

**SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM  
MOVEMENTS IN THE NINETEENTH  
AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES**



**SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS  
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TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

*Edited by*

**S. P. SEN**

**DIRECTOR,**

**INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL STUDIES**

**INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL STUDIES  
CALCUTTA 700 017**

*First published in August 1960.*

Published by Mrs. Minati Chattopadhyaya  
Registrar, Institute of Historical Studies  
35 Theatre Road, Calcutta 700 017 (India)

*Price* : Rs. 125'00 (India)  
U.S. \$ 30'00 or its equivalent in any other  
foreign currency

Printed in India by Shri Tridibesh Basu  
at K. P. Basu Printing Works, 11 Mahendra Gossain Lane, Calcutta 700-01

## P R E F A C E

THE PRESENT VOLUME is a collection of thirty-three papers presented at the Twelfth Annual Conference of the Institute of Historical Studies held at Shillong in October 1974. Its publication has been delayed by several factors beyond the control of the Institute. The papers were edited by the Director of the Institute, Dr. S. P. Sen, and practically the entire volume had been seen through the press by him before his sudden and premature demise on 9 June 1979. His contributions to Indian Historical Studies, through the volumes written and edited by him, including the monumental *Dictionary of National Biography*, as also through *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* of which he was the Founder-Editor, are well known to all serious students of Indian History throughout the world. He built up the Institute of Historical Studies as an all-India organization and enlisted the co-operation of eminent scholars of international reputation in other countries. He fought strenuously to rescue Indian Historical Studies from the grip of the 'pseudo-leftist fashionable intellectuals' who came into prominence in the seventies under the patronage of the then Government of India. His views on his subject were stated briefly in his Preface to *Historical Writings on the Nationalist Movement in India*. His approach to history was marked by the strictest scientific outlook and the most scrupulous adherence to the tradition of dispassionate examination of source materials; political ideology had no place in his methodology. His death has created a void which will not be easily or speedily filled up.

It is a matter of great regret for every one connected with the Institute that his death preceded the publication of this volume. The melancholy duty of presenting it to the world of scholars has fallen upon me.

It was Dr. S. P. Sen who chose the theme—*Social and Religious Reform Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth*

*Centuries* as also the contributors who were well known for their special study of different aspects of the subject. There is no novelty in the choice of the theme ; many scholars have written books and papers on it in recent years. But Dr. S. P. Sen's conception was a comprehensive one ; he desired to present an all-India picture which would emphasise regional varieties without overlooking the common features which gave the reform movements a national character. The diversity of political, social and economic developments in India during the modern period, as also the local socio-religious traditions inherited from the past, had to be properly assessed before the underlying unity of the new trends could be explored. The volume was not intended to be a collection of more or less unconnected papers on a general theme. In order to ensure uniformity of treatment the writers were given a set pattern to follow so that their contributions might be complementary studies from which a comprehensive national picture could emerge. The main points of that standard pattern are given below to enable the readers to go through the papers more intelligently and to appreciate the broad scope assigned to the volume :

- I. State of the Society at the Beginning of the 19th Century ; the inadequacies in the Social system.
- II. How the awareness for reform was first roused.
- III. Some of the leading personalities in the reform agitation.
- IV. Development of organised reform movements and Institutions.
- V. The reaction of the Society in general.
- VI. The extent of success or failure.

The survey covers twenty States and Union Territories : (1) Bengal, (2) Assam, (3) Orissa, (4) Bihar, (5) Uttar Pradesh, (6) Punjab, (7) Himachal Pradesh, (8) Jammu and Kashmir, (9) Rajasthan, (10) Gujarat, (11) Maharashtra, (12) Tamil Nadu, (13) Andhra Pradesh, (14) Karnataka, (15) Kerala, (16) Pondicherry, (17) Goa, (18) Manipur, (19) Nagaland, and (20) Meghalaya. The approach of the contributors is primarily regional ; but, taken together, their survey

provides a more or less integrated picture of the socio-religious changes initiated throughout the country primarily by the impact of the West. Source materials in regional languages have been used profusely to supplement official records. In writing the history of the people's reaction to the new forces generated by foreign rule indigenous sources should be given primary attention.

In a sense this volume is complementary to *Historical Writings on the Nationalist Movement in India*, edited by Dr. S. P. Sen and published by the Institute in 1977. Writers on the history of the nationalist movement usually lay stress on its political and constitutional aspects. But India's urge to be free had several facets, e.g., freedom from lifeless religious rituals, social abuses, intellectual subservience to the West. Inevitably revivalist forces emerged, among the Hindus as also among the Muslims, for the search for a new identity almost automatically implied retrospective glorification of the past. Readers of the present volume will find in its pages useful data and meaningful ideas which will place the history of the nationalist movement in a broader perspective.

