Local Self-government and Education in India: Explorationsinto the Late 19th Century Punjab

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to suggest how the colonial Punjab government reputed for its paternalistic rule managed to defeat some significant imperial initiatives and advocacy of the poor man's education. It is argued that officially controlled and semi-elected local bodies which were tasked for a variety of reasons to manage public-sector schools had neither understood the true import of education nor provided resources for its expansion and improvement. Responsibility without power and answerability impeded their work while class considerations held them back from promoting mass literacy and egalitarian trends in education. They were stirred into action after 1919 reforms once franchise was extended and education and local government were transferred to ministers answerable to the legislature. Democratisation, however slow, stimulated growth and wider disbursement of educational opportunities.

Introduction

The nationalist upsurge in India during the last quarter of the 19th century found a growing sympathy among the Liberal politicians in Britain to seek association of Indians with the

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administration of the country. The Whiggish philosophy to regard nationalist cravings in colonies as natural gave birth to a relationship of trust between the ruler and the indigenous political elites which put India on the path to Independence over half a century later. The verity of this claim was provided by the imperial government's decision to handover the management of public sector schools to the newly-reformed and semi-elected local bodies, i.e. municipalities, local and district boards in 1886. This step had pre-dated legislative politics in the Punjab and set in motion hitherto dormant political forces.[1] Being the initiative of Viceroy Lord Ripon, backed by Gladstone, it was symbolic of sympathetic Whiggerythat had inspired the birth of the All India National Congress a year earlier.[2] Having weighed its political merits and demerits, the Liberal stalwarts braveddiehard opposition from Conservatives in Britain and the bureaucracy in India. They refused to heed the vociferous Tory admonishment of the urbanized and educated nationalist bourgeois, beneficiaries of colonial *laissez-faire* economy and the earliest pushers of *swaraj*. In that conflict of ideologies in the imperial house, the Conservatives had to wait until the close of the 19th century by which time apologists of *laissez faire* lost ground to the Conservatives and socialist exponents of stately intervention.Long in gestation, the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 had marked the triumph of statist conservatism in Britain as well as in India.[3]

How did the educated middle-class Hindu nationalists react to this ideological shift in the imperial household? They

1 The Punjab had its legislative council in 1897 against the express will of the local government which was not in favour of liberalizing control on the administration of the province.

2 For a coherent compendium of liberal discourse on the Indian question, see R. J. More, *Liberalism and Indian Politics 1872-1922*(London: Edward Arnold,1966).

3 Since the 1860s the Anglo-Indians in the Punjab had been pressing for peasant-protective legislation which finally led to the passage of the Act. For more on the subject, see, Peter van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in Nineteenth Century India* (London: Allen &Unwin,1972).

regarded sympathy for the peasants in the Land Alienation Act as smokescreen for official hostility for their class. Over a decade earlier they had commended Lord Ripon's inclusive government. Among others, they had welcomed his reform of local self-government, *albeit* with reservations about the suitability of local bodies for the management of government schools.[4]The Punjab Hindus, especially the money-lenders, had prospered by pursuing education and "property with vigour".[5]They formed the nationalist elite with membership in intelligentsia too. As earliest advocates of *swaraj* in the region, they had locked themselves in a protracted battle for rights with the British bureaucracy. As alumna of colonial schools, colleges and universities, they critiqued government policies and questioned the moral propriety of the Raj. Modern education, an instrument of official control since 1835 conditioned to feel needs of imperial political economy, informed their political discourse as they increasingly grudged the Anglo-Indian monopoly of power and privilege.[6]

The imperial responses to the challenges of incipient nationalism were both retaliatory and conciliatory. Pandering to the influential elites and neglecting the masses of people, the British sought to rope the landed aristocracy and the urban-based educated middle classes, the select few, in the network of government-sponsored institutions such as

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4 According to Ruchi Ram Sahni, later professor of Physics at Government College Lahore, they were so carried away by the news of reforms, that he along with numerous other students took rounds of various towns to popularize them.

5 Francis Robinson, "Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces 1883-1916," in John Gallagher *etal*, eds., *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics: 1870-1940*(London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 69-121.

