



Impact On Punjab Of Socio-Religious Movements (1849-1900)

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Due to the critical situation in Punjab, a number of socio-religious reform movements emerged in Punjab during 1849 to 1900 AD. The brave and valiant Punjabi fighters were engaged in wars for many centuries. After the consolidation of the English rule, a political peace was established in Punjab. To develop Punjab socially, a number of peaceful reform movements emerged. With the advent of the English in Punjab, the Punjabi people not only got acquainted with the western ideas, the western ideology had immense influence upon them. Due to the spread of education by the English Government, a special passion emerged in Punjab. This resulted in the beginning of a number of reform movements. Some of these reform movements emerged out of Punjab itself and some others came from other provinces of India¹.

The Namdhari movement has an important place in the history of Punjab. This movement was a part of the 'Jagiasi (the enquiring) - 'Abhiasi' (the practicing) movement which was firstly started by Jawahar Mall. It could also be stated that the Namadhari movement was a form of the Jagiasi-Abhiasi movement started by Sai Jawahar Mall but it separated itself from its original form and took an independent form. This movement campaigned according to the higher ideals of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh². Sai Jawahar Mall was a true and firm follower of Gurbani, devotional singing and of Gurus' legacy. His primary vocation was to propagate Sikhism. He was given a famous name of Sai because of his absorption in meditation of God. Due to the religious campaign of Sai Jawahar Mall, Hazro became a big campaign center. Baba Balak Singh has been a high profile person of this sect who achieved a great success due to his Naam Abhiasi (meditating upon the creative principle) and campaigning for Sikhism. He developed the Jagiasi-Abhiasi movement, propagated and made it grow. His deeds and successes can be guessed from the fact that Baba Balak Singh came to be recognized³ as the founder of the movement started by Sai Jawahar Mall.

¹Sudarshan Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas* (1849-1949), Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1991, P-55.

²Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Lehran* 1850-1910, Ashok Pustakmala, Patiala, 1974, P-55.

³Piara Singh Padam, *Sankhep Sikh Itihas*, 1469-1989, Kalam Mandir, Lower Mall, Patiala, 1990, P-207.

Baba Balak Singh was born⁴ in 1799 in the home of Dial Singh Arora in a village Sarvaalaan of the Atak district. In 1828, his elder brother Bhai Manna Singh shifted his shop from Sarvaalaan to Hazro. Baba Balak Singh also started living in Hazro. There, he met with Sai Jawahar Mall. He was so much impressed by him that he became his disciple. He became famous for his meditation and campaigning for religion. For this, he began to be counted among the founders of this sect⁵. When Sai Jawahar Mall shifted to Rawalpindi, he handed over⁶ the management of the Sikh campaign center of Hazro to Baba Balak Singh. He managed this center with great ability till his death. He passed away in 1862⁷.

Baba Balak Singh taught his disciples to meditate upon God always, to have simple marriages, to perform marriages in the Anand-custom, not to accept dowry, to abstain from tobacco and liquor, not to beg, to treat everyone like their co-religious, and not to hurt anyone's feelings⁸. Baba Balak Singh had three famous disciples - one was his nephew Bhai Kahn Singh, the second was Bhai Lal Singh who preached in Amritsar, and the third was Baba Ram Singh Bhaini of the Ludhiana district who later became Guru of the Namdhari movement⁹.

Baba Ram Singh was born in the home of Bhai Jassa Singh carpenter in 1816 AD in the village BhainiRaia of the district Ludhiana. Baba Ram Singh had knowledge of Gurmukhi and theology. The Sikh rule was at its zenith during his young days. He joined the cavalry of KanwarNauNihal Singh. In 1831, Baba Ram Singh's platoon had to go to Hazro on a Government assignment. There, he met Baba Balak Singh¹⁰ and he was greatly impressed by him. Because of this, he joined this sect.

In 1857, on the Vaisakhi day at Bhaini Sahib, Baba Ram Singh established a new organization by baptizing five Sikhs. This was named as Namdhari. Guru Gobind Singh also established Khalsa on the Vaisakhi day. Baba Ram Singh resurrected the Khalsa by baptizing the five Sikhs in the same way. These five Sikhs were Bhai Kahn Singh Nihang, Bhai Labh Singh, Bhai Naina Singh, Bhai Atma Singh and Bhai Sudh Singh. Baba Ram Singh baptized many more Sikhs other than these five. Baba Ram Singh asked all these Sikhs to follow the path shown by Guru Gobind Singh. They were asked to bear the five Ks namely Kangha (the comb), Kachchha (the loin garment, underwear), Karha (the iron bracelet), Kes (the hair), and Kirpan (the

⁴*Khalsa Samachar*, 5 December, 1940, Amritsar, P-3.

⁵Kirpal Singh, *Sikh Itihas De VisheshPakh*, S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1995, P-171.

⁶*Rawalpindi Gazetteer*, 1883-84, (Lahore; Punjab Govt.1895 reprint, Sang-e-Meel, Lahore, 2001), P-38.

⁷*Op.cit.*,P-39.

⁸Trilochan Singh Gill,*Bharat Di Azadi Lehar*, Velvis Publishers P.P.5, Mauriya Enclave, Delhi, 2000, P-75.

⁹Kartar Singh, *Sikh Itihas, BhagDuja*, S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1961, PP-205, 206.

¹⁰Sukhjot Singh, *Punjab Dian RajnitakTeItihasakLehran*, LokgeetParkashan, Chandigarh, 2014, P-15.

sword). The Government had banned carrying sword then¹¹. Therefore they were asked to carry Lathi (the fighting stick).

