Azad accepted Urdu as a language of reform and the successor to Persian. He believed that British rule provided the opportunity to develop Urdu and move beyond the influence of Persian, transforming Urdu from a poetic language to a language for scientific inquiry, debate and education. Urdu poetry also was to replace the highly poetic and abstruse terms associated with Persian verse. As a result, he wrote in a well-organized and logical Urdu, with a prose style that is still admired today. His ideas may appear to be straightforward, but they were written in a prose that suited the tastes of a wider audience as Azad sought to easily explain ideas that were somewhat revolutionary.<sup>49</sup>

Azad was soon at the center of the development of Urdu, and the reform of Urdu poetry was one of his significant contributions to educational and language reform. In May 1874, a *musha'ira* (poetry recitation series) was organized in Lahore by the Anjuman in conjunction with the Department of Public Instruction, Punjab. Azad was one of the key speakers for the first event, and his speech was published in Urdu newspapers and other journals soon afterwards, providing wider distribution of his ideas.<sup>50</sup> It was one of Azad's most significant statements on the reform of Urdu poetry. He began with a brief history of Urdu poetry and detailed the influence of other languages on it. He stated that Persian provided Urdu with "colorful thoughts" and influenced Urdu grammar; Urdu developed "beautiful" similes, metaphors, and ideas due to its Persian heritage. Yet, he also thought that Urdu writers should utilize other sources, reflecting the circumstances of colonial rule; "if we open our eyes and see wisdom,...the languages of European books are full of powerful thoughts."<sup>51</sup> His goal, and the objective of the meeting, was to advocate the 'advancement' of Urdu poetry by examining and learning from European poetry (especially English poetry). He believed Urdu poetry should communicate ideas and emotions, and not only rely on the embellishments of its Persian heritage. At the time, Azad's ideas offered a somewhat radical departure from a traditional *musha'ira* series, but his work proved influential for later generations.<sup>52</sup>

Azad's early writings in Lahore had a lasting influence upon his career. They illustrate his eagerness to support a wide range of reforms to elite society, including his efforts to promote Urdu language instruction. The Anjuman provided Azad with important opportunities to participate in reforms associated with the new cultural world brought by colonial rule. However, these efforts contributed to his intellectual and personal dislocation as they were a fundamental challenge to his way of life and dependency on a pre-colonial order. Indeed, this was a period of extensive challenges, as his cultural and educational background in Delhi was radically questioned and adapted with the formation of societies such as the Anjuman, Urdu language colonial schools, and the rejection of the pre-1857 cultural heritage of Delhi.

Although Azad supported and worked with Leitner, another significant part of Azad's personal dislocation was the eventual strained relationship between these two intellectuals. Azad relied upon Leitner for employment, patronage, and legitimacy. They worked closely together in the Anjuman and as educational officials. Azad also was appointed a professor of Arabic at Government College, Lahore in 1869, a position he gained through the support of G.W. Leitner. The close relationship between Azad and Leitner in the later 1860s was illustrated in a speech about education where Azad praised his patron. Azad's tribute was overly complimentary of Leitner's "enthusiastic" efforts and "wise suggestions."<sup>53</sup> Comparing London in the 1860s to ancient Greece, Azad also drew parallels between Leitner and Aristotle. Thus, Azad asked the Anjuman members to put their faith and trust in Leitner, and support educational and social reform. This was a friendship that Azad valued and needed personally.

However, Azad's long-term experiences with Leitner as a patron consolidated his intellectual and personal dislocation. Although they collaborated on several projects, one project caused their partnership irreparable harm – the publication of the history text *Sinin-e Islam*, in 1870.<sup>54</sup> *Sinin-e Islam* was written in Urdu, specifically for the "use of Maulvis," because Leitner argued that although, "some of the Maulvis were profound in matters of verbal and grammatical details, ...all were, more or less, ignorant of some of the most prominent facts of Arabic history and literature."<sup>55</sup> *Sinin-e Islam* taught these moulvis European Orientalist scholarship with an Arab-centric view on Islam. Thus, Leitner hoped that his work would teach moulvis, "the sequence of their history," and teach that this history, "is connected with the history of other cultures."<sup>56</sup>

Leitner sought to use the text as an example of educational reform. He believed that utilizing Urdu for educational texts such as *Sinin-e Islam* meant more than adopting terms and ideas from the European scientific and humanities disciplines. Leitner argued that there was a need to 'adapt' European knowledge in order to develop 'oriental' learning. Thus, he developed a new notion of translation in *Sinin-e Islam*, where he argued that, "books on scientific and literary subjects, written in any of the European languages, should not be translated, but "adapted" into Urdu," as European writers were "abstract and impersonal," while "Oriental" writers were "personal, particular, concrete, and dramatic."<sup>57</sup> For Leitner, the "difficulties" of translating into "Oriental languages" required that European books should be "*re-written*" for "oriental" languages, to better adapt them to an 'Oriental' audience. Instead of relying on a dictionary and a "docile Munshi," he believed that translators needed to examine and compare "thoughts" and "associations" between languages, and if necessary, they needed to narrate these associations in translations. It is clear that Leitner sought to control the interpretation and application of this knowledge by explicitly detailing the meanings of this knowledge. Yet, he also sought to make translations relevant to the student reader rather than forcing students to memorize materials they did not completely comprehend.

Similar to many British Orientalist scholars, Leitner did not adequately credit his intellectual partner (and Urdu writer), Muhammad Hussain Azad. Yet, the texts illustrated the close relationship between Leitner and Azad. Leitner relied on Azad to draft the text in Urdu. Although Leitner only expressed his gratitude for Azad's "assistance" in the introduction, the literary style of the book suggests that Azad played a significant part in crafting its prose.<sup>58</sup> It is probable that Azad served as a translator and stylist in order to adapt (to use Leitner's term) a manuscript that Leitner had originally written in English. This would help to explain why Azad later defended the format of the text from criticisms of the books "faulty style" by arguing that it provided a basic history of Islam.<sup>59</sup>

It was this criticism that ultimately ended their partnership, causing Azad further personal and intellectual dislocation. After receiving several harsh critiques, Leitner was willing to acknowledge the role of Azad in crafting the text. Indeed, Leitner sought to blame Azad for the problems. Although Azad sought to salvage their relationship that had benefited both men, writing a defense of *Sinin-e Islam* in a statement to Leitner, Leitner essentially distanced himself from Azad.<sup>60</sup> Leitner continued to view Azad suspiciously. For example, Leitner's reflected on Azad's efforts to reform Urdu and hold *musha'iras* in the 1870s rather negatively, stating that problems of the *musha'iras* were that the, "irritable genus of poets did not want to be told by any one that they had hitherto debased their genius by celebrating love and they declined dictation in poetic inspiration."<sup>61</sup> Azad certainly was distraught by their disputes, and it affected him in his later years.

### *Conclusion*

By 1890, Azad was certified to be mentally ill, a process that is documented at least from 1885 if not earlier.<sup>62</sup> He was known to wander the streets of Lahore alone by that time. The causes of this mental illness were undoubtedly complex and many. Personally, this was an individual who suffered many tragedies. After his father was murdered in 1857, most of his children died in his lifetime. This includes his beloved daughter Amat us-Sakinah, who died in 1885, and who he said, "was more precious than seven sons, when I was writing she was my right hand; her death has shattered my heart."<sup>63</sup> Such tragedy would cause anguish to any parent.

In addition to his anguish over losing many family members tragically during his lifetime, there is little doubt that his physical, intellectual, and personal displacement caused him irreparable mental health problems. Indeed, by reviewing his earlier works in Lahore, we learn more about Azad and can begin to piece together the causes of his madness. The events of 1857 and the loss of his cultural world in Delhi were never fully reconciled in or replaced by Lahore. His work "Delhi" clearly illustrates a man who held a tragic love for the city and its history, a Delhi he also referred to as a "paradise." Yet, we also see an individual who relied on the patronage and goodwill of the people (the British) who murdered his father. Perhaps this is why his public comments

radically shifted from critiquing the British in 1857 to praising them in 1865. Azad clearly was a man who illustrated seemingly contradictory ideas in his lifetime, and he never openly discussed these contradictions.

Azad's contradictions and dislocation were not only about loyalty, they also were a central part of his work in Lahore for Leitner and the British. One can locate a love for his Persian-Urdu heritage in his writing. This is the subject of many of his writings and his most celebrated (even if biased) work, *Ab-e Hayat*. Moreover, he illustrated this devotion to his Persian-Urdu heritage by stating that when he fled the British in 1857, he chose to bring with him copies of the ghazals of the Urdu poet Zauq; "If God is gracious, and you live, then everything can be restored; but where will this very Ustad come from, who can compose these ghazals again?"<sup>64</sup> Yet, as he stated in his writings about Urdu beginning in 1865 and onwards, he continued to advocate for the reform of Urdu literature, prose and poetry.

The reasons for seeking to reform Urdu and what that meant may be less clear. Indeed, on one level, it can be difficult to understand why Azad rejected and ardently sought to reform the Persian heritage of Delhi in his writings, as he was a product of this heritage. He may have sought to be a faithful servant for British interests, and his ideas certainly echoed Leitner and the larger colonial debates about language and education. Yet, there are several problems with such an analysis. Indeed, by examining his early writings in Lahore, we can see a connection between these writings and his later works. In 1865 he wrote about the need to reform and remodel Urdu and Urdu poetry, transforming Urdu from a poetic language to a scientific language that relied less on Persian literary and poetic devices. He again echoed these comments when he launched the *Mushairas* of 1874, and communicated similar ideas as he wrote *Ab-e Hayat*. If he only needed to please the British, he would not necessarily have to restate similar ideas over the course of two decades. Instead, he could have served as a professor and translator, writing textbooks for the Education Department and living a quiet life in Lahore. Moreover, if he was concerned about appearing loyal to the British, he would not have mentioned 1857 and his rush to retain the ghazals of Zauq (even if it was brief) in *Ab-e Hayat*. This could have reminded any British official, who would have read this work (and read that far in the text), about the role of Azad's family's in 1857; consequently this could raise questions about Azad's loyalty, questions that would not be answered by any of his pro-British writings.

It is doubtful, therefore, that he simply served British interests, and this contradiction helps to explain his final intellectual dislocation. It is likely he did not have a simple or straightforward answer himself to fully support his efforts to reform Urdu or about how to reform Urdu. Indeed, it has been argued that Azad may not have fully accepted the reforms brought with colonial rule, and that he longed for the cultural world of his Delhi childhood.<sup>65</sup> Azad's pre-1857 experiences certainly were important, and the devotion to the Delhi of his youth was clear, but we also need to examine his larger concerns and experiences as well. He spent his career seeking to overcome his physical, intellectual, and emotional displacement from, and his heartrending memory of, a Delhi that no

longer existed. He sought to preserve this Delhi and its cultural heritage beginning in 1857, when he fled with copies of Zauq's ghazals. Yet, he realized retaining copies of poetry was not enough, and his call for reform was a recognition that Indians needed to adapt to changing times under British rule. It was not only the British ability to use violence (such as in 1857), it was their ability to use knowledge for control and power in India. Therefore, Azad believed that Indians could learn from the British, as he stated in 1874, "if we open our eyes and see wisdom,...the languages of European books are full of powerful thoughts."<sup>66</sup> Similar to his contemporary, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Azad sought to be a 'modernizer' who could develop his heritage to reflect the realities of colonial Lahore and colonial India in the later nineteenth century – after the fall of the Mughal Empire. In other words, Azad sought to preserve this heritage through reforming it in order to make it relevant to life under colonial rule. Although Azad rarely directly articulated his predicament, it was a very real concern for many intellectuals, and one that is seen clearer in the writings of Altaf Hussain Hali.<sup>67</sup>

The unanswered questions in his writings continue to plague those who study Azad. Yet, by evaluating Azad's earlier writings in Lahore, we can piece together a more complete picture of an individual who seemingly defies a straightforward answer. *Ab-e Hayat* became a monumental work, not least because it was one of the earliest attempts to delineate the history of Urdu literature. It is this delineation of history and culture (and his identity), through his writing, that he valued. Even prior to *Ab-e Hayat*, Azad utilized notions of historical change and the progress of societies and languages in his writing. In fact, his early historical lectures on Delhi already use this pattern, a pattern that continues to the study of language with his 1860s lectures about Urdu and in later writings. Thus, these efforts were lifelong pursuits that celebrated his heritage and relocated him physically as well as intellectually and personally in the colonial realm of Lahore. At the same time, his writings, especially on language, advocated reform to retain this heritage. In essence, Azad symbolical represented his own heritage and the challenged posed to it by British rule - he was a memorial to this heritage and he worked tirelessly to document as well as reform it. Unfortunately for Azad, his writings were part of many attempts to reconcile his dislocated identity between his narratives of reform and displacement, and judging from his madness he did not fully succeed in his efforts.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This is a view some critics have held. See, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry: Ab-e Ḥayāt (1880) by Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād (1830-1910)." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 23, No. 10/12, pp. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of Azad's Perso-Islamic cultural heritage around Delhi, see David Lelyveld. *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim solidarity in British India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, especially Chapter II - "Sharif Culture and British Rule."

<sup>3</sup> Punjabi was the most widely spoken language in the Punjab region, although it is not always associated with elite literate culture. For further details, see, Jeffrey M. Diamond. "A 'Vernacular' for a 'New Generation'? Historical Perspectives about Urdu and Punjabi, and the Formation of Language Policy in Colonial Northwest India," in Harold Schiffman, ed. *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and its Neighbors*. Leiden: Brill, in-press.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of immigrants and displacement, see, Mike Baynham and Anna De Fina, eds. *Dislocations/Relocations: Narratives of Displacement*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Moulvi Muhammad Hussain took the pen name "Azad" (free), and is now known as Muhammad Hussain Azad. Thus, he is referred to as Azad in this examination. Background on his life is from, Muhammad Sadiq. *Muhammad Hussain Azad: His Life and Works*. Lahore: West-Pak Publishing Co., 1965, especially pp. 1-18; According to different sources, Azad's birthday is said to be both in 1827 and 1830.

<sup>6</sup> For a background to Delhi College, see Margrit Pernau, ed. *Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State and Education before 1857*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Nadir Ali Khan. *A History of Urdu Journalism (1822-1857)*. Delhi: Idarah-e Adabiyat-e Delli, 1991, pp. 65-71.

<sup>8</sup> Azad held this role from about 1850 until 1857. See Khan, *A History of Urdu Journalism*, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Khan, *A History of Urdu Journalism*, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> For a copy of the poem, see, Frances W. Pritchett. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 23-24.

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion about Delhi after 1857, see Narayani Gupta. *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1803-1931*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 39-58.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. (Francis Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, translators). *Ab-e Hayāt*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, 450, p. 367. This was the only direct reference to his experience in 1857 that I have located, perhaps not surprising as he did not wish to relive the experience.

<sup>13</sup> Azad wrote to Fuller to detail his circumstances and desire to work for the DPI. The letter is contained in, Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Banam Maijur Fulur Da'iriktur Mahikma Ta'lim Punjab." in, Tazi Hussain Fazl Lucknowi. *Maka 'iyab-e Azad*. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1966, pp. 31-32.

<sup>14</sup> The British often referred to Indian languages as "vernacular" languages in the Punjab region at this time. This paper uses the word "vernacular" as it is the term utilized in colonial debates.

<sup>15</sup> *Report of the Anjuman-I-Panjab, or the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge For the Year 1865*. Lahore: Punjabee Press, 1866, pp. 23-26. For a further analysis about the Anjuman-e Punjab, see, Jeffrey M. Diamond. *Negotiating Muslim Identity: Education, Print, and Intellectuals in Nineteenth Century Colonial North India*. Amherst, NY: Cambria, forthcoming.

<sup>16</sup> Urdu was the official 'vernacular' of chosen for the Punjab by the 1860s. Punjabi was viewed by the British as 'vulgar,' and debates about Hindi and Urdu did not emerge in the region until the later nineteenth century (debate that have resonated through the national projects of India and Pakistan). Indeed, Urdu was used by the elite of all religious communities who worked with the British at the time. See, Diamond, "A 'Vernacular' for a 'New Generation'?"

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Anjuman-I-Panjab...For the Year 1865*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Adas. *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> This landed elite were central to early colonial policy in the region as well, and was the subject of colonial interest. For example, see Griffin's work on Punjabi elite families, printed for British officials, Sir Lepel Griffin. *The Punjab Chiefs*. Lahore: Chronicle Press, 1865.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion about language usage and policy in early colonial Lahore, see, Diamond, "A 'Vernacular' for a 'New Generation'?"

<sup>21</sup> An excellent article about Palestinian refugee displacement in Gaza is, Ilana Feldman. "Home as Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza." *History and Memory*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2006, pp. 10–47.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Delhi." In, Agha Mahmood Baqir, ed. *Maqalat: Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad..* Vol. 2. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1978, pp. 221-222.

<sup>23</sup> Azad, "Delhi," p. 222.

<sup>24</sup> Azad, "Delhi," pp. 2222-224.

<sup>25</sup> Azad, *Ab-e hayat*, 450, p. 367.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Russell. *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*. London: Zed Books, 1992, p. 121. Sir Syed was at the forefront of what later came to be known as Islamic "Modernism," as he sought to utilize European knowledge, ideas, and frameworks in order to re-examine Perso-Islamic religious and knowledge systems. See, Aziz Ahmad. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, p. 25. Sir Syed maintained close contacts with Latif, and Sir Syed gave a speech at Latif's house in Calcutta that addressed the need to translate important European works into Urdu and Hindi. See, Francis Robinson. *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 92.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of Hali's work in Lahore and the later influence of Sir Syed on Hali's writings, see, Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed. *Hali's Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, Introduction.

<sup>29</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 38. The criticisms related to an experimental *musha'iras*, discussed below.

<sup>30</sup> Azad was a member of the Committee since 1865, and begun to work with Leitner from that time. *Report of the Anjuman-I-Panjab...For the Year 1865*, pp. 4-6, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, p. 25. The Anjuman's lecture series was proposed to the Punjab government in early 1866. OIOC, PEP, A, January 1866, No. 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Tashviq o Tehris-e Ta'lim o 'Ulum." [Desire and the Stimulation of Education and Knowledge] in Baqir, *Maqalat*, Vol. 2, pp. 107-111.

<sup>33</sup> Azad, "Tashviq o Tehris-e Ta'lim o 'Ulum," p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Azad, "Tashviq o Tehris-e Ta'lim o 'Ulum," p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> For details of this mission, see Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, pp. 26-27. For an overview of the Great Game interest, see, John Keay. *The Gilgit Game: The Explorers of the Western Himalayas, 1865-95*. London: J. Murray, 1979. An article that concentrates on British concerns for the Gilgit region is, Chad Haines. "Colonial Routes: Reorienting the Northern Frontier of British India." *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 2004, pp. 535-565.

<sup>36</sup> Leitner published many works on this area he called Dardistan (the present day Gilgit region of Pakistan), over his career, including, G.W. Leitner. *Dardistan in 1866, 1886, and 1893*. Woking: Oriental University Institute, 1893.

<sup>37</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Zaban Urdu." [Urdu Language] in Agha Mahmood Baqir, ed. *Maqalat: Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad*. Vol. 3. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1987, pp. 35-49.

<sup>38</sup> Azad, "Zaban Urdu," p. 36-38.

<sup>39</sup> Azad, "Zaban Urdu," pp. 38-39.

<sup>40</sup> Azad, "Zaban Urdu," pp. 40-42.

<sup>41</sup> Azad, "Zaban Urdu," pp. 43-46.

<sup>42</sup> Azad, "Zaban Urdu," p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "'*Ilm-e Mantaq par Not*.'" ["A Note on the Logic"] in Baqir, *Maqalaat*, Vol. 2, pp. 157-167.

<sup>44</sup> Azad, "'*Ilm-e Mantaq par Not*,'" pp. 157-159.

<sup>45</sup> Azad did not participate in debates about Punjabi, and he is less clear of his view of that language. For an examination of these debates, see, Diamond, "A 'Vernacular' for a 'New Generation'?"

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Zaban-e Urdu." [The Language of Urdu] in Agha Mahmood Baqir, ed. *Maqalaat: Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad*. Vol. 1. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1966, pp. 154-168.

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion about Urdu as *rekhta* (mixed language) in early nineteenth century Delhi, see, Javed Majeed. "'The Jargon of Indostan': An Exploration of Jargon in Urdu and East India Company English" in Peter Burke and Roy Porter, eds. *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995, pp. 191-196.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Ralph Russell believed that *Ab-e Hayāt*, "for the first time...presents Urdu poetry against some sort of historical background and gives critical assessments of the poets in something approaching a modern style." Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> Many of his essays were read in meetings of the Anjuman, and he sought to appeal to a wide audience to promote his ideas. James Ballantyne also sought to convey his ideas in a manner that were "least likely to provoke cavil"

with his readers. See, Michael Dodson. "Re-Presented for the Pandits: James Ballantyne, 'Useful Knowledge,' and Sanskrit Scholarship in Benares College during the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, May 2002, p. 282.

<sup>50</sup> *Akhbar-e Anjuman-e Punjab*, 14 May 1874, pp. 1-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Akhbar-e Anjuman-e Punjab*, 14 May 1874, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion about the general atmosphere of Urdu poetry during this time with reference to Azad and his critics, see, Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*.

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Tashviq o Tehris-e 'Ilm." [Desire and the Stimulation of Knowledge] in Baqir, *Maqalaat*, Vol. 1, pp. 99-101. The title was similar to another lecture where Azad praised British rule (examined above).

<sup>54</sup> G.W. Leitner. *Sinin-e Islam*. Lahore: Indian Public Opinion Press, 1871, Preface, pp.1-4. Leitner titled the text in English, *Sinin-I-Islam: Being a Sketch of the History and Literature of Muhammadanism, and Their Place in Universal History*. He started to write and distribute parts of the text in 1870 (see below).

<sup>55</sup> Leitner, *Sinin-e Islam*, Preface, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Leitner stated this in a letter to the Sec. GOP about the initial "chronological sketch" he wrote before the publication of the full text in 1871. OIOC, PEP, A, November 1870, No. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Leitner, *Sinin-e Islam*, Preface, pp. 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> This idea has been proposed at least since Urdu literary critic Muhammad Sadiq discussed Azad's important contribution to *Sinin-e Islam*. See Muhammad Sadiq. *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, Appendix IV, pp. 131-135. Leitner would not have been the first colonial official to understate the influence that indigenous translators and editors served in 'preparing' their works.

<sup>59</sup> For a copy of Azad's defense, see, Muhammad Hussain Azad. "Subab Taliq "Sinin al-Islam."" [A List of Reasons "Sinin al-Islam"] in Agha Mahmood Baqir, ed. *Maqalat: Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad*. Vol. 2. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1978, pp. 298-300. The essay is not dated, but was written after the publication of *Sinin-e Islam*. Sadiq argues that the attacks on the book were engineered by people jealous of the close relationship between Azad and Leitner. Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> Azad, "Subab Taliq "Sinin al-Islam"", in Baqir, *Maqalat*, Vol. 2, pp. 298-300.

<sup>61</sup> G.W. Leitner. "Indigenous Oriental Education, With Special Reference to India, and in Particular, to the Panjab." *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*. Vol. 8, October 1894, p. 428.

<sup>62</sup> Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad*, pp. 164-169.

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 41, from. Aslam Farrukhi. *Muhammad Husain Azad*. Vol. 1. Karachi: Anjuman Taraqqi-e Urdu, 1965, pp. 324-325.

<sup>64</sup> Azad, *Ab-e Hayāt*, 450, p. 367. Zauq (Muhammad Ibrahim Zauq) was a famous Urdu poet and a family friend in Delhi when Azad was young. Zauq died in 1854 prior to the 1857 Revolt, and Azad later stated that he saw Zauq as his *ustad* (teacher). See, Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>65</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 145.

<sup>66</sup> *Akhbar-e Anjuman-e Punjab*, 14 May 1874, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Hali and Syed Ahmed also shared a similar predicament. Seeking to reform a cultural world that they “carried...within themselves.” See, Majeed, “Nature, Hyperbole and the Colonial State,” p. 33.



## Contemporary Evidence on Sikh Rites and Rituals in the Eighteenth Century

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This paper on Sikh rites and rituals analyses the whole range of contemporary evidence on the eighteenth century in three phases for observing continuity and change in the rites of initiation, birth, marriage and death. The Sikh sources are relevant for all the three phases, the Persian sources associated with the Mughal empire are relevant for the first, and the European accounts for the third. Two major findings emerge from this study: the continuity of normative statements on Sikh rites and rituals in which the Brahman priest and Brahmanical scriptures had no role, and there was a large degree of correspondence between the normative statements and empirical evidence on Sikh rites and rituals.

### Introduction

No historian of the Sikhs has brought rites and rituals of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century directly into focus. Harjot Oberoi, for example, looks upon rituals as ‘a key element in the construction of religious identity’, and underlines the importance of the ‘rites of passage’ for Sikh identity. He maintains that prior to the Khalsa transformation, the Sikhs possessed only a fluid identity, and did not think of ‘a distinct set of life-cycle rituals’. The Khalsa introduced new rites related to birth, initiation and death which ‘endowed an individual with a new and bounded identity’ to demarcate the Khalsa from the rest of the ‘civil society’. Oberoi presents these rituals in a few paragraphs on the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* which he places between 1750 and 1765.<sup>1</sup>

W.H. McLeod approaches the eighteenth century as a formative phase in the history of the Khalsa *rahit*. Rituals figure among ‘issues’ related to *rahit*, but he does not place any *Rahitnama* in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. The earliest *Rahitnama* for him is the *Tankhahnama* attributed to Bhai Nand Lal which he places within a few years of Guru Gobind Singh’s death. The *Rahitnama* attributed to Prahlad Rai and the *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10* attributed to Bhai Nand Lal are placed in the 1730s. The *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh is placed sometime between 1740 and 1765. The *Rahitnamas* of Daya Singh and Desa Singh are placed in the late eighteenth century, or the early nineteenth.<sup>2</sup> McLeod has persistently argued for placing the *Prem Sumarag* in the early nineteenth century.

However, by now views regarding dating of the *Rahitnamas* have changed which has a significant bearing on Sikh rites and rituals. Sikh scholars generally have placed the *Prem Sumarag* in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Among the professional historians, J.S. Grewal and Gurinder Singh Mann have



argued that this work can be placed in or close to the time of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>3</sup> I have argued elsewhere that there is nothing in the text of the *Tankhahnama* to suggest that the original was not composed in the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>4</sup> Grewal has argued that the *Sakhi Rahit* was originally written in the time of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>5</sup> Grewal and Mann have argued that the prologue and the *rahit* part of the *Rahitnama* known after Chaupa Singh were composed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, and the two narratives and the *tankhah* part in the text published by McLeod were added later.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we find that four *Rahitnamas* in full and a substantial portion of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh can be placed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. This new perspective calls for fresh interpretation.

Evidence on Sikh rites and rituals is not confined to the *Rahitnamas*. There are several other works which are certainly relevant. The *hukamnamas* have an importance of their own. The earliest of the eighteenth-century Sakhis, the *Parchi* of Sewa Das Udasi compiled in 1708, is also relevant.<sup>7</sup> For Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha*, even 1711 appears to be unsatisfactory and it is argued that this work was started in 1701 and completed soon after Guru Gobind Singh's death in October 1708.<sup>8</sup> Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* is generally placed in 1751. The arguments in favour of its composition in the early nineteenth century have been refuted, and it has been analysed consciously as a work of 1751.<sup>9</sup> Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka* is known to have been completed in 1769. The *Mahima Prakash* of Sarup Das Bhalla is generally accepted as completed in 1776. The *Guru Kian Sakhian* of Sarup Singh Kaushish, placed in 1790, is remarkable for its empirical content in terms of dates, persons, and places.<sup>10</sup> Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* is known to have been written in 1797.

Sikh literature, understandably, provides the maximum information on Sikh rites and rituals. However, Persian and European works have their own importance. Their authors profess to provide empirical information. The Persian works are relevant for the early eighteenth century; the European accounts are relevant for the late eighteenth. All these Sikh, Persian and European sources have been used in this essay with a focus on Sikh rites and rituals. Furthermore, this literature has been studied in three phases with an eye on continuity and change: (a) the early eighteenth century, (b) the middle decades, and (c) the late eighteenth century.

It may also be noted that, contrary to Oberoi's impression, Guru Nanak and his successors were seriously concerned with the 'rites of passage' related to birth, initiation, marriage and death. For example, Guru Nanak underlines the futility of the sacred thread which was worn at an important ceremony. He discards the notion of pollution (*sutak*) which was associated with child birth. His song of joy (*Sohila*) is relevant for both wedding and death (as leading to union with God). The *Alahnian* of Guru Nanak were meant to be sung in place of the traditional mourning songs. The performance of *shraddh* to feed the dead ancestors, and the practice of offering rice balls (*pind*) to the dead through the mediacy of Brahmans, are ridiculed. The practice of floating lamps in water as a part of obituary rites is treated by Guru Nanak as meaningless.<sup>11</sup> The

*Anand* composed by Guru Amar Das, celebrating the experience of joy in liberation, began eventually to be sung or recited on important occasions like birth, marriage and death. Guru Ram Das says that this true song of joy is to be sung in the true house. Guru Arjan invites the Sikhs to listen to the *Anand* so that all their wishes are fulfilled. It is probable that this composition was sung to celebrate the birth of his son Hargobind. Guru Amar Das disapproves of *sati* which was practised by the upper castes and upheld by Brahmans, and of the practice of female infanticide which was prevalent in his time. The *Ramkali Sadd* of Baba Sunder makes it absolutely clear that the last wish of Guru Amar Das was to have no Brahmanical rites performed after his death.<sup>12</sup>

The *Ghorian* of Guru Ram Das were meant to replace the folk songs sung by women at the time of the bridegroom mounting the mare (*ghori*) for departure with the wedding party. His *Lavan* eventually became the core of the Sikh wedding ceremony. References to supplication (*ardas*) occur frequently in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak lays emphasis on offering *ardas* with a feeling of complete surrender. Guru Angad enjoins that the Sikhs should stand for *ardas*. Guru Arjan underlines that they should stand for *ardas* with folded hands. A stanza of Guru Arjan's *Sukhmani* (*tum thakur tum pae ardas*) now serves as a prelude to the formal *ardas*.<sup>13</sup> The mid-seventeenth century *Dabistan-i Mazahib* underscores the Sikh 'custom' of praying 'together'.<sup>14</sup> Bhai Gurdas testifies to the daily religious routine of the Sikhs ending with the prayer, followed by the sharing of *prasad* by all.<sup>15</sup> The practice of praying together and partaking of *prasad* at the end was apparently well established in the seventeenth century.

Bhai Gurdas has used the terms *charan amrit* or *amrit* in his *Vars*.<sup>16</sup> One reading is that the toe of the Guru was dipped into the water which was drunk by the initiate.<sup>17</sup> However, Bhai Gurdas seems to be referring to 'the dust of the feet of the Sikhs of the Guru'. The mode of initiation described in the *Dabistan*, though a variant on Bhai Gurdas, clarifies nonetheless that it was not the Guru's toe.<sup>18</sup> With this background we turn to the evidence directly from the eighteenth century.

### The Early Eighteenth Century

In the longer *Rahitnamas* of the period there are references to the rites of initiation, birth, marriage, and death. In the *rahit* part of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, the author says that a Sikh of the Guru must take baptism of the double edged sword (*pahul*). The Sikh who administers the *pahul* should follow the mode established by the Guru. Five palmfuls of *pahul* should be drunk by the initiate, and five times should it be sprinkled on his head and eyes. The baptized Sikh should exclaim, '*Vaheguru ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. He should then be given the sacred formula (*mantar*) of the true name (*satnam*) and instructed in the Sikh way of life. The Sikh who administers *pahul* should be one who observes the *rahit* and who is free from lust, anger, pride and ignorance; he should not be an idler. He should be intellectually wide awake and without a physical or a moral defect.<sup>19</sup>

The *pahul* is closely linked with keeping the hair (*kes*) unshorn. The baptized Sikh is called Kesdhari. A Sikh should never keep unshorn hair without taking *pahul*. For him, the *kes* serve as alternative to the sacred thread and the sacred mark. The sanctity of the *kes* is emphasized in various ways. Along with the *kes* are mentioned *kachh* (drawers) and *kirpan* (sword) among the five most important positive injunctions (the remaining two are *bani* and *sadh-sangat*). The sword as ‘Sri Sahib’ is to be held in reverence, in fact to be worshipped, as it was done by the Guru himself. Among the negative injunctions is not to have any association with the Minas, Dhir Mallias, Ram Raiyas, Masands, and Masandias. A Sikh should never kill an infant daughter and have no association with those who kill their daughters. He should not smoke or inhale tobacco. The three most important injunctions of the *rahit* are against female infanticide, tonsure (*bhaddan*), and the use of tobacco. It may be noted that service of the Sikhs is recommended for those who aspire to become leaders (*sardars*).<sup>20</sup>

The *Prem Sumarag*, which we regard as one of the earliest *Rahitnamas*, lays great stress on initiation into the order of the Khalsa. The essential feature of initiation is *khande ki pahul* which should be sweetened before it is administered to the volunteer. He should put on a *kachh*, and bear five arms. The minimum number of the Khalsa present at the time of initiation should be five, and five stanzas (*pauris*) of the *Anand* should be recited. An *ardas* is specified: ‘This Sikh has come to Sri Guru Akal Purkh and the Khalsa for refuge. He may be given the gift of the faith of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. His mind may remain steady and all his wishes may be fulfilled’. The Sikhs of the Khalsa pray for him: ‘May Guru Baba Akal Purkh fulfil his wishes’. The whole procedure is described in detail. The administering of *pahul* is followed by some general instruction with regard to the beliefs and ethics of the Khalsa.<sup>21</sup>

A married woman could take *pahul* from a Gurmukh. ‘She should have education in Gurmukhi, read and love *shabad-bani*’. The baptized Sikh women (*sikhnis*) should associate with one another and reflect on the *shabad*. A widow could also take *pahul*. However, no *kesar* (saffron) was to be sprinkled in her case; she should wear an iron ring on her finger, and observe restraint and chastity. It is explicitly stated that the injunctions given in the first two chapters of the *Rahitnama* are meant for both men and women.<sup>22</sup>

Like the authors of the two longer *Rahitnamas*, Sainapat does not describe the ceremony of initiation at the time of the institution of the Khalsa but he does refer to *khande ki pahul* and underlines its importance. The baptized Khalsa adopt the epithet ‘Singh’, bear arms, and exclaim ‘*Vaheguruji ki fateh*’. Sainapat is emphatic about the excommunication of the ‘five reprobate groups’. The sanctity of the *kes* is emphasized.<sup>23</sup> In the *Parchi* of Sewa Das, Guru Gobind Singh says that the *sangat* would be transformed by handling the sword (*bhagauti*). He declares that his Sikhs would not remain without *kes* and without weapons (*shastar*). All the Sikhs of the Guru adopted unshorn hair and arms in obedience to his declaration. Sewa Das refers to the seal of Guru Gobind Singh, and to a couplet (‘*salok*’) spoken aloud by Guru Gobind Singh before shooting an arrow. This ‘*salok*’, actually a couplet in Persian, is very close to the

inscription on the seal of Banda Bahadur. It refers to '*deg, teg, fateh*' of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>24</sup>

The *hukamnamas* bear witness to the fact that Guru Gobind Singh removed the Masands and instructed his Khalsa not to have any association with them and their followers. The Sikhs are asked to take *pahul*. The epithet 'Singh' appears frequently in the *hukanmanas* of the early eighteenth century. The Khalsa are asked to come to Anandpur fully armed. In a *hukamnama* of Guru Gobind Singh issued to the *sangat* of Benares, the Sikhs are referred to as '*Vaheguruji da Khalsa*' (instead of the earlier 'Guru's Khalsa' or 'my Khalsa'). A *hukamnama*, dated 12 December 1710, refers to '*Sri Akal Purkhji ka Khalsa*', a phrase that appears frequently later in the *hukamnamas* of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi; it also refers to five weapons and 'the *rahit* of the Khalsa'. Like the inscription on the seal of Banda Bahadur, a *hukamnama* of Mata Sahib Devi, dated 10 September 1726, refers to '*deg, tegh, fateh*'.<sup>25</sup>

In the *Amarnama*, Guru Gobind Singh is emphatic that the Sikhs should take *amrit* to become 'Singhs'. Taking of *amrit* is helpful against the enemy and also at the end of one's life. They should never observe any Brahmanical rite. They should eat food in the *langar* with all others and ensure that no one remained hungry. They should not kill an animal in the Muslim fashion. They should pay no heed to what the Brahmans say. There was no point in performing Brahmanical rites (*kiryā karam*).<sup>26</sup>

The Persian sources of the early eighteenth century contain no detail of the Sikh rite of initiation or the rites of passage, but they do contain a few references with a close bearing on initiation and *rahit*. A report from the court of Emperor Bahadur Shah, dated 24 May 1710, refers to the dismissal of the Masands by Guru Gobind Singh by one stroke of the pen to establish the Khalsa. 'It was settled by him that the Sikhs of the Khalsa would not cut the hair of the head, moustaches and beard and would be known as the Sikhs of the Khalsa'. The report goes on to add that a great disturbance occurred among the community of the Khatri over the new injunctions, due to which marriages between the two groups were given up. Actual fighting took place at Ramdaspur in *pargana Patti*.<sup>27</sup> Writing in 1728-9, the author of the *Asrar-i Samadi* refers to the followers of Banda Bahadur as 'Singhs' who wore unshorn hair; he refers also to *deg* and *teg*.<sup>28</sup>

According to the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, on the birth of a male child the father should give him the water, in which the feet of five Sikhs have been washed, to drink as *pahul*. If the child was to be brought up as Kesdhari, he should be given *khande ki pahul*. His hair should be kept uncut. His name should be chosen from the *Granth Sahib*. Then he should be bathed with curd.<sup>29</sup>

For the author of the *Prem Sumarag*, the ceremonies connected with the birth of a child start with conception. The features to figure in these ceremonies are *pahul* for the mother, and the constant sight of weapons like *khanda*, bow, arrow, and sword. If a son is born, he should first be made to bow to arms and the *Granth-Pothi*, and the first feeding (*gurhti*) given to him should be touched by a *khanda* (double edged sword). An *ardas* should be made. Sanctified food

(*prasad*) should be distributed among the Khalsa and among the kith and kin on the same day. Other ceremonies for the son include *pahul* administered to him by five Sikhs, piercing of his ears for rings made of gold or silver, keeping his *kes* intact, naming him with the epithet 'Singh', and feeding Sikh men and women present on the occasion. The same ceremonies are required to be performed on the birth of a daughter, with appropriate variation in detail. The daughter should also be administered *pahul* and bear the epithet '*devi*' in her name. Her nose as well as her ears should be pierced.<sup>30</sup>