6 For a link between education and politics in colonial India, see, Bruce TieboutMcCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940) 1966;AparnaBasu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Tim Allender, *Ruling Through Education: The Politics of Schooling in the Colonial Punjab*(Delhi: New Dawn Press, 2008); GauriViswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

reformed local bodies by Lord Ripon's government. Fortuitously, Ripon found in the gubernatorial office in the Punjab a fellow Liberal, Charles Aitchison, with whom he shared identical views on reforms, facing commonplace hostility from the Anglo-Indians.[7] This preference of reform to extremism and constitutionalism to militancy did not mean the Liberals were blind to the imperatives of colonial rule.[8]As Philip Mason had rightly observed, Liberals and Conservatives both believed that the English were trustees. However, Liberals had more faith than did the Conservatives in the ability of Indians to govern themselves eventually. Conservatives, on the other hand, were convinced that for a long time to come there would not be much lightening of the White Man's Burden.[9]

Reformof local self-government was driven by political considerations and considerations of economy. Attempted in the wake of foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, it evoked a mixed reaction. At its best,the step represented a modicum of decentralization. Apartment from fiscal decentralization, the reformed local bodies provided avenues for official-elite networking and served as nurseries of political education. In a few cases, they formed an electoral college for the provincial legislature which was formed in 1896. Through their agency, the officials gauged the nature and intensity of local problems and devised policy responses accordingly. The system was designedas an instrument of political and popular education.

Thus self-government in India was initiated in the periphery under strong controls and from the lowest rung of representation. Strangely, the significance of this important beginning and its regional functioning has failed to draw the

7 Against the common opposition and concerted campaign of Anglo-Indians Aitchison had supported the Viceroy on Ilbert Bill (1881) that had sought to empower Indian judges to try Europeans too.

8 For more on the subject of government's preference for reform and the reformists, See, Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale:A Study in Reconciliation and Confrontation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962).

9 Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics,* 33.

attention of historians and policy makers. This paper is to revisit the work of reformed local bodies as managers of public-sector education in the Punjab. It seeks to address and portray indigenous reactions to the effected change and assess the performance of public-sector education under their care and in comparison with the private sector. A reference, where necessary, is also made to the Punjab government's elitist views about Western-education in the province which were at variance with those of Calcutta urging education of the poor masses.For its impact, the councillors'interest in education is measured in relation to their social background and elitist ideas they shared with the Civilians.

Educational Landscape

Only twenty-seven years had elapsed since the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849, when its government placed all the public-sector schools under the charge of local bodies as directed by Calcutta following the Hunter Report (1882). Strategically important, the region had been least touched by colonial influence and modernity and was limping behindthe older provinces of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras. Following Arnold's, the DPI, investigation, its expansive but moribund indigenous system of education did not find favour with the ruling class and the Education Department, whereas its modern/colonial alternative was afforded little practical sympathy and was evidently slow in the making.[10] Random opening and closuring of schools marked the first few years of British rule in the Punjab whereas formal and systematic attempts only followed Charles Wood's Education Despatch of 1854, the Magna Carta of modern education in India. The Despatch outlined goals and methods of education policy and directed the establishment of Education Department in each provinceand universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It committed public-sector to meeting the expense on primary education officially designated as education of

10 Philip Mason, *The Men Who Ruled India* (London:Jonathan Cape, 1953), 175.

the poor masses; and it urged public-private partnership in the provision and financing of post-primary education. Likewise, it stressed the promotion of vernaculars for transmitting the knowledge of European science and literature. To what extent were these important provisions of the Despatch in question to chime with the Anglo-Indians, mainstay of the paternalistic British rule in the Punjab?

A glance at the educational landscape during this period is essential to answering the above question. In 1902, there were seventy-one vernacular secondary schools in the Punjab under Local Boards and forty-four under the municipalities. In addition, municipalities managed sixty-six Anglo-Vernacular Schools and Local Boards thirteen. Consequently, all government schools for boys became the preserve of local bodies from 1886 onwards. As model institutions, the Lahore-based Government College and the Central Training College were retained under direct control and supervision of the Education Department.[11]

SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS BY MANAGEMENT

	Year	Government	MissionSchools	Private	Total
Schools	1882	189	38	…	227
Scholars	---	4,974	946	…	5,920
Schools	1902	193	63	95	351
Scholars	…	12,475	4,941	4,762	22,178

SOURCE: *Fourth Quinquenial Review of Book in India 1897-1902*.

