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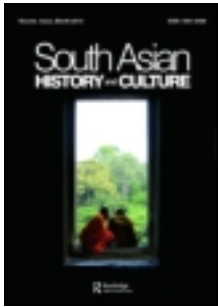
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## South Asian History and Culture

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsac20>

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Published online: 19 Aug 2013.

To cite this article: South Asian History and Culture (2013): Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam: religion, socialism and agitation in action, South Asian History and Culture, DOI: 10.1080/19472498.2013.824678

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2013.824678>

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## Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam: religion, socialism and agitation in action

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The dynamics of agitational politics that Majlis-i-Ahrar came to epitomize in the Punjab during the 1930s and the 1940s are the primary focus of this article. Indelibly influenced by the Khilafat Movement and its leadership, the Ahrar chose to tread a different path from 1929 onwards. Ideologically, the Ahrar was influenced quite profoundly by the socialist ideal of egalitarianism in tandem with the Islamic reformism of the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the Ahrar's popularity waxed enormously and the lower middle echelons of the Punjabi populace became its political constituency. Artisan classes of Central Punjab were particularly its devout followers. Ahrar leaders belonged to all sectarian denominations but it generally subscribed to the Deobandi ideology. The Ahrar came to the political centre stage in 1931 when bands of its volunteers entered Kashmir to protest against the policies of the then-Maharaja, which were perceived to be anti-Muslim. The Ahrar's agitational mode of politics manifested itself with the same intensity again in Kapurthala and then in the United Provinces. However, the Ahrar's condemnatory rhetoric against Ahmadis ultimately became the principal tenet of its politics and the ideology of *Hakumat-i-Allahia* (rule through the dictates of Allah) its primary deployment for political leverage.

**Keywords:** Ahrar; socialism; Ahmadi; Kashmir; Deobandi

Radical history has often become synonymous with left-wing movements and communist parties. However, in the South Asian context the infusion of religion with politics during the colonial era means that radical movements were often contradictory in terms of whether they were left wing or right wing. The Majlis-i-Ahrar movement<sup>1</sup>, with its street-level agitation politics in the 1930s and the 1940s, and in particular, its key ideology of *Hakumat-i-Allahia* (rule through the dictates of Allah), is perhaps the best example of a radical movement that embodies multiple traditions. Indeed, even the name Ahrar, as the movement was usually referred to, is a plural form of the Arabic word *hur* or *har*, which means become to be free. The Ahrar movement has yet to find any space in the national discourse of Pakistan. From the very outset Pakistan's historiography was dominated by the official version of freedom, which excluded those movements and parties that had been pitched against the All-India Muslim League. The conspicuous absence of parties like Khudai Khidmatgar Movement in N.W.F.P. (presently Khyber Pakhtun Khawah), Jeeya Sindh in Sindh and the Awami League in East Bengal from the mainstream political discourse leaves a vacuum in the mainstream scholarship on Pakistan. The works of the two most prominent historians of Pakistan, Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi and Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, set the historiographical trend for the later generation by reducing these movements to the margins.<sup>2</sup> Yet they all, in different ways, played extremely important roles in Indian

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Muslim politics of the late colonial era. The history of the future Pakistan areas cannot be completely understood without reference to their careers and legacies.

This article highlights a particular aspect of agitation that the Ahrar came to epitomize in the 1930s and the 1940s, which sets it apart from other studies, conducted so far. Samina Awan's book, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab: Majlis-i-Ahrar, 1929–1949*<sup>3</sup> is the first in-depth study in English of the movement. The outline that Awan provides offers a foundation from which this article will consider the agitational mode of politics that the Ahrar deployed. Similarly, Awan has based her study mostly on archival sources, which obscures the points of view of the Ahrar ideologues. Hence, this article aims to unravel the ideology and methods of the Ahrar politics through original sources not used before, such as the writings of Chaudhary Afzal Haq, Janbaz Mirza, Shorish Kashmiri, Master Taj-ud-Din and Mazhar Ali Azhar. All of them were the frontline leaders and ideologues of the Ahrar. They wrote extensively on the Ahrar; however, their writings have not been fully tapped in academic histories. In this article, an attempt has been made to draw on these vernacular sources.