Regarding marriage, there is only one sentence in the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh which recommends that a Sikh of the Guru should employ a Brahman in the ceremony of marriage. It is not clear, however, whether the Brahman in this situation is a Sikh who could perform a Sikh ceremony or a Brahman priest who is supposed to perform the marriage ceremony according to the Brahmanical rites. The evidence of this *Rahitnama* on other rituals makes it almost certain that the Brahman in question is a Sikh.<sup>31</sup>

The author of the *Prem Sumarag* recommends that betrothal ceremony should precede marriage by one and a half months. The bride should pray to Sri Akal Purkh for a happy union; she should not invoke the blessing of any god or goddess. The marriage ceremony should be performed in the last quarter of the night. The bridegroom should put on arms while riding for wedding to the bride's home. The marriage ceremony should be performed by a Sikh of the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purkh. He should ask both the bride and the bridegroom for their consent to marry each other, and also for the consent of their elders. Fire, like Sri Bhagauti Ji and Sri Khalsa Ji, was to be lighted as a witness to the wedlock. An *ardas* should be made to Sri Guru Akal Purkh for a happy and pious life for the married couple. They should go round the fire clockwise, and each time a stanza of the *Lavan* should be sung and some *ghee* thrown into the fire. After all the four rounds, *khande ki pahul* should be administered to the couple. Five *pauris* of the *Anand* should be sung and then *karha prasad* should be distributed. The couple should make supplication to Sri Vaheguru Akal Purkh alone and should not worship any god or goddess; they should not resort to any *jantar* or magical device and *mantar* or magical formula.<sup>32</sup>

According to the *rahit* portion of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh, there should be no mourning on the death of a Sikh. No tonsure (*bhaddan*) should be performed. The Guru's *shabad* should be sung when the dead body is taken away for cremation. *Prasad* should be distributed among the persons present. Ashes of the deceased should be taken to the Ganga for immersion. The *Granth Sahib* should be installed in the home for a complete reading. *Katha* and *kirtan* should be performed for eleven, thirteen, fifteen or seventeen days of *bhog-path*, according to the means of the family of the deceased. The practice of customary charity is recommended. There is emphatic rejection of traditional offerings to the dead (*shraddh* and *pind*), along with fasts, pilgrimages, objects and modes of worship, *mantras*, evening worship (*sandhya*), ritual offering of water (*tarpan*). In fact, a Sikh should have no recourse to a Brahman who is without *kes* and *pahul*. Nor should a Sikh of the

Guru perform any ceremony by putting thread (*dhaga*) over his body, or a mark on his forehead.<sup>33</sup>

According to the *Prem Sumarag*, there should be no beating of the breasts by women on the death of a Sikh; all men and women present should sing the *Alahmian*. The men should not remove their turbans. A new pair of *kachh* should be put on the body of the deceased after it has been washed. After dressing it, a sword should be placed on its right. There should be no wailing: God's will should be accepted without any sign of grief. The widow should adopt simplicity and restraint, think of the deceased as ever present with her, and read the *Pothi* of *Shabad- Bani*.<sup>34</sup>

The essential procedure in all situations, with appropriate variation in detail, is the same for men and women, for the young and the old, for the married and the unmarried, for the mothers and the childless widows. There should be no mourning. The ashes of the Khalsa could be consigned to a nearby stream or buried in the earth. For condolence, there should be no association with Masands and their followers, and with those who practised *bhaddan* (tonsure). All the three had turned away from the Guru. On death anniversary, all kinds of food should be served to the hungry and the Khalsa, and *kirtan* should be performed.<sup>35</sup>

Sainapat refers simply to the cremation of Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>36</sup> An interesting insight into the norm and practice in the rituals related to death is provided by the *Amarnama*. Guru Gobind Singh was informed of the death of a Singh on the cot, and the other Singhs wanted to know what was to be done. They were told not to worry; the life of this Sikh was marked by humility, and his thoughts were on the Guru at the time of his death; he had certainly gone to heaven. They should perform *ardas* and consign the body to the river. There was no need to call a Brahman, or to wait for the parents of the deceased. The Sikhs consigned the body to the river, uttering 'Vaheguru'. A similar episode is mentioned in this work in connection with a Sikh of Guru Arjan.<sup>37</sup>

Mirza Muhammad refers generally to new customs introduced by Guru Gobind Singh for the Sikhs of the Khalsa.<sup>38</sup> According to Muhammad Qasim Lahauri, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, his followers assembled from all sides and 'proceeding with their own prescribed rituals, cremated his body with due ceremony'.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Middle Decades**

For the middle decades of the eighteenth century we have only two sources which refer to initiation and matters related to death: the narratives and the *tankhah* portion of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh and Koer Singh's *Gurbilas*. In the narrative of the *Rahitnama*, we find for the first time a description of what Guru Gobind Singh did for administering the new baptism. He decided to give *kesan di pahul* (baptism of the hair) in 1697. Chaupa Singh was asked to bring a bowl of water, to stir it with a knife, and to recite five of the *savaiyyas*. Diwan Sahib Chand made the request that some soluble sweets (*patashas*) may be mixed with water to make it tasteful. Dharam Chand was

asked to bring *patashas*. When the *pahul* was ready, Chaupa Singh took the bowl in his hand and stood before the Guru. Taking five palmfuls of water, the Guru sprinkled it five times over Chaupa Singh's eyes and five times over his head. Guru Gobind Singh then recited the famous *savaiyya* of the *Chandi Charitra* which starts with '*deh Siva bar mohe ihae*'. With his own hands he gave *pahul* to Chaupa Singh who was asked to exclaim '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. Four other Sikhs, named Dhanna Singh, Hari Singh, Mewa Singh and Jodh Singh, requested for *pahul*. Thus, on the first day, five Sikhs were made Kesdhari. For the future, five Sikhs were to be present at the time of administering *pahul*. The persons initiated were to add the epithet 'Singh' to their name and to keep arms. Thirty-five Sikhs were initiated on the second day and sixty on the third. The Guru emphasized that the *kes* were the distinctive mark of a Singh. Distribution of *karha prasad* is mentioned as a part of the ceremony. *Hukamnamas* were issued to the Sikhs that they should not recognize the authority of the Masands. Among many things which the armed Kesdhari Singh were to do was to fight and establish their rule. For this purpose the Goddess was invoked. A lot of space is given to this episode. Nevertheless, the distinction of the new *panth* from Hindus and Muslims is underscored.<sup>40</sup>

The *tankhah* portion of the *Rahitnama* emphasizes the sanctity of the *kes*, beard and turban, the importance of *ardas* and *karha prasad*, and the obligation of responding with '*Vaheguruji ki fateh*' if not preferably saluting with '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa*'. It is in this part of the *Rahitnama* that baptism of the double edged sword is prohibited for Sikh women. However, association with the five excommunicated groups and with the killers of infant daughters is emphatically prohibited. The second narrative reinforces *kes* as the mark of the Kesdhari Singh; it is the seal of the Guru.<sup>41</sup>

Koer Singh too talks about the ceremony of initiation performed by Guru Gobind Singh at the time of instituting the Khalsa. The Guru poured clear water into a vessel of iron and started reciting *mantars*. Kirpa Ram informed the Guru's mother (Mata Ji) that the Guru was going to institute the Khalsa Panth and for this purpose he was preparing the *pahul* for initiation. She came and put *patashas* into the bowl. Having prepared the *amrit*, the Guru made an *ardas*. Then he administered *amrit* to five Sikhs: Daya Singh, a Sobti Khatri of Lahore, Nihchal Singh (Mohkam Chand), a Chhipa of Dwarka, Sahib Singh, a Nai of Bidar, Dharam Singh, a Jat of Hastinapur, and Himmat Singh, a Jhiwar of Jagannath. The first instruction given to the five on this occasion was not to associate with those who cut their hair, who killed their infant daughters, the Minas, the Masands and the 'Turks'. The initiate should discard every other means of worship and take refuge in the Wielder of the Sword. He should bear arms, keep his *kes* unshorn, wear *kachh* and keep a dagger (*kard*). He should clean his *kes* twice a day with a comb (*kangha*).<sup>42</sup>

Koer Singh mentions that, just before Guru Gobind Singh's death, Mata Sahib Devi expressed her wish to burn herself on his funeral pyre. The Guru told her that this was not to be done. Mata Sahib Devi accepted this and prepared to go to Delhi. The implication is quite clear: the practice of *sati* was forbidden. Before the funeral pyre prepared for Guru Gobind Singh was lighted

by a Brahman Singh, Guru Gobind Singh disappeared, and he was seen by an Udasi who was asked to tell the Khalsa not to mourn but to observe the Khalsa *rahit*.<sup>43</sup>

### The Late Eighteenth Century

Kesar Singh Chhibber's account of the procedure adopted by Guru Gobind Singh for administering *pahul* to the Sikhs for instituting the Khalsa is broadly similar to that given in the narrative of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh. The initiates are instructed to keep their *kes* unshorn. The *kes* are to replace the sacred thread and the sacred mark as a distinct marker of the identity of the third (*teesar*) Panth. One important implication of the sanctity of the *kes* is that no rite connected with tonsure was to be performed. The emphatic injunction in support of *kes* is matched by the strong injunction against tobacco. The Keshdhari Singhs were to bear arms and to wear blue dress. They were not to associate with the Minas, Dhir Mallias and Ram Raiyas, nor with the Masands. The other category of people with whom the Khalsa were not to associate were those who killed their infant daughters.<sup>44</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla refers to initiation of the double-edged sword in connection with the institution of the Khalsa. Five Sikhs were given *pahul* by Guru Gobind Singh. The rest of the Sikhs were told to take *pahul* from them. The Khalsa were required to keep their hair uncut and wear blue dress. They were to add the epithet 'Singh' to their names. Guru Gobind Singh adopted the same appearance as that of the Khalsa. The attitude of the Khalsa towards the sacred thread is indicated by the statement that one of the *panj piaras*, Daya Singh, removed his sacred thread to tie the sword of Guru Gobind Singh. It is explicitly stated later that the sacred thread and the sacred mark had no meaning in comparison with the true Name. Nevertheless, the Guru tells his followers that the Khalsa should not be compelled either to remove or to wear the sacred thread. This too suggests the irrelevance of the sacred thread for any cherished belief or practice.<sup>45</sup>

The *Guru Kian Sakhian*, unlike several other Sikh works of the eighteenth century, makes no reference to the Goddess. The account of the *khande ki pahul* is the most comprehensive. Even the phrase '*panch kakar*' (for 5Ks) is used, though instead of *kes* the *kakar* recommended is '*keski*' (a small turban worn under the large one). Even so, the *kes* are there by implication. As a prelude to the institution of the Khalsa, the Masands were 'punished' or removed; they were shunned completely, and offerings (*dasvandh*, *chaliha*, *mannat*) began to be sent directly to Anandpur. As instructed by Guru Gobind Singh, a day before the Baisakhi of 1698, Diwan Mani Ram put up five tents, and Bhai Chaupa Rai brought five goats to be tied in each tent. After the *kirtan* of *Asa di Var* and *katha* of a *shabad* by Bhai Mani Ram on the Baisakhi day, Guru Gobind Singh called for a head five times. Bhai Daya Singh, a Sobti Khatri of Sialkot, Mohkam Chand, a Chhipa of Dwaraka, Sahib Chand, a Nai of Bidar, Dharam Chand, a Jat of Hastinapur, and Himmat Chand, a Mehra Sikh of Jaganaath, in turn, responded to the call. They were taken into the tents, one by one, and



asked to slaughter the goat. Then they were dressed afresh with the 5Ks, and the Guru adopted the same form. They all came out. Guru Gobind Singh declared the five Sikhs to be '*panj piare*' (the five beloved ones) as they had passed the test and become *marjivaras* (who were ready to lay down their life for the Guru). The description of the way in which *khande ki pahul* was prepared and administered is equally graphic and detailed, and the injunctions for *rahit* are comprehensive. Nothing important is left out.<sup>46</sup>

Sukha Singh dramatically brings in the context in which the baptismal water was prepared for instituting the Khalsa. He refers to the call for volunteers at Kesgarh to sacrifice their head for the Guru. After the third call, a follower (*sevak*) stood up. He was taken into a tent, given a sword, and asked to slaughter a male goat with one stroke. Blood flowed from the tent. With the sword in his hand Guru Gobind Singh asked for another head. Another *sevak* stood up after the third call. He too was taken into the tent and asked to slaughter a goat. There was murmuring among the Sikhs who thought that this was the evil effect of invoking the Goddess (Bhavani). The Guru came out of the tent with the *panj piaras*. He began to prepare the *pahul* with fresh water into which Mata ji put *patashas*. The *pahul* was meant to rekindle the dead spirit. When it was ready, the Guru made an *ardas* and gave this *amrit* to the *panj piaras* asking them to exclaim 'Vaheguru'. They were instructed to discard the false thread in favour of the sword, and not to associate with the Minas, Dhir Mallias, Ram Raiyas, and the Masandias. Sukha Singh says that the fifth category, apparently those who shaved their head, was not concealed from anyone. Apart from the Wielder of the Sword, there was no refuge and no other object of worship. In this way Guru Gobind Singh created the third (*teesar*) Panth, distinct from and superior to Hindus and Turks. Already at the time of his own '*jagg pavit*', Guru Gobind is said to have told the Brahmans that the Wielder of the Sword had given him the sword as his sacred thread and he would give this protective shield to the Khalsa.<sup>47</sup>

The *Rahitnama* of Desa Singh gives primacy to baptism of the double edged sword to be conducted by five Singhs. The initiate is required to carry arms and wear turban and also have a comb (*kangha*) and a dagger on his person. He should not make *ardas* without weapons (*shastar*), and *karha prasad* should first be touched by the *kard* (dagger) before it is distributed equally among all. As in other *Rahitnamas* the novitiate in this work is required to shun the reprobate groups which included the killers of daughters as well. It may be mentioned that the writer dwells at some length on the proper method of preparing and serving the *langar* as well as the *karha prasad*.<sup>48</sup>

The *Daya Singh Rahitnama* expresses a serious concern for the ceremony of initiation and rites of passage. Bhai Daya Singh requests Guru Gobind Singh to pronounce a *rahitnama* that may serve as the source of liberation. Guru Gobind Singh says that when the Goddess appeared the *mantar* of '*ek onkar satnam*' was given by Shakti (through Guru Nanak), the *jantar* of *Vaheguru* was given by Mohan (Krishna), the *tantar* of *amar-jal* was provided by Varun, sweet was provided by Indra, the vessel of iron was provided by Yamraj, the knife of iron was provided by Kal, the *kes* were given by Chandi, and the *kachh* was given

by Hanuman, the four *padaraths* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksh*) accruing from the *khande ki pahul* were provided by Vishnu, *maida* (fine flour) was provided by Mahadev, and *ghee* was given by Brahma for the *karha prasad*. These divinities were subordinate to Akal Purkh and, therefore, subservient to Guru Gobind Singh. Daya Singh adds that the path for *mukti* was provided by the *Japuji*; the *Anand* was given by Guru Amar Das for peace; and the *chaupai* and the *savaiyyas* were added by Guru Gobind Singh. It is underscored that the *karha prasad* of unequal quantities of flour, ghee and sugar did not reach the Guru. On the occasion of administering *amrit*, jaggery should not be used in place of sugar for the *karha prasad*.<sup>49</sup>

The actual ceremony of initiation is then spelt out in the *Rahitnama*. Anyone of the four *varnas* could take *amrit*. By taking *amrit* even the lowest of the low would attain liberation. The person to whom *pahul* is given should wear *kachh*, bind his hair in a knot and tie a turban. He should stand up with an unsheathed sword in hand. The water of *amritsar* (the sacred tank at Ramdaspur) should be used for preparing *amrit*. First of all, the whole of the *Japuji Sahib* should be recited, followed by the *chaupai*, five *savaiyyas* and five *pauris* of the *Anand*, while *kard* was used for stirring the water to prepare *amrit*. A Singh should then take the permission of the assembly (*sarbat*) and take the bowl in his hands to let the new entrant drink from it. He should place that *kard* in his turban. The person who takes the baptism should place his right hand over the left to drink the baptismal water; he should then exclaim '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*'. In this way he should drink five palmfuls of *amrit*, and it should be sprinkled over his eyes and head. He should be given the *gur-mantar* of *satnam* and a new name. He should make an offering of a rupee and a quarter. Then *ardas* should be performed and the *karha prasad* eaten by all together. It is emphasized that those who administer *amrit* should be devout Sikhs and men of exceptional qualities, because it was first administered by the Guru as the incarnation of Akal Purkh.<sup>50</sup>

Among the European writers, Charles Wilkins was told that if a person showed a sincere inclination to renounce his former beliefs to any five or more Sikhs, he was asked to bring a small quantity of *patashas* which were diluted in pure water; this water was sprinkled on his body and into his eyes, and one of the best instructed Sikhs instructed him to observe the chief canons of their faith for the rest of his life. Wilkins, goes on to add that they were prepared to initiate him into the Sikh faith. Thus, the Sikh faith was open to everyone.<sup>51</sup>

Colonel A.L.H. Polier, George Forster, James Browne and John Griffiths refer to the rite of initiation on the basis of what they heard from Sikhs or non-Sikhs, and their statements contain, collectively, a number of features: openness of the initiation to all classes, including Muslims, keeping unshorn hair and beard, bearing arms, wearing an iron bracelet on one arm, the presence of five or more Sikhs on the occasion, exclamation of *Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*', instructions regarding religious, moral and political duties, and prohibition of the use of tobacco. The intention of the ceremony was to abolish distinctions of caste and its result was the distinct identity of the Khalsa.<sup>52</sup>

John Malcolm's statement is the most elaborate. Guru Gobind Singh admitted converts from all tribes and classes. All those who subscribed to his tenets were on the same level; the Brahman who entered the fold had no higher claim to eminence than the lower Shudra who swept his house. It was the object of the Guru to make all Sikhs equal. He changed their name from Sikh to 'Singh', which till then was assumed only by the Rajputs. They were required to devote themselves to arms, to have steel about them in some shape or other, to wear a blue dress, to allow their hair to grow and to exclaim '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vaheguruji ki fateh*' on meeting one another. The blue dress was still worn by the Akalis. Malcolm thinks that perhaps Guru Gobind Singh's idea was to separate his followers from all other classes of India by their appearance as much as by their religion.<sup>53</sup>

The way in which Guru Gobind Singh first initiated his converts was described to Malcolm by a Sikh. Guru Gobind Singh had initiated five converts in the first place and they were instructed how to initiate others. 'The convert is told that he must allow his hair to grow, he must clothe himself from head to foot in blue clothes, and he is then presented with five weapons: a sword, a firelock, a bow and arrow and a pike'. Sugar and water were put into a cup and stirred round with a weapon; the first chapter of the *Adi Granth* and the first chapter of the *Dasama Padshah ka Granth* were read, and those who performed the initiation exclaimed '*Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki fateh*'. After exclaiming this five times the water prepared for initiation was drunk by the proselyte. A sweet drink prepared in a similar manner was sprinkled over his head and beard. After these ceremonies he was told to abandon all intercourse with five categories of people: the Minas and Dhir Mallias, the Masandias, the followers of Ram Rai, those who killed their infant daughters, and the *bhaddanis* who ritually shaved the hair of their head and beard. The initiate was instructed to sacrifice his life and property for the cause of the Khalsa; he was directed to read both the *Granth*s every morning and every evening. It was his duty to share with others whatever he received from God.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Matthews recorded that 'a Sikh wishing to become a Singh' could go to the Akalis at Amritsar and give proof of his determination to discard his former beliefs. With his own hands the proselyte broke his *zunar*, 'the small thread, or cord, worn across the shoulders by most of the Hindoo sects'. After the performance of certain ceremonies, he was given to drink a *sherbat* made of sugar and water by an Akali. After the initiation, he never shaved his beard, nor cut his hair. He became 'heterodox' for the Hindus who considered him as an apostate. He was allowed to eat whatever food he liked except beef.<sup>55</sup>

For marriage, Bhai Desa Singh recommends that it should be endogamous but he does not refer to any rite.<sup>56</sup> Bhai Daya Singh gives preference to the baptized Khalsa for the marriage of a daughter and lays down that 'marriage should not be performed without the *Anand*' (being recited at the end).<sup>57</sup>

For the ceremonies related to death, Sarup Das Bhalla simply refers to the cremation of Guru Gobind Singh's body. With an implicit reference to the *Sadd* of Baba Sunder, he underlines that Brahmanical rite was to be performed. In fact, Guru Nanak himself told his followers that no Brahmanical rites were to be

performed after his death.<sup>58</sup> According to Sukha Singh, Guru Gobind Singh told his followers that his end was ordained by God and, therefore, it was a matter of rejoicing for him; none should wail and cry after him; they should sing the praises of God and perform *katha* for forty days, and the lowest of the low should not be debarred from it. All varieties of food were to be prepared and distributed among all the four castes without any distinction. The Khalsa should celebrate the event and organize *chauki-shabad* or *kirtan* by turns.<sup>59</sup>

Kaushish in the *Guru Kian Sakhian* refers to the exclamation of '*Vaheguruji ka Khalsa, Vahguruji ki fateh*' by Guru Gobind Singh as his last farewell to the Khalsa. His body was washed and dressed, and weapons were placed by its side. After the cremation of the body, the *Sohila* was recited, *ardas* was performed, and *karha prasad* was distributed.<sup>60</sup>

Bhai Daya Singh says that the *Japuji* should be recited at death. When the deceased is being bathed, a new *kachh* should be put on him, and a new turban tied on his head. There should be no mourning after death. The *prasad* should be prepared in a clean enclosure (*chauka*), reciting '*Vaheguru*' all the time. Five Singhs should sing *shabads* and make an *ardas*. When the *prasad* is ready, the officiant should offer it first to Sri Guru ji, then to five *bhujangis* (sons of the baptized Singhs), and then to the other Singhs. The *prasad* should be distributed equally among all.<sup>61</sup>

Forster observes that widows were expressly forbidden to destroy themselves at the death of their husbands, and allowed to renew the ceremonies of marriage. He goes on to add, however, that adherence to the old practice was strong among the Hindus converted to the Sikh faith. Many of their women were seen ascending the funeral pyre; others could not be induced to enter the connubial state for a second time.<sup>62</sup> Captain Mathews states that, after cremation, the ashes were thrown into the river. He also refers to the existence of small structures over the spots where some important men had been cremated.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Eighteenth Century in Retrospect**

When we look back at contemporary evidence for the three phases we have examined, we find that the middle decades, coinciding with the most intense phase of political struggle of the Sikhs, figure only in two sources which refer to the rites of initiation and death. Though the information on the late eighteenth century or the period of Sikh rule is far larger, it relates mostly to initiatory and funerary rites. These are also the rites on which Persian and European sources provide information. The rite in connection with birth finds mention in the first phase and the last phase, in which the Sikh sources cover the ceremony of marriage as well as the initiatory and funerary rites. There is no description in the first phase on how *pahul* was prepared and administered on the day of the institution of the Khalsa. Such descriptions appear first of all in the middle decades. On the whole, the maximum importance is given to initiatory rites, followed at a distance by funerary rites and the ceremony of marriage.

There is no uniformity in the rites and rituals recommended or described in our sources but there is a large degree of consensus. There is a good deal of variation in detail but there is basic agreement on essentials. Consequently, continuity is more remarkable than change for the eighteenth century as a whole. Despite variation in modes, 'Sikh' rites are clearly conceived as non-Brahmanical: the officiants are Sikh, and so are the scriptures. Recitation of the *Anand*, performing *ardas*, and distribution of *karha prasad* appear to have become the common features of Sikh ceremonies.

In all the three phases, there is categorical rejection of Brahmanical rites and rituals. The Pandit and the Padha are bracketed with the Mian and the Mahant: their teaching (*mat*) is rejected in favour of Gurmat. The only means of liberation in the Kaliyuga is *nam*: a Sikh should read the *shabad*, hear the *shabad*, and live in accordance with the *shabad*. He should never sit in front of a Brahman for any ritual (*karam*). What is essential is to recite the *Anand*, do *ardas*, and distribute *karah prasad*. Everything is set right when a Sikh feeds five Sikhs and they do *ardas* in his behalf. The Guru says: 'All the *kiryā-karam* of my Panth have been performed by Satguru Akal Purkh'.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh it is emphasized that a Sikh of the Guru should cultivate *sikkhi* in accordance with the teachings of the *Granth Sahib*. The Khalsa Panth was made distinct by God for the preservation of *sikkhi* in poverty, wealth and rulership.<sup>65</sup> In the *Rahitnama* of Daya Singh it is stated that a Sikh should never put on the sacred thread for performing the rites of birth, marriage or death. A baptized Singh should never meet a Brahman. A Sikh who uses the services of a Brahman for any ceremony becomes liable to penance. In everything the *maryada* laid down by the Guru should be followed.<sup>66</sup> It must be added that the *Prem Sumarag* in the early eighteenth century and the *Guru Kian Sakhian* towards its end were written on the assumption that the Brahman priest had no role to play in Sikh rites and ceremonies. In the literature that we have examined there is little indication on the whole that any Brahmanical rite was recommended for the Khalsa.

This raises the question of *charan pahul* and the Sahajdharis. It may be pointed out that both the terms are used in all the three phases. However, there is very little information about the *charan pahul* or the Sahajdharis in the literature of the period. They are not bracketed with the Minas, the Dhir Mallias or the Ram Raiyas. They appear to be accepted as 'Sikhs'. This makes the evidence of the *Rahitnama* associated with Chaupa Singh rather important. They are bracketed with Kesdharis for a number of important dimensions of Sikh life: daily personal and congregational worship, keeping the beard uncut, proscription against *bhaddan* and the use of tobacco, belief in no *guru* other than the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, and belief in the Guru-Granth and the Guru- Panth. The Sahajdhari has the discretion to keep or discard the sacred thread. For funerary rites he must arrange *bhog-path*, *kirtan*, *ardas*, and distribution of *karah prasad*. The Sahajdhari is a 'Khalsa' but not a 'Singh'. He has not been baptized through *khande ki pahul*. He takes *charan pahul* which is prepared by reciting five *pauris* of the *Japuji* and five *pauris* of the *Anand* when *patashas* are mingled with water in which the lactern of the

*Guru Granth Sahib* has been washed.<sup>67</sup> By using the blanket term 'Khulasa' for all non-Singhs, the European writers confused the identity of the Sahajdharis by bracketing them with reprobate groups. Even so, according to European accounts, the non-Singhs were rather small in numbers. Nearly all the Sikh writers identify themselves with the Khalsa Singhs and write for them and about them.

There is unanimity among the Sikh sources on the administering of *khande ki pahul* to five volunteers in the first place, and the obligation of keeping unshorn *kes*, bearing arms and the epithet 'Singh'. The injunction against *bhaddan*, female infanticide, and use of tobacco is also common. No association with the reprobate groups is common, though they are not uniformly the same. There is consensus on the names of the *panj piaras*. There is consensus on recitation from the *Japuji*, the *Jap*, the *Benati Chaupai*, five *savaiyyas* and five *pauris* of the *Anand*. About the 5 Ks, all the five items are present in contemporary literature. In some early works, there is emphasis on three items together: *kes*, *kirpan*, and *kachh*.<sup>68</sup> In the *Guru Kian Sakhian* alone the five *kakars* are explicitly mentioned. One of these *kakars* is *keski* and not *kes*, but the *keski* itself covers the *kes*. Apart from the *Anand*, the *Lavan* are mentioned in connection with the ceremony of marriage prescribed for the Khalsa. It must be pointed out that the use of a fire-pit in place of the *Guru-Granth* does not make the ceremony Brahmanical. Neither the Brahman priest nor the Vedic *mantras* have anything to do with the ceremony prescribed.

Finally, there is the issue of praxis. The *Rahitnamas* are professedly normative. However, the Sikh narrative literature contains statements on actual practices. The Persian and European writers profess to provide empirical information. The European sources in the late eighteenth century affirm the practice of initiation through *pahul*, removal of sacred thread on initiation, the Akal Takht as the place where *khande ki pahul* was administered by the Akalis, the obligation to keep *kes* and beard unshorn, to add the epithet 'Singh' to the name, to bear arms (spears and matchlocks, besides *kirpan*), to wear *kachh*, preference for the blue turban or dress, and the practice of cremation, in addition to injunction against the use of tobacco and beef, mourning over death, and the practice of becoming *sati*.<sup>69</sup> John Malcolm writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century refers to the patterns of matrimony but not to any ceremony of marriage. He emphasizes that *pahul* was open to all classes of people, including Muslims. It was the principal institution of the Khalsa, with the obligation to keep unshorn hair, bear arms, have the epithet 'Singh' in the name, and wear blue dress. The ceremonial for baptism introduced by Guru Gobind Singh was described to Malcolm by a Sikh and it is very close to the statements made in Sikh literature.<sup>70</sup>

On the whole, there is a considerable correspondence between the normative and empirical statements. All this gives a strong impression that the Singh Sabha advocacy of uniform Sikh rites and rituals would have been unthinkable without the legacy of the eighteenth century. There is a remarkable correspondence between the norms of Sikh rites and rituals advocated by the Sikh writers of the eighteenth century and the Sikh ceremonies advocated by the

leaders of the Singh Sabha movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

### Notes

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13. *Shabdarath*, pp. 576, 774. See also, Jaggi, *Guru Granth Vishavkosh*, vol. I, pp. 75, 463; vol II, p. 463.
14. *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, in *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*, ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, New Delhi: Tulika/Indian History Congress, 2001, p. 78.
15. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, ed. Giani Hazara Singh, Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1962 (7th edn.), p.105, *Var VI, pauri 3 (VI.3)*; also p. 336, XX.10. Bhai Gurdas uses the term '*mahaprasad*' for the sanctified food distributed in a Sikh place of worship.
16. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, p.4, I. 3; p.115, VI. 17; p.367, XXII. 14.
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61. Daya Singh's *Rahitnama*, in Padam, *Rahitname*, p. 74.
62. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, vol. I, pp. 308-9.
63. Captain Matthews, 'A Tour to Lahore in 1808', p. 117.
64. *Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10*, in *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 33-6.
65. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 98, 114, 130.
66. *Rahitnama Bhai Daya Singh*, in Padam, *Rahitname*, pp. 69-71-2, 74-5.
67. *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, pp. 57, 59-60, 62-4, 100, 107.
68. Apart from *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*, the *Sarab Loh Granth* refers to the three symbols of 'kachh, kirpan, kes' and 'kachh, kes, kirpan': Padam *Rahitname*, pp. 147-8. According to Gurinder Singh Mann, the earliest manuscript of *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* is dated 1698: 'Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times', pp. 254-5.
69. 'Sicques, Tigers, or Thieves: Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (1606-1809)', ed. Amandeep Singh Madra and Parmjit Singh, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 81-3, 129, 131, 141, 151, 189, 202, 228-9, 232, 296.
70. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 135, 157, 180-6.



## **Uniformities and Differences of a Sikh Nationalist Identity: Opinions and Practices of Ordinary Sikhs**

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This article contributes to an understanding of Sikh identity by examining the narrative construction of identity through an examination of opinions and practices of ordinary Sikhs. The particular contours of a nationalist identity narrative and its four narrative themes are developed through a close analysis of interview responses. The interview responses provide evidence to support the arguments that (1) a segment of the Sikh community narrates their identity through a public Sikh nationalist narrative that emphasizes the pursuit of truth, justice, and recognition and is characterized by four narrative themes; and (2) this particular narrative identity generates certain forms of unity and homogeneity while also creating differences and ambiguity, thus decentering a binary approach to understanding Sikh identity.

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### **Introduction**

Much of the scholarship in Punjab and Sikh Studies centers on a debate regarding the unity and homogeneity of a Sikh identity. N. Gerald Barrier (1993) argues that Punjab and Sikh Studies can in large part be characterized through two major approaches: one emanating primarily from academic institutions in the Punjab and the other originating from Western universities. The first approach is more concerned with demonstrating the unity and homogeneity of a Sikh identity, while the later is more interested in the differences and ambiguities of a Sikh identity. Both approaches focus largely on the Singh Sabha movement, because it was during this period that “certain symbols, historical events, and records gained legitimacy, while others were rejected or given a secondary status” (Barrier 1993, p. 27). Both approaches also rely heavily on textual analysis of official colonial discourse, political pamphlets, and religious texts. Often what remain unexamined in both these approaches to Sikh and Punjab Studies are the opinions, behaviors, and practices of common Sikhs.

This article moves away from a focus on the Singh Sabha period in an effort to understand present-day perceptions of Sikh identity among ordinary Sikhs. This article also focuses primarily on the opinions, behaviors, and practices of ordinary Sikhs by examining in-depth, open-ended interview responses of 40 individuals. By doing so, the article contributes to an understanding of Sikh identity by examining the narrative construction of identity through an examination of interview data. I argue that one can understand identity formation processes – how identities are created, maintained, and challenged –

by exploring the narratives that social actors use “to make sense of – indeed, to act in – their lives” (Somers 1994, p. 618). An exploration of narrative identities demonstrates how individual Sikhs understand themselves through and act based on a public Sikh nationalist narrative that generates a certain unity and homogeneity of identity that is dependent upon and constitutive of particular differences and ambiguities. This particular approach to studying Sikh identity formation has explanatory value because it (1) decenters a binary approach to Sikh identity as either uniform and homogeneous or differentiated and ambiguous by demonstrating how these two binaries are mutually constitutive; and (2) demonstrates that the forging of a seemingly uniform and homogenous public Sikh nationalist identity is intimately tied to a selective remembering of Sikh history and lived experience one that privileges some while marginalizing others.

My main fieldwork research in Punjab took place during Spring 2009. I conducted 40 in-depth interviews in Punjabi in two districts of Punjab – Mohali and Amritsar – with approximately the same number of men as women from each of the three major caste groups – Jats, Khatri, and Scheduled Castes/Backward Castes. Also, I conducted interviews with respondents of varying ages (21 to 71) and educational levels (illiterate to highly educated). In addition to conducting in-depth interviews, I had the opportunity to gather crucial information through follow-up interviews, informal conversation, and observation of religious and social activities. This research also builds on one summer of preparatory research conducted in 2005.

The rationale for using a qualitative, exploratory research design is that such a design has distinct advantages when trying to understand identity-formation processes. First, qualitative methods permit the definition of key concepts like martyrdom and Khalsa Raj to be determined by ordinary members of the Sikh community, not by religious and scholarly elites. Second, a qualitative approach does not assume that Sikh nationalist identities are a simple reflection of Sikh scripture or Sikh religious history; rather it builds an understanding of Sikh nationalist identities from the ground up.

Selection of interview respondents occurred in two ways: first, I relied on my informants in Mohali and Amritsar districts to help make initial contact with respondents; second, respondents whom I interviewed suggested other potential respondents and introduced me to individuals in their workplace, religious, and social networks. Through these two methods of selection, I was able to interview Sikhs of varying socio-economic backgrounds, degrees of religious observance, and political affiliation.

When asked about the treatment of Sikhs in India, Hardev Singh Saini, a 43-year-old Backward Caste man, says, “In the nation, when people see a Sikh about 70% of those people are actually against him. They are opposed to Sikhs because Sikhs have their own identity, their own religion, their own everything.” When asked the same question, Hardeep Kaur Bedi, a 55-year-old Khatri woman, answers:

We don't need anyone to give us anything; we Sikhs have our own separate law. We love our religion; we have our own way of dress;

we have our own identity; we have created our own social norms of how we interact and interrelate. We have created all of this on our own. Our *qaum* [nation or community] is just like this; no one needs to give us anything. We don't need anything. Our Gurus have given us so much, and they continue to watch over us, and we actually do better on our own, as the lions that we are.

The statements made by Saini and Bedi raise interesting questions: How does one make sense of a Sikh identity that values separateness and distinctness from India? How is this identity constructed? What discourses are at play in this particular identity formation? How can the homogeneity and ambiguity of this identity formation be conceptualized? And lastly, who is privileged and displaced by these particular forms of homogeneity and ambiguity?

This essay makes sense of Sikh identity formation by drawing on Margaret Somers' notion of narrative identity. Narrative identity is premised on a new interpretation of narrative that is not limited to representation, but defines "narrative and narrativity as concepts of *social epistemology and social ontology*" (Somers 1994, p. 606). This conception of narrative posits "that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (Somers 1994, 606). In short, Somers argues "all of us come to *be* who we *are* by being located or locating ourselves in social narratives *rarely of our own making*" (1994, p. 606). Somers describes this relatively abstract formulation of narrativity by outlining four different dimensions of narrative – ontological, public, conceptual, and metanarrative (1994, p. 617). For the purposes of this analysis, the most relevant dimension of narrativity is public. Public narratives are "attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to intersubjective networks or institutions" (Somers 1994, p. 619). Public narratives, for Somers, can range from the narratives of one's family to those of the workplace, church, government, and nation.

I operationalize Somers' notion of narrative identity to explore the uneasy way in which individuals understand themselves through and act based on a public Sikh nationalist narrative, which generates certain forms of unity and particular types of differences. The goal of the analysis is to make sense of the process through which nationalist identities are created, maintained, and challenged by reading interview responses as generative of a public Sikh nationalist narrative rooted in truth, justice, and recognition. By doing so, one is able to better understand the formation of a separate yet narrow Sikh nationalist identity, an identity that gives rise to certain forms of homogeneity and unity by selectively drawing from Sikh history while simultaneously producing particular forms of privilege and marginalization.

It is important to note that a Sikh nationalist narrative is only one way in which Sikhs understand their identity. A Sikh public narrative of integration, in addition to others, is also a prominent identity narrative among Sikhs. Unlike a

Sikh nationalist narrative, an integrationist narrative envisions a more harmonious relationship with the Indian state.<sup>1</sup>

### **Sikh Nationalist Narrative**

This article relies on interview data to outline the contours of one identity narrative that is prominent among Sikhs, a public Sikh nationalist narrative. The particular contours of a nationalist narrative and its four narrative themes are developed through a close analysis of interview responses. The underlying basis for a public Sikh nationalist narrative is respondents' widespread sense of identification based on four narrative themes – sacrifice and martyrdom, injury and injustice, Khalsa Raj, and recognizable identity – that reinforce the common goal of truth, justice, and recognition. Interview respondents develop this particular narrative by selectively drawing from Sikh history and lived experience. However, the very forging of this seemingly uniform and homogenous nationalist narrative is dependent upon and intimately tied to difference and ambiguity.

#### *Sacrifice and Martyrdom*

One of the components of a public Sikh nationalist narrative is the narrative theme of sacrifice and martyrdom, which connects individual Sikhs to one another both historically and contemporarily. Respondents narrate their own position in relation to other Sikhs by constructing a narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom that draws selectively from the Guru period [1469-1708], Khalsa Raj [1765-1849], Indian independence struggle [1920s-1947], and militancy period [1980s-1990s]. Respondents not only narrativize their lives in relation to other Sikhs, but also in relation to the lives of the Gurus, which allows them to understand their personal history as part of a larger set of sacred communal memories, thus creating a seemingly uniform and homogenous identity that is stable across time and space.

