

FOUNDATION OF MODERN EDUCATION: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUNJAB UNIVERSITY AND THE ROLE OF ANJUMAN-I-PUNJAB IN SHAPING REGIONAL EDUCATION IN COLONIAL PUNJAB

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Abstract

Punjab's educational history was incredibly rich, both in the pre-colonial and colonial eras. Before British intervention, Punjab had a flourishing system of education rooted in indigenous traditions. After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the British used education as a key tool to establish control over the region and promote their colonial agenda. This article explores the foundation of modern education in Punjab, highlighting the contributions of G.W. Leitner and the Anjuman i Punjab in reviving oriental learning and promoting knowledge in vernacular languages, focusing on the establishment of Punjab University in 1882, its role in shaping regional education by analyzing its contributions to higher learning and the dissemination of knowledge in vernacular languages in colonial Punjab.

Keywords: Anjuman i Punjab, Colonial Education, Education, GW Leitner, Punjab University

1. Introduction

Per annexation, Punjab was overseen by Sikh rulers. It was a momentous province in India bordering Afghanistan to the North-West. The 2nd quarter of the 19th century was marked by strong battles among Sikh and British forces for this fertile and productive region. (Akhtar & Mahmood, 2020, p.453). Punjab occurred as a province of British India from 1849 to 1947. It was among the last provinces in the Indian sub-continent to be conquered by British authority. Following the termination of British governance in 1947, the province was partitioned between India and Pakistan. In Punjab, Muslims primarily resided in the West and North, although Hindus and Sikhs were predominantly located in the East and South, while all three groups were intermingled throughout the region. (Baqai, 2010, p. 110).

Education eases intellectual growth and cognitive enhancement in individuals and societies. It serves as a compound for individuals and societal advancement, although it is observed as a tool of power by post-modern philosophers. The prime goal of education is to cultivate awareness of global dimensions, thus prompting momentous societal transformation. (Altaf & Rizvi, 2018, p.43). Charles Grant, who is the originator of British educational policy in India, introduced the Act called Charter Act of 1813. He successfully passed this act from the British parliament in 1813. Therefore he was named the forefather of modern education in India (Asim & Shah, July 2014, p 88).

In the 19th century, the East India Company (EIC) and later the British Crown established a state-controlled educational system in India. From 1858 to 1919, British administrators supervised educational procedures till it was moved to word Indian provincial ministers. During this time, several laws, recommendations, and funding efforts helped increase and advance public education (Chaudhary, 2009, p.269). Education plays a vital role in the growth and progress of any country, particularly in today's world. It allows individuals to specify certain areas, helping to overcome weaknesses and improve overall development. Governments emphasize higher and technical education because it is the key to developing an expert

workforce. The growth of Southeast Asian countries, known as the “Asian Tigers,” is basically due to their strong focus on proceeding to higher education. (Asim & Shah, July 2014, p 88).

2. Literature review

J. F. Bruce’s book *A History of the University of the Punjab* (1933) covers the university’s journey from its early foundations to its development into a major educational institution by 1932. The book highlights key milestones, including the establishment of Oriental College, the role of Dr. G. W. Leitner and Anjuman-i-Panjab in the creation of Punjab University, the raising of Punjab University, and its growth in the colonial context, examining its impact on education and society (Bruce, 1933).

Aparna Basu wrote a pioneering work titled *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898 -1920* (1974). The book does not aim to deliver a thorough analysis of Indian education or politics. It explores three central themes. The first theme highlights the critical yet ineffective evolution of official education policy in late 19th century India, particularly regarding Curzon’s reforms. The second theme analyzes the expansion of English education. The third theme seeks to examine the intersection of education and political participation (Basu, 1974).