Besides this, the Namdharis were ordered to wear white dress, support white turban and keep a white string of beads for meditation. The Namdharis were also called Kukas (the shouting ones) because they used to start shouting in passion while reciting the holy verses. Because of this, people started calling them Kukas. Baba Ram Singh has used the tag 'Sant Khalsa' too for his companions¹².

Baba Ram Singh converted Bhaini Sahib into the main centre for the Kukas. Besides this, he established 22 campaign centres in different parts of Punjab. He appointed a representative in each campaign centre who was called 'Suba' (literally province). Besides Bhaini Sahib, the Subas began the religious campaigns in Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot, Mukatsar Sahib, Gujranwala, Jalandhar, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Ambala, Karnal, Patiala, and Jind, etc.¹³centres.

When the Namdhari movement started, the social condition was rather bad. All those evils had surfaced again against whom the Gurus had waged a struggle. During Baba Ram Singh's times, the social condition was very precarious. At that time, the people either had forgotten the Guru's advice or were ignoring them deliberately. Due to a phenomenal rise in the social evils, Baba Ram Singh had to face a large number of difficulties. Many Bedis and Sodhis had proclaimed themselves as Gurus¹⁴.

The women, who were accorded by Guru Nanak a very high rank in the Sikh religion were subject to social oppression again. An abhorable custom of killing the girl child was in vogue. The evil custom such as child marriage was also in vogue. The widows were looked at hatefully as if they were not a part of the society. Actually, they were meted out with a very bad treatment. The custom of dowry had taken a horrible form. The caste and high-low discrimination had increased by leaps and bounds¹⁵. To eradicate those evils, Baba Ram Singh advised his disciples to abstain from child marriage, and the intoxicants. In fact, the main goal of this movement was to root out the aberrations and evils that had afflicted the Sikh society. Therefore, Baba Ram Singh stressed upon the construction of a progressive society by eliminating the evils prevalent among the people¹⁶.

¹¹Suwarn Singh Virk, *Kuka Lehar De Amar Nayak*, LokgeetParkashan, Chandigarh, 2017, P-3.

¹²Piara Singh Padam, *Sankhep Sikh Itihas*, (1469-1489), *op.cit.*, PP-207, 208.

¹³Gurcharan Singh, *Punjab Da Itihasak Sarvekhan (AadKaal Ton 1947 Tak)*, Kapur Printing Press, Ambala, 1962, PP-300, 301.

¹⁴Sangat Singh, *Itihas Ch Sikh*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2003, P-144.

¹⁵KrishanGopalLamba, *Punjab Da Azadi De Andolan VichYogdan*, LokgeetParkashan, Chandigarh, PP-13, 14.

¹⁶Fauja Singh, *Kuka Movement*, Moti Lal Banarsi Das, Delhi, 1965, PP-11, 15.

Baba Ram Singh did not believe in caste and high-low distinctions. He accorded a high place in society to the low ranked ones. He campaigned for inter-caste marriages. Baba Ram Singh was in favour of widow-marriage. Therefore, he encouraged widow-marriages¹⁷. He paid particular attention to the improvement of the women's condition and their progress. He was in favour of educating women just like men. Therefore, he paid particular attention to their education. At that time, many evils such as killing the girl child, selling them, and marrying them at a tender age were prevalent. These evils were more common among the higher castes. Baba Ram Singh campaigned for eradicating these evils from the Sikh society. This resulted in a partial elimination of these evils¹⁸. Baba Ram Singh is remembered as the first liberator of women from the point of view of social reform. He started the custom of Anand Karaj (marriage according to the Sikh tenets). In this, a simple marriage was performed without any costly costumes or wasteful expenditure¹⁹.

During the congregation on the Vaisakhi day of 1863, a number of issues regarding social reform were deliberated upon. At that time, a number of notions based on blind faith and social evils were prevalent in the society²⁰. On the one side, Baba Ram Singh lifted the people spiritually with the magnificence of Nam (meditation), while, on the other side he brought a revolutionary change by eliminating the evils of the society²¹. The Namdharis paid particular attention to the costumes and the eating habits. The intoxicants were prohibited. Besides this, a particular attention was paid to the cleanliness as well.

The Namdhari movement was, though, a religious and social movement, even then its political aspect cannot be ignored. Namdhari movement slowly made big strides. In the beginning itself, the number of retired soldiers of the old Khalsa army joining Namdhari movement was on a rise. By the time it drew the Government's attention in 1863, it had become a command of saint-soldiers who practiced fighting in the nights²². To gain information about this movement, the British Government started keeping an eye on the Namdharis. The Namdharis resorted to civil disobedience and boycotted the Government products. They considered Baba Ram Singh as Guru Gobind Singh²³. They wanted to finish the foreign rule of the British

¹⁷Sangat Singh, *Itihas Ch Sikh*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2003, P-144..

¹⁸Dalip Singh Namdhari, *Bharti Sutantarta Itihas Da Sunehri Pana Kuka Lehar 1857-1947*, Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh, 2005, PP-52, 53.

¹⁹Charnjit Kaur Mann, *Namdhari Movement*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2011, P-546.

²⁰Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Lehra*, 1850-1910, *op.cit.*, P-67.

²¹Kirpal Singh Kasel, *Tavarikh Sant Khalsa Gur-Itihas*, Arsi Publishers, ChandniChauk, Delhi, 2006, PP-549, 550

²²Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Leheran*, 1850-1910, *op.cit.*, P-131.

²³*Ibid*, P-28.

and wanted to make the country free from them. They also tried to seek help from the ruler of Kashmir and the Governments of Russia and Nepal against the English but they did not succeed. They wanted to make Maharaja Dalip Singh as the ruler of Punjab but could not succeed. The Namdharis also started a campaign against cow-slaughters. Because of this, they killed many cow-slaughters of Amritsar, Raikot, and Malerkotla²⁴ in 1871-72. For this, the Government arrested the Namdharis and executed 66 Namdharis by canon fire. Baba Ram Singh was exiled to Rangoon where he passed away in 1885²⁵.

