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## Orientalism's Last Battle in the 19th Century Punjab

\_\_\_\_\_ Masood Akhtar Zahid  
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The historiography of the colonial Punjab has some visible lacunas which can be attributed to the historians' preoccupation with high politics, national panorama and the general oversight of less exciting regional scene or issues. The case of the Anjuman-i-Punjab, the conservative seeker of literacy and revival of classical literature, is a fit example of how species of historians, both the colonial and the nationalists, have chosen to overlook a movement, the study of which is indispensable to understanding the transition of Punjab from *sikha shahi*,<sup>1</sup> a euphemism for Sikh twilight, to a settled government. A perusal of the Anjuman's work, the milieu in which it operated, its specific goals, the odds that it faced, success or failure that it met, being the thrust of this paper, is intended not only to fill the slated historiographical gap, but also to provide clues to the future political and economic developments in the region and the evolution of British policy.

A few words about our context, especially about the Punjab's socio-economic profile at the time of its annexation by the British (1849) would be pertinent here to explaining not just the specificity of the Punjabi scene, so distinct from other regions of India which fell to the British control, but also its suitability for subsequent socio-political engineering by the British. Generally known as the land of the five rivers, the Punjab had been a home to various ethnic groups and the followers of Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism, with little sprinkling of Buddhist, Jain and Christian population. Being a gateway to India from Central Asia and further afar Europe, it encountered for centuries the influx of armies, warlords and seekers of fortune, who all contributed to its racial, cultural and religious mix. As of December 1854, its population was estimated at

thirteen millions in the British territory including 7.5 million Muslims, 5.5 million Hindus, and Sikhs who numbered 200,000 in Lahore Division but were classified as Hindus elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The factors that accounted for ever-increasing Muslim population were mainly migration from Muslim Central and Western Asia, conversion, conquest, polygamy and high fertility. As the dominant ruling elites during Muslim rule in the Punjab were largely drawn from the Muslim nobility, the urban Hindu Khatri and Aroras monopolised trade and wealth in the cities. Derisively nicknamed by the rural Muslim debtors as kirars, these meandering bankers and entrepreneurs of the Punjab later formed, what Jones called a third world of marginal men, the Anglicised elite, the end product of the interaction between British colonial culture as an extension of European civilization and the existent Punjabi society.<sup>3</sup> The Punjabi Brahmans did not wear that aura of respectability or featured so prominently in the local caste and social hierarchy. Unlike fellow Brahmans from elsewhere in India, they could be seen, much to the surprise of non-Punjabi visitors following the annexation, doing menial jobs like railway coolies and paid workers for the non-Brahmans. Largely a rural society of impoverished peasants spread over some 26 thousand villages, the Punjab could boast only four cities (Amritsar 122,000, Lahore 94,000, Multan 56,000 and Peshawar 53,000) with a population exceeding fifty thousands. The absence of national feelings, generally characteristic of the entire Sub-continent at that time, was rather conspicuous in the Punjab, where the jobbery and rapaciousness of the Sikh soldiers and officials, the sore signs of Sikh twilight, encouraged community consciousness among the Muslims and the Hindus. It is no wonder that the Punjab remained quiet during the 1857 uprising when even its neighbouring North-Western Provinces and other regions revolted against the British. In the post-rebellion restructuring, the rulers rewarded this 'loyalty' by protecting the traditional social hierarchy and dominance of the landed aristocracy, and thus laid the foundation of a paternalistic administration by co-opting the genteel classes.<sup>4</sup> Of the earlier colonial administrators generally known as the Punjab School, the brothers Henry (a military Civilian) and John Lawrence (an ICS) were instrumental, with the backing of Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, in shaping the policies and general modus

operandi of the colonial government in the province.<sup>5</sup> Although Henry lost his life as Resident in Lucknow during the 1857 war, the policy that he had initiated in the Punjab of strengthening eminent families and feudatory chiefs, as surrogate rulers and what Irfan Habib called pucca (firm) loyalists of the Raj, was continued by his successors.<sup>6</sup> Assured of the *carte blanche* in their domain of power and influence, those *imperium en imperio* formed a most conservative instrument of control and exploitation, preserving status quo and defeating the attempts, if any, for egalitarian change.

The official policy of gilding the Lilly worked. The educational backwardness of the Punjab people, sluggish growth, archaic and nondescript means of production and communication, stark diversity, and social hierarchies, being the signposts of pervasive decline or stagnation since the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, worked to the imperial advantage, as many began to perceive Pax Britannica, its effectiveness, novelties and the colonial administrators as godsend. After almost three decades the region witnessed peace under the "benevolent" despotism of the Anglo-Indian administrators, the followers of the celebrated James Thomason, the doyen of the Indian Civil Service from the neighbouring NWP. The Victorian Englishmen, known for propensity to hard work and *joie de vivre*, found among the Punjabi peasants the habits and traits somewhat identical to their own.

