

ROLE OF SOCIO- RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN PUNJAB COMMUNALISM

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Abstract: Communalism is a very popular term which means a group of people following a particular religion they have, as a result, a common social, Political and economic interests¹ from the Past Centuries communalism spread in India very fast; Specially, when Britishers came to India they adopted the policy of 'divide and rule'. Then the problem of communalism raised and they divided the Sikh, Muslims, Hindu and Christians². So many other reasons were also behind the communalism which divided the Indians. Here in this paper an attempt has been made to show the interest of all social and religious organization which divided the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of Punjab. This paper is divided into four sections. First one is related to the causes of communalism. Second one describes Arya samaj Organization Third one highlights the Sikh organization Fourth Section is about Muslim Organization.

Keywords: Communalism, Arya Samaj, Socio- Religious, Punjab Communalism

I

There were Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs who lived in Punjab from long years. Sikh religion came in Punjab with the advent of Guru Nanak Dev Ji other hand Muslims also came in Punjab. Guru Nanak was the first man who said that why we were divided into castes, creeds etc. There was only one God. He dismissed the idea of communalism. But after some years when Britishers annexation the Punjab they adopted the policy of Divide and rule and brought many reforms. Many schools, Colleges were opened and all the communities of the Punjab thought that we were different from each other on bases of customs, tradition, religion etc.³ Why we were merged into other religion. In this time many socio- religious movements came in the Punjab. They Spread and showing that they were the best. There were many causes of communalism in Punjab. Firstly, The professional classes the professional classes and the bourgeoisie emerged later among the Muslims than among the Hindus. There was rivalry for Jobs, trade and industry between the two communities.⁴ Because of the economic backwardness of India and rampant unemployment, There was ample scope for the colonial government to use concessions, favours and reservations to fuel communal and separatist tendencies. Muslims were generally looked upon with suspicion initially, especially after the Wahabi and 1857 revolts. Introduction of English education had undermined Arabic and Persian learning which added further to the economic backwardness and exclusion of the Muslims from service. After the 1870s the Government reversed its policy of repression of Muslims and instead, decided to rally them behind it through concessions, favours and reservations, and used them against nationalist forces. The government used persons like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to counter the growing influence of the congress later he started supporting the colonial government, exhorting the Muslim masses to stay away from the congress. He also started talking of separate interests of Hindus and Muslims. The communal Interpretation of Indian history portrayed the ancient phase as the Hindu phase and the medieval phase as the Muslim phase. The conflicts of ruling classes during the medieval phase were distorted and exaggerated as Hindu- Muslim conflicts. Reform movements such as Wahabi Movement among Muslims and *Shuddhi* among Hindus with their militant overtones made the role of religion more vulnerable to communalism. Dadabhai Naoroji, Presiding over the second Congress sessions (1886), declared the intentions of the Congress not to raise socio- religious questions in its forums. In 1889 the congress decided not to take up any issue opposed by the Muslims. Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji Festivals and anti- cow slaughter campaigns created much suspicion. Aurobindo's vision of an Aryansied world, *Swadeshi* Movement with elements like dips in the Ganga and revolutionary terrorism with oath- taking before goddesses were hardly likely to enthruse Muslims into these campaigns in big way. The communal element in the Lucknow Pact (1916) and the *Khilafat* agitation (1920-22) was too visible to be of insignificant consequences. Naturally, The minority communalism met with a reaction from the majority community which set up militant organizations like the Hindu *Mahasabha* (established in 1915) and *Rashtriya Swayamesvak Sangh* (RSS established in 1925) Syed Ahmed Khan and Raja Shiv Prasad of Bhinga were propped up as an anti- congress front by the Government. Syed Ahmed Khan appealed to the educated Muslims to stay away from the congress, although some Muslims did join the congress. Agha Khan led a Muslim delegation called the Shimla delegation to the viceroy, Lord Minto, to demand separate electorates for Muslims so that the

Muslims with their “ political importance and their contribution to the British Empire”. During this period, the Muslim League was dominated by younger Muslim nationalists such as Mohanmad Ali. Maulana Azad and Jinnah. The Congress accepted the Muslim League demand of Separate electorates and the congress and the League presented joint demands to the Government. The Arya Samajists started *Shuddhi* (purification) and *Sangathan* (organization) movements. The *Shuddhi* movement was aimed at reconverting to Hinduism the converts to Islam. Some Nationalists also turned communal. The *Swarajists* were divided along communal lines and the Responsivists among them joined the Hindu Mahasabha.

