

CHAPTER FOUR

PUNJAB AND THE NORTH-WEST

THE SETTING

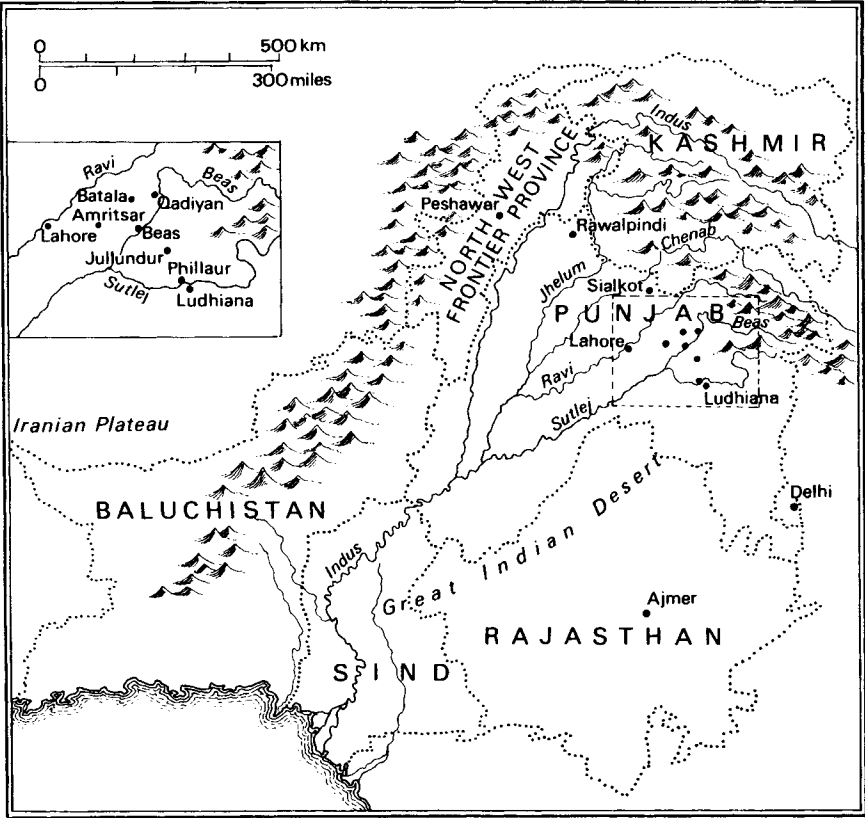
The Punjab encompasses the land west of the Sutlej to the Indus River, and from the Himalayan foothills south to the confluence of the Panjnad and Indus Rivers. North of the Punjab are the foothills and the Himalayan mountains that include the Kashmir valley. To the West lies the edge of the Iranian plateau with its sharp hills, tribal groups, and key passes. To the South of eastern Punjab is Rajasthan with its dry, hilly topography that merges to the East with the great Indian desert. Beyond Rajasthan, at the lower end of the Indus River, is Sind, a semi-desert land at the edge of South Asia.

The Hindu-Buddhist cultures of the North-West extend back in time to the third millennium BC and were the first to be incorporated into the Islamic world, Sind in AD 712, and the Punjab by the end of the twelfth century. Majorities of Muslims lived in Sind, western Punjab, and Kashmir. Hindus remained the majority in eastern Punjab, Rajasthan, and the Punjab hills. The religious structure of this region was given a new dimension when Guru Nanak founded Sikhism (see p. 13). In 1799, under the leadership of Ranjit Singh, they established a Sikh kingdom that ruled Punjab and Kashmir.

In 1803 British victories brought them to Delhi and the eastern border of the Sikh kingdom, as the lands between the Sutlej and Jumna Rivers came under British control. After 1818 the princes of Rajasthan accepted British supremacy, and in 1843 Sind was annexed to the Bombay Presidency. The two Anglo-Sikh wars led to the acquisition of the Jullundur Doab in 1846, and of the entire Sikh kingdom in 1849. The British Empire expanded to its geographic limits with a fluctuating border in the trans-Indus territory. This vast surge of the British political sphere, the last such expansion in South Asia, was followed by a much slower uneven growth of the cultural milieu.

Delhi during its pre-Mutiny 'renaissance' became the source of cultural interaction for the Punjab until it was replaced by Lahore. In between these two cities, Ludhiana gained prominence after 1834

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS IN BRITISH INDIA



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when the American Presbyterian Mission established its new headquarters there. The next year the Mission acquired a printing press and proceeded to publish tracts, translations of the scriptures, grammars, and dictionaries in Punjabi, Urdu, Persian, Hindi and Kashmiri. As with the Baptists of Serampore, the Ludhiana missionaries did much to standardize the languages of this region. They also introduced new forms of religious organization and aggressive proselytism. For the missionaries, Ludhiana was a forward base from which they quickly expanded after the Punjab was annexed on 29 March 1849. The growth of Christian missions was interrupted briefly by the Mutiny, but during the 1860s they created a chain of missions throughout the North-West. Theirs was an aggressive and uncompromising Christianity, which was expressed in print and through open preaching in the streets. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Christian converts rose from 3,912 in 1881 to 37,980 by 1901 – small numbers for Punjab, but percentage increases that frightened indigenous religious leaders. The Christian missionaries were seen as part of a government machine that first defeated the Punjabi, next sought to govern him, and then to convert him. This comprised a ‘hard’ impact in contrast with the experience of Bengalis during the period when Christianity and government could still be seen as somewhat separate. It is against this framework that we must view the first of the socio-religious movements of Punjab.

TRANSITIONAL MOVEMENTS AMONG THE SIKHS

The Nirankaris

Baba Dayal Das (1783–1855) founded the Nirankaris, a movement of purification and return. Dayal Das was born into a Malhotra Khatri family in Peshawar and raised as a pious, religiously oriented boy, but beyond this we know little of his early life. After his parents died, Dayal Das moved to Rawalpindi where he opened an apothecary shop. Apparently disenchanted with contemporary religion, Dayal Das concluded that Sikhism was decadent, filled with falsehood, superstition and error. Sometime during the decade of the 1840s, he called for the return of Sikhism to its origins and emphasized the worship of God as *nirāṅkāṛ* (formless). Such an approach meant a rejection of idols, rituals associated with idolatry, and the Brahman priests who conducted these

rituals.¹ A repudiation of Brahman priests meant also a rejection of those Sikhs allied with them. Dayal Das quickly ran into opposition from the established religious authorities; consequently, the movement progressed in secret until the British gained control of the Punjab.

The Nirankaris focused more on deficiencies in religious practice than on a critique of theology. The appropriate path to God was through worship based on meditation rather than complex ritual. Dayal Das urged his disciples to meet each morning for daily worship in their *dharmshālās*. He stressed the importance and authority of Guru Nanak and of the *Adi Granth* (the source of all authority and knowledge). His disciples were 'to worship the formless God, to obey the *shabad* of the guru [in the *Adi Granth*], to clean the shoes and feet of the congregation [as an act of humility], to serve one's parents, to avoid bad habits, and to earn one's livelihood through work'.² In accordance with Sikh tradition, Dayal Das taught a religious code for the householder, that is, an individual who retained his familial and social ties and had not withdrawn into the role of a mendicant.

In addition Dayal Das taught that women should not be treated as unclean at childbirth; disciples should not use astrology or horoscopes in setting the time for ceremonies; the dowry should not be displayed at marriages; neither lighted lamps nor blessed sweets, *prasād*, should be placed in rivers; and no one should feed Brahmans as payment for conducting rituals. Eating meat, drinking liquor, lying, cheating, using false weights – all were forbidden. Each should follow a strict moral code and use only the proper life-cycle rituals as taught by Dayal Das. The new ceremonies included those of birth, naming of a child, a shortened marriage ceremony that had at its core a circumambulation of the *Adi Granth*, and a death-rite requiring that the body be immersed in a river or cremated. All ceremonies eliminated the services of a Brahman priest.

Slowly the Nirankaris attracted new members. Because of persecution, Dayal Das purchased land on the edge of Rawalpindi where he constructed a *dharmshālā*, which became a centre of worship and was known as the Nirankari Darbar. Baba Dayal Das died on 30 January 1855 before he could bring organization and cohesion to this

¹ There is some disagreement on just when Baba Dayal Das began to preach and draw to him disciples, see John C. B. Webster, *The Nirankari Sikhs* (Delhi, Macmillan Company, 1979), p. 10; information from this section will be from Webster or it will be cited specifically.

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

movement. The Nirankaris of Rawalpindi placed his body in the Lei River at a spot where he used to meditate. Later it was known as Dayalsar and considered sacred by the Nirankaris. Before his death Dayal Das named his son, Baba Darbara Singh (1814–70), to succeed him.

Darbara Singh, born under the name of Mul Rai, was an energetic and persuasive leader who was determined to cut all ties with Hinduism. A year after he had replaced his father, Darbara Singh began to issue *hukamnāmās* (statements describing both doctrine and approved rituals). He toured the Rawalpindi area and while travelling preached, converted, and married his followers according to their own rites. In 1861 he visited Amritsar and asked permission to perform the Nirankari marriage ceremony at the Golden Temple. This request was rejected; however, he conducted such a service in Amritsar on 17 April 1861.³ In fifteen years Darbara Singh opened forty new subcentres as the number of disciples continued to grow: under him the Nirankaris had their most rapid period of expansion. He died on 13 February 1870, and his younger brother, Rattan Chand, succeeded him.

Rattan Chand established new centres and appointed *bīredārs* (leaders) for each congregation or *sangat*. The *bīredārs* oversaw these groups and were charged with reciting the *hukamnāmās* every fifteen days. Thus they provided a tie between the head of the Nirankari movement and its members. Rattan Chand developed Dayalsar into a religious hub as new *bīras* (congregations) were added to the surrounding towns and villages. In 1903 he wrote a will leaving all property of the association to his successor, and before his death on 3 January 1909 he named his son, Baba Gurdit Singh, to fill that office. Gurdit Singh headed the movement until his death on 26 April 1947.