The emerging signs of goodwill between the two, often the cause of envy among the elites worked wonders; it helped revive the economy of this newly colonised and war-torn Province with signs of agricultural growth just in two years after the annexation. It was not until 1877, after Swami Dayanand Saraswati's, the founder of the Arya Samaj, visit that the first seeds of nationalist politics, albeit Hindu, were sown in the Province.<sup>7</sup> As the Hindu nationalist discourse of the Arya Samaj, as distinct from the fictive Congress secularism, evoked emotive responses from the urban middle-class Hindus and almost elbowed out the Congress from provincial politics, Muslim Anjumans and Singh Sabhas sprang up in emulative reactions. The emerging religio-political triumvirate served the twin objective of articulating and preserving the religious identities and, notwithstanding their ample philanthropy

especially in education, it failed to transcend religious barriers. Simultaneously and silently at work were the new forces, big and small, unleashed by the colonial system of administration that was to harness communalism in this region.<sup>8</sup> Doubtless, the British-introduced metalled roads, railways and steamers, telegraph, newspapers, schools, offices, competition for jobs, official records/reports and decennial censuses, though modernising steps towards an effective government and economy, also worked to stoke communal sentiment in politics. Religion came to be seen and stressed increasingly as the nucleus of intra-faith solidarity, not merely a repetitive ritual or a matter of private choice or practice, but of temporal utility. Communalisation of politics was nevertheless not a British-project; it was an end-product of historical forces, not easier to pinpoint without a fear of contradiction to any particular historical era, factor or personage. Nor is it possible to trace its intensity to any conscious contribution of the colonial administrators, who were rather wary of its perils in the post-1849 period.

The British colonial administrators, as legatees of Sikh rule, had better alternatives to *divide et impera*. The economy of Punjab was in ruins in 1849. Most of its land comprised barren plains,<sup>9</sup> dotted with sparse cultivation in river meridians or rain-fed terrain of hills in the north-west. Therefore, a huge task awaited the new administrators to rebuild the economy and fight the menace of poverty. Pragmatism - not ideology - governed the British policy of cultivating the landed gentry which they treated as the natural leaders of the *ryot*, i.e., poor peasants. The British protected the landowners and did not repeat the ill-conceived Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement of Bengal (1793)<sup>10</sup> in Punjab, as they had no wish to create a politicised Punjabi variant of "ungrateful Bengalis" who benefited from the imperial largesse, yet craved an end to the British rule. They discouraged the fragmentation and alienation of land, and late in 1900 forbade the mortgage/sale of agricultural land to non-agriculturalists, i.e., urban *sahukars*, almost all Hindus. Malcolm Darling, a Punjab Civilian, was to concede later the primacy of colonial interests in the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900,<sup>11</sup> which, being a class legislation, aimed at checking the rapaciousness of urban *bania*, ended up in creating agriculturalist

banias from within the agricultural classes who maximized their holdings by resorting to the same practices as the urban sahlukars before them.<sup>12</sup> The British also showered on these landlordly classes the uncontested appointments of Statutory Civilians, and encouraged their membership in government-inspired associations, municipalities, district and local boards, university senate and, later in the century, in the provincial legislature.<sup>13</sup> It was in this atmosphere of developing quid pro quo between the rulers and the influential classes, that the Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Ulum-i-Mufida, popularly known as the Anjuman-i-Punjab, was founded by G. W. Leitner in January 1865.

The Anjuman, writes K. W. Jones, was 'the most successful of European-led efforts to influence Punjabi opinion'. Its Hungarian-born founder, the famous Orientalist G. W. Leitner, had reached Lahore in 1864 to assume the Principalship of the just-established flagship institution, Government College, Lahore. Leitner arrived as recognised scholar of Oriental languages and literature, with a reputation in England and Europe.<sup>14</sup> At King's College London he was appointed a lecturer in Turkish, Arabic and Modern Greek in 1859, and two years later at the age of 21 a professor of Arabic and Muhammadan Law. A polyglot, he knew twenty-five languages and his works in philology were praised among others by Professor Max Muller and Dr Trump.<sup>15</sup> The Anjuman had a flying start with a membership of 245 eminent Punjabis (indigenous educated or influential Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) and Europeans in its inaugural year.<sup>16</sup> This was the first Indian organisation to have ruling chiefs and senior officials as its members and the Prince of Wales as its Patron.<sup>17</sup> As Leitner did not restrict himself to the onerous responsibilities of his office and the administrative charge of two more institutions (University College, and the Oriental College) that fell subsequently to his care, he immediately began to express his views on indigenous, vernacular and classical education, their intrinsic worth and the need for their revival. Under his stewardship, the Anjuman sought to reform the education policy in four directions: the establishment of a university of the Punjab, the revival of Arabic and Sanskrit learning, the introduction of European science to the general population through education in the vernacular languages, and raising the standards of English education.<sup>18</sup>

