
Pre-Colonial Situation of Women Education in Punjab

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This article deals with the pre-colonial situation of education in Punjab before its annexation in 1849. The centuries old indigenous educational system was functional and prevalent among the natives of the province. This system was heavily dependent on the religious and traditional methods of teaching and learning. This system lacked coherence and uniformity among the three dominant religious communities namely Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Although they differ in their approaches to impart education to women but unanimously restrict them to homes by denying the right of accessing education above the basic level. The role of females in indigenous system of education in Punjab is analyzed to underpin the salient features of the system holistically and critically. This research article focuses on adding to the limited nature of literature available concerning the women and the pre-colonial educational situation in Punjab, Indian subcontinent.

Introduction

Education is regarded as the most powerful instrument for changing the women's subordinate role in the society. It not only develops the personality of the individual but also improves their socio-economic status by qualifying them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions. In 1849, indigenous education system was implemented for the education of the natives till the time of annexation of Punjab with the East India Company. The new colonial rulers perceived it inefficient particularly for the education of women this region. Hence, they took steps to develop new education system to replace the prevailed education system in their newly controlled province of Punjab. They decided to use education as an effective tool for social change of women's plight. Therefore, the British government encouraged female education as a remedy to improve the deprived conditions of women in Punjab.

Historical approaches towards the study of women education in pre-colonial Punjab

The present topic has been discussed as a most important research issue in colonial studies by the educationists and historians using various theoretical approaches and methodologies. The purpose of such studies is to emphasize and

explore the role of women in modern India. The scholars identified three approaches to investigate this topic including; “the nationalist approach which traces the history of the freedom movement from 1885 to the partition of India in 1947.” We cannot understand the role of women in modern Pakistan and India without understanding the system of women education in pre and post-colonial Punjab which is still the base of our educational system inherited by the Britishers.

The Nationalist School developed the idea that nationalism was a unified and collective opposition of the Indian nation against the common enemy represented by British colonial rule (Thapar-Bjorkert, 2006). Nationalist discourse, according to Partha Chatterjee, resolved the ‘women question’ by the end of the nineteenth century (Chatterjee, Sanjari, & Vaid, 1989). The indigenous elite leaders led the people especially women from subjugation to freedom and like Mahatma Gandhi who brought the women into public life and motivated them to solve their own problems.

The second approach is of the historian of the ‘Cambridge School’. This school views the development in India and the province primarily in terms of the British and colonial elites. This school regards the colonial rule as a boon to India. Colonial historian narrates the civilizing mission of the British as rescuing Indian women from their own culture and society. This school reduces the over-emphasis on and glorification of elite leaders instead projected them as ‘middle man’ (Thapar-Bjorkert, 2006, p. 41). These middle men took the help of Britishers in cleaning their society from all sort of social evils and tried to emancipate their ladies.

The development of new corpse of historical scholarship in the late 1970s and 1980s that is denoted by ‘Subaltern Studies’. The subalterns refused the past historical research and focused on non-elite and marginal groups and highlighted their ‘autonomous’ resistance at different phases during the struggle of independence against the British rule (Thapar-Bjorkert, 2006, p. 42). The subaltern approach discusses the ‘history of below’ and re-reads history from their perspective. They take into account all magazines, journals, newspapers, books and other edited or written by them. The history by the women is discussed thoroughly,

Research Objectives

1. To highlight the salient features of the Education-System of Punjab from the Vedic Era till the annexation of Punjab owing to its importance in the history of India.
2. To explore the system of women education among the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs, which is mostly ignored by the educational historians.
3. Define the significance of Indigenous system of education among the different religious communities of Punjab.
4. Explore the socio-economic and religious impediments for the growth of female education in Punjab.

Research Methodology

Historical method has been used for analysis in this study. The present research analyzes the published sources in order to draw any conclusion from the identified literature. This study uses descriptive and analytical approach to analyze primary and secondary sources. The study was analyzed the available primary and secondary sources comprising Books, Journals, Reports, Govt. documents and published material about education of pre-colonial Punjab.

