



Christian Missionaries' Contribution Towards Women Education In The Colonial Punjab (1849-1882)

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Abstract

In Punjab Women's formal education is considered to be stemmed from colonial education system. The field of women's education was a very sensitive one because of the attachment of the people of this region to different socio-religious customs and conventions which, in a sense, were in opposition to the education of the female population. The Colonial government decided to initiate its work in this field. Christian missionaries joined hands with the Government and started their efforts in the field. This research aims to explore the real contribution of Christian Missionaries in the field of Women's education in the province of the Punjab. It attempts to bring forth the challenges of the field and the measures taken by the missionaries to cope with these challenges. Following the historical method of research, the data has been collected from different archival sources that help in drawing conclusions and findings. The data analysis goes on to explore the difficulties in the way of female education and also to bring forth the missionaries' modes of action to cope with the challenges. The research shows the concrete contribution of Christian missionaries in the form of different types of missionary schools, and other innovative interventions in the field of female education. Their contribution was vital in preparing the base of an education system for the females of this region and they, with the support of the British Government, paved the way for the higher education of women in this region.

Key words:

Women's Education, Colonial Punjab, Christian missionaries, Challenges, Response.

Introduction:

Women education was considered a sensitive area to work in the conservative society of the nineteenth century Punjab. At that time women were facing huge problems in terms of their education which was considered unnecessary, unorthodox, and dangerous in the society (Malhotra, 2000). Almost all the stakeholders of the indigenous education system—

the Muslims, the Hindus, and the Sikhs—considered formal female education against their dignity. They thought it contradictory to their religion as well as to their social norms, conventions and customs. The conservative character of the oriental society and its great regards for its specific set of social values, norms, and conventions deprived the women, even, from some of their fundamental rights including education. The orthodox lifestyle of the society, customs like child marriage, Purdah and some distorted religious beliefs were mostly responsible for keeping women away from their education. The Sensitivity of the matter can be judged from the fact that even the native champions of Western education in the Punjabi society, like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Dr. G.W. Leitner, failed to exhibit any significant contribution in this field.

Modern education system, with women education as one of its essential components, emerged in the Punjab under the umbrella of Colonial government, during second half of the nineteenth century. The colonial Masters were not satisfied with the performance of prevalent system of education especially in the field of women education. To them, the female multitude of the province was entangled in some miserable social norms and customs. They thought that unsatisfactory condition of the women in the society was due to their lack of education. They concluded that women's education would be the most powerful instrument for changing the subordinate role of the female community in the society. The suggested remedy was not only to develop the personality of the individual but also to improve their socio-economic status by qualifying them to certain economic, political and cultural functions. So women's education became a compulsory component of the new education system in the province. Christian missionaries decided to join the field along with the government and, therefore, are considered to be pioneers to enter this sensitive field in this region.

This research focuses on Christian missionaries' efforts in the field of women education from the annexation of the Punjab to the establishment of the Indian Education Commission, 1882. This period is important because it was the period when the ground was prepared for the development of female education system in the province of the Punjab. The system of women's primary education was fostered during this period which paved the way for secondary education, in the subsequent years. That is why this work concentrates on missionaries' efforts for the development of women's education in the Punjab, during this period. The study has been divided in two parts. The first part explores the real challenges of the field and their efforts are discussed in the second part of the work. This research tries to bring forth the supportive role of the Colonial government which the missionaries enjoyed in the field. This research tries to explore the answers to the questions such as:

Research Questions: What was the role of Christian missionaries in the development of female education System in the Colonial Punjab? What type of challenges missionaries face in their pursuit of educating the Punjabi Women? What was the missionaries' response to the challenges of the field?

Significance: Modern education system is considered as one of the most important legacies of British Imperialism in India. Christian missionaries were the main allies of the

British administration in establishing this education system in the province of the Punjab. The missionaries' contribution was very important for the education of the Punjabi women of that time. It provided a base for the modern women's education system in this region. So examination of the missionaries' efforts for women's education is important to understand the foundations of the existent women's education system in this region.

Methodology: This research follows the historical method of research. It is mainly based on the Primary and Secondary sources collected from different archives. Annual education Reports of Director Public Instructions, Punjab, are consulted to find out the quality and quantity of missionaries' female schools. Other contemporary missionary and cultural secondary sources are also used to formulate and analyze the arguments.

Aim and Objective:

To examine the contribution of Christian missionaries in educating the female folk of the Colonial Punjab.

To find out the challenges in the way of women's education in the colonial Punjab.

To study the response and mode of action of Christian missionaries to cope with the challenges of the field.

Literature Review

It is appropriate to have an overview of existing literature on the topic, before going into a comprehensive analysis of missionaries' efforts for the spread of education among the women of the Punjab. The existing literature on the subject contains the works produced by the educationists, historians particularly missionary historians, social historians, historians of gender and the like. 'Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India' ([Minault, 1998](#)) has discussed the efforts of the Muslim community to improve the education of their women. She analyzed the role of different literary writers and magazines in preparing the ground for female education in the region. These works helped a lot in reducing prejudices against women's education in the province. She also discussed the solid input of different Anjumans to promote female education in the society. The work focused only on the Muslim community and the efforts of the other sections of the society are not discussed in it. Moreover, it attempts to discuss the efforts made to promote female education in the society but no attention is given to the challenges and difficulties in furthering the cause of female education in the province.