In bringing out this volume Dr. S. P. Sen received full co-operation from the contributors of papers without whose co-operation the publication of the volume would not have been possible. He also received the kind help of Dr. Amitabha Mukherjee of the Jadavpur University, Dr. Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta of the Calcutta University and Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee of the Visva-Bharati University while editing the papers. Mrs. Minati Chattopadhyaya helped Dr. Sen in the preparation of the volume. Hence we owe our thanks to all of them. Our thanks are finally due to Shri Biram Mukherjee for seeing the volume through the press and for designing the get-up and to Shri Tridibesh Basu of the K. P. Basu Printing Works for his personal attention in supervising the printing work.



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## PUNJAB

# SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE PUNJAB IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

DR. GANDA SINGH

(Panjabi University, Patiala)

### I

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY saw the rise and development of a number of socio-religious movements. In 1799 Sardar Ranjit Singh of the Sukkarchakkia confederacy of the Sikhs was able to roll back the tide of the Afghan invasions which had for over half a century threatened the independence of the Panjab. Enthused with the spirit of socio-religious reform among the people of the Panjab inculcated by the Sikh Gurus, the devotees of Guru Gobind Singh, under the lead of his chosen disciple Banda Singh Bahadur, had taken up the cause of the political liberation of its people from under the galling yoke of Mughal tyranny in the beginning of the eighteenth century. At this time Emperor Bahadur Shah I tried to excite and set up the Muhammadan population of the province against the Sikhs, and issued an edict on the 29th Shawwal, Bahadur Shahi 4, (December 10, 1710) against them asking the *faujدارs* of the neighbourhood of Delhi,—of Lahore and Sirhind,—to kill the disciples of Guru Nanak, wherever found (*Nanak-prastan ra, har ja kih bayaband ba-qatl rasanand*). This order for indiscriminate massacre of the Sikhs was also repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar

during his reign, and it continued with more or less rigour up to the early fifties of the eighteenth century.

Thousands of Sikhs were thus killed at Lahore and other places during the governorships of Abdus-Samad Khan, Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan and Mir Moin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Mir Mannoo. But this could not frighten them into silence or inaction. It rather deepened their devotion to their cause and added to their strength to organise themselves into a number of confederacies, known as the Sikh *misals*. By the mid-seventeen-fifties they were able to measure swords with the Mughals, and in the next decade they liberated the Panjab from the north-western invaders and became masters of Sirhind and Lahore in 1764-65. Finally, Ranjit Singh (1799-1839) consolidated the Panjab into a well-knit political and geographical unit, carrying its boundaries to Tibet on the north-east and Sindh on the south-west, with Afghanistan on the north-west and the province of Delhi on the south-east. This Panjab was a gift of the Sikhs to India. But, unfortunately, it again came to be divided on a narrow communal basis in 1947.

## II

With the rise of the Sikh political power in the country, most of the predominant positions in the government came to be held by the Hindus, particularly the Brahmans and the Dogras, and, through their social influence, the old Brahmanical ways of life began to creep into the Sikh society. The long discarded gods and goddesses also appeared here and there on the scene with Hindu rites and rituals in the outer precincts of the Sikh temples. The Brahman slowly reasserted himself as the presiding priest at the birth, marriage and death ceremonies of the Sikhs. This deteriorating state of affairs raised a protest in the mind of a devoted Sikh, Bhai Dayal of Peshawar, and he felt called upon to cleanse the Sikh society of the un-Sikh practices that had crept into it. Born in 1783, he had grown up into an intensely dedicated Sikh under the influence of his mother, in whose company he regularly visited the Gurdwara of Bhai Joga

Singh and imbibed the spirit of the Guru's *Khalsa*. In his early twenties he moved to Rawalpindi where he found a wider field for the propagation of his mission. In March, 1808, at Bhera, he publicly denounced the Hindu prohibition of marriages in the month of Chaitra, and had his own marriage performed in this month according to the Sikh rite of *Anand* instead of the Brahmanical Vedic rite. To him, in the words of Guru Arjan, "Wherever there is His Grace, the month, the day and the time are all auspicious" (*Bara-Maha, Majh, V, p. 136*). This raised a storm against him, but, like an inspired reformer, he was able to weather it with added strength to march on to his goal. While he preached against the worship of gods and goddesses and whimsical rites and rituals, he inculcated the recognition of only One Formless God, saying, "Sing, ye, dear ones, the glory of the One Formless Lord, *the Corporeal ones are all Contemptible — Japo piario Dhann Nirankar, jo dch dhari sab hoi khuar.*" The orthodox and superstitious people launched a social boycott against him and closed to him the doors of the Gurdwara Peshawarian. But this steeled the hearts of his devoted admirers and a new centre for his mission was soon raised on the bank of the Leh, later on known as Dayal-sar. The puritan adherents of Baba Dayal, who always had the words of Dhann Nirankar on their lips, came to be known as *Nirankari*, giving the same name to their movement.