Women educational situation in Pre-colonial Punjab

On 29 March 1849, the East India Company proclaimed the Punjab annexation and all the terms and conditions were settled with young Maharaja Duleep Singh ([Bell, 1983](#)). Before its annexation, the Punjab was under the control of the Sikh rulers. The Punjab was an important province of the India which was stretched from the North-West with the border of Afghanistan. Second quarter of the 19th century was very eventful in the history of the Punjab because furious battles were fought between the Sikh and the British forces for the occupation of this fertile land. Ranjit Singh gave first importance to protect his kingdom from the EIC so he spent major sources to increase his military forces and warfare sources which resulted in ignoring the important affairs of the state like the public welfare and education. This was one of the major reasons why the development of education was put to halt in the Punjab and unsettling the process of education of the contemporary generations in all major spheres and domains linked directly or indirectly to education.

Female population of the province completely dependent on their male members of the family due to the low status in the society. They were dependent on their fathers before marriage, after marriage was dependent on their husband's, sons in old age. Due to their subordinate role in the society, women were deprived from even their basic rights, including education. Main duty of the parents was to marry her daughter and she was considered as *Paryadhan*, means the property of others. Due to this reason it was considered the wastage of money to educate the girls ([Malhotra, 2000](#)). There were social prejudices against the women education because the Punjab was a male dominated society so the people were hesitant to educate their daughter and it was considered a shameful act ([Naik & Nurullah, 1951a](#)). Some women were able to read and write, it was difficult for his male family members to admit this reality ([Government of India, 1883](#)). Due to their inferior social status in the province of the Punjab, the Punjabi women were entirely dependent on their male counterparts, which resulted their almost complete deprivation of their about formal education. There is very little evidence of girls' education in the official reports. However the Muslims families and wealthy Hindu families had a system to educate their daughters at home ([Khanolkar, 1964](#)).

Education in the province of Punjab was not in a developed form at the time of annexation. After the death of Mughal Emperor Aurangzaib the Punjab remained unstable for a very long time so the transfer of power from Mughal to

Afghan Duranis and later given to Sikh did not bring any considerable change in the cultural, social and educational development of the province. It was neither Muslim nor Hindu education systems/institutions that were surviving on their own in the Punjab. The Sikh education system was not so developed yet and the vernacular education during that era was there for the expression of ideas (Mehta, 1929). Prior to the establishment of the British rule in Punjab, the system of indigenous education was vogue. Traditionally, education was based on sacred religious literature. Members of religious class transfer their knowledge and education to boys and girls (Forbes, 1999).

The province of Punjab at the time of Annexation had an ancient, deep rooted and wide spread system of education, known as indigenous education system. The term indigenous is used in colonial educational reports to denote the secular and religious system of education the sub-continent, which has its continuity from centuries. However the “indigenous institution of education is defined as an institution established or conducted by natives of India on native methods” (Commission of Inquiry on Education in India & Hunter, 1883). This system of indigenous education was mostly in the hands of the religious authorities who were independent to draw their educational involvements according to their religious traditions and education to achieve their objectives. This was a system with huge network to give basic education to students in the elementary schools and of higher learning. Almost with every mosque, Dharmshala and temple had a school to attach it (Leitner, 2002b). Being an institution, it was expected that the village community would maintain its expenses. The tutor and the students were the duty of the village community to look after them. Free hold grants were given for the patronage of the learned scholars and village schools (Mehta, 1929). Majority of the people were taught to read the Holy Books of their religion by rote. Moral values, religious faith, and ceremonial observances were also the part of the indigenous education in the Punjab (Government of India, 1883).

The indigenous system of education had its own short comings due to its limited scope and religious learning only. Some important subjects like science, history and mechanics were ignored and were not the part of the students learning scheme (Bhatia, 2001). There was no specially designed curriculum or published books were in vogue and these kind of schools had no systematic study (Leitner, 2002a). Moreover the education of women and scheduled caste did not encourage the prevalent educational system (Grova, 1994). The indigenous educational system and the method of teaching were considered imperfect by the European critics. Lack of reasoning power, neglecting the scholars and limited teaching aims were the major areas of concern by the European critics (Government of India, 1883). The aforementioned circumstances urged the British Government to categorically declare its plan and intention to take the control of mass education after the annexation of the Punjab (Government of India, 1883).