The above figures portray no significant increase in the number of Board/government schools save in their population. By contrast, growth was recorded in the non-governmental missionary and unaided/private-sector schools by the Punjabi reformers. The performance of private

11 After annexation, W. D. Arnold, the first Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab conducted an enquiry into the indigenous education. He reported a vast number of indigenous schools for Hindus, Muslims, and the Sikhs, besides a great yearning for knowledge.

enterprise was noteworthy given the fact that it could not boast a single secondary school in 1882 but now two decades later it surpassed government-aided mission schools. The differential growth in the public and private sectors was not officially unintended though, as the imperial policy had thus stressed the expansion of tertiary education. The overall growth was however unimpressive and not to the full potentials of the region's burgeoning economy.It therefore evoked emotive reactions from the intelligentsia and later from the leading nationalists like Gandhi who decried the massive scale of illiteracy under the Raj contrasting it somewhat lyrically with the widespread literacy in pre-colonial India. Gandhi held the British uprooted the 'beautiful tree' (indigenous education).[12] The growth in the Punjab, not even remotely close to the expanse of officially reported literacy on the morrow of annexation, brought the institution of local self-government into disrepute for its failure to conjure up support for modern education.

Local Self-government: Origin and Expansion

The British who annexed the Punjab in 1849 were pleasantly surprised to learn about the prevalence of wide-spread literacy and its providers.[13] They regretted the historical neglect and the amount of harm education had been done during the Sikh twilight. They were impressed by the resilience of self-contained Punjab villages to the depredations occasioned by the Sikh wars. They learnt from the remains of centuries-old dysfunctional rural *punchayat*system about indigenous tradition of local self-government. Ironically, these social indices of bygone glory of the Punjab villages failed tofind favour with the colonial administrators who replaced the *punchayat* with municipalities in towns and local and district boards in the country.

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12 Report on Public Instruction in Punjab (hereinafter PPIR), 1881-82, Statements II-V; PPIR, 1901-02, Table V.

13 Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*: *Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New Dehli: BiblioImpex Private Ltd., 1983).

The origin of local self-government in the British Punjab dated from the Municipal Committees Act XXVI of 1850. Giving birth to two municipalities of Simla and Bhiwani, the law did not spur municipal government in the province. Officially aimed at breaking "through the habit of keeping everything in dependence on Calcutta", the act was to encourage discretion by Local Government.[14] It was to minimize official interference and provide the people's representatives with an opportunity to self-employ in the development of municipal administration.Years passed without notable progress in municipal government. Although Donald Macleod, the financial commissioner, bemoaned its profile in 1861, he was hopeful of its eventual success. For he thought municipal government was suited to the genius of Indians, who must be trusted and not treated "as children or imbeciles."[15]Following a resolution by Robert Montgomery, the lieutenant-governor, and the first Municipal Act of 1862, municipal committees were set up at district headquarters. However, the enthusiasm of Montgomery or optimism of Macleod was not shared by most Anglo-Indians. For example, John Lawrence, the Viceroy of India (1864-69) and the first lieutenant-governor of the Punjab thought Indians were incapable of running municipal government.[16] Such commonplace Anglo-Indian attitudes would not augur well for the growth of local bodies in the Punjab.

Lord Mayo's devolutionary policy acted as a catalyst for the development of local self-government in India. His government's resolution of 1870 had become a point of common reference among his successors. Drawing on it, Lord Ripon (1880-84) set out to vitalize municipal institutions. Given India's geographical and ethnic diversity, he discouraged a uniform system and advocated discretion

14 Based on Arnold's findings, Leitner's History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab at Annexation and in 1882, Calcutta, 1882, provides a powerful testimony to the indigenous traditions of learning.

15 Hugh Tinker, *The Foundation of Local-Self Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*(London:Athlone Press,1954), 35.

16 Amar Nath, *The Development of the Local-Self Government in the Punjab: 1849-1900*(Lahore: Government of Punjab Press, 1930),14-15.

by local governments in matters of local interest. Claiming that his scheme of reform for local self-government was based on the principles laid down by Lords Lansdowne, Mayo and Northbrook, Ripon denounced his critics as "the type of Englishman who considers that India and her inhabitants were made for his advantage."[17] Aware of the officials' impatience with the "blunders, prejudices and slowness of local bodies", he discouraged them from checking the "advance of habits of self-government among the people."[18]