Interview respondents make sense of Sikh socio-political realities through a narrative emphasis on sacrifice and martyrdom, one that consistently points to the sacrifices of the past to make sense of the present. For respondents, sacrifice and martyrdom represent a fundamental institution of Sikhism, one present since the faith's very inception.<sup>2</sup> For example, many respondents, such as Hardeep Kaur Bedi, discuss the Indian independence struggle as part and parcel of a larger Sikh narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom:

Many young people, like Bhagat Singh, who were shrewd and sharp, are now identified as the martyrs of that time, the martyrs of the independence movement. But nowadays if they were among us we would call them militants. We would, right? Many people rose to the occasion, and the British attempted to put down the movement. Some like Mahatma Gandhi would agitate half-naked in front of official buildings. He would refuse to move and the British said, "This old man is very obstinate." And for us, these

people are martyrs, and for the British they were militants. They used to call Guru Gobind Singh a militant because he fought for his nation; he sacrificed his entire family for his *qaum* [nation or community].

Bedi connects Bhagat Singh and Mahatma Gandhi to Guru Gobind Singh, thus connecting three men from two different time periods with different religious, political and ideological commitments through a narrative focus on sacrifice and martyrdom. Bhagat Singh, for example, explicitly framed his participation in the Indian independence struggle vis-à-vis his Marxist, atheist, and anarchist beliefs. Mahatma Gandhi, in contrast, understood his participation in the Indian independence struggle through his particular conception of Hinduism. Unlike Bhagat Singh and Mahatma Gandhi, Guru Gobind Singh's sacrifices are arguably best understood through his creation of the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood. Bedi overlooks these differences by relying on a narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom. In short, Bedi is forging a uniform and homogenous narrative by purposefully ignoring the differences between these individuals. Furthermore, Bedi constructs a gendered notion of sacrifice and martyrdom by selecting male martyrs to make her argument. By relying solely on male martyrs, Bedi constructs a narrative that uses gender differences, in this case maleness, to define the ideal sacrifice and martyrdom. Bedi privileges men in her narrative while simultaneously marginalizing women because she defines men as the ideal martyr.

Bedi also explores the meaning of martyrdom by claiming that if Bhagat Singh were among us now he would be considered a militant, not a martyr. She elaborates by stating that for the British Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh were militants, not martyrs. And ultimately, Bedi ends her discussion of martyrdom by discussing the sacrifices that Guru Gobind Singh made for his nation. Bedi seamlessly brings together three men with distinct religious, political, and ideological commitments from two different time periods because she makes sense of these two time periods through the common narrative theme of sacrifice and martyrdom. Consequently Bedi is able to make sense of the Indian independence struggle and the Guru Period as part and parcel of a public Sikh nationalist narrative by obscuring the differences between these periods.

A narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom is not only apparent in the way in which respondents understand a Sikh socio-political reality, but is also evident in their concern for external recognition of a narrative of Sikh sacrifice and martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> For example, when discussing the Indian independence movement, Fateh Singh, a 42-year-old Scheduled Caste man, states "Sikhs are the ones who gave up their lives, who martyred themselves to gain independence for this country." He continues by stating that, in the present day, the Indian government does not sufficiently recognize the sacrifices of the Sikh community:

This thing [Sikh sacrifice] bothers the Indian government. They don't count the sacrifices that we have made. For example, the government presents Indian history on T.V. or in other mediums



by characterizing Sikhs as nothing. Why did they do this? See, no one has made the type of sacrifice that Sikhs have made. If they [Indian government] recognize our sacrifice, then they become nothing because they have admitted that they didn't sacrifice. As long as they keep Sikhs down, characterize Sikhs as zero, as nothing, and as long as they keep a divide-and-rule policy, then they can continue to rule.

According to Fateh Singh, Sikhs sacrificed and martyred themselves for Indian independence, but this sacrifice and martyrdom is not acknowledged in dominant accounts of Indian nationalist history. In particular, Fateh Singh argues that the Indian government has purposely obscured and ignored Sikh sacrifice and martyrdom in an effort to characterize Sikhs "as zero, as nothing," and in doing so the Indian government is able to keep Sikhs down. Fateh Singh also implies that if the supposed sacrifice and martyrdom of the Indian government is revealed to be false then the government will be sapped of its power, of its ability to rule. Fateh Singh calls for the Indian government to recognize the truth of Sikh sacrifice and martyrdom. For Singh, according to a public nationalist narrative of truth, justice, and recognition, the Indian government is required to publicly recognize the sacrifices made by the Sikh community for the Indian nation.

It is important to note that both Hardeep Kaur Bedi, 55-year-old Khatri woman, and Fateh Singh, a 42-year-old Scheduled Caste man, adhere to a public Sikh nationalist narrative. These two individuals are differentiated both in terms of gender and caste, but nonetheless they adopt a narrative theme of sacrifice and martyrdom to connect Sikhs across time and space through a seemingly uniform and homogenous identity.

### *Injury and Injustice*

A second component of a public Sikh nationalist narrative is the narrative theme of injury and injustice, which allows respondents to connect their lived experience under Hindu/Congress Rule<sup>4</sup> to the lived experience of Sikhs during Mughal and British Raj. Respondents emphasize the narrative theme of injury and injustice in order to (1) create a connection between Sikhs irrespective of time and space; and (2) explain their commitment to truth, justice, and recognition, which for a segment of the respondents is attainable through Khalsa Raj.

Respondents such as Beena Kaur, a 65-year-old Khatri woman, claim that Sikh history and contemporary life are best characterized through a narrative of injury and injustice:

Behind all these things there are some very deep issues; our history is very deep. It is a very painful history. For example, if we begin to speak of our history, it becomes difficult. It is difficult to speak of the small, small children whose throats were squeezed; at one

point, their necks were squeezed, and later they were covered with tires.

Beena Kaur's version of Sikh history is intelligible only through a narrative emphasis on injury and injustice. She is able to discuss the physical abuse of Sikh children during Mughal rule and the brutal mistreatment of Sikh children during Congress Rule – specifically the 1984 riots in Delhi<sup>5</sup> – as a seamless narrative irrespective of the differences between monarchical and democratic forms of governance.<sup>6</sup> Beena Kaur expresses pain at the thought of “small, small children” being brutalized in different ways, in two distinct eras and contexts. Irrespective of these differences, Beena Kaur is able to speak of these atrocities as connected because both give rise to a narrative of injury and injustice rooted in a sense of pain and trauma experienced by Sikhs under foreign rule, be it Mughal monarchical governance or Hindu/Congress democratic governance. In short, Kaur forges homogeneity out of difference and ambiguity by relying on a narrative theme of injury and injustice, thus demonstrating the mutually constitutive nature of the two.

Women and children play an integral role in a narrative of injury and injustice. For example, when Beena Kaur makes a distinction between Sikh and Singh, she justifies this difference by describing the mistreatment of Sikh women during Mughal Rule:

When there was Muslim rule the degree of violence and atrocity was very high. They would kidnap daughters and sisters. When Guru Sahib saw that these atrocities were occurring, that our daughters were being kidnapped before our eyes, he asked, ‘Are we so weak that we can’t protect our own daughters?’

According to Beena Kaur, Guru Gobind Singh initiated the *khande di pahul* ceremony to create Singhs, whose duty is to fight for justice and to protect daughters and sisters against injury and injustice. In Beena Kaur's narrative both women and men are narrowly defined. According to Kaur, Singhs exist to protect and sisters and daughters are to be protected. Kaur's narrative characterizes men as agents who are capable of protection and women as passive and therefore in need of protection. As a result, Kaur privileges men by characterizing them as agents capable of pursuing truth, justice, and recognition while denying women this same privilege.

Fateh Singh and Surinder Singh, a 22-year-old Jat man, connect their demand for justice with the injury experienced by Sikhs in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. For example, Fateh Singh focuses his attention on the state's inability to provide justice:

There [in Delhi] innocent people were burned to death with tires. How many years has it been? It's been 24, 25, 26 years. But justice has yet to be attained. Justice hasn't been served. Why hasn't it? Our politics is beholden to the chair, to the seat of power. If politicians seek justice, then they lose their seat. They lose their seat. Then why do these individuals claim that they are

the rightful representatives of the Sikhs? These people are the enemies of the Sikhs. Since 1984, these people haven't been able to prosecute the perpetrators of this crime; these people haven't been able to pursue justice. Ask who has suffered through this incident: those individuals who lost mothers, fathers, sisters; those individuals who are now orphans.

Fateh Singh is outraged by the fact that so much time has passed since the atrocities of 1984, yet the victims have not received justice. According to Fateh Singh, in the current political structure a politician who actually pursues justice will lose his or her position of power. Fateh Singh is criticizing the very structure of the state by claiming that the state and its agents (i.e. politicians) cannot pursue justice if they want to remain in power, and therefore, in Singh's narrative formulation, Sikhs will never attain justice within the current Raj. He concludes by stating that it is the victims who continue to suffer; it is the victims who endure injury and injustice on a daily basis; it is the victims who search for truth, justice, and recognition. Similarly, Surinder Singh raises questions regarding accountability and justice:

Take for example, the 1984 riots; it's been 25 years and there still hasn't been a resolution. If Tytler<sup>7</sup> didn't have a hand in the riots, then who did? Someone has to be behind the riots; if it isn't Tytler, then whom should we hold responsible? Someone was behind these riots, and if it isn't you, then who is it? Someone is behind this, and we still don't know who it is.

Surinder Singh repeatedly asks, "If Tytler didn't have a hand in the riots, then who did?" Singh claims that someone has to be behind the riots, and he or she must be held accountable. Interestingly, Surinder Singh was born after the riots occurred, but this fact does not diminish the pain he experiences; despite his age. Surinder Singh creates a connection between himself and those who suffered in 1984. As a result, Surinder Singh is committed to finding out the truth about the 1984 riots and garnering justice for the victims even though he was not directly involved.

Respondents connect a discussion of injury and injustice to the need for Khalsa Raj, where truth, justice, and recognition can be attained. To make such an argument, many respondents explain that foreign rule – irrespective of governmental form – fails to provide justice. For example, Fateh Singh states:

The state doesn't think it's a sin to kill innocent people. The state simply says, "A big tree has fallen; no big deal, some will die." But was the big tree right? Was the big tree just? If you bring injury to someone's religion, then the religion will rise. Even if people like me stay sleeping, there are some out there that have been filled by the religion, and they will rise. That injury gave rise to a call for justice.

Fateh Singh integrates the language used by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi following Indira Gandhi's assassination into his nationalist narrative to underscore the injustice of Congress rule. According to Amiya Rao, Rajiv Gandhi "explained away this unprecedented orgy of violence [1984 anti-Sikh riots] comparing it with a natural phenomenon: 'there is a shaking of the earth, whenever a big tree falls'" (1984, p. 2066). Fateh Singh interprets the "big tree" as Indira Gandhi and the "shaking earth" as the killing of innocent Sikhs. This narrative formulation allows Fateh Singh to question if Indira Gandhi's actions were just. Fateh Singh follows with a statement in which he argues that if the Sikh religion is injured then it will rise in the name of justice. Thus, Fateh Singh explicitly connects the experience of injury to a Sikh nationalist narrative that claims to pursue truth, justice, and recognition.

Similarly, Beena Kaur argues, "If the nation gave us justice, then we wouldn't need Khalsa or Khalsa Raj." However, the fact that Sikhs have yet to attain justice for the atrocities committed in 1984 allows Kaur to maintain that Sikhs need Khalsa Raj. The need for Khalsa Raj is justified not only through the unjust treatment of Sikhs under Hindu/Congress Rule, but also through references to past atrocities inflicted by other rulers, such as Mughal and British rulers. Thus, the narrative of injury and injustice allows respondents to create a seemingly uniform and homogenous history of atrocity across time and space. In turn, respondents argue that this history of atrocity must be met by a commitment to and pursuit of truth, justice, and recognition, which, according to some, is only attainable through Sikh rule, Khalsa Raj.

Once again, it is important to take note that irrespective of gender and caste differences, respondents adopt a narrative theme of injury and injustice to connect Sikhs across time and space in pursuit of a common goal of truth, justice, and recognition through the forging of a seemingly uniform and homogenous identity.

### *Khalsa Raj*

The third component of a public Sikh nationalist narrative is the narrative theme of Khalsa Raj, which, according to respondents, functions as both a religious symbol and a collective memory. A segment of respondents who adhere to a public nationalist narrative claim that Khalsa Raj is the only way to truly attain truth, justice, and recognition for the Sikh community.

A majority of respondents narrate the historical memory of Khalsa Raj with great pride and dignity. Hardeep Kaur Bedi, for example, boasts about Ranjit Singh's rule:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was an amazing *raja*; his reign was outstanding. Before the British Raj the Sikh religion really grew; this happened during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time. He was able to bring all Hill Kings into his kingdom. He won over all of Punjab including Peshawar and Lahore. He conquered all the way to Pakistan and Afghanistan all the way to Kabul. His rule was strong up 'til Kabul. But the Sikh nation was badly damaged by the

British when Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son Dalip was kidnapped and held against his will in England. And that was the end of the Sikh nation in the world.

Bedi describes with pride the way in which Ranjit Singh was able to build a Sikh Empire that spanned from current day Punjab through Pakistan to Afghanistan. Bedi also points out that the Sikh religion grew during Khalsa Raj. She ends her narrative by stating that initially the Sikh nation was damaged by the British, and ultimately brought to an end. Others, like Jatinder Singh, a 24-year-old Scheduled Caste man, also take pride in the international connections that were forged during Khalsa Raj: "During Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time we had a connection with Europe – we had established links with Europe. For example, the French people traveled here to give [military] training, and therefore our identity was known in foreign lands."<sup>8</sup> Singh takes pride in the knowledge that a Sikh identity was recognized around the world. Many respondents look back to this historic period with pride and honor because this is one of the few times when the religious symbol of Khalsa Raj took concrete form, thus leading to the growth of Sikhism.

Other respondents speak of missed opportunities by narrating moments at which Khalsa Raj was potentially attainable. A few, for example, describe the period of the militancy as a missed opportunity when Khalsa Raj could have been established under the leadership of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.<sup>9</sup> But many more respondents discuss the period of Indian independence as a missed opportunity. For Jatinder Singh the period of Indian independence marks a significant moment:

They [Sikh political leaders] didn't become aware at that time. If they had become aware, then we [Sikhs] could have had some success – we could have had our demands met by the British. But we experienced failure during this time. Sikhs could have gained a state during this time, but they failed. Muslims were absolutely smarter. For example, Muhammad Iqbal<sup>10</sup> writes "*Saara jahan se achchha, Hindustan hamara*" [Better than the entire world, is our Hindustan]. But after that he is a staunch supporter of Pakistan, of independent Pakistan. How did this man's thinking change? How could he at one point say that Hindustan is the best and then so soon thereafter demand Pakistan? We have been let down by our political leaders.

This period, according to Singh, represents the moment when Sikh demands for an independent Sikh state, for Khalsa Raj, could have been met. Unlike their Muslim counterparts, Sikhs were let down by their political leaders. To reinforce this statement, Singh turns to a narrative description of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who, according to Singh, was initially a supporter of Hindustan, but seized the opportunity to help create a new Muslim state, Pakistan. For Singh, this is where Sikh leaders failed; Sikh leaders were not able to translate this opening for the potential creation of Khalsa Raj into a

concrete reality, thereby missing an opportunity to attain truth, justice, and recognition for the Sikh community.

Beena Kaur argues that Sikhs made a grave mistake by collaborating with Hindus:

*Pundits* [Hindu priests, also a *jati* or birth group] are not our friends. This is *Pundit Raj* [Hindu rule]; they aren't our friends. The *pundits* said that we [Sikhs] would receive our piece; when Pakistan and Hindustan divided they told us, "For now give us your support, and then you will be given your own territory where you will be able to rule yourself, where you will be able to spread your religion." And later we [Sikhs] were told by the *pundits*, "The time for Sikh self-rule has passed." They [*pundits*] backed down.

According to Kaur, during the independence struggle Sikhs had the potential of reinstating Khalsa Raj because Hindus had promised Sikhs their own autonomous territory. However, after partition, according to Kaur, Hindus backed down on their promise to Sikhs, thus destroying the possibility for reinstating Khalsa Raj and instead subjecting Sikhs to *Pundit* rule. The idea of a missed opportunity resonates with a specific segment of the Sikh community that adheres to a public nationalist narrative.

Other respondents, however, like Jasveer Singh Gill, a 54-year-old Jat man, equate the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966 with Khalsa Raj:

In 1966, the *Punjabi Suba* [Punjabi-speaking state] was created. Akalis [Sikh political party] participated in peaceful agitations, they went on strike, they were jailed and they managed to create a *Punjabi Suba*, but the Congress people say they were wrong in doing so. But I don't say this. I think that they [Akali Party] did the absolute right thing. It is the right thing because today's Punjab, doesn't matter what the count is, it could be 40 percent, 30 percent, 25 percent Hindus, but ultimately whose state is it? Punjab is a Sikh state. This is the one demand of ours that has been met. If we still had a *maha-Punjab* [Super Punjab, composed of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal], then Punjab would never be a Sikh state. It would have been a Punjab of Punjabis, or a Punjab of those who live in Punjab, but today it is a Punjab of Sikhs; Punjab is a Sikh state.

After the language-based re-organization of Punjab, the demographics of Punjab shifted dramatically. Sikhs, who were a minority in Punjab, became a majority. Currently, Sikhs represent over 60 percent of Punjab's population. This demographic shift, according to Gill, also signals a shift in power. A demographic shift can be equated with a shift in power relations because the Khalsa is a form of religious state formation. According to Peter van der Veer, the Khalsa amounts to a religious state because "there is the emergence of a supralocal religious identity, the rise of powerful and authoritative institutions that control the public domain, and the development of particular ways of

organizing production and consumption” (1994, p. 56). In short, Punjab is a Sikh-majority state, and therefore, for a segment of the Sikh population who adopt a nationalist narrative, it is also Khalsa Raj committed to the pursuit of truth, justice, and recognition. This particular formulation of Khalsa Raj is significant because the state of Punjab is majority Sikh, but not solely Sikh; Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jains also live in Punjab.

Respondents repeatedly discuss the importance of Khalsa Raj within their nationalist narratives. However, there is no agreement on what constitutes Khalsa Raj. For example, for some, the independence period marks a missed opportunity to establish Khalsa Raj, whereas others argue that Punjab in its current form as a majority Punjabi-speaking state is Khalsa Raj. The fact that a majority of Sikhs who adopt a public nationalist narrative privilege the notion of Khalsa Raj demonstrates some uniformity within this narrative. However, the fact that respondents are divided on whether the current state of Punjab is a failure or a fulfillment of Khalsa Raj represents difference and ambiguity within a public Sikh nationalist narrative. Thus, demonstrating the fact that uniformity is intimately tied to ambiguity.

Interestingly, for those who envision a Punjabi-speaking state as Khalsa Raj there is yet another type of ambiguity in their narrative. Present-day Punjab is a majority Sikh state, however, this does not mean that it is solely a Sikh state; Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jains also live in Punjab. Khalsa Raj is described by respondents as the location from which Sikhs can pursue truth, justice, and recognition; however, what does it mean to pursue a Sikh understanding of truth, justice, and recognition in a state that has religious minorities? How do Sikhs who adopt a public nationalist narrative understand their relationship to religious minorities? How do Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jains experience a Sikh understanding of truth, justice, and recognition? The relationship between Khalsa Raj as the location from which to pursue a Sikh understanding of truth, justice, and recognition and the presence of religious minorities who may or may not adopt a Sikh understanding of truth, justice, and recognition represents one source of ambiguity within a public Sikh nationalist narrative. A source of ambiguity on which the apparent uniformity of the Sikh nationalist narrative depends.

#### *Recognizable Sikh Identity*

Lastly, respondents characterize a public Sikh nationalist narrative by emphasizing the importance of a recognizable Sikh identity. Most respondents adopt the concepts of *amritdhari* [bearer of *amrit* or nectar], *kesdhari* [bearer of long *kes* or hair], and *sahijdhari* [bearers of slowness] to define and delimit who is a member of the Sikh community.<sup>11</sup> According to some respondents, Sikhs are only those who have undergone the *khade di pahul* [baptismal ceremony]<sup>12</sup> and live according to *rahit* [Sikh code of conduct]. Others, however, define Sikhs more inclusively as those who keep unshorn *kes*. Still other respondents define Sikhs simply as those who live according to *gurbani* [word of god]

irrespective of outward appearance, which is the most inclusive definition. For example, Jasveer Singh Gill defines Sikh identity by focusing on *kes*:

A Sikh's heart should be full of Sikh teaching even if a Sikh doesn't conform completely to the required outward appearance. But I also don't believe that a Sikh can cut all their hair. The main characteristic of Sikh identity should remain intact; the most important Sikh characteristic is a Sikh's *kes*. If a Sikh keeps his *kes*, if he ties his turban, then he looks like a Sikh; he looks to be a Sikh. But if this same Sikh cuts his *kes* – even if he is wearing a *kirpan* [sword] – then he doesn't look to be a Sikh. This is the identity that I believe in...You must have hair, you must tie a turban, and your beard can be cut, but it needs to be cut, not shaven. People like this should be considered pure Sikh and should receive full respect and dignity.

According to Gill, *kes* and turban are the most important characteristics of Sikh identity because this is what makes a Sikh look like a Sikh. For Gill, if an individual appears to be a Sikh, then he should be considered pure Sikh, and in turn be granted full respect and dignity. Gill's emphasis on a Sikh's identifiability is reinforced by his explicit exclusion of *sahijdhari* Sikhs: "Sahijdhari Sikhs aren't like me; *sahijdhari*s are those who belong to the Sikh religion, but they cut their hair, so I don't consider them Sikhs."

Many respondents share Gill's opinion regarding Sikh identifiability. For example, Hardeep Kaur Bedi describes Sikhs as those who can be identified: "Unlike Americans or Chinese, Sikhs have a recognizable identity. Sikh identity is, you know, of his turban, of his beard; Sikhs have a separate identity." Bedi's narrative description includes both *amritdhari* and *kesdhari* Sikhs because both categories of Sikhs are recognizable through their unshorn hair, beard, and turban. As such, both Gill's and Bedi's narrative descriptions of Sikh identity can be read as fairly inclusive, excluding only *sahijdhari*s. Both Gill and Bedi want to maintain a separate Sikh identity by emphasizing one's hair, beard, and turban as the boundary marker, but they also want to open up the religion to those who have not undergone the *khande di pahul* ceremony.<sup>13</sup>

According to Gill, the Sikh religion needs to open up its ranks to less observant Sikhs in order to avoid decline:

I believe that the Sikh religion needs to change: it needs to become more liberal. It needs to change in a manner, for example...every time a religion has fractured, it has happened due to increased rigidity, increased conservatism. The change that needs to be brought about is that the Sikhs who cut and trim their beards, like myself, they should receive complete respect and dignity in the Sikh religion, in the Shiromani Committee, our Sikh [democratically elected] body; Sikhs like myself should receive full respect. Sikhism will grow only if this change is adopted; otherwise Sikhism will go into decline because to keep a beard and to become a true Sikh isn't something everyone is capable of. To



maintain this position one needs to work extremely hard. And when you have to work harder and harder to maintain Sikhism, then little by little people will begin to leave the religion.

Gill's narrative can be read as an inclusive nationalist narrative because he attempts to retain a separate Sikh identity, which is marked by *kes* and turban, while simultaneously opening up the religion to Sikhs who are less observant. According to him, the prescriptions associated with *amritdhari* status are too burdensome, and therefore people will begin to leave the Sikh fold. However, if one opens up the religion by granting *kesdhari* Sikhs the same rights as *amritdhari* Sikhs, then the Sikh religion will grow.

Gill's definition of who counts as a Sikh demonstrates one differentiation within a nationalist narrative; this differentiation is controversial because it can disrupt the current power structure in the Sikh community. If *kesdhari* Sikhs are elevated to the same position as *amritdhari* Sikhs, then they will be granted full rights and privileges in Sikh institutions, including the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC).<sup>14</sup> According to Peter van der Veer, since the 1920s "the control of this committee has become the most coveted prize in Sikh politics" (1994, p. 74).

Another source of ambiguity is the ongoing debate regarding the SGPC's definition of a Sikh.<sup>15</sup> Thus far, the SGPC has defined a Sikh in a relatively exclusionary way by only permitting *amritdhari* Sikhs to be full participants in the electoral process. Gill's call for the Sikh religion to become more liberal has vast implications. If *kesdhari* Sikhs are given the same rights and privileges as *amritdhari* Sikhs, this will enable them to be part of the SGPC electoral process. *Kesdhari* Sikhs actually outnumber *amritdhari* Sikhs, thus the extension of rights to this category of Sikhs could vastly change current power structure in the SGPC and larger Sikh community. For example, if *kesdhari* Sikhs were to gain control of the SGPC, the very understanding of who is a Sikh could change dramatically, and this change could, in turn, impact distribution of resources and access to benefits.

The narrative descriptions of identifiable and recognizable Sikh identity are rooted in unity and homogeneity as well as difference and ambiguity, which create specific forms of privilege and certain types of marginalization. Gill and Bedi, for example, deviate from the orthodox definitions of Sikh identity by narrating a more inclusive Sikh identity that creates room for *kesdhari* Sikhs, but they simultaneously exclude Sikh women by emphasizing male markers of Sikh identity, such as turban and beard. Both Gill and Bedi equate Sikh identity with male identity by consistently referring to *his* hair, *his* turban, and *his* beard. According to Brian Axel, Sikh men have become the privileged site for negotiating who is recognized as a member of the Sikh *panth* "by means of particular bodily techniques, religious practices, visual representations, and narratives of Sikh 'identity'" (2001, p. 4). Even though Gill's and Bedi's narrative construction of Sikh identity is more inclusive towards *kesdhari* Sikhs, their narratives are simultaneously exclusive because Sikh women are written out of a Sikh nationalist narrative and a male Sikh identity is adopted as the

norm. It is important to note that Jasveer Singh Gill and Hardeep Kaur Bedi both adhere to a narrative that privileges men over women irrespective of their gendered differences. A public Sikh nationalist narrative generates certain forms of unity and homogeneity around a Sikh male identity that is recognizable and identifiable, while also obscuring a female Sikh identity. The privileging of a recognizable male identity becomes more apparent when compared to an obscured, excluded, and marginalized female identity. Therefore, these two identities – one privileged and one ignored – must be read as mutually constitutive.

### **Conclusion**

An examination of the ways in which Sikhs narrativize a nationalist identity contributes to a specific debate on identity in Sikh and Punjab Studies by demonstrating that conceptions of identity as either uniform and homogenous or differentiated and ambiguous are limited in their explanatory value. This analysis is able to capture the significance of a nationalist narrative in the Sikh community without assuming that this narrative is uniform or monolithic. By doing so, I am able to demonstrate the continued significance of this particular narrative, while also being cognizant of the differences and ambiguities within the narrative, and how these differences and ambiguities function to privilege some and displace others.

### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> Bachittar Singh Walia, a 40-year-old Jat man, states, “Sikhs are a minority; for example, they are two to three percent [of the Indian population].” Walia also adds, “Sikhs have an identity that is recognized worldwide. But we can’t say that Sikhs have a specific or special national identity.” Thus, for Walia a minority identity does not give rise to a separate national identity among Sikhs. When asked explicitly about the treatment of Sikhs in India, Walia states that the treatment of Sikhs is “fine.” He adds, “There aren’t any major problems, because India is an independent nation in which all religions are given an equal degree of respect. The state doesn’t adopt any policies that privilege one religion over another; all religions are treated equally and given equal respect.” For Walia, Sikhism, like other religions, is recognized and respected by the state. And more specifically, the state does not adopt policies that privilege one religion over another. And therefore, Walia’s understanding of a Sikh minority identity is narrativized as harmonious with the state and its policies towards religious minorities. Even though Walia’s narrative does not completely resonate with the narrative themes emphasized in a Sikh nationalist narrative – injury and injustice, sacrifice and martyrdom, Khalsa Raj, recognizable identity – he does recognize Operation Blue Star as one of the most important moments in Indian history since independence. For Walia, Operation Blue Star represents an injury Sikh sentiment from which Sikhs are still recovering. Walia

understand himself through and takes action from an integrationist narrative, but this does not foreclose his capacity to recognize the importance of injury and injustice, especially in relation to Operation Blue Star.

<sup>2</sup> There is debate regarding the veracity of the popular belief that Sikh Gurus established martyrdom. Louis Fenech argues that the current understanding of martyrdom that is prominent in the Sikh community is not directly connected to the Guru period. Specifically, Fenech challenges the dominant belief among Sikhs that Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, was the first Sikh martyr. Fenech is able to decenter this belief through a three-prong strategy: (1) Fenech's critical examination of primary sources "demonstrates that many scholars of the Sikh tradition extrapolate far too much from them, filling in the numerous gaps in these sources' narrative with popular understandings forged in later years" (1997, p. 627); (2) Fenech determines that "a conceptual system of posthumous recognition and anticipated reward" (1997, p. 630) necessary for the accommodation of martyrdom did not exist during the time of Guru Arjan; and (3) Fenech comes to the conclusion that the terms *sahid* and *sahadat* when used in Sikh literatures is used in its Islamic sense rather than what would later come to signify the Sikh martyr (1997, p. 636). Based on these three arguments, Fenech comes to the conclusion that Tat Khalsa ideologues in the nineteenth century appropriated a profound and powerful 'rhetoric of martyrdom' in an effort to produce the far less inclusive definition of the Sikh martyr (1997, p. 642).

<sup>3</sup> Many respondents describe Sikh military service as part of Sikh sacrifice and martyrdom. Santokh Kaur, a 46-year-old Jat woman, for example, states, "Sikhs are always ready to fight; they are always ready to give their lives, but no one respects this sacrifice. Take a look at all the borders; the borders are full of Sikh regiments." According to Kaur, Sikhs sacrifice their lives for Indian national security; however, these sacrifices are neither acknowledged nor respected.

<sup>4</sup> Many respondents who adopt a Sikh nationalist narrative use the terms Congress Raj and Hindu Raj interchangeably. For these respondents secularism is read as a thinly veiled pursuit of Hindu Raj. For example, Fateh Singh states, "Look, before British rule, there was Muslim rule, after the British there is Hindu Raj, Congress Raj. Hindu Raj and Congress Raj is one thing. Their porridge is the same; the only difference is that one speaks to your face and the other says, 'We believe in and respect every religion.'"

<sup>5</sup> According to Barbara and Tomas Metcalf, public rage in response to Indira Gandhi's assassination took its most hideous and brutal shape in Delhi, with mobs roaming the streets in pursuit of revenge. For three days, gangs of arsonists and killers in criminal collusion with the police and Congress Party politicians were allowed to rampage freely. Consequently, over 1,000 innocent Sikhs were murdered in Delhi, and thousands more rendered homeless. No one was ever brought to jail for these crimes (Metcalf & Metcalf 2002, p. 255). For further details see Metcalf and Metcalf's chapter entitled *Congress Raj: Democracy and Development, 1950-1989*. Others such as Amiya Rao argue

that closer to 5,000 Sikhs lost their lives. (For further details see Amiya Rao's "When Delhi Burnt.")

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the significance of forms of state power on Sikh identity and politics see Pritam Singh's "The Political Economy of the Cycles of Violence and Non-violence in the Sikh Struggle for Identity and Political Power."

<sup>7</sup> Jagdish Tytler is a Congress Party politician who recently withdrew from Lok Sabha elections. Tytler was under CBI investigation for alleged participation in the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. In April 2009, the CBI released a report clearing Tytler of any responsibility. This led to widespread protests by Sikhs in Punjab and Delhi. The Congress Party asked Jagdish Tytler to withdraw from the Lok Sabha election in order to avoid further protest. Tytler ultimately withdrew, but maintains that he is innocent.

<sup>8</sup> Jatinder Singh is referring to fact that Ranjit Singh hired European officers, several of whom served under Napoleon Bonaparte, to train the Khalsa army (Mann 2004, p. 51).

<sup>9</sup> According to the Indian government, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his followers were fundamentalists and terrorists. However, for a segment of the Sikh population, Bhindranwale is considered a *gursikh* [true Sikh], a defender of *gurbani* [word of god] and the social and economic interests of the Sikh *qaum*. Also, it is worth noting that Bhindranwale was referred to and continues to be referred to as *sant* [saint] by a segment of the Sikh population.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Muhammad Iqbal was instrumental in the creation of an independent Muslim state, Pakistan. He is also widely regarded as the author of *Saare Jahan Se Achchha*, an anthem celebrating independent Hindustan.

<sup>11</sup> Sikhs can be differentiated by degrees of religious observance categorized as *amritdhari*, *kesdhari*, and *sahijdhari*. After implementation of the *khande di pahul*, the Sikh community was composed of two segments. The first was the "*kesdharis* or Singhs, who had undergone the ceremony of the *khande di pahul* and had taken up the mission of establishing the Khalsa Raj" (Mann 2004, p. 99). The other segment included the *sahijdahri*, who had not undergone the *khande di pahul*. In the nineteenth century, a third category, *amritdhari*, was created to distinguish those who keep unshorn hair and have undergone the baptismal ceremony from those who keep hair but have not been baptized.

<sup>12</sup> According to Peter van der Veer, Gobind Singh's 1699 inauguration of the Khalsa brotherhood was a major development that enabled Sikhs to formulate their own nationalism. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh declared that (1) he was the last in the succession of Sikh gurus and (2) from then on the authority and unity of the Sikhs would lie in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs, and in the judgment of the entire brotherhood. The formation of the Khalsa brotherhood "was a major development that later enabled the Sikhs to formulate their own nationalism, distinct from that of the Hindus. From then onward, Khalsa Sikhs can be clearly distinguished from those followers of Guru Nanak who did not opt to become part of the Khalsa." (van der Veer 1994, p. 54).

<sup>13</sup> The respondents' construction of a recognizable Sikh identity is more inclusive than what is often referred to in the literature as the "real" or "true" Sikh identity. For example, Peter van der Veer argues that the hair and dress of an *amritdhari* Sikh functions as a perfect boundary marker: "While it is often difficult to discern the doctrinal differences between members of the brotherhood and followers of other Sikh teachings, the hair and dress of a 'real' Sikh maintain the boundary perfectly" (1994, p. 75-76). In contrast to van der Veer, some respondents are willing to stretch the boundary of who counts as a "real" Sikh by including *kesdhari* Sikhs as well as *amritdhari* Sikhs.

<sup>14</sup> The SGPC is an elected body of the Khalsa. The SGPC first came into being in response to the 1920s Gurdwara Reform Movement. Since then, the SGPC has managed and maintained gurdwaras, prepared a standard edition of the *Guru Granth*, issued authoritative statements on Sikh history, beliefs, and code of conduct, and built a chain of schools and colleges.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar's *Sikh Identity*, W.H. McLeod's *Who is a Sikh?*, and Brian Axel's *The Nation's Tortured Body*.

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## **Wavell's Breakdown Plan, 1945-47: an Appraisal**

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The Breakdown Plan was prepared by Lord Wavell and his closest circle of advisors to deal with the fast evolving political situation in India. Two main political tendencies had crystallized in post-War India: Keeping India as one geographic entity; the second one was diametrically opposed to it, espoused by the Muslims, who wanted an independent Muslim-majority state. Wavell's BP was formulated with two main goals in mind: Firstly, a safe withdrawal of the British from India; secondly, to avoid a partition of India by attempting to maintain it as one geographic entity. For the first goal Wavell suggested a 'phased withdrawal' from India, which would be initiated from the Hindu-majority provinces of the south. The second goal was to be achieved by proposing a partition of both the Punjab and Bengal, as a bargaining tool with the Muslim League to deter from pursuing its agenda of a separate Muslim-majority homeland on religious grounds. Although Wavell's overall plan was rejected by the HMG in London, parts of it were, however, incorporated in the final withdrawal plan laid down by Mountbatten, Wavell's successor, in his June 3 Plan. This included the partitioning of both the Bengal and the Punjab thus dealing a blow to Muslim interests in both those provinces. This article tries to detail the overall BP and its implications for the Muslims, particularly, as it ended up shaping the future course of the history of the Punjab. This, in the author's view, has not been attempted before.

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### **Introduction**

Lord Wavell, (the Viceroy of India October 1943-March 1947) conceived of India as a single geographic and administrative unit, and, therefore, was desirous of preserving its political unity. After the failure of the Shimla Conference in 1945, in pursuance of precisely such a goal, he came up with a secret scheme which has come to be known in history as Wavell's 'Breakdown Plan'. Although the final shape of this Breakdown Plan took some time to evolve, however, in its earlier forms, it strictly avoided any reference to the idea of Pakistan.

Wavell's proposed Breakdown Plan, so-called in its final shape, required two steps to be taken for a phased withdrawal of British authority from India: Firstly, a withdrawal from the four Hindu-majority provinces of Bombay, Madras, Orissa and the Central Provinces; secondly, a general withdrawal from the rest of the country, before March 1948.

Wavell believed that such a plan of withdrawal would not only avoid a division of India but also the civil war, which to all indications was looming clearly on the horizon. However, before he had a chance to put his plan into operation he was removed from his position as the Viceroy of India because of



the Labour government's reservations about some long-term implications of his plan.

A critical, historical understanding of Lord Wavell's Viceroyalty which lasted between October 1943 and March 1947, is important for gaining a true insight into the constantly evolving, dynamic relationship between the three leading political actors of India in that period, the British, the Congress and the Muslim League. While Wavell was stressing to the Attlee administration the need to accept and implement his Breakdown Plan the British government, in London, was simultaneously working on a departure plan of its own and it was this policy which was later on adopted by Mountbatten as well.

Voluminous historical literature about the vicerealties of Lord Linlithgow, 1936-43, and Viscount Mountbatten, March-August 1947, exists about the British government's ideas for the transfer of power into Indian hands during those two vicerealties, however, Wavell's period is often overlooked by the historians; consequently, the historical importance of his Breakdown Plan is not fully appreciated.

Wavell's Breakdown Plan, in this author's view, aimed at preserving the political unity of India by the tactic of denying undivided Bengal and Punjab to the Muslim League if the latter persisted in its demand for a totally independent Pakistan. He expected enough flexibility from both parties so as to reach a compromise for a united India, which was Wavell's desired goal. Although Wavell failed in his efforts for a united India via the implementation of his Breakdown Plan, parts of it, however, were incorporated into Mountbatten's June 3, 1947 partition plan resulting in a serious loss of territory for the newly created Muslim state of Pakistan.

### **Wavell's Breakdown Plan**

Wavell, right from the beginning of his viceroyalty, discerned a variety of complex problems lining the Indian political scene. The main ones were the following: the ever-growing Hindu-Muslim friction on religious lines; the Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims on the basis of its two-nation theory and the expected complications flowing from it; lastly, a state of hibernation induced in the British government following the rejection by both the Congress and the League of the Cripps Proposals in 1942; London was not ready to initiate another attempt at breaking the political impasse in India.