Education of the women was entirely based on religious or semi religious character. The people of the Punjab were not against the education of women folk but they considered better place for women education was their home. Women

were expected to learn recite the Quran, study the *BhagwadGita*, *Ramayana* or read the *Guru Granth Sahib* and *JanamSakhis* at their home. The teachers were mostly used to be the *Bhai*, *Mulla* or the family priest through women teachers. Muslims, Hindu and Sikh were also found (Mehta, 1929). Most of the female teachers were the wives of the *Bhai*, *Mullah* or any other clergyman, whose duty was to give religious education to the local girls. Sikh girls were considered necessary to be fluent in Gurumukhi (Ahuja, 1959). Apart from the household tasks the girls were taught embroidery work, spinning, and *phulkaris*. All women were engaged in these domestic duties along with other house hold work (Ahuja, 1959). In some of the local schools boys and girls were educated together at early stages of their life.

When the British Government annexed the Punjab its education system consisted of two types of educational institutions-elementary schools and secondary or higher schools. The women education was a neglected area at that time, except for the women of privileged classes. They were educated in their homes by the educated ladies or male learned tutors of mature ages. The women used to get education in religious scriptures, basic arithmetic and classical literature (Bhagat, 1989). However, it should be kept in mind that the number of these educated women were meager and was not more than a few hundreds (Government of India, 1883). G.W. Leitner mentions that there were six public schools for girls in Delhi before the annexation of the Punjab and these schools were kept by Punjabi women themselves (Leitner, 2002b). The female teachers and the girl students of these schools belonged to all three major communities-Muslims, Hindu and Sikh (Government of India, 1853). Girls from propertied families received the basic education in accounts keeping (Forbes, 1999).

But the girls, those belonged to the ordinary classes mostly received only religious education. They were allowed to get basic education with boys in elementary schools, where these learners learnt the skills of reading religious scriptures of their religion or sect. at elementary level the female education was entirely religious and the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh girls were required to learn read and properly recite their religious books (Mehta, 1929). A considerable number of Punjabi women was denied the access to basic education and had no access to the secondary or secular education. In indigenous system of education in Punjab. There were no specific arrangement for the ordinary women education and the historical evidence affirms it. The major hindrance in establishing the schools for the girls was the Punjabi conservatism. Due to this reason the female education in the Punjab remained limited to religious scriptures (Ikram-ul-Haq, 1981).

At the primary levels boys and girls were mostly educated together in the Punjab. Memorization of the multiplication table was, neither popular with the girls, nor it was felt necessary for them. The girls took equal interest at secondary level also and sometime showed much better performance than the boys in the recitations art. Charanjit Kaur, has mentioned the name of many Sikh women those received their education among the Sikh community in the Sikh *Dharmshalas*.

These historical instances show that female education was prevalent among the wealthy Sikh families([Kaur, 1992](#)).

The method of teaching was mostly oral and there was no printed material was available and children learnt by cramming or note. Wooden boards were used for writing the letters, alphabet and figures, or sometimes. The students used dust with their fingers for writing. Later stages palm leaves, were used to teach the students with bamboo things or reeds. In *Dharmshalas and Makhtabs* students were taught orally([Kaur, 1992](#)). Almost the same method of teaching was used in Hindus and it was based on writing, memorization of the lesson taught and discussion([Kaur, 1992](#)). Education was almost free and no fee or a very small fee was paid to the teacher, or lady teacher. In villages, the *Mulla* often had some piece of land as a grant of the expenditures and support of the mosque, and he was given presents at village ceremonies or marriages. But in towns, he was paid monthly fee from his students. In *Dharmshala* the teacher was mostly not paid and he was dependent on the produce of the endowment and the offerings of the pupils' parents or guardian. The fee was also paid in the shape of *Pie* (*Pie* is a former monetary unit equal to one quarter of an *anna* or a unit worth 1/64 of *rupee*) and a little flour and *dal* but it was gradually replaced by a monthly fee of about for *Annas*. It was mostly common boy's schools([Gazetteer of the Jullundhurlur District, Part A, 1904](#)).