### Origins and ideology

All the individuals who later constituted the Ahrar were exponents of the Khilafat Movement in the Punjab during the 1920s. The history of the Khilafat movement, its components and the reasons why the movement fizzled out in 1924 have been well documented by South Asian historians.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the Ulema-i-Deoband was in the vanguard of the Khilafat movement, they were not the only people striving for its sustenance. The Modernist Muslim section, spearheaded by Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, mostly referred to as the Ali brothers, also had its representation in the movement. Both groups worked superficially well together in the early stages of the struggle. However, a schism soon appeared. It was in this context that Majlis-i-Ahrari Islam came into existence. As Shorish Kashmiri states:

Undoubtedly Ahrars were the outcome of the Khilafat Movement, the ideas of *Al Hilal* and the pen of the *Zamindar* put together. It was a combination of an anti-British outlook, love for Islam, patriotism, hatred of capitalism, enmity with superstition, love for sacrifice . . . ambition to bring about revolution and enthusiasm for conducting *jihad*.<sup>5</sup>

This heady combination of religion and politics, communism and patriotism means that the Ahrar would ultimately agitate in multiple political arenas. For example, because of its Khilafatist background the Ahrar was close to the Indian National Congress, although it differed from it on such issues as separate electorates. Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bokhari, one of the founders of the Ahrar, is quoted in a few Ahrari texts as saying that Abul Kalam Azad asked him to set up Majlis-i-Ahrar the organization, although Azad himself did not relinquish his position as a top Muslim leader of Congress to join the organization. To solve this conundrum, a thorough appraisal of the political scenario in the 1920s is required: both at the national level and in the Punjab.

Before Kemal Attaturk's abolition of the office of caliph, the Khilafat Movement had been dealt a series of blows. These included Gandhi's calling off of civil disobedience after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 and the movement's own internal crisis. The embezzlement to the tune of Rs. 1.6 million in the Khilafat fund resulted in the erosion of trust that millions of Muslims had reposed in the leadership. Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali (Ali brothers) also took some of the blame. The Enquiry Committee set up for

investigating the matter held them equally responsible for the mismanagement of the fund. It was headed by Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri and comprised all Punjabi members branded as loyalist to Abul Kalam Azad. Maulana Muhammad Ali harboured suspicion and ill will towards the Committee, and ensured that the Central Khilafat Committee ostracized it. The Committee itself split into two factions: namely the Muslim Nationalist Party under the leadership of Muhammad Alam, which could not keep its distinct character for long and subsequently submerged into Congress, and the *Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam*. Zafar Ali Khan (editor of *The Zamindar* newspaper), Maulana Daud Ghaznavi, Syed Ata ullah Bokhari, Chaudhri Afzal Haq, Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, Khawja Abdul Rehman Ghazi Sheikh Hassam ud Din and Maulana Habibur Rehman Ludhianvi constituted the core leadership of the Ahrar. Afzal Haq writes as follows regarding the background to the Ahrar movement's emergence:

Punjab Khilafat Committee was the soul of the Central Body, unintentionally and unconsciously it had two distinct factions in itself. Khilafat Punjab had an elite faction and a downtrodden faction. The elite, like the son of a prostitute and the horse of a trader, had been sluggish and enjoyed the easy life. All the laborious work was the fate of the downtrodden faction. The elite were conscience of their distinctness as a class whereas the downtrodden had no such realization, they thought of themselves as a part of the totality . . . . When *Majlis i Khilafat Punjab* severed its link with Central body, the elite formed its organization by the name of Muslim Nationalist Party and the downtrodden constituted *Majlis i Ahrar*.<sup>6</sup>

This explicit division of the movement along class lines perhaps reveals why the author Afzal Haq Razi Wasti was widely known as *Mufakir-i-Ahrar* or 'the brain of Ahrar Party'. Haq undoubtedly created a stir amongst the Muslim *ulema* by writing a pamphlet *Islam mein Umara Ka Wajud Nahin* (The rich have no existence in Islam). Iftikhar Malik therefore contends that the Ahrar imbibed the 'impact of the October Revolution in Russia (1917) and the communist ideas that it had disseminated'. In 1931, addressing the annual meeting of the Ahrar, Sahibzada Faizul Hassan enunciated that socialism was not at all different from the Islamic concept of *musawat* (equality):