Thus, we can state that the chief goal of the Namdharis was to eliminate the social evils through social reform. Therefore, they formed their principles by keeping this goal in sight and followed them firmly. Baba Ram Singh had thought that social reform and religious awakening were very essential, to cultivate political awareness among Indians. Therefore, he stated social reform to be the first step of the road to attain liberation from foreign rule²⁶.

After the Namdhari movement slowed down in Punjab, another reform movement Singh Sabha began in Punjab. This comprised of liberal and radical both kinds of Sikhs. The earlier Sikh movements namely Niranjani and Namdhari believed in the living Guru after the ten Gurus. But there were Sikhs in the Sikh religion who disagreed with this concept of Namdharis²⁷. For this reason, the Namdhari movement slowed down and the Singh Sabha movement started.

There were a number of reasons for the beginning of the Singh Sabha movement. There were some evils in the Namdhari movement of Baba Ram Singh which were against the tenets of Sikh religion. Idol worship, caste-discrimination and untouchability were some of the evils which had engulfed the Sikh religion. This took the people of Sikh religion away²⁸ from the Guru's advice. The Namdhari movement made efforts to eradicate the caste-discrimination and other social evils from Punjab. It was successful to a great extent in this. But after the lapse of some time, these evils affected Baba Ram Singh too. This made the social reformist Namdhari movement slow down in Punjab. The result of this was that the social evils which were reduced to an extent, they raised their head again. The obnoxious evils of caste-discrimination occupied the main space in society. The Sikhs from the

²⁴Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, Bhai Jodh Singh Abhinandan Granth*, Khalsa College, Patiala, PP-107, 108.

²⁵*Ibid.*, P-112.

²⁶Gurcharan Singh Brara, *Bharti Azadi Da Andolan*, Punjab State University, textbook Board, Chandigarh, 1975, PP-43, 44.

²⁷Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Lehran*, 1850-1910, *op.cit.*, P-84.

²⁸Surjit Singh Nanua, *Sankhep Sikh Itihas*, Manjot Parkashan, Patiala, 2008, P-203.

lower castes were not allowed to enter the Gurudwaras. This made these people turn to the Christian religion²⁹.

At that time, the large fear which was faced by Sikhism from the Christian missionaries, because after Punjab was made a part of the British imperialism, the missionaries accelerated their activities in Punjab. When Maharaja Dalip Singh and the Raja of Kapurthala joined the Christian religion, it made a big blow to the Sikh society. The Sikhs from the lower castes were already joining the Christian religion very easily. By this they hoped for a better employment and they also attained a good status in the society. The youth which attained education in the missionary schools came under the influence of the Christians and they paid no attention to Sikh customs and started trimming their hair. The second biggest danger to Sikh religion then was from the Arya Samaj. At that time, Swami Dayanand started negating other religions to campaign for the Hindu religion and to establish the importance of the Vedas. The Sikh community couldn't tolerate this abuse. Other than this, four Sikh students Aya Singh, Atar Singh, Sadhu Singh and Santokh Singh of Amritsar mission expressed their desire to join the Christian religion. This caused a bit tumult among the Sikhs. Pandit Shardha Ram Philauri used some inappropriate words about the holy scriptures of Sikhs while he was delivering a religious discourse at Guru Ka Bag, Amritsar³⁰. This caused a vibration among the Sikhs and this became a main reason in starting the Singh Sabha movement.

To save the Sikh religion from the onslaught of the Christian religion and to eliminate the evils prevailing in the society, Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia gathered the Sikhs at Amritsar in 1873. Harnam Singh, a Sikh aris to crat from Kapurthala converted soon after Maharaja Dalip Singh. The Sri guru Singh Sabha at Amritsar was formed at a meeting on 1st October 1873. This was attended by several elits Sikhs including some Gianis, priests, and Granthis. The following were selected as office bearers :Thakar Singh Sandhawalia president, Giani Gian Singh Amritsar secretary, Amar Singh Deputy secretary and Dharam Singh was Treasurer. The organization decided to work to "re established the real Sikh values"³¹. Singh Sabha at Lahore was formed by the Sikh elite in Lahore on 2 November 1879. The majority of Sabhas were members of the Khalsa Diwan. A number of rules were framed to run this Sabha in a proper manner. It was essential to have faith in the Gurus' advice to become its member. Each member had to take an oath for remaining faithful to the Sabha and to serve the Sikh thought. Other than this, he had to pay some levy too to the Sabha. In the beginning of the Singh Sabha Amritsar, it had 95 members and this number increased. The Singh Sabha formed its Executive Committee which

²⁹ Kartar Singh, *Sikh Itihas, op. cit.*, PP-268, 269.

³⁰ Shyamala Bhatia, *Social Change And Politics In Punjab*, Enkay Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, P-151.

³¹ Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, *Sikh History in 10 Volumes*, Sikh University Press, vol. 4, Belgium, 2012, PP-49,69.

comprised of the President, Secretary and some more members. These were elected democratically. Thakar Singh Sandhawalia and Giyani Giyan Singh³² were appointed its President and Secretary respectively.

Thakar Singh Sandhawalia was born in 1837. His father's name was Sardar Lehna Singh. Since he was of a very young age at the time of the annexation of the Punjab, he couldn't be a part of the upheavals of 1848-49. He was first appointed as an Extra Assistant Commissioner in 1865. After this, he remained a member of the Committee made for the management of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. This made him know the evils prevalent in the society and campaigns of the Christian religion. Due to this, he took other Sikhs with him and started the Singh Sabha, Amritsar.