Female Education among the Muslims

By the 10th century A.D India became an important and famous country where Muslims thronged from all parts of the Islamic world. So the education in India was also based on the same pattern as imparted in other Islamic countries i.e. religious education. In India the women made fair advance in the field of intellect but they could not rise to standard which was set by their religion. Though there was the tradition of female education in Muslims community but it was mostly limited to elementary level schools, which were known as *Makhtabs or Quran* schools. Boys and girls were mostly educated together and elementary education was considered enough for the girls([Jaffer, 1972](#)). The little girls learnt the *Quran* by heart and sometimes the books of religious observances were also the part of their learning([Government of India, 1883](#)). If the wives of Muslims were educated then it was their duty to instruct the reading and writing to students up to a certain age([Leitner, 2002b](#)). Most widows of the Muslims community considered it their sacred duty to teach young boys and girls, how to read the *Holy Quran*. Moreover, there were some specific schools for the education of the Muslims girls, female teachers were appointed to run the female schools in Amritsar, Lahore, Karnal and Panipat districts([Leitner, 2002b](#)). The data of the Government shows that in 1856-57 there were about 17 girl's schools with 306 pupils and all these students were reported to be Muslims([Commission of Inquiry on Education in India & Hunter, 1883](#)).

The higher education of the Muslim women was not unknown to Muslims of the Punjab but it was limited only to the upper class and elite family women of

the society. The wives of the respectable Muslim were mostly educated and polished ladies. Some of the Muslim women were good poetesses who composed fine verses in Persian and Urdu (Leitner, 2002b). Educated women were given respect in the society and they were able to use their influence inside and outside of their home. But all these encouraging indications reflect the conditions of the upper strata and the female of the lower class were unable or deprived of higher education. We have no sound evidence to suggest the presence of higher education or even the secondary education among the ordinary class Muslims women. Women were mostly restricted to basic learning or religious education and secular education was considered to be out of bounds for the females in the Punjab (Mehta, 1929). In 1845, there were many girls school was established in private houses but the teachers were Muslims, *Bhais* and *Pundits* for the female education (Leitner, 2002b).

Female Education among the Hindus

Although the Muslims and the Hindus had separate schools for learning of their children but several features were common to both communities, educational institutions. For example, both kind of educational institutions received financial assistance from the rulers, chief of the village or religious citizens. These institutions had learned teachers and some reputable authors. But the majority of the teachers were very low paid and education was almost free or very nominal fee was charged. Institutions of both these communities were Medieval in character and classical languages (Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit) were used as a medium of instruction on traditional methods (Naik & Nurullah, 1951b). During the Muslim rule, Persian was the official language and it continued its status even in Sikh period. It was, indeed, the lingua franca of the elite class and the language of the literature (Mehta, 1929).

According to the traditions Hindu education began when the *Kshatria* King made the decision to confine himself to the war and rule the Kingdom and the Brahmin were given the duty of relinquish legislation. This devolution of the power made the Brahmins conscious to their social status in the society. To maintain their prominent position in the society and among the other Hindu Caste they made strict moral codes and for this purpose the life was divided in to four stages (Leitner, 2002b). The first stage was *Brahmacharia* or learner, which was extended many years of youth and early manhood and the Brahmins it was a source of profound learning. The second stage of a Brahmins life was teaching which main aim was to establish a relationship with other castes and secured protection and ascendancy for them. So the teaching was not only their obligation but was also a source to maintain their academic authority. The Hindu schools were called *Pathshala* and their medium of instruction was mainly Sanskrit. The teaching of Dharma-*Shastras* was in the hands of the Brahmin and other two castes and mix multitude was limited to elementary knowledge only (Leitner, 2002b). In some secular Hindu schools, astronomy, philosophy, astrology and even medicine

was taught. Later the colonial government of the Punjab also created “Anatomy Chair” on four stations on the medical board recommendations ([Punjab Administrative Record, 1885](#)).