Khalil Ahmad, Ahmad Ali, and Haris Kabir wrote an influential article titled: “Historical Significance of the British Education System in Colonial Punjab: A Study in Perspective of its Consequences on the Native Society and Education” (2018)”. This research examines the British education system in colonial Punjab, focusing on its impact on literary, academic, and social development. It challenges the notion of radical change and explores how English became a tool for communication and resistance. The study also traces the evolution of education in the subcontinent, shaped by shifts in British political policies (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Gurpreet Kaur wrote an inventive work, titled, *Development of Higher Education in Colonial Punjab (1880-1920)* (2021). The fourth chapter, titled “*Higher Education in Punjab*”, explores the development of higher education in the region by addressing key issues related to policy, planning, and financing. It highlights the establishment of various colleges and the creation of Punjab University in Lahore, marking an important milestone in educational advancement. The chapter also covers the range of courses and academic disciplines offered to students, reflecting the growing diversity in higher education (Kaur, 2021).

Hardev Singh Virk wrote an article, titled “Punjab University Lahore: History of Development (1882-1932)” (2021), This article outlines the history of the development of Punjab University from 1882 to 1932, highlighting its shift from Persian to Urdu instruction, Dr. G.W. Leitner's influence, and its transition from an Oriental to a Western-style educational institution (Virk, 2021).

3. Research methodology

This research aims to examine the “contribution of Anjuman i Punjab in the establishment of Punjab University and its role in shaping regional education in colonial Punjab. The study adopts an analytical and descriptive approach, utilizing an inductive method to explore the subject in depth. The research is based on both primary and secondary sources, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of historical developments. Furthermore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is employed to collect and understand data, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the educational transformation brought about by Anjuman in Punjab in the colonial context.

4. Pre-Colonial Education System in Punjab

There is a common misconception that pre-British Punjab has lacked in education and an organized system. However, G.W. Leitner, in his book *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab*, delivers a comprehensive account of the pre-colonial educational practices in the region (Shoeb, 2017, p. 159). He points out that landlords and the upper class had their private schools, and they often hired teachers to teach their children at home. These instructors were highly respectable people, and it was the village's rich families who ensured the teachers had the essential resources. Teachers were not just accountable for teaching reading and writing, but also for conveying social values and manners to the students (Shoeb, 2017, p. 160).

When the British annexed Punjab, schools were characterized into different types, according to Leitner. *Maktabs* taught Persian, *madrassas* intensive on Arabic, *patshalas* focused on Sanskrit education, *Gurmukhi* schools taught Punjabi in the *Gurmukhi* script, and *Mahajani* schools taught the *Landi* or *Sarifi* script to businesspeople (Rahman, 2007, p. 28). According to G W Leitner, each mosque, temple, *dharmsala*, and *Gurdwara* had a school attached to it, where students acknowledged religious education. These schools were closely linked to social institutions, family, and religion. According to the 1860 Lahore District report, there were 576 formal schools in the area, with 4,225 teachers (Shoeb, 2017, p. 160).

5. Wood's Dispatch of 1854

Wood's Dispatch of 1854, delivered by Sir Charles Wood, was a momentous document in the history of education in colonial India. Dispatch frequently called the "Magna Carta" of English education in colonial India, is considered the first organized and structured plan for educational development. The dispatch planned a clear system of education, starting from primary schools to universities, with vernacular languages encouraged at the school level and English highlighted at the university level (Chand, 2015, p. 111). The 1854 Dispatch called for the establishment of education departments in each province, a grants-in-aid system, and open universities in the three Presidency towns based on the University of London model. It also helped advance education in Punjab, leading to the formation of the Department of Public Instruction there in January 1856 (Sohal, 2013, p. 78).

6. Indian University Act 1904

Lord Curzon supported centralism in administration and education, appointing the Raleigh Commission in 1902, with only two Indian memberships. Based on its commendations, he introduced the Indian University Act in 1904 to restructure higher education in India. The act's core advantage was an annual grant of five lakh rupees (Chand, 2015, p. 112). The Punjab University was established in Lahore in 1882 upon meeting the organizers' conditions. Post the University Act of 1904, the University was located under government oversight, enhancing the Senate's arrangement to seventy members (Gautam, 2011).

