Punjab on the Eve of Quit India Movement.

In this chapter it is proposed to discuss the historical background of the Punjab politics in general and the changes which took place between 1849-1941 in particular. This is very essential to have a proper understanding of the Punjab province and its problems. In this chapter, an effort has been made to study the multi-facet changes and developments in the Punjab politics.

The year 1849 is a landmark in the history of Punjab as it was annexed by the British Government. It marked the end of the Sikh rule and enabled the British Government to reconstruct the administrative machinery which had suffered laxity since the death of Ranjit Singh.

Punjab was divided into seven divisions\(^1\) which consisted of 24 districts which were placed under a Commissioner and a Deputy-Commissioner. The three additional districts of Peshawar, Kohat and Hazara were placed under the 8th division in 1850. In February 1858 the division of Delhi and Hissar were formally incorporated in the province of Punjab. The division of Punjab

\(^1\) Divisions were Ambala, Jullundur, Amritsar, Lahore, Multan Rawalpindi and Leigh(Derajat).
into 10 divisions and 32 districts continued till 1875. Judiciary was not separately established and Deputy Commissioner i.e. the District Officer acted as Collector, Magistrate and Civil Judge also.\(^2\)

Administratively, the Punjab was a non-regulation province. The Regulations passed before 1833, therefore, were not applicable here.\(^3\) In 1849 a Board of Administration was established with an adequate staff of civil and military officers. The Board consisted of a President and two members. Henry Lawrence was appointed its President and C.J. Mansel and John Lawrence were its members.

The functions of the Board were divided into three parts, viz. political, revenue and judicial and each members had special charge of one of these departments though all of them worked jointly when any question of more than ordinary importance arose. The Board with other subjects was empowered to prepare census reports


The Punjab was the first province of British India in which the non-regulation system was practiced. It aimed at to providing a cheap and administrative machinery "to quicken the economic and social development in order to render it into a paying province". Besides, it secured for the Governor-General a personal control over the provincial government and was based on a "closely centralised administrative hierarchy".
of each districts of the Punjab. Moreover, it acted as the highest court of appeal and had full control of the revenue, excise and all troops not an actual parts of the army. The Board was also entrusted with plenary authority to control and supervise all Departments and with powers usually conferred on the Suddar Courts of Judicature and Suddar Board of Revenue of Presidencies.

Defence was given top priority. The Guide Corps was increased in strength and included troops of horse as well as infantry. The Guides were charged with guarding the chain of fortresses which were built to prevent tribal incursions from the north-west and with maintaining peace in Derajat. A system of regular revenue settlement with cultivators was introduced. A reduction was made in the rate of assessment. While land revenue continued to be based on the value of produce as before, only 1/4 or even 1/8 at certain places of the total produce was claimed. Despite a reduction in the rates of assessment, however, an effort was made to abolish the middlemen, there was no diminution in the revenue. The Board also undertook some utility works. The Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Delhi was reopened. Cross roads throughout the territory wherever they existed were also

brought under repair. The digging of the Bari Doab Canal was also taken in hand. The Board's greatest contribution, however, was to improve the condition of the agriculturists who formed the vast bulk of the population. New varieties of crops were introduced. New Orleans cotton, sugarcane, flax, tobacco and a variety of root crops began to be grown in the plains; tea was planted on the slopes of the Murree hills and in the Kangra Valley.

Thus within a short period of four years (1849-53), the Board established a "system of administration complete in all branches — military, civil and financial, in addition to which it provided roads, canals and jails, put an end to thuggee and dacoity, codified the laws, refined the coinage and promoted agriculture."

The Board enjoyed short life in the State administration because it was dissolved in 1853 perhaps due to dissensions among the members.10 The differences between Henry Lawrence and his brother John Lawrence had often strained relations to the breaking point. Even Montgomery confessed that he had to serve as a "regular buffer between two high powered engines". In these

8. Ibid.
10 Richard Burn, (ed), Cambridge History of India, (Delhi, 1957) pp. 556-57.
disputes Lord Dalhousie openly showed preference for John and often went out of the way to be little Henry. The conflict came to a head when brothers put in their resignations. Dalhousie promptly abolished the Board, transferred Henry Lawrence to Rajputana and appointed John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. In 1858, the next change was made in Punjab administration when Delhi was transferred from North-West Provinces and placed under Punjab administration. From January 1, 1859, Punjab was given a Lieutenant-Governorship and John Lawrence became the first Lieutenant-Governor. In this office he was succeeded by Sir Robert Montgomery (1859), Sir Donald Macleod (1865), Sir Henry Durand (1870) and Sir Henry Davies (1871-77).

Some principles adopted by the Government in the administration were to carry justice through several institutions and agencies to the people. For this the Government employed the experienced officers in upholding the responsibility through police and legislation. After the annexation of Punjab, authorities attempted to administer civil justice so that law and order could be maintained. Moreover, the motives of the imperial masters in

11. In a letter of June 13, 1851, Henry wrote to his brother John: "I am at a loss to understand the governor general... Bad enough to snub us when we are wrong, intending to do right, but to be insulted by assumptions and tittle tattle is too bad... One works oneself to death, and does everything publicly and privately to aid the views of a man who vents his impertinences on us, in a way which would be unbecoming if we were his servants". Edwards and Marivale, Life of Sir Henry Lawrence., pp. 441-42.

Punjab were to develop agriculture, canals, railways, roads, post-offices etc. in order to meet their imperial interests.  

These principles of administration were made by a proclamation which was issued by Governor-General in March 1849. The Government hoped that by following these principles it would gradually gain the confidence of the people and convert the warlike people into law-abiding and loyal citizens.

The Government directed its attention towards the establishment of peace in Punjab. The people were asked to give up their arms. This a majority of them did. The dismantling of strongholds also started vigorously. Out of these some were preserved which the Government required for political or military purposes. The Sikh military chiefs and soldiers were called at Lahore where nearly 50,000 persons were paid and disbanded. The most promising among them were taken into the British service and the rest were given gratuities and pensions. The British knew the fighting qualities of the Sikhs. They thus enlisted the Sikh martial ardour into the British army. All people, other than European and Government servants, were prohibited to keep or carry arms of any kind.

15. Foreign Misc. Series, S.No.156 in the list 356-59, para 101
The British found in the Punjab well-preserved joint village communities consisting of peasant proprietors; and being fully conscious of the political advantages of maintaining the existing framework of the society, and of keeping the land in hands of those whose hereditary occupation was tillage; they successfully prevented the growth of landowners. It was beneficial for the Punjab administrators to keep the proprietors of the province in possession of their land. The Punjab peasant had relatively a large holding as compared to some provinces of India. The expropriation of the peasant proprietors from the money-lenders and they were helped by making available to them through canal irrigation large tracts of land which hitherto had been lying barren. In a short period the policy of Government ever since the annexation of the Punjab had been to maintain the Punjab only for purely political reasons. It was primarily an agricultural Province comprising peasant proprietors attached to their land, and thereby prevent the development of a commercial and an industrial middle class and a landless proletariat. These classes provided recruits for the political life of the country. With the breaking up of the feudal economy and the British exploitation of the Indian markets by way of construction of public buildings, roads, bridges, railways, irrigation works there grew up a wealthy Indian class. This class was closely allied with the British by economic interests, and could not be expected to adopt an independent line of action in political matters.  