On his death on January 30, 1855, Baba Dayal was succeeded by his son, Baba Darbara Singh. He was an ardent believer in the mission of his father and felt that the faith of the Sikh Gurus could continue in its purity only if its followers were to completely shake off the Brahmanical influence, as desired by the Gurus. In addition to reform in many other fields, he devoted his attention to popularizing the *Anand* rite of marriage. He undertook extensive tours of the western Panjab for this purpose, and was eminently successful in winning over the lukewarm Sikhs to his views. In 1861 he tried to persuade the *Granthis* and *jathedars* of the Darbar Sahib and Akal Takht at Amritsar, but they refused him permission to perform the *Anand* marriage in front of the Akal Takht. He was, however,

not to be dejected. He was successful in performing a marriage by the reformed rite in Chauk Moni in the *Dera* Thakur Dayal Singh on April 17, 1861. To set his movement on a sounder footing, he appointed *Beredar* or local advisers at different places to continue the work in an organised manner.

In 1870, Baba Darbara Singh was succeeded by his younger brother Ratan Chand, popularly known as *Sahib Ratta-ji*.

By this time, the Christian missionaries had also started their work in the Panjab and the Sikh leaders began to think very seriously about the future of their community. It was at this time that Bhai Ram Singh had started a movement of revivalism among the Sikhs in the Malwa area, but the misdirected energies of some of his followers led them into activities subversive of law and order, and the movement was banned by the British Government in 1872. The leaders of the Singh Sabha movement started by Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, however, rendered yeoman's service to the cause of the Nirankaris. Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha and his son *Tikka* Ripudaman Singh visited *Sahib Ratta ji* at Rawalpindi, and assured him of their help in furthering their cause. The *Anand* Marriage Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council by *Tikka* Ripudaman Singh in 1908, and was passed into an Act in October, 1909, through the active support and judicious handling of Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia, a prominent leader of the Singh Sabha Movement. The Sikh *Maryada* was discussed afresh during the time of Baba Gurdit Singh in 1915, and was published for the guidance of the community. He was an ardent supporter of the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the early twenties of the century. After the partition of the Panjab in 1947, Baba Hara Singh, the fifth leader of the Nirankaris, established his headquarters at Chandigarh. In 1971, he was succeeded by his son Baba Gurbakhsh Singh, the present head of the community. The Nirankaris are liberal in their outlook as preached by Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The Nirankaris may rightly be called the precursors of the Namdhari (Kooka), the Singh Sabha and the Akali movements in the Panjab with a permanent impact on the social life of its people.

## III

The Namdhari Movement owes its origin to the religious fervour and enthusiasm of Bhai Ram Singh of village Bhaini in the district of Ludhiana. Born in 1816, he joined the Sikh army in Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh's Regiment. In the course of his service in 1841, he met Bhai Balak Singh of Hazro, a disciple of *Sain Sahib* Bhagat Jawahar Mall, a devoted Sikh, who spent most of his time in meditation and recitation of the divine *Name*.

For his devotion to the faith of the Sikh Gurus, he attracted a large number of admirers, popularly known as *Jagiasi* or *Abhiasi*,—Seekers or Meditators. As an earnest seeker, Baba Ram Singh, we are told, "was also influenced by the teachings of Baba Darbara Singh Nirankari who persuaded him to introduce the Anand marriage system amongst his followers, and he was partially successful. A little before the battle of Mudki during the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845) Bhai Ram Singh left the Sikh army and returned to his village. Here he assumed the role of a preacher. Deeply devoted to the recitation of the Holy Name of God, as Bhai Ram Singh and his associates were, they were known as *Namdhari* or adopters of the *Name*. But as, at times, some of the enthusiasts repeated *Wahiguru Wahiguru* (a name of God) in a quick loud voice, they also came to be called *Kooka* or shouters. According to the information collected in the early eighteen sixties, the leading features of the doctrines taught by Bhai Ram Singh were :

"He abolishes all distinctions of caste among Sikhs ; advocates indiscriminate inter-marriage of all classes, enjoins the marriage of widows . . . . He never takes alms himself and prohibits his followers from doing so ; enjoins abstinence from liquor and drugs . . . he exhorts his disciples to be cleanly and truth-telling . . . . The *Granth* is their only accepted inspired volume."