The unjust distribution of production is the real root-cause of all maladies and social injustice. To control it properly will be the actual cure of a big problem faced by human beings. Such control can be called *musawat*, too. Socialism is an ideology brought out after a thorough research, and to me, is better than capitalism, fascism and other contemporary ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

However, it would be a mistake to perceive the Ahrar as solely a left-wing party influenced by Communist ideology. Although many of its members came from poor backgrounds, they displayed religious zeal and conviction. Hamza Alvi regards the humble origins of many of its leaders as a source of strength. 'Its main assets were the devotion and zeal of its members and the eloquence of its leaders. Some of them could cast spell bound influence upon their audience. In spite of a lack of material resources, the Ahrars, within a short period, became one of the strongest political parties in the Punjab'.<sup>8</sup>

The Ahrar had the following aims: to work for complete Indian freedom through peaceful means; to provide political guidance to the Muslims; to strive for ensuring betterment of the Muslims in the fields of religion, education, economic and social plight; to promote indigenously manufactured products; to organize peasants and workers on the economic principles and to set up voluntary organizations by the name of *Jayush i Ahrarul Islam* throughout India. The working Committee of Ahrar approved its party's red-colour flag with a white crescent and a star in the middle. The Ahrar leaders decided on a red-coloured

uniform for the Ahrar volunteers who regularly drilled with a band and a drum and carried hatchets.<sup>9</sup> The decision to wear red was made in the memory of those *Khudai Khidmatgars* who died in an armed clash with the British in *Qisa Khawani Bazar*, Peshawar on 23 April 1930.<sup>10</sup> During the early days, Ahrar volunteers were widely known as *surkhposh* (people in red outfit) but subsequently that appellation became specific to the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. All of these symbols nonetheless were representative of the Ahrar leadership's aim to imbibe influences not only from Islam but also from socialism. Samina Awan provides a succinct account of the ideological mix underpinning the Ahrar's ideology. The movement not only aimed at eradicating the 'darkness of imperialism and feudalism' but also 'stood for equal distribution of wealth; eradication of untouchability; respect for every religion; and freedom to live according to the Sharia'.<sup>11</sup>

Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam-i-Hind expounded the concept of *Hakumat I Illayia*in, its annual meeting held at Sahranpur on 26 April 1943. *Hakumat I Illayia*<sup>12</sup> had its conceptual basis in unequivocal opposition to the British Raj, as the very first clause of the resolution put forward at Saharanpur explicitly suggests (a) 'we cannot support any political move or settlement for which one has to go to London obsequiously and cringingly'.<sup>13</sup> *Hakumat I Illayia* called for more powers to be devolved to the provinces and considered the schemes like *Akhand Bharat* (United India), and the establishment of Pakistan or Independent Punjab as lethal for communal harmony. The organization laid optimum stress on inter-communal peace and so the Ahrar would not oppose any effort aimed at forging an alliance between Congress and Muslim League but the Ahrar itself would not have any alliance with any political group. Most significant was the Ahrar's avowed stand against any machination professing division on the basis of geographical, ethnic or linguistic considerations as, to them, this was not a religious obligation of the Muslims.

The concept of *Hakumat i Illayia* suggests a complete disparity between the Ahrar's ideals and those of the Muslim League. Nevertheless, the two organizations briefly allied in 1936.<sup>14</sup> This alliance reflected Jinnah's marginalization in the Punjab politics on the eve of the Provincial elections, and the Ahrar's declining popularity in the wake of the Shaheed Gunj affair (as explained later in this article) rather than any coming together of ideologies. The alliance could not survive because of the inherent contradictions between the separatist stand of Muslim League and Ahrar's aversion for any division based on linguistic or ethnic differentiation. Therefore, the issue of fees for party tickets, which drove a wedge between the components of the alliance, took nobody by surprise. When the Muslim League Central Committee at once raised the fee for the party ticket from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500, the Ahrar registered its discordant note and the 'marriage of convenience' was over.<sup>15</sup>