The levelling process of the Rule of law, the most significant feature of the Pax Britannica, was introduced in the Punjab with certain limitations. Customary law, largely tribal in origin, had here an authority unknown in the rest of India. Similarly, in consonance with its general policy, Government attempted successfully to keep the Punjab backward than the other provinces of India in the matter of constitutional development. The Indian Councils Act,1961, established Legislative Councils in Bombay and Madras, and authorised the establishment of similar councils in other provinces. The Bengal and the United Provinces' Councils were constituted in 1863 and 1866 respectively, but in the Punjab a similar council did not come into existence till 1897, thirty years after the Act which authorised its creation. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 authorised an increase in the membership of the Councils and allowed reserved seats to be filled by indirect election from public associations, municipal and other bodies. Although other provinces in India took advantage of these provisions, but such advantage came very late in the Punjab.20

British Policy Towards Muslims:

The English mistrust of Muslims was deep rooted. It was believed that "1/10 of Indian Muslims were passively loyal, 8/10 passively disloyal and 1/10 actively disloyal...4/5 of the Musalmans spring from converted Hindus and they combine the defects

of both races". The English believed that the revolt of 1857 was engineered by the Muslims. But the English not only distrusted the Muslims they also feared them and felt that they had to watch the "Mussalman with the green flag calling for blood".

This ambivalent attitude was reflected in British policy towards Muslims. They gave concessions to them to remove the cause of their discontent so that they were not prompted to rebel. Mistrust of the Muslims still remained but fear led to a policy of cultivating the friendship of the loyal Muslims.

The change in the British policy was not only sudden, it was a reversal of the old policy of impartiality. Lawrence, the earliest administrator of Punjab, observed: "My men expected to extend equal rights to all native religions and to align with none". In 1880's his successor Lt. Governor Lyall had decisively broken this policy of impartiality. Reasons for this reversal of old policy were manifold.

Some officials had begun to clamour that the Muslims had been given a raw deal. William Hunter was probably the first British official in India who suggested the authorities to change policy and attitude about the Indian Muslims. In his famous book, Indian Mussalmans, he said: "The Indian Mussalmans arraigns the British Government for its want of sympathy, for its want of

22. Martin, Gilbert: Servant of India (Dunlop Smith diary) 10-9-1906, p.56.
magnanimity, for its mean malversation of their funds, and for great public wrong spread over a hundred years...consequently, many peaceful Muslims, who in different circumstances, would have helped the British had gone to the rival side. Thorburn, a Punjab official, also began to advocate the case of Punjabi Mussalmans. Another reason for this changed attitude towards the Muslims was growing unrest among a section of Hindus who had begun to show signs of political consciousness.

Punjab Society and Impact of British rule:

Punjab had a complex society consisting of the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs but numerically dominated by the Muslims, although the balance was maintained by the Hindus and the Sikhs if taken together. The percentage of each community varied from one region to another. Muslims dominated in seventeen districts, i.e. Lahore, Shahpur, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Attock, Mianwali, Montgomery, Lyallpur, Jhang, Multan, Muzzaffargarh and Dera Ghagi Khan and there was great variation of population between 91% in Attock and 51% in Gurdaspur Districts; their numerical strength was greater than that of the other two communities taken together. Thus Western Punjab was the stronghold of the Muslims and their proportion decreased if one moved from the West to East. In the Himalyan region their population was hardly 5%. The Hindus were in majority in six Districts:

Hissar, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Karnal, Simla and Kangra. Their proportion ranged between 91% in Kangra and 65% in Hissar, while in two Districts i.e. in Ambala and Hoshiarpur, they were more numerous as a community, their proportion was 46% and 40% respectively. The proportion of the Hindus steadily decreased as one proceeded westward.

The Sikhs did not have a clear majority in any of the Districts but in Ludhiana District they were more numerous than the Hindus or the Muslims; their proportion was 47%.

The Sikh community in the earlier period was not organised as a separate entity from the Hindus-Khatris and others. It was organised as a separate "class" of people of various castes of the Hindus to serve in the 'army', but later on the Sikhs acquired the character of separate "religious community", particularly during the rule of the Sikh misls; and therefore, they become an exclusive group as distinct from the Hindus. This tendency of becoming a separate 'community' was strengthened by various British policies, reform-movements etc.

The Sikhs and the Muslims had a long history of conflict and antagonism which was largely the result of oppressive policies of the Mughal rulers against Sikh Gurus and Sikhs in general. The memories of these sufferings and the bitter struggle between the Sikhs and the Mughals became a part of the communal heritage of the Sikhs. It has been rightly argued: "continual invasion and cultural confrontation had produced a society composed
of three different but sometime overlapping segments, each with its customs, and traditional elite (landed and religious). There was a heritage of conflict involving war, rioting and struggle for converts. 27

The impact of the British on the social order of Punjab can be described in the following words of L. Hazleburst: "The 19th century is significant for it marks the transformation of the society from one based on the hegemony of the chiefs and rulers to the social dominance of the merchants and the agriculturists."

Construction of canals and colonisation of canal irrigated land, overhauling of land revenue system, introduction of Western education, development of railways etc., all led to changes in the social structure of Punjab. Consequently, Punjabi society in these years was in a state of flux. Traditional values were being questioned and many features of the old order were slowly replaced.

The Punjab was essentially an agricultural region with the predominance of peasant-proprietors. Habitation was mostly in villages with a few towns, mostly small but a few of them quite large also. Large areas were lying waste in the Western parts of province. These lands were made fit for cultivation by the introduction of canal irrigation, and they came to be known as


"canal colonies". On being irrigated they were granted, or sold at concessional rates to settlers from old districts. The grants took various forms; sometimes lands were given only to those persons who showed their loyalty to Government. Usually lands were granted to persons on the conditions that the grantees would take up residence and build houses on a site provided for the purpose.  

