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COMMUNALISM IN THE BRITISH PUNJAB DURING 1937 TO 1939: FOCUS ON RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

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Abstract. The era from 1937 to 1939 has its own importance as the British contended that an effective political system could bridge the communal differences but it hardly met this challenge. This study explores the state of communal riots in the British Punjab during the years 1937 to 1939 due to religious as well as language differences. In 1937, the government reminded the Deputy Commissioners through directives that generally, the people were free in their religious activities but law and order was paramount to be observed. If officers thought religious activities to be dangerous they must be dealt with a heavy hand in order to curtail danger. The Punjab Governor wrote that a clash between agitators and police would be inevitable in this situation “but the alternative is to allow provocative acts to continue with the consequent spread of communal trouble.”¹ The British policy on religious freedom and law and order seemed tangible and practical as well, nevertheless the state of communal trouble based on religion and language remained acute in the British Punjab. Many counter-moves like a secular setup of the Punjab Unionist Party, apparent evenhandedness of the officials and British patronage of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities seemed to be working as resisting forces to the communal agony. Leadership might have friendly posture but masses remained divided on religious lines. Pestering enough the communal clashes convinced the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to accept the respective leaders to have geographical split ultimately. This endeavor aims to explore communal clashes in Punjab during the years of 1937 to 1939 that occurred mostly on lingual and religious grounds.

Key Words: Communalism, British, Punjab, Religion, Language, Muslim, Sikh

Communalism in Retrospect

The religious differences and British reforms created a new fabric of society in the Punjab. Cultural bonds worked as a binding force but many times communal strived overcame the traditional structure of the region. Urban areas were the main target of the ill-will between the communities. British Punjab underwent terrible chaos as a result of communal contests. The so called secular forces tried to resolve the communal tension between the Muslims and non-Muslims nevertheless, the ongoing tension increased day by day. The British Punjab proved the most stumbling land in this regard as the Muslim-Sikh question along with the Muslim-Hindu question, an additional trouble, made the communal tussle more complex. Punjab embracing four major religious communities including Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Christian, had been experiencing a complex natured communal relationship therefore, it became centre of communalism.

The west part of the British Punjab constituted Muslim majority whose support always strengthened the Muslim leadership working at the national level. The provincial political leaders were confident being at one time ruling community and securing the support of the British and national leadership. The Congress report of 1923, presented by C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Abul Kalam Azad, and Hakim Ajmal Khan, concluded that the Hindu-Muslim relationship in the Punjab was unmanageable.

On the other hand, the government expressed its inability to create unity between the two communities. The Congress and the government held the *shuddhi* movement responsible for instigation of the communalism.ⁱⁱ Different religious beliefs of the locals had provided a clear-cut bifurcation long before the British advent in the Subcontinent therefore for an effective governance, the British preferred the policy of dialogue to have friendly relations with the people but the religious difference further affected the relationship between the Muslims and Hindus and Sikhsⁱⁱⁱ when British introduced certain reforms. Furthermore, the response to the educational, economic, political and other reforms proved havoc to the harmonious relationship because

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benefit of one community was taken as loss of the other. Sometimes, people from different religious background tried to be united but it only proved to be a makeshift arrangement and was soon shattered. The collapse was again attributed to the insincerity under 'religious antagonism' which deepened the feelings of trust-deficit. Under these circumstances the constitutional package and job opportunities in the newly established democratic and government institutions aggravated the situation and strife to secure more and more opportunities for the concerned community dragged the local communities to the point of clash. This situation was named 'communalism.'

The next abomination was violence, not allowed in any religion, but riots, clashes, brawls and altercations became an unremitting feature of the Punjabi society. Politics influenced by the western philosophies gave rise to the pestering issues of representation, political creed and slogans, manifestoes and right to protest. Religious issues were mostly politicised^{iv} resulting in the demise of the peace of the region. The perception that the Khilafat movement united all the communities living in the Subcontinent seems misleading as its rise and strategy were disputed^v and its end was absolutely controversial^{vi} as well. Many opine that that the Hindu-Muslim question was settled and a new chapter of communal harmony started. Many have named this period as the 'honeymoon period of the Hindus and Muslims.' This direction is entirely deceptive due to the fact that it mistakenly leads to feel that there was no communal tussle between the Muslims and Hindus or Sikhs during the under study period. Apparently, the writers portray that the factors behind the Muslim and non-Muslim friction seemed finished and both as the Indian nationalists presented the real democratic and peaceful character at all levels.

The primary sources repudiate such approach because the communalism was too deep-rooted to be eliminated within few years or with one stroke of any religious or political movement. Though the Khilafat movement convinced the Muslims and non-Muslims to create an environment of cooperation and working relationship despite problems, all this was left in the 'top' circles. Though an era of compromise as a political gimmick, this was an ideal environment of joint working but despite all endeavours this timely patch-up could not eliminate the 'real' factors of the entrenched communalism. Followers were blindly pursuing what was exhorted by their religious leaders. In

this sense, even a political speech was deemed as an Islamic verdict and on the other hand, the leadership was yoked to protest together under the prevailing circumstances. Simultaneously, the communal tussle was going on with its full force at the bottom level. For the very reason, despite joint struggle, the future saw no revolutionary change in the attitudes towards communalism. The enthusiasm displayed by the Khilafatists proved timely and the Punjab witnessed a vivid divide in the Muslim and non-Muslim politics from the year 1922 onward.