Wavell considered India's geographical and political unity as 'natural' and was, therefore, dead-set against any division.<sup>1</sup> He thought of giving appropriate representation to various communities in the legislature, the new central executive and the services. He wished to see the same kind of treatment being given to the Princely States.<sup>2</sup>

Ian Stephens has written that Wavell had contemplated a date for the final British withdrawal from India and, therefore, "in fact, at any rate during that crucial December of 1946, his thoughts were evidently more progressive on this point than the Cabinet's."<sup>3</sup>

H. M. Close has written about Wavell that “consciously or sub-consciously, was not willing to promote a plan for partition on equality with a plan for unity, and therefore downgraded it with the unattractive name of “Breakdown”.”<sup>4</sup> Based on a rough mental sketch of his ‘Breakdown Plan’ Wavell directed his advisers Evan Jenkins, V. P. Menon and B. V. Rau to chalk out its details.

Jenkins’s ‘reserve plan’ of 10 November 1945 had suggested the establishment of an Indian union with the right of a province(s) to secede from it and form a separate union. In case the Muslim-majority provinces decided to form a separate union, he suggested partitioning the Punjab, Bengal and Assam to make Pakistan small, weak and unattractive for Jinnah. He believed, “In the long run I think that the Punjab and probably Bengal might join the original Federal Union on terms- the prospect of partition would be less attractive when it became imminent.”<sup>5</sup> However, he asked V.P. Menon to chalk out further details.

Abell’s input into the Breakdown Plan was that “Pakistan Provinces would be offered to continue for the time being under the present constitution with the British support they have now. They could watch the formation of Hindustan and they could decide later (by an unspecified procedure) to join the Federation or stay out. It would be made clear that H.M.G. would be ready to grant Dominion Status as under the Cripps Plan to the Pakistan Provinces if they wanted.”<sup>6</sup>

However, B. N. Rau agreed with the ‘reserve plan’ and suggested that it would be necessary to give large territorial units in the Pakistan Provinces the option of merging themselves into the neighbouring federating provinces of ‘Hindustan’. He thought that “this is the right sort of reserve plan and that it might be acceptable to the Congress.”<sup>7</sup>

V. P. Menon stressed the need for the establishment of a coalition government pledged to assist in the revision of the Constitution at the earliest possible moment. He also proposed the adoption of a time-table, so that everybody could see that His Majesty’s Government meant business. He disagreed with imposing a constitution suggesting instead convening a convention of important political parties, communities, groups and their representatives which would prepare a constitution. He opined that under the existing plan there was the hope of setting at least one union by the people themselves, as Nehru had suggested. Having got the union, he suggested that they would be in a position to know which units stood out and then to deal with them on that basis.<sup>8</sup>

The general elections (1945-46) had electrified the political atmosphere in India causing the political parties to grow further apart. Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India (1945-1947), inquired of Wavell the actions that would be necessary in the event of their finding it impossible to bring agreement between the parties during the coming summer. Wavell informed him on 5 December 1945 that he and his staff had been considering the “breakdown plan” for some time but had not finalized it.<sup>9</sup> Wavell’s request for a visit to India by Dr. Monteath to chalk out details with his own staff was refused.

Meantime Jinnah's expression of a willingness to accept "frontier adjustments where primarily Hindu and Muslim lands were contiguous to the Hindustan or Pakistan States, as the case may be"<sup>10</sup> was seen as a welcome sign by Wavell as an opening for future negotiations.

According to Wavell's calculations, any contemplated plan for a division of India would affect at least two divisions (Ambala and Jullundur) of the Punjab and almost the whole of Western Bengal, including Calcutta, which could only be joined with the Indian Union. Wavell believed that adoption and enunciation of such a policy by Whitehall would diminish the attractiveness of Pakistan to Jinnah. Wavell, quoting Jinnah, said, "only the husk" then, would remain.<sup>11</sup> Faced with such a fait accompli and finding his power of negotiation vis- a- vis the Congress reduced drastically Jinnah would try to secure the best possible terms for the Muslims within the Union.<sup>12</sup> Wavell felt, "No-one believes that Pakistan is in the best interests of India from the practical point of view, and no-one knows where the partition of India, once it starts, will end short of Balkanisation."<sup>13</sup>

Wavell, on his part, wanted to remove the bargaining power of the Muslim League. He had no doubt that his Breakdown Plan would force the Congress and the League to come to terms, but the best panacea was that "the Constitution would be made sufficiently attractive to the Muslims to induce them to remain in the Federation from the start."<sup>14</sup> It appears that Wavell, quite skilfully, had drafted a plan which would be unacceptable to the Muslims and Hindus, and violently opposed by the Sikhs so that each one of them would have to accept the unity of India.

However, the Labour Party had a number of reservations about Wavell's Breakdown Plan primarily because it felt that such a plan would greatly weaken any possibility of compromise on the basis of even a very loose federation. Further, how could it be enforced without an agreement between the two leading parties?<sup>15</sup> They, like Wavell, wanted adoption of measures most helpful in securing a united India. For carrying out the necessary revisions to Wavell's Breakdown Plan, he was provided the services of David Monteath's Committee.<sup>16</sup>

Evan Jenkins had detailed knowledge about the Indian affairs with clear headedness and always showed great commitment for work<sup>17</sup> and as result Wavell leaned heavily on him.<sup>18</sup> Besides this, Jenkins helped Wavell chalk a comprehensive outline of the Breakdown Plan which he termed it as 'Reserve Plan'. Therefore, Evan Jenkins became ultimate choice of Wavell for the Punjab's governorship whose Governor Bertrand Glancy's term of office came to an end in April 1946. Wavell had a feeling that Glancy had tired man and lacking interest in the provincial affairs of the Punjab.<sup>19</sup> He never discussed the Breakdown plan with Glancy rather relied heavily on his advisers including B. V. Rau, Menon and Evan Jenkins. He was not very happy with the Glancy's handling of the general elections in 1945-46 and food condition in the province.<sup>20</sup>

In the meantime the protracted negotiations regarding the Cabinet Mission Plan's proposals for both the long and the short-term components further

estranged the Hindu-Muslim relations. The delay in forming the Interim Government had caused communal as well as administrative problems. The Calcutta riots following the "Direct Action Day" turned it even bloodier. The riots once let loose could not be stopped. The Interim Government (September 1946-August 1947) caused more frustration than satisfaction for Wavell.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, he pointed out to Whitehall that they must be ready with a plan which could be put into effect if Congress and League failed to reach an agreement or in case both rejected the Mission's Proposals.<sup>22</sup>

Though Wavell had teamed up with the Cabinet Mission Delegation in presenting the Cabinet Mission Plan, deep inside him was not optimistic about its success, expecting a sudden outbreak of violence owing to unbridgeable differences among the leading parties. Therefore, he suggested to Whitehall an adequate consideration of his 'Breakdown Plan' as well. Details of that plan included handing over the Hindu majority provinces of Bombay, Madras, C.P, UP, Bihar and Orissa, by agreement and as peaceably as possible, to the Congress followed by the withdrawal of troops, officials and European nationals in an orderly manner from these provinces.

Wavell was not unaware of the flaws in his Breakdown Plan and, therefore, suggested means to deal with them. Firstly, he thought that the Muslim League might decline the British offer. Secondly, even if it accepted the Plan the plan would result in a division of the Indian army. Thirdly, the actual military operation of withdrawal from Hindustan into Pakistan could be difficult and possibly dangerous. Fourthly, it was an equally grave problem to deal with the large minorities, Hindus and Sikh, in the Muslim provinces. Even at that stage, he still favoured that maximum efforts be exerted to bring about a union of India on the best terms possible and then affect a total withdrawal.

On 6 June 1946 in a Cabinet meeting presided by Attlee at London Wavell's Breakdown Plan was discussed at length. It disapproved the idea of withdrawal from India by a specific date. The Cabinet remarked:

We are anxious to give India her independence and have put forward plans for achieving it. Unfortunately the Leaders of the political Parties of India cannot agree among themselves on a plan for independence. We cannot in these circumstances allow a situation to develop in which there will be a chaos and famine. Accordingly we must maintain our responsibilities until the Indian leaders can find a basis for accepting our offer of independence. Our proposals still remain open.<sup>23</sup>

However, seeing the difficulties facing the Cabinet Mission's proposals and feeling especially pessimistic about Congress's general attitude and supported by a realisation that the continuous attrition faced by the essential services and the army.

The Congress-League disagreement over the long-term and short-term parts of the Cabinet Mission Plan particularly the formation of the Interim Government caused disharmony, discontent and disappointment and it paved the

way for further division among the Muslims on one hand and the Hindus and the Sikhs on the other. With all his good intentions Wavell was convinced that a coalition government would not only help to bypass the demand for Pakistan but help avoid a civil war as well.

Wavell warned that one party rule would lead to a certain civil war, as was obvious from the carnage on the 'Direct Action Day';<sup>24</sup> Gandhi pounded the table and said, "If a bloodbath was necessary it would come about in spite of non-violence." Gandhi in his letter on 28 August told Wavell that Congress would not bend itself and adopt what it considered a wrong course because of "brutal exhibition recently witnessed in Bengal. Such submissions would itself lead to an encouragement and repetition of such tragedies."<sup>25</sup>

The Muslim League decided to declare 2 September 1946, the day the Congress-led Interim Government started its tenure, as a day of mourning and Jinnah instructed the Muslims to display black flags which led to communal riots in Bombay, Punjab, Bengal and Bihar. Jinnah's response to Nehru's broadcast was a bitter attack on the Congress and the British Cabinet.<sup>26</sup>

Wavell, aware of the repercussion and the backlash it would bring to induct one party rule in a multi-religious country with hostile feelings. He recorded:

Though the consequences may be serious I think it is as well that things have come to a head. Calcutta with its 4,400 dead, 16,000 injured and over 100,000 homeless showed that a one-party government at the Centre was likely to cause fierce disorders everywhere. Far from having any sobering effects, it had increased communal hatred and intransigence. If Congress intentions are as Gandhi's letter suggests the result of their being in power can only be a state of virtual civil war in many parts of India while you and I are responsible to Parliament.<sup>27</sup>

Penderel Moon has recorded that "During the period acute tension that followed the failure of the Cabinet Mission, Khizar's Government remained uneasy in the saddle. Though there were isolated communal incidents, there was no widespread outbreak of violence in the Punjab such as occurred in Bengal and Bihar. But this outward tranquillity deceived no one. All the major communities-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs-were collecting arms and getting ready for open war."<sup>28</sup> Evan Jenkins reporting to Wavell informed him that "It has suggested to me that in Lahore the Hindus now feel that they are well prepared and wish to provoke a conflict."<sup>29</sup> He imposed Punjab Public Safety Ordinance on 19 November 1946 to curb communal unrest created by Rashtryia Awayam Sewak Sing (RSSS) and the Muslim League volunteers.<sup>30</sup>

But Wavell was quite aware of the growing disorder and hostility between the major communities in northern parts of India. Defending his phased withdrawal from the south to north he argued, "After all the Congress would be receiving unqualified and immediate power over a very large proportion of India, and it would hardly be to their interest that those provinces should be thrown into chaos. I think that there is prospect that the position might be

accepted, and that the Congress would acquiesce in an orderly transfer, whether the Central Government were dismissed or not.”<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, Wavell once again reiterated the implementation of his Breakdown Plan.<sup>32</sup> Called to London in December 1946 along with the Muslim League and Congress leadership to try to sort out their differences over the interpretations regarding the Cabinet Mission Plan, Wavell in his private talks with the leaders of His Majesty's Government and the Whitehall insisted upon implementing his proposals for the 'Breakdown Plan' or else get ready to face serious consequences.<sup>33</sup> He had reached this conclusion because, firstly, Congress had not accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan in full, and secondly, His Majesty's Government by an inadequate expression of its position regarding the 'Grouping Clause' had allowed the political deadlock to continue with the resultant increase in communal tensions; feeling, therefore, that the Cabinet Mission Plan had lost its efficacy he felt it was time to look for alternate solutions.<sup>34</sup>

Wavell reiterated that his Breakdown Plan was intended for use not merely in case of a widespread administrative deadlock, but also in the event of a political breakdown. He believed that the plan would enable the government to take a firm line with Congress, since it had a reasonable alternative on which to fall back; such a course of action might also enable it to avert a political breakdown.

Since 1945 His Majesty's Government had considered Wavell's ideas about the Breakdown Plan in several meetings of the India and Burma Committee and the Cabinet Committees and Wavell personally pleaded his case on 5 December 1946. Attlee, pointing out the necessity of new legislation, was not optimistic about its outcome. Although granted a personal appearance before the India and Burma Committee, Wavell still felt that his proposed Breakdown Plan did not get the wholehearted approval it deserved.<sup>35</sup>

It was again discussed at 10 Downing Street on 11 December 1946 and it was felt that if either of the two communities refused to cooperate in carrying out the Mission's Plan, then a situation would arise which would justify and necessitate a fresh statement of policy by the government.

Wavell held that if the League refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly, the government would be ready to accept a constitution, drawn up by the present Constituent Assembly, as valid for the Hindu majority provinces only. He pointed out that an announcement by the Government favouring the establishment of Pakistan would at once arouse great opposition on the part of Congress. On the other hand, he hoped that "if they realised that continued intransigence on their part would lead to the establishment of Pakistan, the Congress leaders might become more reasonable."<sup>36</sup>

Wavell explained that under his 'Breakdown Plan' the Hindu Provinces of Bihar and the United Provinces would not be handed over to the Congress in the first stage. Although, politically, they were the most difficult provinces, he had the full concurrence of the Commander-in-Chief on this matter and proposed their retention so as to avoid giving any impression that they were only

retaining hold on the Muslim Provinces. In the end, Wavell's Breakdown Plan, failed to bypass the Pakistan issue completely though it did succeed in postponing it for a while.<sup>37</sup>

In later discussions of Wavell's Breakdown Plan, issues concerning the religious minorities in either of the two groupings or new territories and agreements with one or more new successor authorities were discussed.

Issues concerning the position of the army were particularly awkward as its control and functioning, in the initial stages, both at the central and the provincial levels could spark conflicts in its modes of operations. At a later stage, control of the Indian army would have to pass under the command of some specified authority. If no central authority for the whole of India came into being they could not hand all of it over to a government for the Hindu provinces only; therefore, they would be compelled to divide it.<sup>38</sup>

India and Burma Committee remained unclear about the future of the Princely States. They were unsure about the action with regard to the states adjoining the provinces in which sovereignty was to be handed over and at what stage Paramountcy in respect of those states would have to be surrendered. The rights of minorities would also have to be dealt with and eventually all this would require new legislation in the British Parliament.<sup>39</sup>

Wavell emphasised the importance of announcing at the earliest, in fixed and unequivocal terms, the decision to leave India by a specified date. He believed this would force the leading political parties to come to terms. He said, "the shock of this announcement might be of value in inducing a sense of responsibility in their minds they still had the sense that in the last resort the British would always be there to maintain law and order."<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, the British Ministers forwarded their own line of action. They suggested that most of the objections raised were due to the suggestion that there should be a formal transfer of power to the provinces. The 'constitution' of India could be preserved intact until the later stages. The first stage would consist in the removal of the remaining officers of the Secretary of State Services in the four southern Provinces and the withdrawal of all British troops from there. The British governors could also be recalled unless the provincial governments specially asked for their retention and Indian governors appointed in their place on the advice of the provincial ministers. There would thus be a complete and absolute 'Indianization' of the services in the provinces while the existing constitution would continue to operate and provinces' relationship with the central government would continue as before. The troops of the Indian army would also remain in the provinces to help avoid the division of India into separate units. Similarly, the termination of Paramountcy of Indian States could also be avoided.

The third sitting of India and Burma Committee took place on 19 December 1946. Now, Wavell put forward a different version of his Breakdown Plan. He proposed that it should immediately become clear that if the Muslim League were not be represented in the Constituent Assembly, government would withdraw the governors, Secretary of States Services and British troops from the provinces of Orissa, the Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras within a

period of three or four months. The present status of central government and the constitution should be maintained but fresh governors would be appointed on the advice of ministries. In his concluding remarks in favour of the Plan, he said that it would enable him to concentrate his administrative forces and limit his responsibilities. It would cause psychological effect on the two communities and they might go for some form of cooperation.<sup>41</sup>

The India and Burma Committee considered the revised Wavell Plan and held that legislation would be necessary because it completely disregarded the government of India Act 1935. The Secretary of State and the Viceroy could not rid themselves of their responsibilities under that Act without an Act of Parliament. It was, however, desirable to avoid legislation before the final transfer of sovereignty. They thought that such legislation would be difficult to get through the Parliament and, therefore, it might be possible to use the 'convention' that governors would always accept the advice of their ministers. Alternatively, it might be possible to obtain the approval of the parliament to some 'blanket resolution' which would give the government sufficient authority to act. Without such authority they might be charged with abandoning their responsibilities towards the minorities and neighbouring states.

Since the cooperation of the Congress was crucial for any implementation of the Breakdown Plan it was felt necessary that its introduction be made through a carefully worded statement since an impression, in spite of the retention of Bihar and the United Provinces, of the British withdrawal from southern provinces as implying a tilt in favour of Pakistan could easily be created. The probability was that the following the British withdrawal southern provinces would continue to hand over to the central government the taxes necessary for financing the essential services.

The India and Burma Committee resumed its discussion of the Wavell's Breakdown Plan on 20 December.<sup>33</sup> Wavell stressed, feeling the heat from the prime ministers of the four southern provinces, that announcement of a definite date for British departure could lessen their enthusiasm for an immediate, full independence in essential services. The date decided upon was 31 March 1948.

Concerning the transfer of power it was felt that it could be easily carried out to a central authority representing the Congress-led provinces while concerning the other provinces the power could be handed over individually or to a separate central government for them; it would also result in splitting the Indian army.

The India and Burma Committee in its meeting of 3 January 1947 rejected Wavell's Breakdown plan. The Ministers held that "it was wrong to press too far the analogy of a military withdrawal. The operation now to be begun was not so much a military as a political operation of great delicacy. It must be regarded not as a withdrawal under pressure, but as a voluntary transfer of power to a democratic government. To an increasing degree the Viceroy would assume the position of a constitutional ruler and he and the British officials would act in conformity with the policy of that



Government.<sup>42</sup> All this was, however, not conveyed to Wavell before his departure for India.

Next meeting of India and Burma Committee took place on 6 January 1947.<sup>43</sup> Although the Committee showed appreciation of the fact that the area under the control of the Viceroy would be lessened, thereby reducing his risks, they however, disagreed with Wavell's argument that he would remain unaffected. They felt that his argument was not conclusive enough.

The second argument that the Breakdown Plan would deserve implementation in case a law and order situation arose was also rejected on the ground that the Committee's plan for vacating India should not be based on the assumption that law and order would be broken. It thus failed to appreciate the ground realities of a serious communal conflict, just around the corner, in India. In general the Committee desired a friendly atmosphere for transfer of power to Indian authorities. They were of the opinion that the Plan would result in the division of India into two or more parts and this would lead straight in the direction of Pakistan. Therefore, the Committee decided that the Viceroy's plan should be held in reserve for use only in case of an emergency.

Some recommendations concerning the transfer of some members of the Secretary of State Services at present serving in the southern provinces to other provinces and movement of some troops from south to north so as to concentrate them in the north were made.<sup>44</sup> These changes should be carried out in such a way as not to imply a complete withdrawal of British authority from these provinces.

Attlee conveyed the Cabinet's decision to Wavell on 8 January 1947.<sup>45</sup> He invited Wavell to London as soon as possible for a review of the situation. But Wavell had returned to India and thought it would be useless to plead his Breakdown Plan any more.<sup>46</sup> His termination a short while later ended all hopes of its implementation.<sup>47</sup>

### **Implications of the Breakdown Plan**

The Breakdown Plan fell short of the desirable level of acceptability in the British political circles because it could have created a conflict between the central government and the provinces due to ambiguity in the central and provincial subjects; Wavell's suggestion to overcome this weakness that withdrawal should be made only from four provinces instead of six Hindu-majority ones, to obviate a 'pro-Pakistan' bias was also deemed unsatisfactory.

The main reason for the failure of acceptance concerning Wavell's Breakdown Plan, however, lay with a majority of the British ministers who disliked any scheme that included evacuating the largest and most important colony, India. It was also considered desirable to leave India in the hands of those leaders who could make economic and political treaties with the British Government but, they also felt, that the Plan did not guarantee such peaceful transfer of power to a legitimate authority or authorities. Additionally,

a chain reaction of other colonies demanding their freedom as well was very worrisome to many leading members of the British political leadership.<sup>48</sup> Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, felt that “the defeatist attitude adopted by the Cabinet and by Field-Marshal Wavell is just completely letting us down.”<sup>49</sup> He was against the fixing of a specific date for withdrawal as it could cause problems for them in the Middle East and suggested Attlee to replace Wavell due to his defeatist approach.<sup>50</sup>

The British government was also apprehensive of the communist involvement in the region. They did not wish to leave their former possessions in an unfriendly atmosphere which would force the colonies to reach out to the USSR.

Wavell's Breakdown Plan needed legislation from the British parliament to put it into force. Labour Party feared that new legislation would not get approval in the Parliament on the lines proposed by Wavell as he was considered a ‘defeatist’ by the Labour party and an advocate of scuttle.<sup>44</sup> Attlee himself never had a positive opinion of Wavell's political insight and doubted whether he had the finesse to negotiate the next step. Since one of the main aims of the Breakdown Plan was to avoid the blackmailing by the Congress ministries from the four provinces, as Viceroy was obliged to act upon the advice of the ministers.<sup>43</sup> Although the Labour Party rejected the Wavell's Breakdown Plan, they agreed in principle to leave India lest the Indians forced them to vacate the country. They announced the date of their final withdrawal as March 1948, a date which Wavell had suggested.<sup>51</sup>

All this delay in settling the communal problem and winding up the British rule had the most adverse effect in India particularly in the province of the Punjab. The loyalties of the police and the army towards British authority became doubtful. According to Noor-ul-Haq, “it seems that, by January 1947, the communal feelings in the Armed Forces had grown very strong....Because of the growing communalism in the Armed Forces, Prime Minister Attlee, who stood for the unity of India, got worried that Indian unity, could not be achieved if the Indian Armed Forces were spilt on communal lines.”<sup>52</sup>

The country had been heading towards a civil war which could have been avoided by implementing the Breakdown Plan. Victoria Schofield has recorded:

Since partition formed part of the eventual solution, it may be conjectured that the Breakdown Plan-taking place over more than a year under Wavell's schedule-would have provided more time for tempers to subside; under Mountbatten, there were less than three months between the announcement of partition in June 1947 and independence celebrations in August. Mountbatten argued that once the plan had been announced time was of the essence, but within Wavell's longer time-frame it is possible the violence that accompanied partition could have been considerably lessened, if not averted.<sup>53</sup>

Thus the civil war that broke out during the last days of Raj in India, in which numerous innocent people were slaughtered, might have lost a major part of its fury if Wavell's Breakdown Plan had been implemented, the division of India and also the partition of the provinces of Punjab and Bengal would most likely, have taken place peacefully.

According to the instructions of His Majesty's Government, Mountbatten acted as a constitutional head of the government and, therefore, could do nothing to stop bloodshed; rather, he left everything in the hands of the Interior Minister Sardar Patel who made scant efforts to control it. Wavell, on his part, had been impartial and conscious of the rights of all communities and was determined, as an executive head, to suppress all such threats. After his dismissal, extremists became uncontrollable and shed the blood of innocent people in India in presence of the new Governor-General and British forces, police and army.

During Wavell's Viceroyalty, devolutionary process of British authority in India was accelerated.<sup>54</sup> Whitehall rejected his Breakdown Plan because they believed that it was a weak plan of a defeatist soldier and would result in a clash with the Congress. Attlee thought, "Partition would bring us into immediate conflict with the Congress and permanently embitter our relations with the larger part of India."<sup>55</sup> This kind of approach emboldened the Congress which promoted violence and bloodshed against the Muslims.<sup>56</sup>

It proved a great error on the part of Whitehall to ignore the Breakdown Plan as Ian Stephens has recorded, "he put forward a 'Wavell (Breakdown) Plan', politically and militarily clear-cut, whereby British authority would have been withdrawn from the subcontinent much more gradually; that this was turned down; and that had it not been, much of the appalling slaughter at Partition-time, and resulting ill-will between the two successor-States, might have been avoided."<sup>57</sup>

It is obvious that Wavell's personal relations with Attlee were strained and uneasy. Wavell's insistence on carrying out his Breakdown Plan put the Labour government in an awkward position. Although Wavell was allowed to return to Delhi following the meetings of December 1946 the fact was that Attlee had already decided to replace Wavell during his stay in London but did not dare tell him personally.<sup>58</sup> The Congress leadership was annoyed with him too and had been continuously asking the Labour Government to replace him. In the last days of the transfer of power, he had become unacceptable both to the Congress and the ruling Labour Party in England. H. C. Close has already challenged the myth that Wavell had become a spent force. But he has concluded wrongly that Wavell was insisting on establishing a 'Lesser Pakistan'. As a matter of fact, Wavell in his Breakdown Plan had developed a strategy to force the Congress and the League to come to terms on the basis of the Cabinet Mission Plan but he was not allowed to carry it through in its entirety. The Labour Government rejected some of Wavell's main recommendations as put forward in the Breakdown plan but accepted some others which were embodied in it but dismissed him from the viceroyalty.

Wavell can also be credited with strongly apprising the British government of the widespread backing by Muslims of the 'Pakistan' scheme so that it could

be dealt with effectively before it became unmanageable. He considered the Cabinet Mission Plan as the best antidote to the spreading popularity of the Pakistan scheme and, therefore, wanted the British Government and Whitehall to press the Congress strongly in order to gain concessions which would have prevented the emergence of Pakistan; in the end, however, he failed in his attempt.

### Conclusion

Wavell was not original in his ideas about the partition of India because Rajagopalachari and Gandhi had earlier suggested the division of the Punjab and Bengal on communal lines as well if Pakistan were to be created. However, Wavell prepared the Breakdown Plan to reduce the attractiveness of the 'Pakistan Scheme' for the Muslims. In his Breakdown Plan he suggested the division of Punjab, Bengal and Assam on communal basis something which was not clearly mentioned either in the Rajagopalachari Formula (1944), Gandhi-Jinnah talks (1944), Cripps Proposals (1942) or the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946). His suggestion in the Breakdown Plan that Punjab and Bengal should be divided on a communal basis if Jinnah insisted on the Pakistan demand, was only envisaged as a bargaining point with the Muslim League and never intended for actual implementation because he was dead sure that the League and the Congress would come to terms on a formula for a united India based on the Cabinet Mission Plan. However, since neither of the parties was willing to compromise enough he was proved wrong. In the meantime his Hindu advisers had drawn up an unjust demarcation of the Punjab and the Bengal boundaries on maps, which, when actually implemented during Mountbatten's brief tenure as the Viceroy, later on, caused tremendous territorial losses to the newly created state of Pakistan.

### Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Qazi Saeed-ud-Din, "Is India Geographically One, in Rafique Afzal, ed., *The Case for Pakistan* (Islamabad, 1988), pp. 67-76.
  - <sup>2</sup> *Transfer of Power, Constitutional Relations between Britain and India*, Vol. IV, pp. 331-38.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ian Stephens, *Pakistan*, (London: Ernest Benn), p. 125.
  - <sup>4</sup> H. M. Close, *Wavell, Mountbatten and the Transfer of Power*, (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1997), p. 86.
  - <sup>5</sup> Jenkins to Wavell, 10 November 1945, R/3/1/108: ff 8-11.
  - <sup>6</sup> Minutes by Wavell and Abell, 29-30 November 1945, R/3/1/108: ff 16-17.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>8</sup> Menon to Abell, 6 December 1945, R/3/1/108: ff 24-29.
  - <sup>9</sup> Wavell to Lawrence, 5 December 1945, L/PO/10/22.
  - <sup>10</sup> Wavell to Lawrence 18 December 1945, Ibid.
  - <sup>11</sup> Wavell to Lawrence 27 December 1945, L/P&J/ 8 / 525: ff 248-51

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Minute addressed to Gibson, undated, Turnbull Papers, MSS. EUR/ D. 714/72.

<sup>14</sup> Wavell to Lawrence 27 December 1945, L/P&J/ 8 / 525: ff 248-51.

<sup>15</sup> Minute addressed to Gibson, undated, Turnbull Papers, MSS. EUR/ D. 714/72.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Before being selected to be Wavell's private secretary Evan Jenkins was an outstanding member of the Indian Civil services, who had been Chief Commissioner of Delhi, 1937-40, and the Secretary, Department of Supply, 1940-3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.108.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.210.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> It suggested that a policy should be adopted to ensure there would be minimum loss of face to the image of His Majesty's Government and no ultimate prejudice to conflicting aims of Indians. The condition of a provisional constitution for India must be based upon in the 1935 Act and such a constitution must continue to provide a unitary framework. It also pointed out that means should be applied to retain India as single state, without prejudice to interests of Indian Muslims. Draft by India Office, undated, *Transfer of Power*, Vol., VI, pp. 1213-28.

<sup>23</sup> Attlee to Wavell, 6 June 1946, Ibid., pp. 830-32

<sup>24</sup> Wavell Collections, 1946, 134-5

<sup>25</sup> Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, 342-3

<sup>26</sup> Tara Chand, *Freedom Movement in India*, volume 4, p. 486

<sup>27</sup> *Wavell to Lawrence, 28 August 1946, R/3/1/117: f 145*

<sup>28</sup> Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*(London: Chatto & Windus Limited, 1961), 74

<sup>29</sup> Jenkins to Wavell, 31 October 1946, L/PEJ/5/249:ff 34-5

<sup>30</sup> Jenkins to Colville, 30 November 1946, L/P&J/5/249 : 22-3s

<sup>31</sup> Wavell to Lawrence, 23 October 1946, L/PEJ/10/46: ff 490-6

<sup>32</sup> Wavell told Lawrence that the British government should hand over, after a stated plan, the Congress majority provinces to Congress but maintain the present constitution and British control in the North West and North East India. Wavell predicted that under such conditions if British government was not prepared to change their policy, the British control in India could be maintained for maximum one and a half-year or till the spring of 1948. Therefore, a definite plan should be worked out in order to wind up British control in India. He suggested that withdrawal should be completed not later than the spring of 1948 because from the administrative point of view government could no longer exercise control beyond that date.

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However, he made it clear that the Breakdown Plan was intended primarily for use in the event of a deadlock before 1 January 1947. He held that the plan should come into operation no later than 1 March 1947.

- <sup>33</sup> Lawrence to Attlee 13 September 1946, L/PO/6/117: ff 42, pp. 45-82.
- <sup>34</sup> Note by Wavell, 2 December 1946, L/P&J/10/111: ff 86-90.
- <sup>35</sup> India Conference in London, 5 December 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 374-9
- <sup>36</sup> India and Burma Committee. I.B. (46) 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 11 December 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, pp. 332-7
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Wavell was sure that it would no longer be possible for Congress to put pressure upon him by threatening to withdraw ministries from the provinces. This threat had in the past been a source of embarrassment because he at that time was in no position to administer the provinces under section 93 of the government of India Act 1935 because of growing control of the popular governments under the Congress party. India and Burma Committee. I. B (46)11<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 19 December 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, pp 383-6.
- <sup>42</sup> India and Burma Committee. I. B. (47) 1st Meeting, 3 January 1947, L/P&J/10/46: ff 48-51
- <sup>43</sup> India and Burma Committee. I. B. (47) 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 6 January 1947, L/P&J/10/46: ff 23-6.
- <sup>44</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 6 January 1947, India and Burma Committee, Paper I.B. (47)3. *Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, pp.472-4.
- <sup>45</sup> Attlee said that "in even of the Muslim League failing to enter the Constituent Assembly it would be desirable to announce a time limit for the continuance of British rule in India; it was considered that it would not be advisable to fix a day. While it was considered that the plans might be made for that event and that troops might be moved, there was strong confirmation for the view expressed by the India Committee that the proposal for the abandonment of all responsibility for four Southern Provinces was unacceptable. The Cabinet did not approve the approach to the problem on the basis of a military evacuation. It was considered that a different approach was required-viz that if close co-operation with the Indian Governments at the Centre and in the Provinces in order to work out with them plans for handing over the Government in India, as a going concern. There was a feeling that withdrawal by stages was an encouragement for fragmentation." Attlee to Wavell, 8 January 1947, L/PO/8/9: ff 66-8.
- <sup>46</sup> Michael Edwards. *The Last Years of the British India* (London: Cassel, 1963), pp. 147-149.

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- <sup>47</sup> Attlee to Wavell, 12 January 1947, Telegram, L/PO/8/9j: ff 42.
- <sup>48</sup> Sir O. Sargent to Sir D. Monteath, 7 December 1946, L/P&J/10/122: ff 105-6.
- <sup>49</sup> Bevin to Attlee, 1 January 1947, R/30/1/8a: ff 72-7.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> The new Viceroy Mountbatten did not like to delay the process of demitting the British authority. Therefore, he claimed the maximum powers from the government to settle issues in India. He learnt from the experiences of the previous Viceroy and acquired plenipotentiary powers.
- <sup>52</sup> Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: The Military Perspective* (Lahore: Army Education Press, reprinted, 1995-96), pp. 158-9.
- <sup>53</sup> Victoria Schofield, *Wavell, Soldier and Statesman*, p.400.
- <sup>54</sup> The newspaper wrote that “widespread sympathy with Viscount Wavell, who is regarded as having been given an impossible individual task, and is now made to appear a scapegoat for the failure of the Government to bring the Indian parties together.” *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 March 1947.
- <sup>55</sup> Attlee to Mr. Mackenzie King 13 February 1947, Telegram, L/P&J/10/77: ff 325-8.
- <sup>56</sup> Wavell to Lawrence, 8 January 1947, L/PO/10/24.
- <sup>57</sup> Ian Stephens, *Pakistan* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1963), p. 122.
- <sup>58</sup> *News Chronicle* indicates that from a present point of view Lord Wavell’s departure will be regretted, but there is no need to gloss over the fact that certain errors of judgment have been attributed to his political inexperience in dealing with the astute Indian politicians. *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1947.

## **Muslim Urban Politics in Colonial Punjab: Majlis-i-Ahrar's Early Activism**

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The British annexed Punjab in 1849, and established a new system of administration in form and spirit. They also introduced western education, canal colonies and a modern system of transportation, which had its impact on the urban population. In rural Punjab they collaborated with the landlords and feudal elite to get their support in strengthening the province as 'grain basket' for the British Army. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (hereafter MAI) was an urban Muslim organisation, comprised of ex-Khilafatists, trained in agitational politics during the period 1919-1929, many of whom were ex-Congressites. Ahrar leaders split with the INC over the issue of the Nehru Report in 1929. Soon after the formation of the new party, they decided to participate in INC-led civil disobedience movement of 1930 and were interred in large numbers. The MAI's platform was based on a united India, but one, which was free from imperial control, anti-feudal, with less economic disparities and had an Islamic system for the Muslims of India.

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### **Introduction**

A number of religio-political movements emerged from Punjab during the first half of the twentieth century. A study of the history, politics and social structure of Punjab is necessary in order to understand these movements. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (MAI) was founded in 1929 in Lahore, and reflected a unique blend of religion and politics in the multi-cultural province of Punjab in British India. Its career raised and spawned both concerns and suspicions about its ideology and activism.

Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Punjabi peasants did not have any proprietary rights in land; as the community collectively constituted the proprietary unit. It was difficult to alienate land from the cultivator without the consent of the whole community. The communal terms, like 'individual rights', 'property', the 'purchasing power of money' and 'attachment and sale', were beyond the comprehension of cultivators.<sup>1</sup> The rural character of society was encouraged and fostered by giving proprietary rights to the peasants, and integrating the rural aristocracy into the administrative system. The British Legal System, which was based on Rivaj-i-Aam or Customary Laws, did not offend the religious or racial identities of people of Punjab, and provided agricultural classes with proprietary right in land, which was transferable. It gave a sense of security but at the same time was leading the Muslim peasantry



to indebtedness to the Hindu moneylenders. Within a decade of annexation, steps were taken to correct this situation under a new 'Punjab tradition'.<sup>2</sup> The Land Alienation Act of 1900 stopped transfer of land from agriculturalists to moneylenders, and the large-scale canal irrigation brought vast new areas under cultivation.

By 1920, Punjab had been ruled by the British for seventy years, which had brought about changes in the society at all levels. The introduction of western education, new revenue settlement and administrative system, the construction of canals, colonisation of canal-irrigated lands, and the development of railways, had led to major social changes. Once law and order had been established, the British instituted alliances with the rural elite, in order to strengthen their rule. While the presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay helped to maintain trade and commerce, Punjab played the role of a 'grain basket' for the sub-continent, from the late 19th century onwards. Punjabi peasants were recruited in the army and police, in large numbers, which converted Punjab into the sword arm of India. Punjabi society in the early 20th century comprised of a predominantly rural population, which had been further consolidated with the irrigation schemes and land settlements.

The Muslim community in Punjab was founded on a kinship-based system, and in several cases lacked the strict caste-based divisions. The organisation of society depended upon tribal affiliations, and instead of social and economic factors, political allegiance underwrote tribal solidarity; whereas caste reflected only professional and social identity. Identical groups (Jats, Rajputs, Gujjars, Pashtuns, Sayeds, and Qureshis) represented different layers of classes of society, if one could literally use the barometer of such a classification for a rural setup.<sup>3</sup> The politico-administrative arrangements made by the new rulers, the economic changes brought about by their policies and measures, threw up a new middle class, which was more prosperous, literate, and influential than its predecessors. Gradually, this class assumed the leadership of Punjab in social, cultural and political matters. The possibility of participation in the politics of Punjab, kept these Punjabis active in society. The British, though neutral, thought in terms of religious communities. The leaders of this new middle class often reacted to the activities of Christian missionaries, and in a way, their interaction also defined their respective communal identity. The movements for reforms and revival sprang up in Punjab, the way they had been evolving in Bengal and the UP. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, all redefined their collectivities; which were based on their languages, traditions and cultures with Hindi, Urdu and English largely displacing Persian and Punjabi.