The goals of the Singh Sabha movement were to establish the sanctity of the Sikh religion once again, to eliminate the caste-discrimination and to remove illiteracy, to get the religious and historical books written and to get them published, to seek help from the British in the educational policies, and to eliminate the evils³³ which were hurdles in the development of the Sikh religion.

The development of the Singh Sabha was at great pace during the last years of the 19th century. In the light of the progress of the Singh Sabha Amritsar, many Singh Sabhas were formed in different parts of the Punjab. It was a new turn in the Sikh history, when the Singh Sabha movement gathered momentum. This gave a new energy to the Sikhs. After the Singh Sabha movement began, the educated people, the Sikh scholars and the Sikh missionaries of Punjab joined the movement. This greatly added to the impact of Singh Sabha movement. The chief aim of this Sabha was to eliminate the social evils and to spread the western education. Due to these reforms³⁴, the Singh Sabha faced opposition³⁵ too at several places.

There was no such unity among the top three founders of the Singh Sabha Amritsar, which is essential for the success of any organization. These founders were Thakar Singh Sandhawalia, KanwarBikram Singh Kapurthala and Baba Khem Singh Bedi. Among them, KanwarBikram Singh had the view that the Singh Sabha should engage only with the social reform activities and should keep away from politics. Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia wanted to uproot the British empire from Punjab and establish the Sikh rule again. Baba Khem Singh Bedi supported the social reforms on the one hand and having faith in the living Guru, he campaigned in support of this. Due to these conflicts of opinion, this Sabha couldn't become much popular. This made the activities of the Sabha dim further³⁶.

³²*Report On The Administration Of Punjab And Its Dependencies For Lahore 1897-98* (Lahore 1898) No. 162, P-ccxix.

³³Jagjit Singh, *Singh Sabha Lehar 1873-1902*, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1974, P-14.

³⁴*Ibid.*, P-26.

³⁵Giani Amar Singh, *Sikh Itihas*, BhaiChatar Singh Jivan Singh, Amritsar, 1968, P-230.

³⁶*Khalsa Akhbar*, April 14, 1899, Lahore, P-8.

After the influence of the Singh Sabha Amritsar waned, the Singh Sabha Lahore was established in 1879 with the efforts of Bhai Gurmukh Singh³⁷. Bhai Gurmukh Singh was born in 1849 in the house of Vasawa Singh of Kapurthala who was a poor peasant Jatt. He gained education with the help of Kanwar Bikram Singh. Along with his education, Gurmukh Singh used to join Singh Sabha Amritsar with Bikram Singh. Due to this, Bhai Gurmukh Singh engaged himself with the social reform and with the elimination of evils prevailing in the Sikh religion. In 1876, when Gurmukh Singh realized that influence of the Singh Sabha had waned and that the campaign for the Christian religion was on the rise³⁸, the Singh Sabha Lahore was then founded with his efforts.

Dewan Boota Singh was the President and Bhai Gurmukh Singh was the Secretary of the Singh Sabha Lahore. The Singh Sabha Lahore had greater influence than the Singh Sabha Amritsar because the Singh Sabha Amritsar was under the influence of the elite Sikh Sardars whereas the Singh Sabha Lahore was more democratic in nature. The most of its members came either from the middle class or from the lower class. Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Giyani Ditt Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh and Bhai Lakshman Singh were all either from middle or from the lower class. In this way, the Singh Sabha became the centre of the Sikh renaissance³⁹.

Besides this, another institution 'Khalsa Dewan Amritsar' was established. This was established to remove the differences between the Singh Sabha Amritsar and the Singh Sabha Lahore. The ruler of Faridkot, Bikram Singh was made the Patron, Baba Khem Singh Bedi was made the President, and Bhai Ganeshi Singh and Bhai Gurmukh Singh were made Secretaries of the Dewan. But the Dewan had some managers with Hindu leanings. In the 1890, Sikh groups formed many Khalsa Diwans in towns and cities, while rural groups formed their own Sikh Sabhas. By 1902, there were over 150 Singh Sabhas and Khalsa diwans in existence another attempt brought 29 of these Khalsa diwans and other Sikh societies under a Chief Khalsa diwan, partly due to the need for greater political coordination in the face of a more powerful common adversary, the Arya Samaj, the main representative of political Hinduism in Punjab. This and the nature and character of the Singh Sabha's modernizing zeal, was motivated in large part by the Arya Samaj's own political innovation of the term 'Hindu' from meaning a non-muslim inhabitant of India to a specifically religious identity embodied by the term. "Hinduism" that was a reason Khalsa Diwan invite the Hindu⁴⁰. The managers of the Khalsa Dewan couldn't stop untouchability, Hinduised Sikh customs, idol worship, particularly the idol worship

³⁷*Op.cit.*, P-231.

³⁸Kartar Singh, *Sikh Itihas, BhagDuja, op.cit.*, PP-274-275.

³⁹Piara Singh Padam, *Sankhep Sikh Itihas 1469-1989, op.cit.*, P-218.

⁴⁰D. Petric, *Memorandum On Recent Development In Sikh Politics*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. IV, Part II, Patiala, 1970, PP-310-311.

inside Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar⁴¹. Bhai Gurmukh Singh didn't like all this phenomena. Due to this, he established the Khalsa Dewan Lahore in 1886⁴². Bhai Gurmukh Singh and his comrades were the members of this Sabha. All the members of this Sabha were determined social reformists. Therefore, the efforts for removing the untouchability among Sikhs and the evils such as caste-discrimination started immediately after the establishment of the Sabha.