[Cox \(2002\)](#) concentrated on the area of the Punjab and Delhi and incorporated research to examine the complexity of missionaries' activities. He attempted to bring forth the facts behind the ever-increasing interest of the missionary bodies in this area of the Indian sub-continent. His emphasis on tracing the reasons behind the heavy deployment of Christian missionaries in this area, after 1830s, is one of the glaring features of his work. Sanjay Seth focused on the educational activities of the missionaries and related them to their ultimate desire of conversion in 'Secular Enlightenment and Christian Conversion: Missionaries and Education in Colonial India'. He attempted to prove that the missionaries' educational services sprang up from their religious objectives and they used education of

the native people as a tool to prepare the native mind for evangelization. Anglican Evangelism in North India and the Punjabi Missionary Classroom; the Failure to Educate 'the Masses 1860-77" ([Allender, 2003](#)) focused on the Anglican mission schools in the Punjab. He explained how the mission schools failed to expand their network to the rural areas and how the emergence of the native educational organizations brought a halt to the educational dominance of the missionary schools. The researcher examined the role of the female educators in India and also the objectives of the colonial Government behind their construction([Allender, 2006](#)). The same writer examined the role of the colonial masters in constructing the female educational ethic, based on race and class([Allender, 2008](#)). [Leitner \(2002\)](#), the eminent educationist of the nineteenth century Punjab, traced the history of the prevalent indigenous education system in the province. He discussed the rich infrastructure of the indigenous education system and held the British administration responsible for the fateful demise of the indigenous education system. [Zafar\(1996\)](#) analyzed the impact of the missionaries' educational activities in Jampur. He discussed the social changes brought in the Muslim society of Jampur, by the missionaries' activities. The review of the literature shows that little work has so far been done to trace the role of missionary education in the development of the female education in the Punjab. Most of the missionary historians confined their research to the impact of the missionaries' activities on the oriental society. The educational historians tried to trace the progressive growth of the present system of education.

1-Challenges of the Field

The orthodox lifestyle of the society, the customs like child marriage, seclusion of women and some distorted religious beliefs were mostly considered to be responsible for keeping women away from their education. Let us have a look on some socio-religious customs and traditions which made adverse effects on the education of the women in the Punjabi society of colonial period.

1.1- Prevalent Socio-Religious Superstitions

The conservative Punjabi society had much regards for different kinds of superstitions. The Hindu community, one of the largest groups of the homogeneous society of the Punjab, was marked by its social differentiation. The Brahmins enjoyed the supreme position among the four vernas of the Hindu community (cited in [Singh, 1981](#)). They made it penal to communicate any but elementary knowledge to the servile and mixed multitude and at the same time used different tactics to forbid the women from the acquisition of learning. In fact the early Vedic society allowed the girls to acquire knowledge and grow into prominence but in the later Vedic society, the orthodox Brahmins introduced blind superstitions, rituals, and rigid customs, which forbade girls from the acquisition of learning.

A superstition of the same kind was found to be existent in the majority of Hindu families. It was mainly cherished by the Hindu women but the men were also involved in it by not condemning or discouraging it. According to it the society had a common belief that the husband of the girl, who learnt to read and write, would die soon after his marriage and the girl would become a widow([Richter, 1908](#)). According to the customs of the society, a

woman observed religious practices, all her life, wishing for the long life of the male members of her family and she never want to do anything which was harmful for them. So it was very easy to keep her away from the world of knowledge by the introduction of such kind of demeaning superstitions. Nothing but evil and danger were supposed to be the only outcome of the revolution of women's education as it was assumed to girls to be more conceited and unmanageable([Richter, 1908](#)).

1.2- Early Marriage

Early marriage was another major hurdle in the way of women's education. The Custom of child marriage was actually a Hindu custom and the girls were married between the ages of 10 and 15. The ancient ideal for high caste Hindu was that when children reached the age of eight and twelve, the boys should go to school and the girls should be married([Gupta, 1991](#)). Moreover 63 per 1000 girls were reported to be married between the age of 5 and 10(The Census of India, 1911). But this custom was less common among the Muslims. The custom of child- marriage created difficulties at every step, for the promoters of women education. It actually reduced the school going duration of the girls and thus deprived them from the acquisition of learning. The education of the girl students was generally terminated with their marriage because, due to the restriction of Purdah, they were not allowed to attend any school after marriage. So the education of the girls was, generally, terminated at the age of nine and very scarcely extended beyond the eleventh year([Hunter, 1883](#)).

The indigenous educational institutions, usually, started the education of a child at the age of five or six years([Ahuja, 1989](#)). The Muslims, especially, celebrated the starting point of their child's education at the age of four years four months and four days. The child, dressed in its best clothes, was brought to the school and his education started by that day([Leitner, 2002](#)). This was a common practice for the children, regardless of their gender. But the female students leave the school at the age of nine or eleven due to their marriage as well as that of seclusion([Hunter, 1883](#)). It means that the duration of education for girl students was about four to six years and after that their relationship with their school was terminated. After leaving the school, it was almost impossible for a married child to have any opportunity of going with her education([Hunter, 1883](#)). In this way the education of the female multitude was limited to their elementary education and the secondary education was out of bounds for them due to their early marriages.