The Hunter Education Report of 1882 failed to attract Muslims towards modern western education in a significant way. The rural nature of their community, and a sense of political loss among the Muslim elite, engendered such alienation. They were in a phase of lamentation after losing political power to the British, and were not willing to accept the Hindu majority as equals. The government blamed Muslims for not educating themselves, without understanding, that, they could not afford the cost of modern education, as traditional madrasa education was free and in tune with their cultural and

religious values.<sup>4</sup> Reformation of the traditional Muslim instruction was also overdue, for without appropriate education, every opportunity, whether political or social, was foreclosed on the community.<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising that both the traditional revivalist and the modern reformist movements, sought in their own ways, mobilised Indian Muslims in their cultural and social pursuits.<sup>6</sup> The emergence of several Muslim political organisations from these cultural and educational movements is a complex process, which directly impacted the Muslim elite, *Ashraaf*.<sup>7</sup>

A new political chapter opened in Punjab in the early twentieth century and was dominated by leaders like Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1875-1938), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928)<sup>8</sup>, Sir Muhammad Shafi (1869-1932)<sup>9</sup>, and Sir Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936).<sup>10</sup> It was a new phase in agitational politics, and it began to impact on the people at large. These political stirrings resulted in the creation of political organisations, such as the MAI, Khaksars, Mahasabha, Unionist Party and Akali Dal.

### **Formation of the Party**

The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam<sup>11</sup> was founded in Lahore on 29 December 1929.<sup>12</sup> The dominant group amongst its founders was the dissident Punjab section of the Khilafatists,<sup>13</sup> who were influenced by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1889-1958).<sup>14</sup> The Khilafat Movement was aimed at the preservation of the Ottoman Empire, which was the symbol of the unity of Ummah for the Muslims of India. In the wake of the Khilafat Movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had already started his Non-Cooperation Movement against the British government in India, by forming an alliance with the Ali Brothers and the ulama of *Farangimahal*.<sup>15</sup> The guiding spirit and the main financier behind the Central Khilafat Committee was Haji Mian Jan Muhammad Chotani (1873-1932), a businessman from Bombay. Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Shaukat Ali (1873-1938), Maulana Muhammad Ali (1878-1931), Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Dr. Mukhtar A. Ansari, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) and Saif-ud-Din Kichlew were some of the prominent leaders of this Pan-Islamic movement, which created a cadre of political workers tempered and trained in the art of agitation, strikes, mass meetings, processions and willing to be jailed in large numbers. After the Turkish victory and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, while the apprehensions about the independence of Turkey receded, their concerns about the fate of the Caliphate remained amongst the Muslims of South Asia. The Khilafat Movement suffered a setback when M. K. Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement in response to the riots in Kerala. The Khilafat Movement became a lost cause when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the leader of the revolution in Turkey, abolished the Caliphate in 1924. One of the Khilafat leaders, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, issued a religious decree supporting the action of Ataturk, which the new Turkish government distributed in the form of leaflets.<sup>16</sup> The Muslim movements like Khudai Khidmatgars in the NWFP<sup>17</sup> and Khaksars in Punjab,<sup>18</sup> all came into being with the efforts of the former Khilafatists and pro-INC nationalists. To some extent, Muslims had to forget

their basic differences with the Hindus during the Khilafat Movement. For a short period of time, the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity was fostered by nationalists such as Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936), along with a group of ulama led by Abdul Bari Farangi Mahal (1878-1926).<sup>19</sup>

The primary reason for the formation of MAI was the dissension among the Khilafatists in Punjab. After the decline of the Khilafat Movement, the Punjabi Khilafatists had developed and maintained their autonomous identity within the All-India Khilafat Committee, and their critics denigrated them by referring to them as the Punjabi *toli*.<sup>20</sup> After the break with Maulana Shaukat Ali and the Central Khilafat Committee, the ex-Khilafatists from Punjab sought help and guidance from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who advised that they should organise themselves into a regular political party. They had been together over the contentious issue of the Nehru Report, and had followed Azad in supporting it, unlike the Ali Brothers. The Punjab Khilafatists had been thinking of forming a new Muslim party for quite sometimes, but it was finally on Azad's 'suggestion and great insistence' that they laid the foundation of this new party, which eventually took the shape of the MAI.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Nehru Report and the MAI**

The Nehru Report of 1928 had brought dissensions between Azad and Ali Brothers into the open, and became a contentious issue between the Punjabi Khilafatists and the Central Khilafat Committee, which had been closely aligned with the INC. The Nehru Report<sup>22</sup> was a joint effort of Hindu and Muslim leaders of India to solve the problem of representation in India, and sought to paper over communal cleavages. It was the most radical document that the Indian nationalists had produced as a basis for the future constitution of India. The process of preparing the Report began towards the end of 1927, when the British Government, in pursuance of the India Act of 1919, had appointed a statutory commission to inquire into the working of the Act, and to offer further recommendations for a future Indian constitution. Sir John Simon chaired this Commission, which consisted of members of the British Parliament, but it had no Indian representation on it. The INC convened an All-Parties Conference to protest against the composition of this all-white Commission, and objected to its terms of reference. The Conference appointed its own committee with Motilal Nehru as the Chairman, and Jawaharlal Nehru as its Secretary.<sup>23</sup> The report that this committee prepared was ultimately known as the Nehru Report. Instead of full independence, the Report's stated goal was the achievement of a dominion status, with complete transfer of all the departments of the central government to a responsible Indian legislature. It suggested a unitary rather than a federal form of government. The Report turned down the Muslim demands for thirty-three percent representation in the central legislature and rejected the principle of separate electorates, which had been a long-standing Muslim demand. The Punjabi Khilafatists had not been in favour of a unitary system of government, and had wanted to establish a federation in India, based on provincial autonomy,<sup>24</sup> yet they signed the document during the All-Parties Conference in

Lucknow, despite their earlier reservations about joint electorates.<sup>25</sup> They even joined hands with the Indian nationalists in defending joint electorates as a means of resolving communitarian differences. The moral pressure of the nationalist leaders like Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sarojni Naidu, Maulana Azad, Lajpat Rai, Zafar Ali Khan and Mohammad Alam had persuaded the Punjab Khilafatists to accept joint electorates, and they dropped their reservations on these issues.<sup>26</sup>

Another reason for their acceptance of the Nehru Report was the adult franchise formula in the proposed text, which was agreed upon for the first time by all the three main communities of India. This formula was deemed to be a way-out of the deadlock among the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities. The Khilafatists realised that the clause of joint electorates would be unacceptable to the Sikhs, because by adopting this, they would become a permanent minority. The reason was, that except for certain areas in Punjab, they were already a minority in other British Indian provinces. The Khilafatists of Punjab believed that the Sikhs would never agree to the Nehru Report, while the Sikhs had similar expectations from the Muslim nationalists. The Report endangered the Muslim majority in Punjab and Bengal, as they were given less representation than their proportion in the population in these provinces.<sup>27</sup> The Sikhs like the Muslims were not happy with joint electorates and therefore did not support the Nehru Report. They feared that by opting for the Report, they would not be able to win a single seat in the Punjab, or in any other province.<sup>28</sup> This Report, however, ignored the Hindu-Muslim issues, and instead focused on an all-India political solution. It also failed to take into account several enduring Muslim grievances.

The central Khilafat leadership also disapproved of the Nehru Report, and gradually, the Punjab Khilafat Committee began to veer towards political isolation. The conflict between the Central and the Punjab Khilafat Committee over the Nehru Report brought out their differences over several other issues. Among these were the communal riots of 1927, King Ibn-i-Saud's policies in Arabia, and the audit report of the Central Khilafat Committee highlighting the issues of corruptions. The communal riots in Multan, Amritsar, Kohat and Lahore, caused enormous human loss, were seen in the context of religious and cultural differences, and economic and disparities between the Hindus and Muslims.<sup>29</sup> These riots proved a political blow for the nationalist cause in Punjab, mainly, Khilafatists, working on the basis of communal harmony. Prince Ibn-i-Saud had replaced Shariff Hussein of Mecca, and tried to promulgate Shariat in his kingdom. As a leader of the Ikhwan Movement, he believed in the preservation of Islam in its original puritanical form. He was encouraged a good deal by the Indian Khilafatists, who believed that he would be able to establish an Islamic Republic in Hijaz on the pattern of the early days of Islam.<sup>30</sup> But their expectations failed, when an Ikhwan leader ordered the removal of all the domed structures from the graves of Muslims held sacred by most Muslims. On the initiative of the Central Khilafat Committee, a delegation led by Maulana Muhammad Ali visited the Hijaz, to lobby against this action, but with no result. On his return, Muhammad Ali opposed Ibn-i-Saud's policies,

while Maulana Azad openly declared himself in favour of the new Saudi king.<sup>31</sup> Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, the President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee, and other members of it also supported the reformist measures of the Arab Sultan, but differences continued to dog the Muslim leaders.

These differences also occurred due to the audit report of the Central Khilafat Committee Funds, which had resulted in the suspension of Haji Jan Muhammad Chotani, the President of All-India Khilafat Committee, since he was held responsible for the misuse of the Khilafat funds. In his account of the embezzlement issue, Afzal Haq had absolved Jan Muhammad Chotani of any offense and held Central Khilafat Committee responsible for the breach between the Central and Punjab Khilafat Committees. Individuals who had prepared this audit report were assumed to be the opponents of the Central Khilafat leadership like Maulana Mohammad Ali, although they were not Punjabi Khilafatists.<sup>32</sup> During the Calcutta session of the Central Khilafat Committee this 'conflict' between the rival groups of Maulana Mohammad Ali and Maulana Azad became more open, and the Ali Brothers declared the Punjab Khilafat Committee 'unconstitutional', because of its support of Azad. The upper group, or *tabqa-i-oula*, of the Committee, founded the Muslim Nationalist Party; whereas the lower group, or *tabqa-i-adna*, founded the Majlis-i-Ahrar.<sup>33</sup> The Punjab Khilafatists had their own grievances against the Ali Brothers.<sup>34</sup> The Calcutta session of the All-India Khilafat Committee broke into a tussle over the Nehru Report.<sup>35</sup> The leaders of the Punjab Khilafat Committee accepted the Report, but the Ali Brothers rejected it.<sup>36</sup>

The INC, after accepting the Nehru Report during its Calcutta Convention, had fixed 31 December 1929 as the deadline for the acceptance of its recommendations by the British government. The Punjab Khilafat leaders were actively opposing the Nehru Report, as they were generally in favour of separate electorates.<sup>37</sup> Punjabi nationalists tried their best to mobilise Muslims in favour of the Nehru Report, but could not attract large audiences to their public meetings.<sup>38</sup> At an all-India level, issues like Muslim opposition to the Sharda Act<sup>39</sup>, the boycott of Simon Commission and the Hindu-Muslim riots, had already broken the unity between the Hindu Congressites and Muslim nationalists.

### **The Birth of the MAI**

On 29 December 1929, the INC abandoned the Nehru Report at its 44th annual session in Lahore, and instead of dominion status, it demanded complete independence for India. The Punjabi nationalists, who later formed Majlis-i-Ahrar, accused the Congress leaders of not taking them into confidence, before they decided to abandon the Report.<sup>40</sup> This led to the disillusionment of the Muslim Punjabi nationalists with the INC, and they decided to concentrate on forming a new Muslim party. They began with a revolutionary agenda, which stipulated the expulsion of the imperial power from the country,<sup>41</sup> and argued that it was 'useless' to request the British Government or the Congress to grant

reforms, and concentrated on obtaining their freedom through their own struggle.<sup>42</sup>

The idea of forming a new Muslim party took practical shape in the pavilions of Lala Lajpat Rai Nagar, on the banks of River Ravi, a place specially designed for the 44th annual session of the INC in Lahore.<sup>43</sup> When the Muslim members from the Punjab finally left the Congress, they split into two parties. One group held a meeting over which Malik Laal Khan presided in the Hijazi building, outside the Delhi Gate, Lahore. Muhammad Alam, Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Mian Siraj Ahmad Piracha, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Malik Barkat Ali, and Shaikh Abdul Qadir attended this meeting. They formed the Muslim Nationalist Party, which eventually decided to work with the INC. The other group led by Afzal Haque, decided to get active from the platform of the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam. Its leaders gathered at a place outside the Delhi Gate, where Afzal Haq (1893-1942) was designated as the patron-in-chief of the new party, and was deputed to finalise its objectives.<sup>44</sup> Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari (1891-1961) chaired this meeting. Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari was born in Patna (Bihar), where he received his early education in a madrasa, and was a member of the INC and the JUH. When the MAI evolved from an idea into an organisation on March 30 1930, it held its first public meeting at Islamia College in Lahore, under the presidency of Afzal Haq. In his address to this meeting, Ataullah Shah Bokhari urged Muslim youth to come forward and fight for the independence of their country.<sup>45</sup>

Soon after its formation, the MAI adopted a programme in which, amongst other things, it advocated separate electorates. The reason behind this change of policy was that they had lost hope and confidence in the Congress and the central Khilafat leadership. The Ahrar leaders had also realised during their campaign in support of the Nehru Report in Punjab, that despite exhortations from Syed Ataullah Shah, Shaikh Hissamuddin and Habib-ur-Rahman, the general response of the Muslim community to joint electorates had been negative.<sup>46</sup> Afzal Haq and others were now convinced that the joint electorate formula would not be acceptable to the Muslims of the Punjab, although earlier on, these leaders had been carried away by the Congress creed of nationalism.<sup>47</sup> The Khilafatists and Muslim nationalists began advocating separate electorates for Muslims. The propaganda and activities of '56 percent group' in the Punjab, also influenced Muslim thinking. Lal Din Kaiser, a young Punjabi journalist, headed this group, which had raised the issue of Muslim representation in the Punjab. They had argued that 56% Muslim inhabitants in the province must be given proportionate representation based on their population ratio. The MAI accused the editor of *Inqilab*, Abdul Majid Salik, of getting financial support for his paper from Mian Fazl-i Husain, and giving the MAI reduced coverage.<sup>48</sup>

According to a member and chronicler of the MAI, the Party aimed at eradicating the "darkness of imperialism and feudalism", which had developed and flourished under the hegemonic colonial power.<sup>49</sup> It offered a platform from where they could raise the issues concerning Muslims of India, though the focus of reformation remained on the Punjab.<sup>50</sup> Amongst the other Party objectives were complete independence for India, better relations among different Indian

communities, establishment of an Islamic system for the Muslims in the country, and the socio-economic development of India, with special emphasis on the well-being of the Muslim community.<sup>51</sup> The MAI stood for equal distribution of wealth, eradication of untouchability, respect for every religion, and freedom to live according to Sharia. Ataulah Shah Bokhari, in his presidential address at the inaugural session, invited the Muslim masses to cooperate with the MAI in its struggle to safeguard the rights of the Muslims through separate electorates, and the medium of a separate religious organization. Urdu newspapers like *Inqilab* and *Zamindar* of Lahore, identified the Ahrar leaders with INC, although the two parties had parted ways on the issue of the Nehru Report. *Zamindar* welcomed the new party as a fruition of a strong desire to have a central Muslim organization, which would raise the political consciousness of the community, and mobilise it for the attainment of independence from foreign yoke. *Zamindar* even suggested changing the name of Majlis-i-Ahrar to Majlis-i-Watan-i-Islamiyya.<sup>52</sup>

### Component Elements

The prominent founders of the MAI, who were also involved in drafting its initial program were Afzal Haq, Syed Ataulah Shah Bokhari, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Daud Ghaznavi, Ghazi Abdul Rahman and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar. Most of them hailed from the Punjab, and had been active in various movements, particularly the Khilafat movement. At its inaugural session, Syed Ataulah Shah and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar were elected as President and General Secretary respectively of the Majlis.<sup>53</sup> The MAI attracted diverse groups to its ranks, drawn mainly from the educated lower and middle classes; small shopkeepers, artisans, and urban Muslim youth, who had been inspired by the Khilafatists and religious scholars. However, many of those who joined the MAI were inclined towards the Deobandi school of thought.<sup>54</sup> Although the MAI leaders shared the same doctrinal orientation that emphasised the study of law and of the traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, but they also inherited a reformist ideology, quite opposed to the prevalent popular Muslim beliefs and practices. They kept a distance from other doctrinal groups like the Barelwis, Ahl-i-Hadith and Shias. Ataulah Shah Bokhari, a prominent leader of the MAI, was given the title of *Amir-i-Shariat* at an annual meeting of ulama in March 1930, which was presided over by Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, in the presence of almost three hundred ulama.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the leaders and workers mentioned above came into the MAI via the Khilafat movement, and had been actively associated with the INC. These groups had participated in all INC political campaigns, especially the Non-Cooperation movement in the post-War era. They had acquired considerable political experience, organisational and mobilising skills; and by using their oratorical gifts, could easily stir up emotions at public meetings. The second important group of people in the MAI was that of the ulama and workers belonging to the Deobandi school of thought. These ulama had emerged as a new political force during the Khilafat Movement, and claimed the right to lead

Muslims in politics. The result was the infusion of religion into politics. These traditionally educated Muslim religious scholars had existed in Muslim societies for over a thousand years, and played an increasingly important role in Indian politics. Their transformation, discourse and religio-political activism were important for the recent history of the Muslim community in India.<sup>56</sup> Their political aspirations had led them to establish their own party, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind (hereafter JUH) in 1919; which had turned into an anti-colonial organisation of the Deobandi ulama, who followed pro-INC policies.<sup>57</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Khilafatists in Punjab were split into three main factions; those who joined the AIML, those who took refuge in the INC programme, whereas the third consisted of those who had formed the MAI.<sup>58</sup> Another important component of the MAI was a group of the INC Muslim leaders, who were disenchanted with the communalism pervasive within the INC, and felt a need for a new political identity.<sup>59</sup> That is why the MAI used slogans that related only to 'Muslim issues'. Their membership included those people who had lost hope both in the INC and the AIML, and were radically opposed to the British imperial presence in the sub-continent. Led by idealists and individuals with humble economic backgrounds, the MAI's politics were influenced by the INC, while representing Islamic particularism in its religious outlook. The party succeeded in creating a tumult in the British India, especially in the Punjab, where it functioned as an anti-feudal group, and preached Sunni Islam. Punjab remained the main centre of its activities, with Lahore as its headquarters; whereas the Party's main office was situated outside the Delhi Gate. The Party had its branch offices in Amritsar, Delhi, Peshawar, Bahawalpur State and Lucknow. Although the Party's following and influence were mainly confined to Punjab and the NWFP, yet the intensity of its campaigns had an impact on other areas as well.

### **The MAI and the Civil Disobedience Movement**

Before the various tiers of the Party could be organized into a single, homogenous strand, the MAI leaders decided to participate in the civil disobedience movement launched by the INC in 1930. Consequently, they could not devote time to organising the Party till the following year. The MAI had a band of dedicated leaders who were Islamists in their orientation, but also believed in the fundamental unity of India. The Party thus aligned itself with the INC, and subscribed to the INC-led nationalism against the Raj.<sup>60</sup> When the INC had abandoned the Nehru Report at its Lahore session, it had adopted 'complete independence' as its 'ultimate goal', which was closer to the MAI's position.<sup>61</sup> The MAI leaders tried to convince a section of the Deobandi ulama to join the civil disobedience movement of the INC, but they had become divided as a response to the Nehru Report. One faction led by Hussain Ahmad Madni (1879-1957),<sup>62</sup> was cooperating with the Congress; the other led by Shabir Ahmad Usmani and Ashraf Ali Thanavi, had dissociated itself from the civil disobedience movement, because it was in favour of Muslim separatism.<sup>63</sup> Ahmad Saeed Delhvi, the General Secretary of the JUH, tried to unite all



Muslim nationalists on the platform of the civil disobedience movement.<sup>64</sup> During its Amroha session under the presidency of Maulana Moeen-ud-Din Ajmeri, the JUH adopted the 'Complete Independence Resolution' as its policy on 3 May 1930 and resolved to cooperate with the INC. The MAI leaders, and in particular Ataullah Shah Bokhari, the President of MAI, exerted influence from behind the scenes; and in parleys lasting for seventeen hours, convinced the ulama to support the Congress.<sup>65</sup> The MAI's decision to join the Civil Disobedience Movement, established their own anti-colonial credentials. With their training as Khilafatists, they were willing to forge alliances with every other political force arrayed against the alien rulers. When the INC decided to commemorate the 26th of January 1930, as 'Independence Day',<sup>66</sup> the MAI actively participated in all the events.<sup>67</sup> When Gandhi, accompanied by seventy-eight followers, marched to Dandi (Gujarat) on 5 April 1930, and broke the salt law, the MAI leaders and workers joined hands with the INC in a shared defiance of the government's laws, and supported his call for the celebration of a "national week".<sup>68</sup> They picketed the liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops on moral and political grounds.<sup>69</sup> The MAI leaders supported and encouraged people who were willing to leave government schools, colleges and jobs.<sup>70</sup> Some legislators resigned from their seats, whereas hundreds of office workers left their jobs. The Ahrar leaders toured towns and villages of Punjab to promote anti-colonial ideas and rally people against the Raj.<sup>71</sup> As a result of their campaign, people began to use locally-made *khaddar* instead of foreign cloth, and denounced the industrial exploitation of India.

The Punjab Government declared the Congress Working Committee illegal, and arrested its top leadership in June, 1930.<sup>72</sup> The new cadre that replaced it and emerged on the Indian political scene, included among its leaders Afzal Haq, who occupied a prominent place in the movement. At this stage, the MAI's support for the Congress movement was steadfast, and many of its leaders and workers courted arrest.<sup>73</sup> Ataullah Shah Bokhari was arrested from Dinajpur, Bengal, while Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianavi, a leading Ahrari, undertook to make salt and defy the law.<sup>74</sup> The police resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the Congress rally he was addressing in Ludhiana, and injured several people. Habib-ur-Rahman was put behind bars for one year because he declared:

"I consider the British Government a foreign government. I consider it my duty to expel the British and win freedom for our country. For this, whatever punishment we are given, shall be accepted gladly. So it is the duty of all Indians to boycott British goods and to make the running of the country impossible".<sup>75</sup>

After his arrest, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad nominated Afzal Haq, a member of the Congress Working Committee, as the de-facto leader of the movement.<sup>76</sup> Afzal Haq gave call for a public meeting in Delhi, and was also arrested.<sup>77</sup> Haq was not released until June 1931, while other Ahrar leaders, including Mazhar Ali Azhar, Sheikh Hissamuddin and Daud Ghaznavi, were also arrested during the campaign.<sup>78</sup>

### **Farewell to the Disobedience Movement and the INC**

After the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, the British Government released all the political prisoners except for Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianwi, who was released a month later. This was done to create a conducive atmosphere for the second Round Table Conference; a series of negotiations between the British and the Indian politicians on the political impasse.<sup>79</sup> The INC held its annual session in Karachi in March 1931; but the phase of accommodation between the Muslim nationalists and the INC seemed to have ended. The Muslim members from Punjab felt disillusioned with the INC, because of its indifference to the aspirations of Muslims. The MAI had another reason to feel frustrated at the Karachi session; Afzal Haq from Punjab was not nominated to the INC Working Committee, and instead Doctor Muhammad Alam was, on the recommendation of Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri. During the same session, the Chair turned down Zafar Ali Khan's request for adjournment of the session for prayer. He was told, that his right of vote would be forfeited, if he left the meeting. When he tried to move his case in the Subjects Committee on the basis of his privilege as a member, it was again rejected.<sup>80</sup> The Muslim press took up this issue as an anti-Muslim gesture.<sup>81</sup> Zafar Ali Khan dubbed the INC as a Hindu party, and declared that he would boycott its future proceedings.<sup>82</sup> Other contemporary developments also added to the Ahrar frustration. Firstly, the Ahrar candidates in the district Congress elections in Ludhiana and Amritsar, lost to their rivals. Even Ghazi Abdul Rahman, once a close associate of Gandhi, was defeated.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, Syed Ataullah Shah and Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman had advised Gandhi not to participate in the Round Table Conference in London, and especially travelled to Bombay for this purpose, but to no avail.<sup>84</sup> The indifference of the INC leadership towards Ahrar, made them bitter and frustrated. Lastly, the Hindu nationalists in Punjab launched a campaign against the MAI, accusing them of communalism, since the latter had reverted to the demand for separate electorates for Muslims.

### **Reorganisation of the MAI**

After the Karachi INC session in 1931,<sup>85</sup> Afzal Haq resigned from the Punjab Congress and devoted his energies to the MAI.<sup>86</sup> Along with Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Sheikh Hissamuddin, Habib-ur-Rahman, Mazhar Ali Azhar, Syed Daud Ghaznavi and Khawaja Abdul Rahman Ghazi, Haq took steps to reactivate the MAI, which had been dormant since the starting of the non-Cooperation Movement in 1930.<sup>87</sup> Finally, in a public meeting in June 1931, under the chairmanship of Ataullah Shah Bokhari, they decided to reorganise their party.<sup>88</sup> About seven thousand attended this meeting in Lahore where the party's branch was formally established; and the establishment of similar branches in other cities of Punjab, NWFP and Sindh followed.<sup>89</sup> The MAI planned a political conference for July 1931 in Lahore, to highlight its objectives; and constituted a reception committee consisting of Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar as its chair, and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Ahmad Ali

Lahori, Maulana Abdullah and Ghulam Murshad as members.<sup>90</sup> The MAI elected Habib-ur-Rahman as its President, and Maulana Daud Ghaznavi as the General Secretary. In the same year, the first working committee of MAI was formed, and its nine members included Afzal Haq (Hushiarpur), Abdul Aziz Begowal (Kapurthala State), Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman (Ludhiana), Ataullah Shah Bokhari (Gujarat), Shaikh Hissamuddin (Amritsar), Maulana Daud Ghaznavi (Amritsar), Mazhar Ali Azhar (Batala), Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad and Master Shafi (Lahore).<sup>91</sup> The reception committee decided to send invitation letters for the political conference to all the prominent political leaders, including M K Gandhi. *Inqilab* in its editorial suggested a few objectives for the planned political conference; this mentioned separate electorates for Muslims and the need for a separate Muslim political identity within India.<sup>92</sup>

The first political conference held under the auspices of MAI on 12-13 July 1931, was a spectacular rally of Muslim nationalists, and the formal launch of their Party. Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianwi reached Lahore on 10 July 1931 for this conference, following his release from the Gujarat jail.<sup>93</sup> A large number of disillusioned Punjabi Muslims from the INC and AIML, accompanied by Afzal Haq, received him at the railway station, with about fifty red shirted volunteers carrying the new red Ahrar flag with an embroidered crescent.<sup>94</sup> The Punjab government suspected that the reactivation of the Ahrar had the INC support, but it was a misperception; the MAI had not supported the INC on the issue of joint electorates, although it did have some other common objectives. Afzal Haq, in a letter to Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936) on 1 June 1931, suggested, that after the introduction of adult franchise, the formula of joint electorates was not acceptable in the Punjab. Haq also lamented the indifference of Indian nationalist Muslims towards the nationalist Muslims of Punjab, who were compelled to quit the INC.<sup>95</sup> Earlier, in June 1931, the Muslim press had suggested to the Ahrar leaders that they should opt for separate electorates, in order to save the political identity of the Muslims of British India.<sup>96</sup>

The venue for the political conference was the Habibia Hall of Islamia College, Lahore; almost six hundred delegates attended the Conference, which had four sessions spread over two days.<sup>97</sup> In his inaugural speech, Mazhar Ali Azhar reiterated the Party's commitment to the rights of the poor, and criticised the British capitalist system, which, he argued, only oppressed the underprivileged.<sup>98</sup> He focused on the deplorable state of the Muslim middle class, the backbone of Indian society, while demanding equal opportunities for the working classes, so that they could have a better existence.<sup>99</sup> He informed the delegates, that the MAI would carry on its struggle for independence of the country from the British, and protect the poor from exploitation. The new President of the MAI, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman, stressed the need to organise farmers and labourers of the country.<sup>100</sup> He declared:

“I want to tell all the communities of Hindustan in clear words that, the Ahrar do not want injustice done to any other community, but, at the same time, the Muslims are not prepared to live as a scheduled caste in India. They are equally entitled to have a share

in Indian affairs. They will essentially be equal partners in the Indian Government".<sup>101</sup>

He expressed pride in his association with the INC, but remained apprehensive of a possible scenario whereby in a post-independence India, the Muslim community might suffer at the hands of the Hindu capitalists. His views reflected the symbiotic relationship between the INC and the MAI.

During the same session, Sahibzada Faiz-ul-Hasan also delivered a speech on 'Islam and Socialism'; and observed that socialism was in accordance with the Islamic concept of *musawat*. The unjust distribution of wealth, he argued, was the root-cause of all the maladies and social inequalities. He claimed that 'socialism was a reformist ideology, that had been worked out after thorough research; it was better than capitalism, fascism and other ideologies, and would ameliorate the condition of the poor'. According to Faiz-ul-Hasan, socialism was not yet totally scientific, and the discussion of its merits and demerits had only been theoretical so far. However, he demanded an equal distribution of wealth and resources among the people.<sup>102</sup> Sheikh Hissamuddin discussed the economic backwardness of Muslims, and exhorted them to work towards material progress and social uplift. In the four sessions of the conference, several topics were discussed, including British policy in the NWFP, and the treatment of Muslims in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. For the first time, Muslim nationalists from the Punjab were beginning to sound communal. The MAI also held an open-air meeting for "the bitter condemnation of the fetish of untouchability".<sup>103</sup> Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar moved the most important resolution in the concluding session,<sup>104</sup> which demanded "the retention of separate electorate until the Hindus abandoned their negative attitude towards the Muslims".<sup>105</sup> Afzal Haq and Hissamuddin seconded the resolution, and an overwhelming majority of the delegates passed it; only ten votes were cast against it. The MAI decided to send deputations all over the province to spread its message, in addition to forming a cadre of 10,000 volunteers to launch a fund-raising campaign. The general expectations were that the urban Muslims would use this party "as a stepping stone to power", and therefore the government functionaries observed it closely.<sup>106</sup> The Ahrar leaders toured Punjab, and the public responded positively to their exhortations and appeals for funds.<sup>107</sup> On 6 August 1931, the Ludhiana Majlis-i- Ahrar held a meeting of 1,500 participants, in which a large number of Hindus and Sikhs were also reported to have participated. Atallah Shah Bokhari presided over the meeting, and justified the MAI's support of joint electorates in the Nehru Report.<sup>108</sup>

### **The Maclagan Engineering College Agitation and the MAI**

The Maclagan Engineering College was a professional college located in Lahore, which imparted science education to young men in Punjab. The trouble arose when a series of articles were published in the *Muslim Outlook*, Lahore, criticising Captain Whittaker, the Principal of the College, and his

administration.<sup>109</sup> The Principal was accused of using words and expressions regarded as offensive by the Muslim community. The Principal responded by suspending the faculty member, who was allegedly behind the publication of these articles in the local press. A delegation of Muslim students met the Principal on 13 May 1931, and tried to convince the Principal to reverse his decision. During this meeting, Whittaker openly expressed his contempt for the Muslim community, and declared himself to be a staunch opponent of Islam.<sup>110</sup> The students contacted the Muslim press and provincial leaders like Allama Iqbal, to take notice of his derogatory remarks and behaviour towards Muslims. On 28 May 1931, fifty-nine Muslim students went on strike, alleging that the principal was “inconsiderate to their demands”.<sup>111</sup> On the same day, the Muslim students of the Rasul Engineering College also went on strike against their Hindu principal. This strike was, however, subsequently settled without any serious trouble. Almost all the Muslim anjumans and newspapers protested against the discrimination meted out to Muslim students and teachers in Maclagan Engineering college.<sup>112</sup> Considerable resentment against the principal was building up amongst the urban Muslim circles, who demanded an official apology from him.<sup>113</sup> Telegrams were sent to the ministers for education, revenue, agriculture, local government and other important officials of the Punjab government. A meeting of prominent Muslims was arranged at Allama Iqbal’s residence, in which the striking students also participated.<sup>114</sup> When the MAI announced the launching of a movement against the Principal, Muslim press supported and encouraged the initiative.<sup>115</sup> The MAI joined the maelstrom, and gained considerable public support, and transformed the rally into a political protest against the Punjab government. An official committee was appointed to enquire into the issue on 19 June 1931.<sup>116</sup> The Punjab government published a communiqué on 31 August, summarising the Report of the Committee; which said that the remarks made by Whittaker, even if not intended to offend, were capable of being misconstrued. It was further decided that the striking students would be re-admitted, but prior to their readmission, they would express regret for their actions. The entire episode helped the MAI in making its political presence felt in Lahore.

### **Role of MAI in the Agitation**

The MAI took up the issue on 9 September 1931, and stepped in to protest against the Report, and the retention of the principal. Muhammad Daud Ghaznavi called for a public meeting outside Mochigate Lahore, on 11 September.<sup>117</sup> It was addressed by Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Ahmed Ali Lahori and Lal Din Kaiser, who advised the students not to appear in the entrance examination scheduled for 17 September. Enthusiasm was again whipped up at a large rally on 15 September, and the following day picketing took place, which resulted in some disorderly scenes. These were repeated again on 17 September.<sup>118</sup> The MAI also invited *jathas* from other towns of Punjab for the purpose of picketing. After a *lathi* charge to disperse the crowd, Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman and Ghulam Murshad were arrested

by the police.<sup>119</sup> On 2 September 1931, a deputation, which included Mazhar Ali Azhar, went to Simla for negotiations with the Punjab government. It was agreed that the striking students would return after submitting a written apology, and that all cases registered against persons involved in the agitation would also be withdrawn. This agreement brought the agitation to a close, although Whittaker was allowed to continue as the Principal. However, the incident served to increase the prestige of Ahrar, whose influence in urban areas had increased significantly.

### **Conclusion**

The British annexed Punjab in 1849, and established a new system of administration in form and spirit. They also introduced western education, canal colonies and a modern system of transportation, which had its impact on the urban population. In rural Punjab they collaborated with the landlords and feudal elite to get their support in strengthening the province as 'grain basket' for the British Army. The MAI was an urban Muslim organisation, comprised of ex-Khilafatists, trained in agitational politics during the period 1919-1929, many of whom were ex-Congressites. Ahrar leaders split with the INC over the issue of the Nehru Report in 1929. Soon after the formation of the new party, they decided to participate in INC-led civil disobedience movement of 1930 and were interred in large numbers. The MAI's platform was based on a united India, but one, which was free from imperial control, anti-feudal, with less economic disparities and had an Islamic system for the Muslims of India.

This was followed by similar ventures on the human rights situation in other princely states such as Alwar and Kapurthala. Until 1934, the MAI enjoyed its unprecedented popular image as an eminent Muslim party in Punjab, which was soon engaged in a vigorous anti-Ahmadi campaign in Punjab. The Ahrar political conference in Qadian in 1934 opened a new chapter of sectarianism in the subcontinent, which helped the MAI to establish its credentials as the mainstream Muslim body. Their exclusionary approach on the issue of the finality of the Prophet-hood, attracted several members and sympathisers from among other Muslim political parties. This included the Unionist Party, a potential rival within the province.

After gaining appreciation from various Muslim quarters, the MAI tried to cash in on their popularity in the legislatures. They participated in the provincial and central legislative elections during 1933 (bye-election), 1934, 1937 and 1945-6. Their smaller representation proved their inability to work more effectively within the legislative domains of British India, and they began to prefer agitational politics. Muslims regarded the issue of Shahidganj Mosque/Gurdwara, as the litmus test for the MAI. However, the party leadership avoided launching an instant campaign, which disappointed the Muslim community. Their opponents, in order to damage their popularity, amongst the Muslims as a result of their support of the Kashmiris and Meos, exploited their reluctance to participate in the Shahidganj campaign. Although they subsequently launched a campaign for the restoration of the Shahidganj

Mosque; but were never able to regain their erstwhile popularity. They participated in the relief efforts for the victims of the Quetta earthquake and Bengal famine, which helped them sustain their humane image. Their leaders, in their personal capacity, tried to work for the social causes affecting the Muslim community, but owing to financial constraints and weaker organizational structure, they could not accomplish much. The party believed in, and actively participated in agitational politics and found another opportunity to show their strength during the recruitment campaign launched by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Sir Sikandar Hayat, on the eve of the Second World War. The MAI decided to oppose it by launching an anti-recruitment movement within Punjab and, as a consequence, the party leadership courted arrest, while pursuing civil disobedience in protest against the Defence of Army Bill.<sup>120</sup> Almost 11,000 volunteers were arrested in the party's last-ditch effort to destabilise the British Government. That was the first time that the party had extended its campaign into the remotest areas of the Punjab. By early 1940, most of the Ahrar leaders were in jail, and the party was in disarray. The death of Afzal Haq also weakened it. When the Ahrars were released in 1943, the MAI launched Hukumat-i-Ilahiya scheme as an alternative to the demand for Pakistan, which did not attract many supporters. The Ahrar leader's espousal of unitary nationalism as the only solution of the Indian constitutional problem resulted in their progressive isolation.<sup>121</sup> Although they participated in the elections of 1945-46, but got only one seat; the AIML swept the polls to the central and provincial Assemblies. The party was divided on the eve of Partition, one for India and the other for Pakistan. It showed some activism in the anti-Ahmadi campaign of the 1950s, but could not gain its pre-Partition strength.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Thorburn, *The Mussalmans and the Moneylenders in the Punjab* (Edinburgh : W. Blackwood, 1886), p. 49, cited in S M Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan: 1858-1951* (Lahore: Shaikh M. Ashraf, 1970) p. 194.

<sup>2</sup>After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, Arthur Brandreth, and John Maynard, the ICS officers, worked in different districts of Punjab, and highlighted the issues of voluntary transferring of agricultural landholdings and indebtedness. In succeeding years they criticised the rigidness of the British Legal system and raised the economic objections on legal measures taken to restrict the alienation of land. In 20th century India it was the 'social influences' which shaped that particular version of the British political tradition, which came to prevail in the Punjab". See P. H. M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition* (London: George Allan & Unwin, 1972), p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>The towns grew only very slowly during the century of the British rule. At its close, the vast majority of Punjabis still lived in the countryside. Traditional rural customs and values lay just beneath the veneer of urban sophistication and

culture, but the urban economic and educational advance during British rule led to an increasing gulf between their religious and social outlook, and those of the rural communities. Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p.15.

<sup>4</sup>The Punjab government in an Inquiry Report asked the Anjuman-i-Punjab, why did the Muslim community not avail facilities extended by the government. The majority observed, that “being tradesmen, they were averse to higher education”. Zarina Salamat, *The Punjab in the 1920s*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization* (New Delhi: OUP, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>David Page, *Prelude to Partition: the Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup>Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s Aligarh movement began as a drive for an improved vernacular education and always “retained a strong attachment to Urdu as a lingua franca for the Muslim community. Aligarh was also the centre of English education for the North Indian Muslim elite ...It aimed at producing a cadre of Muslims who would ultimately lead the entire community toward modern education, social reform, and renewed political power. Another, more traditional movement was begun by the ulama. Such institutions like Deoband School were founded to reform Muslim education and society from within, rather than adopting English education and infidel culture which accompanied it.” See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>See Shyamnandan Shahi, *Lala Lajpat Rai: His Life and Thought* (New Delhi: Chanakya Publication, 1986).