Under Mayo's policy of financial devolution and decentralization police and education were assigned to the municipalities. The areas beyond the jurisdiction of cantonments and municipalities were placed under the care of district and local boards. The Punjab District Boards Act (October 1883) was extended to twenty-one districts in November 1883 and a year later to all the thirty districts. Duties of the district and local boards included the provision of civic amenities such as water, roads, famine relief, promotion of agriculture and industry, registration of births and deaths, management of schools, teacher-training and scholarships. Local boards were established as adjuncts of district boards. After police, primary and secondary education became an important area of municipal and local responsibility. The members of municipal, local and district boards not only managed Board Schools (formerly government schools) but also disbursed government grants to mission schools in accordance with the Punjab Education Code. Local bodies assumed the charge of education as part of a major change enacted by Ripon's government. The principle of local self-government, first enunciated by Ripon at a meeting in 1881, was typical of British liberal free-trade imperialism. The resolution of 1882 stressed the value of

17 Muhammad Aslam Khan Magsi, *Development of Local Self-Government in the Punjab, 1919-1932*(Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1973), 4.

18 Ripon to Gladstone, March 24, 1883*Gladstone Papers*, (NDC, Islamabad), (mf) 3229.

local self-government as a means of popular education.[19] However, its implementation did not signify the indigenization of power at local level.

Credentials of the Local Bodies to Manage Public Sector Education

Local bodies assumed the charge of education in the backdrop of the educated Indians' craving for and Anglo-Indians' aversion to the expansion of educational opportunities. To the educated Punjabis, especially to urban Hindus, the change was a retrograde step and a concession to the anti-education lobby. Except for *The Civil and Military Gazette*, the mouthpiece of Anglo-Indian interests, the move was generally deprecated in the Province.[20] The educated Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs opposed the official policyof confining government support to elementary education. In particular, the Punjab Hindus, mostly town-dweller Khatris, Aroras and Banias, were in the vanguard of opposition to the government withdrawal from post-primary education - the education of the privileged class. Their fears were not altogether unjustified.

According to Peter Dungen, the Punjab officials had begun to pinpoint social and political demerits of *laissez-faire*economy since the 1860s, urging class legislation to save the peasants from exploitation by money-lenders (mostly Hindus). Their concernsfinally led to the passage of the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900.[21] In the communally-charged political atmosphere,[22] the Land Alienation Act was condemned by the nationalists as pro-Muslim and anti-Hindu. In a similar vein they perceived political motives behind the official emphasis on education of the massesunderscoring class and communal biases.

19 Ripon to Gladstone, October 22, 1881, *Gladstone Papers*, (NDC Islamabad), (mf) 3229.

20 Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*, Bombay (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1981),115.

21 *The Civil and Military Gazette,*Lahore, May 14, 1884.

22 Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition*.

Considering these semi-elected local bodies as the adjuncts of officialdom, the Hindu intelligentsia opposed their association with education citing educational backwardness of the province and lack of private philanthropy. Apprehensive of the credentials and conduct of local bodies, they regarded official participation as indispensable.

Launched amid suspicion, the managerial role of local bodies was not a happy augury for primary and secondary education. Preoccupied with the provision of civic amenities and public order, they neglected Board schools. The police consumed most of their funds; in Delhi, for instance, the outlay on police soared to 75percentof the municipal budget. Following the transfer of government schools to local bodies, the Punjab Government withdrew itself to a few model institutions. Only the Anglo-Indian *The Civil and Military Gazette,*Lahore, considered the step compatible with the spirit of local self-government.[23] The change in management, however, did not represent obsolescence in official control as board schools were still subject to government intervention via the Education Department. The Punjab Education Codes (1886, 1896) which laid down the rules regarding fees, grant-in-aid, salaries, selection and promotion of school teachers, fettered the local bodies. The local bodies lacked any say in the selection of curriculum which remained a preserve of the government-appointed textbook committee, whereas the final selection of textbooks rested with the Education Department. The work of municipal, local and district boards was swayed by official chairmen, i.e. deputy commissioners.