Tehrik-i-Khilafat (1918-1923) was the upheaval which not only influenced the Muslim but also the Indian politics. The Khilafat centered in Turkey (Ottoman Empire) was a symbol of Islam and Muslim unity in the eyes of the Muslims, especially of the Subcontinent. There were several sacred places located in the Empire for which the Muslims could sacrifice their lives for its security. Makkah, Madina, Karbala Mualla, Najaf-i-Ashraf, holy shrines of Shah Abdul Qadir Jilani and other Muslim personalities were the holiest places for them. All the stakes of all the Muslim sects were involved in the Turkish region which had plunged into the international politics against the Allied forces during the World War-I (28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918). Turkey joined the war on the side of the central powers.^{vii}

The anti-British stance of the Turkish government confused the Indian Muslims who were fighting at front in favor of the British. They were at a fix because the Turkish defeat was not tolerable for them and on the other hand they themselves were fighting against them. This situation divided the Indian Muslims into pro and anti-government factions. However, this anti-British group did not intend to adopt a rebellious strategy so it attracted many including the Congress leadership particularly MK Gandhi (2nd October 1869 –30th January 1948) who was purely a religious and spiritual leader (Mahatma) of the Hindus.^{viii} The Muslims welcomed him and rendered allegiance and respect to him. Many Muslims declared that he might be a ‘prophet’ if the chain of prophethood and sometimes he was presented to be an ‘Hazrat Imam Mahdi.’^{ix} One can find the disunity among the Muslims and tangibly continuity of the Hindu-Muslim or Muslim-Sikh conflicts that reflects cooperation at top level for some time and bottom remained polluted with the germs of communalism. Therefore, the separate Electorates, issue of Representation, ignoring Muslim League leadership, kine-killing, music before mosques, halal-haram issues remained problematic subjects during the 1930s.

Language Issues in India from 1937 to 1939

According to Ethnologue the number of languages in India is 461 out of which 447 are alive and 14 extinct, 63 institutional, 130 developing, 187 vigorous, 54 in trouble and 13 dying.^x Urdu and Hindi had originally developed from Sanskrit^{xi} into the Prakrits from which Khari Bholi had derived. The split of the script gave birth to Hindi and Urdu, creating two different languages identified respectively with Hinduism and Islam.^{xii} MK Gandhi, in 1918, had established the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha (Institution for the Propagation of Hindi in South India). He, in 1937, made his standpoint clear by stating that Urdu was the religious language of the Muslims as he was, at that moment, a supporter only of Hindi language. Further, he managed an All India Educational Conference in Wardha where he invited education ministers from different provinces as well as influential educationists.^{xiii}

The Madras Presidency which lasted from 1937 to 1940 witnessed a series of clashes related to the opposition of the obligatory teaching of Hindi in schools which had been introduced as a special initiative of the Indian National Congress government which was led by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari. His support for Hindi language had been expressed publicly in the *Sudesamithran*, newspaper of 6th May, 1937:

Government employment is limited. All cannot get it. Therefore one has to search for other jobs. For that and for business, knowledge of Hindi is necessary. Only if we learn Hindi, the south Indian can gain respect among the others.^{xiv}

An anti-Hindi conference was held on the 4th of October of 1937 by Periyar and the Justice Party which was led by Paneerselvam in order to protest the policy statement of Rajagopalachari. However, a government order was passed making the teaching of Hindi compulsory in more than one hundred schools on 21 April 1938. This move created unrest in the area from the proponents of Tamil and others who saw this as an attempt to overrun the Tamil movement, leading to the arrest of Periyar and other 1,197 people as well as the death of two. The Urdu speaking Muslims were supporting the Hindi language movement while the Tamil speaking Muslims supported the agitation. In fact the Tamil Brigade addressed 87 public meetings 234 villages and 60 towns.^{xv}

The Congress Party which was ruling at the time was confused on the issue. They floated the idea of making Hindi optional or allowing the parents the choice of whether their children should learn or not Hindi language in school. Rajagopalachari kept on defending his action without giving in to the demands of the Tamil proposers. However the Congress Government of Rajagopalachari resigned on 29th of October 1939. This was the perfect opportunity for Periyar to stop the clashes on 31 October and request the Governor for the withdrawal of the Hindi order which took place in February 1940.

The Urdu-Gurmukhi Issue in Punjab

Punjabi, an Indo-European, Indo-Iranian and Indo-Aryan language, is written in the Gurmukhi and the Shahmukhi scripts. Traditionally, the Gurmukhi script is associated with the religious books of the Sikhs as the script seems to have derived from the Sharada script and was later on standardized by Guru Angad Dev in the 16th century. However, there are different theories as to how the proto-Gurmukhi script emerged. The word Gurmukhi means ‘from the mouth of the Guru.’ On the other hand, ‘Shahmukhi’ means ‘from King's mouth.’^{xvi} The script is based on the Nastalique style of the Persian and Arabic script. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of the Punjab spoke Punjabi as a first language or mother tongue but they supported their traditional languages. Lala Lajpat Rai, Punjabi leader of Arya Samaj, had not even learned the Hindi alphabets but he supported Hindi language.^{xvii} The Sikh cultural and religious identity was rooted in Punjabi, the Gurmukhi script. Hindus supported Hindi in the Devanagari script, while the Muslim connection and identity was based on Urdu in the Nastaliq script.