<sup>9</sup>He was a member of Imperial Legislative Council (1912), and a Punjabi politician from Baghbanpura locality of Lahore. He was first General Secretary of Punjab Muslim League and participated in all three sessions of Round Table Conference (1930-1932). He was the President of Muslim League for a short while in 1928. See Hafeez Malik, Yuri V. Gankovsky (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 249.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* He was a politician and remained a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (1920), and was nominated as minister for education in Punjab in 1920, and on the Viceroy’s Executive Council during the 1930-1935 period. He was a member of Indian delegation to the League of Nations, and a delegate to Round Table Conference in 1930s. He remained a Vice President on the Governor-General’s Council (1934).

<sup>11</sup>‘Ahrar’ is a plural of ‘hur’, meaning a free or an independent person. Various forms of this word were used during the Khilafat Movement; such as hurriyat (freedom) and leader of freemen (rais-ul-ahrar), a prefix that was used for Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam, (trl. League or Committee of Free Men) reflected the quest of Muslim community in British India for a political identity. Maulvi Feroz-ud-Din (ed.), *Feroz-ul-Lughat* (Rawalpindi: Ferozsons, 1973) p. 518.

<sup>12</sup>*Inqilab* (Lahore), 14 January 1930; *SPPAI*, 8 August 1931, vol. 2, pp. 498-99; Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1968), pp. 25, 71, 91;



also see M. Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan, 1947-1958*, vol. 1 (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1986).

<sup>13</sup>The Khilafat Movement was the first mass movement of Indian Muslims to be directed against the British rule in India. As soon as it became apparent that Germany, along with its ally the Turkish Ottoman Empire, would lose the First World War, Indian Muslims became apprehensive about the fate of the Sultan of Turkey who was also the Caliph the spiritual head of the Muslims. The agitation in India became pronounced with the imposition of the Treaty of Sevres (1920), which was harsh and rejected by Turkey. Ever since Indian Muslims had been deprived of political power, the Khilafat had served as a symbolic reminder of past greatness, and its survival a matter of deep sentimental concern. Hafeez Malik, Yuri V. Gankovsky, *The Encyclopedia of Pakistan*, p. 151.

<sup>14</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup>Abdul Bari Farangi Mahal, one of the ulama, who founded the Madrasa Nizamia in Lucknow in 1908, supported by donations from his disciples and Shi'a magnates like Mahmoodabad and Rampur. He took part in Muslim politics in India, and was elected the first-ever president of Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind in 1919. *SPPAI*, 1 February 1919, vol. 12, no. 5, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup>See Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, *Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Abul Kalam Azad-A Fresh Look* (Karachi: OUP, 1998).

<sup>17</sup>See Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the Northwest Frontier Province 1937-47* (Karachi: OUP, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>See Muhammad Aslam Malik, *Allama Inayatullah Mashraqi: A Political Biography* (Karachi: OUP, 2000).

<sup>19</sup>The UP Muslim elites were distributed into different groups like Sunnis, Shi'as, Barelwis and Deobandis. The differences within the influential Farangi Mahal, or divisions between modernists and traditionalists, or generational differences between the 'Old Party' and the 'Young Party'; added to controversy. They united on issues like the Aligarh University, language controversy, wakf, the Cawnpore Mosque dispute, and other Pan-Islamic issues, but only for a short time. They were engaged in defining the ever-changing relationship with the colonial state. For a detailed study of different phases of Muslim politics in British India see Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of Muslims in United Provinces, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Also see Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1926-1928* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1979).

<sup>20</sup>Clique. Members of the 'Punjabi toli' included Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman, Afzal Haq, Ataullah Shah Bokhari and Abdur Rahman Ghazi. See Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp.13, 25, 27, and 71.

<sup>21</sup>See Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup>For complete text and discussion on Nehru Report see David Page, *Prelude to Partition: the Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 162-174, Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan* (Lahore: Longman, 1961), pp. 101-104.

<sup>23</sup>Other members of the committee were M S Aney, M R Jayakar, G R Pardhan, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M N Joshi, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam and Shoaib Qureshi.

<sup>24</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>For more on Jawahar Lal Nehru, see Stanley Wolpert, *Nehru: A Tryst With Destiny* (Oxford: OUP, 1996); also see Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: Harper and Collins, 2001).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>See Sandria B Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public arenas and Emergence of Communalism, 1870-1940* (California: University of California Press, 1979), also, see Gyanandara Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: OUP, 1971).

<sup>30</sup>M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics* (London: Brill, 1999), p. 397.

<sup>31</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup>Afzal Haq held the breach between the central and provincial Khilafat committees to be a result of infighting and not of embezzlement. *Inqilab*, 14 Jan 1930.

<sup>33</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>34</sup>Maulana Muhammad Ali tried to keep the Khilafat issue alive up to the time of his death. His views on Khilafat remained unchanged despite the Kemalist abolition of the Khilafat. See Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1968), vol. 1, p. 80.

<sup>36</sup>Afzal Haq and Janbaaz Mirza the pioneer and official biographer of the MAI, equally justify the view of dissolution of Punjab Khilafat Committee, but Ashraf Ata viewed that the Punjabi toli, as the Ali Brothers called it, genuinely followed and believed in the person and vision of Abul Kalam Azad. Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shkistaa Daastanain: Kuchh Pareshan Tazkaray* (Lahore; Sindh Sagar Academy, 1966), p. 52.

<sup>37</sup>Allama Muhammad Iqbal argued at public gatherings that the Nehru Report and its proposed formula of joint electorates would negatively affect the Muslim majority areas of Punjab and Bengal. Generally, Muslim popular opinion was against the proposals of the Nehru Report in the Punjab. Indian Muslims would become more vulnerable in a state dominated by a non-Muslim majority. Apprehensive of such disadvantages, some of these Muslim leaders soon called for the creation of a separate Muslim state. For detail discussion, see Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>38</sup>Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shkistaa Daastanain Kuchh Pareshan Tazkaray*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>39</sup> The Sharda Act fixed a minimum age for a girl's marriage. The Muslim community regards it as interference in their religion.

<sup>40</sup> Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, pp. 80-2.

<sup>41</sup> First presidential address of Ataullah Shah Bokhari, *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 28 and Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 82.

<sup>42</sup> *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> *SPPAI*, 4 June 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 32; and Akbar Zaidi et al, *India Demands Independence*, in *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 9, 1925-1928 (ed.) (Delhi: Chand & Company, 1980), p. 562.

<sup>44</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, vol. 1, January-June 1930, no. 1, 2 (Calcutta: 1919), p. 3. In his presidential address, Afzal Haq urged Muslims not to lag behind Hindus in the struggle for freedom, and criticised the Ali Brothers for their desertion of Mahatma Gandhi. A resolution was passed appealing to Muslims to join the Congress because it had now declared complete independence as its goal. *SPPAI*, 4 January 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> A Party pamphlet, Hafiz Ahmad Muawiya, *Pasmanzar Peshmanzar* (Lahore: Majlis-Ahrar Pakistan, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ashraf Ata, *Kuchh Shikista Daastanain*, pp. 58- 64.

<sup>47</sup> Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 72-73.

<sup>48</sup> This group demanded 56 percent representation for Muslims in the Punjab, on the basis of population.

<sup>49</sup> Afzal Haq was called the 'mufakkir-i-Ahrar' (Ahrar ideologue), and his colleagues referred to the party as a "party of poor folks". Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. I, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> According to an official source "it was decided to take steps to arouse the Muslim masses with a view to securing independence". *SPPAI*, 14 June 1930, vol. L-2, no. 1, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> Ikram Ali Malik (ed.), *A Book Of Readings on the History of Punjab 1799-1947* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1970), pp. 557-561; K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), p. 133.

<sup>52</sup> *Zamindar* (Lahore), 6 January 1930.

<sup>53</sup> K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133, Janbaaz Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 141.

<sup>54</sup> For history of the Deoband School, see Zia-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay: Asia Publishers, 1963). Thousands of other madrasas, even if these are not affiliated with Deoband, are called Deobandi. Also see Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1867-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Shorish Kashmiri, *Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari: Sawaneh-o-Afkar* (Urdu), (Lahore: Chattan, 1978), p. 272.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed discussion see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Karachi: OUP, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism And Political Mobilization In India* (OUP: New Delhi, 1982), p. 212.

<sup>58</sup>W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Delhi: Usha Publications, 1946), p. 270.

<sup>59</sup>On 17 April 1937, in his presidential address at the Ahrar Political Conference in Lucknow, Mazhar Ali Azhar spoke on 'Congress and Ahrar'. He admitted that during the civil disobedience movement, the Ahrar followed the Congress programme. He confirmed the cordiality that developed between the two parties during 1930. Shorish Kashmiri (ed) *Khutbat-i-Ahrar* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Mujahideen, 1944), p. 144.

<sup>60</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: John Lane, 1936), p. 29.

<sup>61</sup>For complete details of the Resolution, see Resolution No. 2, cited in Satyapal and Prabodh Chandra, *Sixty Years of Congress: India Lost, India Regained, A Detailed Record of its Struggle for Freedom* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), p. 294.

<sup>62</sup>He was brought up in Madina, and was a Turkish citizen. He was very hostile to the British and was interned with Shaikh-ul-Hind Mahmood-ul-Hasan in Malta, during the First World War. On his return to India in 1920, he contributed towards Deoband's entry into the Non-cooperation Movement. In September 1921, he was tried in Karachi with the Ali Brothers, and was imprisoned. He was given the title of Shaikh-ul-Islam and presided over the fifth session of the JUH, and subsequent session from the twelfth to the nineteenth. He was the principal of the Dar-ul-Ulum from 1926 to 1957, and was criticised by many Muslim political thinkers for his subservience to the INC. Muhammad Iqbal, a poet philosopher, was also one of his critics, who argued against Madni's view that Muslims and non-Muslims could be part of a single 'nation', defined by territorial and other ties. Iqbal argued that according to Quran, it is the religion of Islam alone, which sustained a nation in its true cultural and political sense. For details, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>63</sup>The Thanavi group founded the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam as a political party, which was sympathetic to the demand for Pakistan. Both of these ulama belonged to Deoband, but unlike Madani, they did not believe in a unitary India. For details of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, and his role in the Pakistan Movement, see Anwar-ul-Hasan Sherkoti, *Khutbat-i-Usmani, Shaikh-ul-Islam Allama Shahbbir Ahmad Usmani Key Milli, Siyasi aur Nazriya-i-Pakistan say Mutaliq Almanah Khutbat, Maktubat aur Mukalmat ka Mukamal Majmua* (Urdu) (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Anwar, 1972).

<sup>64</sup>He tried to unite both factions of the JUH, but failed to do so. Ubaidullah Qudsi, *Azadi Ki Tehreekain* (Lahore: Idara-i-Saqafat-i-Islamia, 1988), p. 237.

<sup>65</sup>Janbaaz Mirza, *Hayat-i-Amir-i-Shariyat* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Tabsra, 1967), p. 136.

<sup>66</sup>The Intelligence Department reported that, 'the day will be an occasion for a good deal of oratory'. *SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. L-3, no. 4, p. 75.

<sup>67</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*, p. 90.

<sup>69</sup>The Ahrar leaders followed this programme until 1931, when an Ahrar, Ghazi Abdul Rahman, was reported to have started picketing the liquor shops in

Amritsar. Although the official view was that 'it would be for a short time only, yet the campaign went on for some time.' *SPPAI*, 27 June 1931, vol. L-3, no. 25, p. 298.

<sup>70</sup>*SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. L-3, no. 4, p. 75.

<sup>71</sup>It was reported that the 'local leaders were tired of covering the same ground over and over again in their speeches, and were anxious for a new programme'. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>72</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>73</sup>According to Janbaaz Mirza, among the fifteen thousand Muslims arrested from Punjab and the NWFP, a large number consisted of Ahrar volunteers. Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 106.

<sup>74</sup>*SPPAI*, 25 February 1930, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 76.

<sup>75</sup>Habib-ur-Rahman was arrested on 23 April 1930. He did not defend himself in the court as instructed by the INC, and remained aloof from all the proceedings. Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>76</sup>He was arrested in July 1931 as cited in Satyapal and Prabodh Chandra, *Sixty Years of Congress*, p. 301.

<sup>77</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 2, p. 115, also see Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 84.

<sup>78</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 304. After the first Round Table Conference, the British Government decided to negotiate with the INC for the constitution making of India. First, they released the Congress leaders who had been imprisoned as a result of their civil disobedience movement, followed by a process of consultations between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The result was the Gandhi-Irwin-Pact of 5 March 1931. The Government decided to release all the Congress prisoners, and the Congress agreed to suspend civil disobedience. Under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Congress also decided to accept Dominion Status as its objective, and agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference.

<sup>80</sup>*Inqilab*, 5 April 1931.

<sup>81</sup>Muslim nationalists like Maulana Azad and Zafar Ali Khan were criticized for having pro-INC leanings. *Inqilab*, 5 April 1931.

<sup>82</sup>*Inqilab*, 8 April 1931.

<sup>83</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari: Sawaneh-o-Afkar* (Lahore: Chattan, 1973), p. 254.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>"India Demands Independence" in Zaidi, *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 9, 1925-1928 (Delhi: Chand & Co, 1980), p. 562.

<sup>86</sup>Afzal Haq explained the reasons for his resignation from the Punjab Congress during the first Ahrar Conference, in July 1931. In his detailed press statement, he criticized the INC policies responsible for the breach among nationalists. Issues of minorities and the Nehru Report, were reportedly the main causes of dissension in the Congress. *Inqilab*, 14 July 1931. Also see Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 88.

<sup>87</sup>K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133.

<sup>88</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol. 1, p. 115.

<sup>89</sup>The British Intelligence Department reported the formation of the MAI's city branches in Lahore, Sialkot and Amritsar, and that it seemed to be growing in popularity. A meeting in Lahore was reported to have attracted a gathering of 7000. *SPPAI*, 27 June 1931, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 399.

<sup>90</sup>K. K. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 133.

<sup>91</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, vol.1, p. 123.

<sup>92</sup>*Inqilab*, 6 July 1931.

<sup>93</sup>*SPPAI*, 27 June, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 433.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.* A press report of this warm welcome recorded by the intelligence officials showed that 'nationalism' was strongly overlaid with 'communalism' in Punjab. Habib-ur-Rahman was received by "second rank Muslims" such as Muhammad Daud Ghaznavi and Muhammad Hayat. An earlier statement of Ataullah Shah left the impression that he had broken with the Congress completely.

<sup>95</sup>*Inqilab*, 4 June 1931.

<sup>96</sup>*Inqilab*, 6 July 1931.

<sup>97</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>98</sup>Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp. 156-158.

<sup>99</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Khutbat-i-Ahrar*, pp. 103-117.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup>*Inqilab*, 14, July 1931

<sup>102</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>103</sup>*SPPAI*, 11 July 1931, vol. L-3, no. 29, p. 455.

<sup>104</sup>*Inqilab*, 15 July 1931.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>107</sup>Letter from the Secretary MAI, Faisalabad (Lyallpur) to *Inqilab*, 5 August 1931.

<sup>108</sup>*Inqilab*, 7 August 1931.

<sup>109</sup>Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938* (Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat, 1939), no. 4, ac no. 358 (Islamabad: National Documentation Center, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>110</sup>*Inqilab*, Lahore 2 June 1931.

<sup>111</sup>Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938*, p. 148.

<sup>112</sup>Muhammad Rafique Afzal (ed.), *Guftar-i-Iqbal* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1969), p. 122.

<sup>113</sup>In a public meeting arranged by Ahrar, Allama Iqbal seconded the resolution against the principal of Maclagan College. Following were the demands from the people of Lahore to the government of Punjab: (1) appointment of an enquiry commission; (2) nomination of a Muslim member in the suggested commission; (3) postponement of entrance examination to college. Muhammad Rafique Afzal, *Guftar-i-Iqbal*, p. 123.

<sup>114</sup>*Inqilab*, 2 June 1931.

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<sup>115</sup>*Inqilab* published a news item on the MAI's decision to start a movement against the principal, and in its editorial, praised the Ahrar for taking up the issue. *Inqilab*, 5 June 1931.

<sup>116</sup>During the meeting, Allama Iqbal explained the agenda to the newly appointed commission. He invited them to look into the allegations of the use of derogatory language, and the expulsion of fifty-nine students. For details, see Muhammad Rafique Afzal, *Guftar-i-Iqbal*, p. 124.

<sup>117</sup> Secret Report, *The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938*, p. 7.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup>Mirza, *Karavan-i-Ahrar*, p. 163.

<sup>120</sup>Shorish Kashmiri, *Pas-i-Dewar-i-Zindan* (Urdu) (Lahore: Chattan, 1971).

<sup>121</sup>Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

<sup>122</sup>For detail, see *Report of the Court of Inquiry constituted under Punjab Act of 1954 to inquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953* (Lahore: NAP, 1954).

## Book Reviews

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#### **Film Review**

*Kitte Mil Ve Mahi* – Never the Twain Shall Meet, Dir. Ajay Bhardwaj, Duration: 72 mins, Punjabi with English subtitles. Format: DVD, 2005 by **Virinder S. Kalra**





Verne A. Dusenbery, *Sikhs at Large: Religion, Culture, and Politics in Global Perspective*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008) x + 337 pp. (hb) Rs. 650. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-568598-5 and ISBN-10: 0-19-568598-9.

This is a rich resource in terms of its range and its analytical sharpness. Dusenbery has brought together almost three decades of his ethnographically grounded publications on Sikh communities resident in South-East Asia (Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia) and Australia as well as in North America. The volume's two strongly inter-connected sections, 'Sikh Ethnosociology' and 'Sikhs and the State' focus respectively on 'Sikh understandings of their social world and their place in it' (p. 1) and Sikh response to life as a minority in diverse political contexts.

Each chapter engages with its specific historical and geographical context, and by so doing deepens the reader's critical grasp of subsequent developments. In some cases the speculation about relevance to other parts of the diaspora is set out, as in chapter eight's discussion of the currently 'coinciding interests' between Sikh organisations and the state in Singapore. In several chapters, careful comparisons are deployed to yield insights: between, for example, (chapters one and two) Gora Sikhs and Jat Sikhs in North America or (chapter nine) between 'the contrasting experiences of Sikhs' (p. 227) in the two modern nation-states of Canada and Singapore with regard to nationalism and multiculturalism.

Dusenbery usefully analyses the concept of a 'Sikh diaspora' itself: chapter four invites the reader to examine the shifting relative importance for Punjabis of ancestral 'genera' such as mode of worship, territorial attachment, language and occupation. He argues that the concept of a territorially delimited Sikh nation state has no secure basis in early Sikh discourse – witness Guru Nanak's travels far beyond Punjab and Guru Gobind Singh's location of the Guru in the Granth and Panth (p. 100). Dusenbery suggests that it was the Partition of 1947 that precipitated the sense of a Sikh *qaum* and the tie of Sikhs to Punjab so specifically. Chapter five further deconstructs 'nation' and 'world religion' as 'master narratives of Sikh identity' (p.118).

In chapter two *izzat* (honour), too, is critically discussed (in terms of its moral and affective dimensions), as also (in chapter six) is the motivation of the acts of philanthropy carried out by overseas Sikhs. Dusenbery untangles philanthropy as a complex interaction between *seva* (voluntary service) and *dan* (giving) in Sikh religious tradition, Jat notions of *izzat* and *sardari* (supremacy of the self) and the tradition of charitable giving in western societies. Chapter three's discussion of sacred language in a 'non-dualistic' culture, as the sound transmitted between Guru and disciple, much as other 'substances' are, is a welcome antidote to still persistent 'Protestant' understandings of the primary importance of understanding scriptural words.

In chapter after chapter, anthropological reflection on a particular situation introduces insights of much wider applicability. For example, in chapter two

Dusenbery shows two events drawing a different response from Gora Sikhs (white converts) and Punjabi Sikhs and outlook between the two, with the Gora Sikhs (who were 'raised sensitive to their personal integrity as individuals' (p. 61) apathetic to *izzat* and primarily attached to Sikh religion (Sikh *maryada* and *dharma*) and the Jat Sikhs primarily concerned with *izzat*, as they had been 'raised sensitive to the variable reputations of the collectivities of which they are a part' (ibid).

Stylistically Dusenbery's volume is good to read. One very minor glitch that I would mention results from the fact that this is a volume of work that has been previously published elsewhere - hence the inclusion of references to 'this volume' which actually refer to the earlier volumes in which some chapters first appeared. There is a degree of overlap in content between some chapters, but this is excusable in preserving the integrity of each: replication is particularly apparent in the case of chapter nine's relationship with chapters seven and eight. The separate treatments of Sikh-state relations in Canada and Singapore, in chapters seven and eight respectively, are drawn together in a comparative analysis in chapter nine, which the author terms a 'modest attempt...at doing an ethnography of the poetics and politics of recognition at two nodes in this intersection of global ethnoscaapes and pluralist polities' (pp. 253-4).

Volumes that embrace a long and distinguished career in a particular field have a distinctive appeal. In this instance, not only does each chapter make a contribution to Sikh studies but it also illuminates the progression in Verne A Dusenbery's impressively cohesive body of scholarship. Because of the times at which they appeared these chapters already inform the discussion in other scholars' more recent publications, for example Arvind-pal Singh Mandair's critique - as overly structuralist - of Dusenbery's analysis of sacred sound (2008 p.327).

Geographically, the obvious lacuna is any treatment of Sikh communities in the UK and other European countries. My hope is that this book stimulates scholars in these countries to continue the theoretical engagement exemplified by Dusenbery. Future comparative studies of Sikh communities' accommodation with politically diverse European states will yield further understanding of the cultural dynamics that are at work, and understanding of the longer-established communities in the UK may well be illuminated by comparison with Sikh experience in Singapore and the countries of North America. It is likely that the explanatory framework of chapter six - the triangle comprising not only *Sikhi* (Sikhs' religious tradition) and Punjabi cultural understandings and cultural expectations but also local religiously and secularly based convention in countries of settlement - will continue to prove fruitful for scholars. Interestingly it illustrates substantial mutual reinforcement between the three dimensions, whereas in other aspects of diasporic Sikh experience, scholars have highlighted more acute tensions between the three dimensions (see, for example, Kamala Nayar's chapter in Jakobsh 2010). Importantly, Dusenbery's corpus demonstrates the value of anthropological approaches - meticulous fieldwork

and analytical rigour - to deepening understanding of social transformations. This is a volume that most definitely merits inclusion on reading lists for South Asian Studies, religious studies, and on the bookshelves of sociologists and anthropologists.

### References

A-P. S. Mandair (2008) *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*, New York: Columbia University Press.

D. Jakobsh (2010) *Sikhism and Women*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

### Eleanor Nesbitt

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Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community*, (London: Zed Books, 2006), 274 pp. £55.00 (hb). ISBN 1842777165. £17.99 (pb). ISBN 184277717.

The strengths of this text lie in its empirical material. Both authors are leading scholars of Sikhs in Britain and have played a central role in generating academic work in the field and indeed giving due status and recognition to Sikh studies as an area of inquiry. Though some of this material has appeared in their previous publications, there is an empirical depth which gives some credence to the author's claims of providing a 'systematic' and 'comprehensive' study.

Of particular note are the chapters on gurdwaras and on the various legal cases that Sikhs have engaged in to claim minority rights. In each of these chapters the authors present in depth useful facts and figures about various issues which are often speculated about, but not substantiated. The number of gurdwaras and their various caste/ sect denominations is a case in point. Given this wealth of material the analysis of the 2001 Census, for the chapter on Employment and Education, might have benefited from some more robust statistical analysis, as much of the information presented is readily available already in the public domain. To some extent the attempt at being comprehensive means that it might have been better for the authors to focus on issues that were very specifically related to Sikhs, rather than to delve into the wider - though of course intermingled - terrain of British South Asian diasporic concerns. In that sense, the material on the Indian Workers Association and on youth identities, reads 'Punjabi' as 'Sikh', which may be an empirically justifiable move, given the numeric dominance of those with a Sikh heritage in these arenas. However, in terms of the lived identity of these figures, this may be a bit of an ascription.

In place of this more general material, more could have been made of

gurdwara culture, the role of worship in everyday life, and in terms of popular culture, the crucial role of *kirtan* in the formation of musical cultures. Being alert to those often neglected areas, where religion actually is central to social practice, would have given the volume a pioneering perspective. Rather, religion is being employed loosely as a term of identification which is rather hollow and can therefore be filled with all manner of social concerns. This treatment of religion is part of a much wider trend within British academia when looking at South Asian minority groups. Sikhs in this sense do provide an interesting case study because the interface between ethnicity and religious is rather porous and particularly, in the British case, where they have been legally allotted the status of a racial group. This partly echoes the long relationship that Sikhs have had with Britain, which is another recurring theme of the book. Indeed, the cover of the book shows a picture of Queen Elizabeth II receiving a *kirpan* from Leicester's Sikh community, above which is a picture of the Harimandir in Amritsar. Perhaps this juxtaposition is a little tongue in cheek but nonetheless the tension between a loyal Sikh soldier in the British Indian army and an anti-colonial Ghadarite is certainly referred to in the text. Postcolonial tensions between the state and the community are well presented in the brief histories of Marxists and Khalistanis that span the 1970s and 1980s. These are, however, relatively muted voices as the main thrust of the book is to establish what the mainstream of the Sikh community is and this is perhaps where the most contentious arguments are put forward.

For Singh and Tatla, it is the *doaba*, *jat* peasantry and their offspring which form the core of the mainstream Sikh community in Britain. It is the institutional failures and future challenges that this group may face which are of central concern. Given this presupposition, a set of well articulated arguments are put forward concerning the issues of generation; relationship between community and state; relationship to Punjab. In itself this very well done and even if one disagrees with the conclusions drawn by the authors, at the very least an agenda has been presented which aims to articulate what is needed at the interface between communities (via organisation and leadership) and the state. The problem of course is that the empirical parts of the text constantly work to undermine the neat formulation of community and state as singular entities. The Midlands location of the authors belies the universalism of their argument, and the actual representative elite of the Sikhs in the UK, has often not been drawn from the main stream *doabi*, *Jat* that is both the core hero and buffoon of the text. This is not to say that the authors are not clearly aware of the role of East African Ramgarhias in this representative politics, but this does not stretch to a fuller analysis of the criss-crossing, often conflictual nature of caste politics as it affects the Sikh diaspora in Britain. If one were to reduce mainstream to turban-wearing Sikh male, then both Bhatra and Ramgarhia Sikhs would need to have a more prominent role in the book. This is where the theoretical problem of mixing ethnic and religious identity in too loose a manner creates more problems than it resolves.

For those interested in the history and character of the numerical majority of Sikhs in Britain, however, certainly this book is a must read. As an introductory text it offers the most detailed date and useful information than has hitherto been present in a single volume. The debates that the book touches on are also certainly those that need to be addressed and it is hoped that it will be read by sections of the Sikh leadership and intelligentsia.

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Agustín Pániker, *Los Sikhs: Historia, identidad y religión*, (Barcelona: Kairós, 2007) 1st edition + 366 pp. (pb) €19.28. ISBN 978-84-7245-654-9.

With 'The Sikhs: History, Identity and Religion', Agustín Pániker brings us the first full-length book on Sikhism published in Spanish, thus making the history and culture of Sikhism now available to a Spanish-speaking audience. *Los Sikhs* is thoroughly researched, and is largely historical in approach, beginning with the origins of Sikhism, tracing its growth and development from Guru Nanak onwards, providing details of the background and contributions of each of the Ten Gurus. After delving into the historical context of Sikhism, Pániker then devotes a number of chapters to the sacred scriptures of the Guru Granth Sahib, Sikh doctrine and practice, the Sikh symbols, and finally ends with a brief discussion of the diversity within Sikhism - looking at the different sects within the Sikh cultural universe and discussing issues of caste and gender.

Although largely aimed at readers new to Sikhism, Pániker addresses issues of interest to scholars in the field, such as the debate regarding whether Sikhism is best viewed as a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, or rather a unique revelation that should not be reduced to either of the two. Pániker prefers to emphasise the uniqueness of the Sikh message, which he roots firmly in the *sant* tradition, agreeing with McLeod that while Guru Nanak employs the same categories and terminology of the *sants*, he offered a more holistic and integrated philosophy than his predecessors who also founded *Panths*. Pániker also offers valuable insights into commonly held perceptions of the Gurus, such as the portrayal of Guru Nanak as a social reformer. In the opinion of Pániker, Guru Nanak was first and foremost a spiritual leader, a 'mystic of action', who openly criticised many aspects of orthodox Hinduism and Islam, yet did not aim to radically transform the structure of Punjabi society. Pániker points out that Guru Nanak's critique of the caste system was so weak that it did not elicit any reaction from the Bramanical establishment, and also notes that each of the ten Gurus married within their caste (as well as married their children following caste norms). His analysis of the Singh Sabha movement closely echoes the conclusions of Oberoi. Like Oberoi, Pániker interprets the efforts of the Tat Khalsa as an attempt to 'Sikhize the Sikhs' and establish firm and non-negotiable boundaries with both

Hinduism and Islam.

At times Pániker appears to affirm too conclusively a Khalsa vision of Sikhism, such as when he states that the *Rahit Maryada* enjoys great influence in the Punjab and is followed and respected by a majority of Sikhs in the diaspora. Although he is careful to point out that it is not followed to the letter by all Sikhs, it is the Khalsa version of Sikhism that he devotes most attention to. His treatment of sexism and casteism within Sikhism however is very insightful and perceptive. With regards to gender, Pániker argues that the equality promoted by the Sikh Gurus is limited strictly to the spiritual plane - that is equality of spiritual opportunity, which left (and continues to leave) patriarchal institutions, structures and mentalities untouched. Like many other authors, Pániker highlights the great contrast that exists between an exemplary egalitarian gender philosophy and a highly unequal and patriarchal praxis. He concludes that as with the majority of the world's religions, Sikhism is a "child of patriarchy". Concerning caste, Pániker gives a thorough explanation of the caste composition of Sikh society, making it clear that casteism can survive and indeed thrive despite the absence of Brahmanical ideology. He asserts that within the *gurdwara*, Sikhism has eliminated caste, while it continues to remain very much a reality within Sikh society. He analyses specific caste groups within Sikh society, such as the Jats, Ahluwalias and Ramgarhias, and argues that in the Punjab, caste mobility has followed a pattern of 'Rajputization' or 'Khalsaization' rather than Sanscritization, due to the weak influence of Brahminism in the Punjab.

In summary, Pániker has produced a well-researched and thoughtfully written introductory book to Sikhism that will serve as a good foundation from which to explore both historical and modern issues in Sikhism in more depth. He makes the reader aware of the diversity and complexity that characterises the Sikh *Panth*, and provides ample historical background to a faith and culture that is likely to be completely new to a majority of Spanish speakers.

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Harold A. Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States, 1900-1946*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006) 460 pp. (hb) £45.00. ISBN 0-7619-3480-4, ISBN-13 978076194806.

*Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies* takes its alliterative title from a description of early South Asian migration to the United States by Har Dayal, a prominent figure in the Ghadr movement. The book details the events that led up to the 1943 publication of an article in the *Washington Post* by investigative reporter Drew Pearson in which the contents of a private letter to President Roosevelt from then US Special Envoy to New Delhi, William Phillips were revealed. In

narrating this complex 'subaltern' history, Harold Gould documents South Asians' struggle for civil rights in the United States (and to a lesser extent in Canada), their struggle against racism and colonialism, and discloses for the first time the identity of the person who made the contents of that private letter available. Chapter 1 'Introduction: The Drew Pearson Affair' introduces the 'dramatis personae' and sketches the historical and political contexts that formed the background to Pearson's *Washington Post* letter.

Early American contact and 'ethnographic' impressions of India and of Indians are the subjects of Chapter 2 'The Yankee Traders'. Drawing heavily from the work of Susan Bean and M. V. Kamath, Gould situates the 'India Lobby' within its history of encounter and exchange with America. Arguing that eighteenth and early nineteenth century commerce and trade between India and America facilitated moral, intellectual, and religious cross-fertilization, Gould suggests "the so-called Bengal Renaissance was to India what Unitarianism and Transcendentalism were to America" (70). Moreover, Gould makes a case that this encounter and exchange shows that early Indian migrants in North America had access to both the "traditional resources" (intra-community networks) and 'indigenous resources' (sympathetic outsiders)" (49) that were necessary for the lobbying effort in the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 'The Early Pioneers' deals with Indian migration at the turn of the twentieth century to the Vancouver area and to the American West Coast, and particularly to the Imperial Valley in Southern California. Here, Gould offers a skilful and informative redaction of established anthropological and socio-economic studies concerning early South Asian migration. In the Canadian context, Gould draws on the careful and detailed scholarship of Hugh Johnston and Archana Verma. Karen Leonard's insightful study on Sikh migration is his main source for the California communities. Gould also appeals to the influential work by Janet Jensen, Verne Dusenbery, and N. Gerald Barrier. Following Verma, Gould rejects the 'economic hardship' argument to explain the motives for early migration. Instead, Gould argues that early migrants were "moderately prosperous peasantry" who saw migrations as "an opportunity to increase their agricultural wealth and enhance the social status of their kin groups." (82) Immigration, Gould holds, was neither abrupt nor individualistic - it came through collective (*baradari*) deliberations and was tied to *izzat* (83) and to retention of property rights (*haq shuda*). But such bonds of kinship were altered in different ways and to different degrees in the Canadian and American contexts. Gould suggests that while less emphasis on caste made Sikhs more adaptive (than Hindus) in both settings, caste communities did emerge in British Columbia (e.g. Paldi Mahtons). By contrast, intermarriage in California produced a shift from "caste communities" to "ethnic communities". In other words, religious identity became secondary to ethnic identity in the United States (96).

Chapter 4 'The Politicization of Punjabi Immigration' documents the emergence of Sikh leadership by such personalities as Bhag Singh, Balwant



Singh, Teja Singh, Chagan Vairaj Varma, Dr. Sundar Singh and is set against the backdrop of Canadian racism and the saga of the *Komogata Maru*. Gould highlights the introduction and increasing involvement of a 'new breed' of middle class Sikhs from the east coast (e.g. Teja Singh) who shared the intellectual and political sensibilities of a growing number of New England Americans, and the establishment of new organizational and economic institutions such as the Khalsa Diwan Society and local gurdwaras.

If Chapter 4 identified how the presence of east coast Sikhs helped to focus the South Asian community's attention on the issues of immigration and racism, and introduced the institutional vehicles through which the community could be mobilized, the White backlash and the introduction of various measures to counter 'seditious' activities by Sikhs is taken up in Chapter 5 'Intensification of Community Awareness'. Gould documents the employment of spies to keep tabs on the activities of Sikhs on both sides of the border, and argues that such attention was increasingly directed to South Asian students and intellectuals. Moreover, Gould notes that the Sikh peasantry in North America was starting to interact with revolutionary individuals. The result of this interaction brought to light an awareness of the connection between the treatment of South Asians in North America and the evils of colonialism (146).

In excess of eighty pages, Chapter 6 'Ghadr' is the longest chapter in the volume. The chapter is largely descriptive, as the bulk of it is devoted to revealing biographies of key players (e.g. Har Dayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Taraknath Das) in the Ghadr movement. Gould is strong here at identifying important links to other world events that shaped the trajectory of Ghadr, and the chapter as a whole offers a good summary of an otherwise complex network of people, events, and political and intellectual sensibilities.

Chapter 7 'From Taraknath to Lajpat Rai' moves the reader to the east coast and the arrival of Lajpat Rai, which, according to Gould, was "for all practical purposes, the beginning of the 'India Lobby'" (231). In Gould's analysis, the radical sensibilities of Ghadr were superseded by a more moderate political stance and affiliation with liberals and liberalism in New York. For Gould, Rai's success on the east coast was his ability to "acquire a voice in the New York media and academia" which provided a conduit to the mainstream political establishment. (256) In Chapter 8 'Let the Lobbying Begin!' Gould provides a balanced assessment of the South Asian mode of reaction to the *Thind* decision (1923) which "ruled that Indians are not "White" and therefore, like all other Asians not entitled to American citizenship" (263) and the counter reaction by those who supported the decision. Gould focuses his analysis on the activities of such 'lobbyists' as J. J. Singh, Anup Singh, and Syud Hossain. Here again, Gould is careful to situate his analysis of the 'India Lobby' within the broader historical and political contexts of world events (e.g. Gandhi's Salt March, WWII, Japanese ascendancy) Chapter 9 'The Propaganda Wars' documents the British initiative to influence American public opinion vis-à-vis Indian nationalism in India and thereby attempt to defuse those same sympathetic voices

in America. At the same time, and by contrast, Gould notes that the India Lobby, through the India League, effectively widened its public profile by linking its interests with those of America and its war effort.

The tenth chapter “‘Deep Throat’ and the ‘Washington Merry-Go-Round’”, further contextualizes and nuances the circumstances and intricacies of the Drew Pearson affair, and reveals the identity of the person who made available the contents of that private, high-level letter. Interestingly, the material surrounding the ‘leak’ comes from Gould’s personal knowledge and private conversations with ‘Deep Throat’. ‘The Final Challenge’ (Chapter 11) focuses primarily on the work of J. J. Singh and the passing of the India Immigration and Naturalization Bill (H.R. 3517) on June 27, 1946, and the subsequent signing of the Cellar-Luce Bill into law by President Truman on July 2, 1946 (the photograph on the cover of the volume). The short, concluding chapter, ‘Aftermath’, offers a concise summary of the volume, but adds two significant corollaries pertaining to the political visibility of South Asians in the American context: i) naming of Asaf Ali India’s Ambassador to the UN, and ii) the selection of Madame Vijayalaskshmi Pandit to lead the first official delegation to the UN’s first General Assembly in New York.

Harold Gould has written a clear and lucid narrative, and is to be commended for his ability to tell a coherent story involving a large and colorful cast of players on three different continents over several decades. He offers a compelling account of a little documented, but important, period in modern history. There are, however, places at which one might have hoped for greater analysis (for example, the reasons why the early Sikh communities followed different social trajectories in Canada and the United States, or the failure of the Ghadr movement). However, this should not be taken as a criticism of the volume as a whole. Gould presents a rich, synthetic, and generally well-nuanced account of a complex, polyvocal, and multifaceted ‘movement’. The volume is user-friendly, offering a *Foreword* by Ainslie Embree, 19 black and white illustrations, a List of Abbreviations, Preface, Glossary, Bibliography, and Index. *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies* is an important work and will be of interest to those working on a wide range of issues relating to the history of South Asian diasporas in Canada and the United States.

**Michael Hawley**

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Verne A. Dusenbery and Darshan S. Tatla (eds), *Sikh Diaspora Philanthropy in Punjab: Global Giving for Local Good*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009) xviii +312 pp. (hb). Rs. 600. ISBN-13: 978-019-8061021. ISBN-10: 0-19-806102-1.

An extraordinarily solid and valuable contribution to all aspects of its topic, Sikh

diasporic philanthropy or SDP; this book is a model of interdisciplinary work, presenting quantitative and qualitative research findings on the important issues raised by the increasing level of SDP in India's Punjab.