In 1863, he issued a strongly worded circular to his followers saying "whosoever makes money by the marriage of his daughter is a rascal. Whosoever commits infanticide and gives his

daughter in barter marriage is an evil-doer." He also advocated the Anand marriage in the presence of the Holy *Guru Granth Sahib* and did away with dowry, rich clothes and ornaments and every type of superfluous display.

In addition to this, he taught the worship of one Formless God and rejected the worship of stones and stocks, and also the intermediation of Bedis and Sodhis who posed themselves as *gurus*. Honesty and hard work were the essentials of the Namdhari way of life. He laid great stress on the Sikh *Rahit* and *Khande da Amrit* as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, and for this purpose he went from place to place, holding religious meetings. It may be safely said that the revival of Sikhism in the Cis-Sutlej Malwa territory was mostly due to his enthusiastic efforts. Brahmanism, however, seems to have been too deeply impressed upon the minds of the people there, and they have not been able as yet to shake off its influence completely. The Hindu *havana* is still to be seen on the occasion of Namdhari marriages. Untouchability is also equally deep-rooted among them. They are distinguished by their *Sidhi pag* (straight turban), and a white woollen rosary carried by them.

As the movement came into prominence about the year 1862, some five years after the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, the British authorities in the Panjab became suspicious about the intentions of Baba Ram Singh and his increasing number of followers. The Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar found nothing objectionable in the conduct of the Kooka leader during his visit to the Golden Temple on April 11, 1863. But, on the report of the Inspector General of Police, dated June 28, 1863, the Government of the Panjab decided to intern him in his village Bhaini. This internment continued for over three and a half years. During this period, Baba Ram Singh appointed a number of leading Namdharis as his deputies to continue his work. They were known as *Soobas*. In 1867 restrictions on his movements were removed and he was allowed to visit Anandpur on the occasion of the *Hola* Muhalla festival on March 19-20. The priests of the Takht Kesgarh refused to offer prayers on his behalf on account of certain innovations among the Kookas. The priests of the Golden

Temple, excepting the *jathedar* of the Akal Takht, however, treated him more leniently on the occasion of Diwali on October 27-28, 1867.

In their over-flowing hatred for idol and grave worship, the Kookas desecrated and demolished in 1866-67 a number of edifices dedicated to Hindu gods and goddesses, memorials of deceased ancestors and graves of some Muslim *pirs*. This was not approved of by the Namdhari leader. Either under his instructions or for fear of punishment by law courts, this came to a stop towards the end of 1868. In 1869 some Kookas joined the Jammu and Kashmir army, but neither the Kookas were happy there, nor was the Maharaja happy over it. Therefore, their contingent was disbanded in 1871.

The disbandment of this contingent set at large some of the restive spirits among them, and the latter launched a murderous campaign against the cow-killing butchers of Amritsar. The slaughter of cows had been prohibited during the Sikh rule, but the prohibition was removed with the advent of the British rule in the Panjab. The age-old prejudice excited the Kookas against the butchers, and they took the law into their own hands, and killed a number of them at Amritsar and Raikot in the months of June and July. This naturally set the law of the land in motion, and as many as seven of them were hanged and five sentenced to life imprisonment. It may be stated here that Baba Ram Singh, the leader of the movement, was in no way involved in these murders, and he permitted no crime to be committed in the name of religion. In spite of it, some of the Kookas in their frenzy led a much bigger attack on the butchers of Maler-kotla in the following year, resulting in a great setback to the Namdhari mission.

On January 11-12, 1872, there were the Lohri and Maghi *Melas* at Bhaini, and hundreds of Kookas had gathered there to celebrate them. It was only in November, 1871, that the accused of the Amritsar murders had been hanged, as also one Giani Ratan Singh who had been a great favourite of the leading Kookas, Sardars Hira Singh and Lehna Singh. The gathering provided them with an opportunity to excite their Kooka comrades to wreak their vengeance and to plan an attack on the butchers of Maler-Kotla. On the morning of 13th, when most

of the Kookas were leaving for their homes, there was noticed a sort of commotion among a group of them, led by Hira Singh and Lehna Singh. They expected Baba Ram Singh to accompany them. This, he flatly refused. He not only told the Police Officer on duty to inform his superior officers of the evil intentions of these turbulent Kookas who had gone out of his control, but also, at the same time, deputed a trusted lieutenant of his, *Sooba* Lakha Singh by name, to inform the District authorities.

Leaving Bhaini on the afternoon of the 13th, the Kookas spent the night and the following day at the village of Rabbon. At night-fall on the 14th they attacked the house of Sardar Badan Singh of Malaud for arms and horses, and then fell upon the slaughter-house at Maler-Kotla on the morning of the 15th. They numbered about one hundred and twenty-five. In the scuffle that followed, eight men of Maler-Kotla were killed and fifteen were injured, while the Kookas lost seven lives, with an unknown number of the injured. This was followed by a much greater tragedy.