7. Anjuman i Punjab and its Legacy in Educational Reform

In the mid-19th century, numerous in Punjab opposed affiliating their colleges with the University of Calcutta, and they criticized its narrow curriculum and its disengagement from their local culture. In this response, Dr. Leitner established the *Anjuman i Punjab* in 1865 (Bruce, 1933, p. 10). A Hungarian Orientalist Dr. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840-99) played a vital role in supporting a university in Punjab through the platform of *Anjuman i Punjab*. After teaching at King's College London, he became the principal of Government College, Lahore, which opened in 1864 with a few students. While Leitner struggling for a vernacular medium university

(Oriental University), the British ruler insisted on English, leading to the founding of Punjab University in 1882 as an English language organization (Talbot & Kamran, 2016, p. 21 of 35).

Anjuman i Punjab Primarily intended as an educational and literary society to spread and grow useful knowledge, it was raised under Leitner's guidance and had a wider impact on the public life of Lahore and surrounding areas, its branches were opened in different cities like Kasur, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Hissar, and Amritsar (Mamta, 2023, p. 95). Its goals comprised reviving and revitalizing ancient Oriental learning, promoting knowledge in the vernacular language, and fostering social and political debates. Anjuman i Punjab had achieved some of its aims, such as setting up a public library, publishing Western works in local languages, and opening an Oriental School in Lahore.

Parallel societies were established in other Punjab cities, and the movement gained support from the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab Sir Donald McLeod (Bruce, 1933, p. 10). The Anjuman i Punjab was a semiofficial society that played a vital role in creating a network of educational institutions in Punjab, including University College Lahore (1869), the Oriental College Lahore, and later, Punjab University (1882). Society contributed to the literature by supporting the Punjab Education Department's initiative to translate European work on education and literature into Indian vernacular language, specifically Urdu, through the Punjab Book Depot.

The Anjuman also encouraged Urdu poetry and aimed to generate a strong public view by fostering discussions and debates on social and political issues. (Mamta, 2023, p. 83). Developing higher education in Punjab began in the 1860s with the establishment of Government Colleges in Lahore and Delhi. Officials and administrators promoted education, including for women, but they were unaware of the best method for Punjabi students. Dr. Leitner, who was confident in his vision, launched the Anjuman i Punjab and the Oriental Movement to establish a national university. However, due to a lack of official and government support, the movement only led to the formation of Punjab University College, not a full university (Bal, 1989, p. 81-82). While GW Leitner tried to revive Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit languages, English became dominant.

His struggles to teach Western sciences in Indigenous languages were also unsuccessful and unproductive, as Urdu language, rather than Punjabi had become the primary medium of instruction up to matriculation (Gandhi, 2013). Disparate the universities in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, Punjab University was developed gradually. Punjab University focuses on both teaching and examinations from the start. Before getting formal approval, Dr. Leitner secured financial support from the Lahore community, ensuring its sustainability. He remained actively and vigorously involved with the University until his departure in 1888. After returning to London, he constantly encouraged and promoted the study of Indian languages and cultures by establishing an Oriental Institute (Boven, 2017, p. 86 & 87).

7.1 Committees of Anjuman i Punjab

The Anjuman i Punjab functioned with the help of some committees, who supervised its activities in various areas. The three most important committees were the Library Committee, the Educational Committee, and the Medical Committee. The Library Committee's major activities comprised creating a public library in Lahore, fostering literary revival, and forming the Punjab Book Depot to translate European works and their knowledge into Indian vernacular language. The second major committee was The Educational Committee, its prominent triumph was the formation of Punjab University and the creation of its senate, which served as the educational

board for the Punjab province. The third committee was The Medical Committee, which focused on promoting indigenous systems of medicine. (Mamta, 2023, p. 95).

7.2 Movements of Anjuman i Punjab

The Anjuman i Punjab organized two interrelated movements, a literary movement to revive and enhance classical ancient studies by assimilating traditional Indian scholars employing with modern European techniques and thought. Another was the Oriental Movement designed to establish an Oriental University. This university would encourage the use of vernacular languages for teaching European sciences, produce modern literature through translations, and make the education system more native by involving local leaders, such as chiefs, zamindars, priests, and wealthy merchants, in the management of educational institutions (Mamta, 2023, p. 96).