Child widow was another problem linked with the child marriage. Since child marriage was a religious obligation therefore child widows became inevitable and many girls became widows even before they reached the age of puberty. There were 1208 women reported to become widows under the age of 9 and 6778 were reported to become widows before the age of 14, in the Punjab([Lietner, 2002](#)). Mostly, life became miserable for these under age widows, as society showed a sullen attitude towards them. They were supposed to be the cause of their husbands' death and were regarded as inauspicious, unfortunate, and condemned women in the society([Malhotra, 2000](#)). These widows were treated inhumanly and they were not allowed to lead a normal life. Their participation in different social activities was abandoned and they were not allowed, even, to attend the singing party or a marriage ceremony([Malhotra, 2000](#)). Education of these girls remained a neglected issue

in these circumstances and their education, most of the times, was ended even before it started.

1.3- Utilitarian Aspect of Education

During the foreign rule, in India, education became a marketable commodity, as the educated natives had better opportunities of having appointments than the uneducated. The power that office pen held over the ordinary people conferred the clerks and high-ups an enviable status([Ahuja, 1989](#)). Moreover, earning a livelihood became the one and only function of education. Education, for most of the boys, merely meant employment instead of increase of manliness and intelligence or increased fitness for the ordinary duties of life([Ahuja, 1989](#)). And the absence of an effective desire of earning a livelihood, on the part of women, emerged as one of the major factors behind the miserable educational condition of the women of the colonial Punjab([Hunter, 1883](#)).

The foundation of Persian schools and the Mahajani schools presented the clear evidence for the development of this materialistic approach. Persian, being the court language since the Muslim rule, was taken as a tool of obtaining a significant post in the helm of government affairs which may give the natives both political power and social prestige over those higher than themselves in the Indian scale([Leitner, 2002](#)). Therefore, the efforts were, made to acquire the language of the rulers to secure a monopoly of appointments and enjoy multifarious benefits attached to these jobs. On the other hand, the Hindus belonging to trade considered the orthodox indigenous education less beneficial for them and they were inclined towards the business studies. This professional approach towards education led to the foundation of Mahajani schools which, instead of aiming at religious or moral education, aimed to teach the art of daily accounts—to calculate mentally, keep business correspondence and maintain ledger([Ahuja, 1989](#)).

The dominant utilitarian approach, determined money and social prestige as the major objectives of education and women were not involved in neither of these two (Hunter, 1983). According to the social structure of the Punjabi society the male members of the family were responsible for the earnings of livelihood of the family. Females were, basically, involved in managing the domestic affairs and they were free from the worries of financial affairs, as the male head of the family was responsible for that. Since, earning became the one and only objective of education therefore the exemption of women from the financial affairs of the family led to deprive them from their education. Therefore, no demand for education as a means of livelihood among the girls and women was found in the society([Arora, 1994](#)). This approach, in addition to the foundation of Persian and Mahajani schools, also contributed in keeping the women away from the education. Consequently, their education remained confined to the religious education only and after elementary level they were not allowed to join any educational institution.

1.4- Purdah

The purdah system was not an essential part of ancient Indian society but its existence is said to be synchronous with the advent of the Muslims in this region([Singh, 2001](#)). No doubt, some sort of purdah in shape of ghonghat was observed in India, even before the advent of the Muslims, as a mark of respect to the elder male members of her in-laws but

the elaborate and institutionalized form of purdah emerged with the advent of Muslims in this region.¹ The Muslim women were supposed to confine themselves to the boundaries of their homes and stay isolated from the world of men. Free mix up of men with women was strictly prohibited and the nineteenth Century Punjabi society was no exception to this custom. Although the custom belonged to the Muslim code of life yet it was observed as the mark of respectability and mannerism by all communities of the Punjab([Malhotra, 2000](#)). The common practice of Purdah was also adopted by the Hindu women, while going out in the public. The adoption of this tradition by the Hindu community had different notions behind it. According to R.C. Majumdar, "Hindus adopted purdah as a protective measure to save the honour of their women folk and to maintain the purity of their social order."([Singh, 2001, P. 51](#)) Downward filtration theory² was also a contributory factor and according to this argument the Hindu women adopted the custom of purdah to imitate the ruling class. Another point of view describes that the chief reason for the adoption of this custom by the Hindu women was to protect the beautiful young girls from the ill-designs of rich nobles([Singh, 2001](#)).

Because of the prohibited mix up of the male and female members of the society, the formal education of secondary level for the latter was badly affected. Generally the Punjabi girls, till the age of nine or ten, were allowed to attend boys' elementary schools([Leitner, 2002](#)). It shows that the mixed education was not prohibited at elementary level, because of the immature age of the pupils. But at secondary or higher level, the case was not the same and we have no traces showing the existence of mixed secondary schools in the nineteenth Century Punjabi society. The students, at secondary schools, were mostly grown up to the teenage and therefore the mixed education was considered socially harmful due to the free mix up of these young boys and girls. On the other hand, separate girls' schools were not available for the secondary education of the female multitude of this region. Although, the Muslims and the Sikhs of some districts of the Punjab were found to have separate schools for girls' education but these were not only few in number but also involved in diffusing elementary education, only([Leitner, 2002](#)). The field of secondary or higher education was totally neglected in terms of separate girls' education. So the bulk of the female population of the Punjab had to finish its education at the end of its elementary education and a large part of Punjabi women were deprived of their higher education due to the custom of Purdah.