On their arrest they were treated as rebels, and sixty-six of them were blown away from the guns at Maler-Kotla on the 17th and 18th of January, 1872, by the Deputy Commissioner of the Ludhiana district and the Commissioner of the Ambala division, while four of them were deported for life. Not only this. The leader of the Kooka movement, Baba Ram Singh, and eleven of his *Soobas* or deputies were also exiled for life.

The Namdhari centre at Bhaini was placed under police surveillance, and the movements of the *Kookas* were closely watched for the following fifty years. The ban was lifted only in 1922 during the days of Baba Partap Singh, the second successor of Baba Ram Singh. He was a saintly person and occasionally allied himself with the political leaders of the country in their struggle for independence. On his death on the night of August 21-22, 1959, he was succeeded by Baba Jagjit Singh.

The Kooka sect differs from the main Sikh community in the continuance of their *Guruship*, based on apocryphal stories concocted after Baba Ram Singh's death by interested writers.

Untouchability also persists among them in addition to some of the old Brahmanical rituals discarded by Sikhism.

#### IV

The Nirankaris had done most of their work in the northern and north-western districts of the Panjab and the Namdharis in the Cis-Sutlej area. Moreover, the latter had become suspicious in the eyes of the British Government, and with the deportation of their leader Baba Ram Singh and his lieutenants, their religious preaching came to a standstill. They also lost a good deal of popularity on account of their schismatic tendency to raise up a separate hereditary *guruship* in the family of their leader in direct succession to Guru Gobind Singh through the agency of Baba Balak Singh of Hazro. The central districts and their urban centres, and the upper classes of people, had received very little attention of the revivalists. Moreover, the Nirankari and the Namdhari movements were the results of the efforts of outstanding individual leaders. They had not assumed the character of mass movements.

Another thing that caused a good deal of anxiety among some of the far-seeing Sikh leaders was the proselytising campaign of the Christian missionaries among the Sikhs. With the annexation of the Panjab in 1849, Amritsar and Lahore had become centres of missionary propaganda. As dissenters from Hinduism and followers of a pure theism, the Sikhs promised to the missionaries a more accessible group of people for their work. In addition to a Church and a Mission School in the city of Amritsar, and a home for the missionaries, the flag of Christianity was planted in the precincts of the Darbar Sahib itself, with one of the surrounding *bungas* rented for preaching the Gospel and distribution of Christian literature among the Sikh pilgrims and visitors.

In the beginning of 1873 four Sikh pupils of the Amritsar Mission School announced their intention to renounce their faith and to embrace Christianity. This not only shocked the Sikh feeling but also urged the Sikh leaders for immediate action to

check apostasy among their people. Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia of Raja-Sansi took the lead and invited, among others, Baba Sri Khem Singh Bedi and Kanwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, to a meeting where measures for the formation of an association called the Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Amritsar, with the following objects, were discussed :

- (i) to restore Sikhism to its pristine purity ;
- (ii) to edit and publish religious and historical books ;
- (iii) to propagate current knowledge using Panjabi as the medium and to start magazines and newspapers in Panjabi ;
- (iv) to reform and to bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates ; and
- (v) to interest highly placed Englishmen in, and ensure their association with, the educational programme of the Sikhs.

The inaugural meeting of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha was held on the Dussehra day, October 1, 1873. In the words of Professor Harbans Singh of the Punjabi University, Patiala,

“The Singh Sabha gained quick support of the literate sections of the community, and many Sikh scholars volunteered to join its ranks. A vigorous campaign was set afoot. Two of its major thrusts were the depreciation of, un-Sikh customs and social evils, and the encouragement of western education. Progressive concern was as pronounced as the revivalist impulse. . . . The reformist ideology percolated to the Sikh peasantry primarily through soldiers serving in the army or those who had retired. One of the regiments had constituted a choir of reciters to go round the villages and sing the sacred hymns at Singh Sabha congregations. The movement picked up momentum and rocked the Panjab from one end to the other. Besides the religious and social reform, it brought fresh leaven to the intellectual and cultural life of the region” (*The Panjab Past and Present*, vii-1, 29).

On November 2, 1879, a Singh Sabha was also established at Lahore, under the guidance of Professor Gurmukh Singh of the

Oriental College, and was affiliated to the Singh Sabha, Amritsar, which assumed the position of a central body called the Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar. Soon a number of Singh Sabhas sprang in other towns as well.