Elitist and conservative, the high profile Anjuman was founded to serve both long term and short-term purposes. It was to mobilise the indigenous-educated conservative elites, rajas, naboo and chiefs, in mutually supportive roles, in support of government inspired/initiated schemes and policies, and in the instant case, in the aid of popular education through the vernaculars. It stressed the creation of vernacular literature and dissemination of European science and scientific literature through the vernacular languages. Considering this as its primary goal consistent with religio-cultural mores and indigenous ethos, it planned to achieve the same under the supervision of a yet to be created an Oriental University. The elite classes, chiefs, rajas and naboo flocked to its banner, as they found in Leitner and his official backers the needed messiah of their rights and protector of their power and prestige. For his part, Leitner did not consider the Indian traditions, customs and caste all that bad and advocated the restriction of competitive examinations for the Civil Services to the small number of pre-selected nominees from the noble and propertied classes. Thus interplay of self-interest, official exhortations especially by Aitchison, and regard for 'hallowed' traditions yoked the nobility, chiefs and rajas (of Kashmir, Nabha, Jind, Patiala, Kapurthala, and Bahawalpur), along with their subscriptions into the university movement.

A cultural exclusivist, Leitner was opposed to the official patronage of English education in the sub-continent. He spoke like many colonial administrators, whether Anglicists or Orientalists, how English education would denationalise the Punjabis, generate a craving for democracy and would consequently threaten the Empire. For the same reason, he objected to the British sojourn of the Indian candidates for ICS examinations, fearing they would also formulate a bad opinion about "our society" once exposed to "some of our cultural vices". Aiming at the revival of Classical Studies, central to which was the cultivation of Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Gurmukhi, under the supervision of an Oriental University, Leitner hoped to succeed in a mission where earlier generation of his Orientalists forbears led by H. T. Prinsep had failed before the determined Anglicist lobby, supported by Benthamite Governor-General Lord Bentinck, his Law Member T. B. Macaulay and his brother-in-law Charles Trevelyan.

The struggle for an Oriental university, the origin of which *The Tribune* traced to Baba Charan Bose's, the curator of the Government Bok Depot, suggestion in early 1865 to establish an institution to foster Eastern and Western learning,<sup>19</sup> offers insights into the motivation behind the Oriental University movement, in particular about the role of Leitner, who picked the idea in earnest. Leitner as well as E. Wilmot, the Principal of the Government College, Delhi, found Calcutta University's English-intensive incubus on the Punjab's vernacular-based education system as cumbersome, unsuitable and unproductive. Calcutta's vast jurisdiction covering North India, Central Provinces, British Burma and Ceylon rendered its examination system as ineffective. The Punjab had no say or leeway in its management, and the degrees and certificates it conferred were in lieu of teaching by schools and colleges elsewhere. The Calcutta system better interfaced with the English-intensive pre-university education in Bengal and least with the vernacular-mode system in Punjab. Yet it took the Anjuman-i-Punjab, Leitner and the Punjab Government some seventeen years to convince the Imperial Government about the merits of having a university in the Province fit to crown its own education system.

In June 1865, the Punjab Government advised steps towards the creation and extension of vernacular publishing to transfer the knowledge of European literature and science through the vernaculars. The DPI took the matter to the Anjuman's meeting presided by Leitner in August 1865. A month later the Anjuman ratified a draft proposal for the Oriental University by Leitner, which was submitted to the Punjab Government on 13 October along with a supportive memorandum by 65 'gentlemen' of Lahore and Amritsar.<sup>20</sup> A high profile European Committee of Support was formed under the leadership of Macleod, which comprised senior government functionaries including the Financial Commissioner, A. A. Roberts.<sup>21</sup> A public appeal for subscription was launched and the association of Prince of Wales with the Anjuman was flaunted to motivate upper-class support to the scheme.<sup>22</sup> To allay the fears in some quarters, commitment to both ancient and modern learning through Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Sanskrit, Nagri, and Gurmukhi was reiterated. And perhaps to appease the Anglicists within the administration, and among the Brahmos in the Punjab and Dayal

Singh-led Indian Association, the word Oriental was also dropped when the scheme was finalised in a Macleod-led meeting of the representatives of chiefs and those who were later gazetted as the founders of the University College.

Despite that the bureaucratic juggernaut in Calcutta opposed the university scheme perceiving a link between Oriental learning and religious extremism and militancy, impressions that were goaded by 1857.<sup>23</sup> The nuances of their expressions matched those of Macaulay and Trevelyan in their time who had viewed the English-educated as the intelligent and zealous co-operators of the Government.<sup>24</sup> They did not perceive the nascent nationalism of the Indian Association, the precursor of the Indian National Congress, with alarm.<sup>25</sup> The Indian Association and its Lahore branch produced the diehard opponents of Oriental education. English had become the *lingua franca* among the Anglicised elites throughout India and proposed education in the vernacular, largely if not exclusively in Urdu, in Punjab seemed to threaten that link. Therefore, they stressed either English or (as witnesses to the 1882 Hunter Commission) alternatively Hindi-Nagri as medium of instruction in schools of the Punjab.<sup>26</sup> Having no truck with the Punjab University movement, they lent support to a parallel movement for a vernacular university in the North Western Provinces (NWP), which coinciding with the Urdu-Hindi controversy of 1867 in the NWP, sought to create a vernacular university to ensure the supremacy of Hindi-Nagri in opposition to Perso-Arabic Urdu in the educational institutions as well as in public offices. Inside India and so too in Britain, they lobbied with the British Government to sabotage the Punjab University movement, described Leitner as an accomplice of the Empire, 'a dictator' and a 'czar of the Punjab'. Aware of his nationalist detractors, whether of Bengali origin or of indigenous stock, as well as of misgivings in some official quarters, Leitner pressed the Government for an early sanction fearing the loss of momentum in the movement. Macleod and Leitner had a disappointment in store, when Lord Lawrence responded by offering a university shared with the NWP at Delhi. They kept up pressure on Calcutta and forced the latter to sanction a University College, with university status in contemplation. Lawrence refused to grant a full-fledged university and linked