The historical impact of the Nirankaris remains a matter of some debate, since even the most basic information is open to question. The census of 1891 stated that there were over 60,000 Sikhs in this movement. John Webster considers these figures exaggerated, and those of the 1921 census as too low with the more realistic estimate of around 5,000 members.⁴ Drawing on Sikh tradition, the Nirankaris focused on Guru Nanak, on Sikhism before the establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur, and the militarization of the faith. In this they pursued a path open to both orthodox, *keshadhārīs*, Sikhs and

³ Man Singh Nirankari, 'The Nirankaris', *Punjab Past and Present* (April 1973), 5–6.

⁴ See Nirankari, 'The Nirankaris', pp. 6–7, 10; and Webster, *The Nirankari Sikhs*, p. 16.

to the non-baptized ranks of the *sahajdhārīs*, but drew members mainly from the urban non-Jat section of the Sikh community. The Nirankaris stressed proper religious practice, issued *hukamnāmās* to define its concepts of what was correct and built a series of worship centres staffed by their own priests. They did not clash with or oppose the British, but grew in part through the establishment of British rule in the Punjab since that freed them from the restriction of the Sikh government. The Nirankaris thus became a permanent subsection of the Sikh religion and in doing so helped to clarify the lines dividing Sikhs from Hindus. Their dependence on Guru Nanak and early Sikhism for their model of 'pure' religion separated them from another transitional movement, the Namdharis.

The Namdharis

Baba Ram Singh (1816–85) founded this transitional movement. He was born into a poor carpenter's family in the village of Bhaini Arayan in Ludhiana district. Little is known about Ram Singh's early life. Apparently he received no formal education and was married at the age of seven. Later his wife was addressed as 'Mata' or mother by members of the Namdhari movement.⁵ In 1836, when Ram Singh was twenty, he joined the army of Ranjit Singh and served until 1845. While a soldier he demonstrated a deep commitment to religion and began to attract his own following. In 1841, he met Balak Singh of Hazru in Campbellpur district and became his disciple. Balak Singh urged his listeners to live a simple life and to reject all ritual except for repeating God's name. Those who accepted Balak Singh's leadership saw him as a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh. Before his death, Balak Singh chose Ram Singh as his successor.

In 1855 Ram Singh returned to Bhaini, where he reopened the family's shop and lived there until his exile in 1872. Gradually disciples flocked to Bhaini where Ram Singh ran a free kitchen and preached his ideas of a purified Sikhism. In 1857, he formally inaugurated the Namdhari movement with a set of rituals modelled after Guru Gobind Singh's founding of the Khalsa. Ram Singh used a recitation of *gurbānī* (hymns from the Granth Sāhib), *ardas* (the Sikh prayer), a flag, and baptism for entry into the new community. Each of the baptized Sikhs

⁵ Fauja Singh Bajwa, *The Kuka Movement: An Important Phase in Punjab's Role in India's Struggle for Freedom* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), pp. 5–6; this is the basic source used for the Namdharis and any other sources will be cited.

was required to wear the five symbols with the exception of the *kirpān* (sword) no longer allowed by the British government. Instead of the sword, Ram Singh required them to keep a *lāthī* (a bamboo stave). In addition the Namdharis wore white clothes with a white turban and carried a rosary to further set them apart from all others.

Ram Singh demanded that his adherents abandon the worship of gods, goddesses, idols, graves, tombs, trees, and snakes. Popular saints were rejected along with the rituals conducted by Brahman priests and the authority of the hereditary custodians of the Sikh *gurdwārās* (centres of worship). He also condemned the claims to special status by the Sodhis and Bedis, descendants of the Sikh *gurus*. The Namdharis were told to abstain from 'drinking, stealing, adultery, falsehood, slandering, back-biting and cheating'.⁶ The consumption of beef was strictly forbidden, since protection of cattle remained one of the Namdharis' most ardently held values. Proper behaviour was enforced by *panchāyats* (village courts), which dispensed the appropriate punishment for a particular transgression. Ram Singh condemned beggary and thus the role of mendicants. His was a householder's religious path that stressed hard work, cleanliness and a moral life.

The Namdharis granted women a degree of equality. They too were initiated through baptism, allowed to remarry when widowed; dowries were rejected, and child marriage forbidden. For men, there was an emphasis on strength and martial qualities drawn from the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh and, no doubt, from Ram Singh's years as a soldier. As he articulated his ideas, the movement grew and the village of Bhaini became a point of pilgrimage later known as Bhaini Sahib. In time Namdhari worship acquired a new dimension. Hymns were accompanied with shouts of joy (*kūks*), as the worshipper slipped into a state of ecstasy. This form of worship resulted in the Namdharis being referred to as *kūkās* (shouters). Many outside the Namdhari community saw them as peculiar and extreme, but they considered themselves as bearers of the only true Sikhism.⁷

Ram Singh attracted many of his disciples from the peasant and untouchable castes and transformed them into a disciplined community. *Sangats* were organized in any village that had a group of Namdharis. Each *sangat* had its own place of worship, a *granthī*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

⁷ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (Princeton University Press, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 128–9.

(scripture-reciter), and a free kitchen. The *granthī* taught Gurmukhi and the Sikh scriptures to both children and adults. *Sangats* were grouped together and administered by *sūbās* (governors), *nāib sūbās* (assistant-governors), and *jathedārs* (group leaders), whose primary function was to collect funds and remit them to the headquarters at Bhaini. The Namdharis also maintained a system of preachers to spread their message and their own postal runners to ensure communications within the community. Among the Namdharis, prophetic letters appeared that described a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh in the person of Ram Singh, and predicted the re-establishment of the Sikh kingdom.⁸

The Punjab government became sufficiently uneasy with the Namdharis that on 28 June 1863 they interned Ram Singh in his village where he was held until the end of 1866. By 1863, the Namdharis were estimated to have between 40,000 to 60,000 members and approximately 100,000 by 1871.⁹ The impressive growth of this movement as well as its militant ideology led the Punjab government to keep them under close surveillance and to prohibit Namdhari missionaries from preaching to Sikh troops of the British-Indian army. The period from 1867 to 1870 remained quiet as the Namdharis continued to make converts. Yet some type of conflict with the government seemed almost inevitable. When Ram Singh visited Amritsar in 1867, he arrived with nearly 3,500 followers, converted 2,000, and conducted himself as a prince. He travelled with an escort of soldiers, held court daily, and exchanged gifts with local rulers. The clash, when it finally exploded, was not over Ram Singh's acquisition of secular status, but the issue of cow protection.

Under Ranjit Singh the slaughter of cattle had been outlawed, but the British lifted this ban. Cattle once more became a source of meat for the British and for Punjabi Muslims. The latter also publicly sacrificed cattle on the Islamic festival of 'Id. Both Hindus and Sikhs objected to this and found offensive the presence of slaughter-houses and meat shops. The Namdharis were pledged to protect cattle and to end their slaughter. In 1871 two incidents occurred as Namdharis put their beliefs into practice. On the night of 15 June, a small band attacked a

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁹ Estimates of size vary; Bajwa claims between 300,000 to 400,000 by the end of the 1860s, but the lower, 100,000 figure is given in G. S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of the Punjab* (Ludhiana, 1962), p. 370.

Muslim slaughter-house in Amritsar. One month later a second attack took place in Raikot, Ludhiana District. The British arrested those involved and hung eight of them; however, this did not quiet matters. Another band marched on the small Muslim state of Malerkotla in January 1872. They intended to seize weapons and possibly begin an uprising against the government. To this threat the British reacted with speed and viciousness. The Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, Mr L. Cowan, rushed to Malerkotla, arrested the Namdharis, and on 17–18 July executed sixty-five of them.

In the aftermath a mixed military and police force raided Bhaini and arrested Ram Singh; he was exiled to Burma where he died in 1885. The government stationed a police post in the village of Bhaini where they remained until 1922. With the removal of Ram Singh, his younger brother, Baba Budh Singh, became head of the Namdharis. During the remainder of the nineteenth century studies of Namdhari attempts to find allies against the British in Nepal, Kashmir and Russia illustrated their enduring hostility toward the British government. Pilgrims continued to reach Bhaini, but the movement was effectively curtailed. The census of 1891 counted 10,541 Namdharis and in 1901 the number had risen to only 13,788.¹⁰

The teachings of Ram Singh and his *guru*, Balak Singh, promised a return to purified Sikhism, not of Guru Nanak, but of Guru Gobind Singh. Both leadership and membership came from the Jat peasant class of Punjab, the same segment of society that had supported Guru Gobind Singh and his version of Sikhism. They shared with the Nirankaris the belief that Sikhism was decadent and degenerate and they too sought to return it to past purity. The Namdhari vision of a restructured Sikhism, however, called for a total reshaping of the Sikh community into a militant, religious–political dominion that threatened established religious authority and brought them into direct conflict with the British–Indian government. With their ecstatic devotionism, a millennial vision of the future, a tightly organized religious community that contained elements of a parallel government they, like the Tariqah-i-Muhammadi, struck against British political dominance and in return were suppressed. Neither Namdharis nor Nirankaris, both transitional movements, were concerned with

¹⁰ Chhabra, *Advanced History*, p. 379.

adjusting to the cultural influences of the colonial milieu, a world that had only begun to penetrate the Punjab.

THE CREATION OF THE COLONIAL MILIEU

Once again we must look to Delhi and Ludhiana for sources of imported knowledge, technology, and the beginnings of cultural interaction in the North-West. After the annexation of 1849 and the uprising of 1857, Lahore became the premier city of the North-West; the centre of provincial administration as well as a place of social, educational, and religious ferment. Students travelled to Lahore from throughout the province. There they received an education, participated in the culture of Lahore and then disseminated it throughout the North-West when they departed for jobs in other cities and towns.