Despite falling out in the Khilafat committee, in terms of religious ideology the Ahrar were clearly inspired by Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband (established in 1867 near Sahranpur). The Deobandi ulema professed a puritanical version of Islam that called for strict adherence to the *sharia* and attacked the intercessory activities of the Sufi shrines. This was most apparent in the Ahrar's opposition to the Ahmadis. *Khatam-i-Nabuwat* or finality of the prophet-hood<sup>16</sup> assumed extraordinary significance ever since the *Ahmedya*<sup>17</sup> sect emerged in the late 1890s. The Ahmadis refuted the very idea of the last prophet, considered as one of the five fundamentals of Islam. Ahrar leaders, through the eloquence of such speakers as Ataullah Shah Bokhari, whipped up so much of an enthusiasm for *Khatam-i-Nabuwat* that it became one cornerstone of its agitational politics. Indeed, the Ahrar became increasingly sectarian in their various stances on religion and perhaps their ideological legacy will be that of providing inspiration to the sectarian movements in contemporary Pakistan. However, in the context of the late colonial Punjab their activities were much less easy to confine solely within the religious domain.

### The Ahrar's relations with congress

If relations with the Muslim League were strained then things were not much better with the Congress. While describing the election of the All India Congress Committee at Karachi in 1931, Nehru says:

Some Muslim members of the A.I.C.C. objected to this election, in particular to one (Muslim) name in it. Perhaps they also felt slighted because no one of their group had been chosen. In an all-India committee of fifteen it was manifestly impossible to have all interests represented, and the real dispute, about which we knew nothing, was an entirely personal and local one in the Punjab. The result was that the protestant group gradually drifted away from the Congress in the Punjab, and joined others in an 'Ahrar Party' or 'Majlis-e-Ahrar'.<sup>18</sup>

That observation evoked an incisive response from Afzal Haq. Nehru's calling the Ahrar, the representative of the lower middle class, in Afzal Haq's opinion, amounted to an attitude of insolence perpetrated by a rich bourgeoisie socialist leader. He narrated the details of the 'election' more exhaustively and differently too. In fact, Dr Muhammad Alam was nominated to the All India Congress Committee at the recommendation of Abul Kalam Azad and Abdul Qadir Qasuri. That nomination caused a stir among the people gathered in the *pandal* (a place of public meeting) and some voices of dissent in particular were raised from amongst the members of the Working Committee. However, Nehru was not all that wrong in his observation. The nomination of Muhammad Alam at the AICC was one of the reasons that alienated the members of the erstwhile Punjab Khilafat Committee from the All India Congress Committee. The Ahrar had been constituted in 1929, two years earlier than the Karachi session of AICC, and its leadership had till this point enjoyed close ties with the Congress. When Gandhi gave a call for Civil Disobedience, the Ahrar leadership had participated with full enthusiasm and many, including Afzal Haq, were incarcerated. Subsequently, after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, Ahraris along with all other political prisoners were released. The final break with All India Congress eventually came about in 1931. A renowned Ahrari, Abu Yusuf Qasimi, while drawing on Afzal Haq's narrative 'Tarikh i Ahrar' sheds light on the break-up. The foremost reason for the 'parting of the ways' between Congress and the Ahrar was the issue of separate electorates and the misgivings they created on all sides. The Punjab Khilafat Committee, right from the very beginning, was in favour of separate electorates, a weak centre with a federal form of government ensuring complete autonomy to the provinces. When Nehru's Report proposed adult franchise in its recommendation for the Indian Constitution, the Punjab Khilafat Committee found its thrust quite consistent with the interests of Punjab Muslims. Therefore, it acceded to the joint electorate.<sup>19</sup> However, the Nehru Report soon ran into trouble and protests on the question of other minorities and could not muster enough overall support. Even Gandhi did not approve of it, particularly on the question of the representation of Sikhs. As J.S. Grewal explains:

The report prepared by the committee (Nehru Committee) recommended separate electorates for Muslims in provinces other than Punjab and Bengal. When the report was taken up in the All Parties meeting at Lucknow in August, the Sikh delegates raised the issue regarding their position in the Punjab. Some of them demanded that if separate electorates or weightage was to be maintained for minorities in other provinces then a similar provision should be made for the Sikhs. Most of the Sikh leaders dreaded the prospect of universal suffrage without reservation of seats for the Sikhs as a minority.<sup>20</sup>

Because of these reservations, the Sikh leadership (The Central Sikh League in Particular) rejected the Nehru Report and decided to boycott the Lahore Session of Congress. Gandhi,

Moti Lal Nehru and M. A. Ansari met Master Tara Singh and Kharak Singh and persuaded them to attend the Session with the promise of safeguards for minority communities. The Nehru Report was also suspiciously viewed by Punjabi Hindus. If adopted, the provision of separate electorates would definitely have a negative bearing on their political status in the Punjab, where Muslims were in a clear majority.