Bhai Gurmukh Singh was an extremist and an uncompromising whole-hogger. Once the conscience of the people had been roused, there should be no half-measures in reforms, he felt, nor should there be any special privileges for the descendants of the Gurus or their relatives in the Sikh congregations. Matters came to a head when Bhai Gurmukh Singh removed a cushioned seat provided for Baba Khem Singh Bedi in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* inside the Golden Temple. This created a rift between the Amritsar Diwan and the supporters of Bhai Gurmukh Singh who had established the Khalsa Diwan of Lahore in 1886. To carry the message of reform far and wide, a newspaper, the *Khalsa Akhbar*, was started under the editorship of Bhai Ditt Singh who also wrote a number of booklets for the masses.

It was at this time, that Max Arthur Macauliffe felt persuaded to study the religion of the Sikhs and to translate their scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, into English. The result of his labour extending over some two decades was published in six volumes in 1909 by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, under the title of *The Sikh Religion, Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*. It is one of the standard works of reference on the subject.

Towards the end of the eighteen-eighties, the Sikh revivalists came into clash with the Arya Samajists whose scurrilous attacks upon the Sikh Gurus and their faith through press and platform not only created a tension between the two but also widened the gulf of separation between the Hindus and the Sikhs. At the same time it proved a blessing in disguise for the Sikhs who felt called upon to study Sikhism more intensely as an independent world religion, and to pay greater attention to the spread of education among their people in order to save them from absorption into Hinduism. In addition to Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh, Sardar Sir Atar Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, and

others, Bhagat Lakshman Singh of Rawalpindi rendered yeoman's service to the Khalsa Diwan, Lahore, through his books and the weekly newspaper, the *Khalsa*. Dr. Jai Singh, the proprietor of a chemists' firm at Lahore, devoted himself to the *Suddhi-movement* or the reconversion of apostates and others from Islam and Christianity. The work of the Khalsa Diwan received a setback with the death of Bhai Gurmukh Singh\* in 1898 and others soon after, and its place was taken by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, established in 1902.

The first meeting of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, was held on October 30, 1902, and elected Bhai Arjun Singh of Bagarian as its president and Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia as its secretary. In addition to propagating the Sikh faith among the masses and giving the community a political entity of its own, it has done a great service in the field of education through its Educational Committee and the Sikh Educational Conference, holding its annual sessions in different places in the country. Sant Atar Singh of Mastuana and Bhai Vir Singh of Amritsar have been its leading lights.

## V

With the awakening brought about by the Chief Khalsa Diwan among the Sikh masses, there was an urge for democratic control and management of the Sikh Gurdwaras or temples. They had, for over two hundred years, been controlled by professional priests who had become almost hereditary. To begin with, the reformers occupied some of the Gurdwaras at Sialkot and Amritsar by slow penetration. A committee for the management of Gurdwaras by the community was formed at Amritsar on November 15, 1920, under the name of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.). This alarmed the old priests, and *Mahant* Narain Das of Nankana Sahib *Janam-Asthan*, the birth place of Guru Nanak, not only resisted by force the transfer of the control of his temple to the Committee but also massacred in cold blood on February 21, 1920, more than one hundred Sikh volunteers, called *Akalis*, who

had gone there to take possession of the temple. This incident aroused the feelings of the whole Sikh community for the public control of their temples, and it was followed by clashes with the Government which stood for the vested interests. The passage of the Gurdwara Act 1925 in the Panjab Legislative Council (it actually came into operation on November 1), however, finally solved the problem in favour of the S.G.P.C.

## VI

The Brahma Samaj was founded by Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) with a view to eradicating such of the social evil and superstitions as had crept into the Hindu community. It was due to his efforts that the Government passed in 1829 an Act declaring *Sati* unlawful. He took up the cause of female education and advocated freedom of the press which were essential for social reform in the country. After his death in 1833 his friend's son Devendra Nath Tagore, tried to complete his unfinished work through the *Tattwa-Bodhini Sabha* established in 1839. Three years later, he merged this *Sabha* in the Brahma Samaj (1842). He was helped by Keshab Chandra Sen who was appointed an *Acharya* of the Samaj in 1862. Keshab Babu was an ardent believer in the efficacy of sincere prayer as a means of human salvation, and established in 1860 the *Sangat Sabha* to discuss in its congregations ways and means for effecting social reform among the masses. In 1861 he started a fortnightly English newspaper, the *Indian Mirror*, for propagating his reform work among the educated people. His *Brahma Bandhu Sabha*, established in 1863 aimed at uniting the *Brahma Samajists* to further the cause of education among women, to start schools and study centres and to publish Brahma literature. In November, 1866, he founded the *Bharatiya Brahma Samaj* whose doors were open to even Muslims and Christians (including Englishmen).