In this way, the institution of Purdah was considered to be the major hurdle in the progress of women education and it was argued that the social growth of the women was tempered due to this custom. It was thought that although the Muslim community wanted their girls to be knowledgeable about the 'Quran' and some accounting tactics but their strict confinement within the boundaries of their homes, due to the custom of Purdah, minimized the opportunities for them. Even, the women of one religious community were not able to have social intercourse with the others, due to this custom. In this way the Punjabi women were cut off from the outer world and women of different social groups developed different ideological groups, each largely ignorant of the others([Nehru, 1989](#)).

Seclusion of women also had its negative impact on the education of women, in terms of insufficient supply of female teaching staff in the girls' schools. The supply of female teachers for the girls was not an easy task at that time. The available female teaching staff

was scantier in quantity and was less satisfactory in quality, than that for the boys' schools([Hunter, 1883](#)). The shortage of female staff for the girls' schools was a major hurdle in the foundation of separate girls' schools, at secondary or higher level.

2- Missionaries' Efforts in the Field

Christian missionaries, in response, picked education as the mightiest lever for overturning low, contemptuous and tyrannical ideas and customs concerning women in the society. Considering education as the most powerful force for social change, the missionaries decided to promote women's education as the only remedy for the depressed condition of the women. To them, it was the quickest method of elevating the home life of the Eastern society([Montgomery, 1910](#)). At the same time, these norms and customs were the major stumbling blocks in the way of spreading women's education in the province. So any kind of improvement in the one was supposed to have its proportional implications on the other and vice versa. So the missionaries wanted to establish maximum number of missionary schools in the province with a view to restructure the Oriental society. Consequently, in spite of the sensitivity of the issue, the missionaries took up the cudgels and set their efforts for the education of the female folk of the Punjab. They adopted different modes of action in the field. They established separate girls' school for the female multitude to lessen the apprehensions of Purdah in the society. Boarding schools were established to affect the Christian lifestyle in the lives of the boarders. Observing the scarcity of the female trained teaching staff in the separate girls' schools, they established female teachers' training schools at different missionary stations in the province. . Furthermore they adopted the strategy of Zananavising to access the women who could not be accessed at any other place in the society. Here is a summary of their all round educational work done in the field of women's education. The missionaries used the following modes to achieve their desired objectives.

2.1- Foundation of Missionary Girls' Schools

The American Presbyterian Missionaries, after establishing their base at Ludhiana, laid the foundation of female education by opening a girls' orphanage at Ludhiana in 1836. The Church Missionary Society followed the suit by establishing a girls' school at Kotgurrh in 1844([Fuller, 1865](#)). The wives of the missionaries involved themselves in imparting education at these schools. But these kinds of schools did not come off with success because of the lack of interest of the native population. Female education, generally, found no favour with any of the religious communities of the province. The Missionaries founded schools at different places but the number of students in these schools was alarmingly low. Only a small number of girls from the lower rung of the social ladder were drawn to these schools through the payment of pice, payment of clothes or both. In addition to the peoples' discouraging attitude EIC's attitude towards the missionaries' activities, due to its strict policy of religious neutrality, was also upsetting. The Court of Directors forbade 'grants of money in aid of education carried on in schools established and conducted by Christian Missionaries'([Ikram-ul-haq, 1981](#)). But this discouraging situation did not last for long in the province of Punjab and its annexation to the British dominion brought about a positive change for the missionaries. it brought a supportive administration at the missionaries'

back. Moreover the Wood's Education Despatch', in 1854, suggested the initiation of 'grants in aid' scheme for the private educational agencies, including the missionaries. The government started granting subsidies through this scheme and the Christian missionaries became the major beneficiaries by receiving a lion's share of these subsidies(Langohr, 2005). The incident of War of Independence damaged the missionaries' progress badly and a considerable time was spent for the repair work after the restoration of the peace.

The missionaries started their fresh efforts after the rise of Robert Montgomery to the status of Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, in 1859. Their efforts took impetus in the early 1860s when the Lieutenant Governor held a grand educational Darbar at Lahore in February 1862. He impressed upon the European officials and the native gentlemen present there the importance of women's education and invited their cooperation(Hunter, 1883). The appeal of the Lieutenant Governor had magical effect on the audience and the gentlemen present there from all the three religious communities of the province—Hindu, Sikh and the Muslim—started working in the said direction. So the public opinion was shaped in the favour of female education and the girls' schools started to mushroom throughout the province.

Christian missionaries also responded positively and decided to recollect their efforts in the important field of women education. The atmosphere, conducive for women education, also drew the female missionaries in the field. The missionary ladies started not only to administer schools for the girls of lower classes but also to enter the Zananasto teach women and girls of the nobility, who would never venture to appear in the public(Newton, 1884). So the missionary schools started to multiply in the length and breadth of the province. By 1860 there were only two missionary schools for the native girls in the province of the Punjab but a progressive increase in the number of missionary girls' schools was observed in the subsequent years. By 1864-65, the number of these schools rose to 8 with 262 students on the roll(Fuller, 1866). The next decade witnessed a reasonable increase in the number of missionaries' schools and the number of girls' schools, under the missionaries' management, was raised to 36 in 1871. The returns illustrates the further numeric increase in these schools and the number of missionary schools stood at 56 in 1876 and at 62 in the year 1878-79(Hunter, 1883). It is a noteworthy fact that at that time 170 private and 113 government schools were existent in the province but the performance of only missionary schools was satisfactory and they were rated as first-class institutions(Flemming, 1989). The missionaries' schools generally were of two types—local day schools for young girls and boarding schools, mainly for the Christian girls.