On the Muslim side, Afzal Haq and Jan Baz Mirza had altogether different views vis-à-vis those expressed by the Sikh and Hindus. In the end, it was clear that though Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs had endorsed the Nehru Report, both communities held serious reservations about the 'Joint Electorate' as proposed by the Nehru Committee. It is likely that the commotion engendered by the Nehru Report among the minority communities, particularly the Sikhs, convinced the Congress high command to dump the Nehru Report at its All India session held in Lahore on 28 December 1929.<sup>21</sup> While discarding the Nehru Report, the Congress leadership did not even bother to consult those individuals who had lent unequivocal support to it, that too at the behest of Congress itself.

Such treatment gave rise to grief and dismay in the ranks of the Punjab Khilafat Committee, who ultimately decided to chart their own course of action. When the participants of All India Congress Committee were disposing off the copies of the Nehru Report in one corner of the same *pandal*, the leaders of the defunct Punjab Khilafat Committee were holding a meeting to form a new party, *Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam*, on 29 December 1929 in Lahore.<sup>22</sup>

Another factor leading to the alienation of these people from Congress was the election of the Amritsar Congress Committee. Dr Saif-ud Din Kitchlew and Ghazi Abdul Rehman were the two contestants and Ata-ullah Shah Bokhari was the polling officer. Those elections were held based on joint electorates. Dr. Kitchlew won the elections, much to the chagrin of Afzal Haq and Ata Ullah Shah Bokhari. Afzal Haq narrates the situation, prevailing on the eve of that election and also the estimate of the two candidates:

Dr. Saifud Din was undoubtedly a selfless but articulate person. He had established his writ among Hindus and Sikhs more than Muslims. Therefore, he was not quite well known in the circle of Muslims. Since the zeal about freedom was very pronounced in him, that prevented him from becoming unpopular among the Muslims also. Ghazi Abdul Rehman on the other hand enjoyed an enviable reputation that he earned through serving the interests of the local Muslims. He was an eloquent speaker and well versed in the art of luring people to his side. Kitchlow won the contest because Hindu capitalists made substantial investment for Kitchlow, which proved to be a decisive factor in those elections. Ghazi did not have such clout, so he lost. After seeing the effect of the joint electorate in practice, Ata Ullah Shah prepared a resolution in favour of separate electorate. Ghazi also supported the move.<sup>23</sup>

That resolution worked as a catalyst in the formation of *Majlis-i-Ahrar* as a separate political organization. Therefore, in July 1931, the Ahrar Conference was convened in the Habibia Hall of Islamia College Lahore. It was presided over by Maulana Habibur Rehman Ludhianvi and Maulana Daud Ghaznavi was its secretary. Addressing the audience, Maulana Habibur Rehman declared: 'I want to tell all the nations of Hindustan in clear words that the Ahrars do not want to do any injustice to any other nation. However they are not prepared to live as a scheduled caste either. The Muslims are equally entitled to the share in the Indian affairs'.<sup>24</sup> The assertion of Maulana Habibur Rehman that Muslims must not be deemed 'scheduled caste' provides a context to Afzal Haq's reference recurrently made in both of his representative works, namely *Tarikh I Ahrar* and *Meira Afsana* to the *chootchaat* (untouchability) practiced by the Congress Hindus against Muslims.<sup>25</sup> That factor also provided sufficient basis for the Ahrar leaders to chart their own course.



The Conference passed a unanimous resolution in favour of separate electorates for Indian Muslims.

The Ahrar Conference at Lahore drew a lot of criticism from the pro-Congress section of the press. Nevertheless, the umbilical cord providing a link between Congress and Ahrar remained intact, largely because of its leadership's reverence for Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhi.