The Nehru Report on Constitutional reforms as suggested by the Congress was opposed by Muslim hardliners and the Sikh League. Jinnah proposed fourteen points demanding separate electorates and reservation for Muslims. It gave recognition to the division of Society into separate communities with separate interests. Some Muslim groups, such as *Jamaat-i- ulema-i-Hind*, State of Kashmir and *Khudai Khidmatgars* participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement while the congress stayed away from two of the three round table conferences held in London. After the Muslim League performed badly in the 1937 provincial elections, it decided to resort to extreme communalism to project the Muslims, not as a minority but as a separate nation. Vicious propaganda was launched against the Congress by Z.A. Suleri, F.M. Durrani, *Fazl-ul-Haq*, etc. . The extreme communalism of Muslims found its echo in militant communal nationalism of Hindus represented by organization such as the Hindu *Mahasabha* and RSS and thoughts of leaders like Golwalkar. There were several reasons for the advent of extreme communalism. Jinnah Blocked all avenues for conciliation by forwarding the impossible demand that the congress should declare itself a Hindu organization and recognize the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Indian Muslims. The ‘Pakistan Resolution’ was passed at the Lahore session of the Muslim League calling for “grouping of all geographically contiguous Muslim Majority areas into independent States. The British Indian Government gave a virtual veto to the League on Political Settlement. The League made full use of this privilege and stuck to its demand of a separate Pakistan throughout the negotiations under the August Offer, Cripps proposals, Shimla conference and Cabinet Mission Plan. Finally, it got what it had aspired for – an independent Pakistan.

II

In 1877 Arya Samaj was established in Punjab by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. He preached the doctrine of Vedas and tried to uplift the Hindu religion because at that time the Hindus were treated very badly in Punjab. At that time Christian missionaries propagated their religion and condemn the Hindu religion. British opened new schools, colleges and administrative units where all the people were treated equally. After this Hindus got chance to come forward. Dayanand also gave them new hope and Path.⁵ He also laid the emphasis of education like D.A.V schools and colleges were opened. Arya Samaj's were divided into two parts on the pattern of education. One wants to adopt modern education other wants to adopt old pattern. Their main aim was to taken back those Hindus who left their religion for this they started *Shuddhi* Movement. To meet the Challenges Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj restore to a defensive weapon known as the *Shuddhi*, in the Arya Samaj.⁶

The ‘*Shuddhi*’ and ‘*Sangathan*’ movements of the 1920's made the Punjab the home of Hindu consolidation.⁷ With the Montagu reforms Hindus thought that they lost their political and civil rights. The publication of the census of India of 1921 and 1923 made the Hindus further aware of the sad plight of their community in the Punjab. So they take the step to spread the Hinduism and they started *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movement. But during the period under study these relations are marked by efforts of religious communities to convert people to their respective religious fold and very often in process they came into violent conflicts⁸.

The word *Shuddhi* means purification or cleansing of one's body from pollution caused by every day acts through bathing and recitation of the sacred mantras and in extreme cases through *Praischit*⁹. Main purpose of this was to taken back those Hindus who left their religion and to make the Hindu religion strong. For this the duty was given to Mahatma Hans Raj in October 16, 1921 and funds were also collected. By his efforts three thousand Hindus came back to their religion again in Malabar. After this communalism was arosed between Hindus and Muslims. The *Shuddhi* in the Punjab did attain relative success, especially in the southern districts. It also affected the *Chamar* community in Saikot.¹⁰ This separates the Hindus and Muslims more. It created the *Shuddhi* – Phobia and *Shuddhi* consciousness in the minds of muslims and the hindus which could never be erased. When Begun Asagni and her two sons adopted Hindu religion much tension was raised between Hindus and muslims. The Anjuman of Delhi files case against Shaddhanand. In 1926 someone murdered Shaddhanad. Communal tension was arosed in Punjab.

Hindus established *Sangathan* movement whose purpose was to develop an organizations structure for its own Bhai Paramanand believed that politics formed a part of the *Sangathan* movement while Lajpat Rai wanted Hindu *Sangathan* to stay clear of Politics.¹¹ Hindu Maha Sabha was a counterpart of the Muslim league in 1907.