This difference on the scripts according to the religious affiliation of the speakers historically gave birth to the communal dispute as language became a base of communitarian identity.^{xviii} For example, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1860's sensed communitarian bifurcation when Hindus suggested Hindi script instead of Urdu. In April 1882 Charles Aitchison, the Governor of Punjab, was petitioned by Guru Singh Baba from the Sikh National Association to make Punjabi written in Gurmukhi the medium of instruction for the Sikh community, to which the Governor replied that excluding the Sikh children from instruction in Urdu would place them at an extremely disadvantaged position with respect to their fellow countrymen as it would be impossible for them to continue their studies beyond

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elementary education to middle and high school.^{xi} In this sense, the Sikhs never achieved their target. Sikhs with support from the Hindus maintained their demands for Gurmukhi or Punjabi scripts to be used in schools and universities. , Sardar Jodh Singh stressed the learning of Gurmukhi by all Sikhs, at the Sikh Educational Conference that took place at Lyallpur. The Conference gave birth to several resolutions for the introduction of Gurmukhi in the educational institutions.^{xx}

During the years before the partition the script and language issues continued. The Sikhs who were against Quaid-i-Azam were relaxed when Nawab Khizer Tiwana, the last Punjab Premier, refused to pay allegiance to the Muslim League leader because this meant from a linguistic point of view that they were in a better position to claim their Gurmukhi rights apart from others.^{xxi} Other efforts in favor of the Gurmukhi script took place such as the meeting between Quaid-i-Azam and Kartar Singh, to which Quaid-i-Azam responded favorably^{xxii} as well as the meeting between the Akali leaders and Maharaja Kapurthala.^{xxiii}

Shahidganj Mosque Affairs

The Shahidganj Mosque^{xxiv} issue, the only major brawl between the Muslim and Sikhs in the British Punjab, continuously disturbed the communal peace. It emerged in 1935 but the subsequent years seemed influenced by this conflict. Although Quaid-i-Azam's visit to Lahore restored peace^{xxv} but the court proceedings relating to the Shahidganj Mosque did not let the communities bury the bitterness. In May 1936, the District Judge gave decision of Shahidganj case filed by the Muslims in favour of the Sikhs. The Muslims approached the High Court for appeal that kept the pace of tension in the coming years. Sikh politics remained anti-Muslim as usual and on the Shahidganj issue, the Shromani Akali Dal took oath from their candidates to protect the Gurdwara Shahidganj. Interestingly, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, head of the liberal and elite group, Khalsa National Party, also took oath to fight for Shahidganj^{xxvi} that exposes the so-called secular and cross-communal claim of the Unionist party.

According to the Governor of the Punjab, Baba Kharak Singh, head of Central Akali Dal, adopted fanatic and unreasonable tone and language during the talks and statements on the Shahidganj issue and caused the trouble and excitement to continue.^{xxvii} The Muslims

remained sensitive regarding the Mosque issue and even in 1940, Sikhs were attacked by a Muslim student in the Shahidganj Gurdwara. SSP, Gainsford revealed that the student fury over the Muslim sacred place was based on the fact that it was under the Sikh possession.^{xxviii} On 22 July, 1937, 5000 Muslims in Lahore celebrated the Shahidganj Martyrs' Day in which Maulana Zafar Ali Khan made a speech, "The mosque was more sacred than *Jhatka*. If the Sikhs wanted freedom of religious rights, they should first return the mosque to the Muslims."^{xxix} The dispute over the ownership of the Shahidganj Mosque continued and decision on the mosque as an immovable property was given in favour of the Sikhs. Justice Din Muhammad stated that a mosque once established could never be treated as private property since all proprietary rights of individuals had extinguished.^{xxx}

Villages observed a clear-cut divide on religious basis but the cultural setup maintained coexistence. Therefore, rural areas seemed immune of communal fight but not communalism but new turn was the mass participation in the political processions and publishing activities made them aware of the core differences entrenched in religion and communitarian contests for economic and political pursuits. Communal problem emerged in Jandiala Sher Khan, District Sheikhpura between the Muslims and non-Muslims that disturbed the other areas like Khanqah Dogran as well. The issue was that on 5th November 1936, a Muslim expressed his anger on a Muslim lady on selling *ghee* to a Hindu shopkeeper. This problem resulted in a communal tension and in a crowd fight a few Hindus got injured slightly.^{xxxi} In 1937, communal tension again prevailed in Jandiala Sher Khan on the Jhatka and Master Tara Singh had pointed out the Muslim-Sikh conflict at Jandiala Sher Khan affairs in a letter to the Punjab Premier. He vociferated that the Jandiala Sher Khan incidents were the outcome of the Premier's speeches and statements therefore, the communal mentality of the Punjab government was encouraging and inciting the Muslims against the Sikhs.^{xxxii}

The Governor of the Punjab informed the central authorities that the communal trouble in the Sheikhpura district remained confined to the place some distance away from the Diwan in which six persons lost their lives but it "was not followed by a general fight between the Sikhs and Muslims who numbered about 6000 and 3000 respectively." The district administration present there performed their duty effectively in preventing further clash. It was reported that communal fracas are

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becoming common. Sikhs exploited minor communal events by protesting and gathering mobs causing clashes between the two communities. The report also observed the situation from different angles and laid down stress on the inevitability of the law and order situation. The government sought to ensure the freedom of religious activities but law and order would be paramount. The Governor opined that a clash between agitators and police would be inevitable in this situation “but the alternative is to allow provocative acts to continue with the consequent spread of communal trouble” that the government could not afford. Except Sheikhpura, communal trouble in Panipat and Mandi Baha-ud-Din (Gujrat)^{xxxiii} was also growing.^{xxxiv} The conversion of a Sikh youth to Islam created problem in the Gujrat district.