The editors are superbly qualified. Dusenbery's interest stems from his work in British Columbia, Canada, in the late 1970s, his continuing work with diasporic Sikhs, and his personal connection with a nearly diasporic donor. Tatla was a donor himself while living in the UK, but he has now returned to the Punjab and founded the Punjab Centre for Migration Studies in 2003. They held an international workshop on SDP in the Punjab at Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar in 2006, and revised papers from that workshop constitute most of this book.

Section I, on contexts for giving, opens with the editors' introduction establishing the significance of the topic: India is the largest recipient of remittances from overseas and the Punjab has one of the highest proportions of NRIs or non-resident Indians, most of them Sikhs. After decades of official neglect or mistrust by India's central and state governments, diasporic Sikhs are now being looked to as partners in the social development of the Punjab, and international development agencies and foundations are also engaging with these philanthropists. But are these private donors contributing to the public good? In the second chapter, Tatla traces the history of SDP, documenting the pre-1947 pattern, the effect of 1984 on diasporic engagement with the homeland, and current trends. Meticulously-produced tables show Punjabi media coverage of SDP, the Sants as intermediaries, the major Sikh diaspora charities, non-resident Punjabi donations to Pingalwara (the well-known institution serving Punjab's destitute) and Sikh diasporic patronage for the Punjabi media. Tatla concludes that SDP is "basically motivated by a shared concern for Punjab and inspired by Sikh theological and ethical concepts of *seva*" (70). However, the third chapter by Dusenbery complicates this, asserting that "multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting motivations" (80) underpin SDP. Dusenbery outlines Sikh religious teachings and practices concerning giving and service, more broadly Punjabi cultural understandings and social expectations, and the experiences of Punjabi Sikhs abroad. He then suggests that Sikhi, religious teaching about selfless giving and service, can conflict with cultural notions of *izzat* or honour and *sardari* or supremacy of self, leading to conspicuous philanthropy and competition in local Punjabi settings. In the editors' interviews, mixed motives and mixed agendas were characteristic of most Sikh diasporic philanthropists. Further, the consequences of their philanthropy, the funding of religious institutions, schools, hospitals, sports tournaments, crematoriums, and village gates, can also be mixed in terms of "progress" or "development" of the Punjab.

Section II focuses on the Punjab to illustrate and deepen these themes. Satnam Chana discusses two surveys of NRI philanthropic investment, the first of 477 villages of the Doaba region of the Punjab (conducted in 2002 by the NRI Sabha Punjab under Chana's supervision) and a follow-up survey of 28 villages of those previously surveyed (conducted in 2007 by Chana). 80% of all Punjabi

NRIs are from the Doaba, and the release of the 2002 survey results helped convince the Government of Punjab to institute a matching grant scheme designed to increase “productive philanthropy” by NRIs. In the 2002 survey, over half the donations went to religious places, especially gurdwaras, followed by educational institutions. Fields Chana deemed unproductive like memorial village gates, crematoriums, and sports festivals received more attention than health care and infrastructure, and Chana’s tables demonstrate dramatic differences among the villages; he termed the 2002 patterns of SDP spontaneous, non-planned, and largely unorganized. His 2007 survey, however, showed a four-fold increase in funds donated and changes of direction from religious purposes to social development ones, projects often done in conjunction with village panchayats or the Punjab government. Next, Inderpreet Kaur Kullar and M.S. Toor’s study of the use of foreign remittances compares NRI and non-NRI farm families on the basis of randomly selected blocks, villages, and households, also focusing on Central Punjab. They studied 180 farm families in depth in 2004-05. The NRI families had higher levels of spending, but non-NRI families placed more emphasis on farm machinery and water and less on religious places and activities. Then, focusing on a single Doaba village, Charanjit Kaur Maan and Gurmej Singh Maan use census data and interviews, wonderfully illustrating how “the diasporic pattern of giving generally means a spirit of competitive consolidation of different factions/castes in the village” (145). The authors bring the village alive, especially by showing what giving from abroad has meant to the full range of religious institutions in the village, not only gurdwaras but high caste Hindu temples, Balmiki or lower caste/class temples, and even a church.

Section III highlights the transnational relationships created by SDP. Hugh Johnston features SDP from Vancouver, British Columbia, specifically excluding gifts for gurdwaras and other religious places as philanthropy. The two donor families presented here add a gender dimension - atypically, both families have contributed to the wife’s village and not the husband’s. In the case of the Siddoos, the maintenance of an outpatient hospital and pharmacy depends entirely on their two daughters, their training as doctors and their service in the Punjab for several months each year. In the case of Tara Singh Bains, he and his wife retired to her village in India and established a school there. Johnston wonders about the second and third generations of Punjabis in Canada, what their patterns of giving will be like. Margaret Walton-Roberts also traces NRI giving from Vancouver, examining the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust (GNMMET) medical facility initiated by Budh Singh Dhahan. Canadian partners were brought in to assure sustainability, the Canada-India Education Society (CIES) and then the University of British Columbia’s School of Nursing. Tracing the institutional and personal challenges of these relationships, Walton-Roberts discusses some transformative effects with respect to women, both as trainees in the Punjab and as members added to the board of GNMMET. She comments that, like the next article by Purewal, her study shows that SDP both challenges and perpetuates gendered norms within Punjab society

(201). Navteej K. Purewal's study of the Bebe Nanaki Gurdwara and Charitable Trust in Birmingham, UK, named for the sister of Guru Nanak by the founder philanthropist Bibi Balwant Kaur, does make that point. The Trust has undertaken projects in Kenya, India, Birmingham, and the Punjab, but as its founder ages she and her female contemporaries have been replaced by "a new generation of male trustees and sangat members" (214-5), causing Purewal like the two previous authors to end with questions about continuity and sustainability.

The final section, IV, discusses "lessons learnt." Autar S. Dhesi asks if diasporic intervention is "boon or bane." His tables, based on a field survey in Doaba in 2004 and 2005, show improvements in sanitation, education, health, and road connectivity. Drawing on a 2007 study he monitored for the Village Life Improvement Foundation (VLIF, an NGO initiated by two NRIs in 1999), he shows holistic development of social infrastructure and universal access to new facilities developed by the VLIF programme, and he discusses various hurdles posed by interactions between formal and informal local institutions. Darshan S. Tatla incisively analyzes the state of information about SDP, the various kinds of projects being undertaken, and the post-1947 changing relationships among NRIs and India's national and Punjab governments. He suggests that philanthropists abroad still view government incentives warily, partly because of considerations of political patronage and alliances with the Congress and Akali parties. Assessing the impacts of SDP to date, Tatla comments on negative outcomes like the destruction of historic structures by "rebuilding," and he remarks on the new assertions of ethnic or caste consciousness through the revival of popular religious forms and the emergence of Dalit politics in the Punjab. His hope is that SDP is bringing a new social ethos to Punjabi and Sikh society, a long-term commitment to productive social welfare activities. Finally, Dusenbery lists the issues raised across the chapters: philanthropists' motivations; productive versus non-productive giving; the effects of demonstration or competitive giving; different priorities for NRIs and non-NRIs; gender and generational differences among diaspora philanthropists; the creation of sustainable structures; problems of equity and social inclusion; and partnering with the state, other development agents, and/or the market. He ends by summarizing the recommendations put forward by participants at the 2006 workshop. Appendices provide additional information, particularly about the Government of the Punjab scheme for matching assistance and its current projects and the NRI Sabha, Punjab, lists of NRI investors and projects.

This excellent book will be widely read and its recommendations should have an impact on Sikh diasporic philanthropists and those who would partner with them.

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Kim Bolan, *Loss of faith: How the Air-India bombers got away with murder*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2005). 388pp. (pb) \$21.99. ISBN 978-0-7710-1131-3 (0-7710-1131-8).

On 16 March 2005, Justice Josephson delivered his historic judgment acquitting both Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri of an alleged conspiracy to blow up Air India Flight 182 in June 1985. The judge's decision naturally came as a great disappointment for relatives who had hoped someone would be found guilty for such a dastardly crime. Their hopes had been raised by the investigation agencies and above all by the media which had implied many times that such a plot was hatched within the Canadian Sikh community. Indeed, such was the force of media coverage that many Sikhs had also come to the same view. The management committee at Ross Street Gurdwara, Vancouver, performed an Akhand Path seeking atonement and many relatives of the deceased were invited though few felt comfortable enough to attend. But the judgment failed to tackle at depth the injurious assertions which had affected the Canadian Sikhs' image for almost two decades.

The judge said that there was a conspiracy to put the two bombs on Air India flights in Vancouver; that both the prosecution and defence acknowledged, apparently for different reasons, that Talwinder Singh Parmar probably was the leader in the conspiracy; and that the device detonated at Narita was linked to Parmar and Reyat. However, Parmar had disappeared from the scene in 1992 when he was allegedly caught by the Punjab police, tortured and killed; his dead body was disposed of by Punjab police through an 'encounter'. Despite Reyat's conviction for the Narita bomb device, the crucial link to Air India plane proved to be the most difficult task. It took sixteen years before Canada's investigating agencies could arrest and charge two Sikhs, Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri in 2001 with a conspiracy to blow up the Air India plane. Still, the prosecution's case did not meet the reasonable criterion of the Canadian judicial system to find the two Sikhs guilty.

Rather than feeling relieved that the judge had accepted or confirmed some elements of the prosecution's case, Bolan asserts that the judgment amounted to a 'loss of faith' in Canadian justice, and quotes many relatives' immediate reactions. Obviously the trial by media was to continue even as 500 pages of the learned judge's verdict had freed the accused Sikhs.

Kim Bolan is a reputedly stubborn journalist who has worked for the *Vancouver Sun* since 1984 - her career became involved in the Punjab crisis as dramatic events in Amritsar embroiled British Columbian Sikhs. Bolan aims to provide many pieces of information, which she asserts were either 'overlooked' or 'underplayed' by the learned judge. Among her findings, Bolan points out financial irregularities in the Khalsa School Vancouver run by Ripudiman Singh Malik. She also located Surjan Gill, a key figure of the pre-1984 Khalistan movement in Vancouver, now living in west London keeping a low profile, perhaps following a 'deal' in 1996 with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,

which suggested some association with Indian agencies. But she does not pursue this further.

On the conspiracy to blow up the Air India plane, Bolan's additional evidence consists essentially of her talks with Tara Singh Hayer, proprietor of a Punjabi weekly, *Indo-Canadian Times*, from Vancouver and Rani who worked for Malik at the local Khalsa School. Hayer told Bolan that during a visit to West London he overheard a confession by Ajaib Singh Bagri as he talked to Tarsem Singh Purewal, editor-proprietor of the UK based weekly *Des Pardes*. However, when questioned by the police Purewal denied having heard Bagri's admission to conspiracy to blow up the plane. Nor could Avtar Jandialvi, another person who was present with Hayer on that day, confirm that conversation. So why Bolan should put so much weight on Hayer's crucial hold on Bagri's alleged confession? Both Purewal and Hayer had been murdered and their assassinations remain unsolved to date. Bolan speculates that Hayer was murdered to frighten other witnesses in the case into silence. As to the other witnesses, Bolan heard many stories from Rani [her identity is protected by court order], who appeared for the prosecution and her testimony was subjected to full examination during the trial.

One can only conclude that notwithstanding her investigative feats, Bolan's narrative essentially reads like a sensational account, albeit one that shows empathy with the families of those who died. A more responsible journalist would have shunned adding to such a sentimental atmosphere by alluding to half-baked theories, conjectures and odd pieces of information that would not stand reasonable scrutiny while contributing much to malign the Canadian Sikhs' image.

### **Darshan S. Tatla**

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Tejwant Singh Gill *Amrita Shergill: Life and Art* (Punjabi) (Patiala: Publications Bureau, Punjabi University, 2008) pp.244. Rs.360 (hb). ISBN 8130201054.

In recent years there seems to have been a revival of interest in the work of Amrita Shergill, one of India's foremost women painters. Geeta Doctor's work about her paintings in 2002 was followed by Yashodhra Dalmia's detailed biography in 2006, not to mention earlier works by Amrita's contemporaries like Karl Khandalavala and Baldoon Dhingra. Gill's work combines both Shergill's intensely lived and sharply divided life as well as her paintings which took the east and the west in their embrace. The objectives of this work are different from the others which have preceded it as it is part of a larger project to record the history of Punjab, to build up a continuity not only in the state's artistic history but also to project its contribution to the national scenario. This in itself is long overdue - an essential task if histories of art and literature are to have a national

fulsomeness.

It is evident from the work that the writer has enjoyed working on this thoroughly researched and sensitively identified-with biography, primarily because a similar feeling of enjoyment is passed on to the reader. For all apparent purposes it follows a linear and an historical account, tracing lineages, histories and relationships right from the exiled Maharaja Dalip Singh's daughter Princess Bamba's ambition to recover her father's birthright to the Hungarian Marie Antoinette's parental backgrounds. In fact Gill goes back to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's times and traces the history of the great patrons of art leading to the development of the Kangra painting school. Gill has divided the work into twenty sections followed by an appendix which contains excerpts from her correspondence. The first four sections trace ancestral histories, the next five childhood and adolescence, the next nine deal with her emotional relationships, bringing the story of her young life to the event of her marriage with her Hungarian first cousin Victor Egan. Of the remaining four sections, two detail the last years of her young life and the details of her untimely death as a result of the complications following in the wake of an abortion, before moving on to a comparative study of Amrita's work in relation to her Mexican contemporary Frida Kahlo, and a final evaluative section.

Gill has not separated her life and art, instead he has very deliberately located her art in her life, in her double cultural heritage and within this larger area zeroing down to her emotional pull towards India. One can see that, through the study of the several self-portraits of Amrita, he has suggested her psychological conflicts. Wisely he stops short of making conclusive statements as well as working through any speculative reconstructions. He locates individual actions of all the characters he deals with in the context of family relationships and social pressures and, wherever possible, supports his position with reference to Amrita's correspondence. Jealousy, possessiveness, desire – all have their psychological reasons at their root.

Amrita Shergill's life is an interesting study in itself – not only because of her background, which was indeed rich and varied as if the fates themselves had conspired to place these reserves at her door, but also because of her location in the twenties and thirties, which was a vibrant period for art and literature, when Paris was the city of exiles and modernism and experimentation were at their peak. Her father Umrao Singh Majithia came from an aristocratic family, her mother belonged to a Hungarian family with musical talent, her maternal uncle Ervin Baktay, was an Indologist. These were the influences which shaped her work and are deeply reflected in her art. On one side the sensuousness of the body and on the other the gracefully clad figure; on one side the attraction towards religious constructs, on the other the acknowledgement of the physical – it is this coming together of opposites which made her life so vibrant and intense and her art a confluence of cultures. What Gill achieves through this rooting of Amrita in her Punjabi paternal home and her presence in the flow of history not only of Punjab but of India, is to give both – Amrita and her background – a



presence in the wider national context. His weaving in of Sant Singh Sekhon's play *Kalakar* and Himanshi Shelat's Gujarati novel *Atho-Ma-Rang* adds to this dimension. There are other literary references such as the one to Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* but one feels the absence of Javed Siddiqi's Urdu play *Tumhari Amrita*, which has had several performances all over India with Shabana Azmi and Farooq Sheikh playing the lead characters. But while the influences on her work and her artistic friendships are explored, only marginal references are there to her younger sister, or later the family inheritance as visible in the work of her nephew Vivan Sundaram, who incidentally has two books on his aunt.

Another question that arises as we read the work is that of its targeted readership. Obviously it is a Punjabi-reading audience but which one? Literary and art historians, family historians or historians of national reconstruction? Or is it a wider readership that the work aims at? The writer's style stands on a meeting point between guarded scholarly assessments, balanced judgments and the free delineation of a life story. The serious reader's memory is jogged by memories of Toru Dutt's life in France, her equally untimely death at a young age and Mary Wollstonecraft's struggle, and finally death, arising out of post-delivery complications. One would also have valued a more detailed reference to the art movements current at that time in India and Amrita's shift from them. A bolder statement about the gender dimensions of the cultural ethos would also have been welcome. A young woman who defies normative patterns, who treats motherhood as incidental (and perhaps dispensable), who travels between continents and across the subcontinent, who rejects her maternal heritage and yet marries a maternal cousin is, to say the least, enigmatic. Her life falls into the pattern of a fairy tale but one which is turbulent and happens to be tragic and sad; it is a life which would easily lend itself to a great deal of imaginative reading, especially given Amrita's bold acknowledgment of the body and its desire. But as one reads this agonising tale of an interrupted life, her several romantic fascinations including one with the handsome young Jawahar (Jawaharlal Nehru), one needs to acknowledge that Gill has done a splendid job, pulling the reader into a world of emotional intensity, histories of Hungary as well as India, personal lineages and art histories all at once, while retaining his own scholarly balance and successfully resisting the temptation towards over dramatisation. A rare feat indeed!

**Jasbir Jain**

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John R. Hinnells and Richard King (eds.), *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, (London: Routledge, 2007) ix + 265 pp. (pb) ISBN 978-0-415-37291-6. (hb) ISBN 9780415372909. (ebk) 9780203088692.

It is perhaps not surprising that since 9/11, there has been a dearth of scholarly interest in the notion of violence *vis-a-vis* religion. But over the past decade, the trajectory of this inquiry has tended to move from historically-driven case studies of violence in specific religious traditions toward more broadly constructed - methodological and theoretical - (re)assessments of what constitutes not only 'violence', but also 'religion' and the intersection of the two.

The present volume makes an important and timely contribution to this inquiry within the context of South Asia. This collection of essays by notable scholars in the field "is designed to look beyond... stereotypical images of violence and to analyze the diverse attitudes towards and manifestations of violence within South Asian traditions" (2). Hinnells and King explain in their *Introduction* that the purpose of the volume is to 'normalize' violence: not to understand violence as exceptional or unreal, but rather as imbedded within the history of South Asia. In doing so, the essays together offer a reconsideration of a matrix of inter-related questions concerning both violence and religion: What counts as violence? Is the question of violence a purely humanistic one, or should violence be understood more broadly?

A distinctive and valuable feature of the volume lies in its acknowledgement and analysis of cultural, epistemic, and symbolic expressions of violence to the extent that verbal and (social) structural violence are seriously considered. Additionally, interwoven throughout several of the essays is a broader concern for the conceptual efficacy of 'religion' when seeking to understand violence in a South Asian context.

The volume is divided into three main parts. Part One offers five assessments relating to 'Classical approaches to violence in South Asian traditions'. Each of the five essays address conceptions and articulations of violence in the Hindu (Laurie Patton), Jain (Paul Dundas), Buddhist (Rupert Gettin), Muslim (Robert Gleave), and Sikh (Balbinder Bhogal) pasts. Part Two turns its attention to three recent instances of 'Religion and violence in contemporary South Asia'. The essays by Peter Schalk, Ian Talbot, and Christophe Jaffrelot are situated in the geographical theatres of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Gurjarat respectively. These essays deal in turn with politicized Buddhism and *simhalatva*, the historical context for conflict in Pakistan, and the 'communal' violence that plagued Gujarat in 2002. Part Three delivers three critical discussions relating to 'Theory: framing the "religion and violence"' *debate*. Peter Gottschalk takes on the notion of 'communalism' and its place in colonial epistemologies. Arvind Mandair grapples with the epistemic and symbolic violence of 'religion' in the context of a 'post-colonial' South Asia. Richard King revisits the association of 'religion' and violence as a trope imbedded in scholarly discourse.

The readers of this journal will likely be most interested in the contributions

by Balbinder Bhogal and Arvind Mandair. Balbinder Bhogal's 'Text as Sword: Sikh Religious Violence Taken for Wonder' is a corrective to what Bhogal calls the 'break' theory: a reading of Sikh history that posits a 'break' in orientation between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, a 'break' from religion to violence. According to Bhogal, it is a non-Indic (i.e. western) presupposition that religion and violence stand in opposition to one another that sustains the 'break' theory. This presupposition has allowed such scholars as Hew McLeod and Louis Fenech (cited specifically by Bhogal) to perpetuate what amounts to a misreading of the Guru period. According to Bhogal, the subtext of these erroneous interpretations of Sikh history cast Guru Nanak as religious and non-violent against the non-religious and violent sensibilities of Guru Gobind Singh. Bhogal's approach is to highlight the 'violent' imagery in the *bani* of Guru Nanak and to show its resonance with the orientation and innovations of Gobind Singh.

The strength of Bhogal's article lies in its reappraisal of Nanak's metaphorical and poetic use of 'violent' imagery. In a rather lucid presentation, Bhogal shows the palimpsest of religion and violence in Nanak's *bani* that is all too often read over in the *Adi Granth*. This part of Bhogal's analysis is insightful and cogent. Less convincing however is Bhogal's argument against the 'break' thesis specifically. Bhogal puts forward a strong version of the theory in which a clear and decisive break occurs in Sikh history – a break that definitively distinguishes Nanak from Gobind Singh. But how widely-held is this view? Bhogal himself uses terms such as 'change' and 'innovation' to characterize the traditions of the first and tenth gurus. What precisely is the difference between 'break' and 'change'? In addition, Bhogal does not distinguish as clearly as one might hope between metaphorical and poetic uses of violence on the one hand, and the call to physically take up arms on the other hand. This is not to say that Gobind Singh did not employ violent imagery in poetic and symbolic ways, only that Bhogal seems to downplay the physical dimension of the tenth Guru's orientation.

Arvind Mandair's 'The Global Fiduciary: Mediating the Violence of Religion' is broad in its conceptual scope, and innovative in its analysis of 'religion' in South Asia. Mandair calls into question the symbolic and all too often latent 'violence' imposed by the very term 'religion' in South Asian 'discourse'. Drawing heavily from Jacques Derrida's observation that religion and violence are inextricably linked to the iatrogenic imposition of an assumed universality (i.e. law) of the term 'religion', Mandair argues that when South Asians affirm (or deny) a particular religious affiliation, there lies unexamined an assumed universal meaning of 'religion' that violates the law of the Other (in this case, the South Asian speaker). Thus, for Mandair, the use of 'religion' in the South Asian context necessarily entails an act of injustice (i.e. violence).

Mandair connects the injustice of 'religion' to the notion of the fiduciary - "the performative experience of the act of faith, without which there can be no address to the other" (217) – and to what Derrida calls the *globalatinization* of

Christian values latent in the “conceptual apparatus of international law, global political rhetoric and multiculturalism.” (217). All this leads Mandair to speculate upon Derrida’s question: “What if *religio* remained untranslatable?” (223) as a possible ‘response’ for mitigating the violence of ‘religion’.

Mandair’s piece is conceptually intriguing and presents a sophisticated analysis. However, one might wonder whether Mandair’s argument has not inadvertently devalued the experiential authenticity of many diaspora Sikhs whose conceptual framework may differ significantly – ‘religiously’, socially, morally – from those Sikhs living in South Asia (or of those Sikhs living in South Asia but beyond a Panjabi operational and normative context). Put differently, it may be the case that Mandair has started down a slippery slope toward an (unintended) essentialist view, one that entails an expression of “pure” self-identity, free from “external” (i.e. non-Panjabi) influences.

Notwithstanding the questions and criticisms above, Bhogal and Mandair (as well as the other contributors to this volume) make positive, substantial, and timely contributions to what may become one of the defining discourses (i.e. religion and violence) in South Asian studies in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Michael Hawley**

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Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (eds) *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement and Resettlement*, (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008) 283pp. Rs. 595. (hb) ISBN-13 9788131714164, 8131714160.

In the past decade or so, the recovery of lost voices, narratives, and lived experiences of Partition has emerged as a major project within modern Indian historiography. A rich body of literature, as a result, has shaped up bringing to the surface raw accounts of loss, displacement and suffering experienced in various parts of South Asia. *Partitioned Lives* is yet another welcome addition to this growing body that brings together literary, cultural and historical contributions on the theme of Partition. The anthology consists of fifteen contributions seeking to explore the ‘imaginings of home in the narratives of the displaced’ (xxvi) in fictional writings, cinematic representations, as well as personal memory of the survivors.

Within migration studies, the loss of home/homeland is a central theme invoked in the everyday life of the ‘displaced’ people. The notion of home is often bound to a particular place within the territory of imagination that migrants long to return to. This longing and desire to resurrect ‘home’ appears complicated once we begin to unbundle the Partition processes. And doubly so for those migrants who chose to migrate further than either India or Pakistan, or what we loosely term the South Asian diaspora. For one thing, the national entity

that hundreds of thousands had left behind during the imperial migrations of mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not exist any longer. The British imperial power had given way to the two new states of India and Pakistan that were largely meant to constitute a homogenous demography of Hindu/Sikhs and Muslims respectively. This logic of homogeneity meant that, for the first time, the diasporic South Asians were forced to reassess their notion of homeland: did Pakistan become a natural homeland for Muslims now that their ancestral home lay within the boundaries of the Indian nation-state, and similarly, did Lahore automatically become out of bounds for the Hindu/Sikh diaspora? Once the place of intimate associations, home – place of birth, residence, family ties and emotional associations – has been lost, say in India or in Pakistan, can the new assigned nation-state be naturally assumed as one's homeland? These questions have barely been asked within Partition studies as they have so far been mainly concerned with experiences of displacement within India and Pakistan. Yet, for millions within the diaspora, this remains a critical theme often wrapped in deliberate ambiguity and uncertain reason.

Some of the contributions in this anthology join issue with the theme of South Asian diaspora and Partition through fiction and films. In 'Moving Forward though still Facing Back: Partition and the South Asian Diaspora in Canada', Prabhjot Parmar challenges the idea that diasporic response to Partition is either ill-placed or lacking in intimacy, as is sometimes alleged. Through the works of Deepa Mehta (*Earth*, 1998) and Shauna Singh Baldwin (*What the Body Remembers*, 2000) mainly, Parmar ascertains Partition dislocation and disjuncture as a central motif in the lives of the diasporic South Asians as they deal with the realities and demands of being citizens in a new nation-state. Paulomi Chakraborty's 'Refugee Women, Immigrant Women: The Partition as Universal Dislocation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*' takes forward the same theme, while tying Partition to the universalisation of the experience of dislocation and exile. Another paper 'Eternal Exiles in the Land of the Pure: Mohajirs in Mass Transit' by Amber Fatima Riaz shows, through a close reading of Maniza Naqvi's work (*Mass Transit*, 1998), the difficulty in remembering and living the 'home' of one's longing.

While these contributions begin to address the issue of Partition and diaspora in some ways, we learn little about the ways in which post-1947 politics of belonging and identity have come to constitute the diaspora itself. In many respects, the responses of the diasporic writers in the West to Partition, though contextually different, are not substantially far from those stemming from the second or third generation writers and film-makers in India and Pakistan. By now, we know that the history of Partition migration is hardly etched between two neat points of departure and arrival, it zig-zags, goes back and forth and often takes unfamiliar routes in time and space as many recent studies have shown. In this volume, Pippa Virdee's essay 'Partition in Transition: Comparative Analysis of Migration in Ludhiana and Lyallpur' underscores yet again this complicated nature of Partition migration. What the recent histories of

Partition – particularly of women, Dalits, orphaned children and those somehow at the margins of the new citizenry – tell us is that dislocation and exile are universal conditions that do not always require physical movement, and for many ‘home’ remains a permanent state of disjuncture even when one is located within one’s assigned home/homeland.

**Ravinder Kaur**

University of Copenhagen

Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot, *The Partition of India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) xvii + 206 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-67256-6 (pb) \$29.99, 978-0-521-85661-4 (hb) \$85.00.

In *The Partition of India*, Singh and Talbot admirably synthesize Partition’s immense historiography, considerably revising our basic understandings of the period. Organized thematically, this slim volume breaks new ground by detailing the full breadth of Partition. Their most important contributions are giving due attention to Bengal, Kashmir, and regions besides Punjab, including both high politics and history from below, describing Partition violence beyond the summer of 1947, and, most novelly, identifying the longer-term effects of Partition on postcolonial domestic politics and bilateral international relations. They conclude with a brief call to reexamine Partition in comparison to other partitions (e.g. Ireland, Palestine, Cyprus) rather than as a singular event. Simply, this book is a major reconceptualization of the Partition narrative that will prove itself a valuable entry to the wider literature.

In the first chapter, Singh and Talbot provide an extremely helpful review of the historiography of Partition, encompassing national and regional high politics as well as the recent revisions of subaltern and feminist histories. The second chapter studies the historical background leading to the decision for Partition. They argue against a view of Partition as a colonial parting shot and instead emphasize the quadruple consensus of All-India Muslim League separatism, the Congress High Command’s wish to dominate postcolonial politics by doing away with incorrigible minorities, the British desire for a speedy departure, and the hope of the *bhadralok* in Bengal and of Sikh and Hindu elites in Punjab to create truncated states in which they could be assured political dominance. The third chapter focuses on the darkest consequence of Partition, its gruesome violence. The authors portray its scope beginning not in August 1947, but a year earlier in the Great Calcutta Killing and ultimately spanning Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, in addition to Punjab. They demonstrate both its planned nature as well as its shift from a “traditional” riot to a brutal ethnic cleansing. The fourth chapter, on refugee resettlement, emphasizes, contrary to state-centered nationalist accounts, how class, caste, and gender conditioned migrants’

experiences and how population transfers led to major demographic shifts in cities such as Delhi and Calcutta. The fifth and sixth chapters, exploring the long-term effects of Partition on state policies and interstate relations, respectively, are singular for seeing beyond 1947 as a discrete historical terminus. Singh and Talbot discuss how Partition encouraged unitary governments that have marginalized minorities in both states and how the Kashmir conflict has resulted in a seemingly intractable antagonism.

The main strength of Singh's and Talbot's synthesis is its authoritative grasp of historiography and their effort, largely successful, to encompass a wide range of Partition narratives. By giving due attention to different levels of politics, regional and local accounts, interstate relations, and long-term effects, the authors are able to offer valuable insights into the many facets of Partition. This breadth is what allows for their significant revision of our basic understandings of the period and the important extension of the narrative beyond 1947 to include postcolonial state formation, diplomacy, and fissures within the construction of national identities.

The other recent study of Partition, Yasmin Khan's excellent *The Great Partition* (2007), differs in its use of continuous narrative; Khan's prose, peppered with contemporary quotations and anecdotes, is appealing and includes glimpses into the mentalities of historical actors that are valuable not only to the non-specialist reader. Though Singh's and Talbot's work boasts a wider chronological scope and is more comprehensive in its fuller treatment of Bengal and Partition historiography, Khan's narrative is chronological and she is not forced to skip neatly between discrete thematic headings, so allowing for a nuance that sometimes falls between the cracks of Singh's and Talbot's work (such as the opening anecdote of Malcolm Darling's ride).

Thus, the main weakness of the book stems from this predilection for thoroughness of historiographic detail that seems to foreclose broader questions beyond the prior scholarship. For example, in the vast literature on the causes of Partition, the grail of the roots of "Muslim separatism" has elicited fervent pursuit and though the authors mention in passing the tension between primordialist and instrumentalist definitions of Muslim identity, their judgement in favor of a golden-ageism of communal fluidity prior to colonialism fails to interrogate the converse innovation of a pan-subcontinental national identity. How did a land mass nearly the size of Europe come to comprise a single nation? What historical processes have made this political assertion appear natural? Yet they are perhaps less blameworthy for such oversight than the historians they diligently summarize.

Notwithstanding, this book is an important contribution and will be useful as an introductory text for advanced undergraduates or as a reference for postgraduates. Its valuable review of the many approaches to the study of Partition, as well as its imaginative perspective on the totality of Partition beyond 1947, ensure that it will be considered a significant contribution. As more oral histories, especially lacking from the Sikh and Muslim perspectives, are

published, this book will become in need of correction. Yet, for a goodly time it will stand among our best introductions to Partition.

**Ajeet Singh**

Columbia University

W. Owen Cole, *Cole Sahib, The Story of a Multifaith Journey*, (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2009, 204pp. ISBN: 978-1-84519-336-2 (pb) £16.95

Of all human means to share, transmit and transform through knowledge, the age-old art of storytelling is perhaps unsurpassed. No wonder it works so soundly in this memoir by W. Owen Cole, pioneer and still guiding voice for multifaith, religious education. The insights and reflections presented here, gathered and honed over seven decades, illuminate his personal retrospective on a century gone and direction offered for the century ahead.

The reading of this book is a communal experience. We join family members, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, imagined future audiences and descendents in following a journey through a changing, everyday world and across the seasons of life. It is presented through the author's multiple identities as a son, a husband, a father and grandfather; a schoolboy, a student and a working man; a traveller, a passer-by, a lifelong friend; a teacher, populariser and, dare one say, academic (for the latter is, in Cole tradition, always understated).

Geography is the book's organising principle; a place lived in becomes a chapter. From Bradford the journey takes us to Bath, Harlow, Newcastle, Leeds and Chichester (with Wales occupying a place in the emotional, if not physical, landscape). Mapped out is a breadth of personal and social experience in different neighbourhoods and educational institutions across the country. There is engagement with others making journeys to Britain, be they refugees in wartime Europe, or later migrants from the Commonwealth. We follow Cole to places visited and revisited in India and Pakistan. As circumstances and viewpoints change, and knowledge evolves, one also senses a constancy of inward vision, glimpsed at the outset and tempered over time.

From the start we are drawn by Cole's child's-eye vignettes from his early life, tracing the gradual discovery of a world populated by different religious and cultural identities. With tender humour, he shares the childhood memory of 'my beautiful, black-haired aunty Betty' coming home in tears, having been stood up on a date after explaining she was not Jewish. Cole's father, a Congregationalist minister and former miner, exudes an affable and practical humanitarianism rather than religiosity or excessive dogma. It seems natural that, years later, Cole would be endeared to Bhai Kanhaiya, the Sikh who saw none as an enemy or stranger as he tended to the wounded in battle.



During the war, Cole was a conscientious objector, leading to work with the Friends Ambulance Unit, from washing dishes, and patients, in hospitals, to felling trees, to a post-war construction project in Germany, to setting up a temporary school in Staffordshire for Hungarian refugees. Here begins an association with the Quakers (with whom, in recent years, he has become formally aligned). After marriage, he converts to Anglicanism; his explanation reveals a habit of appreciating and weighing up context, rather than relying, aloofly, on ideology alone. Elsewhere in the book, we see firm changes of opinion, such as his views on school worship; others, such as reservations about faith schools, allow scope for flexibility.

Significantly, *Cole Sahib* charts a journey in education. Out of all his qualifications, including a PhD, it is clear that the teaching diploma is his most treasured. In a classroom moment reminiscent of Ken Loach's film, *Kes*, Cole recalls the sudden blossoming of an otherwise subdued pupil, when he encourages the boy to talk about his hobby of pheasant rearing. The episode 'taught me a lesson that I have never forgotten, namely that most of us have greater potential than is usually recognised but that it takes some particular circumstance to release it.' Years later, this translates into Owen's pupil-centred initiatives in the multicultural classroom.

For those familiar with Cole's work on South Asian religions, accounts of his journeys to the Indian Subcontinent will be of interest, as well as insights to his collaborative writing and enduring friendship with the late Piara Singh Sambhi. We learn, too, of Cole's work at Patiala, with Professor Harbans Singh, on the groundbreaking *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*. Indeed, in the book's title, *Cole Sahib*, we hear the voice of the many South Asians whose affectionate respect he has earned.

In many ways, there is an echo of the initiatives of Macauliffe in British India, who first arrived in the Punjab in 1864. Quite literally, a century on, Cole enabled knowledge about Sikhs to reach everyday British schools and institutions, helping to establish a body of post-war, English-language resources in Sikh Studies. This latest contribution, in the genre of a memoir, is certainly important, because it serves to contextualise the writer, revealing a great deal about the lenses interpreting the world. In this respect *Cole Sahib* joins *Interfaith Pilgrims* by Eleanor Nesbitt (also a Quaker) contributing to a body of personal and reflective writing within the field. They feature, rather like a research chapter, situating the researcher in relation to the field, outlining the world-views and life experiences which inevitably shape understanding and approach. Thus, in the book, where a detail of religious ritual is reported, somewhat abruptly, as 'superstition', one may be inclined to disagree, yet find room to accept it as a perspective on an ongoing journey. Elsewhere, in contrast, Cole is mindful to stress the importance of questioning assumptions and understanding nuance.

*Cole Sahib* is written with a bold sense of purpose and its implications are wide. Running through it is a critique of educational, cultural and social

stagnation, drawing attention to ‘curriculum inertia’ and a ‘fossilized world’. Still today, he argues, we are challenged by the apathy, ignorance, arrogance or neglect symptomatic of previous decades. Immersing ourselves in Cole’s life story, we are reminded, with urgency, of education’s vital role in enabling us to overcome challenge and move forward. We are also privileged to better understand the life of a single individual, dignified by those qualities - much cherished by Sikhs - of contemplation, industriousness and magnanimity, of dedication to family, work and society, and of faith and grit against the odds. As we finish and close the book, it is this rich and resilient character which is, ultimately, the ‘Sahib’ behind Cole.

**Gopinder Kaur Sagoo**

University of Birmingham

Aatish Taseer, *Stranger to History: A Son’s Journey through Islamic Lands*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009) 323 pp. £14.99 (hb) ISBN 978-1-847676-071-7.

Aatish Taseer’s *Stranger to History* comes highly recommended: V. S. Naipaul’s praise - “A subtle and poignant work by a young writer to watch” - is printed on the front cover and Antonia Fraser’s comments - “... an amazing narrative: a kind of Muslim Odyssey which unfolds before the reader’s eyes, bringing revelations, sometimes painful perhaps, but always intensely compelling” - endorse the work on the back cover. Indeed, the author takes the reader on a journey - both in the concrete and figurative sense of the word; it is a personal journey which Taseer embarked on to explore and understand his cultural and religious genealogy. The physical journey took him, in gradual stages, from West to East, beginning in Venice and ending in Delhi. However, the book only covers part of this geographical expedition, charting the author’s experiences in Istanbul, Mecca, Iran, and Pakistan, leaving out other parts which covered Jordan, Yemen, and Oman. In all these countries, Taseer traces his routes through the intermediary of contacts, acquaintances, friends, and family, who help him navigate the vagaries of local life and lessen the difficulties of being a stranger in a strange land. They also answer questions and interpret Islamic thought and practice, while also acting as guides and interpreters. While in most cases they assist the author’s progress and facilitate access to particular places and personalities, there are also occasions, especially in Iran, where Taseer finds it hard to judge whether someone can be trusted, given the harshness of Iran’s Islamic regime which uses the full force of its powers for those who do not observe its rules. The author himself comes to feel some of the weight of official suspicion when his application for a visa extension runs into difficulties, leading to a somewhat hasty exit, after interrogation and unsuccessful intervention by Iranian friends. It is this episode in particular which shows the hazards of the

journey both for Taseer and those who act as intermediaries. The suspicion towards him taints those who help or vouch for him - only he can leave the country and they cannot.