In 1866-67 Keshab Chandra Sen came to the Panjab, delivered a series of lectures at Delhi, Amritsar, Lahore and Simla, and established branches of the Brahma Samaj. But the glory

of preaching the Brahma gospel in the Panjab belongs to Babu Pratap Chandra Majumdar and his comrades. The greatest gifts of the Brahma Samaj to the Panjab are its leading daily newspaper, the *Tribune*, the Dayal Singh College and the Dayal Singh Library, founded by the generosity of Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia who bequeathed his entire property to the Brahma Samaj to be used for charitable purposes.

## VII

The founder of the Dev Samaj, Shiv Narayan Agnihotri, was born in a well-to-do Brahman family on December 20, 1850, at Akbarpur in the district of Kanpur in U.P. As a school boy, he felt that girls also should be educated, and he soon started teaching his niece and his cousin's wife. He joined the Thomason Engineering College, Roorkee, in 1866. Here he not only gave up his family practice of eating food prepared only by a Brahman but also discarded untouchability and began to eat sweets purchased from Muhammadan shops.

At Lahore, in 1873, he was drawn to the Brahma Samaj through its leader Babu Navin Chandra Roy, and began taking a greater interest in social reform among the Hindus. In 1875 he started at his own expense two journals, one in Urdu called *Bradar-i-Hind* and the other in Hindi, *Bandhav*, devoting their columns to propagating the ideal of female education and advocating the abolition of child marriage and enforced widowhood. On the death of his wife in 1880, he, a U.P. Brahman, married a Bengali widow. By the end of 1886 he began to preach the necessity of a *Guru* for guiding the people, and proclaimed himself as commissioned by God to be an apostle of His.

In February, 1887, he established a society of his own called the Dev Samaj with a view to freeing his followers from the bondage of superstitious Hindu rites, making the education of women the chief plank of his movement. The Dev Samaj Girls' High School at Ferozepore, started in 1901, was the first Hindu girls' high school in the Panjab. This school gave the first lady M.B., B.S. and the first woman B.A., B.T., to the province.

The Dev Samaj also established two Nari-Ashrams for the education and training of elderly women, and four widow's homes for the training of widows for self-help.

On the sixth anniversary of the Dev Samaj (February 16, 1893) Agnihotri declared himself to be *Saviour Dev Guru Bhagwan* and in 1895 he denied the existence of God and proclaimed himself to be *Devatma*, the first and the only *Devatma*, the one and the only true worshipful being. He died on April 3, 1929.

### VIII

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati at Bombay on April 10, 1875, but it found its best field for fruitful work in the Panjab where the ground had already been prepared among the Hindus by the teaching of Guru Nanak and his successors, and by the Sikh movements of the Nirankaris and the Singh Sabha. The Singh Sabha movement had no doubt worked for a complete separation of the Sikhs from the Hindus and had insisted upon the separate socio-religious identity of the Sikhs. But, their preachings against the multiplicity of gods and goddesses, the worship of stocks and stones, the social division into castes and classes and the futility of many of their age-old rites and rituals had shaken the faith of many Hindus in them.

Born in 1824 at Morvi in Kathiawar, Gujarat, in a well-to-do Brahman family, Mool Shankar, as Dayanand was originally named by his parents, developed into a religious minded youngman under the influence of his mother. But at the age of fourteen, his mind revolted against the idolatrous Shaivite worship. The death of his sister turned his mind from things mundane to the study of ancient Hindu literature, and he became a monk and set out in search of a *guru*. From 1845 to 1860, he wandered about as a mendicant (renamed Dayanand) in different parts of the country, studying the Vedas and the different branches of Hindu philosophy, learning *Yoga*, and completing his education at Mathura at the feet of a blind religious preceptor Swami

Virajananda. As a parting pledge that Dayanand made to his teacher, he undertook to devote his life to the dissemination of the Vedic knowledge in order to shatter the religious and social superstitions fostered by the *Puranas*. For this purpose he undertook a tour of the places which were regarded as citadels of Hindu orthodoxy and held discussions and disputations with Brahmanical scholars with varying success. He held the *Vedas* as "the utterances of God Himself", and repudiated the other Hindu *Shastras*,—the six systems of philosophy and the eighteen *Puranas* as false. He rejected idolatry and mythology not only as harmful errors but also as positively sinful. According to him, castes were not created by God, and all men are of the same species.

Impressed by Swami Dayanand's anti-idolatry and anti-caste speeches, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sub-Engineer, Ajmer Division, suggested to the Sikh leaders that he should be invited to the Panjab. He was welcomed by Sardar Bikrama Singh at Jullundur and by other leading Sikhs at Amritsar. His speeches at the Sardar's *Kothi* at Jullundur, and in front of the Akal Takht at Amritsar, were greatly appreciated by the people there, and attracted a number of Sikhs to his views.