At this time when social reformists in India and Punjab were working hard for removing religious and social evils, the British rulers paid no attention to it. But due to the pressure mounted by these movements, the Government passed the inter-caste and community marriage Act in 1872. In 1891, by another law they abolished the child marriage⁴³. The most important social reform carried out by Singh Sabha movement was the reform for women⁴⁴. It contributed in providing a place to women which is equal to men. They campaigned for education to women and for widow-remarriage. The Singh Sabha achieved a complete success in providing a higher status to women⁴⁵. The Singh Sabha struggled for changing peoples' attitude towards women and eliminating the veil-custom among them, because there was no place for such custom in the Sikh society⁴⁶.

The Singh Sabha made great contribution to education by establishing educational institutions. The Singh Sabha opened the schools at various places for promoting education. These institutions stressed upon the development of the Punjabi language along with the religious education. Though the Singh Sabha opened these schools for promoting education but this doesn't mean that they opposed western education. Rather, they equally stressed upon the need for attaining the western education by the students from the schools established according to the Sikh tenets⁴⁷. In 1876, the Singh Sabha opened the Punjab University Oriental College. The study of Punjabi language was begun there. Bhai Gurmukh Singh was appointed Professor of Punjabi there⁴⁸. Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh together carried out big reforms. They made the people aware about the social evils and made them move on the right path⁴⁹. Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh played

⁴¹*The Civil And Military Gazetteer*, April 30, 1888, Lahore.

⁴²Trilochan Singh Gill,*Sikh Itihas*, Velvis Publishers P.P.5, Mauriya Enclave, Delhi, 1998, P-78; The Khalsa, June 6, 1900, Lahore.

⁴³Rajwant Singh Rana, *Azadi Di Lehar Vich Punjab Te Bangal Da Hisa*, Manprit Parkashan, Delhi, 1997, P-31.

⁴⁴*Khalsa Advocate*, 22 April 1905, Amritsar, P-3

⁴⁵*District Gazetteer Multan*, Lahore, 1901-02, P-98.

⁴⁶*Khalsa Akhbar*, January 3, 1896, Lahore.

⁴⁷Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, PP-127, 128.

⁴⁸Jagjit Singh, *Singh Sabha Lehar 1873-1902, op.cit.*, PP-19, 20.

⁴⁹ *Census Report of The Punjab*, 1911, Volume XIV, Punjab, P-294, Para 386.

an important part in the Lahore Singh Sabha of 1879. They started the 'GurmukhiAkhbar' in 1880⁵⁰.

Bhai Gurmukh Singh started campaigning in 1880 for starting the Khalsa College, to promote education. He proposed a resolution to the Singh Sabha and wrote several articles for this in the GurmukhiAkhbar. Bhai Gurmukh Singh expressed his views for establishing the Khalsa College before the Sikh religious (Panthak) heads. The Sikh Sardars formed a committee to deliberate upon this. After the deliberations, the Sikh Sardars handed a letter to Lord Duffron on 22nd April, 1885⁵¹. The English Officer greatly appreciated the educational movement of the Sikhs. This greatly encouraged Bhai Gurmukh Singh. He started seeking help from the British Government for establishing the Khalsa College. Financial help was also sought from the Sikh Riyasats (principalities). With the support of the British Government, the Khalsa Diwan Lahore constituted the 'Khalsa College Sthapna Committee' on 22nd February, 1889 to promote education movement⁵². Its first meeting was held in Lahore on 22nd February, 1890. Bhai Gurmukh Singh was founder of this. After a long struggle, the foundation of the Khalsa College was laid by James Lyal the Lord in Amritsar on 5th March, 1892. Sir William Rationon was made the first President of the Khalsa College and Mr. J.C. Omen the first Principal. One of the founders of the Khalsa College, Sardar Jawahar Singh was made Secretary⁵³ of the 'Khalsa College Council'.

Similarly, to impart education to the women, famous women education centres like Sikh KanyaMahavidyalya, Ferozepur, Khalsa School, Kairon, and VidyaBhandar, Bhasaurh were opened. By this, the Singh Sabha made great contributions to spread education among the women and to their upliftment⁵⁴.

Besides this, the Singh Sabha started to get the Punjabi books published and the Khalsa Printing Press was established in Lahore in 1883. Many other printing presses were opened along with this where books related to the Sikh history and religion and small magazines were printed in Punjabi. The publication of newspapers in Punjabi also began. The first Khalsa Akhbar was printed in Punjabi in 1885.

The Khalsa Samachar was founded in 1899 which became a prominent Sikh magazine. This magazine made great strides during Bhai Vir Singh's tenure because he was a prominent scholar, poet, and commentator on religious books. He established the Khalsa Tract Society in 1894. It had its head office in Amritsar and Bhai Kaur Singh was its main guide. A monthly 'Masik Tract' started being published

⁵⁰*Khalsa Samachar*, November 11, 1899, Amritsar.

⁵¹Gurnek Singh Neki, *Singh Sabha Lehar De Usraie*, Literature House, Amritsar, 1985, PP-29, 30.

⁵²*Ibid.*, P-30.

⁵³Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, P-128.

⁵⁴*The Khalsa Akhbar*, May 6, 1898, Lahore.

by it. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha published 'GurshabdRatnakar Mahan Kosh' during this period which is considered his great literary contribution. The Singh Sabha also published the book on Sikh religion⁵⁵ by McCauliffe.