Pakistan is the country that links Taseer with the part of his family with which he has had little contact during his upbringing. Weaving the story of his family background into his travel log, the authors seeks to unravel the less tangible threads of his genealogical quest. The beginnings of these threads lie in the chance encounter of his parents in 1980 in Delhi: a politically engaged Muslim from Pakistan and a Sikh political reporter from India. However, this mixed-faith relationship does not result in a mixed-faith family. Taseer grows up without his father, embedded in the Sikh culture of his maternal extended family, albeit with an awareness of that other - Muslim - inheritance. His efforts to make contact with his father during adolescence do not establish a continuous link with him. Taseer's quest is to understand his father's Muslim-ness, which - he hopes - will shed light on his own (rather ambivalent) sense of having something Muslim in and about him. He seeks to gain this understanding by exploring the cultural and religious expressions of Islam in the countries he visits - as he finds it in individuals and institutions - and by looking at the way in which politics and Islam relate to one another - separated from the affairs of the state in countries like Turkey, intertwined with the affairs of the state in countries like Iran.

The book thus records parts of the personal journey of someone with a dual cultural heritage, although Taseer seeks to capture some of the wider political and cultural contexts around him. The chapters which describe his travel experiences are interwoven with chapters which record his childhood and provide the background to his upbringing. To this reviewer, these are the most interesting parts of the book, because they convey something of what being of mixed heritage means - the sense of being part of a family and knowing some of its history, while also being conscious of being 'other' and 'different' in some respects. Despite his estrangement from his father, Taseer writes, "I grew up with a sense of being Muslim, but it was a very small sense" (p. 14). Eventually, it is the question of what makes him a Muslim despite his lack of faith which sets Taseer off on his journey.

There are also the formative influences of the extended family, of family friends, and of a Christian boarding school in South India. The subtle influences of the maternal grandparents are especially noteworthy; these occur by the sheer fact that the grandparents are part of Taseer's everyday life - with grandmother passing on sacred stories and both grandparents being examples of lived history, having lived the partition of India.

Given the author's background in journalism - he has worked as a reporter for *Time* magazine - this is not an academically conceived or constructed book. It records the experiences and thoughts of someone who sets out to discover missing links in his understanding of Islam, culture and politics, how these combine in different Muslim countries to the point of being inextricably meshed and providing the rationale for and underpinning each other. Some of these

experiences are refracted by the lenses of others - by those who acted as guides in the respective countries and their particular 'take' on politics and religion. The book thus provides a set of snapshots taken by the author. The book can also be seen as a primary source for those interested in people of mixed heritage and the way they deal with and relate to both 'self' and 'other' in their lives, as an example of 'mixedness' which does not ultimately result in the easy resolution of ambivalence and 'mixed feelings'.

**Elisabeth Arweck**

University of Warwick

William B. Milam, *Bangladesh and Pakistan: Flirting with Failure in South Asia*, (London: Hurst, 2009) xii + 276 pp. £50 (hb) 00ISBN 978-1-85065-920-4, £16.99 (pb) ISBN 978-1-850-65-921-1.

Pakistan and Bangladesh, according to former US ambassador Milam, are stumbling between failure and success primarily due to their lack of good governance and developed institutions. His interpretation builds from De Soto's (1989) view of the failures of non-Western countries to inculcate the institutional requirements for markets and private-sector growth. Milam argues that a weak tradition of civilian rule, a stagnant economy in need of major structural reform, and a political culture lacking consensus and prone to corruption, among other reasons, have led to the current state of affairs of weak civilian governments punctuated by military intervention. Milam brings his experience as US ambassador to both countries, and his training in international economics, to write a political history of Bangladesh and Pakistan since their split in 1971 to the present. He also includes a chapter on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social development and argues for their beneficial effects, especially in Bangladesh.

Milam's account extends from January 1971 to January 2008 and his epilogue covers briefly the period from February to July 2008. Milam's basic narrative is straightforward: he argues that since 1971, both countries have followed similar trajectories, oscillating between military rule and unstable democracy, all the while coping with weak economies in need of liberalization. Beginning with the democratic episode of Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh (1971-1975) and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977) in Pakistan, Milam builds the case that both began with a wave of optimism, but their populism led to economic mismanagement and ultimately a weakening of democratic institutions. When the military intervened in both cases (1975-1981 in Bangladesh under Ziaur Rahman and 1977-1988 under Zia ul Huq in Pakistan), neither regime had lived up to its original promise. These military regimes would experiment with "hybrid" governance—officers in civilian garb – but were ultimately unable to prepare the ground for lasting civilian rule and robust market economies. The

subsequent years, according to this narrative, follow a tragic cycle of unstable democracy and military coups. Ultimately, both states face today the same problem they did at their inception, that of creating developed market economies and parliamentary political systems.

As US ambassador to Pakistan (1998-2001) and Bangladesh (1990-1993), Milam demonstrates deep knowledge of both countries. Furthermore, his background in economics allows him to discuss the situation of non-governmental organizations' social services clearly and intelligently; he concludes that the criticisms of NGOs ignore their positive role as substituting for a state that is unable to adequately provision public goods. Additionally, in comparison to a recent spate of books on Pakistan and other Islamic states, Milam's approach is less reductionist; he does not make Islam the overriding cause of the political turmoil, as several other authors have. Instead of grand proclamations about Islam, modernity, and identity we are presented with a more sober and credible narrative, emphasizing fundamental issues of governance while not neglecting the tension between Islamic parties and the state.

Based on Milam's privileged diplomatic location, a reader would assume some special insight, but, occasional footnotes aside, he avoids inserting himself into the narrative and his work reads scarcely differently from a standard history. This can be interpreted as either strength or weakness depending on the reader's perspective; as an historian, I would have preferred a political memoir for a glimpse into US foreign policy. On the other hand, instead of hoping for some revelation, we should modestly recognize that perhaps his position allowed less for perspicaciousness than the temporality of being able to write a history years before the historian would ever enter the archive.

More significantly, depending on one's view of De Soto's theory of underdevelopment caused primarily because of poor legal institutions and bureaucratic formalities, one may find much to agree or disagree with in Milam's account. Critics of De Soto and the Washington Consensus will be frustrated by his treatment of defects that are solely internal. For example, he ignores the United States' Cold War policy of bolstering military regimes in Latin America, Indonesia and, of course, Pakistan under Zia.

Milam's book is reminiscent of Stephen Cohen's *The Idea of Pakistan* (2001) in its clarity of language and in its intended audience of policymakers, political scientists, and journalists (we can also add, through Milam's chapter on NGOs, those interested in development). Since it focuses on national politics and only mentions the regions briefly in regard to political tensions with the center, this book has little to offer to Punjab specialists. It would have been helpful to include maps (of which there are none) and more importantly, a timeline, as the chronology of so many short-lived governments in two different countries becomes difficult to follow. Finally, the editing of the book is unsatisfactory, including many spelling mistakes (especially in the second half) as well as terms that are left undefined or defined far after their first use. Nevertheless, for its intended audience, this book is useful for its timeliness, providing a

contemporary history of both countries written not twenty years too late.

**Ajeet Singh**

Columbia University

Farzana Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2009) 274pp. (pb) £15.99. ISBN 978-185065-965-5; (hb) ISBN 978-185065-964-8.

*Making Sense of Pakistan* is an important yet incomplete exposition of how religion defines Pakistan's politics. The first half of the book and its organising questions, namely, 'Why Pakistan?' 'Who is a Pakistani?' and 'The Burden of Islam,' neatly capture the core theoretical propositions of the book. Shaikh answers the question of why Pakistan was created by showing how the political movement for Pakistan in colonial India capitalised on the universalist claims of Islam to legitimise the demand for a separate, Muslim-majority nation-state. Pakistan assumed meaning to would-be Pakistanis because a historically and geographically specific group of Muslims perceived the right to exercise political power as divinely ordained. But the definition of Pakistani citizenship, a question too vaguely answered by Pakistan's founding fathers, became quickly politicised after independence, the paradigmatic question being whether a Pakistani citizen was designated by national creed or by religion. To ask who is a Pakistani is to pose a question about the relationship between Islam and the state. Pakistan's 'burden of Islam' is the tendency of its politicians to rely on religious rhetoric to legitimise their grasp on power.

A key contribution of this book is to lay bare how conflicted and uncertain the relationship between Islam and the state has always been. Shaikh showcases how this uncertainty has characterized every one of Pakistan's administrations, with the ultimate effect of religious radicalisation. The founding fathers of Pakistan, including Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Muhammad Iqbal, and Sayyid Ahmed Khan, were deliberately ambiguous about the relationship of Islam to the state. Each of Pakistan's formative administrations, unable to consolidate loyal bases of support, has capitalized on this uncertainty and turned towards exclusionary religious discourse to destabilise political opposition. Ayub Khan tried to formulate institutions which bypassed formal religious councils in favour of localised *pirs* and *sajjida nashin* to isolate the *ulema*. Though relatively successful in marginalizing the *ulema*, Ayub Khan nonetheless readily utilized Islamic discourse when it proved useful. Yayha Khan used Islam to legitimise the 1971 civil war against the East Pakistanis. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto similarly sought alliances with local *pirs* and avoided confrontation with the Islamist *ulema* by promulgating an explicitly Islamic constitution. But as Bhutto steadily alienated bases of support with his nationalization policies, he too eventually bowed to Islamist opposition by banning alcohol, nightclubs, and gambling. The direct influence of Islam perhaps reached its zenith under General Zia, who paid

public tribute to religious discourse within national politics. To a lesser extent, the same has been true of the democratic administrations of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Musharraf too, when in need of political support, turned to the mullahs.

Shaikh effectively argues that this recurring tendency to rely on religion to destabilise political opposition has strengthened the Islamists' political voice. The continual engagement in Islamic discourse politically empowers the religious establishment for, if being a good Muslim is a pre-requisite to being a good Pakistani citizen or a legitimate leader, then those institutions claiming the divine right to interpret who is a good Muslim or what is an appropriately Islamic state are accordingly granted considerable political power.

The book's key shortcoming is its continual marginalization of socio-economic interests in explaining Pakistani politics. It thereby effectively attributes a greater causal role to the contested interpretation of Islamic identity than it rightly deserves. For example, Shaikh attributes the first large-scale religious riots in Pakistan, in Punjab in 1953 over whether the Ahmedis were legitimate Pakistani citizens, to the 'chronic ambiguity and confusion over the meaning of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims' (p. 60). But to see these riots as being driven by a conflicted vision of Pakistani citizenship is to severely underplay the role of political interests in motivating these riots. Key religious organizations in colonial India had long been concerned with denouncing Ahmedis. However, these denunciations only became politically explosive in 1953, at the precise time when the national administration in Pakistan was considering a constitution that was perceived as generally unfavourable to Punjabi interests. Indeed, a powerful Punjabi landlord himself wrote that the anti-Ahmedi riots were instigated by the Chief Minister of Punjab in order to undermine this constitution (Firoz Khan Noon, *From Memory*, [Islamabad, National Book Foundation, 1993] p.234). To therefore understand these riots as being predominantly driven by questions of citizenship is to confuse immediate justifications with underlying causes.

Shaikh's contention that contradictory visions of political Islam predominantly explain Pakistan's lack of commitment to public welfare and social equity is another case in point. Though Shaikh acknowledges that it was the nature of class interests in those areas which became Pakistan which initially drove the lack of commitment to a developmental agenda, she ultimately argues that it was 'the absence of a consensus regarding the role of Islam that has, *above all*, severely constrained the economic and social reach of the state' (p. 146, emphasis added). But the interests of wealthy, politically powerful social groups in preventing redistributive policies play a more important role in blocking the state's developmental agenda. To be sure, ambiguity over the public role of Islam has complicated the state's ability to pursue a developmental agenda. Yet the interests of Pakistan's ruling families, particularly of its powerful feudal and industrial families, in preventing a genuinely redistributive agenda that could challenge their grip on power is surely a bigger obstacle to a redistributive

agenda than a contested vision of Islam. Only a cursory comparison with neighbouring India, where questions of national identity have not been nearly as contested but where a developmental agenda has been similarly thwarted by the interests of local power-holders, serves to illustrate that it is the structure of socio-economic interests which have, above all, limited the developmental reach of the state.

### **Maya Tudor**

University of Oxford

Shauna Singh Baldwin, *English Lessons and Other Stories*. Reader's Guide Edition (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publishers, 2007), 216 pp. (pb) \$18.99 CDN. ISBN 0-86492-273-6, and Shauna Singh Baldwin, *We Are Not in Pakistan*. (Fredericton: Goose Lane Publishers, 2007) 274 pp.(pb) \$22.95 CDN. ISBN-13: 978-0-86492-488-9..

*English Lessons and Other Stories* and *We Are Not in Pakistan* are two collections of short stories by the award-winning author of *What the Body Remembers* (1999) and *The Tiger Claw* (2004). *English Lessons* is the earlier of the two collections and contains fifteen short stories (Adesh Bhuaji would be proud). The central characters in *English Lessons* struggle with issues surrounding their South Asian religious and cultural identity. The stories are broadly framed in terms of 'tradition and change', and are situated in a variety of (often overlapping) contexts: culture and religion ('Rawalpindi 1919', 'Nothing Must Spoil This Visit', 'English Lessons', 'Jassie'), family relationships ('Family Ties', 'Dropadi Ma', 'Devika'), miscegenation ('Gayatri', 'Lisa', 'Simran'), prejudice and racism ('Montreal 1962 Toronto 1984'), and honor and shame ('A Pair of Ears', 'The Cat Who Cried' 'The Insult').

Since its initial publication in 1996, the current edition of *English Lessons* comes complete with an Afterword by Kuldip Gill (193-198) and a Reader's Guide consisting of 'About the Author'(202), 'An Interview with the Author' (203-207), and 'Books of Interest Selected by the Author' (209-216). In the last of these, Baldwin shares her reflections on an inventory of books – fiction and non-fiction – that have informed her intellect and creative imagination.

*We Are Not in Pakistan* is a collection of 10 longer stories (Manjit Uncle would be proud). If *English Lessons* explores the experiences of its characters against the backdrop of tradition and change, *We Are Not in Pakistan* tends to be oriented toward themes of power and oppression. The stories tend to be weightier in their subject matter than those in *English Lessons*. Baldwin overtly and unapologetically takes on themes of terrorism, racism and alienation on a variety of levels: socio-cultural, political, and psychological.



The subaltern characters in the stories find themselves in a range of geo-political settings and in a variety of psychologically unsettling circumstances. For example, 'Only a Button' is set mainly in post-Chernobyl Soviet Union and in the United States and relates the story of Olena, the marginalized heroine struggling to find her own voice and home. 'The View from the Mountain' set in Costa Rica deals with a post-9/11 world of racial distrust and fractured friendships.

On the other hand, one finds other stories that are thematically reminiscent of those in *English Lessons*. In the title story, 'We Are Not in Pakistan', Baldwin returns to the fault line between old world and new world values. And 'This Raghead' tells the story of racist Larry Reilly who realizes he "needs this raghead's skills" when his physician, Dr. Bakhtiar, comes to his aid after Larry's pacemaker fails. 'The Distance Between Us' is the story of Indian father living in Santa Barbara who meets the Indo-American daughter he didn't know he had. There are also the unexpected tales. 'Naina' is the magical and dream-like telling of a pregnant Indo-Canadian woman whose baby refuses to be born. As Fletcher, Baldwin tells a tale from the perspective of Collette's ubiquitous Lhasa apso.

On a theoretical level, Baldwin's stories call into question key conceptual categories. "Diaspora", "transnationalism", and "identity" are dislodged, problematized, and contested. Her characters, each in their own ways, occupy ephemeral, negotiated, and imagined spaces. They are liminal players occupying interstitial cultural, religious, political, and psychological landscapes. While several of the characters are what some sociologists might understand as 'third culture', there is a hybridity and mimicry that enriches Baldwin's characters. They are at times foreign and at times native. They are, in Homi Bhabha's words, "almost the same, but not quite" (Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1993:86). Moreover, Baldwin masterfully conveys through her characters "a dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (ibid. 44).

Baldwin's stories betray a keen awareness and sensitivity to time and to place. She is a gifted creator of memorable characters, and a skilled conjurer of sensitive narratives and poignant turns of phrase. More than fine literary accomplishments, *English Lessons* and *We Are Not in Pakistan* are wonderful pedagogical resources, and in this writer's experience add substantial heuristic value to the classroom experience. Undergraduate students seem to find it easy to relate to, if not personalize, the experiences of Baldwin's characters. These collections of stories will appeal to a wide range of readers interested in issues surrounding power, displacement, and identity. They are, however, first and foremost, must reading for anyone who loves a good story.

**Michael Hawley**  
Mount Royal University

### Film Review

*Kitte Mil Ve Mahi* – Never the Twain Shall Meet, Dir. Ajay Bhardwaj, Duration: 72 mins, Punjabi with English subtitles. Format: DVD, 2005

It is hard to write a review of this film which is not also an obituary. Two of the film's central characters, Bhagat Singh Bilga and Lal Singh Dil *urf* Mohammad Bushra, passed away in 2009. This alone makes *Kitte Mil Ve Mahi* poignant and powerful. Both men were involved in revolutionary left politics in the Punjab, yet came from completely different social backgrounds. Bilga, was forged in the Ghadar party and in the later years of his life spent much of his time in England. Lal Singh Dil, a poet and activist, became politicized, ultimately by his caste status, but also through intense involvement in the Naxalite movement. Their ongoing political commitment to social justice and the removal of caste inequality provides the ideological direction and potency to the film.

What makes the documentary aesthetically appealing is the constant intermingling of music with the interviews. At almost all points in the film, when a serious point is made it is followed by some appropriate music or supporting song. For instance when the custodian, Kadar Sakhi, of the Baba Dasondhi Shah shrine, is talking of the way in which the lineage of a particular saint goes back to the Qadiri order from Baghdad, the scene is followed by the BS Balli Qwaali group singing: 'Get me Qadiri bangles to wear.' This is then often followed by some commentary from Bilga or Dil. This interweaving of aesthetics and politics makes the film a powerful and pleasurable viewing and aural experience.

The film touches on a considerable number of themes. Quite clearly the backdrop is that 'other' place and that 'other' time in which Muslims were present in East Punjab and these shrines, to some extent, perceived as their domain. This is never made explicit. Thus Lal Singh Dil is never referred to as Mohammad Bushra, yet for those who can read the imagery, after we are told his name, he is then shown in great detail doing his *wuzu* (ritual cleaning) and doing the *namaz* (prayer). Indeed, in all of the shrine scenes, it is ostensibly Muslim saints, who have been integrated into a Dalit lineage, who are present, yet absent. The Islam of the shrine fits in so well with Dalit identity, that even the shift from Chisti Sufi Pir to Brahm Chand seems perfectly fine in a world where caste rather than formal religious identity is crucial. Here the normative boundaries established by formal religion of high caste/ low caste and male/female cease to operate. At the shrine of Channi Shah, in Sofi Pina, a woman devotee has taken over the role of the living saint. No one in the film protests at this, rather her pious position is seen as just reward for *seva* and piety to the saint. Localised power and spirituality of a diverse and appropriate nature come to dominate the scene in this Jalandhar-doaba landscape.

This is a film that works at many levels. At its most explicit it is a treatise on the continuing 'slavery' of Dalits in India. This is most powerfully articulated

through the voice of Lal Dil, but also supported by Bilga. Yet the shrine culture demonstrates a site of creative appropriation and resistance without articulating it in that way. At a more subtle level, the centrality of caste even punctuates the analysis given in terms of social justice. The struggle that Lal Singh has with the *naxalbari* movement and the left, though not explicated in the film, is certainly present. The endemic nature of caste stratification is illustrated in the contrasting ways in which Bilga and Dil talk about Chamars. Bilga stands as a Marxist when he is critical of the Indian state or the way that the left get marginalised in certain sections of the film. Yet, when it comes to talking of Dalits, he centres himself as the mainstream and them as the 'other'. This is not an unsympathetic position but is in marked contrast to Dil, speaking as a Chamar. An unnecessary debate about those who face oppression and those who fight against it from a position of caste advantage is not made in the film, nor is that my intention now. Rather, it is to highlight the existence of this tussle within the left that partly made Dil turn towards Islam as a way of dealing with caste oppression. But even this conversion did not lead him away from his caste identity as, at the time of his death, he was not buried but cremated in the Dalit cremation grounds of his village.

In opening this review as an obituary, it is important to end it with the optimism that pervades the film in the face of increasingly rigid religious boundary marking in the subcontinent. In the world of Dalit spirituality and shrines, the opposition and resistance that Lal Singh Dil bemoans as lacking in other social spheres, such as the economic and political, seems alive and well. Paying no heed to the requirements of formal religious markers, the sites the film explores are such that all who wish to come and pray are welcome, in whatever form. In the face of changing structures of caste inequality in contemporary Punjab, and the emergence of a proud Dalit/Chamar identity, *Kitte Mille Ve Mahi* provides the cultural background and a clue to the resources mobilized in this new found self-assertion.

**Virinder S. Kalra**

University of Manchester

## In Remembrance

### Ram Narayan Kumar (1955-2009)

Ram Narayan Kumar, one of the finest human rights researchers, activists and campaigners in South Asia, the focus of whose work for many years had been on Punjab, passed away on June 28, 2009 at his house in Kathmandu (Nepal). His death at a relatively young age of 54 sent shock waves among all those struggling for justice and fairness in South Asia.

His first major confrontation with state power was in 1975 when he opposed the authoritarian Emergency regime in India and was imprisoned for many months for his political act of defiance to defend democracy. He came from the Indian socialist tradition influenced by Jaya Prakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia but had the courage to oppose the overemphasis on the caste dimension in somewhat opportunistic politics of some of the followers of JP and Lohia. It was, perhaps, this disenchantment with his erstwhile comrades, which attracted him to the more universalist appeal of human rights work.

By family background, he came from a distinguished religious family of India. His father was the head of a *math/peeth* in Ayodhya with a very large following. Ram was groomed until his teenage years to succeed his father as the head of the *math* but Ram revolted and joined the secular world of socialist politics. However, the large following of the *math* in Austria resulted later on in Ram marrying an Austrian doctor Gertie.

Although he worked on almost all regions of India where human rights violations took place such as Kashmir, North East, Gujarat and Eastern India, and even in the Middle East against US interventions and Israeli aggression, his most remarkable contribution to human rights practice and documentation was in Punjab. Coming from a South Indian Brahmin family, he had no personal link with Punjab. However the massacre of the Sikh minority in Delhi in 1984 pushed him into the study of Punjab and its troubles. He never abandoned Punjab after this in spite of his many time demanding pre-occupations elsewhere. It is a reflection of his deep humanity that he spent about 15 years of his life studying and documenting human rights abuses in Punjab, a state with which he had no other relation except the bonds of humanity. He traveled to remote villages of Punjab to hear the painful stories of victims of human rights violations, expressing solidarity with them and bringing their plight to the attention of concerned Indians and international human rights organisations.

I met him for the first time in 1988 when during one of his visits to the UK, I invited him to speak in Oxford on the crisis in Punjab from a human rights perspective. Our friendship grew and since 2008, we were involved in a joint project to write a book on Punjab. His death means the death of that project also.

He had phenomenal knowledge of Punjab's history, politics, geography, culture, civil and police administration and Punjab's troubled relationships with the federal Centre in Delhi. He was meticulous in his research to the point of obsession, never compromising on the empirical evidence of his claims. His work on disappearances in Punjab *Reduced to Ashes* is destined to become a classic in the literature on disappearances and the brutality of state power. He published a pioneering paper on the institutional flaws in human rights law and practice with reference to Punjab in the *International Journal of Punjab Studies*. On the invitation of the Punjab Research Group/Association of Punjab Studies (UK), he presented a paper on the constitutional and institutional rigidities in defending human rights in Punjab at the Association's bi-annual conference in Oxford in 2003 where he received standing ovation from the conference participants for the rigour of his analysis and his towering moral integrity.

His last book on Punjab was *Terror in Punjab: Narratives, Knowledge and Truth* (2008) and it is some solace to me that my review of this book was published in the June 2009 issue of *Himal South Asia* magazine (Kathmandu) and Ram was able to see this review ([http://www.himalmag.com/The-third-Sikh-ghallughara-Terror-in-Punjab-by-Ram-Narayan-Kumar\\_nw2960.html](http://www.himalmag.com/The-third-Sikh-ghallughara-Terror-in-Punjab-by-Ram-Narayan-Kumar_nw2960.html)) a few days before his death.

He wrote several books on the genesis of the Punjab crisis which led to the violation of human rights at a level that had no precedent in Punjab's history for about 200 years. Ram made a unique contribution to the understanding of the troubled nature of the Sikh relationship to the majority Hindu community and Indian nationalism, and through that, to the tragic nature of the human rights condition in Punjab.

My association with Ram was shaped by this shared understanding of the approach towards the Punjab tragedy. We came from two different political and cultural backgrounds but felt that there existed a complementarity between our differences. He entered the Punjab scene as an outsider and immersed himself in understanding Punjab history, politics and culture. I viewed myself as an insider who was attempting to relate the inside view to a larger perspective in a national and global context, while Ram, as an outsider to Punjab, brought with him a depth and wealth of a larger perspective on human rights. We decided a couple of years back to combine our respective outside/inside strengths to write a joint book to grapple with the placing of the Sikhs and Punjab in India. We had started on this project and his death means the project remains unfinished. To me, this is a personal and political loss that is irretrievable.

I wish to highlight his contribution to Punjab studies in five areas:

One, he tried to substantiate that the 1984 tragedy in Punjab was both a continuation and reinforcement of upper caste Hindu-centric bias in the Indian elites' thinking and political practice in dealing with the Sikhs of Punjab. This contribution is substantial and empirically grounded.

Two, he hinted at several places in his books and papers that the upper caste Punjabi Hindus should not be viewed merely as a religious minority in Punjab in understanding their role in Punjab's and India's political economy. The upper caste Punjabi Hindu elite, in his view, occupied strategic places in the ideological and repressive apparatus of state power in India, and in that position, had played mainly a destructive role in shaping the Indian state's policy design towards Punjab. His work on this issue had reached a middle stage. He had collected some very interesting data and had done some preliminary work but he needed further development and critical appraisal of his own work especially in terms of making a differentiation between urban upper caste Hindu elites and the rural based Hindus. The importance of his contribution in this area is that most studies on Punjab, in attempting to capture the religious dimension of politics, focus on the Sikhs. Ram, in contrast with this, made an attempt to examine also the upper caste Punjabi Hindu location in Punjabi and Indian politics.

Three, Ram was of the view that Punjabi Sikh leadership had shown good qualities of political resistance against the Indian elite on specific issues but had not displayed, barring a few exceptions, qualities of imagination and foresight in developing a long-term political perspective.

Four, in his work on human rights in Punjab, Ram took the question of methodology of collecting and analyzing data very seriously, and in this, he attained a status that is unmatched by anyone else so far in the studies on human rights conditions in Punjab.

Five, his insights and empirical evidence on the politics of anti-Sikh jokes showed a degree of political sensitivity I have not seen in anyone else so far. He did not consider that anti-Sikh jokes were a benign matter and felt pained to observe that many of his own friends indulged in participating in what he called obnoxious sardarji jokes. His view was that the jokes' portrayal of the Sikhs as a "community of brainless people" was a serious political issue that needed to be examined and combated. He told me at one point that he had once had a long interview with two young Sikhs sympathetic to militancy about their experiences of sardarji jokes. He said that they started crying after some time, remembering their experiences of having been ridiculed and traumatized through sardarji jokes when they were in school in Hindu-majority urban areas of Punjab. This was a typical Ram characteristic – that he would read meanings into the experiences of the vulnerable that many others would ignore as irrelevant and insignificant.

The loss of this man to Punjab is truly irreplaceable.

Ram Narayan Kumar was directing a major project on studying the culture and practice of impunity that the state officials involved in human rights abuse enjoy in India. The project covering four critical regions of India- J & K, North East, Gujarat and Punjab- and involving joint collaboration between Kathmandu-based South Asia Forum for Human Rights and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has the promise of path

breaking output in bringing transparency, accountability and justice to human rights practice in India and South Asia.

Ram, as he was affectionately called, was an inspiration to human rights activists not only in India but also in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Some of the key dons of Harvard Law School recognised from an international perspective Ram's contribution to furthering the cause of defending the vulnerable and the weak in India and South Asia.

He worked too hard, was too pure in his heart and was too demanding of himself. That took its toll on his health. Though he has gone, his insights and dedication will forever remain a source of inspiration to those who want to unearth truth and bring the powerful to accountability.

He is survived by his wife Gertie, daughter Cristina, sister Sita and brother Gopal, all living in Austria. He was cremated in Kathmandu as per the wishes of his family. A remembrance meeting was held to commemorate Ram and his work at the India International Centre, Delhi on August 31, 2009 where I was able to acknowledge the contribution of Ram both to raising our understanding of the human rights violations in Punjab as well to the legal and institutional struggle against these violations. The memory of Ram Narayan Kumar will live on in the continuing causes and struggles for human rights in Punjab, South Asia and beyond.

**Pritam Singh**

September 2009

### **Patwant Singh (1925-2009)**

Patwant Singh died after a cardiac arrest in Delhi on August 8, 2009 at the age of 84. He lived an illustrious life, and his death is the death of a unique voice on Indian, Sikh and global affairs. His was a voice of a man who was fearless, sharp, erudite, sophisticated and commanded attention. In terms of his literary output, his life can be divided into two phases: before 1984 and after 1984. There was, however, continuity in terms of vision and perspective between the two phases. Before 1984, his major interests were in architecture and design, as well as global affairs with relevance for Asia and India. After Operation Blue Star and the massacre of the Sikhs in 1984 in Delhi, his focus was almost entirely on Punjab and the Sikhs.

In this pre-1984 work, his approach towards architecture and urban planning was one of an aesthete and creative conservationist against ugly and commercial interests of construction industry, and in his work on international affairs, he defended the emerging post-colonial nations against the big global powers. That vision in a transformed manner was clearly visible in his post-1984 work. There was, however, one vital difference. Before 1984, his Sikh upbringing was mainly a matter of personal belief and was reflected only indirectly through his

professional work as a designer and commentator on international affairs. The trauma of 1984 shook him to the core about the secular and democratic credentials of the Indian state. He was a part of the top Indian elite and had access to information at the highest level. He was absolutely convinced that both Operation Blue Star and the November 1984 carnage were avoidable but the decision makers at the highest level in the Indian state deliberately pushed events to the tragic collision. It was during this time that he became acutely aware of his Sikh identity. He had always been proud of his Sikh upbringing and valued very highly the influence of the Sikh gurus' humanistic and egalitarian teachings on the shaping of his intellectual vision and world view. He did not see any conflict between being embedded in his Sikh identity heritage and still having an internationalist outlook. He was very critical of narrow minded aspects of some Sikh political tendencies and at the same time had contempt for those Sikhs who felt apologetic about asserting their distinctive identity in order to appear secular and flow with the Indian mainstream.

I first met Patwant in 1988 in London, and we immediately clicked. He would visit London every summer, and we would plan to meet while he would be in India. I would visit Delhi almost every winter, and having a dinner at his beautiful house at Amrita Shergill Marg used to be the highlight of the visit. He lived the life style of a prince. The whisky and the cuisine were of the highest order and the food was served in style. He was a great conversationalist and had many stories to share. I want to narrate just one here. When the killing of the Sikhs was going on in Delhi in November 1984, Patwant along with Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Arora, I.K. Gujral and a few other eminent Punjabis went to see Giani Zail Singh, the President of India to press upon him the need to use his official power as the Supreme Commander of the India military to call the army to control the killings in Delhi. The President met them without wasting any time and while they were talking, tea was served with special burfi and kaju. Patwant Singh told the President speaking directly to him, "While members of our community are being slaughtered and burnt alive, we have not come here to have burfi and kaju". The President was stunned and Patwant's companions were embarrassed and General Arora tried to calm him down but he stood his ground. The tea was removed. I can not imagine anyone else in India having such moral courage to almost reprimand the President of the country. I came to know another story about Patwant snubbing Indira Gandhi also once.

In the post-1984 period, his first major book (co-edited with Harji Malik) was *Punjab: The Fatal Miscalculation* (1985). This was a sharp critique of the Indian media's representation of Punjab and the Sikhs and of the Indian establishment's flawed policy design on Punjab. In 1989, his wonderfully produced book *Golden Temple* came out which is dedicated "To those of noble thought and deed who have helped to sustain the dignity, the grace and the spiritual authority of this most holy shrine". One aspect of this book deserves special mention by way of highlighting Patwant's qualities. Two A3 size pages of the book (pp 86-87) have a rare photograph of the January 26, 1986 Sarbat Khalsa called by the Sikh militant groups at the Golden Temple. It shows a massive gathering of Sikh youth who were enraged by the destruction caused to



the Akal Takhat during the Operation Blue Star. Patwant Singh had the courage to include this photograph and the historian's instinct to recognise and record the historical significance of the gathering. Patwant requested me to review the book for any Punjabi language publication in the UK. The *Punjabi Guardian* published the review. In the review, I had mentioned that despite differences in our ideological background, I felt very close to Patwant Singh. At a dinner at his house, he asked me in front of his partner Meher to explain what I meant by my differences with him. I said that I was Marxist in terms of my ideological background. Patwant smiled and said that if the essence of Marxism was a vision of an equitable world; his Sikh world view was not different from that vision. That one line said a lot about Patwant's interpretation of the Sikh vision. It might be worth mentioning here that Meher who comes from a mixed Parsi-Christian family background got baptised as a Sikh a few years ago out of her own choice because of the deep respect for the egalitarian vision of Sikhism which Patwant's life conveyed to her.

He followed the book on the Golden Temple by *Gurdwaras in India and Around the World* (1992) which is a rare and the only book of its kind reflecting not only the artistic skills of Patwant's professional background of pre-1984 period but also his deep devotion to these places of worship. His next book *Of Dreams and Demons: An Indian Memoir* (1994) is an attempt at integration of his life story and the different phases of India's history from the 1930s to the 1990s. It is a devastating critique of the depravity of Indian politics and politicians. I had reviewed it in this journal (Vol 3, No 1, 1996).

In 1999, he came out with his major work *The Sikhs* on which he had been working for many years. This book is an important contribution to Sikh historiography. In 2001, he wrote (with Harinder Kaur Sekhon) *Garland Around My Neck* which tells the remarkable story of Bhagat Puran Singh of Pingalwara. In writing this book, Patwant wanted to bring to the world's attention the importance of *sewa* (service to humanity) dimension in Sikh conception of good life that influenced Patwant's own world view also. In 2005, he returned to one of his pre-1984 interests by publishing *The World According to Washington: An Asian View*. He followed this with *The Second Partition, Fault-Lines in India's Democracy* (2007) which is a powerful indictment of India's uneven pattern of development that has generated a class of super-rich Indians dreaming about India as a super power and oblivious of the millions of their country men and women who are living more impoverished lives than even some of the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa. His last book (written with Jyoti M. Rai) is *Empire of the Sikhs- the Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*. It came out in 2008 in India and the UK but its US edition was launched just a few months before his death. In some of the passages while describing Ranjit Singh, it is clear that Patwant's own world view is getting reflected. For example he writes that Ranjit Singh's "consummate humanity was unique among empire-builders. He gave employment to defeated foes, honored faiths other than his own, and included Hindus and Muslims among his ministers. Inspired by the principles of peaceful coexistence uniquely articulated by the Sikh Gurus and firm in upholding the rights of others, he was unabashed in exercising his own".

Patwant Singh was deeply involved in supporting the work of H.S. Phoolka, the Supreme Court lawyer, who has been fighting for over 25 years to get justice for the victims of 1984 anti-Sikh violence. Patwant Singh also actively supported the work of Baba Sewa Singh Khadoor Sahib, who is creating an environmental heaven in the Khadoor Sahib area of Amritsar district and is also playing a pioneering role in promoting education, especially of girls, in the rural areas around Khadoor Sahib. Way back in 1978, Patwant Singh was also responsible for establishing the Kabliji Hospital and the Rural Health Centre, near Gurgaon in Haryana. During the organised violence against the Sikhs in 1984, Patwant's and his sister's farm houses near the hospital were deliberately targeted and burnt but this hospital was not touched because, it seems, that even the lumpens organised for the violence knew that this hospital was the only one in the area providing much needed services for the poor and under-privileged.

Patwant Singh was deeply concerned with the environmental and social degradation caused by the pattern of agricultural development in Punjab. In his memory, his sister Rasil Basu has produced a film on farmers' suicides in Punjab which was shown at his house on March 28, 2010 by way of celebrating his first birth day after his death. The international character of the gathering at this thoughtful celebration of his life reflected the wonderful integration of the local and the global in Patwant's life and work.

Patwant Singh is survived by his wife Meher, sister Rasil Basu, nieces Amrita and Rekha, and his adopted son Satjiv Singh Chahil.

**Pritam Singh**

September 2009

## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Articles submitted to the JPS should be original contributions; if an article is under consideration for any other journal, authors must indicate this on submission. Articles should be submitted in hard copy in triplicate, typed double-spaced throughout (including end-notes and references) with 1 inch margins. Contributors are required to provide an abstract of approximately 100 words which should be indented and located at the top of page 1. Typewritten copies must be accompanied by IBM-compatible word-process or discs in Microsoft Word. Discs should be labeled with the article, the author's name and software (including version) used. All submissions should be sent to:

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2. Papers accepted for publication become the copyright of the JPS.

3. All articles submitted will be sent anonymously to two referees.

4. Style. Please note that we use the Harvard system with separate end-notes and list of references, with bracketed abbreviated references embedded in the text eg (Tinker 1967, 147, or 147-148). References should be listed in full at the end of the paper.

**Quotations.** Indent quotations of more than one sentence. For primary source citations give the name and location of oral informant/the archive in which the material is stored.

**Italics.** Italicize words in Punjabi and other languages (not in common English usage) only on first occurrence, giving the English translation in parentheses. Proper names in a foreign language should be capitalized and set in roman.

**Transliteration.** Words from non-English languages (other than proper nouns and words already current in English) should be transliterated in accordance with convention (e.g. as in Oxford University Press publications) and italicized on their first occurrence.

The editors reserve the right to modify transliterations in the interest of consistency.

No full stop after abbreviations e.g. Dr, MP, MLA, CPI and no apostrophe in plurals such as MPs, the 1930s. % to be written as per cent.

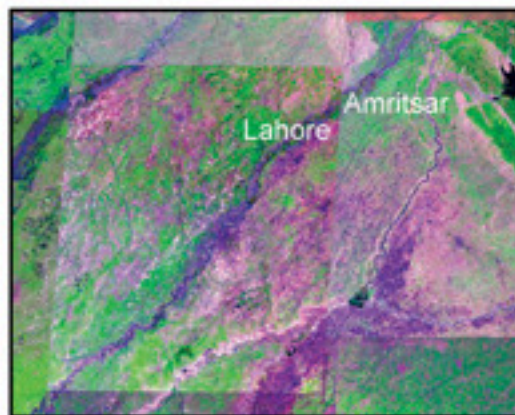
Quotations should be in single quotation marks, double within single. Long quotations or five or more lines should be indented without quotes.

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