The composition of local bodies was such that it tended to reduce the members to mere rubber-stamps. Of the 149 municipalities in the Punjab (under the Act XX of 1891),

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23 The urban middle-class Hindus, especially the Aryas are generally regarded as mainly responsible for religious polarization in the Punjab. See, for example, K. W. Jones, *AryaDharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*(Berkeley: University of California Press 1978); InduBanga, "AryaSamaj and Punjabi Identity," in *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context*,Pritam Singh and Shinder S. Thandi, eds.(New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

thirty-eight were nominated and 110 were partly elected and partly nominated. Under the same Act there were a total of 1,656 municipal members in the Punjab, including 227 ex-officio, 624 nominated and 805 elected.[24] Of the 1,280 members of district boards only 455 were elected while the remainder comprised ex-officio and nominated members. Together, the nominated and ex-officio members constituted a majority on municipal and district boards. Even the elected minority owed membership to restricted franchise. Decision-making in municipal and district boards therefore bore official stamp as real power remained with the deputy commissioners, who continued to control the institutions of local self-government notwithstanding the periodic extension of elective element in them. The municipal committees, Hugh Tinker observed, were formed under the chairmanship of district magistrates from a list of influential *mulaqatis* (acquaintances) and other respectable citizens.[25]

Local Bodies as Instrument of Official Control of Education

As managers of public-sector education local bodies brought no relief to public funds as theywere unwilling to levy new taxes for the financing of education in the province. Apart from the existing one percent Education Cess on land revenue no new taxes were introduced due to fear of educated propertied class and urban voters. Funding for the Municipal Board schools was provided from provincial revenues, district funds and subscriptions. In boys' schools for general education, tuition fees raised substantial amounts, exempting girls' and special schools. The District Board Schools relied on district funds, supplemented in some cases by contributions from provincial revenues, municipal funds, subscriptions and school fees. Again, girls' and special schools were exempt from payment of fees. Grants from provincial revenues were paid chiefly in the form of remissions of a portion of the contribution from district

24 *The Civil and Military Gazette,*Lahore,May 14, 1884

25 Nath, *Local Self-Government in the Punjab*, Appendix iv,xx.

funds to provincial revenues. Whatever the source, grants in support of Board Schools were credited to the local body concerned which defrayed the cost of establishment and contingent charges.[26]

Local bodies'ineptness in education was illustrated by the extent of their financial contribution. Before they took the rein, the proportion borne by provincial revenues to the total expenditure on secondary schools, which was 39percent for India, varied from 28percentand 34percentin Madras, Bombay and Bengal to 55percentand 69percentin the Punjab and NWFP. Financial contributions from local and municipal funds to secondary schools varied from 1percentof the total cost of secondary education in Bengal to 2percent,in Madras 10percent, in the Central Provinces and 24percent in the Punjab. Bombay and the NWFP contributed 7percent and 8 percent, respectively.

In the Punjab, major chunk of educational budget was consumed by the middle and chiefly by middle-vernacular schools. These funds also defrayed one-third cost of the Central Training College, Lahore, meant for secondary school teachers training. Given the small number of public-sector schools and scholars, only limited income was procured through tuition fees. The percentage of tuition fees to the total expenditure on secondary education, which was 33 percentfor India, rose to 48percent in Madras; in Bengal, Assam and Bombay it varied in that order from 40percent to 35percent; while in the Central Provinces, the Punjab and NWFP it fell to bare 10percent, 9percent and 6 percent, respectively.[27] The Board Schools in the Punjab therefore relied heavily on public funds.

By virtue of the relevant sections of Acts of 1873 and 1884, the Local Government was competent to order the local bodies to set aside a certain portion of their income toward the educational expenditure.[28] Its failure to do so

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26 Tinker, *Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*, 137.

27 Punjab Education Proceedings [PEP], July 1887, Proc. 3A.

28 *Report of the Education Commission* (1882)(Calcutta: 1883), 205.

resulted in the neglect of education. A few examples would suffice. As of 1890, in Rohtak district, the total provision made in the budget for educational purposes, exclusive of expenditure on school buildings, fell short by Rs.6,000 that could be required; and in Delhi by Rs.4,000; in Karnal by Rs.4,500; in Bannu by Rs. 1,400; in Hazara by Rs. 1,200; in Peshawar by Rs.5,800; in Montgomery (present Sahiwal) by Rs.4,400; in Hoshiarpur by Rs. 12,600 and in Ferozepur by Rs.7,300.[29]