The Hindu system of indigenous education was interviewed in the clutches of caste system and the education of Hindu women was not encouraged properly. During the ancient times not only the higher education but even the elementary education was banned for *Shudras* and women ([Grova, 1994](#)). Till the first half of the 19th century we have very little evidence to claim the separate schools for the Hindu girls. However among the women of the upper class religious education was found to be present but there were no specific schools in Hindu society for this type of religious learning. The education or learning of religious scriptures was arranged in the homes of the nobles or priests. Traditionally it was considered the duty of the Hindu higher class parents to educate their male and female children about their religious scriptures and duties ([Leitner, 2002b](#)). Generally, the Hindu women were barred from learning, reading and writing but on the other hand, the trading community set up separate schools for their sons to get the knowledge and learn the skills of arithmetic, business-correspondence and *Behi-Khata* (Account) ([Punjab Administrative Record, 1885](#)).

Soit indicates that elementary education was commonly available to the Hindu women of the 19th century Punjab. Due to its strict caste system the Hindu community restricted their only for the elite or upper class and the female multitude and lower class were deprived of even their rudimentary education.

Female Education among the Sikhs

The Sikhs originally belonged to the Hindu stock and were considered to be the Protestants of Hindu, society politics and religion ([Mirza, Hsnat, & Mahmood, 1985](#)). The world Sikh means disciple or the learner ([Mann, 2005; Mirza et al., 1985](#)). The main aim of this new religion was to overthrow the monopoly of learning and of the social or religious ascendancy of one class and to make education the property of the masses of his community. In Sikhism, education means, continuous development and unification of human personality. The knowledge and education is considered as the third eye through which an undivided can see in and outside. The main aim of education was to widening the horizon of wisdom and development of spiritual and academic tendencies. Its main aim is to make a person wise, spiritually and academically ([Leitner, 2002b](#)).

Religious education of Sikh girls in *Gurdwaras* was given by the *Bhais*. After their daily Holy Prayers and during their spare time they use the buildings to cultivate the religious ideas beliefs, sentiment, and proper attitude in the minds of their young girls ([Ahuja, 1989](#)). The Sikhs of the Punjab are also reported to have separate schools for the education of their females and these indigenous institutions were spread over between the district of the Jhelum and the Attock ([Ahuja, 1989](#)). The education of Sikh females in these schools was confined only to the religious education, like that of the Muhammadans. In the elementary

schools the Sikh girls were given the education of *Adi-Granth* by the *Bhais* and without it no girl could claim the title and privilege of a learner unless she was able to read the *Granth* (Leitner, 2002b). The wives of the Sikh priests were generally visited the families of their community and teach them in their homes also. Reading of elementary level was mostly based on religious books sewing, embroidery, cooking and household (Ahuja, 1989).

Unlike the Muslims, the higher education was out of the reach of lower ring of society's women and fewer higher educated women of the Sikh noble families were an expectation. The society better classes treated their women with honor and with a religious care. They convey secular education to their women within the limits of social fabric of the society and their class. Apart from the women of the upper class which were very small minority, the majority of the Sikh women deprived of basic and formal education. Moreover, 18th century was a tough period for the Sikh community and even during the Sikh rule Ranjit Singh was not interested in the development of the education (Thorburn, 1975). Their stress on the militant activities had negative impact on their youth's education because they had not enough time for the education of Sikh youth (Bhagat, 1989). So when the EIC annexed the Punjab in March 1849, the Sikhswere in a critical situation and the educational condition of their young generation, not only females but also males were alarmingly worst.