In Ferozepore, a Hindu married woman eloped with a Muslim,^{xxxv} event started a new chapter of communal hatred. Military marching of the Nihang Sikhs alarmed the Muslims of Gujrat district.^{xxxvi} On 3rd June, on the missing of a Nihang Sikh aggravated the communal frenzy as Sikhs believed the Nihang killed at Ala (Gujrat district). Although, the Sikh murder was not confirmed however the Sikhs were inclined to blame the Muslims because of the already stringent environment. The Sikhs collected funds to arrange protest against the murder that infuriated the local Muslims. On 13 June, the Muslims attacked a few Sikhs present at railway station Harriah to telegraph to the district authorities for police arrangements at Ala. On 15 June, Sikhs held diwan. The police was patrolling but could not prevent the Muslim attack and resultantly one Sikh lost his life while several were injured. The Police took drastic action and 4 Muslims were killed in the police firing.^{xxxvii} Master Tara Singh criticized the Premier’s visit to Jalalpur Kikhan (Gujrat).

To him, Sir Sikander became guest of a *Pir* (heir of spiritual leader) who was the “soul of the Muslim aggressive movement in that ilaqa.” His public speech and private talks with the local Muslim leaders meant to provoke them against the Sikhs and his visit could set in a new wave of persecution of the local Sikh workers by the local officials and the Muslim.^{xxxviii} The Indian National Congress maintained its strategy to make the fullest use of the Sikhs in the Punjab against the Muslims. On 17 and 18 November 1937, it along with its Sikh allies they appeared in the *Puran Mashī* fair at Nankana Sahib, Sheikhpura district^{xxxix} but their statements made to a political conference. Dr. Satyapal, the

provincial Congress President, presided over the gathering. Divalpur was also an important town wherein the communal problem prevailed and an incident of burning the *Granth Sahib* in a local Dharamshala on 22 November night was reported. It was said to be a retaliation of destroying *Quran-i-Majeed* on 1 October. Obviously Sikhs from Divalpur and Mandi Baha-ud-Din district Gujrat experienced severe protest:

Sikhs ...followed the lead of the Sikhs of Rawalpindi and refused to take out processions on the occasion of Guru Nanak's birthday. Licences already secured from the police were returned under instructions from Amritsar.^{x1}

Sectarian tension within the Muslim community sometimes dented the Muslim unity but it was mainly confined to the local areas because of the non-Muslim threat. In Kunjah (district Gujrat) a Sikh Sub-Inspector of the Police was conducting an inquiry regarding the *Shia-Sunni* friction but a Sunni Muslim killed him while the report pointed out the Sikh sympathy in favour of the *Shia* party.^{xii} A dispute took place between the Muslim sects, *Ahli-i-Hadis* and *Ahl-i-Sunnat*, after the "murderous assault in Amritsar on Maulana Sanaullah by a *Sunni* youth."^{xlii}

The political atmosphere remained sensitive too and Sir Sikandar Hayat's tilt towards the Muslim League proved to be a severe jerk for the non-Muslim allies in the provincial assembly. Sikhs and Hindus registered reservations on the Jinnah-Sikander Pact of October 1937, which declared all the Unionist Muslims as the League's members too. He assured in Jalandhar that his pact with the League would not disturb the Unionist coalition arrangements but the Governor doubted whether Sir Sikandar had "cleared his position with Jinnah." He reported that the Ministers toured throughout the province and he was briefed about the government hold over the affairs "but so far have seen little results." HW Emerson reiterated that the British could not afford to let the political champions propagate their violent agenda.^{xliii}

The political alignment on the League-Unionist rapprochement resulted in new wave of criticism from different parties and groups during this period and Ahrars kept on condemning the Muslim League on the Jinnah-Sikander Pact. The local committee of Ahrars of Rawalpindi unleashed support to the Congress and campaigned to attract the Muslims to join the Congress party. The Muslim League countered

all the rival drives successfully and took wise measures as the changing pace of time demanded. Several District League Committees were established by the League workers to stimulate the crowds.^{xliv} The relations between the Sikhs and the Muslims at Daulatala (Rawalpindi) suffered due to a dispute over a Jhatka meat shop.

Jinnah-Sikander Pact and Communal Issue

Jinnah-Sikander Pact was concluded at Lucknow on 15 October 1937 and Sir Sikander along with other Unionist Muslim members of the Punjab Assembly became the League members. The Muslim Mass Contact Movement of the Congress^{xlv} and stature of Quaid-i-Azam convinced Sir Sikander to join the League camp. Sikh and Hindu members particularly of the Congress had already been united in the Assembly. Master Tara Singh supported Nehru by expressing his views about the Muslim Premier that “the Premier was a stooge for the British, and that he was consolidating the Muslim position in the Punjab.”^{xlvi} Emerson reported this to the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow stating that the Premier was unaware of what he had done at Lucknow nevertheless, he still enjoyed friendly relations with Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Raja Narendra Nath, Ch. Chhotu Ram, Sir Gokal Chand Narang (influenced by Raja Narendra Nath) and other Sikh and Hindu leaders. He wrote about the sensitive and under-control situation:

I still do not know whether Sikander went to Lucknow with the previous intention of coming to an agreement with Jinnah or whether he was carried of his feet by Muslim enthusiasm. He certainly did not realise the implications of what he was doing, nor he did appreciate the position for some time after his return. He did not consult his colleagues previously about his action. The situation was and still is much complicated by different versions as to what happened at Lucknow. ...I have advised him very strongly to be careful not to issue anything likely to give rise a public controversy between Jinnah and himself, and I understand that he is in correspondence with Jinnah on the matter. In the meantime, although the Hindu and Sikh Ministers are a little uneasy, they are sticking loyally to the Premier.^{xlvii}

Akali Sikh MLAs and the Executive Committee sought deeper relation with Congress under the threat of the Jinnah-Sikander Pact. They desired a strong opposition to the Unionist Party in the Punjab.^{xlviii}

Nihang Sikhs of Gurdwara Baba Phula Singh, Amritsar attacked a Muslim because his cattle strayed into the Jand belonging to the Gurdwara. Other Muslims retaliated by attacking the Sikhs too.

Although the fight was not a communal one but there was a grave danger to be coloured as Muslim-Sikh tension.^{xlix} During early months of 1937 the Hindus and Sikhs of Dhurnakka (Attock district) along with the Muslims enjoyed opening ceremony by performing an *Akhand Path* on the rebuilt of an old Gurdwara. Nevertheless a false rumour regarding *jhatka* in the Gurdwara created ill-will and a crowd of Muslims from suburbs advanced on the village. The Sikhs ensured them that no *Jhatka* music during the prayer times would be done but this settled issue was revived by the mischief-mongers that generated communal tension in numerous villages.¹ Tensions were observed between Muslims and Sikhs in the Attock district over the rumors spread about the Shahidganj mosque issue which had been happening in Lahore.^{li}

Naranjan Dass Mohaya stated that the Punjab had been privileged in regards to the communal stability. However, right after the Unionist ministry took over office the communal uprisings took place in the area. The disturbance against religious peace namely, *Jhatka*, *halal*, cow-killing, music before Mosques and Muslim, Hindu and Sikh festivals continued and were the main reasons behind these uprisings. The unrests commenced in the 1930's in Kot Bhai Than Singh (district Attock), Amritsar, Panipat (District Karnal), district Gujrat, Multan, and Tallagang (Attock) disturbed the goodwill between the two communities.^{lii} There were allegations by Master Tara Singh that harassment of Hindus and Sikhs had taken place with the purpose of encroaching homes and this had been carried out by Sardar Mohammad Nawaz, a Unionist and a first class Honorary Magistrate. According to him he had humiliated the Sewadars of the Gurdwara while the Sikhs at the same location were assaulted twice:

Murder and sacrilege and other felonious acts that were committed by the employees and servants of the Sardar on the 1st day of April, 1937, the day you assumed charge of office, have no parallel in the history of the British Administration in India, and I am sure that the previous Punjab Government. Pro-Muslim as it was, could not have suffered these acts without taking drastic action against the Sardar to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.^{liii}

Masterje complained against the pro-Sardar attitude of the Premier and registered a protest against Sardar Mohammad Nawaz Khan who had divested of his official powers as a Magistrate. Moreover, a Sikh and a Hindu working at a small hotel in Jhelum killed a chicken by *Jhatka* method in front of the shop of Sant Singh, murdered some time ago by a Muslim fanatic that infuriated the Muslims but the police ensured peace

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of the areas through proper measures.^{liv} In Jhelum there was agitation by the Hindus on the slaughter of kine and an extended strike with a boycott of Hindu shops as the Muslim retaliation has been observed.^{lv} In Lyallpur, (now Faisalabad), a boy attacked the Sikhs who were at protest against the construction of the Cantonment slaughter-house at Lahore that caused severe communal tension but the police did not let the trouble spread. In Chak No. 80 G.B. of Lyallpur district a band of 15 “Sikhs came by night and demolished a mosque.” In Gujranwala district, the Sikhs of Bardi Chima and the Muslims of Gilwali, fought over the theft of a mare that left caused two Sikhs casualties.^{lvi} The region was affected by communal tension throughout and the communitarian relations were increasingly unsatisfactory. On 30th May, a member of the Khaksar organization, killed a Sikh shopkeeper at Jhelum.^{lvii} Elections of the Town Committee at Khudian, Lahore district (now district Kasur) caused severe communal tension.^{lviii}

On 21st October, 1937 Emerson through a letter to Linlithgow expressed that Sir Sikandar was losing popularity among the Sikh and Hindu allies and subsequently his image as cross-communal and secular leader would be vanished. The Premier had become a Muslim leader and the Hindu and Sikh allies would gradually disown him.^{lix} Master Tara Singh expressed his dissatisfaction on his pro-Muslim policies in a letter written to Sir Sikander dated 10th September, 1937. The British Government, to him, continued exploitation of India and during the near past they cajoled the Muslims. He explained that Sikhs would never succumb to a Punjab politically dominated by Muslims. Quoting many injustices done to the Sikhs in different areas of the Punjab he massively criticized the Premier.^{lx}