With the efforts of the Singh Sabhas, Khalsa hospitals were opened in Punjab where poor were treated free. The YatimKhanas (orphanages) were opened for the orphans belonging to the Sikh religion and Andh-Ashram (shelter for the blind) for the blinds. The Singh Sabha missionaries reformed the society by opposing the untouchability, caste-discrimination, and false value system. This made the Amritsar and Lahore Singh Sabhas as the favourite institutions of the Sikhs.⁵⁶

During this time, the Singh Sabha had no political goal. They didn't want to oppose the British in any way. In the beginning, the Singh Sabha and the British Government worked together. The educated Sikhs were of the view that jobs and some other concessions be obtained from the British. But the Singh Sabha couldn't remain aloof from the political situation prevailing then because the Singh Sabha campaigns brought awareness among the people which made them demand particular political rights⁵⁷. Thus, the reforms carried out by the Singh Sabha in the social and religious domains made significant contributions to eliminate the evils affecting the Sikh society⁵⁸. The spread of education brought awakening among the people which developed a national sentiment among them.

During the later half of the 19th century, reform movements took place to eliminate the evils of the Hindu society. Through these reform movements, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, DevinderNath Tagore, KeshavChanderSen, IshwarChanderVidyaSagar, Swami Vivekanad, and Swami Dayanand made significant contributions to eliminate the social evils in Punjab⁵⁹.

Swami Dayanand was born into a Brahmin family in 1824. When he was 14 years of age, he visited a Shiva temple along with his family to worship there. He realized that the Shiva idol save others which cannot save itself from the rats. Thus, Swami Dayanand lost faith in religion and he started living with Swami Virjanand in Mathura. After acquiring teachings from Swami Virjanand, Swami Dayanand engaged in removing social evils and superstitions from the people. He used to deliver lectures at various places and inspired people to get rid of the social evils affecting the Hindu society. He went to Banaras, Calcutta, Punjab and Rajsthan for

⁵⁵Harjinder Singh Dilgir, *Sikh Kaum Di DujiJaddojehd: Sikh Tavarikh*(1849-1947), S. Surjit Singh Chhadauri, 2008, PP-722-724.

⁵⁶Khushwant Singh, *Sikh Itihas (1839-2004)*, Tr. Gurcharan Singh Aulakh, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 2006, P-155.

⁵⁷Jodh Singh, *Sikh Dharam Vishavkosh*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2008, P-504.

⁵⁸Jagjit Singh, *Singh Sabha Lehar 1873-1902, op.cit.*, P-20.

⁵⁹S.K. Bajaj and J.S. Rekhi, *Bharat Da Itihas (1818-1919)*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2000, P-202.

this⁶⁰. Swami Dayanand was a reformer and believed in pragmatism. He preached against many rituals of the Hindu religion such as idol worship, caste by birth, animal sacrifices and restrictions of women from reading Vedas. He was not only a great scholar and philosopher but also a social reformer and a political thinker. Dayanand was responsible for the revival of the Indian educational system by bringing together pupil from different strata of the society under one umbrella, that is, classroom. He wrote a book named 'SatyarthPrakash'⁶¹ in 1874. He described his teachings in this book.

Swami Dayanand had a great faith in the Vedas and considered Vedas as the repositories of true knowledge. There was no place in Arya Samaj for the worship of Gods and Goddesses. They believed only in one God. Therefore, they argued against the idol worship. They didn't believe in caste-system either. The people of all castes were equal for them. Besides this, Swami Dayanand campaigned for equal status of men and women. He also campaigned against the Sati Pratha, female infanticide and for widow-marriage. He was in favour of women's education.

Thus, Swami Dayanand felt the pulse of the times and arrived at the conclusion that an institution to eliminate the social evils should be established through which the people's thinking could be changed. For this, he established an institution named Arya Samaj in Bombay in 1875. Slowly, the branches of this institution started spreading in the whole of India. But the Arya Samaj achieved the greatest success in Punjab⁶².

In January 1877, the Viceroy of India, George Litton called the famous Delhi Darbar. Swami Dayanand also participated in this. Some representatives from Punjab met Swami Dayanand there and invited him to visit Punjab. After some time, Swami Dayanand started for Punjab and reached Lahore via Ludhiana. He established the first Arya Samaj of Punjab in Lahore. Lala Mool Raj was appointed its first President and Lala Sai Das its first Secretary. In the beginning, the Lahore Arya Samaj had 300 members. The Arya Samaj gained such an astounding success in Punjab that it left the Bombay Arya Samaj behind⁶³.

After the establishment of the Lahore Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand stayed in Punjab for 15 months and he visited different cities of Punjab during this period. First of all, he established Arya Samaj in Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Jalandhar. The members of these Arya Samaj spread Swami Dayanand's ideas with great enthusiasm which made a large number of educated people to join Arya Samaj. The Punjab Brahmins were less orthodox compared to the Brahmins of other provinces.

⁶⁰Sudarshan Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas* (1849-1949), *op.cit.*, PP-72, 73.

⁶¹Tara Chand, *History Of The Freedom Movement In India, Volume II*, Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi, 1967, PP-421-422.

⁶² S.K. Bajaj & J.S. Rekhi, *Bharat Da Itihas* (1818-1919), *op.cit.*, P-202

⁶³Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, PP-149, 150.

They were engaged in occupations other than the priestly engagements. These Brahmins and the people from the Khatri and Vaish castes considered Swami Dayanand's teaching akin to theirs. Therefore, Swami Dayanand gained better success in the Punjab⁶⁴. There were several reasons for Arya Samaj's success in Punjab. First, the people of Punjab had been facing foreign attacks. They were tired of the war life. Therefore, they were in search of a leader who could liberate them from such evil society⁶⁵.