The conquest of the Punjab generated a sudden need for educated Indians to staff government offices and the institutions erected by Christian missionaries. Brahmans and Kayasthas were recruited from Bengal and from the North-Western Provinces. Their arrival created an elite situated below the English rulers, but above Punjabis who lacked an English education or an understanding of the new colonial world. Bengalis provided three models for emulation: one as orthodox Hindus, a second as converts to Christianity, and a third as members of the Brahmo Samaj. Of the three types, the Brahmos were the most outspoken, aggressive, and articulate. In 1863 a few Bengalis and Punjabis founded the Lahore Brahmo Samaj. Much of the dynamics of this society derived from the leadership of Babu Novin Chandra Roy, a Bengali employed as paymaster of the North-Western Railway offices in Lahore. He wrote extensively as an advocate of socially radical Brahmoism, fought for increased use of Hindi, and succeeded in recruiting new members among Bengalis and Punjabis. The Lahore Brahmo Samaj was aided by visits from leading Bengali Brahmos. Keshab Chandra Sen spoke in Lahore in 1867 and 1873, Debendranath Tagore in 1867, 1872 and 1874, and Protap Chandra Majumdar in 1871.¹¹

Islamic influences also reached Punjab and the North-West from the Gangetic plain and particularly from Delhi. The career of 'Abdul-

¹¹ Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm, Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), p. 16; and Sivanatha Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta, R. Chatterjee, 1911), vol. 2, p. 395.

Minan Wazirabadi illustrates the diffusion of Islamic ideas. He was born in Jhelum, travelled first to Bhopal and then to Delhi for his education. In Delhi he studied under Nazir Husain and when he returned to the Punjab, he brought the ideology of Ahl-i-Hadith with him, becoming one of this movement's most effective exponents.¹² Another prominent supporter of Ahl-i-Hadith in Punjab was Maulawi Muhammad Husain of Batala (Gurdaspur district), who began publishing the newspaper, *Ishā'at-i-Sunnah*.¹³ At an extreme of movements of return, the Lahore Ahl-i-Qur'an, founded by 'Abd 'Ullah Chakralawi, rejected orthodox Islam as well as all movements such as the Ahl-i-Hadith that accepted forms of authority other than the Qur'an. Chakralawi and his few followers clashed with all other Muslim groups, remaining as they did on one end of a continuum of advocates for religious and social change.

New types of Islamic organization began to appear in the years after the Mutiny. In 1866 the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam (the Society for the Defence of Islam) was founded in Lahore by Muhammad Shafi and Shah Din, both followers of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. This society opened schools that included western education and required the study of English. They emphasized female education, loyalty to the British-Indian government, and opposed the Indian National Congress. This organization was not limited to Lahore. The parent association established branches throughout the subcontinent.¹⁴ Three years later the Anjuman-i-Islamiyah (the Islamic Society) was organized in Lahore to teach Muslim youth the principles of Islam and elements of western knowledge. Thus influences from Muslim movements outside of the North West flowed into that area and beyond through societies and organizations created in the North-West. The largest of the Hindu acculturative socio-religious movements, the Arya Samaj, also demonstrated the inward and outward flow of ideas and organizations.

The Arya Samaj

The career of one man, Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824–83), changed the face of the Punjab and the territories surrounding it. He

¹² Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 292.

¹³ Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyah Movement, a History and Perspective* (Delhi, Manohar Book Service, 1974), p. 10.

¹⁴ J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York, Macmillan, 1919), pp. 347–8; Lavan, *Ahmadiyah Movement*, p. 10.

was born in Tankara (Gujarat), a town in the small Princely State of Morvi. His father, a Samavedi Brahman of the Audichya caste, had considerable status and wealth. Young Dayananda, born Mul Shankar, was educated in his home by local tutors. He studied religious texts and Sanskrit in preparation for his life as an orthodox Shaivite. He questioned and then rejected his expected role. After delaying the marriage his parents wanted, the young Mulji fled from his home to begin the life of a wandering mendicant. He was initiated into the order of Saraswati Dandis, taking the name Dayananda and then dedicated his life to searching for release from rebirth.¹⁵

His life's direction changed in November 1860, when he met and became the disciple of Swami Virajananda. After nearly three years with Virajananda, Dayananda emerged with a new set of goals, namely to purify Hinduism and save it from its contemporary degenerate state. He also had devised a method of accomplishing this. For Dayananda all truth was to be found in the Vedas by anyone who used the proper analytic and grammatical tools needed to understand Vedic Sanskrit. Dayananda separated all Hindu scriptures into two categories: *ārsha* and *un-ārsha*. The former included the Vedas and any text based on a proper understanding of the Vedas. The latter were the products of the post-Mahabharata period of history when true Vedic knowledge was lost and ignorance prevailed. The Vedas then comprised the yardstick against which all other scriptural texts were judged, as were questions of religious custom and ritual.

Dayananda began to preach a 'purified' Hinduism, one that rejected the popular Puranas, polytheism, idolatry, the role of Brahman priests, pilgrimages, nearly all rituals, and the ban on widow marriage – in short, almost all of contemporary Hinduism. He still dressed and lived as a *sādhu*, spoke in Sanskrit, and debated with orthodox priests. Dayananda visited Calcutta in 1872 where he met Debendranath Tagore as well as other Brahmos. When he left Bengal, Dayananda had abandoned the dress of a mendicant and spoke in Hindi to reach an audience of middle-class, often educated Hindus. Among them his message found a much greater acceptance. One of his new disciples, Raja Jai Kishen Das, suggested he record his ideas, with the result that, in 1875, Dayananda published his first edition of the *Satyārth Prakāśh* (The Light of Truth), in which he elaborated his concepts of true

¹⁵ See J. T. F. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati, His Life and Ideas* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 1–23.

Hinduism. Dayananda condemned all that he considered false, i.e. orthodox Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and, Sikhism. For him there was only one true faith, Vedic Hinduism.

In 1874 Dayananda travelled to Gujarat and Bombay. On 10 April 1875 he established the Bombay Arya Samaj (Noble Society). It survived and became the first successful organizational expression of his ideas. Turning north Swami Dayananda reached Delhi in January 1877. Once there sympathetic Hindu leaders, primarily Brahmos, invited him to visit Lahore. After arriving in Delhi on 19 April 1877, Dayananda attacked idolatry, child marriage, elaborate rituals, the Brahman priests, and, at the same time, insisted on the infallibility of the Vedas. Orthodox Hindus were outraged and critics, such as the Brahmos, disturbed by his insistence on Vedic truth.¹⁶

Swami Dayananda remained in the Punjab until 11 July 1878, when he left for the North-Western Provinces. During these months he criss-crossed the Punjab. In Lahore he quickly attracted a group of dedicated disciples, many of whom were students and graduates of the Lahore colleges. On 24 June 1877, after three months of public lectures and private discussions, the Lahore Arya Samaj held its first meeting. The lengthy statement of belief was rewritten by Punjabi Aryas and reduced to ten simple principles that became the universal creed of the Samaj. Soon Arya Samajes were organized in different cities of the province. In the meantime Dayananda left for the North-Western Provinces. He toured primarily the western Gangetic plain until the spring of 1881 when he departed for Rajasthan. Here he spent the last two years of his life in a vain attempt to persuade the Rajput princes to accept his vision of a purified world. In this he failed; yet on his death in Ajmer on 30 October 1883, he left behind him Arya Samajes scattered throughout the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces plus a few in Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

The Arya Samaj lacked any central organization and each Samaj was independent. Dayananda's death, however, did not lead to disintegration, but to a burst of energy, as numerous Samajes sought to honour their departed teacher. They were nearly unanimous in the desire to found a school that would impart his Aryan form of Hinduism, and thus be safe from Christian influence. The Lahore Samaj drafted plans for this institution and on 6 December 1883 set up a

¹⁶ Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 34-7; information has been taken from this source unless otherwise cited.

subcommittee to raise funds. Initially they were quite successful, but by 1884 enthusiasm waned. In 3 November 1885 the Antarang Sabha (Executive Committee), of the Lahore Samaj, received a letter in which Lala Hans Raj promised to serve as principal of the school without pay. Hans Raj, a Bhalla Khatri, had joined the Arya Samaj while a student at the Lahore Government College. His act of selflessness rekindled the desire for a school. Events then moved quickly. The newly organized Dayananda Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society held its first meeting on 27 February 1886 and the school was opened on 1 June of that year. Within one month 550 students had enrolled and on 18 May 1889 the Punjab University granted affiliation to the new Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College. The high school and college taught a curriculum similar to the government schools, but did so without government support or the participation of Englishmen on the faculty. It was highly successful, as students trained in this institution demonstrated the quality of their education in the annual examinations.

The Dayananda Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society was the first centralizing organization within the Samaj, with representatives from many branch *samājes*. Still it was limited to issues concerning the school. Consequently, a formal representative body convened in October 1886, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab. Delegates to this Sabha came from throughout the province and in time from branches in Sind and on the trans-Indus frontier. It dealt with a wide variety of questions and provided a degree of centralization missing since Dayananda's death. As the Samaj expanded, other provincial *sabhās* were established: the North-Western Provinces (1886), Rajasthan (1888), Bengal and Bihar (1889), Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha (1889), and Bombay (1902). Organizational developments, however, could not prevent the rise of internal tensions.

Serious strains first appeared among the Aryas as the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic school progressed from a set of ideals to their concrete expression. A militant party, led by Pandit Guru Datta, began to separate itself from more moderate Aryas. Pandit Guru Datta Vidyarthi was born of a wealthy Arora family in Multan. He earned both a BA and MA degree at the Government College. Guru Datta joined the Arya Samaj and was deeply committed to Dayananda and his message. For Guru Datta this was a religious experience. He considered Dayananda a *rishi* (a divinely inspired prophet), and the *Satyārth Prakāśh* a text that must be taken literally and could not be questioned. He and

those, such as Pandit Lekh Ram and Lala Munshi Ram, who shared his vision, wanted the proposed school to focus on Aryan ideology, on the study of Sanskrit and the Vedic scriptures. For them it must be modelled after the ancient Hindu universities, and would thus produce the new 'pure' Hindu youth. The school, once established, expressed the ideas of more moderate Aryas who wished to provide an English education safe from non-Hindu influence and relevant to careers within the colonial milieu.