Cognisant of the fact, Master Tara Singh supported the five professors of Khalsa College, Amritsar who were removed by the government. He pointed out the government’s exploitative intention in this matter as decision was made in a meeting of the Enquiry Committee of the Khalsa College in the presence of Sir Sundar Singh, Nawab Liaqat Hayat and Maharaja Patiala. To him, the government intended to weaken the Sikhs by creating dissension and doubt in their ranks.^{lxi} The persecution of the Sikhs was protested by Master Tara Singh as well as the non-inclusion of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee members in the Unity Committee constituted by the Premier. The official agencies were assigned to

collect home addresses of the members of the Executive Committees of the Akali Dal and SGPC that exposed the anti-Sikh drive of the Unionist government. Expressing determination, he vowed to sabotage the government policies against the Sikhs and advised the Premier to govern with justice:

And work for the freedom of the country and the amelioration of the economic and social condition of the starving millions living in the province. God had given you powers which are flowing into wrong channels. For God's sake rise above the limits of narrow communalism and work for ushering in an era of liberty, equality and fraternity. If you could listen to this feeble voice from wilderness and take to the noble work of liberating the country and serving the masses, my services and of those whom I represent will be at your disposal. May God help you.^{lxii}

Communal tensions on religious issues seemed to have kept growing following the Eid-ul-Zuha events of the previous year, 1937. On the religious fronts, the disputes continued over the calling of *Azan* and an attack on the Muslim cleric (imam) by the Sikhs in the Gurdaspur district.^{lxiii} Riots broke out in Hissar town over the permission of the government of the Muslims sacrifice of cows in which one Muslim and one Hindu lost their lives. The secret report stated that Emerson wrote to the Viceroy stating the real culprits had not been arrested and the Muslim SP and Sikh DC's performance was not up to the mark due to the different reasons and they should be transferred.^{lxiv} Similar troubles happened in Dera, Kunjah over the slaughter of cows.

Further, At Kot Faten Khan (Attock) the erection of a wall by the Sardar bothered the Sikhs because it was blocking the path they used for water transportation to their Gurdwara. When they tried to demolish the wall the police intervened.^{lxv} Trouble between the Ahmadis and the Sikhs at Qadian (Gurdaspur) over the graveyard issue caused tension in the area.^{lxvi} The Sikh and Muslims of Raja Jang in the Lahore district (now a part of Kasur district) fought on *Azan* in the mosque. The Sikhs, land owner and rich, never allowed the unfortunate Muslims to say the prayers in the mosque. The Sikhs attacked the police as well. In 1937, the Muslims protested against this injustice but the Sikhs attacked and killed two Muslims while left hundreds as injured. The government established a police chauki (post) in 1939 at Raja Jang under the Lulliani Police Station with a punitive police tax on the Sikhs while the Muslims got exemption from this tax. The Sikhs did not allow the Muslims to use their fields for their cattle and forced the Muslim children and women to be away from their lands that created much problem for them especially

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for the call of nature.^{lxvii} The Governor expected that the agreement that was arranged by the local officers between both parties would conclude the disputes and both communities would be able to live in harmony.^{lxviii}

However, another fight occurred in village Mir Muhammad which left five Sikhs injured and to which they retaliated against the Muslims on Canal Bank.^{lxix} The Sikhs by securing SGPC, Amritsar and Sikh Assembly members support, reversed tax and later on managed to impose tax on the underprivileged Muslims. SDO Balwant Singh Nalwa revised the tax proposal in favour the Sikhs. The Muslims appealed to the Governor and the Governor-General for restoration of the police tax exemption in April, 1940.^{lxx} The Raja Jang Muslims were unable to avail their religious as well as their constitutional rights because they were poor and under the dominance of the Sikhs.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal suggested the idea of a Muslim state while the Sikhs floated a similar idea during the RTC. Sikhs pursued the demand of partition to secure a Sikh majority which the Muslim League initiated the Pakistan scheme in March 1940, nine years after. Again the League's demand was made at a party level session while the Sikhs demanded it in a formal and official meeting in which all the ruling and ruled stakeholders were participating.^{lxxi}

The strikes staged by the Indian Muslims on the occasion of the death of the Turkish president Kemal Ataturk in 1938 were not attended happily by the Congress leaders. The Muslims expressed bitterness at the Congress disinclination to join the Muslim congregations.^{lxxii} Sikh training activities continued and twenty students were enrolled at the Akali Training School opened at the Sikh National College Lahore on 3rd July 1939 with the purpose to impart training to help the operations of the kisan fauj.^{lxxiii} The controversy in the press about Quaid-i-Azam's Deliverance Day continued with great vigour on purely communal lines. The day was celebrated through the province quietly and with great restraint. A few Hindu papers misinterpreted this restraint to mean a lack of enthusiasm but more discerning papers had expressed their appreciation of the control and moderation exercised on the occasion. The general impression is that the great majority of Muslims were convinced that the interests of their co-religionists had suffered under the Congress ministries. The restrained way in which the feelings were voiced on the Day of Deliverance served to emphasize the depth of these feelings.^{lxxiv}

Conclusion

Religion and language played adverse roles in the political alignment of the Indian communities during the British period. Majority-minority divide further dented the unity when the majority tried to exploit the minority. Shiromani Akali Dal reprinted Sikhs, Congress led Hindus while Muslim League became advocate of the Muslim rights. The Muslim League always supported the Sikh cause and furthermore, the Sikhs had no bitter experience of working with it but even then they kept on considering the Leaguers as enemies while the Congress damaged Sikhs politically but the Akali leadership pursued its agenda which depicted the narrow vision of the Akali leadership. Under the factual position of all-India politics and the leadership crisis the Sikhs seemed sandwiched between the top leadership sometimes sought peaceful environment although the communal clashes continued reflecting the ill arrangement on the part of the Punjab government to constitute a genuine forum which could work effectively for the communal harmony. Cultural affinity and interdependence contributed to the communal peace.