the refusal to the pressure from within his Executive Council especially from Henry Maine and John Strachey, as also to the teacher-text problem in Punjab. The Viceroy also expressed doubts if the proposed scheme was reflective of the true wishes of the people.<sup>27</sup> To console Macleod, he offered however to reconsider the matter if the decision was too much of a disappointment for him.

The Punjab University College began its life as a teaching - cum examining body. In the opening year of 1869-70, a Senate of 70 members was appointed by the Chancellor. An Oriental School was opened in 1870 which was raised to a College two years later. Sanskrit and Law lecturers were appointed, Lahore Medical School was affiliated in 1870 and Faculties of Law, Arts, Medicine and Engineering were established. An Entrance examination parallel to the one for Calcutta University was started, and special examinations in Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian were instituted. A separate Faculty of Arts and Oriental Studies was set up leading to graduate and post-graduate degrees in Oriental Learning. As feeder to the College and the degree classes, the School Department was also maintained where proficiency classes in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Gurmukhi were held, and certificates equivalent to Entrance were given to the successful candidates.<sup>28</sup>

Promising funds, financial viability, and quality education, the promoters of the university movement arranged a spectacular show of solidarity among the Europeans and the vernacular elites. Reacting to the Calcutta's standardising influence, they looked forward to cultivating the classical studies through the cultivation of Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, Punjabi, and Persian. Eastern learning, Leitner alleged, became the victim of official neglect since Lord Bentinck-Macaulay's pro-English verdict of 1835, and it would be completely wiped out if not rescued through a reversal of that policy. Through an Oriental University and an education relevant to popular religious tradition, Leitner claimed to be striving for people's education as opposed to the Calcutta's elitist and exotic medium. Leitner's advocacy of Oriental education was so strong that the vernacular elites regarded him the real benefactor,<sup>29</sup> and years later C. L. Tupper, the Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab University acknowledged how

the university derived its enthusiasm from attachment to Oriental learning the desire for which was propelled by Leitner.<sup>30</sup>

For a short-while the University College modeled its timetable, standards and curriculum after Calcutta University. Its distinction was the Oriental Faculty, which offered BOL, MOL, and DOL analogous to those in Arts and Sciences but through the medium of Urdu. The College also conferred Oriental literary titles following examinations in vernacular languages, and granted indigenous titles to students of Islamic and Hindu Law, and Medicine. Its Senate advised the Government on educational matters. Yet the University College lacked the ambiance of a teaching institution as well as its own habitation and it functioned from a room in the Government College Lahore. In time the College began to cause a dent in demand for Calcutta degrees due largely to the inducement of scholarships and relevance of examinations to the Punjab conditions. Leitner publicised those gains to acquire for the College the status of a full-fledged university.<sup>31</sup> The successors of Macleod, Henry Davies and Robert Egerton were equally committed to the university campaign. In December 1876, Davies had secured a promise from the Viceroy Lord Lytton, then visiting Punjab that the University would be chartered in due course,<sup>32</sup> evoking once again a barrage of criticism from the anti-university lobby. On 5 April 1877, Arthur Hobshouse, the former Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University asked the Imperial Government to prevent what he called this breakaway attempt at the Calcutta University. It may well be that Lytton could not carry out the pledge during his term due to various forms of internal and external pressures. His successor the Liberal Lord Ripon's term coincided with that of another Liberal administrator-Governor of the Punjab, Charles Aitchison. The two men were not as amenable to the Anglo-Indians as were the Conservative Viceroys including Lord Lytton. As young Deputy Commissioner of Lahore Aitchison had put his weight and influence with the influential chiefs behind the University movement. He shared with Ripon concerns on many important political issues, urging reciprocity and accommodation in relation to Indian aspirations. A known promoter of educational causes and the founder of Aitchison College Lahore, Aitchison raised the matter in earnest with Lord Ripon, who, notwithstanding the dissentient views of Edward

Clive Bayley, member of his Executive Council, agreed to charter the University, supported as he was by Alexander John Arbuthnot, another member of his Council.