7.3 Anjuman i Punjab's Struggle for Punjab University

The Society insistently encouraged its visions until 1867, when it faced rivalry or competition from the British Indian Association in the North-Western Provinces. In August, the Association petitioned the Viceroy, disapproving of the educational system and encouraging a University that would promote Eastern Classics and Vernaculars together with English education. This competition reignited public interest or attention in educational issues, settling the authenticity of the emerging agitation. In response to the Association, the Government of India stated its obligation to the principles of the 1854 Dispatch and supported the study of Western science through Vernaculars, nevertheless, it could not instantly find a University, offering financial support, careful consideration, and official recognition instead (Mahmood, 1895, p. 91).

After establishing a public library, the Anjuman i Punjab was attentive to forming an "oriental university." On 13 October 1865, the Anjuman submitted a memorandum to the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Sir Donald McLeod, who agreed he called for wider consultation. Approximately three years later, a public meeting was held in Lahore on 12 March 1868, resolved to establish a teaching and examining university institute in Lahore, using a professorial system and continuing education from where government colleges ended.

On 25 May 1868, the final proposal and suggestion were approved, highlighting teaching both European and Oriental knowledge in English and vernacular languages. This technique replicated the tension between utilitarian and orientalist perceptions in British India's educational administration (Bangash, 2022, p. 426). The Government of India was firstly supportive but they felt hesitant to approve a university in Punjab, instead granting 21,000 Indian rupees to Government College Lahore. However, after further petitions, they agreed to establish a "University College" in August 1869, with the promise that it could develop into a full university if the college appeared with owing success.

Punjab University College was founded on 8 December 1869, ultimately leading to the formation of the University of Punjab in 1882. The Anjuman was pleased to attain its goal of a Punjab university college with a representative senate and the power to grant certificates. By 1882, the Punjabi elite played a vital role in the promotion of the university college into a full university, they also funded and supported the university's development, with the government identifying the Punjab-originated nature of the university in 1886 (Bangash, 2022, p. 427).

8. Establishing Punjab University as a Triumph of Education

After Punjab was annexed to British India in 1849, a modern education system began to take shape. Primarily education was governed by a Board of Administration, supervised by the Judicial Commissioner, Mr. R. Montgomery. In 1853, when Mr. John Lawrence became Chief

Commissioner, and later in 1854, when education was transferred to the Financial Commissioner, Mr. D. F. McLeod, substantial steps were taken to develop education in Punjab. Sir McLeod, who became the 2nd Lieutenant Governor, played a significant role in establishing Punjab University College in 1869 (Bruce, 1933, p. 1).

The 1854 dispatch permitted the formation of universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, following the model of the University of London. The goal was to set a high academic standard while residual near talented and capable students (Thomas, 1891, P. 69). But Punjab's experience with the formation of a university was delayed. College education in the province only began in 1864 with the opening of institutions in Lahore and Delhi. Until then, students from Punjab had to take the Calcutta University entrance exam to pursue higher education (Gautam, 2011).

In the 19th century, two new universities were established in India, the University of Lahore (Punjab University) and the University of Allahabad. In Lahore, the influential figures, supported by Lieutenant Governor Sir Donald Macleod, struggled for an Oriental University to encourage and support Eastern classics, vernacular languages, English, and Western science. In 1867, the British Indian Association of the North Western Provinces requested a university that created a balance between Eastern and Western education. However, the government forbade the idea but approved Lahore University College in 1869.

This college intended to spread European science with the help of vernacular languages, improve local literature, and encourage and support both Eastern and English studies. Over the next decade, many institutions became affiliated with the college, leading to renewed demands for a full university in Punjab. Government colleges were established in Lahore and Delhi in 1864. In 1870, Sir Donald Macleod initiated Punjab University College to meet the demands of Punjab's elites (Majumdar, 2007, P. 53). In 1871, an educational conference was held in Lahore, this conference struggled to turn Punjab University College into a full university, but Lieutenant Governor of Punjab Sir Henry Durand (1870-1871), was not persuaded and shaped a committee to evaluate the proposal.