The English education left a profound impact on the people of Punjab. With the introduction of new education system the people of Punjab began to imbibe the great treasures of rationalist and democratic thought of the modern west. It spread the gospel of extreme political ideas among the educated Punjabees which they imbibed from the political literature of Europe due to their knowledge of western education. This study of western education provided an opportunity to study the social liberties, natural, scientific and rational philosophical and literature in that language. English education became a medium of instruction in Colleges and Universities. Through this education the Indian intelligentsia came to know the struggle started by Western philosophers and political thinkers for the attainment of civil rights and liberties in their respective countries. This class also fought against the feudal and hierarchical structure of India and gave a democratic direction to the rise of Indian nationalism in the provinces in particular and in the country in general. The Western education also created a powerful journalism in the country through which people came to know the local and national problems of the

people of whole India. This education also played a vital role in the rise, growth and furtherance of English newspapers which got circulated in the entire country. This western education created a new class in the Punjab, popularly called as the middle class which comprised of journalists, lawyers, teachers, traders etc. Through English education the leaders of this class began to correspond with the leaders of other regions. Moreover, it shattered the regional barriers and created a class consciousness through the instrumentality of Indian National Congress in 1885. This class presented Indian grievances to the British rulers in India and England. It demanded Indianization of services, protection of Indian industries, fiscal autonomy, freedom of association and press, representative institutions, dominion status, home rule and finally complete independence.  

In the social life there arose a zeal for social and religious reforms among the newly emerged Punjabi elite. The new Punjabi elite did not want to join the Brahmo Samaj but craved for something different and the Arya Samaj satisfied this craving. When Dayanand made a tour of Punjab during 1877-78 he found ready acceptance, and Arya Samajas were established in various parts of the province and Brahmo Samaj lost its ground. Most of the Punjabi who had turned Brahmos joined the Arya Samaj. Brahmo Samaj had a great following amongst the students of the Government College, Lahore, but later the college became a centre of the Arya Samaj. All important Arya Samaj leaders Pt. Guru Dutt, L. Munshi Ram  

(later Swami Shradhanand), L. Lajpat Rai, L. Sain Das, Bhagat Ishwar Das etc. had been members of the Brahmo Samaj in their student days, but they changed their allegiance to the Arya Samaj after its establishment.

Thus Arya Samaj became a popular creed of the English educated Punjabi Hindus. By adopting the Arya Samaj they could remain a Hindu and yet different from the uneducated masses. A large number of Hindus took advantage of the opportunities provided by the British rule. They took to English education and became acquainted with the liberal, democratic and radical ideas of the west. For years the Arya Samaj remained to preserve the elites and it remained concerned with the question of social work. Moreover, Arya Samaj assumed an educative role in establishing Western type schools and tried to bring into its fold as converts untouchables, Muslims and Christians. It hence played a considerable role in promoting community awareness and community difference in Punjab. 31

Gradually the Arya Samajists realised that they should have the support of the masses; that the reform work could not be of lasting value, unless the gulf between the 'classes' and 'the masses' was bridged and the two were linked together closely. The Arya Samaj became most popular among the Jats of Rohtak, Hissar and Delhi and was successful in spreading national consciousness.

among its followers. So great was the influence of the Arya Samaj that once a Deputy Commissioner had some dispute with L. Chander Lal (President of Hissar Arya Samaj) and this led to a hartal in the entire town. The Commissioner who came for an enquiry said to him, "You are the Raja of the District."  

The Arya Samaj and its success indicated the separation of the trading section from the agrarian one. There came an end to the historic Jat-Bania Combination.

The economic effects of the British rule had produced a pattern which was more in favour of stability.  

The success attained by the Arya Samaj, and the ideas propagated by it worried the Muslims and the Sikhs. The idea of the Hindu Nation taught by the Arya Samaj alarmed the Muslims who were already backward and the Sikhs who were in a minority. Hence the Muslims started their Anjuman-i-Islamia and the Sikh their Singh Sabha with similar aims and objectives. The Shuddhi crusade launched by the Samaj was resisted by the Muslims and the Sikhs and had an important effect on the relations of three communities.

In 1880's there emerged a socio-religious movement amongst the Muslims, namely, the Ahmediya movement. Its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad laid emphasis on religious revival with few social and educational reforms. He published sixty works in Urdu, the most important of them being 'Brahin-i-Ahmadiya', in which he presented the first Islamic rejoinder to the statements of Dayanand Sarswati against Islam.  

32. L. Lajpat Rai: Autobiographical Writings; V. C. Joshi (ed), (Delhi-Jullunder, 1965), p. 37
34. Edward Churchill; 'Printed Literature of Punjabi Muslims, 1860-1900 in Sources of Punjab History, op. cit.
The Sikhs also started seeking their identity and examining their relations with the Hindus. The result was the publication of books like *Ham Hindu Nahin* (1899) by S. Kahan Singh, and opposed by others like *Sikh Hindu Hain* (1899) by Baba Narain Singh. This action and reaction weakened the close social relationship which had existed between the two sister communities.  

The people supported a particular institution, idea or project through pamphlets. Bhai Ditt Singh, Bhai Mohan Sohan Vaid, Baba Teja Singh, Overseer, were among prominent pamphleteers. Khalsa Tract Society was formed in 1894 to carry out the work of the distribution of the pamphlets, and the Khalsa Handbill Society was formed in 1908. "A predominantly agrarian community, the Sikhs pioneered in programmes to link rural and urban co-religionists with publicity tracts and prachar (preaching) teams."  

Throughout the years 1903-08 Sikhs debated with Aryas on the meaning of Sikhism, on their separateness from Hindu community, and on the alleged job discrimination by the Government, as economic competition between educated Sikhs and Hindus added fuel to the existing communal competition.  

Thus the middle classes of the Punjab, which had provided leadership for the nationalist movement in other provinces, remained

36. N.G. Barrier; *The Sikhs & Their Literature 1839-1919* (Delhi, 1970).  
wholly concerned with local, communal or religious issues. Nationalism seemed irrelevant in the light of these issues. The Punjab lacked leaders who could work across provincial, communal or religious lines. They worked within caste and religious organisations. Moreover, the middle classes had not much to complain against the British. Punjab was the last province to fall under the British sway and it was given a parental form of Government. The middle classes enjoyed the same power and prestige they enjoyed before.

This typical structuring of the middle classes also explains why the national politics did not make any appreciable headway in the province. The Lahore Indian Association, the first political organisation started here in 1877 by the efforts of Bengali nationalist Surendranath Bannerjea, was restricted to a few persons only who lived in Lahore then. Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia, a dynamic Sikh aristocrat and his friends like Harkishan Lal, some local lawyers and enlightened middle class men, mostly of the Brahmo shade, adored the ranks of this elite organisation. It met occasionally to discuss 'some important problems of national and provincial interest and soon proved to be more or less a prestigious debating club'. In 1883, it converted itself into a branch of the famous Indian Association, Calcutta, though informally...