Tensions between adherents of opposing Aryan concepts erupted in the late 1880s, as the question of who would become principal of the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College was debated in the Managing Committee. The militants wanted Pandit Guru Datta and a change in the curriculum; the moderates preferred Lala Hans Raj and the existent form of education. The moderates won, but out of this struggle came two clearly defined parties. The militants, later known as the 'Gurukul' wing, stressed the religious nature of the Samaj and the moderates, the 'College' party, saw Dayananda as a great reformer, but not as a divinely inspired *rishi*. The issue of vegetarianism came to symbolize these internal differences. Militant Aryas insisted on a strict vegetarian diet, while the moderates maintained that this question was one of personal choice and irrelevant to membership in the Samaj. By 1893, the Arya Samaj was formally divided. The militants gained control over most of the local Arya Samajes and the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab. The moderates kept their hold on the Managing Committee and the school. They established rival local organizations and in 1903 founded the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha as their own provincial representative body. Power and leadership for them remained focused on the Managing Committee and education their primary cause.

The division of 1893 left the moderates and supporters of the College in severe difficulties. They had lost the organizational structure that supported their educational work. Slowly they rebuilt it and were able to provide the necessary money, not only to maintain the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College, but to expand it. The student body grew to 961 by 1914. More importantly, the Lahore school became the model for other Aryas as local *samājes* established elementary and secondary schools throughout the Punjab. By 1910, the Managing Committee framed rules and regulations governing schools affiliated to it, and thus became the formal head of a growing educational system.

Moderates added to their educational activities other forms of service

to the Hindu community. As early as 1877 Rai Mathura Das opened the first Arya Samaj orphanage in Ferozepore. It grew slowly until the famines of the late 1890s. In response to Christian relief measures that both saved starving children and converted them, Lala Lajpat Rai, a leading moderate in the Arya Samaj, announced that the Samaj would shelter any orphan sent to them. In February 1897, he began a campaign to collect funds for orphan relief. This opened a struggle between the Aryas and Christian missionaries over legal control of Hindu orphans. In the meantime, Aryas travelled to the Central Provinces and brought back children who were sent to Ferozepore and to other newly established orphanages throughout the Punjab. Orphan and famine relief illustrate the tendency of moderate Aryas to view Hindus as members of a community rather than a religious sect and then act for the benefit of that community. Militant Aryas, however, developed a somewhat different set of priorities.

With the division of 1893–4 the militants replaced their main purpose, education, with an emphasis on *Ved prachār* (proselytism and preaching). After the death of Pandit Guru Datta on 18 March 1890, leadership fell into the hands of Lala Munshi Ram and Pandit Lekh Ram. Under their guidance the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha created a plan for professional missionaries. The entire province was divided into circles (*mandalis*), and in November 1895, six full-time missionaries were hired to preach and work with local Arya Samaj branches. Volunteers aided them, tracts were published, and newspapers printed in both English and the vernaculars. The Arya Samaj borrowed the institutional forms and techniques of the Christian missionaries needed to counter the challenges presented by the three conversion religions, Christianity, Sikhism and Islam, as they made inroads into the Hindu community.

Traditionally, Hinduism lacked a conversion ritual. After the introduction of a decennial census in 1871, religious leaders began to focus their attention on the issue of numerical strength. For Hindus the census reports pictured their community as one in decline, its numbers falling in proportion to those of other religions.¹⁷ Christian success in converting the lower and untouchable castes furthered Hindu fears and led the militant Aryas to develop their own ritual of conversion, *shuddhi*. Initially *shuddhi* was employed to purify and readmit Hindus

¹⁷ Kenneth W. Jones, 'Religious identity and the Indian census' in N. G. Barrier (ed.), *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (Delhi, Manohar, 1981), pp. 73–101.

who had converted to Islam or Christianity. During the 1880s and early 1890s, Aryas conducted individual reconversions; however, considerable opposition existed to this practice and it was often difficult for a reconvert to find admission to Hindu society. In the wake of the 1891 census that reported an increase in Christian converts of 410 per cent for the previous decade, Aryas and their Sikh allies in the Singh Sabhas began to expand the use of *shuddhi*. Individual conversions gave way to group conversions. The first of these was performed on 31 March 1896, when the Shuddhi Sabha purified five people, and on 5 April another six. During the 1890s larger and larger groups were purified and the meaning of *shuddhi* reinterpreted. Originally *shuddhi* applied only to those converted, but soon it was performed for anyone whose ancestors had once been Hindus. Aryas also used *shuddhi* to purify untouchables and transform them into members of the clean castes. During the first decade of the new century, Aryas purified a number of Rahtias, a caste of Sikh untouchables, as well as Hindu Odes and Meghs.

Shuddhi and Arya proselytism challenged the other religious communities, creating tension and discord between them. The most dramatic of all such clashes resulted from the career of Pandit Lekh Ram (1858–97). He was born in Peshawar near the north-western frontier; educated in Persian and Urdu by Muslim teachers. He joined the Peshawar Arya Samaj in 1880 and travelled to Ajmer, where he was at Dayananda's bedside when he died. The next year, Lekh Ram resigned from the police to devote himself completely to the Samaj. He wrote extensively in condemnation of Islam in general and the Muslim leader, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in particular. In 1892 he published *Risāla-i-Jihād ya ya'nī Dīn-i-Muhammadi kī Bunyād* (*Jihād*, the Basis of the Muhammadan Religion). In it, Lekh Ram portrayed Islam as a religion of murder, theft, slavery, and perverse sexual acts. Repeated writings by the Pandit angered Muslims who responded in kind. Islamic leaders appealed to the courts, but failed to silence Lekh Ram. On 6 March 1897, the Pandit was assassinated and the resulting furor tore apart the Punjab, as Muslims and Hindus moved to the edge of communal violence. On the surface conditions quieted in the next few months, but tensions remained embedded in north-western society.

In addition to *Ved prachār* and *shuddhi*, militant Aryas turned their attention to education. By the early 1890s Lala Munshi Ram (later known as Swami Shraddhanand), Lala Dev Raj, and their fellow Aryas in Jullundur, had established a girls' school, the Arya Kanya Pathshala,

to provide an education safe from missionary influence. They also founded the Kanya Ashram or women's hostel. Both the school and the hostel were considered controversial to most of the Hindu community, whether orthodox or moderate Aryan. The success of the Kanya Pathshala stimulated discussions among its supporters for expansion towards higher education, with the result that on 14 June 1896, they founded the Kanya Mahavidyalaya. Initially this was an extension of the older school, but it grew steadily, becoming a fully developed high school and finally a women's college. By 1906, the Mahavidyalaya enrolled 203 students in all grades and the Ashram housed 105 students, a mixture of unmarried, married, and widowed women. Gradually the school became the core of an educational movement, as its alumnae opened their own girls' schools. The Kanya Mahavidyalaya published literature for women's education and founded the Hindi monthly, *Panchal Panditā*, in 1898, 'to preach and propagate about female education'.¹⁸ For the militant Aryas, education was intended to produce a new ideal Hindu woman.

Along with their attempts to educate women the militants also advocated widow remarriage. They launched societies to support such marriages and to put these ideals into practice. Over the next decade widow remarriage became increasingly acceptable among Punjabi Hindus. There was, however, a line drawn between virgin widows, those who had not lived with their husbands, and non-virgin widows, especially women who had borne children. Only the remarriage of virgin widows was beginning to be accepted in the late nineteenth century. The cause of widow remarriage drew adherents from a wide spectrum of the Hindu community, yet leadership was often provided by militant Aryas who wished to create the 'new' Hindu as envisioned by Dayananda.

Pandit Guru Datta's dream of a school system modelled after the ancient Hindu universities survived his death, since Lala Munshi Ram and other militant Aryas shared this vision. In the late 1890s Munshi Ram dedicated himself to the creation of a new educational institution, one where students would follow a life of celibacy, discipline, and Vedic learning. In 1898 the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of the Punjab voted to establish such an institution. On 22 March 1902 the Gurukula Kangri opened in Hardwar, with Lala Munshi Ram as its manager and

¹⁸ Jones, *Arya Dharm*, p. 217.

moral guide. Students at the Gurukula entered the first grade and remained there through college. They lived on the campus under strict faculty discipline, and learned selected western subjects through the lens of Aryan ideals, Hindu scriptures, and the vernacular languages.

With the establishment of the Gurukula, militant Aryas had completed their own system of religiously oriented education for both women and men. The Samaj had become a major acculturative movement with its purified Vedic Hinduism that rejected almost all contemporary Hinduism. Drawing its leadership and members from educated Hindus, primarily of the upper castes, the Arya Samaj adopted an imported organizational structure and parliamentary procedures. The two wings of the Samaj created a wide variety of institutions, offered new forms of worship, introduced proselytism, including paid missionaries, a conversion ritual, and reduced their teachings to a fundamental creed. Commitment to Aryan ideals focused the energies and wealth of their devotees into a variety of fields. It also provided the necessary psychological strength to publicly oppose existing rituals and customs. The ideals of the Samaj were not only preached, but put into action. The Samaj with its aggressive defence of Vedic Hinduism reinforced the lines drawn between Hindus and other religions. They also created escalating religious conflict. The Samaj entered the twentieth century divided over interpretations of Dayananda, his message, and the methods of putting those ideas into concrete form. In the process, Aryan Hinduism had become a creedal religion, repeatedly defined and explained through a system of proselytism and conversion. The Aryas were not, however, the only Punjabi socio-religious movement to follow this pattern of creed and conversion.