The people of Punjab had a new ray of hope after listening to Swami Dayanand's teachings. During the Middle Age when India was engulfed by conservative customs and superstitions, Guru Nank Dev and his successors brought a thinking among the people through their teachings which eliminated the social evils of the world. But with the passage of time, the people were again infected by these customs and superstitions. The Sikh Gurus liberated them from these. Thus, Swami Dayanand came as a new ray of hope for the people of Punjab⁶⁶. But the Christian missionaries and the Muslims were attempting religious conversions in Punjab. Swami Dayanand raised his voice against the conversions and started the Shuddhi or religious conversion movement again to bring the people from the lower castes back into the Hindu religion. He joined the people who had converted to Christianity or Islam back into the Hindu religion and gave them a status equal to the higher castes. Arya Samaj started the Shuddhi movement in Lahore too in 1893. Brahmo Samaj had also been established in Punjab by then. A large number of educated Bengalis joined the Brahmo Samaj. They started obtaining higher level jobs in Punjab. This proved to be a challenge⁶⁷ for the people of Punjab. Due to this, they started joining the Arya Samaj. A reason other than this for the success of the Arya Samaj in Punjab was to give an equal status to women in society. Also, most of the Arya Samaj members were literate and a large number of them were teachers, doctors and lawyers. The caste-system was also weakening the Hindu society during those days. The Arya Samaj not only opposed the untouchability, it also made every effort to bring the people from the lower castes back into their society through the Shuddhi movement. The people saw a new hope in this and they started joining Arya Samaj. Actually, the Arya Samaj came into existence through the efforts of the common people. The middle class joined it in great numbers which became a factor for its success⁶⁸. At

⁶⁴Ravinder Kaur, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements And The Press (1885-1910)*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2008, P-630.

⁶⁵J.N. Sarkar, *Swami Dayanand Saraswati - His Place In India, A Life History*, Harbilas Sharda (ed.), Dayanand Commemoration Volume, Ajmer, 1937, P-10.

⁶⁶*Op. Cit.*, P-11.

⁶⁷Satish Kumar Sharma, *Social Movement And Social Change - A Study Of Arya Samaj And Untouchables In The Punjab*, B.R. Corporation, Delhi, 1985, P-25.

⁶⁸Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, P-152.

that time, some such evils afflicted the society of Punjab which needed a fight against them. A lower status to women, prohibition of widow-remarriage, child-marriage, the veil-custom, the dowry custom, and the untouchability were such social evils which were eating into the society of Punjab. The Arya Samaj decided to eliminate these evils.⁶⁹

Swami Dayanand accorded rights to women equal to men. He considered men and women equal. The principles framed by him applied equally to both. Swami Dayanand was in favour of educating boys and girls both. He motivated women to get educated and to study the Vedas. Some women made important contribution to the Arya Samaj movement⁷⁰. The Arya Samaj not only raised its voice against the child-marriage, it also motivated people for widow-remarriage. In the Arya Samaj gatherings, a campaign was waged against these evils. The D.A.V. institute didn't allow admission to the married children⁷¹. Lala Lajpat Rai, HarbilasSarda, and Mukhtiar Singh worked for making a law for abolition of child-marriage and in favour of encouraging inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. This is called Sarda Act. Ganga Ram founded the 'VidhwaVivahSahayak Sabha' (the society helping widow-marriage) in Lahore and its branches were opened in many cities of the country. This was to encourage widow-remarriages. The Arya Samaj opened Ashrams (homes) in many places. They also made many efforts for the widow women⁷². The veil-custom was prevalent among women then. The Arya Samaj took strong steps against this. The women were invited in the societal meetings. They were encouraged to engage in social service. Sarla Devi and Poorni Devi's names are eminent for such work. The Arya Samaji women joined to form a League. They trained women in tailoring and embroidery⁷³. The Arya Samaj also raised its voice against the dowry-system. The Arya Kumar Sabha made particular contribution in this⁷⁴. The Arya Samaj also worked against the evils of drinking and gambling. The Arya Samaj also raised its voice against prostitution. They formed a NaikJatiSudhar Sabha for this purpose. The girls belonging to this caste were admitted to the Arya Schools. Besides, they were housed in Arya Ashrams⁷⁵.

⁶⁹*Op.cit.*, P-26.

⁷⁰Satyendra Prakash Nanda, Aas, *Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati: JivanKarya Evam Darshan*, Alok Prakashan, Pathankot, 1996, P-85.

⁷¹Madhu Chopra, *Bharat KeSamajikAurDharmikJivan Me Aarya Samaj Ka Yogdan*, Satyam Publishing House, 2006, P-73.

⁷²*Ibid.*,P-74.

⁷³S.R. Bakshi, Arya Samaj, *Swami Dayanand And His Ideology*, Volume II, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1991, P-11.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*,P-12.

⁷⁵Jagjivan Mohan Walia, *A History Of The Punjab (1799-1947)*, Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana, 1992, P-239.

The caste system have kept India greatly backward. The Shudra caste was particular victim of this evil. A feeling of untouchability against them got established. This caste was prevented from entering the Hindu temples. The Christians and the Muslims took advantage of this frailty. They began attracting the lower castes into their religious fold. Swami Dayanand raised his voice against this custom. He started the Shuddhi movement and provided equal status to the Shudra caste people in his society. Some Arya Samajis did not like it in the beginning. The Christians stated about this that the Arya Samaj has given up the caste system but the Arya Samajis have not⁷⁶. There is no doubt that our society is still shackled by the caste-system. Though there were some evils prevalent in the Arya Samaj, but yet the Arya Samaj gave a direction⁷⁷ to our society like the Sikh Gurus.