Hindu Sabha was gaining progress in Punjab and founded Mahavirdal who trained the Hindu Youths in the field of wrestling and in the field of wrestling and in other physical activities. They founded 75 sabhas and twenty five Mahabir dals. The ninth session of the Hindu Mahasabha witnessed the establishment of sewak association this was another step towards Hindu consolidation.¹² They encourage the hindus to take part in politics. But they were defeated in the election of 1926. Motilal Nehru accepted the defeat Muslims were relieved after this. The *Shuddhi* and the *Sangathan* movements were the two legs of Hindu Consolidation movements in the 1920's to be joined by the third limb the Hindu Sabha. Their aim was always the same – to preserve the 'dying race' as well as increase its numerical strength.¹³

Thus the three major planks of Arya ideology would move in the direction of aggressive 'Hindu' nationalism. In all this programme there was little left for Punjabi sentiments, regional language or regional identity. It is no doubt that throughout the British rule, religious disturbances broke out between the Hindu and muslim communities resulting in Communal riots in Several places.¹⁴

III

The identity crisis among the Sikhs after the British take over has been reflected by popular Sikh slogans like "Ham Hindu Nahin" or in other words "We are not Hindus" and the Singh Sabha movement which matured into the radical Gurdwara movement of the twenties of this century.¹⁵ The movement was started with three Principal objectives firstly to purify the Sikh religious institutions from Hindu influence by taking control of Gurdwaras from udasis and the Nirmals who were 'blind Hindus'. Second to protect Gurdwaras from Government control specially protégés from the Mahants. Third consolidate the strength of the Sikh community so that they claim from the Government the privileges enjoyed by the Muslims as a distinct in other provinces.

On other hand Hindus claimed that the Sikhs Guru's belong to the Hindu community. So the Sikhs were also the part of their religion Pandit Din Dayal and Dr. Moonji also said this. In *Kumbh Mela* at Prayag in 1921 this was discussed that Sikhs belongs to Hindu religion. Sikh Guru's specially Guru Teg Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh ji protect cow, Brahmin, Sanatan Dharam and sacrifice their lives for them. The result of all these turned into negative. Sikhs were not ready to believe this that they were Hindus. They took active part in Singh Sabha movements and protect Sikhism.

They also started Gurudwara reform movements. But the British however haunted by the memories of 1857 and the recent *Ghadhar and Kuka* conspiracies, looked upon the Gurdwara movement as an uprising against their Raj to restore the Sikh rule.¹⁶ Gurdwara reform movement was resulted for the rise of religious and political consciousness of the Sikhs, Gurdwara's were the holy place of Sikhs but they were not so sacred. So the Sikhs want to reform the Gurdwaras. English Government took the administration of the Gurdwaras under the mahants. They were doing illegal works with their activities. The purity of the Gurdwara's were broken Mahants Captured all the property of Gurdwaras. They were paid servants of British. Singh Sabha movement teaches the Sikhs to respect their Gurdwara's. Sikhs wants Mahants were not now be the part of Gurdwara. In 1911 Sikh league passed a resolution that Gurdwaras were looked after by the Sikh panth. In 1920 at Akal Takath new committee named the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was established. From 1920 to 1925 Progressive steps were taken to protect Gurdwaras. For the protection of Gurdwaras Sikhs did Morchas against Mahanthas. As the result in 1925, 30,000 Akalis had been sent to jails. Forty three had been martyred more than 2,000 had been sentenced under criminal law amendment act and a Lakh of rupees had been collected as fines.¹⁷ The result was a compromise Gurdwara legislation that was passed unanimously in the Legislative council on July 7, 1925.

The Gurdwara movement may sometimes have appeared to be an attempt by the Sikhs to restore Sikh rule in the Punjab, or at times resembled 'Bolshevik' tactics to overthrow colonial rule or even looked like a part of Gandhian non- violent movement to restore *Swaraj* in reality however, it was struggle waged by the Sikhs to stand as a distinct community against the political domination by the muslims and the cultural absorption by the Hindus. The greatest gain to the Sikhs from the Gurdwara movement was the strengthening of the will of the Sikhs to exist as a distinct community, a tendency later manifested in the notion of the Sikh state in the 1930's and the 40's and the final emergence of the autonomous Sikh state within the Indian Union in 1966.¹⁸

IV

The Muslims in particular the ulemas, strongly felt that the *Sangathan* and the *Shuddhi* movement aimed at increasing Hindu numerical strength could eventually spell the doom for the future of Islam in India.¹⁹ They reacted to this threat by establishing counter- organization such as the *Tabligh* and the *Tanzim*.