Significance of Indigenous Education System

The significance of indigenous educational institutions cannot be underestimated for catering the educational need of the local people of the Punjab. Although these institutions had no sound position and due to it gradually it became difficulty to run them in difficult and unfavorable condition. As mentioned above most of the schools were run in mosques, temples, *Dharmshalas* private house in the cities, common house of village, house of patron of the school or teacher's own residence. There was no permanent status of the ordinary schools, and their continuity was dependent on the interest or the local demand of the area. Similarly was the condition of the centers for higher education such as *Tols* (*Tols* were Hindu educational institution which was concerned with preparing boys to fulfill the duties of their particular vocation in life) and *Madrashas*. These centers of learning did not have any permanent condition and their continuity was based on various factors and for this purpose there were no such arrangements. It was the duty of the local people to manage these institutions. Teachers were paid very nominal salary, and sometimes it was paid in cash or kind which was not timely and regular. In some schools the teachers were paid in the form of gifts by their students. Generally it was common by the parents of the students used to contribute to the salary of the teacher in cash or kind. Majority of these institutions received assistance or aid from patron like religious personage, rich people, *Zamindars* or the rulers (Nayak, 2012).

For the financial or moral assistance to the indigenous schools, the government took not sufficient steps. Major sources for running these schools were, public donations, land revenue grant bestowed by the rulers, rich people of the locality, gifts given by the students, payment in the form cloths, food and other articles etc(Nayak, 2012). the average income of the teacher hardly exceeded Rs. 2 a month in cash, but this means of subsistence was considerably supplemented by the amount paid of the occasion of religious ceremonies(Harbans, 1988).

Though the system of education in pre-colonial Punjab, was predominantly religious but the practical needs of the students were not ignored. Respect for education and learning has always been one of the salient features of the East and for it the province of Punjab was no exceptions. Even after a period of more than hundred years of political unsteadiness, the foreign invasions and civil wars, Punjab preserved and redefined its educational legacy to meet the emerging challenges. Almost every school was attached with any mosque, *Dharmshalas* and temple where the youth was given the religion or elementary education. "The chief merit of the indigenous system of elementary school was their adaptability to local environment and vitality and popularity they had earned by centuries of existence under a variety of economic condition or political Vicissitudes"(Walia, 2005). There was no school buildings, no state aid and even no printed text-books were available. Despite these problems and low wages of the teacher this system served well for centuries to giving education to the pupils. But this vast system or network of elementary educational institution never received due attention from the rulers or the government. This system of indigenous education was unable to face the challenges of the modern education system when the Punjab was annexed in March 1849 by the British(Walia, 2005).

Unfortunate this system of education in Punjab had potential to progress but it was neglected by the rulers or education legislators. They did not handle it properly or pretended to be, careless in this regard. Even in spite of the best intention, a generous government and availability of the efficient Officers, the system of education in the Punjab was crippled nearly to destruction. The likelihood of its complete restoration and development were either overlooked or perverted(Leitner, 2002b).

Socio-Economic and Religious impediments

There were many socio-economic and religious rituals and evils which worked as an impediment for the growth of female education in Punjab. The customs like *Purdah*, Sati, early marriage and enforced widowhood were very common and it restricted women's easy and free access to education even in elementary level education in these schools. The custom of female infanticide was very common the province and this custom seriously affected the female sex ration in the province. Due to this social evil girls were unable to get opportunity to live and get education. The girls were considered inferior to the boys and "The birth of a boy in an occasion for a great rejoicing, a girl causes less enthusiasm"(Punjab

[Government, 1916](#)). The practice of female infanticide was widely prevalent in the Rajputana, the United Provinces and Punjab. These evil was quite common especially Khattris, Jats, Rajputs and among all classes of the Sikhs([Harikishan, 1912a](#)). Even the marriage expenditures particularly dowry were also the reason for selectively killing infant daughters([Lambert-Hurley, Powell, & International Federation for Research in Women's History Bangladesh Chapter, 2006](#)). The Bedis were commonly known as *Kurismar*(Daughter-Killer) and they were notorious for committing female infanticide([Punjab Government, 1905](#)). Almost in every district-Gujranwala, Ferozepur, Nabha, Jehlum, Multan this evil custom was adopted and practiced by every caste.