2.1.1- Day Schools

Day schools were, generally were supervised by the missionary women. Mostly, these schools started with 20 to 25 students, all under the age of ten.Christian women, having mission based teachers' training, were generally appointed as teachers in these schools. 'Callers' were also considered a necessary part of a girls' school. These were the widows from the native community hired to go daily to the families in their respective areas and gather girls into the school. In fact, it was thought improper for a native girl, above eight years of age, to go unaccompanied outside of her home. It was a major hurdle in the

progress of girls' schools because the girls, above the age of eight, were unable to attend the schools due to this social barrier. Christian missionaries hired the begging widows to cope with the situation. Generally a widow was attached to a school who begged of the parents as a personal favor to allow their daughter to accompany her a few hours daily to a school opened in the neighborhood. She ensured her responsibility for the girls during their absence from home. For this service each widow was paid at least as much as she could expect from her charity([Gordon, 1886](#)).

These schools were established, under the supervision of different missionary societies, in almost all the important cities of the province. Presbyterian missionary society of America, Scotland mission, SPG mission, Baptist missionary society, and Church missionary society were the missionary organizations involved in the educational work in the province of the Punjab. All these societies opened girls' school at their respective areas. American Presbyterians had girls' schools at Ludhiana, Rawalpindi, and Lahore, CMS at Amritsar, Peshawar and Multan, SPG at Delhi, Baptists also at Delhi, and Scotland mission at Sialkot and Gujranwala District.

It is a considerable fact that the missionaries' aim of women education was different from that of the education of men. The missionaries did not want to impart a bulk of secular knowledge to their female students rather they wanted to make them only able to read and write with a view to enable them read the Bible and exert some Christian influence through the missionary schools. Girls' schools were mainly designed to bring the gospel to the native women, both directly in the schools themselves, and indirectly by opening up and preparing the way for Zananwork([Gordon, 1886](#)). So the instruction, at these schools, was of very basic level and the students were taught in their respective native languages. English was not taught even as a subject, in these schools. With a slight variation at different stations, the curricula usually comprised the Bible, the Presbyterian catechism, graded readers, simple arithmetic, and handwork([Flemming, 1989](#)).

These schools had very little contribution, in terms of the academic development of the students. In spite of offering the incentives and prizes to encourage the students' attendance, ([Hunter, 1883](#)) the missionaries were facing difficulties to make any significant academic contribution, through these institutions. The girls left schools for marriage, usually at the age of ten, which made it difficult for the missionaries to progress much beyond the graded readers and the four simple arithmetic operations. Moreover the day schools were also failed to change the lifestyle of the students. The education provided here was so basic and so minimal that it scarcely provided any significant lifestyle changes([Flemming, 1989](#)).

In spite of all the above said demerits of these schools, their importance cannot be neglected. These schools were mostly staffed with the native female teachers which created material interest in the education of women([Flemming, 1989](#)). The employment opportunities created in these schools were considered to tempt the native community to educate and train their females as teachers. The native teachers of the day schools also provided the models of educated women for previously illiterate women, in a society that actively devalued education for the women([Flemming, 1989](#)). The day schools were supposed to play an important role in providing the missionaries' access to the isolated

female multitude of the society. B.D. Wyckoff in his writing to the Secretary Board of Foreign Missions characterized these schools as follows:

“The importance of these schools can hardly be overestimated when we remember that they open the way for religious instruction and for admission to thezanana. I believe every house in the city open to visitation to the lady missionary has been opened by means of these schools.”(Flemming, 1989, 45).

The missionaries considered these schools to be a fitting means to achieve their desired objectives. Importance of these schools can be seen from the fact that during the later part of the nineteenth century each missionary station had five to ten day schools. These schools were vital in bringing the school-age girls under their influence and also in accessing the secluded women of the society.

2.1.2- Boarding schools

Boarding schools were the major tools, in the hands of the missionaries, to affect their desired academic as well as cultural changes in the society. These schools, headed by women missionaries and, mostly, staffed by the native Christians, had a considerable potential for effecting significant changes in women’s lifestyle(Flemming, 1989). The children of the converts, in the boarding schools for Christian girls, were given Christian education in an atmosphere totally different from that of the conventional Punjabi society(Devanandan, 1963). The missionaries were able to introduce new values and model attainable roles, through these schools staffed by independent minded women(Flemming, 1989). These schools, in this way, provided a highly conducive atmosphere in which the students were encouraged to break the shackles of the society.

The boarding schools mostly formed a ladder of educational opportunities, with the ablest often progressing from one rung to the next. These boarding schools, collectively, provided education from basic to the secondary level with Biblical instruction to the girls of urban as well as far off rural areas,(Flemming, 1989) who generally did not find these facilities near to their homes. In addition to the formal education, these institutions also had their focus on the character molding process. The women missionaries, through this process, strove to formulate the desired changes in girls’ behavior and values, through their close contact with the resident students in communal living arrangements. Due to the high rate of success in this kind of schools, the missionaries established boarding schools in the major cities, like Lahore, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Sialkot, and Deyra, of the Punjab(Newton, 1884).