39. There were several Muslim members also, but they left it after the Municipal Election of 1884 when heat and acrimony was generated between the elites of different communities.
of the Indian National Congress. But all said and done it was by all standard an inactive body.40

The Indian National Congress in Punjab did not make much headway, though Jaisi Ram, Dwarka Das, Dyal Singh Majithia, Harishan Lal and others of the Indian Association were the leading lights behind it. Its branches were opened, besides Lahore (1885), at Ambala (1885) and Hissar (1886), which no doubt functioned very informally. It had some following, too which was of course larger than that of the Indian Association. Quite a few Muslims, among whom Mohammad Alam (Editor, Paisa Akhabar) Nabi Bakhsh and Umar Bakhsh (Sir Saiyed Ahmad Khan's opponents) were prominent, also joined the organisation. A nationalist paper, The Tribune, was started by Dyal Singh Majithia in 1881 to give strength to the National movement. Three annual sessions, 1893, 1900 and 1903 of the Congress were also held at Lahore, the capital of the Punjab. Despite all this, however, the roots of nationalism did not go deep into the Punjab soil during this period. The social base of the Congress in Punjab by and large was confined to urban Hindu middle class, and rural areas hardly felt any impact of its programmes. Government's considerate policy to keep the province out of the 'evil influence of the Congress', and poor politicization of the people were the great stumbling blocks in its way. And despite the efforts on the part of the nationalists, the Congress, as rightly

said by Duni Chand, a veteran nationalist leader from Ambala, could become "nothing but a gathering of a few holiday makers out for intellectual entertainment".41

In the Punjab, the Congress had great difficulty in establishing itself since the Arya Samajists were not in favour of it. Many of them regarded the Congress as a handiwork of the Englishmen, and they said since Englishmen loved their country, therefore, they would never be successful in winning political freedom for India. They believed that Congress had been formed by Englishmen to keep the Indian intelligentsia busy. They were of the view that Indians should make themselves stronger through education. By popularising Swadeshi they would increase their strength and then they would be in a position to oust the British. They were not in favour of Hindu-Muslim Unity as they believed that such unity would make the Muslims politically very strong. They thought that the Congress movement would divert energy from the work for Hindu solidarity and Hindu reform. They argued that political involvement would make the British suspicious of the Hindus and thus would harm them, so they should remain aloof from political movements and remained concerned only with social reform. Still there were some men like Bakshi Jaishi Ram, Babu Jogendra Chandra Bose and L. Harikishan Lal in the Samaj who had contacts with the

41. Duni Chand, The Ulster of India, (Lahore, 1936), p.2
Also see Azim Hussain, op. cit., p.70.

42. Joshi, V.C., op. cit., p.87.
Congress in the province. It was due to their efforts that in 1893 Punjab invited the Congress, yet Arya Samaj leaders did not take any conspicuous part in the Congress. This led the conflict between religion and modernisation which split the Arya Samaj in 1893. The split was an indication of change in the leadership pattern. Earlier the Samaj had been the stronghold of trading and commercial classes under the sway of Brahminical tradition, but the growth of English education challenged the Arya Samaj. The newly emergent elite could not work independently. It owned its position partly to the Government which was the chief source of its patronage and partly to the positions of the classes to which it belonged. Thus it remained in a captivated position both socially and economically, which became an hindrance for the growth of the Congress. One example of such leadership was L. Harikishan Lal, about whom L. Lajpat Rai said, "The beauty of it is that L. Harikishan Lal's political outlook was the same as that of the Arya Samajists but ostensibly he was a Congressmen. He ridiculed the social and religious ideas of the Arya Samajists and called many of its members humbugs, but he knew that in this province no movement could be successful without the help of the Arya Samaj". 43

Unfortunately, the emergence of the Indian National Congress in this province coincided with the rise of the situation that led to the enactment of the Land Alienation Act, 44 which created communal

43. Ibid., pp.95-96.
44. The Land Alienation Act was passed in the Imperial Legislative Council on October 19, 1900, which came into force in June 1901. The Act aimed at placing certain restrictions on the transfer of agricultural land in the Punjab with a view to checking its alienation from the agricultural to the non-agricultural classes. It also prohibited all unsatisfactory mortgages except "automatic repayment mortgage", where after the expiry of the term of mortgage which was limited to a maximum of 15 years, the land reverted to the mortgagee with the mortgage debt extinguished.
tension in the province and marred its proceedings. The Hindu bourgeoisie who dominated the Congress felt annoyed with it on account of its failure to take a strong action for the repeal of the Land Alienation Act. The Hindu delegates from the Punjab had raised this question at several sessions but the attitude of the Congress leadership towards this question left both the communities dissatisfied. For instance, a strong resolution against the Bill passed by the Congress at its session in December 1899 hurt the Mohammedans in the province. When the Hindus raised this question again at the 1900 session, the Congress leadership was reluctant to endorse their earlier decision on account of the determined opposition of the Mohammedan delegates.

The Land Alienation Act added to the strengthening of divisive forces in the economic conditions of the three communities. It accentuated the difference between the agricultural and non-agricultural classes in rural areas. The Act was to safeguard the interest of the agriculturists. The question as to who was or was not an agriculturist was not decided by actual occupation but by caste. It, therefore, sowed the seeds of separatism. All Jats and Rajputs were declared agriculturists while all Khatris, Aroras and Banias were classed as non-agriculturists. The Act did


46. See Report of the Proceedings of the Sixth Indian National Congress, Session 1899, Calcutta.

not provide an exception in the case of Jat moneylenders or Arora agriculturists. In certain districts Brahmins were declared agriculturists. However, cases of individual hardships were not as serious as the breaking up of the population on a new racial basis. 48

Since most of the moneylenders were Hindus the main axe of the Act fell on them. Though the Government could not be blamed for it, but the way it was made to work created a suspicion among them (the Hindus) that this measure was deliberately designed to punish them for their enthusiasm for the national movement, and not for removing economic inequalities. The Muslims, amongst whom the caste system did not exist, were not effected by the Act. A supporter of the Hindu viewpoint stated that while the census report prior to this Act recorded 53% Hindus, 59% Muslims and 75% Sikhs engaged in agriculture, the Land Alienation Act notified only 32% Hindus, 60% Muslims and 68% Sikhs (as agriculturists). 49

Further, the policy of the Government to open non-agriculturist professions to agriculturists, the majority of whom were Muslims, added to the grievances of the Hindus; one Hindu leader pointed out that the "Hindu Sabha came into existence in the Punjab mainly with a view to bringing about pressure on the Government to

repeal the Land Alienation Act. The Indian National Congress could not take up any issue over which the major communities in the province were divided. This policy of the Congress prevented many Hindus from joining the Congress.