After the death of Swami Dayanand on 30th October, 1883, the Arya Samaj decided to establish a Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School in his memory. The people made huge donations for the success of this school. Rs. 7000/- got collected in the first gathering itself. Malik JawalaParsad made a contribution of Rs. 8000/- and Baba Narayan Singh that of Rs. 10000/-. Some people decided to contribute one tenth of their salary every month. In this way, they started contributing to the Dayanand Fund on the occasion of birth day, promotion in job, marriage and other occasions for celebration. Lala Lal Chand was elected the first President of this Fund committee. The appeals made by Lala Lajpat Rai, Guru DuttVidyarthi, and Mahatma Hans Raj for the funds never went empty. One must remember that Sayyad Ahmad Khan's Islami College, Aligarh, or Khalsa College, Amritsar were fully patronized by the provincial rulers and the British Government. But the Arya Samaj had no help of this kind. Even if the British Government offered any help to them, they did not accept it⁷⁸. According to the principles laid out for the Dayanand College, there was a special arrangement for the study of Hindi, Sanskrit, and the Vedas but the study of Science and English literature were also given importance. A training of industrial skills was also promised along with the general studies⁷⁹. According to the rules of this institution, only the representatives from Arya Samaj could be its members and only the Indian teachers could teach there. Along with this, they accepted no economic help from the British Government. A rule was also laid out to give free education to students as far as possible⁸⁰.

All these facts show how Arya Samaj wanted to kindle a spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance among the people. It brought the Swadeshi(nativity) spirit in the

⁷⁶Sudarshan Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas* (1849-1947), *op.cit.*, PP-72-73.

⁷⁷Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, P-154.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, P-155.

⁷⁹Amrit Lal Gupta, *Bharti Sutantarta Da Itihas*, Punjabi Publishers, Jalandhar, 1964, PP-90, 91.

⁸⁰S.R. Bakshi, *Arya Samaj And Philosophy Of Swami Dayanand*, Vista International Publishing House, Delhi, 2005, P-180.

education system. Actually, the Arya Samaj set a standard of its own for its educational institutions which were distinct from the prevalent western system to a great extent. Mahatma Hans Raj agreed to become the Honorary Head Master of the Dayanand School and he became Honorary Principal later on. He did a great work for Dayanand institutions⁸¹. In 1899, D.A.V. School was opened and D.A.V. College was opened later on. Both of these institutions became famous in Punjab. At the time of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of this institution, the School had 1739 students on its rolls and the College had 903 students. Of these, 700 students lived in the boarding house. Not only in terms of the number, in terms of results to the students of the D.A.V. institutions have kept their place of pride at the University level⁸². The Arya Samaj have made particular contribution for the women education too. The place which the D.A.V. School and the D.A.V. College had for boys' education in Punjab, the same place was held for the girls' education by the KanyaMahavidyalya⁸³ established in 1891 at Jalandhar.

Besides this, the Arya Samaj carried out several important works of social welfare. To support the orphan children was considered to be the most important responsibility by the Arya Samaj. Due to this, an orphanage was established in 1877 at Ferozepur. Children from each caste and each religion were kept in this orphanage. In 1877, one third of the children of this orphanage belonged to the Muslim religion. Along with the boarding and lodging of the children here, arrangements were also made for their education. During the horrible famines of 1896-97 and the 1899-1900 in the country, the Arya Samaj helped the people affected by the famines a lot. During this time, the Arya Samajis went to the famine affected regions and worked in all of the regions of the country and brought the orphaned children to the Ferozepur orphanage several times⁸⁴. Impressed by the good work of this orphanage, the Arya Samaj opened 10 more orphanages.

The Arya Samaj was though a religious and social reform movement, Swami Dayanand never raised his voice against the British Government. In fact, Swami Dayanand was not in favour of any revolt or agitation against the British Government, because he had no political goal. He was a religious and social campaigner. But the Arya Samajis like Lala Lajpat Rai participated in the political issues very enthusiastically. Due to this, the British Government always suspected the Arya Samajis⁸⁵. To make the Arya Samajis suspects in the eyes of the British, the Muslim opponents of the Arya Samaj also dubbed them as a political movement.

⁸¹Madhu Chopra, *Bharat Ke Samajik Aur Rajnitik Jivan Me Aarya Samaj Ka Yogdan*, *Op.Cit.*,P-141.

⁸²*Report Of The Managing Committee Of The D.A.V. College Trust And Management Society*, New Delhi, 1984-85, PP-1, 2.

⁸³*Op.cit.*,P-142.

⁸⁴S.R. Bakshi, *Arya Samaj And Philosophy of Swami Dayanand*, *op.cit.*,P-181.

⁸⁵Sudarshan Singh, *Punjab da Itihas (1849-1947)*,*op.cit.*,P-74.

Though the Arya Samaj movement was not a political movement, but Swami Dayanand's slogans of 'Back to the Vedas' and 'India for the Indians' inspired the common people to participate in the national movement. Swami used the Swadeshi word first of all and advised to use Swadeshi (native) goods⁸⁶. This filled the people with a national spirit and the Arya Samaj participated in its full power in the first national movement in Punjab. In the movement against the Patiala rule, court cases against many Arya Samajis were registered⁸⁷. Thus, the Arya Samaj infused the national spirit among the people through religious and social reforms.

We can, thus, state that the Namdhari, Singh Sabha and the Arya Samaj movements active during the years 1849-1900 have a special place in the social history of the Punjab. Though these were religious movements, they carried out several social reforms. These greatly helped to give birth to a new society, because they weakened the discrimination caused by the untouchability and the caste-system. A spirit of unity and equality spread around. The women were given equal place to men in the society. Thus, if these movements attempted to bring a particular change in the social structure here, the educational institutions run by them produced such patriots who never hesitated to give any kind of sacrifice for the freedom of the country.

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⁸⁶Ganda Singh (ed.), *Punjab 1849-1960, op.cit.*, P-159.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*,P-160.