2.2- Zanana Visiting

The activity that occupied most of the women missionaries was the ‘zananavisiting’. The constraints of oriental social and family life prevented foreign men from easily interacting with its women therefore women missionaries’ access to the oriental ladies was considered easier than that of their male counterparts. Moreover, most of the missionaries believed that the women and the girls of the Punjabi society could not attend the schools due to their largely dependent and domestic roles. Consequently, the missionaries established a regular system of visiting in which the women missionaries, accompanied by the trained native women, visited the secluded women at home. The women missionaries were

supposed to effect religious as well as social change, through this mode of instruction([Flemming, 1989](#)).

The female missionaries responded positively and contribute significant efforts for the betterment of the women of the Punjab. The missionary ladies devoted their lives for the cause of female education through the mode of home-teaching in the native families, who received them willingly([Hunter, 1883](#)). Their education was confined to the female members of the family and, in addition to the diffusion of basic Christian teaching, it was extended to secular subjects. As the missionaries were convinced that secular education, consisted of the sharpening of the intellectual nature produced by exercising the mind in the ordinary subjects of education, was necessary part of their preparation for their religious work([Hunter, 1883](#)). The general clearing away of ignorance, folly and superstitions through the means of education were considered to pave the way for Christ's spirit and they acknowledged secular education as their ally in their pursuit of spreading the gospel in the oriental society([Seth, 2007](#)).

These zanana visiting groups were composed of one or more European ladies, with the trained staff of Native Christians or Anglo-Indian young women, who taught in the zananas allotted to them([Hunter, 1883](#)). Thirty European ladies, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, were reported to be involved in carrying on the female education in the Punjab. These ladies and their assistants offered a mixture of religious and secular education in hundreds of houses to Native gentlemen's wives and daughters, who being purdah-nishin(secluded), could not attend the schools([Hunter, 1883](#)). Delhi, Ludhiana and Amritsar were the major centres for this kind of instruction. The S.P.G Mission was receiving a grant in aid from the Government for its zanana teaching in Delhi and its neighbouring towns. American Presbyterian mission and Christian Missionary Society were involved in this kind of teaching in Ludhiana. Eight European ladies, assisted by seventeen female Christian teachers and eight Muhammadans and Sikhs, were doing their educational work through nine schools and 130 families were visited in 1882([Hunter, 1883](#)).

In spite of the involvement of a gigantic physical as well as mental effort, on the part of the teacher, the pace of education in this mode of instruction was very slow and very limited content of the course was likely to be covered, in the due course of time. In addition to the interruption in the lessons, the zanana mode of instruction was difficult to execute due to the irresponsible behaviour of pupils. No serious efforts were mostly done on the part of the pupils and they did not take much pain to improve themselves in the intervals between the visits of their teachers([Hunter, 1883](#)). Furthermore, the continuity was also disrupted due to the women's frequent visits back and forth between natal and in-laws' houses([Flemming, 1989](#)). All these factors posed the serious challenges to the architects of zananavisiting programme and the missionaries involved in it found it discouraging and frustrating. They were mostly found complaining as:

this is not an uncommon experience, to have one's heart all glow with zeal, to have the message to carry for that morning clearly grasped, and then only to find one sick, another absent from home, a third perfectly heedless, a fourth looking blankly as if she did not comprehend a single word, a fifth asking, 'what is that cut on your hand?' ([Janvier, 1890, p. 216](#)).

No doubt, the missionaries involved in this kind of instruction, mostly, derived their funds from the missionary societies in Europe and America. Yet they also received grants from the education department, as S. P. G. Mission received grant-in-aid from Government for zanana teaching in Delhi and some of the neighbouring towns([Hunter, 1883](#)). But the uncertain behaviour of the officials, most of the times, created difficulties for the missionaries and other organizations working for the cause of women's education. Having regards for the zanana educational enterprise.

Despite the all aforesaid difficulties, the missionaries generally preferred this type of instruction to schools([Hunter, 1883](#)) because this mode of instruction provided them direct interaction with the little girls as well as with the adult female members of the family. This woman-to-woman work was vital in terms of reaching the influential ladies of the society to create awareness among the native families about the education of their daughters. The zealous ladies engaged in this work achieved a lot by the tact of courtesy and wise moderation([Hunter, 1883](#)). These women missionaries affected a huge academic as well as social impact on the Oriental society. Contemporary scholars, in their assessments about the impact of women missionaries in India and the rest of Asia, recognize their contribution and tended to characterize missionaries as change-agents([Flemming, 1989](#)). They are considered important because of their contribution in changing women's status with their emphasis on education as well as their demonstration of active care and concern for women which spurred Indian social reformers to act([Paul, 1984](#)).³ The missionary women stressed the degraded position of the Indian women and contrasted it to the exalted position of American women. The customs of early marriage and treatment of widow received special attention of these ladies and they often used strong negative imagery to characterize the lives of the oriental girls([Flemming, 1989](#)).⁴ Troubled by the interruption caused by early marriage, they lamented that 'cruel custom' forced the girls to soon leave their schools to be married. By the same token they were much disturbed by the Hindu ban on widow remarriage and made serious efforts to rescue widows, by making them economically self-sufficient([Flemming, 1989](#)). Critical of the early seclusion of the women and their consequent lack of access to education, the missionary women pressed for the education of women and the girls among both the Hindus and the Muslim communities. They took considerable pleasure in arousing in educational interest among the women of the oriental society([Flemming, 1989](#)).