As a last bid, the nationalists once again became proactive in opposition. Their polemical attacks projected the university campaigners as 'men of the old school', 'a herd of simple creatures shepherded by influential officials'. *The Pioneer* of Allahabad appealed to Lord Ripon not to grant the proposed up-gradation. From Calcutta, *The Brahma Public Opinion* condemned this 'national calamity bound to ostracise English education', while *The Hindu* from Madras asked the Government to ensure the primacy of English in the university's programmes. As if this was not enough, the Anglicists sought the intervention of the Secretary of State, Earl of Kimberly, on 27 July 1881, urging him to save the English education, the greatest boon from Britain to India, from the dangers of destruction by the Punjab University. They downplayed the University College's academic achievements from qualitative and quantitative points of view. Half a dozen Urdu and as many Hindi text-books, observed *The Tribune*, the leading spokesman of Anglicism and nationalist viewpoint in Punjab, was the total achievement of the College during the trial period. The Paper questioned the quality of works such as Roscoe's Elementary Chemistry, *Miftah-ul-Arz*, and Raja Shiva Prasad's *History of India*. Leitner came in for scathing remarks by *The Rahbar-i-Hind*, while *The Akhbar-i-Am* lambasted this government 'fabricated' demand.<sup>33</sup>

The Anjuman-i-Punjab responded by calling the critics that "small party of adullamites and their dupes", who would spare no opportunity to stultify the institution, even though some of them had learnt excellent English in it. The residents of Gurdaspur drew a counter memorial to that of the Indian Association challenging the latter's representative character. The apologists of English took a refuge behind Macaulay's Minute whereas the partisans of Indian classics and Oriental studies made a reference to the Charles Wood's despatch of 1854 and its emphasis on the development and diffusion of Western knowledge through the vernaculars. Between these diametrically opposed stands was the decisive voice of the Viceroy which sympathised with the campaigner's view. An influential

delegation led by the Punjab's Lieutenant-Governor waited upon the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, on 13 November 1881 and prayed for the redemption of the pledge by his predecessor Lord Lytton to sanction the University. On this occasion Leitner recounted the gallantry of Punjab soldiers in the Afghan war and held that the proposed university would be a fitting tribute to it and a reward from the government side. A supportive memorial from the Guru Singh Sabha, a society devoted to Sikh renaissance through Punjabi-Gurmukhi, was also presented on this occasion.

Finally Calcutta capitulated and chartered the university under the Act XIX of 1882 in formal recognition of its valuable work during the probationary period. James B. Lyal became its first Vice-Chancellor, and Charles Aitchison, who as Deputy Commissioner of Lahore had the distinction of successfully persuading the chiefs to subscribe to the university funds, its first Chancellor. The fears expressed earlier in the Viceroy's Executive Council, that the university might be dominated by the officials were not unwarranted as all the top academic and administrative posts were monopolised by the Europeans. Indians and that too in few cases were appointed as Lecturers or Assistant Professors, while Bengali baboos Navin Chandra Rai and Chandra Nath officiated for short periods as registrars. The eminent Orientalists who taught at the Oriental College were Leitner, his successor principal of Oriental College Aurel Stein, T. W. Arnold, Altaf Husain Hali, Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad, Gurmukh Singh, and Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal. For quite sometime Leitner wore three hats concurrently, being the Principal of Government College, Oriental College, and registrar of the University.

The ever-increasing control of the university and the Oriental College by the Europeans, mostly Anglicists, was resented by Leitner. Towards the end of his Punjab career he wrote a letter supported by the Anjuman-i-Punjab to Lord Dufferin in January 1886, criticizing the Management Committee of the Oriental College, comprising non-scholars and a majority who were opposed to Oriental learning. He considered it a serious breach of the assurances that were given to the 'native' donors to create a truly Oriental University, a Mahavidyala, and a Beyt-ul-ulum.<sup>34</sup> Leitner admitted he had failed to convince this committee to stand by the original aims of

the College. Like the Oriental College, the Senate of the University was also packed, unlike the universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, with the non-academics, whose only merit was wealth, donations to the university, and tested loyalty to the Government.

The Punjab University Act of Incorporation had praised the contribution of the University College towards Oriental learning and European Science. In 1871, the College had examined sixty-eight candidates for its Arts examination through the medium of English, and fifty through the medium of the vernaculars. Hopes were then entertained that the elevation of the College to a University, with powers to confer Oriental degrees as opposed to certificates, would add further momentum to Oriental learning. It was also argued that those who appeared on the vernacular side displayed a better grasp of the subjects such as mathematics and history, than those who appeared through the medium of English. In 1881, for instance, 196 and fifty-three candidates appeared for the Entrance examination of the University College on the English and vernacular sides respectively, with seventy and thirty-nine passes in each. Similarly, out of twenty-nine Anglo-vernacular and seven vernacular candidates for the proficiency examination, twelve and five passed; in the high proficiency examination, equal to the B.A. degree, four out of thirteen Anglo-vernacular and two out of four vernacular candidates passed.