The Dev Samaj

As with many of the first Aryas in Lahore, the career of Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri as a religious leader grew from his involvement with the Lahore Brahmo Samaj. Pandit Agnihotri was born into a family of Kanauji Brahmans on 20 December 1850.¹⁹ At the age of sixteen Agnihotri enrolled in the Thomson College of Engineering at

¹⁹ P. V. Kanak, *Bhagwan Dev Atma* (Lahore, Dev Samaj Book Depot, 1942), p. 51. J. N. Farquhar states that Agnihotri was born in 1850, but gives no source for this information. The remaining dates in Kanak's work are uncontested and so it has been used as the standard biography for this section. Other sources will be cited.

Roorkee. As a student he was introduced to Vedanta through the teachings of Shiv Dayal Singh who, in 1871, formally initiated Agnihotri and his wife as his own disciples. Two years later Agnihotri left Roorkee for Lahore where he accepted a position as drawing master in the Government School.

After settling in Lahore, Pandit Agnihotri was attracted to the Brahmo Samaj through the influence of his *guru* and of Munshi Kanhyalal Alakhdhari. He joined the Samaj in 1873 and quickly became a major figure in that organization. The Pandit was a dramatic speaker, prolific writer, and a successful journalist. While a member of the Brahmo Samaj, he spoke and wrote in favour of marriage reform and vegetarianism. He expounded the rationalistic and eclectic Brahmo doctrine. Gradually he committed more of his time to the Samaj and, in 1875, Agnihotri became an honorary missionary of the Samaj.²⁰ Five years later, he travelled to Calcutta where he was ordained as one of the first missionaries of the newly established Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

Pandit Agnihotri met Swami Dayananda in 1877 and, although many of their ideas were compatible, they clashed with each other on a personal basis. Afterwards Agnihotri repeatedly attacked Dayananda and the Arya Samaj. Writing in Hindi, Urdu, and English, Agnihotri borrowed criticism from European scholars to reject Dayananda's interpretation of the Vedas. Aryas replied with a stream of tracts condemning Agnihotri, first as a Brahmo, and later as leader of his own religious movement. Pandit Agnihotri became increasingly involved in the work of the Brahmo Samaj. He took a modified Brahmo form of *sanyās* on 20 December 1882 and changed his name to Satyananda Agnihotri. As a full-time practitioner of religion, Agnihotri left his post as drawing master, but still retained his married life. Friction developed within the Brahmo Samaj and doubts in the Pandit's own mind so that in 1886 he resigned from the Punjab Brahmo Samaj.

On 16 February 1887 Agnihotri founded the Dev Samaj (Divine Society). At first this organization was considered an extension of the Brahmo Samaj, but it soon began to deviate from their doctrines. Agnihotri rejected Brahmo rationalism and taught instead that only the *guru*, in the person of Agnihotri, could provide a path of eternal bliss. At the upper end of an evolutionary ladder, he possessed the 'Complete Higher Life', a stage of being beyond the dangers of degeneracy and

²⁰ Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 173.

disintegration. A soul moved up this ladder of life or down it. Degeneracy could be achieved by anyone, but progress upward required the guidance of an enlightened soul, and in this world the only guide was Pandit Agnihotri. In 1892 he initiated the dual worship of himself and God. Three years later, the worship of God was dispensed with, leaving the *guru* as the sole point of attention for members of the Samaj.

The Dev Samaj held regular services consisting of hymns, a sermon, and readings from the *Deva Shāstra*. *Mūrti pūjā* (idol worship) was combined with these other types of worship. Agnihotri or his portrait replaced the traditional idol. In its patterns of worship and its ideology, the Dev Samaj fused traditional concepts with demands for radical social change. It taught a code of honesty in public and private. The Dev Samajis were forbidden to lie, steal, cheat, accept bribes or gamble. They should take neither liquor nor drugs and were expected to be strict vegetarians. Adultery, polygamy, and 'unnatural crimes' were outlawed and each member was expected to follow a useful life – that is, to work and live as a householder. All levels of membership looked to Agnihotri, known later as Dev Bhagwan Atma, for guidance in their lives and in their search for fulfilment.

The Dev Samaj demanded that its members abandon all caste restraints; they were expected to practise intercaste dining and intercaste marriage. Pandit Agnihotri also wished to restructure the role of women. He attempted to eliminate child marriage by setting the age of marriage at twenty for boys and sixteen for girls. Agnihotri discouraged excessive dowries, the seclusion of women, and their traditional mourning rites. He taught that widow marriage was acceptable and married a widow himself after the death of his first wife. The Dev Samaj encouraged the education of women and opened a coeducational school in Moga (Ferozepore district) on 29 October 1899.²¹

The emphasis on a stern moral standard plus considerable social radicalism appealed to educated Punjabi Hindus, 'graduates, magistrates, doctors, pleaders, money-lenders, landlords and Government servants', who comprised the membership of the Dev Samaj.²² The Dev Samajis were almost totally educated men and even contained a large percentage of literate women. This, and their position in society, gave the movement far greater influence than sheer numbers would allow. This acculturative socio-religious movement was always an elite organ-

²¹ Kanai, *Bhagwan Dev Atma*, pp. 345–6; and Census, 1911, *Punjab Report*, p. 139.

²² Census, 1911, *Punjab Report*, p. 139.

ization drawing its membership from the highly educated upper caste Hindus of Punjab. Centred on a *guru*, the Dev Samaj produced a mixture of religious tradition and radical social change, especially in the role of women. The Samaj peaked in 1921 when it had 3,597 members. After the death of Pandit Agnihotri the Dev Samaj declined, but it did not disappear. It continued to practise the Vigyan Mulak Dharma (Science Grounded Religion).²³ The radicalism of the Dev Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, and Arya Samaj, the attacks by individual critics, such as Kanhyalal Alakhdhari, and the criticisms of the Christian missionaries stirred orthodox Hindus to defend their religion from all who opposed it.

SANATANISTS IN DEFENCE OF HINDU TRADITION

Pandit Shraddha Ram Phillauri

The first nineteenth-century leader of Hindu orthodoxy in Punjab was Pandit Shraddha Ram who was born in 1837 at Phillaur (Jullundur district). His family belonged to the Marud Joshi Brahmans and served the Bhandari Khatri community of Phillaur. His father, a worshipper of *shakti*, earned his living as a priest. The young Shraddha Ram was educated to follow the same profession, but in a manner unique to the North-West. He studied both Sanskrit and his native tongue of Punjabi, but because of the long Islamic dominance in this area, he also learned Persian and Urdu from a local *maulawī* (Islamic scholar).²⁴ By the time he was nineteen, Shraddha Ram had begun to perform his priestly role. One evening after reciting a part of the Mahabharata in public, Shraddha Ram was arrested and expelled from Phillaur by the police who thought he was preaching revolution. This was either just before or at the beginning of the Mutiny. Shraddha Ram travelled to Patiala, then Hardwar and back to Ludhiana, where he found employment with the Reverend J. Newton of the American Presbyterian Mission. The young Pandit translated tracts and books into the languages of the North-West. His work included parts of the New

²³ Census, 1931, *Punjab Report*, p. 301.

²⁴ Tulsi Deva, *Shraddha Prakash, Pratham Bhag, Shri Pandit Shraddha Ram Ji Ka Jivan* (Lahore, Punjab Economical Press, 1896), pp. 3–12. This is the only biography of Shraddha Ram.

Testament and the Qur'an, the latter translated from Persian. Later he broke with Newton and returned home. Yet this tie with the English rulers was maintained, as he continued to write books for the use of government officials.

After his return to Phillaur, Shraddha Ram began to preach Vaishnava Hinduism. He called for forsaking liquor, flesh, theft, gambling, falsehood, and vanity. He condemned 'bad customs', such as public bathing, and urged his listeners to maintain all the signs of an orthodox Hindu. Each should follow the rituals of purification, learn the *gāyatrī mantra*, wear a red mark on the forehead, a necklace of Tulsi beads, and greet each other with '*jāyatṛī hari*' ('Victory to God'). Shraddha Ram went from town to town where he preached and organized hymn-singing. His travels took him to Kapurthala in 1863–4 along with other Hindu leaders. It was rumoured that the Maharaja of Kapurthala was about to succumb to the preaching of a Christian missionary, Father Golaknath, and convert. Shraddha Ram, so it is claimed, persuaded the Maharaja to remain a Hindu, thus defeating the missionaries. In 1867–8, he joined with Munshi Yamuna Prasad in establishing a Hindu school in Ludhiana that taught both Sanskrit and Persian. They also organized a Hindu Sabha to sustain *sanātana dharma* (the eternal religion).

Pandit Shraddha Ram continued to defend orthodox Hinduism and bitterly condemned Christianity as 'trivial and gross'. He maintained 'there are only two things you can get from being in the Christian religion that are not possible in Hindu *dharma*, one is liquor and the other is eating left over food and meat'.²⁵ Shraddha Ram visited Amritsar in 1872–3 and preached at the Guru ka Bagh. He excoriated the Namdharis and also claimed that Ram Singh was one of his disciples. He spoke against the Anand Marriages (reformist Sikh marriage ceremonies), the killing of Muslim butchers, and for the necessity of Brahman priests and their rituals. A number of Sikhs who heard him felt that Shraddha Ram had denied the sanctity of the Sikh *gurus*. A near riot erupted and for the remainder of his stay Shraddha Ram required police protection to ensure his safety.

Shraddha Ram published a number of books and tracts that explained his beliefs and criticized his opponents. Perhaps the most significant of all his works appeared in 1876. This was *Dharma Rakshā*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2.