As a result of such measures the Government created a class of big landlords amongst Mohammedans who having acquired vested interests in the existing order became its strong supporters. O'Dwyer, in his Memoirs, stated the following advantage of the Act; "As a result of the Act, the Punjab landowners, the finest body of the peasantry in the East, have been standing loyal to the British." Moreover, among the Muslims no strong middle class had emerged. In the absence of such middle class, the Muslims looked for leadership to landed families which owned their wealth and status to the Government. The Muslims had been against the Congress since its inception. Most Muslims after 1887-88 opposed the Indian National Congress, and many pamphlets warned the Muslims of the dangers in not doing so. The pamphlets of Sujad Hashim Bukhari, National Congress Se Mussalmanon Ko Bachanā Chahiye (Mussalmans should beware of National Congress) and Munshi Shams-ud-din's Aina-i-National Congress ('Mirror of the National Congress') greatly influenced the Muslims who kept on isolating themselves from the Congress, the only national organisation of the country. When the

50. Ibid.
51. O'Dwyer, M., op. cit.
52. Edward Churchill; 'Printed Literature of the Punjabi Musli 1860-1900' in Sources on Punjab History, op. cit., pp. 309-1
Congress session of 1893 was held in Lahore the central Mohammedan Association of Lahore showed great hostility towards it. It was reported by an observer that Mohammedans were so vehemently antagonistic to this session that none of them was coming forward to attend it till Maulvi Moharram Chisti undertook to bring a contingent of them. However, he was not very successful, as out of 481 delegates of Punjab only 49 were Mohammedans. This caused a serious damage to the prestige of the Congress among the Mohammedans. The sessions of 1905 and 1906 attended by large contingents from Punjab could claim just a few Mohammedans.

A Muslims political organisation i.e. the Muslim League was established in December 1906. This was formed as a counterpoise to the Congress which was regarded as a Hindu organisation. A branch of the Muslim League was also established in the Punjab in 1907, and Mohammad Shafi became its Secretary (For details see chapter V).

The Sikh leaders were equally cautious. They refrained from giving offence to the Government which had been well disposed towards them. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Singh Sabha appeared to promote and protect Sikh interests and pledged itself to cultivate loyalty to the Government. Its membership was not open to the persons who had proved obnoxious to the

53. or. cit.
55. Ibid.
Government. It was provided in its fundamental rules that nothing against the Government could be discussed in its meetings. The Government also favoured the tendency among the Sikhs to distinguish themselves from the Hindus, since it fell into their scheme of segregating as many elements as possible from the general body of Hindus who were held responsible for the political agitation against the British. A British scholar even suggested to the bureaucracy to support the Sikh religion for maintaining its identity in view of the absorbing power of Hinduism. The Sikhs by and large remained averse to the Congress. The Chief Khalsa Dewan did not respond favourably to the 1893 Congress session held at Lahore and expelled three of its members who had attended it.

The political life of Punjab thus remained in many ways different from those other provinces. A secular all India organisation like the Congress could not be very successful here. The people of other provinces always spoke of Punjab as a politically backward province.

Incidentally, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Punjab Government itself provided further impetus to the nationalising forces. Probably not calculating as to what repercussions could

58. Ibid.
these have, they passed a number of legislations and took unpopular measures, such as excessive land revenue increase in Rawalpindi district,\textsuperscript{60} Doab Bari Act\textsuperscript{61} and Colonisation Act.\textsuperscript{62} These legislations provided ground to arouse public feelings against the British rule in India especially in the Punjab and to launch a campaign of agitation and to exploit these acts for using them against the British Government. A feeling of discontent undoubtedly existed throughout the central districts of the province and was more or less acute in those districts (Lahore, Lyallpur, Sialkot and Ferozepur) where the agitators directly appealed to the people. There was unrest all round and it needed only wise

\textbf{60.} Land revenue in Rawalpindi district was increased by 25\%.

\textbf{61.} In November 1906 the Government enhanced the rates for water from the Bari Doab Canal and this affected the landowners in the district of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lahore. They greatly resented this increase.

\textbf{62.} The Chenan colony was mostly inhabited by the peasants and military personnel of the central districts of Punjab. They had secured the land either free or on very nominal rates. The new colonies were carefully planned and controlled by local officials. The Punjab Land Colonization Bill (1906) aimed at strengthening the "irksome system of regulations"; it was also proposed to introduce inheritance by primogeniture in order to check the process of sub-division of land holdings. As it touched off widespread discontent in rural areas, the Viceroy, Lord Minto, vetoed the Bill in May 1907.
leadership to encash it for enhancing the social base of the national movement. Fortunately, the nationalist leadership seized the opportunity with both hands and L. Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, the great revolutionary, stirred the masses and created awareness in their minds to their difficulties and helplessness. Ajit Singh chose Lyallpur district as the centre for agitation because of it being a newly developed area. It had people from almost all parts of the Punjab as also retired military people who could be useful in bringing about a revolt in the army. During his tour of Lyallpur district explained to the people now injustice was being done to the public in the shape of Doab Bari Act, Colonization Act and increase of land revenue. After having prepared this ground an epoch-making meeting was held in Lyallpur on 21-22 March, 1907. At this meeting Banke Dayal, Editor of Jhang Sayal, read the historic poem "Pugree Sambhal oh Jatta".

It became very popular and it was heard everywhere in the Punjab resounding the skies.

There were riots in Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, etc. British personnel were manhandled, mud was flung at them, offices and churches were burnt, telegraph poles and wires cut. In Multan Division Railway workers went on strike and the strike was called off only when the acts had been cancelled. The Superintendent of

63. For details see Pardaman Singh and J.S. Dhanki (ed), Buried Alive - Autobiography, Speeches and Writings of An Indian Revolutionary, Sardar Ajit Singh, Delhi, 1984, pp. 33-40.
Police, Mr. Phillips, in Lahore was beaten by rioters. Sardar Kishen Singh and Swaran Singh, elder and younger brother of Ajit Singh respectively, were arrested in this connection. 64

This unnerved the Punjab Government, and the forces of suppression and repression were let loose on the public; censorship was imposed on the press; editors, printers and publishers were arrested; leaders were wished away and public harassed. L. Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh 'the moving spirit behind the whole movement' were deported to Mandalay. 65

After these harsh measures, the Government effected a climb down, it immediately withdrew all the bills and measures which were not liked by the peasantry. In November 1907 L. Lajpat Rai was freed. 66

From now onwards terrorist activities gained ground in the Punjab. One instance of terrorist movement was the Ghadar movement started by secret agents of the Ghadar party formed in U.S.A. in 1913. Their programme was the programme of the terrorists, the killing of Europeans, looting of Government property, non-cooperating with the Government, and forcing the British out of the country with the help of Germany, America, etc. However, due to lack of leadership, organisation and support, the movement was crushed. The vast majority of the Ghadrities were Sikhs.


65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.
eruption of the Ghadar movement brought a complete change in the outlook of the Sikhs. The return of the Ghadrities was the first live contact that the Sikh peasants experience with politics of any kind. 67

When the First World War broke out in 1914 and ended in 1918, the Punjab made tremendous efforts to save the British Empire because a large number of youngmen enlisted themselves in the army. Sikhs' recruitment was speeded up. The number of Sikhs in the services rose from 35,000 at the beginning of 1915 to over 100,000 by the end of the war 68 forming about one-fifth of the army in action.

Post war happenings pushed India towards a political, economic and social turmoil. The high hopes of the liberals in the sincerity of the Raj were rudely shaken by the evasive Montague-Chelmsford Reforms announced in 1919 and the repressive provisions of the Rowlatt Act introduced thereafter. The Jallianwala Bagh Massare staged at Amritsar by the Britishers on 13 April 1919 to teach the Indians a lesson in loyalty. Tagore renounced his knighthood as a protest and Gandhi gave up his affection for the Raj.