It was evident that dropout rate was higher on the Anglo-vernacular side than on the vernacular. As for direct teaching, the Oriental College did not take off in the real sense until Aurel Stein was appointed its Principal in 1888. This distinguished scholar retained the dual charge (he was also the Registrar of the University) until 1899, and after an interval was succeeded by A. W. Stratton, who died in 1902. The College taught to the post-graduate level in the classical and Oriental languages, and Western science through the standard vernaculars. It also maintained a School Department where students read for Entrance examinations in Urdu, Hindi, and for Proficiency in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Gurmukhi. To study Oriental languages methods of European philology were adopted, and to encourage Western research methodology, European editions of Oriental classics were kept in its library.<sup>35</sup> The College set high

traditions in Oriental learning, yet failed to match the growing popularity of Western learning. To illustrate, in 1901, a total of 403 candidates appeared for the Oriental examinations compared with 3, 779 for Arts and sciences.

What is often omitted in the various accounts of the Punjab University is its compromise over the principles on which it was first proposed. Its founders, especially Leitner, the Anjuman-i-Punjab, and Guru Singh Sabha, vied to make Orientalism its distinct feature; but neither the officials nor the English-educated Hindus shared their euphoria for popular education in the vernacular mode. Whatever their sources of motivation, the followers of the Ram Mohan Roy and Macaulay schools lost no opportunity of disparaging Oriental and classical learning. The steady decline in the number of candidates opting for Oriental programmes testified to utilitarian appeal of English education. The university failed, as was predicted by *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 'to throw up a dam to keep out the rising tide of English education.' The protagonists of Oriental education lost to the Euro-centricism of the bureaucracy and the English-education elites.

Even in the Oriental College, the content of education was Euro-centric. For Urdu and Hindi classes, translations from European works were attempted in subjects like algebra, arithmetic, trigonometry, psychology, political economy, chemistry, physics, descriptive astronomy, hydrostatics, dynamics, deductive and inductive logic. To meet the popular demand, arrangements were also made for the cultivation of European languages. As of 1883, the College staff had some 49 finished or unfinished works to their credit, most of which were Urdu, Hindi, and Gurmukhi translations of English literary, historical, and scientific works. Works on Hindu Law, Sanskrit Literature, Logic, Medicine, Philosophy, and Grammar were also undertaken, beside Urdu translations of scientific, Arabic and Persian treatises.<sup>36</sup>

Although some European and Indian professors of the Oriental College, like Leitner Aurel Stein, Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad, Altaf Hussain Hali, Gurmukh Singh and Sheikh Iqbal made notable contributions to Oriental learning, the Oriental College did not enjoy as much appeal as its Arts and Professional rivals in the public and private sectors. Its students

were placed at a disadvantage in English-oriented competitions against their brethren of Bengal and other places.<sup>37</sup> The College attracted relatively poor students and mostly (in the case of Hindus and Muslims) from the sacerdotal classes. There were very few Sikh students and rarely a Christian studied at the College. Generally the students chose subjects which would foster their religious identities. Just as Muslims kept aloof from Shastras, Vishard, and Pragnya Examinations, Hindus stood away from the Maulvi and Qazi Fazil, Munshi Alam, and Munshi Fazil examinations.

Towards the end of the Century, Calcutta began to consider the Oriental College a liability and Curzon refused to commit further funds to emulate the Punjab example. Students were lured into the College through the bait of scholarships and nominal fees. The Anglicists regarded its alumnae, especially Maulvi and Hindu pandits as agents of religio-social polarization.<sup>38</sup> But the College was the University's reason d'être and the first serious effort to teach classical studies at the university level.<sup>39</sup>

The new university faced funding problems. As its income from tuition and examination fees was inconsiderable, it relied on endowments and government aid, compromising in the process its academic and administrative freedom. As the years rolled on, the fee component showed a quantum jump on the Arts than on the Oriental side indicating lesser demand for Oriental degrees and certificates. Consideration of utility among the students determined their choices of education and degree. The Oriental degrees in Persian, Urdu, Arabic and Sanskrit were popular only with students from sacerdotal classes, whereas the Lecturer of Punjabi-Gurmukhi had a problem getting any student to teach.

Also the financial mismanagement at the University was adding to its financial woes and giving the critic a target to attack. The proceeds from endowments and other subscription remained either unspent or were spent on non-designated purposes. For sometime, the endowments earmarked by the donor for the promotion of Gurmukhi teaching, and for scholarships to those passing Gyani examinations were not used for the Lepel Griffin alleged 'grave misappropriation' when the university failed to institute Griffin Scholarship in violation of

commitment with Khalifa Mohammad Hussain, Foreign Minister of Patiala, and the donor.<sup>40</sup> Leitner upbraided the 'timid' subscribers too for their silence or muted reactions to these breaches of trust. Bowing to the mounting criticism, the Punjab Government appointed a Financial Committee to straighten up funds. Along with Harbans Singh, a member and subscriber to the University Fund, Leitner resigned from the Committee when it cleared the name of Mr. Lewis, the Assistant Registrar. In protest he resigned from the office of registrar too.