(In Defence of Religion). Here he defended orthodox Hinduism by references to various scriptures given in the text in Sanskrit and then explained in Urdu. He rejected the idea that human reasoning had any validity, only the scriptures counted, and yet when it came to customs he considered unacceptable – such as Ras Dhārī with its erotic adventures of the young Krishna – Shraddha Ram discounted them through the authority of his own personal logic. As with many a Sanatanist, he asked for change, but its scope remained extremely limited.

In 1872, as a member of the Amritsar Dharma Sabha, Shraddha Ram joined with other Hindu leaders including the critic of contemporary Hinduism, Kanhyalal Alakhdhari, in an attempt to purify Hindu social and customary practice. The two men cooperated until 1873 when Alakhdhari founded the Niti Prakash Sabha in Ludhiana. Shraddha Ram with his followers attended the initial meeting, delivered a devastating condemnation of Kanhyalal, and then left with his followers. The two leaders became enemies and also typified the division among Punjabi Hindus into critics and defenders of their religion. The year 1877 brought a new and more dangerous opponent to Shraddha Ram with the arrival of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Dayananda's success stirred Shraddha Ram to action. He followed Dayananda around the province to counter his call for a restructuring of Hinduism. In all their travels the two men never met, although supposedly challenges to formal debates were issued by both sides. After Dayananda left for Rajasthan, Shraddha Ram continued to argue against the Arya Samaj. He also turned his attention to establishing organizations to protect orthodoxy.

On 13–15 March 1880, a celebration was held at Phillaur to mark the founding of the Hari Gyan Mandir. Along with this temple Shraddha Ram opened a school where the four Vedas would be taught. That same year Shraddha Ram organized the Hardwar Sabha with a rest-house for mendicants visiting the holy city and Brahman pilgrims. His third accomplishment of 1880 was the establishment of the Gyan Mandir in Lahore; it too had a school attached. Shraddha Ram fixed the pattern of services for this temple and arranged that the temple property would not be inherited by his relatives. He was able to do no more since he died in the first quarter of 1881.

Shraddha Ram had laid the foundation for later Sanatanist movements, but he himself created only a few small organizations uncoordinated and without central authority. He did, however, leave

behind him a collection of writings that expounded Sanatanist ideas and defended them from a variety of critics. Typical of adherents to Punjabi culture, Shraddha Ram clashed with other religions including Christians and Sikhs. He found support from pre-British elites among them Brahmans, landowners, princes, and merchants. Orthodox Hindus of Punjab would have no movement until the young Brahman, Din Dayalu Sharma, began his own organizational efforts in 1887 (see pp. 77–82). Shraddha Ram's defensive campaign was the first attempt to protect orthodoxy in Punjab and was a natural outgrowth of socio-religious movements that threatened the entrenched religious establishment of the Hindu community. Paralleling these critical movements within Hindu society were similar ones among the Sikhs of Punjab.

ACCULTURATIVE MOVEMENTS AMONG THE SIKHS

The Singh Sabhas

A series of events led to the founding of the first Singh Sabha at Amritsar. The Sikh community had been shaken by Namdhari unrest, the speeches of Shraddha Ram, and by Christian conversions. In the beginning of 1873, several Sikh students at Amritsar Mission School announced that they intended to become Christians. This incident stirred a small group of prominent Sikhs to form the Singh Sabha of Amritsar, which held its first meeting on 1 October 1873. Among those who helped to establish the Sabha were Sir Khem Singh Bedi, Thakur Singh Sandhawalia, Kanwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, and Giani Gian Singh. Sandhawalia became its president and Giani Gian Singh its secretary. The Sabha intended to restore Sikhism to its past purity, to publish historical religious books, magazines and journals, to propagate knowledge using Punjabi, to return Sikh apostates to their original faith, and to involve highly placed Englishmen in the educational programme of the Sikhs.²⁶

The Singh Sabha was directed by an Executive Committee consisting of the president and secretary plus a few members. As the Sabha expanded, new officers were appointed, a vice-president, assistant secretary, a *giānī* (scholar of the Sikh scriptures), an *updeshak* (preacher), a

²⁶ Harbans Singh, 'Origins of the Singh Sabha', *Panjab Past and Present* (April 1973), 28–9.

treasurer and a librarian. They were elected each year and could be re-elected. Members had to be Sikhs with a strong belief in the teachings of the *gurus*. They paid a monthly subscription and were asked to pledge themselves to serve the community and to be loyal to Sikhism. All the original members were baptized Sikhs, although no requirement for this was written into the constitution of the Sabha.²⁷ They met every two weeks, held anniversary celebrations, and special meetings on festival days or in response to specific challenges by other religious groups. The Sabha soon began to issue *hurmatās* (records) of its decisions, each of which was the result of a majority vote. The Sabha also kept records of its income and expenditures, and produced annual reports.

The Singh Sabha represented the leaders of the Sikh community. It was joined by members of the landed gentry, the aristocracy, and by various types of temple servants: *pūjārīs* who conducted rituals, *granthīs* who recited the Sikh scriptures, *mahants* who administered the *gurdwārās*, *giānīs* and descendants of the *gurus*.²⁸ The Sabha prepared a calendar that listed the correct dates of the births and deaths of the ten *gurus*. They embarked on the preparation of a definitive text of the Dassam Granth; however, this task proved so demanding that a separate organization, the Gurmat Granth Pracharak Sabha, was founded to finish it. The Singh Sabha published numerous tracts and books and in 1894 organized the Khalsa Tract Society to popularize Punjabi, the Gurmukhi script, and to issue monthly tracts on the Sikh religion.²⁹ Soon the Singh Sabha of Amritsar was emulated by a new organization that also proved to be a competitor for leadership within the Sikh community.

The Lahore Singh Sabha held its first meeting on 2 November 1879. This new society was led by Professor Gurmukh Singh (1849–98) and Bhai Ditt Singh (1853–1901). Gurmukh Singh drew others into the Lahore Sabha through his personality, his extensive writings, and his efforts in the field of journalism.³⁰ This new Singh Sabha announced goals similar to those of the Amritsar society. They also wanted to

²⁷ Gurdarshan Singh, 'Origin and development of the Singh Sabha movement, constitutional aspects', *Panjab Past and Present* (April 1973), 46.

²⁸ See Teja Singh, 'The Singh Sabha movement', *Panjab Past and Present* (April 1973), 31–2; and N. G. Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature* (Delhi, Manohar Book Service, 1970), p. xxiv.

²⁹ Teja Singh, 'Singh Sabha movement', p. 32.

³⁰ Barrier, *Sikhs and Their Literature*, p. xxvi; and Chhabra, *Advanced History*, pp. 382–3.

return Sikhism to its past purity by expunging all elements of non-Sikh origin. The Lahore Sabha intended to publish literature on Sikhism and authentic texts of the various Sikh scriptures. They wished to impart 'modern' knowledge through the vehicle of Punjabi, and published journals and newspapers to achieve these ends. The first president of this Sabha was Diwan Buta Singh, and Bhai Gurmukh Singh served as its secretary. The Lahore Singh Sabha formed an Educational Committee to encourage Sikh learning and also invited sympathetic Englishmen to join in the Committee's project. Another of the early acts of this Sabha was to affiliate with the Singh Sabha of Amritsar.

Differences between the Lahore and Amritsar societies quickly surfaced. The Lahore Sabha was more democratic and accepted members from all castes including untouchables. Their programme of purifying Sikhism directly opposed the vested interests of the Amritsar Sabha. The career of Bhai Ditt Singh illustrates the type of friction that erupted between the two organizations. Ditt Singh, himself of low-caste status, wished to remove the 'evils of caste' and 'guru-dom' from the Sikh community. Because he was an effective writer, he became the main propagandist for the Lahore Sabha. His publications chided high-caste Sikhs for denigrating converts, especially from the lower castes; Ditt Singh also attacked the hereditary priests and claimants to special status as descendants of the *gurus*. His tract, *Sudān Nātak* (A Dream Drama), ridiculed the religious establishment and resulted in a court case, the first of many that grew from his writings.³¹ The Lahore Sabha soon confronted considerable opposition within the Sikh community, and were banned from meeting in many local *gurdwārās*. Consequently, the Singh Sabhas found it necessary to erect their own *gurdwārās* served by priests who accepted the Singh Sabha ideology.

The Lahore Sabha expanded with local branches in many of the Punjab towns. The Amritsar Sabha developed its own societies, but its growth was far slower than the Lahore society. In 1880 a General Sabha was established in Amritsar to provide a central organization for all Singh Sabhas. On 11 April 1883 this was renamed the Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar. It included thirty-six to thirty-seven different Singh Sabhas as well as the Lahore association. The officers reflected an attempt to bring all groups together to heal the differences between them. Raja Birkam Singh of Faridkot accepted the title of patron, Baba

³¹ Barrier, *Sikhs and Their Literature*, p. xxvi.

Khem Singh Bedi, president, Man Singh, officer-in-charge of the Golden Temple, Bhai Ganesh Singh and Bhai Gurmukh Singh as joint secretaries. This effort at unity lasted but a short time. In 1886 the Lahore Singh Sabha created its own Khalsa Diwan (Sikh Council). Only the Sabhas of Faridkot, Amritsar, and Rawalpindi allied with the original Diwan; the rest turned to the Lahore leadership and to its radical ideology of social and religious change.³²

The Lahore Khalsa Diwan received assistance from the Maharaja of Nabha as its patron, while Sir Attar Singh served as its president and Bhai Gurmukh Singh as its secretary. At first they had good relations with the Arya Samaj. Several young Sikhs joined the Aryas, seeing in it many of the same ideals that motivated members of the Singh Sabha. The two organizations appeared to be moving along parallel paths. Dayananda criticized Sikhism, but the Aryas had not emphasized this until the Lahore anniversary celebrations of 25 November 1888. On this occasion Pandit Guru Datta attacked Sikhism and labelled Guru Nanak 'a great fraud'. Other Aryas, including Pandit Lekh Ram and Lala Murli Dhar, joined this denigration of Sikhism. As a result, three young, educated Sikhs, Bhai Jawahir Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh Giani, and Bhai Maya Singh, departed the Samaj for the Lahore Singh Sabha. They became staunch defenders of Sikhism against all external criticism, especially from the Aryas. Arya-Sikh relations ranged from vicious tract-wars to cooperation in the area of *shuddhi*, but as the two movements matured they tended to draw further and further apart.