Tabligh refers to the conversion of a non- muslim (*Kafir*) to Islam. As a matter of fact the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in India were Hindus who had been converted to Islam during the millennium of Muslim rule over India. However, in 1920's the offensive thrust of *Tabligh* was not only neutralized by the militant Hindus. So majority of the muslims felt that it was absolutely necessary to stop the loss of their members and if possible try to augment their strength. In the Punjab the muslims religious organizations arose to meet this challenge.²⁰ The *Jamiat- Ul- Ulema* espoused the cause of *Tabligh* by establishing the All India. *Anjuman Tabligh- Ul- Islam* in Delhi as early as 1923 to Propagate Islam and to combine the various schools of Muslim sects in a joint action. Each Muslim organization, nevertheless did work independently to strengthen the muslim community by adopting measures to check the hindu proselytizing activities. Many Muslims who had been converted were taken back to the fold. A *Jamiat – I- tabligh* was founded by the Qadions, in Ambala to combat *Shuddhi* and to collect funds.²¹ In the Sialkot district where the hindus were busy converting the *Chamars and Batwals*, a newly formed *Jamiat – I- Dwaat- O -T- Tabligh* caused considerable local excitement. The inevitable result was that they came into confrontation with the Hindu *Shuddhi* Propagators.

The *Tabligh* and the *Shuddhi* movements intensified the already worsening Hindu- Muslim relations and the lives of the chief architects of the *Shuddhi* and the *Tabligh* movements Swami Shraddhanand, Khwaja Hasan Nizami- were threatened by the followers of opposing faiths.²² The assassination of Swami Shaddhanand in December 1926 afforded an occasion for the Muslims to carry out, at least in Ehetoric, the *Tabligh* with greater intensity than before. He further put forth two twin goals of *Tabligh*. The immediate goal was to increase the strength of the Muslims to fifteen crores and the long term goal was to convert all the Hindus to their faith. On January 22, 1927, the Muslims organised a mass meeting in Lahore which asked the Muslims to oppose *Shuddhi* with *Tabligh*.

The *Tanzim* movement was an effort made by the Muslim pastly to support *swaraj* but primarily to counteract the activities of the Hindu *Sangathan*. The *Tanzim* movement owed its origin to Dr Kitchlew, who after his release from jail in 1923 started *Jami- at- e – Tanzim* for the purpose of achieving *Swaraj*.²³ The *Tanzim* was the counterpart of the *Sangathan* movement, yet it was less aggressive than the latter. This was because its founder, Dr. Kitchlew, could not completely detach himself from the congress as Swami Shraddhanad and Ram Bhoj Dutta had done. He never lost faith in Hindu- Muslim unity. These included the development of *Maktas* schools colleges and training institutions, the organization of the mosques so that they could impost the correct type of spiritual, moral and educational instructions to the youths and improve the physical health of the muslims.

The year 1926 brought a further consolidation of the *Tanzim* movement. The leaders of the *Khilaft* movement, a champion of the Hindu- Muslim unity, in a special session of the *Khilaft* conference decided to join the *Tanzim* and the *Tabligh* movement and to help the riot victims. The muslim movements such as the *Tanzim* and *Tabligh* suffered more the lack of leadership than did their Hindu counterparts. The Muslim League partly due to the spilt and partly due to is secular learning's could not throw its weight to *Tanzim* and the *Tabligh* as did the hindu Mahasabha to the *Shuddhi* and the *Sangathan*.²⁴

The Muslims did react promptly and efficiently, however to the dangers to Islam imposed by the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan*. They sent their message loud and loud & clear to the Hindus that they were not going to tolerate any more encroachment on their numerical. The *Tabligh* and the *Tanzim* were really defensive movements. It is difficult to evaluate the relative success of these movements. But the extent of damage done to Hindu- Muslim relation by all these four movements taken together was tremendous²⁵ Lastly ,we can say that the institutionalizations made by me Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were only for their own interests . They had done a huge damage to the unity of India. Result of these institutions was the position of India and Pakistan in 1947.

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