2.3- Foundation of Teacher Training Schools

The provision of insufficient number of trained female teachers in the girls' schools was considered as the major hurdle in the spread of female education in the Punjab. The phenomenon of separate girls' schools was very much new in the province and its success was mainly dependant on the provision of sufficient trained female teaching staff for these schools. But finding trained female staff for these schools looked to be a Herculean task in the existing educational and social setting of the province. At the same time the Government was lacking in spirit and in her efforts required to cope with the problem. As she was not interested in establishing any training institutions for women and the required enterprise was left, mostly, to the private bodies([Mehta, 1929](#)).

The first Normal school for the native mistresses was established by SPG mission, at Delhi, on 1st October, 1863. The native community followed the suit and established, with the active support of Raja of Kupperthullah and that of the existing provincial Government—Rs. 100 from each— two more Normal schools at the important cities of Lahore and Amritsar, in 1865(Fuller, 1866). A female Normal School was opened at Sialkot in 1869, under the management of the Deputy Commissioner(Holroyd, 1869). Another female Normal school was opened at Jalandhar, in 1870, under the management of Indian Female Normal Schools and Instruction Society(Pearson, 1873). In spite of establishing all these training institutions in a quick succession, the performance of these institutions, in terms of number of female teachers inducted in the system through these institutions, was a big question mark on their establishment. The following graph shows the number of girls trained in these schools and the number of these trained females inducted in the system, since the establishment of institutions to 31st march 1873.

By 1879-80, at the end of the period under consideration, there were only four Normal schools for the native girls, with 244 scholars, in the Punjab. In each case an English lady superintends the school but none of these answer the purpose for which it was intended. The performance of all these schools was not up to the mark and the Inspectors of the respective schools were not satisfied by the performance of any of these schools(Holroyd, 1880). The Lieutenant Governor observed that “Female Normal Schools are no more than middle class girls schools....they were only maintained by Government scholarships, which the students seemed to consider as a provision for life.”(Hunter, 1882) Out of these four, the contribution of missionaries was one, under the management of SPG mission, Delhi. Its performance was comparatively better than the others in the province. Here is a brief history of this school from its establishment to the end of this period:

2.3.1- SPG Mission Normal School, Delhi

The Female Normal school at Delhi was part of the great work carried on there by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel mission. This all important institution for the training of female teachers was established on 1st October 1863(Pearson, 1873).⁵ Mr. H.W.P. Hutton, the then inspector of Schools, had very positive views about the future of the school and was hopeful of getting some good trained female teachers from the school in the near future(Fuller, 1864). Not to the disappointment of its managers, several of the trained teachers of the school, by 1866-67, were found to be performing their duties as school mistresses in the neighbouring areas of the school(Fuller, 1864). The school comprised two separate departments providing separate educational facilities for the Hindu and the Muslim girls. The course of studies included the reading and writing skill of Hindi for Hindu girls and that of Urdu for the Muslim girls. The study of geography, history of India and the elementary rules of Arithmetic and their application were also included in the course of studies for a trainee. Women of both the religious communities were found to be well acquainted with Geography and the elementary rules of Arithmetic. They also knew something about the history of India. The Hindu women were able to read and write in Hindi and those from the Muslim sect were well aware of reading and writing in Urdu. The Muslim women belonged to the prominent families of Delhi. They were termed as more intelligent than those of the Hindu section of the school. The Arabic and Persian

pronunciation of the Muslim women was termed as perfect to the expectations. The Hindu women also belonged to the good caste.

Although the school may be considered to have answered its purpose sufficiently yet, by 1872-73, less than a third of the women trained during the last ten years were employed as teachers (Pearson, 1873).⁶The women at the S.P.G. Mission School were reported to be either too young or too old. The work of teaching could not be done, earnestly, in both of these cases. Especially the older candidates were not expected to attain any degree of proficiency throughout their career. The inspector of schools, time and again, complained about the lower standard of instruction and also about the higher ages of the pupils in the school. Consequently, the Muslim section of the school was reorganized in 1875-76 and the elderly girls were dismissed and succeeded by the more advanced girls from the SPG schools. The new setup also extended the course of studies for three years and it went up to that of the 4th class (Holroyd, 1877). The Hindu section of the schools also needed reorganisation but was not incorporated.

The change did not work in terms of quality of education and the inspectors of the schools continued to report negatively about the school in the subsequent years. The inspector of schools, Ambala Circle expressed his views about the school in the following words:

The school is no more than a primary school. I am surprised that so enterprising a body as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel can show but such excessively meagre results for the large sum of money expended. The expenditure amounted to Rs. 3812 of which Rs. 1800 were paid by Government (Holroyd, 1869).

The next year the report of the inspector contained the following expressions:

That it does not succeed in turning out competent teachers; though, it must be allowed, that the difficulties to contend with, are many and great. The women in Muhammadan department are very much below the standard that should be required for teachers of even the most elementary schools. Those in Hindu department could read and write well, and knew something of the map of Asia but were very backward in Arithmetic and could scarcely work easy sums in the simple rules (Holroyd, 1880).