Early marriage was another social issue and the girls who escaped from infanticide were mostly married at a very young age. Early age marriage was the choice left for the parents due to the lack or nonexistence of female education. "The custom of early or infant marriage arose due to caste restriction and elaborates customs regarding marriage which made the parents anxious to marry their daughters at the earliest opportunity"([Harikishan, 1912b](#)). Girls were mostly married at every age, between seven and twelve years. In Hindus this custom was common due to their religious believes because the *Shastras* give great stress to marry a girl before or as an early as possible after attaining puberty. It was considered a disgrace in early age([Punjab Government, 1905](#)).

Purdah or veil was very common in the region. This tradition came to India after the arrival of the Muslims. The women of noble families used *Purdah* at early stages but gradually this custom became prevalent in this region among the females of different religion and caste. It was considered as a sign of mannerism and respectability by all communities of Northern India and province of Punjab was no exception([Harikishan, 1912c](#)). Due to this tradition the women were segregated not only from their family members but also from the other members of the contemporary society. This custom of *purdah* was a great hurdle not only in the progress of the women but also for the development and growth of female education in the Punjab.

There were also many problems which were creating hindrances for females to receive education in Punjab. Even if the young girls were sent to the nearby or indigenous schools, they had to suffer due to their poverty, lack of appropriate school buildings, the irregular presence of students; teachers were not properly trained and apathetic attitude of the government. Due to the caste and creed discrimination in India society the children belonging to the lower castes were not given an equal educational opportunity to study with the children of upper classes. The teacher in these schools was not properly trained so often they were unable to transfer their knowledge, properly to their students. Despite of these deficiencies no steps were adopted to enhance the professional skills and academic competence of the teachers. Curriculum was narrow in outlook and limited in scope. As a result, there was no unanimity in the syllabus so different teacher followed different program of action and course contents. System of formal examination and awarding degree or certificates were not usually adopted. Lower

irregular payment of the pay to teachers for their teaching, lack of control and supervision, and non-existence of any department to regulate the education etc. was other limitations of the Punjab indigenous education (Nayak, 2012). Sometimes the absence of female teachers was the major reason for parents not to admit or send their daughters for getting education even in the local schools. However despite of all these shortcomings the value of indigenous system of education cannot be underestimated which could become the foundation of national system of education as Adam remarks (Nurullah & Naik, 1943).

“Existing native institutions from the highest to lowest, of all kinds and classes were the fittest means to be employed for raising and improving the character of the people, that to employ those institutions for such a purpose would be the simplest the safest, the most popular, the most economical and the most effectual plan for giving that stimulus to the native mind which it needs on subject of education, and for eliciting the exertion of the natives themselves for their improvement, without which all other means must be unavailing”.

Results and Conclusion

This article illustrates and analysis the historical background and significance of the pre-colonial system of education in Punjab. Prior to the Annexation of Punjab, the medium of education was designed in vernacular languages. Educational institutions of different communities in the province were run by their own system and community. Social customs and local traditions caused hindrances in the achievement and development of female education in the province. Most the female students were not allowed to impart education due to the restrictions of *purdah* and to go out from their house was not appreciated by the society. Religious or semi-religious education was given to the girls and it was considered enough for them because their main duty to look after their children and home. Only few families in the province were aware of the benefits education, that it would help their females to handle the problems of life and household in well manners. They were aware of the fact that on educated women children properly and is able to take care of her family not only physically and mentally. But unfortunately this thinking was not prevalent in whole of the society and due to this negative attitude females suffered many religious and social hurdles in getting education.

In a nutshell, the indigenous system of education was dominating in the Punjab at the annexation time in 1849. This system had its limitation and there were very little arrangements for the female's education in it. In such a backward circumstances the British administration took necessary actions to replace it with a parallel modern system of education. The new education system tried its best to encourage the women's education in newly annexed province of the Punjab. The Britishers laid emphasis on the female education due to its importance as they

knew that educated women has key role to bring changes in any society. Therefore the next half of the nineteenth century was remarkable due to the rapid growth of girl's educational institutions with the arrival of the British in the province of Punjab after its annexation, new cultural factors cross the threshold of the Punjabi life. The new factors like spread of new English education, knowledge of western science and Christian. Proselytization started a far-reaching process of interaction between the western and eastern communities. All these new factors gave a set the momentum for the development of female education in Punjab.

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