### The Ahrar movement in the Punjab

Although the Ahrar aspired to all-India support, its greatest influence was in the Punjab. It played an important role in the Muslim politics of the province during the 1930s. This is not always acknowledged by Pakistani scholars because of its chequered relationship with the Muslim League. Immediately after the Lahore Conference, where it assumed the formal status of a political party, Majlis-i-Ahrar plunged into political work. Until the setback of the Shaheed Gunj affair in 1935 (explained later in this article), it posed the only major challenge to the Unionists in urban Muslim politics.<sup>26</sup> The Unionist Party was an agriculturalist party.<sup>27</sup> All the major landlords and tribal *Sardars* (chieftains) had gathered under its banner. The Ahrar had to contend not only with fortified landed interests but also with Mian Fazl-i-Husain's (a Unionist leader) tenacity in the realm of politics. Interestingly, this leading exponent of Muslim Punjabi interests initially revered Chaudhri Afzal Haq because of the rectitude and forthrightness, which he had demonstrated in the Punjab Legislative Council. Afzal Haq too held Fazl-i-Hussain in high esteem. In *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, Haq rates him as the best political figure among the Muslims. Even M A Jinnah was not considered a match for Hussain's sagacity and ingenuity in the political arena.<sup>28</sup> This mutual respect and reverence turned into avowed hostility when Fazl-i-Hussain recommended Sir Zafarullah Khan, an *Ahmedi* leader from the Punjab, for a vacant slot in the Viceroy's Executive Council. The Ahrar party's uncompromising stand on the issue of *Khatam i Nabuwat* meant that any association with the *Ahmediya* sect was considered out of bounds. Following the selection of the Ahmedi leader, Hussain, became a special target for Ahrar wrath. Deploying the tactics of religion did not however disturb the Unionists' rural powerbase.<sup>29</sup> Local power relations connecting shrines and their incumbents, the *Sajjada Nashins*, to a form of Sufi Islam infused an added vigour through thousands of their devotees to the already impregnable Unionist Party. They successfully countered the religious appeal of the Ahrar, who had among their leaders, religious scholars from all the sects of the Islamic faith.<sup>30</sup>

It was the other dimension of the Ahrar that had more success in the rural areas, that of socialism. Majlis-i-Ahrar's radical economic programme carried more impact because of agricultural depression in the Punjab. Nevertheless, similar to the Kisan Sabhas, the Ahrar found that the Unionists were still able to deflect rising discontent by blaming the harsh conditions on the depredations of the *bania* (moneylending) class. Even so, the Ahrar success in a by-election to the Central Assembly in 1934 revealed that the Punjab's depressed conditions had opened up at least some chinks in the Unionists' armour. Sir Fazl-i-Hussain selected Khan Bahadur Rahim Baksh as the Unionist candidate for a constituency comprising four districts, namely Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozepur and Gurdaspur. Ahrar fielded Khalid Latif Gabba (he was the son of Lala Harkishen Lal, a famous Punjabi entrepreneur; he embraced Islam just to renounce it afterwards) as their candidate. As the time for the election drew near, the propaganda for an Ahrar candidate gathered momentum, rightly causing panic to the Unionists as the Ahrar won the seat. This was at a time when the party was at the peak of its popularity, the basis of which came from their activities in Kapurthala and Kashmir.

### The Kashmir agitation

The Ahrar's agitation for the rights of the Muslims of Kashmir who were suffering under the oppressive rule of Maharajah Hari Singh is not as fully acknowledged in contemporary Pakistani historiography as they deserve to be. Indeed, their contribution is surprisingly omitted in the otherwise excellent studies by Victoria Schofield and Alastair Lamb into the Kashmir issue.<sup>31</sup> The 1931 agitation was important also because it raised the Ahrar party's popularity in urban Punjab to an unprecedented degree.<sup>32</sup> This was due to the presence of large Kashmiri Muslim communities in such cities as Amritsar, Lahore and Sialkot. In combination with the Ahrar's efforts in Kapurthala, a Muslim majority Punjabi state with a Hindu leader (as explained later in this article), this agitation was to provide electoral dividends in the assembly elections of 1934. In some senses the mode of mobilization in Kashmir was very similar to the model subsequently followed in Kapurthala: a series of incidents that took a communal tinge were exploited for political mileage by the Ahrar.