The large-scale retrenchment of the Indian soldiers at the end of war added to the confusion. The unrest among the retrenched army personnel, who had caught the glimpses of free

67. Khushwant Singh & Satindra Singh; Ghadar India's First Armed Revolution.

countries on the West European front, was further eroding the myth that the British rule was a blessing for India. The tales of revolution in Russia thrilled the revolutionaries and the moderates alike. In the Punjab, the Akalis started a non-violent agitation to liberate the gurdwara from the hereditary mehants. The Government did its worst to suppress the movement but all in vain. It rather further alienated the public opinion. (For details see Chapter V)

Mahatama Gandhi gave the call of Swadeshi and appealed to his countrymen to boycott the British rule and its institutions.

Bhagat Singh, by that time, had joined D.A.V. College, Lahore. In pursuance of the call given by Gandhi, he, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan, Yaspal and many other youngmen left D.A.V College and joined national college an institution started parallel to the affiliated colleges.

The freedom struggle which had entered a mass phase began to falter and waver around 1922 when Gandhi called off the Non-co-operation movement. That provoked the Youth of Punjab like Bhaga Singh who plunged into an arena to follow the example of Bengali revolutionaries. Sardar Bhagat Singh organised the Nau Jawan Sabha in March, 1926 to instill revolutionary ideas among the Punjabi Youths to prepare them for the coming struggle against British. 69 Nau Jawan Sabha received the support of such prominent leaders

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69. *Home Political*, F.No. 130 & K.W.
like Kedar Nath Sehgal, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Anand Kishore Mehta, Pindi Dass Sodhi and comrade Ram Chandra and soon became a force to reckon with. Several public meetings were held during the summer of 1926 which attracted large number of students. It gained great popularity by inviting well known revolutionaries like Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, S.A. Dange and Phillips Spratt of the British Communist Party in their public meetings. In one such public meetings held on April 15, the organiser announced their intention of holding a series of public meetings "to expound new ideas on religion and freedom". 70

The members of the Sabha also engaged themselves in the boycott of Simon Commission which reached Lahore on October 20, 1928, where a huge procession greeted with a black-flag demonstration and shouting "Go back Simon". As a result of the concerned efforts of the Sabha, there was a remarkable response from the public. Lala Lajpat Rai who was leading the procession surged forward like waves of a mighty sea. The police then took resort to lathies and batons resulting in severe injuries to a number of processionists who had remained disciplined and peaceful throughout. The demonstrators did not disperse, which infuriated the police still further. Lala Lajpat Rai was also badly attacked by lathies and consequently he died on November 17, 1928. 71

70. Ibid.
The revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Chander Shekhar Azad, Rajguru, Yashpal, Kailash Pati and some other decided to avenge the murder of their great leader by killing Scott who was in-charge of the police. They decided to kill Scott on December 17, 1928 while he came from the police station. Jai Gopal, who had been asked to keep watch on Scott's activities, mistook Saunders, got out of the police station on his motor cycle, he gave a signal to Bhagat Singh and Azad who were waiting of the signal. They fired at Saunders and he died on the spot. The revolutionaries fled away and the police could arrest none of them.

Immediately after this incident, the Punjab revolutionaries went underground. The all-India revolutionary party under the name of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association intensified its activities. It drew the attention of the people towards the failure of the Satyagraha movement and called upon every Indian to take a vow to change the existing social order. They appealed to the people, "Join hands with us in throwing out the Government by an armed Revolution planned secretly". Such a revolution "will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges and will banish social parasites from the seat of political power".72

After learning the bomb making from Jatendra Nath Dass of Bengal, they opened bomb factories at Agra and Lahore. Bhagat Singh

72. The Hindustan Socialists Republic Association's Manifesto.
and Batukeshwara Dutta threw bombs (which were made at the Agra Factory) in the Central Assembly Hall with a view to wrecking the British administration. They did not try to escape after this act, but shouted at the top of their voices "Long Live Revolution; Down with Imperialism; Workers of the World Unite". The bombs did little damage and according to Jawahar Lal Nehru there "seems to have been meant merely to create a big noise and attract the country's attention". Both were arrested immediately. The bomb factory at Lahore was discovered by the police and soon after, subsequent arrests of Sukhdev, Kishori Lal and others were made. But the confessions made by Jai Gopal and Hans Raj Vohra led to more arrests of most active workers and leaders of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. The exposure of the conspiracy led to the trial which came to be known as the Lahore Conspiracy case of 1929. Bhagat Singh and B.K.Dutt were implicated in the new case. The judgement was announced in October 1930. Bhagat Singh Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death. The three heroes were hanged on March 23, 1931.

The persons who were implicated in Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1925 were also the companions of Bhagat Singh. Among them prominent were Sohan Singh Josh, Kedar Nath Sehgal and Abdul Majid. The ruthless acts of the officialdom had their desired effect and the revolutionary movement gradually petered out but certainly not without leaving behind indelible mark on the people of the country.

Simultaneously, the British Government consolidated the loyalist forces—Muslims, landlords especially, Agriculturists Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Unionist Party and feudal lords. In the West Punjab, the British Government turned to the leading landlord families to form an important pillar of their rule. During the Anglo-Sikh war 1848-49 and in the revolt of 1857, many of them had fought on the British side. During both the period of crisis, the Tiwanas raised a 400 - strong cavalry troop to aid them. The Ghebas of Kot Fateh Khan also supplied a large number of men. Makhdum Shah Muhammad of the Zakaria Shrine in Multan not only supplied troops but severely demoralised the local rebels by personally taking part in the campaign against them. The British amply rewarded such loyalty. Makhdum Shah Muhammad received a gift of Rs.3000/- for his services. In 1860, when the Viceroy visited Lahore, the Makhdum was further rewarded, receiving as personal gift a garden known as Áhangawala Bagh. Sardar Fateh Khan of Kot Gheba was given a life pension of 600 per annum, invested with judicial powers in 18 villages and granted 3000 acres of pasture land in the Kila Chita Hills.

In the central and eastern districts, the British looked to the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh peasant proprietors as their main allies. The backward Jat tribes of the Ambala division of the

province benefited in particular from the British advances in communications, sanitation, medical and education facilities. The introduction of the Pax Britannica and the development of road and rail communication made the commercialisation of agricultural possible. Most important of all to the Punjab's increasing rural prosperity was the British extension of its irrigation systems.75

In the end of the 19th century the British began to work on the Canal Colony irrigation development. It transformed over 6 million acres of land in the South-West Punjab from arid wasteland populated only by nomadic herders into the richest farming area in the whole of the subcontinent. About 3½ million rupees worth of crops were produced in the Lower Chenab Canal Colony among of the Province's nine Colony areas. The Canal Colony development as a whole was crucial to the Punjab's agricultural prosperity. It relieved the heavy pressure on land in the central areas of the Province, dramatically increased agricultural production and accelerated the region's transformation into a major exporter of wheat and other foodgrains.