The committee found that Punjab University's exams were less rigorous than Calcutta University, so they suggested improvements, including making English mandatory and compulsory for all BA and MA exams. Despite Dr. Leitner's struggles to gain approval from England's Parliament, the proposal was rejected, leading to three years of disappointment (Virk, 2021, P. 45). From 1870 to 1876, Punjab University College concentrated on its development and its improvement. During the Delhi Durbar held on January 1, 1877, when Queen Victoria was declared "*Kaiser i Hind*," the college's senate petitioned the Governor General for greater autonomy to award degrees. In response, Lord Lytton promised to propose a bill for its university status. (Kaur, 2021, p. 191 &192)

8.2 The Final Phase in Punjab University's Establishment

However, after Queen Victoria was declared Kaiser i Hind in 1877, the Senate of Punjab University College submitted a memorandum demanding that university college turn into full university status, which was approved. The process to create the university began in January 1877, with a draft proposal prepared and organized by the Punjab Government. (Virk, 2021, P. 45). It took almost 15 years to create a full-fledged University of Punjab by 1879, but there were still challenges. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Sir Robert Egerton, raised concerns about the competency and capability of the Schools of Medicine, Law, and Engineering, which were not yet proficient in awarding degrees.

As a result, the university decided not to issue degrees in these fields until their educational standards and examinations were enhanced. In November 1880, during a visit to Lahore, Viceroy Lord Ripon was reminded of Lord Lytton's promise to create a university of national significance for Punjab. The delegation emphasized the progress and development made by Punjab University College and highlighted the endowment fund of Rs. 3, 75,000, contributed by local rulers. Lord Ripon expressed his support for a university that would encourage vernacular languages, literature, and a blend of Oriental and English education, appreciating the public funding of higher education in Punjab. (Virk, 2021, P. 46).

After constant communication and debate between the Punjab and Indian governments, the Secretary of State permitted and approved the proposal for the university in August 1881. On September 1, 1881, the Government of India informed Punjab about the approval. The Punjab University Act No. XIX of 1882 was published on October 7, 1882, and the university was officially established on October 14, 1882, by an announcement delivered by Sir Charles Aitchison, Lieutenant Governor of Punjab (Kaur, 2021, p.192).

8.3 Variety of courses in Punjab University

Punjab University became significant by proposing a diversity and variety of courses for students from the Punjab and the North Western Frontier Provinces (NWFP). The annual Master of Arts examination was held and organized in Lahore on the 3rd Monday in March, or another date of examination was set by the Syndicate. The university also organized an annual examination for the Master of Oriental Learning degree, this exam was also held on the 3rd Monday in March, or another date that was set by the Organization. Graduate students of Punjab University College and other recognized universities could receive degrees in different subjects like Languages, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physical Science, etc. (Kaur, 2021, p. 93).

Punjab University introduced Bachelor's and Doctorate degrees in Law and started medical exams with a Bachelor of Medicine, the exam held annually in Lahore on the 3rd Monday in April or another day which was selected by the syndicate. Eligible applicants, including those who passed the Intermediate exam or its equivalent certificate recognized by the syndicate, would attend the exam. Medicine was taught at major institutions in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Lahore (Kaur, 2021, p. 97 & 98).

The Punjab University also opens government scholarships of Rs. 4,500, which based on exam results, the first and second-class scholarships are granted on the basis of merit, first-class scholarships were given to a student who passed the exam in the first division, second-class scholarship were given those students who passed the exam in the second division. Scholarships were effective for two years, starting on 1st June at Oriental College, Lahore Government College, or St. Stephen's College (Kaur, 2021, p. 105 & 106). The university held exams in both English and vernacular languages, providing to a diverse student population.