The wedge between Leitner and the University administration had widened beyond repair. The Anjuman-i-Punjab deplored the circumstances in which the founding father of the University was compelled to resign. The Urdu press mostly sympathized with Leitner and Lahore's *The Shafiq-i-Hind*, *The Aftab-i-Hind*, and *The Delhi Punch* recounted his services in glowing terms. The *Ghamkhawar-i-Hind* and *The Kohi-i-Nur* also paid their tribute and advocated a suitable memorial to honour him.<sup>41</sup>

Leitner's resignation was welcome news for the small but an effective minority of nationalists, the Education Department, and the University administration. From the outset, Leitner ran the affairs of the Government College, the Oriental College and the University in a personalized manner. Easily irritable, he was intolerant of dissent form within and outside. He was to blame partially, if not entirely, for the jibes and criticism form the nationalist elites. At times, his discourse and writings smacked of the purports common to most European Orientalists as highlighted in Edward Said's celebrated work, *Orientalism*.<sup>42</sup> Like most Anglo-Indians he viewed democracy an alien concept to India, which must be kept at a bay. Tendentious speeches and writings and generalization based on selective evidence or testimony of one individual,<sup>43</sup> denied his works both depth and objectivity. It was therefore natural for the nationalist Indian Association to suspect him as a possible promoter of empire through a veiled scheme of Orientalism, a mechanism for identifying, creating and cementing religio-political and linguistic identities.

By and by Leitner lost control of the University administration and the Oriental College where the Management Committee seldom heeded his advice. He worked hard to raise

academic standards but failed to stave off government intervention in the university affairs. His direct attacks on the Education Department and indirect criticism of Punjab Government gradually deprived him of that affinity he had with the two in his early years in Punjab. The DPI, Colonel Holroyod was harbouring open hostility with Leitner, and despite a censor from the Imperial Government was unwilling to bury the hatchet. Even Charles Aitchison began to trivialise Leitner's good work, especially his gigantic role in the Punjab University movement, approximating most credit to himself. By mid-1880s his isolation seemed complete and his fair-weather friends, chiefs and nobles, deserted him as soon as he fell out with the Government. Before leaving the Punjab and India, Leitner had a last encounter with the University and its Registrar, Mr. D. H. Larpent, who was accused in the press for accepting bribes and leaking Law (examination) Papers in 1887. He shared those allegations much to the displeasure of Europeans. Charles Rattigan, the Vice-Chancellor, supported the Registrar whereas T.V. French, Bishop of Lahore and a member of the Senate criticised Leitner and sympathised with Larpent. Larpent failed to come clean during the enquiry and on the testimony of candidates-become approvers was dismissed from service amid calls in the press for a donkey-ride with blackened face. Partially avenged, and as advised by his doctors, Leitner took a premature pension and retired to England to devote the remainder part of his life to the cause of Orientalism.

To conclude, Orientalism had few takers in the colonial milieu where the emerging link between knowledge and power led many believe that only English formed the silver road to success. The nationalists, no matter how critical of the Raj, valued Western education and all that came through it. Earning a space for classical studies in that environment posed enormous difficulties. The powerful British bureaucracy, the Brahmos, and the Indian Association formed with varying emphases the bulwark of Anglicism in Punjab. By contrast, the conservative backers of Orientalism were sufficiently plastic and sensitive to official whims and policies. Yet it would not be wrong to suggest that Eastern learning in Punjab, as well as in India, or for those matter Eastern languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindi, owed their survival and development to the

life-long labours and initiatives of Leitner and the Oriental College Lahore.

### Notes and References

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- 1 During the Sikh twilight, the region suffered from a terrible lawlessness and dislocation generally embedded in public memory as sikha shahi. See, for example, Prakash Tandon, *The Punjabi Century, 1857-1947*, London, 1961.
- 2 S. S. Thorburn, *Punjab in Peace and War*, Delhi, 1987 (reprint), p. 186; Also Hindus were wont to deny Sikhism the status of a religion, something which continually irked the Sikhs. For a contentious debate on the subject, See, Lala Thakur Das, *Sikh Hindu Hain* (Sikhs are Hindu), Hoshiarpur, 1899; Bawa Narain Singh, *Sikh Hindu Hain* (Sikhs are Hindus), Amritsar, 1899; Sardar Kahan Singh, *Ham Hindu Nahin*, (We are not Hindus), Amritsar 1899.
- 3 K. W. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, Berkeley, 1976, p. 313.
- 4 How land was used as an instrument of control and how landowning classes returned the gratitude to the rulers through an abiding loyalty can be gauged from important works like Imran Ali, *Punjab Under Imperialism*, Delhi, 1989; David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, London, 1988.
- 5 John sympathized with the poor Punjabi peasants, the backbone of the agrarian economy and the providers of revenue, whereas Henry sided with the chiefs, the 'natural aristocracy' and won in the end with Dalhousie's support. For more on differences between the two brother on the subject, See, Harold Lee, *Brothers in the Raj: The Lives of John and Henry Lawrence*, Karachi, 2002.