The Canal Colony development gave British officials in the Punjab an endless supply of patronage with which to secure the political support. They were thus in a much stronger position than was usual for colonial administrators who seldom had sufficient

patronage to satisfy all their local allies. Canal colony land was so valuable that even the landlords who owned vast estates elsewhere in the Punjab were eager to acquire it. The British responded by laying aside certain areas for the leading landowners in the hope that they would provide political and social leadership in these newly settled areas. Seven and a half percent of the cultivated area of the lower Bari Doab Canal Colony was in this way reserved for the rural elite. As a result its loyalty to the British was immeasurably strengthened. 76

The major British legislation against the money-lenders' growing influence was the 1901 Alienation of Land Act. This divided the population into agriculturist and non-agriculturist tribes. The latter, which included the moneylending castes, were forbidden to acquire land permanently in the countryside. This measure not only halted the increasing expropriation of impoverished landowners but encouraged future political co-operation between the large landlords of the west and the peasant proprietors of the east by giving concrete expression to their common interests. The British went a stage further in encouraging the creation of a rural political grouping in 1919 when they granted agriculturists a preferential right of recruitment to Government service. 77

British education policy was a further factor in securing

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76. op. cit., p.76.

loyal allies amongst the Punjabi landlords. Aitcheson College was founded in Lahore in 1886 to provide education for the sons of the leading landowners. It restricted admission to all but a few of the province's rural elite. It ethos and syllabus was similar to that of the English Public Schools, and it provided its pupils with a sense of pride and emotional attachment to the British Empire. Many Aitcheson College pupils did indeed go on to have important political careers. Most notable of all was Malik Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana who became the Punjab's Premier in 1942.  

The British and their rural allies did not want to see the more sophisticated and organised urban elites to take advantage of the spread of representative politics into the province. The Punjab Government thus ensured that the franchise and distribution of seats for the new Legislative Council created by the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms favoured the rural population. Separate electorates were created for the Punjab's rural and urban areas with each having a total number of seats proportionate to their population. This meant that a mere four of the 34 Muslims elected to the Council would come from the towns. Moreover, only members of the agricultural tribes as defined by the 1901 Alienation of Land Act were allowed to stand as candidates for the rural seats. The British in this way created the framework in which an intercommunal could


79. Many of the British administrators shared their rural allies' dislike of the urban elites. They were regarded as potential disloyal. Even worse they considered by some as completely treacherous, corrupt and unmanly, totally lacking in all the qualities which the British admired in the rural population.
successfully operate. The difficult task still remained of organising the independent rural members into a political party. This was achieved in 1923 with the formation of the Punjab Unionist Party by Mian Fazl-i-Husain, the leading Muslim politician in the province and Chaudhry Chhotu Ram, Jat leader and thereby tried to give a new turn to Punjab politics by upholding a non-communal programme. Though predominantly a Muslim organisation, it included among its members Hindu and Sikh landlords and agriculturists. In order to realise their objects they took a pro-British stand. Thus the British authorities succeeded in creating an institution which not only became a bulwark against the Congress or left influence but also actively collaborated with the imperialists on the issues of common interests. Discarding communal lines, the Unionist Party adopted a programme to which it gave an agricultural and rural bias in regard to the legislative and administrative policy. Within a short period it became a considerable force in Punjab politics.

80. Regarding the charge of driving a wedge between the villagers and the town-dwellers, Chhotu Ram told the trading communities plainly: "It is true that a distinction between the urban population and the rural population which is more or less identical with in distinction between commercial classes and agricultural classes, has come into existence. But no body can deny that this distinction proceeds from a well recognised difference between two sets of economic interests. No can any reasonable person deny that a line of economic division is twenty times better than a distinction between one section of the community and another on the basis of religious belief. In fact, I will go even to the extent of suggesting that economic interests as a basis for the formation of parties provide a finer and healthier Principle of party" Gopal, Madan, op. cit., p.111. Also see Talbot, I.A., Deserted Collaborated, op. cit., p. 78, Amalendu De, Some Aspect of Communal Politics in the Punjab 1937-47, The Oracle, Vol. I, No.2, Calcutta,1979, p.46.
In fact, Unionist Party dominated Punjab politics from its inception in 1923 to the death of Sir Sikander Hyat Khat in 1942, though after the death of Fazl-i-Husain (1936), it had started yielding to the pressure of the Muslim League.

The Unionist Party's success depended on a careful balancing of the interests of its landlord and peasants wings. The British bent over backwards to make this possible. A striking example of the benefits which could be obtained by United action was given to the rural population in 1924 when the Punjab Government considerably reduced the enhancement of the canal water rates after widespread protests, even though this meant that it had to rearrange the provincial budget and reintroduce urban taxation. Another British concession to joint action was the Land Revenue Act of 1928 which, with its higher assessments and the fix of 40 years as the period of settlement, benefited both the landlords and the peasant proprietors. 81

Although the Unionist Party lost some of its power when Mian Fazl-i-Husain left the Punjab in 1930 to take up his position on the Viceroy's Executive Council, it nevertheless exerted a dominant and moderating influence on provincial politics throughout the period 1923-37.

In 1937, the Punjab politics took a new turn. Provincial elections were held in this year and the Unionist Party got

81. Talbot, I.A.; Deserted Collaborators, op. cit.
tremendous success. It captured 95 seats out of 175, Congress 18, Khalsa National Board 14, Akali Party 10, Hindu Election Board 12, Ahrar 2, Congress Nationalists 1, Muslim League 1, Ithad-i-Milat 1, Congress Socialist Party 1, Parliamentary Board 1 and Independent 19. Thus the biggest was the Unionist Party and it formed the Government with Sir Sikander Hyat Khan as its Premier. It remained firmly in the hands of the loyal allies of the British. This was the culmination of the policy which they had pursued in the Punjab for the previous 80 years.

The Unionist Party introduced several measures of agrarian legislation. Three amendments were made to the Punjab Alienation of Land Act. One of these amendments prohibited agricultural land being put to destructive use by a mortgage or a lease, without the consent of the owner and removed the ambiguity regarding the period for which temporary alienation of land belonging to a statutory agriculturist debtor could be ordered by a Civil Court. Another amendment nullified certain sales and mortgages of land which were affected in contravention of the intention of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act (1900). Yet another enactment placed the agriculturist-moneylenders for the purposes of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act in the same position as non-agriculturist money-lenders and checked them from permanently acquiring the land of their agriculturist debtors.

The Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act was passed in 1938 which terminated old mortgages of land (affected before 1901) on payment of a reasonable compensation when necessary by the mortgager to the mortgages. It restored 835,000 acres of land to 365,000 peasants who had been dispossessed of their lands. The Punjab Agricultural Produce Marketing Act was also passed which provided the registration of the mandis and the licensing of the mahajans. The registration of the mandis envisaged the setting up of the mandi marketing committees, with two third representation to the peasants and one-third to the mahajans.

The gulf that separated the land-holders and the commercial class was gradually bridged. The growing influence of the Congress, Akali Party and Muslim League gave a new dimension to Punjab politics as a whole. In order to strengthen their position, the leaders of these organisations felt the necessity of mobilising both the landholders and commercial class in their own parties. This abruptly altered the entire situation. So long the Unionist Party maintained the balance, the Muslim League did not get any foothold in Punjab politics. But Jinnah as leader of the League was not disheartened. Again and again he interfered in the affairs of the Punjab. He advised the League to take part in the Shahidganj Mosque Agitation along other Muslim organisations. In this way Jinnah tried to keep alive the League organisation there.

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84. Husseain Azim, op. cit., also see The Indian Annual Register Vol.1 January-June 1937, p.32
85. For details see Amalendu De, The Shahidganj Agitation and the Khaksars, the The Punjab Past and Present, Vol.IX-II October,1975.
At last, in the beginning of 1937, the political wind in India began to blow in favour of the Muslim League. Jinnah fully utilised the situation created by the general policy of the Congress with regard to the formation of Ministries in the U.P. and Bengal respectively. Besides, Jinnah followed a policy of mass contact on communal lines. His sole object was to mobilize the Muslim masses behind the League. During this time Jinnah also endeavoured to enlist the support of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Unionist Premier of the Punjab. Shahidganj agitation gave the chance to Jinnah. Taking advantage of this situation the Muslim League, in 1937, tried to extend its sphere of influence in the Punjab as well as to pressurize Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Punjab Premier, to accept the League leadership of that province. To pacify the Muslim mind agitated over the Shahidganj mosque, Sir Sikander also considered it the easiest way to come to an understanding with the League. This was one of the most important reasons for which the Sikander-Jinnah Pact was conducted on the 14th October, 1937. This momentous decision was taken at the All India Muslim League Session at Lucknow. It was decided that the Muslim members of the Unionist Party, who were not member of the League already, would sign the creed of the League and join it. That would not, however, affect the continuance of the present coalition Unionist Party.

85. Khaliquaz-zaman, Chaudhry, Pathway to Pakistan (Lahore, 1961)
It put an end to the League long-standing League-Unionist controversy with regard to the Punjab and other issues affecting the position of the Indian Muslims as a while.

In order to take another step forward in Punjab politics, Jinnah selected Lahore as the venue for the famous Pakistan Resolution in March 1940. It gave a concrete shape to Jinnah's two nation theory. Though Sir Sikander and his followers in the Unionist Party were committed to the ideals of Hindu-Muslim unity yet they had to endorse such a resolution at Lahore which was contrary to their basic principles. This was the natural corollary to the Pact of 1937. This created a peculiar situation in Punjab politics. Undoubtedly, Jinnah derived more benefit out of it than Sir Sikander. It became easier for Jinnah to destroy the non-communal aspect of the Unionist ideology. On the other hand, Sir Sikander's position became precarious. Personally, he did not believe in the two-nation theory and could not reconcile himself with the Pakistan Resolution. On this point, he had differences with the official line of the League. He thought that the implementation of the League's proposal on Pakistan would not only lead to the vivisection of the whole of India, it would also lead to the partition of the Punjab. He tried "to make Punjabis realise that Pakistan would mean the dismemberment of the Punjab". In spite of this distinct view Sir Sikander could not go ahead with his ideas because of the Pact of 1937. He became a pathetic prisoner of his own decision.

89. Amalendu De, *op. cit.*, pp.48-49.
The Second World War broke out in 1939, it dominated all areas of the Punjab's life. The province even surpassed its herculean efforts of 1914-18 in raising army recruits and food supplies for the British. The Unionist Party, unlike the Congress or the Muslim League, unconditionally supported the British effort. It played an important role in coordinating the Punjab's contribution to this. It helped to raise nearly a million recruits for the Punjabi Army, organised savings and 'grow more food' campaigns on a massive scale. But this notable contribution to the war effort obscured the gradual erosion of the Unionist power within the Punjab.\textsuperscript{90}

Wartime financial stringency forced the Unionist Party to abandon many of its ambitious programmes of rural improvement. The important Thal Canal Colony project was, for example, delayed because of lack of funds. The Unionist Party also unable to afford to reduce the water rates in the Canal Colonies and to introduce a sliding scale of Land Revenue charges both of which the smaller landlords had been pressing for a long time.\textsuperscript{91}

Fear of disrupting the war effort also prevented it from bringing forward any further legislation which favoured the rural population at the expense of the non-agriculturists. The dangers in pressing such 'controversial' legislation had become apparent in 1941, when the Hindu and Sikh business class had disrupted the province's commercial life for two months in protest against the General Sales Tax Act, which had attempted to shift more of the burden of taxation into the urban traders.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90} Talbot, I.A., \textit{op. cit.}, p.82.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
Thus at the time of Quit India Movement, the condition of the Punjab was very peculiar. The Unionist Party was the ruling party which had pro-British leanings. Sir Sikander Hyat Khan was the Premier of the province. This party dominated the Punjab politics from 1923 to 1945. It followed a consistent and vigorous policy for the improvement of the condition of the masses, particularly the peasantry. The Unionist manifestoes always encouraged small-scale and cottage industries in the towns as well as in the villages. It steadily pursued its policy of relieving the agricultural and labouring classes of their burden of debt. It had passed many rural legislations which are popularly known as "Golden laws" for the benefit of peasantry i.e. Debtors Protection Act (1936), Punjab Restoration of Mortgaged Land Act (1938) and Agricultural Produce Marketing Bill 1938 etc. and strengthened its hold over the peasantry.

So long as the Unionist Party remained in power in the province, the Muslim League did not find any opportunity to have hold on Punjabi Muslims. But after the Sikander-Jinnah Pact (1937), the Muslim League began to muster strength day by day. It passed the famous Pakistan Resolution in 1940 at Lahore. It gave a concrete shape to Jinnah's two nation theory. Though the Punjab premier was not in favour of two nation theory yet he could not go ahead with his ideas because of the Pact of 1937. Thus the Muslim-League became influential in Punjab politics at the time of Quit-India Movement.
The Indian National Congress from its very inception was rather weak in the province; it had not succeeded in mobilizing a large section of the population. Moreover, its leaders were at loggerheads with each other in Punjab. They were divided into groups, one led by Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargav and the other by Dr. Satyapal. Both the groups wanted to suppress each other in order to have supremacy over the other. The Punjab leaders in such situation could not see eye to eye and failed to co-operate with each other in fighting out reactionary as well as communal forces. Their personal prejudices and vested interests were the major issues which created factional politics.