The Singh Sabhas continued to expand, new branches were founded that, at times, created their own distinct ideas and programmes. The Bhasur Singh Sabha became a hub of Sikh militancy under the leadership of Bhai Teja Singh. Members of this Sabha were required to wear the five symbols of orthodoxy, to accept strict religious discipline, and if they did not do so, were expelled. Its members were treated as equals regardless of their class or caste origins. The Bhasur Singh Sabha was aggressive in its missionary zeal and extreme in its ideology. In time it developed into the Panch Khalsa Diwan and competed with other Khalsa Diwans. Not all deviation or enthusiasm by local Singh Sabhas proved as controversial. Under the leadership of Bhai Takht Singh (1860–1937), the Ferozepore Singh Sabha opened a girls' high school and hostel when the education of women was still unacceptable to

³² Gurdarshan Singh, 'Origin and development', pp. 48–9.

many Sikhs. Other Sabhas connected with the Lahore Diwan built orphanages, opened schools for all classes and castes, and produced a stream of literature, tracts, journals and newspapers.³³

Although strong differences in membership, ideology, and programmes divided the Amritsar and Lahore Diwans, they did cooperate in establishing a Sikh college. Representatives of both Khalsa Diwans met in Lahore to draw up plans for the proposed college. A *hukam-nāmā* (ruling) was issued from the Golden Temple that requested each Sikh to give a tenth of his income for the college project. Sympathetic Englishmen organized a committee in London to raise funds and donations were requested from the Sikh ruling families. This institution became a degree-granting college in 1899 and the foremost success of Sikh efforts in higher education.

During the 1890s, Sikhs in both wings of the Singh Sabha movement became increasingly concerned with the question of Sikh identity; were they or were they not part of the Hindu community? Competition with Hindu movements had done much to fuel this discussion. Western scholars, involved in translations of different Sikh scriptures, added further stimulus to controversy surrounding the role and meaning of Sikhism. In 1898, the Sikh philanthropist, Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, died leaving his wealth to the Dayal Singh Trust. His widow contested his will with the result that an English court had to decide whether the deceased was a Sikh or a Hindu. Throughout 1898, 1899, and 1900, the lawsuit and the question of Sikh identity were argued in public meetings, in the press, and through numerous publications. The more radical Sikhs claimed that Sikhism was separate from Hinduism, while others maintained it was a subdivision of Hinduism. The Arya Samaj added more fuel to this debate.

Sikh leaders of the Rahtia community, untouchable weavers from the Jullundur Doab, demanded that the Singh Sabhas remove their social and religious liabilities. Sikhism rejected caste, they maintained, and so this error of ignorance and Hindu influence should be extinguished. Since the Singh Sabha leaders did not respond to their pleas, they turned to Lala Munshi Ram of the Arya Samaj. He welcomed them and, on 3 June 1900, the Samaj conducted a public ceremony of *shuddhi* in the city of Lahore for 200 Rahtias. The Aryas gave each of them a sacred thread signifying his pure status, shaved their beards and hair, and

³³ For a discussion of Sikh papers, books and tracts, see Barrier, *Sikhs and Their Literature*.

introduced them to the proper rituals of worship. In short, the Rahtias were transformed into clean-caste Hindus. The Sikhs, who witnessed this spectacle, became enraged, seeing it as sacrilege and a threat to their community. In the following months Aryas continued to purify members of the Rahtia caste and Sikh leaders pulled further away from the Hindu community. In 1905 Sikh reformers struck back as they succeeded in 'cleansing' the Golden Temple of Brahman priests, idols, and Hindu rituals. This action strengthened the argument that Sikhs were separate from the Hindu religion, an idea which gained wider and wider acceptance among educated Sikhs during the twentieth century.³⁴

Meanwhile leadership within the Sikh community shifted. The Lahore Singh Sabha lost many of its prominent members. Sir Attar Singh died in 1896, Bhai Gurmukh Singh in 1898, and Bhai Ditt Singh in 1901. Attention moved to a new organization, the Chief Khalsa Diwan founded in Amritsar, where it first met on 30 October 1902. A constitution and an elaborate structure of organization were adopted and, in 1904, the society was registered with the government. Sikh leaders again attempted to unite the diverse organizations within their community under one umbrella. Yet only twenty-nine of the 150 Singh Sabhas then in existence agreed to join the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Membership was limited to baptized Sikhs and the organization depended on individual subscriptions for financial support. The Chief Khalsa Diwan failed to transcend internal divisions among the Sikhs, divisions that surfaced in the decade after World War I.

Initially Sikhs had responded to the loss of political domination much as had the Muslims of north India, but they differed in the models of Sikhism used for their socio-religious movements. The Singh Sabhas sought an adjustment to British control, but the two wings differed in their membership within the Sikh class and caste structures. These differences were manifest in the competing ideologies each group articulated. The Lahore Singh Sabha spoke for a rising educated elite and the Amritsar Sabha, while calling for changes in religion, rejected any fundamental restructuring of authority within the community. It paralleled many of the orthodox defensive movements of the Hindus and of Islam which drew upon the strengths of pre-British elites and members of the religious establishment. The Amritsar Singh Sabha wanted only limited adjustment of British culture. Both wings realized the need to

³⁴ Kenneth W. Jones, 'Ham Hindu Nahin: Arya-Sikh relations', 1877-1905, *Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 3 (May 1973), 468-75.

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gain a command of western knowledge if Sikhs were to compete successfully with Hindu and Muslim Punjabis, but here again they differed on the extent of this education and who should receive it. In the development of their ideas the two branches of the Singh Sabhas helped to redefine the 'true' Sikhism and to draw lines between it and the other religious communities in Punjab. In the twentieth century the Singh Sabhas were overwhelmed by other organizations. In the first decade they were supplanted by the Khalsa Diwans and then in the 1920s by the struggle for control over the Sikh place of worship. Paralleling the Arya Samaj and Singh Sabhas, a socio-religious movement among Punjabi Muslims also added to this general process of self-definition that characterized so much of the nineteenth century.

AN ACCULTURATIVE MOVEMENT AMONG PUNJABI MUSLIMS

The Ahmadiyahs

The Ahmadiyahs began with the career of one man, the messianic Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908). Mirza Ghulam was born in the village of Qadiyan on 13 February 1835.³⁵ His family once held extensive estates that were seized by the Sikhs when they gained control of the Punjab. A few villages remained, but the young Ahmad grew up in an atmosphere of frustration over the decline in his family's status and wealth. He was educated by private tutors, the first of whom was Fazl Ilahi, a resident of Qadiyan and a scholar of the Hanafi School of Law. In 1845 he studied with Fazl Ahmad, a member of the Ahl-i-Hadith, who tutored him in Arabic grammar. At seventeen he began to work with the Shi'ah tutor, Gul 'Ali Shah of Batala, and became acquainted with Muhammad Husain, a fellow student of Gul 'Ali Shah.

After finishing his education Mirza Ghulam's father sent him to Sialkot. There he read law and oversaw a number of legal cases instituted to regain the family's lost estates. While in Sialkot Mirza Ghulam met several Christian missionaries. In 1868 he returned to Qadiyan and in 1876 his father died. Little is known of his life during

³⁵ This date is given by Lavan in his recent study of the Ahmadiyahs. Farquhar states that he was born 'about 1838'. See Lavan, *Ahmadiyah Movement*, p. 22, and Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 137. Lavan's is presently the most authoritative study of the Ahmadiyahs and so will be used as the basic source of this section unless otherwise cited.

the years 1868 to 1876, but after his father's death Ghulam Ahmad ceased to concern himself with the family estates and turned his attention to religion. He debated, mostly through newspapers, with Pandit Kharak Singh, a Christian convert, and with Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri, then a leader in the Brahmo Samaj. In May 1879 Mirza Ghulam announced his forthcoming book, the *Barāhīn-i-Ahmadiyah* (Proofs of Ahmadiyah) in the pages of Muhammad Husain's journal, *Ishā'at-i-Sunnah*. The *Barāhīn* appeared in six issues of *Ishā'at* and was published in four volumes from 1880–4.

Ahmad described his basic ideas, his claims to special authority, and his programme for rejuvenating Islam in *Barāhīn*. He stressed the fundamental principles of Islam and the duties of all Muslims. His claims to religious authority rested on the visions and messages he received from God. Mirza also refuted the doctrines of other religious leaders both within and outside Islam. The Arya Samaj and its founder provided him with a dramatic enemy and one close to home. Mirza Ghulam clashed with Sharampat Rai (1855–1932), a resident of Qadiyan and secretary of the local Arya Samaj. In a registered letter he offered to send a copy of the *Barāhīn* to Swami Dayananda and to debate him over the truth of Islam and its superiority over Hinduism. Dayananda failed to respond. In August, Mirza reported a vision in which he saw that Dayananda would die in the near future, a prophecy that was fulfilled in October. Nevertheless confrontations between Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Arya Samaj lasted until his death in 1908.