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- 6 In the last quarter of the century, more systematic efforts were made through a process of agricultural colonization to distribute state lands, irrespective of religion, to peasants, military officers, yeomen, feudals, capitalists (rais).
  - 7 For an authoritative account of the Arya movement in the Punjab, See Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, Berkeley, 1976.
  - 8 The generality of the nationalist rhetoric to attribute every social and political division in India to the Raj is not shared however by celebrated historians like R. C. Majumdar and Anil Seal who irk the secularist/nationalist historians by tracing the origin of communalism to pre-British periods.
  - 9 For a general survey of the Punjab economy during the early British rule, See, H. K. Trevaskis, *The Land of Five Rivers*, Kent, 1928.
  - 10 That settlement was a folly from the imperial point of view and a legitimate cause of Muslim grievance was stressed among other officials by W. W. Hunter in his *Indian Musalmans*, London 1872 and *The Education (Hunter) Commission Report*, Calcutta, 1883.
  - 11 For a persuasive account of Anglo-Indian concerns over land-alienation in Punjab and its adverse political effect, See P. H. M. Van Dungen,, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in 19th Century India*, George Allen and Unwin, 1972; Also S.S. Thorburn , *Musalmans and Money-Lenders in the Punjab* ( reprint), Lahore, n.d.
  - 12 Cited in Robert, W. Stern, *Democracy and Dictatorship in South Asia*, (Praeger: Westport, 2004), p.55.

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- 13 Co-opting the elites was not however a British novelty in the Sub-continent. It was reminder of antiquarian traditions all over the world, to which ancient Hindu philosophers like Kautalya, medieval Turkish Muslim monarchs, and late Muslim thinkers and theologians like Shah Waliullah all subscribed.
  - 14 Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dhram: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 176, p.25.
  - 15 Frederick Bose, *Modern English Biography, L-Z*, 1965, p.39.
  - 16 K.K Aziz, ed., *Muslim Public Life*.
  - 17 *The Indian Public Opinion and Punjab Times*, Lahore, 28 November 1876.
  - 18 Joachim H. Stockqueler, *A Review of the Life and Labours of Dr G.W. Leitner*, Brighton: 1875, pp.10-11.
  - 19 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 5 December 1885.
  - 20 *Papers Connected with Punjab University Question*, Collected and Published by the Indian association Lahore for submission to the Secretary of State for India, Lahore, 1881, p.3.
  - 21 *Punjab Education Proceedings (PEP)*, June 1886, Proc. 3A.
  - 22 *PEP*, June 1886, Proc. 5A, Appendix IC. On the Education of the People of India.
  - 23 By contrast, Leitner was willing to suggest on the basis of his long residences in Muslim countries that Muslim people were generally ‘too dreamy or

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- apathetic to be bigoted; while the Europeans were bigoted, class, sect and race-oriented.
- 24 See, G.W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab since Annexation and in 1882*, (Government of India: Calcutta, 1882), p.112.
  - 25 Charles Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, London, 1838, pp: 189-90.
  - 26 Some vernacular newspapers to join the anti-university campaign were *The Oudh Akhbar*, *The Koh-i-Nur* *The Akhbar-i-Am*, *The Safir-i-Hind*, *The Patiala Akhbar*, and *The Risala-i-Anjuman-i-Kasur*.
  - 27 J.B. Naik, *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India*, 2, Delhi, 1963, p.42.
  - 28 *Gazetteer of Lahore District, 1893-94*, (reprint) 2006, p. 233.
  - 29 Ghulam Hussain, *Tarikh University Oriental College*, (Urdu), Lahore, 1962, p.125.
  - 30 Punjab Progress: A Paper by C.L. Tupper, Chief Sectary to the Punjab Government, 29 April 1891, in Tupper Papers, MSS-EUR-Photo-EUR-491.
  - 31 *Report of the Punjab University Enquiry Committee, 1932-33*, Lahore, 1933. p. 44.
  - 32 *Indian Education Proceedings (IEP)*, Oct. 1881, Proc. 8A, W. M. Young to the Officiating Secretary to Government of India, 13 Oct. 1881.
  - 33 *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers of Punjab*, January 1882, pp. 3, 17.

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- 34 Leitner to the Viceroy, January 1886, in M. Ikram Cahghatai ed., *Writings of Dr Leitner*, Lahore, 2002, pp.91-92.
  - 35 Muhammad Latif, Lahore: *Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities with an Account of Its Modern Institutions, Inhabitants, Their Traditional Customs*, Lahore, 1892, pp.275-76.
  - 36 PCSL, E31, 1882, *Report of the Oriental College Lahore for 1882-83*, Lahore, 1883, pp.11-13.
  - 37 *The Tribune*, 5 April 1884.
  - 38 The Dabdaba-i-Qaisari, Bareilly, 22 May 1886, cited in SVNP, May 1886, p. 337.
  - 39 PEP, September 1884, proc.7A.
  - 40 PEP, April 1885, Proc. 14A, Lepel Griffin to the Officiating Secretary to Punjab Government, 23 March 1885.
  - 41 SVNP, November 1885, pp.779, 827.
  - 42 See, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1995 (reprint).
  - 43 On the testimony of one *kafir*, Leitner suggested to the Viceroy that kafirs hate Muslims, and this fact should be utilized by the Christian missionaries to convert them.