The conceptual framework was based on religious affiliation, western democracy or nationalism and anti-communitarian stance or hatred. Separate electorates had refrained the communities from major conflict otherwise even general elections might have reminded the crusades. The League leadership had come up with religion as foundation of their struggle while mechanism to secure rights was based on constitutional and democratic principles on the other hand the Sikh leadership remained unclear about the conceptual framework of their struggle and demands. Consequently, respite of political tussle was found at the top level but this relief hardly came to the masses. Therefore, masses enjoyed the traditional arrangement of peace while political domain infused the sense of communitarian rights. This was the natural impact of the democratic and administrative reforms of the government. A mixture of clashes due to religious identity, nationalism mixed with western democracy and anti-communitarian feelings was the base of their ideology.

The communal clashes prepared a large portion of the Punjabi communities to surrender the Punjabi nationalism under the stress of the religious nationalism. A few leaders can be quoted to work beyond the religious boundaries, otherwise most of the political leaders thought it

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impossible to live as a good neighbor to each other. Minor social issue was communalized and advertised that aggravated the situation. Punjabi leadership proved ineffective when the region needed their support. Influence confined to police and court (thana- kacheri) exposed the Punjabi leadership's inability to face a leadership of the national caliber. They had no experience to cope with the crisis-packed situation because the British always rescued whenever they faced odd time. The performance of the Punjabi Sikh, Hindu and Muslim leaders failed to play any effective historical role for the cause of harmony, while the followers belonging to all the communities exhibited marvelous character in support of their leaders.

They were unable to handle the religious, political and language problems which affected their people. Instead of appreciating the inter-religious, multi-linguistic and multicultural environment and heritage which could have been of benefit for them, energies and efforts were wasted in conflicts. These matters could have been dealt with in a manner which would have ensured not only harmony, but also advancement in education. Masses are trained and educated by the leaders therefore, the communal clashes in the Punjab proved that the masses were educated on antagonistic lines and no organization or party steered them to the path of traditional peace and coexistence that they had experienced successfully for hundreds of years. South Asia should learn from its past for a better future.

ENDNOTES

ⁱLetter from Governor to Lord Linlithgow on 14 September 1937, Confidential Report on the Situation in the Punjab, L/PJ/5/238.

ⁱⁱDavid Page, *Prelude to Partition, The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System on Control: 1920-1932* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 85.

ⁱⁱⁱThe initial form of separatism was rooted in religion that affected the political relations but Muslim-Sikh differences were more deep rooted under the duress of religious antagonism. Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, 'Muslim-Sikh Relations in British Punjab after the Lahore Resolution of 1940' (PhD diss. Quaid-i-Azam University, 2011).

^{iv}Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "Muslim-Sikh Relations in the Pre-Partition Punjab," paper delivered at the WUN South Asian Virtual Seminar Series, University of Southampton, UK, 6 May 2008; see also, <http://www.uwex.edu/ics/stream/session.cfm?eid=11900&sid=16502>.

^vViolent strategies to achieve ends were not endorsed by Quaid-i-Azam and other prominent leaders.

^{vi}The Muslims showed furious reaction to Gandhi's proclamation to end the Khilafat agitation without the Muslim consent while MK Gandhi believed that the movement had turned violent.

^{vii}Allies included the [Triple Entente](#) of England, [France](#) and [Russia](#) and the [Central Powers](#) consisted of [Germany](#) and [Austria-Hungary](#).

^{viii}Politically territorial nationalism suited his religious aspiration to establish a Hindu state so he joined Khilafat movement.

^{ix}Imam Mahdi is a descendant of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and Hazrat Ali Bin Abu Talib (RA) who will appear on the Day of Judgment and lead the true faction of the Muslims of the world.

^xM. P. Lewis, G. F. Simons, & C. D. Fennig, (Eds.), *Ethnologue: Languages of the world. Seventeenth* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2013), accessed <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/IN>.

^{xi}María Isabel Maldonado García, *Urdu: A Density Measure of its Etymological Components* (Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2014), 18-19.

^{xii}María Isabel Maldonado García, "The Urdu Language Reforms" *Almas* 15 (2014): 14-24.

^{xiii}J. Oosterheld, "Education, Cultural Diversity and Citizenship in Late Colonial India" EMIGRA Working Papers (2007), 58.

^{xiv}J.B.P. More, *Political Evolution of Muslims in Tamil Nadu and Madras 1930-1947* (Madras: Orient Blackswan, 1997). 156-159.

^{xv}Sumathy Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 176.

^{xvi}Tejinder Singh Saini and Gurpreet Singh Lehal, "Shahmukhi to Gurmukhi Transliteration System: A Corpus based Approach" *Research in Computing Science* 33 (2008): 151-162.

^{xvii}Lala Lajpat Rai, *Autobiographical Writings*, ed., VC Joshi (Delhi: University Publishers, 1965), 25-27.