A decade later Rawalpindi Circle met 90.9percent, Jullundur Circle 83.3percent, Lahore, and Derajat 82.5percent, and Delhi 76.9percent of their financial obligation to education. In District terms, leaving Simla out with nothing to spend on education, Dera Ghazi Khan topped the list providing 115percent of what could be required under the rule.[30] Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Hazara followed close with a little more than the minimum. Ludhiana, Gujrat, Muzaffargarh, Jallundur, Amritsar and Gujranwala allocated 90 percent whereas the contributions from Bannu, Karnal, Rohtak, Peshawar, Shahpur, Lahore, Jhang, Sialkot, Delhi and Ambala districts ranged between 80 and 90 percent of the expected share. Almost twenty districts were close to meeting the official target and of the remaining ten districts, five spent between 60 and 70percent, while Montgomery spent 56.8 percent and Hissar and Kohat districts less than 50 percentof the target.[31]

Nearly all the Punjab districts were responsible for deficit financingof education. This charge is corroborated by the amounts set aside for this purpose. Taken together, their budgetary provisions showed a shortfall of Rs. 92.952 in 1885, while the actual expenditure was Rs. 33,898 less than the budgetary provision. Altogether, the district boards spent Rs. 1,26,842 less on their schools than what they could be

29 Notification by Punjab Government, February 24, 1888 vide Indian Education Proceedings, April 1888, Proc. 42A.

30 PEP, April 1890, Proc. 7-11A.

31 Due to insignificant number of schools in the district, the provision of funds was not a problem.

called upon to spend compared with Rs. 1,05,870 five years ago. The primary schoolsfared no better during the year as on thiscount budgetary provisions fell short by Rs. 62,779.[32]

The district officials encouraged the breach of financial obligations to education just as they encouraged diversion of educational funds to non-educational heads of expenditure. In March 1891, for example, the Municipal Committee of Sialkot contemplated cuts on educational budget so as to fund extra police establishment and sanitary works. To raise the amount it had decided to downgrade the Municipal Board High School in the city. The High School was established in 1887 to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria[33] as well as to end institutional monopoly of American and Scotch Mission Schools.[34]The deputy commissioner argued that the district with its 40,000 inhabitants and two high schools (Scotch Mission College, and American Mission High School) was amply provided and did not justify another high school. The inhabitants of the city resented the move, claiming the school was well attended and had been raising handsome income from fees.[35]They were delighted to learn that the lieutenant-governor had refused the official move, as he was opposed to restricting the people's choice to missionary schools. The incident only added to public resentment against the local bodies.

Class and Gender Biases of the Councillors

Local bodies were often accused of nepotism in the selection and promotion of school teachers. In the Punjab where family ties were strong it was considered a social obligation for the holders of public offices to help their kindred. It is no wonder if they bent rules and violated health as well as required educational qualifications. Numerous anecdotes

32 PPIR, 1894-1895, 11.

33 With 46 scholars in the high and 89 in the middle section, the school raised Rs. 2896 through tuition fees towards its total expenditure of Rs. 7000.

34 Lord Lytton, the viceroy has at times been accused of extravagance in connection with this event celebrated on the morrow of Afghan wars when imperial economy and finances were in dire straits.

35 PPIR, 1894-1895, 10-11.

pointing to high-handedness found their way into the press. A correspondent of *The Rahbar-i-Hind*of Lahore alleged favouratism by the Lahore Municipal Board in the promotion of school teachers.[36]The conduct of local bodies in subsequent years also provoked unflattering remarks. On 24 January 1902, *The Sialkot Paper*of Sialkotaccused them of promoting mediocrity and neglecting merit and asked the government to resume the control of Board High Schools.[37] A few months later, the same paper appealed to the government to take over the management of all secondary schools, as municipal and district boards had proved 'unequal to the task'.[38] The critics availed the Lahore visit of the Universities Commission (1902) to express their displeasure.

The teachers, crucial to any viable system of schooling, suffered from arbitrary decisions of the so-called representatives of the people. In the pre-colonial Punjab, teachers would enjoy proverbial respect in the society and generous financial support from parents. Now paid less than menial workers, they were expected to address concerns for morality and quality education. They were placed under a new set of superiors in addition to European inspectors and their Indian deputies. They felt therefore compelled at times to fidget figures and put up sham appearances just to please these official functionaries and the councillors. As if school-teaching was a light responsibility, the government contemplated additional work from them. Accordingly, on 4 May 1888, the Departmental Conference called for amending the Punjab Education Code requiring the school teachers to become the in-charge of village post-offices.[39] Consequently, the teaching profession carried no appeal and was often used as stepping stone to better-paying jobs.