Lahore, however, soon became the chief centre of the Arya Samaj. A good deal of reform work among the Hindus, particularly among the educated people, had already been done there by the Brahma Samajists under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen, Pratap Chandra Majumdar and Navin Chandra Roy. Swami Dayanand's slogan of 'Back to the Vedas' had a great appeal to the Panjab Hindus, and they flocked to his standard in large numbers and undertook to preach his views through the Arya Samaj and its educational institutions.

After the Swami's death at Ajmer on October 30, 1883, the Arya Samajists of Lahore established in 1886 the first Dayanand Anglo-Vedic High School, raised in 1889 to the status of a College (D. A. V. College, Lahore). Their lead was followed by other communities which established similar institutions for the education of their own people, with the result that the Panjab came to have a network of Arya Samaj, Khalsa, Sanatan

Dharma and Islamia schools and colleges in the first half of the twentieth century.

But the rash and objectionable attitude of some of the Arya Samajists sowed the seeds of communal tension in the country. The latter attacked the founders of the Sikh religion in the eleventh annual session of the Lahore Arya Samaj on November 24-25, 1888. This not only drove out the Sikh sympathisers and members of the Samaj like Bhai Jawahir Singh who had been its Secretary and a promoter of the D. A. V. College, but also brought to light the writings of Swami Dayanand (in his *Satyarth Prakash*) against the various Hindu sects, Christianit Islam and Sikhism. This also led to unpleasant discussions and disputations between the orthodox Hindus, Christians and Muslims on the one hand and the Arya Samajists on the other during the last decade of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries, resulting in communal tension, and, at times, in riots and bloodshed. It may, however, be said to the credit of Swami Dayanand and some of his followers like Lala Hansraj, Swami Shraddhanand, Lala Lajpat Rai, and others, that their writings and speeches have helped to arouse among the people a spirit of sacrifice and patriotism.

## IX

The Ahmadiyah is a religious institution of the Muslims founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. Proclaiming his mission, he declared :

I have been commissioned by God to draw with all humanity the attention of the people to Him Who is All-truth, Eternal and Unchanging and is All-purity, All-knowledge, All-mercy and All-justice. During this age of darkness, I am the only light ; he who follows me shall be saved from the depressions and ditches which have been dug by Satan for those who walk in darkness. I have been deputed by the Lord to invite with peace and humility the people of the whole world to the path of the True Lord and to

reform the moral condition of the Muslims. For the satisfaction of the seekers after truth, He has also bestowed upon me Heavenly wonders...and has revealed to me unknown things and secrets of the future.

When Mirza Ghulam Ahmad proclaimed his mission, he had to face opposition from several quarters. The British Government also suspected his loyalty. He wrote about forty books, mostly in Urdu, to explain his mission and position. On his death on May 26, 1908, he was succeeded by Maulavi Nur-ud-Din as his *Khalifa*, but the latter died soon afterwards on March 13, 1914, and was followed by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's son Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad during whose time the Ahmadiya *Jama'at* made a rapid progress.

According to Mirza Waseem Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad desired his followers to look upon with respect and veneration the prophets and great men of all religions, particularly Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, about whom he wrote :

*Book Nanak arif-i-mard-i-Khuda*

*Razha-i-Maarfat ra rah-kusha*

(*Sat Bachan*, 2),

and

*Yaqeen hai kih Nanak tha mulhim zaroor*

(*Sat Bachan*, 53),

That is,

Nanak was a saintly man of God —

a revealer of divine mysteries,

and

Undoubtedly Nanak was a source of divine wisdom.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also desired his followers to forget the unpleasant events of the past and to live at peace with one and all. He also removed a number of misunderstandings about Islam from among the Muslims. According to him, efforts for a good cause were a *jihad*, whether they were made through persuasion and exchange of views, or through the use of the sword in self-defence. Blind and meaningless use of the sword was not *jihad*. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad considered as un-Islamic the pre-

valent Muslim view that God no longer inspired any human being, however pious and virtuous he might be. "Whomsoever He wishes, God even now makes him speak to Him. Even now He speaks to him whom He loves", said the Mirza.

The Central Board of Ahmadiya Organisation—*Sadar Anjuman-i-Ahmadiya*—is presided over by the Ahmadiya *Khalifa* and it has a network of branches all over the world, run on democratic lines. Every member of the community is expected to contribute to its general fund from one-tenth to one-third of his income. For the propagation of Islam, it has got the *Holy Quran* translated into over fourteen languages. The original headquarters of the organisation is at Qadian in the district of Gurdaspur, Panjab (India), while another has been established at Rab-wah in Pakistan. In spite of their zeal for the propagation of Islam, the Ahmadiyahs are looked down upon by the orthodox Muslims as heretics and are not unoften subjected to persecution.