So at the end of the period under consideration the SPG Mission Normal School, Delhi, was not in best of its performance but it was better than the others present in the field. The school was felt to be in dire need of some reformatory measures which resulted into the merger of the two separate departments for Hindu and the Muslim girls in the subsequent years.

Fostering of female education system in the province is largely indebted to the Christian missionaries' untiring efforts in this field. It is the harvest of their long lasting struggle of restructuring the Punjabi society with a view to emancipate women from the prevalent socio-religious norms and customs. That is why the Historians of Missionaries' activities in Asia have often characterized missionaries as agents of profound changes in the traditional cultures of Asia (Flemming, 1989). Christian missionaries, in their efforts to foster women education in the province, were fairly backed by the existing British administration of the time. With the active financial and administrative support of the top officials of the British government, they, by 1880, were able to establish a base for the formal female education system in the province. As, Primary education for the women of the Punjab was fashioned during this period which ultimately paved the way for the development of secondary

education for women in the subsequent years. Although the missionaries entered in the subcontinent mainly due to their religious obligations and conversion of the native people was their one and only goal yet the education of women sprang up as the byproduct of their evangelizing agenda. As, it is an observable fact that the missionaries are always in search of some weaker aspect of the targeted society, to launch their social programme and the miserable social conditions of women in the Punjabi society provided them the desired launching pad for their social service programme. Considering education as the most powerful force for social change, the missionaries promoted women's education as the remedy for the depressed conditions of the women in society. But the fulfillment of their religious agenda needed some entrée points in the social arena to establish social interaction with the natives and this was mostly done through the means of social service—by providing educational and health services. In the Punjab, the depressed conditions of Punjabi women, especially, their pathetic educational condition provided them the desired room for social work. They dreamt to influence the kitchen as well as the kith and kin of the natives, through their work for women's education.

2.3.2- The European Training School Delhi

The European Training School Delhi was maintained by the SPG mission, with a view to supply competent and trained teachers for Zanana work. During 1878-79, 3 girls were passed out of the school. The Inspector of schools examined and found them competent in all subjects. They were afterwards employed in the schools of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel mission ([Holroyd, 1869](#)). The total expenditure was Rs. 994 and the Government grant Rs. 360. The performance of the school, during the subsequent year, was termed below merit. the inspector gives the following expression regarding the performance of the school:

There was this year one candidate only for a certificate, and she was found to be so backward in Arithmetic that she could not be allowed to pass. The inspector was of the opinion that the manager was not sufficiently careful in insisting upon a fair education in the case of all applicants for admission to the school ([Holroyd, 1880](#)).

It is a noteworthy fact that in spite of missionaries' desire to control the educational domain of the Punjab, they never came in the position, in terms of number of missionary schools and number of students, to do this uphill task. No doubt they were working whole heartedly to extend their network but the network of their schools remained too short to fulfil their long lasting desire. Although missionary schools for girls made a progressive increase during this period yet they, by the end of the period, remained a meagre part of the total female educational enterprise in the Punjab. Moreover the missionary schools were located mostly in the towns of the province and almost the whole rural side of the province was neglected by the missionaries.

Conclusion, Results/Findings:

Christian missionaries contributed a lot in the education of the female Punjabi community of the Colonial Punjab. The socio-religious customs and conventions were the major obstacles in the way of educating the Punjabi women of the colonial period. Christian missionaries combated the circumstances through their educational institutions. They

acted through Zzenana visiting, Girls' schools, Boarding schools, Teachers Training Schools, and the like.

Fostering of female education system in the province is largely indebted to the Christian missionaries' untiring efforts in this field. It is the harvest of their long lasting struggle of restructuring the Punjabi society with a view to emancipate women from the prevalent socio-religious norms and customs. That is why the Historians of Missionaries' activities in Asia have often characterized missionaries as agents of profound changes in the traditional cultures of Asia. Christian missionaries, in their efforts to foster women education in the province, were fairly backed by the existing British administration of the time. With the active financial and administrative support of the top officials of the British government, they, by 1880, were able to establish a base for the formal female education system in the province. As, Primary education for the women of the Punjab was fashioned during this period which ultimately paved the way for the development of secondary education for women in the subsequent years. Although the missionaries entered in the subcontinent mainly due to their religious obligations and conversion of the native people was their one and only goal yet the education of women sprang up as the by-product of their evangelizing agenda. As, it is an observable fact that the missionaries are always in search of some weaker aspect of the targeted society, to launch their social programme and the miserable social conditions of women in the Punjabi society provided them the desired launching pad for their social service programme. Considering education as the most powerful force for social change, the missionaries promoted women's education as the remedy for the depressed conditions of the women in society. But the fulfillment of their religious agenda needed some entrée points in the social arena to establish social interaction with the natives and this was mostly done through the means of social service—by providing educational and health services. In the Punjab, the depressed conditions of Punjabi women, especially, their pathetic educational condition provided them the desired room for social work. They dreamt to influence the kitchen as well as the kith and kin of the natives, through their work for women's education.

Limitations: The data has been collected from local repositories for this research. The research focuses mainly on the education of the women in Colonial Punjab during 1849-1882. It discusses missionaries' efforts throughout the colonial Punjab.

Author Contributions

The article has been derived, mainly, from the Ph.D dissertation of Dr. Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat. The contribution of the co-authors is vital in refining the ideas and arguments. They also contributed in reviewing, writing and formatting the article.

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