Controversies within the Islamic community developed at roughly the same time. In March 1882 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced that he had received a divine command that he should be a *mujaddid* (a renewer of the faith).³⁶ He did not make additional claims or take further steps to initiate his own disciples until 12 January 1889. On that date his son, Bashir ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was born thus fulfilling one of his prophecies. He chose then to announce conditions on which he would grant *bai'at* to his disciples. In 1890–1 he published three works and publicly claimed that he was the *masih mau'ūd* (promised messiah) and the *madhī*. Mirza Ghulam was thus the future saviour of both Islam and Christianity. Different 'ulamā, including Muhammad Husain of Batala, 'Abd al-Haq Ghaznavi of Amritsar, Nazir Husain

³⁶ Lavan, *Ahmadiyah Movement*, p. 36.

of Delhi, and Ahmad 'Allah of Amritsar immediately condemned him. Muhammad Husain arranged for *fatwā* against Mirza Ghulam that were signed by a number of '*ulamā* representing different groups within the Islamic community. Public debates quickly followed. On 20 July 1891, Mirza Ghulam disputed with Muhammad Husain in Ludhiana. In September, he travelled to Delhi where he debated with Nazir Husain, the distinguished leader of the Ahl-i-Hadith movement. This confrontation took place in the Jama'a Masjid and culminated in a near riot, a fairly common occurrence and one that grew from the extremely bitter personal, as well as theological, differences expressed in speech and writing.

Partly out of response to the critical statement issued by various '*ulamā*, a meeting of Ahmad's adherents was held in Qadiyan on 27 December 1891. This was the first general gathering of the movement. Eighty individuals attended and such a meeting was held each year afterwards. In 1892 500 members travelled to Qadiyan from Punjab and the North-West. People came from as far east as Aligarh and from as far west as Mecca. At the 1892 meeting, the Ahmadiyahs declared their goals: 'To propagate Islam; to think out ways and means of promoting the welfare of new converts to Islam in Europe and America; to further the cause of righteousness, purity, piety and moral excellence throughout the world, to eradicate evil habits and customs; to appreciate with gratitude the good work of the British Government.'³⁷ The Ahmadis attempted to expand their membership through proselytism and continually engaged in contests with a wide variety of opponents. In 1897 they began publishing the newspaper, *al-Hakam*, to explain the Mirza's doctrines and attack those who disagreed with him.

Controversy with other Muslims reached its height in the years 1898–9 over Mirza Ghulam's claim to messiah status, his interpretations of the word *jihād*, and over numerous other theological issues. Finally the British Government intervened, impelled to act by his habit of prophesying the demise of his opponents. On 24 February 1899, after a court-hearing, Muhammad Husain signed a statement in which he promised to stop using abusive language against Mirza Ghulam who in turn agreed to cease predicting the death of his critics. This did not end controversy, but did diminish somewhat the intensity and open

³⁷ Quoted *ibid.* p. 93.

animosity that characterized the 1890s. In the process Mirza Ghulam came to consider his own followers as separate from the body of Sunni Muslims. On 4 November 1900, he called for the Ahmadiyahs to list themselves separately on the census of 1901. At this time *al-Hakam* listed 1,098 members who now comprised their own officially recognized religious society.

Paralleling his tussles with different Islamic groups, the Mirza engaged in a struggle with various Christians, particularly the Punjabi converts, Imad al-Din, Thakur Das, and 'Abd 'Allah Asim. One public dispute with 'Abd 'Allah lasted for fifteen days. It was held in May–June 1893 at the village of Jandiyala. At the root of this controversy lay the Mirza's claim to be the *masih mau'ūd*. He argued that Christ did not die on the cross, but survived, and travelled to Kashmir where he lived until the age of 120 administering to the lost tribes of Israel who had settled there. Christ was thus, a man, a prophet, but not the son of God, and Mirza Ghulam was also a prophet fulfilling a similar historic role. Christian leaders rejected Ahmad's claims through a series of polemical tracts and by condemning him in their public lectures.

From the late 1880s Pandit Lekh Ram spoke and wrote extensively against Islam and with special vehemence against Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In 1887 Lekh Ram published his answer to the claims of Mirza Ghulam in *Takzīb-i-Barāhīn-i-Ahmadiyāh* (Accusing as False the Proofs of Ahmadiyah). Nur ud-Din Ahmad answered in 1890 with *Tasdiq-i-Barāhīn-i-Ahmadiyāh* (Verifying the Proofs of Ahmadiyah), and Mirza Ghulam in 1891 with *Ta'īd-i-Barāhīn-i-Ahmadiyāh* (Confirming the Proofs of Ahmadiyah). A year later Lekh Ram condemned all Islam in his treatise on *Jihād*. Ahmad responded with numerous attacks against different elements of the Arya Samaj ideology. He found a particularly vulnerable point with Dayananda's concept of *niyog*, the idea that barren women or virgin widows might have children without being married. This was one of Dayananda's teachings that found little or no acceptance among members of the Arya Samaj, but was often used to embarrass the movement. Ahmad published *Radd-i-Niyog* (The Rejection of Niyog) in 1895. He also predicted that Pandit Lekh Ram would not live long, a prophecy that was fulfilled in 1897.

During these years of conflict, the Ahmadis continued to make converts and a community formed around Mirza Ghulam at Qadiyan.

The ideology of the Ahmadiyahs shared many elements of other nineteenth-century Muslim movements of return. Mirza Ghulam condemned the worship of tombs and numerous other customs as *shirk* (polytheism). He interpreted the Qur'an to justify the gradual elimination of slavery. He explained *pardah* (the seclusion of women), and the Muslim institution of divorce as solutions to worse evils, and redefined *jihād* to exclude the concept of holy war as often accepted by theologians. He taught his followers to perform the five daily prayers, obey God and his Prophet, and to conduct themselves righteously and ethically. As long as he was alive the Ahmadiyah community was united partly through the Sufi institution of *bai'at*, as each member was initiated at the hands of Mirza Ghulam and by his person.

The ideology of the Ahmadiyahs appealed at first to middle-class, literate Muslims; however, because of its location in Qadiyan, the Ahmadiyahs began to attract more members from the less educated, poorer rural classes. The origins of its members produced with the Ahmadis a bipolar pattern. Among the literates were doctors, attorneys, landowners and businessmen. They tended to come from the district towns rather than from the few major cities, and were somewhat separated from a growing rural and less affluent membership. As with other Islamic movements of return, the Ahmadis attempted to remove all error and to return to what they considered the 'true' fundamentals of their religion. The role of Mirza Ghulam, however, led to clashes within Islam, particularly with the *'ulāma* who did not consider Mirza a qualified religious leader. The aggressive, militant stance of the movement brought it into direct conflict with Hindus, Sikhs and Christians among others. The acculturative Ahmadis adjusted their doctrines to the reality of British power and the fact of western civilization as was most clearly illustrated by their reinterpretation of *jihād*. Conversion and proselytism became the main goals of the Ahmadis as they proved uniquely able to win converts from outside of the subcontinent. Success was accompanied in the twentieth century by internal division and drove their community into two distinct organizations, and conflict at all levels continued to be a byproduct of the Ahmadis as it has been of Punjabi movements in general.

PUNJAB AND THE NORTH-WEST IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY: A SUMMARY

The diversity of religious communities in the Punjab led to a greater number of socio-religious movements than in any other region of South Asia. In addition, divisions within and among religious communities appeared repeatedly. The two Sikh transitional movements grew from the crises within this community, by the turmoil among the Sikhs after the death of Ranjit Singh, and by the British conquest of the Sikh kingdom. They reflected the long-standing differences that existed among the Sikhs. The major Sikh acculturative movement, the Singh Sabha, was bifurcated between a pre-British elite centred in Amritsar and a new rising group at Lahore.

The Sikhs were not the only Punjabi community at war with itself. Punjabi Hindus too were rent by opposing visions of what should be done to save degenerate Hinduism from further decline. The founding of the Lahore Arya Samaj in 1877 brought to the North-West an aggressive movement of return, one that was uncompromising in its insistence that it alone possessed truth and its willingness to condemn all other systems of belief. This stance echoed existing conflicts between proponents of radical change and defenders of orthodoxy. It brought the Samaj into conflict with the Brahmo Samaj, among reformers, with orthodox Hindus, and with the smaller Dev Samaj. Aryas also accepted the mantle of defenders of Hinduism against the challenges of Christian missionaries, Muslim religious leaders, and eventually both wings of the Singh Sabha movement.

Punjabi Muslims were influenced by movements of return from the Gangetic basin and reactions to those movements by orthodox Muslims added to religious controversy through the leadership of Mirza Ghulam and his claims to a prophetic role. The Ahmadis demonstrated a similar set of dynamics as they fought against the *'ulamā*, the Ahl-i-Hadith, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's organization, and Muslim orthodoxy. They, like the Aryas, also attempted to defend their parent religion, Islam, and their unique 'truth' against the condemnation of other religious groups including the Christian missionaries.

All Punjabi religious communities created acculturative movements that began in one of its cities and then expanded to the others, to smaller towns, and occasionally to the villages. Each had the Punjabi tendency to see their ideas as the absolute, unbending truth. Such movements

were aggressive with the exception of the Dev Samaj. They adopted western organizational techniques with which they created a wide variety of institutions. Each possessed missionaries, tract societies, parochial schools, centres of worship, systems of fund-raising, bureaucracies, and central associations. Lines dividing one religion from another and one socio-religious movement from all others were defined, and aggressively defended. By the end of the nineteenth century, religious identity was in the process of expressing itself in combinations of symbols based on language, script and religion. This newly strengthened communal consciousness was exported from the Punjab by such movements as the Arya Samaj and the Ahmadiyahs. The Punjab was not only influenced by religious associations outside of it, particularly from movements within Bengal and the Gangetic core, but also itself became an exporter of movements. The North-West was a region on the periphery of the Hindu-Buddhist civilization and one historically unsettled by invaders. Here the religious elites strong in the Gangetic basin and in the South could not maintain control over their respective communities and were repeatedly challenged by individuals and groups that demanded radical change in the status quo. It was a region in turmoil that during the twentieth century added a political dimension to its forms of religious consciousness. In the four decades before Independence the attitudes, strategies and organizations predominant in the Punjab spread to other areas of the subcontinent, carrying with them forms of aggressive religious competition. Further to the South the dynamics of socio-religious movements changed in part, although not totally.