It introduced specialized degrees, such as the Bachelor of Oriental Learning (BOL) for those who studied through the medium of vernacular languages, along with the Bachelor of Arts (BA) for students who took exams in English. The university also recognized an Oriental Faculty devoted to the study of Oriental classics, including exams in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi (the literature of the Sikhs). In addition to these degrees, the university provided higher-level qualifications like the Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Oriental Learning (MOL) for those who passed the honors exams (Croft, 1888, p. 30).

9. Higher education in Punjab

Through British rule, education in India had become more structured and developed, leading to the establishment of universities in cities like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857, but the Punjab experience for university was delayed. Punjab had no higher education system until the formation of Lahore University College in 1869, later renamed Punjab University College in 1870. In 1883-84, Punjab required only three colleges, Government College and Oriental College in Lahore, and St. Stephen's College in Delhi. The literacy rate in British Punjab remained low, in 1901 the literacy rate of men was 6.8%, and only 0.37% of women were literate.

The year 1882 marked a major landmark in Indian and Punjabi education with the formal establishment of Punjab University in Lahore after wide debates or discussion and legislative efforts. (Kaur, 2021, p. 7 & 8). From the beginning Indian education was mainly concentrated on literary studies, and the system showed little importance on technical training. The necessity for technical education became plain in 1886. Before this, Punjab had only a few technical institutes, including the Medical and Veterinary College (Gautam, 2011). The Oriental College in Lahore, which was established by the government in 1870 and later integrated into Punjab University, was unique among educational institutions.

Unlike other colleges that concentrated merely on either Oriental or English education, this college combined the study of Oriental languages with European knowledge and sciences, taught in modern Indian languages. To support this, Urdu and Hindi translations of European texts were published on different subjects like mathematics, history, geography, political economy, and science. Although plans for an Urdu University in Punjab never materialized, the college is considered a precursor to Osmania University (Nurullah & Naik, 1943, P. 229-230).

10. Conclusion

Punjab's educational history, both in the pre-colonial and colonial eras, was far more structured and rich than often assumed. Before the British annexed the Punjab, the region had a well-established system of education, there is the misconception that organized learning only began under colonial rule in Punjab. GW Leitner in his book *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab* provides extensive evidence of this vibrant educational tradition. He precisely documents the several forms of learning that existed in pre-colonial Punjab, including village schools like gurukuls, madrasas, and pathshalas that conveyed knowledge in Punjabi, Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic.

He also highlighted the impressive literacy levels among the population, which opposes the colonial narrative that Indians, particularly in Punjab, lacked a structured education system. Predominantly, women in pre-colonial Punjab were compulsory to read "Punjabi Qaidas," certifying that basic literacy was not limited to men alone in Punjab. After the British conquest of Punjab, colonial authorities were required to restructure the region's educational framework to fulfill their administrative and ideological objectives. The 1854 wood dispatch, led to the establishment of universities in major cities like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, following the University of London model.

The aim was to set a high academic standard while remaining accessible to capable students. But Punjab didn't receive university for several decades until the establishment of Punjab University in 1882. In the mid-19th century, many in Punjab opposed affiliating their colleges with the University of Calcutta, criticizing its narrow curriculum and its disconnect from local culture. In response, Dr. Leitner founded the Anjuman i Punjab in 1865. A significant

landmark in Punjab's educational development was the establishment of Punjab University in 1882.

Through persistent advocacy and negotiations with the British administration, the proposal for the university was formally approved in August 1881, and the university was officially founded on October 14, 1882. The university's creation marked a significant turning point in Punjab's educational history, this shaped higher learning in Punjab influencing future generations. The institution blends traditional knowledge systems with modern academic frameworks. The efforts of Leitner and Anjuman i Punjab played a decisive role in preserving elements of indigenous knowledge by integrating modern educational structures, leaving a lasting impact on Punjab's intellectual and academic landscape. Eventually, Punjab University became a key institution in the region, cultivating intellectual growth and producing scholars, administrators, and professionals who contributed to both colonial and post-colonial India.

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