36 Selections from Vernacular Newspapers of Punjab [SVNP], April 1883, 306.

37 SNVP, June 1887, 343.

38 SNVP, January 1902, 43.

39 SVNP, March 1902, 163.

A further blot on their performance was their apathy toward female education. And when so pointed by the "enlighted" critics or the press, they would often blame, like their British superiors, indigenous traditions, refusing to initiate any programme aimed at girls' schooling until it was preceded by a popular demand. Traditions are generally hard to break and were still harder in the patriarchal Punjabi society under paternalistic colonial rule. Purely male hierarchies of administration and conservative disdain for paid-work by women de-incentivized female literacy. The fears of spoilt-bride and caste commensality hardened *ashraf* (genteel) reactions. Although some of the colonial administrators such as John Lawrence and Robert Montgomery had braved the risk of attacking and controlling misogynic traditions of *suttee* and female infanticide, on balance the civilians cushioned conservative traditions. European school inspectors and their Indian deputies rarely took a generous view of female education. They even wrote annihilating reports urging closure of girls' schools (such as Khem Singh Bedi's schools in Rawalpindi division) and sought to trivialize female education by tailoring it to domestic roles. The candid remarks of a colonial school inspector provide insights into official mindset. "Women in Britain, argued Mayhew, were ornament of home and were consigned to the same role in India".[40] Although towards the end of the 19th century, the metaphor of knowledge-is-power was widely appreciated among the urban bourgeois class as gateway to progress and social mobility, it was considered only the right of affluent male population.

Conclusion

To sum up, the slow and slanted pace of educational development in the province during this period owed to the interplay of ruler's imperative and insensitivity of the semi-elected local bodies to the cause of education.As the government of the Punjab continually stressed quality education and payment of high tuition fees it did not allow

40 SVNP,May 1900, 235.

growth to the region's potentials. Informed by the elitist mother-country traditions, the rulers were predisposed to treat caste as substitute of class in Britain and would not accept education as birth right of all their subjects. Pandering to the elites, they overlooked the vulnerable strata: the poor masses of people, women and 'low-castes'. They acted therefore as normative agents of conservative ethos, militating against the levelling influences of modern education. Mistaken for their democratic nomenclature, local bodies were susceptible to official whims; and were not pressured by their affluent voters into undertaking plans of wide-spread literacy such as would threaten traditional order and cause social realignment. Expecting little good through them, the nationalists suspected them of abetting official containment of higher education in the province. For their part, municipalities and district boards made no serious efforts to salvage their image. On the government side, Aitchison admitted to having lent the government support disproportionately to education of the elites, but neither he nor his successors (James B. Lyall, Dennis Fitzpatrick, Mackworth Young and Charles Rivaz) ventured to right the wrong. They did not prioritise education of the poor masses as espoused by Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854. Primary education received due attention from the imperious Lord Curzon following his standoff with the nationalists.

Education was one set of responsibility in which the performance of local bodies naturally failed to draw applause. The press went on critiquing their apathy, exhorting them to do more or relinquish the charge. Alluding to the Punjab Education Report for 1901-1902, *The Tribune* urged the municipalities and district boards to spend 10 and 25 percent of their income respectively, excluding grants and fees, on Board Schools. The paper decried the shortfall of Rs. 391,181 in the previous year's gross expenditure on education.[41] In percentage terms, district boards in the Punjab spent 21 percent of their income on education

41 Arthur Mahew, *Education of India* (London: Faber &Gwyer, 1926).

against the average of 20percent by their counterparts from all the provinces.[42] In their embryonic stage and hardly meriting the title of self-government, local bodies failed to impress the educated opinion which demanded end to their association with education. Subservient to district administration, local bodies were reluctant providers and promoters of modern education. A further downside of their management was the missing cooperation between them, the inspection staff, and the departmental officers,something that *the Hunter Report* had noted with concern.[43]Some of these pitfalls, hindering growth and progress, were removed under the stimulus provided by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919). With the introduction of Dyarchy and placement of officially described nation-building subjects such as education, health, and municipal government under the charge of ministers responsible to legislature, the prospects of institutional expansion significantly increased. Democratization, however limited, spawned growth notwithstanding imperial concerns. Though growth was still slanted by locality, caste community and gender, it was rapid under the semi-democratic dispensation. Hitherto neglected rural Punjab and the Muslims in general were greatly to benefit from democratic disbursement educational opportunities.

42 *The Tribune*, Lahore January 11, 1902.

43 Punjab Administration Report, xxiv.