^{xviii}Atamjit Singh, "The Language Divide in Punjab," <http://www.punjabilok.com/misc/education/ languag edivide5.htm>, 24/12/2003.

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- ^{xix}Tariq Rahman, "Punjabi Language during British Rule." *Journal of Punjab Studies* 14 (2007): 28.
- ^{xx}Daily *Civil and Military Gazette*, 25 October 1936.
- ^{xxi}Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, 1944, file S-412, para. 224
- ^{xxii}Ibid., 1945, file S-413, para. 178.
- ^{xxiii}Ibid., 1943, file S-411, para. 141.
- ^{xxiv}A Mosque near the Lahore railway station, constructed by Abdullah Khan, cook of Dara Shikoh, the then Punjab Governor. The place was named Sjahidganj because Bhai Taru Singh in 1746 was 'martyred' near the Mosque. After this, his *smadh* was also built at this place but with the passage of time the Sikhs encroached whole of the area including the Mosque. Janbaz Mirza, *Tehrik Masjid Shahidganj* (Lahore: Maktaba Tabsra, 1988), 44-46.
- ^{xxv}Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1921-47*. (Lahore: Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1992), 183-84.
- ^{xxvi}Janbaz Mirza, *Tehrik Masjid Shahidganj*, 244.
- ^{xxvii}Letter from Emerson to Viceroy on 8 May 1937, *Linlithgow Papers* in PN Chopra, *Towards Freedom, 1937-47*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: India Council of Historical Research, 1985), 489.
- ^{xxviii}*CMG*, 16 January 1940.
- ^{xxix}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of July 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxx}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of January 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxxi}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of November 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxxii}Copy of a letter no. 449/16, dated 10-9-1937, sent to Sir Sikander-Hayat Khan, Prime Minister, Punjab, by Master Tara Singh, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{xxxiii}Mandi Baha-ud-Din is an independent district now.
- ^{xxxiv}Governor's letter to Linlithgow dated 14th September 1937, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{xxxv}Situation in the Punjab -First half of August 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxxvi}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of July 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxxvii}Situation in the Punjab -First half of June 1937 L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{xxxviii}Copy of a letter no. 449/16, dated 10-9-1937, sent to Sir Sikander-Hayat Khan, prime minister, Punjab, by Master Tara Singh, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{xxxix}Nankana is now an independent district of Pakistani Punjab.
- ^{xl}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of November 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report).
- ^{xli}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of March 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report).
- ^{xlii}Situation in the Punjab -Second half of November 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report).
- ^{xliii}Governor of the Punjab's letter to Lord Linlithgow on 3 December 1937, L/PJ/5/238.

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- ^{xliv} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of November 1937. (Confidential Report).
- ^{xlv} Nehru's visit of Lahore in that respect was also a threat to him.
- ^{xlvi} Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab*, 192-193.
- ^{xlvii} Letter from HW Emerson to Lord Linlithgow, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{xlviii} Second half of October 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report).
- ^{xlix} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of October 1937. (Confidential Report)
- ^l Ibid.
- ^{li} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of January 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lii} Naranjan Dass Mohaya, "Administration of Law and Order under the Unionist Party (1937-1941)," *Punjab History Conference*, 20th Session (Punjabi University, 1987): 376-78.
- ^{liii} Copy of a Letter no. 449/16, dated 10-9-1937, sent to Sir Sikander-Hayat Khan, prime minister, Punjab, by Master Tara Singh, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{liv} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of July 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lv} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of January 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lvi} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of August 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lvii} Situation in the Punjab -First half of June 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lviii} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of July 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lix} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of October 1937, L/PJ/5/238. (Confidential Report)
- ^l Copy of a Letter no. 449/16, dated 10-9-1937, sent to Sir Sikander-Hayat Khan, prime minister, Punjab, by Master Tara Singh, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, L/PJ/5/238.
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- ^{lxii} Copy of a letter no. 449/16, dated 10-9-1937, sent to Sir Sikander-Hayat Khan, prime minister, Punjab, by Master Tara Singh, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, L/PJ/5/238.
- ^{lxiii} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of January 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lxiv} Situation in the Punjab -First half of February 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lxv} Situation in the Punjab -First half of February 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lxvi} Statement made by the Premier in the Legislative Assembly on the 16th March, 1938, L/PJ/5/239.
- ^{lxvii} In the Punjabi villages, 95% families had no washrooms in their houses therefore they had to go outside to use the fields for call of nature. The fields worked as open-toilets.
- ^{lxviii} Letter from H. D. Craik to Lord Linlithgow May 26th, 1938, L/PJ/5/239.
- ^{lxix} Situation in the Punjab -Second half of May 1938, L/PJ/5/239. (Confidential Report)
- ^{lxx} Letter of the Muslims of Raja Jang to the Governor-General, file No. 1098, Quaid-i-

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^{lxxi} García, María Isabel Maldonado, and Akhtar Hussain Sandhu. "The Text of the Memorandum 'Sikhs and the New Constitution for India' (1930). Political Importance and Linguistic Sentiment Analysis." *South Asian Studies* 30: 1.

^{lxxii} Statement made by the Premier in the Legislative Assembly on the 16th March, 1938, L/PJ/5/239.

^{lxxiii} Report on the situation in the Punjab for the first half of July, 1939, L/PJ/5/242.

^{lxxiv} Report on the situation in the Punjab for the second half of December, 1939, L/PJ/5/243.