The Kashmir case first. Dogra rule in Kashmir (1847–1948) was notorious for its 'autocratically wayward methods of administration' and its religious intolerance. Killing a cow was a cognizable offence punishable with 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. A special tax was levied on the slaughter of goats and sheep, even on *Eid*. A Hindu in case of embracing Islam had to forfeit all his inherited property. The State had usurped many Muslim places of worship and pilgrimage, which the Glancy Commission subsequently restored to the Muslims in 1931. Such discrimination reflected quite conspicuously on the distribution of economic resources, especially those at the behest of the state. Suddans of Poonch and the Sandans from Mirpur were the only people among the Muslims recruited into the army but in the subaltern positions. They were culturally different from the Kashmiris of the valley and therefore the Maharaja believed he could use them to quell any uprising stirred by the valley people.<sup>33</sup>

Punjabi Muslim newspapers in the 1920s and the early 1930s consistently highlighted the miserable plight of the Kashmiri Muslims. The daily *Inqalab* and its editor Abdul Majid Salik were particularly critical on the discriminatory policies of Maharaja Hari Singh towards the Muslims. Its circulation in the state of Kashmir was accordingly disallowed.<sup>34</sup> A series of incidents were then highlighted by the Ahrar indicating discrimination against the Muslim population.<sup>35</sup> The arrest of Abdul Qadeer, from Amroha District Muradabad who was in Srinagar as a guide to a few English travellers, provided the catalyst for violence, when he urged Muslims to launch an active struggle against the Maharaja's rule. The State authorities promptly arrested him. When his trial began in the Sessions Court of Srinagar on 6 July 1931, Muslims assembled there in such a huge number that proceedings were shifted to the securer environment of Srinagar Central Jail. When the trial commenced at the newer venue, people thronged again and the police ruthlessly baton-charged them. The violence escalated and the police opened firing, thus killing 22 demonstrators. Therefore, 13 July 1931 came to be known as 'Martyrs Day'.<sup>36</sup>

The killings immediately triggered clashes between Muslim demonstrators and the state police throughout Jammu and Kashmir. The violence took a communal turn when a procession of demonstrators forced a Punjabi Hindu shopkeeper to close his shop in protest. When he refused the protestors ransacked his and other Hindu-owned shops. 'In terms of casualties and damage to property', concludes Ian Copland, 'it was possibly the most serious communal outbreak in India between the Moplah rebellion of 1921 and the Calcutta riots of 1946'.<sup>37</sup> Consequently the law enforcement agencies of the state arrested more than 300 Muslims, including Chaudhri Ghulam Abbass and Shiekh Abdullah. Sporadic processions, strikes and riots kept the tension soaring in Kashmir.

During the last week of July, leading Muslims assembled at Nawab Sir Zulfiqar Ali's residence at Simla and formed the All India Kashmir Committee.<sup>38</sup> The head of the Ahmadiya community, Mirza Bashir Ahmed, was the Kashmir Committee's President and Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Sir Zulfiqar Ali, Khawja Hassan Nizami, Syed Mohsin Shah, Khan Bahadur Sheikh Rahim Baksh, Maulana Ismael Ghaznavi, Abdul Rahim Dard (an Ahmadi and secretary of the committee), Maulana Nurul Haq (owner of the English daily '*Out Look*') and Syed Habib Shah (owner of the daily '*Siasat*') were its members. The Committee pledged to redress the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims through peaceful and constitutional means. Therefore, it called for the appointment of an impartial Commission of Enquiry to determine the causes leading to the crisis. It also proposed to observe 14 August as a special Kashmir Day in the memory of the martyrs of 13 July 1931.<sup>39</sup> Bashir ud Din Mehmud also had some important local contacts in Srinagar – notably Jamal-ud-Din, the Director of Public Instruction, and Sheikh Abdullah, the emerging Kashmiri leader.<sup>40</sup> More so Qadian was made headquarters of 'the freedom movement' for Kashmiri Muslims. The prominence of the Ahmadiyas was too much for the Ahrars, who were both ideologically opposed to the Ahmadis but also aware of the political mileage that the new group could take from them. Afzal Haq, Ata ullah Shah Bokhari and Mazhar Ali Azhar excoriated the Ahmadis and the ruler of Kashmir alike. They evoked considerable response from the masses in support of their stand.<sup>41</sup>

The Ahrar leadership became proactive and requested the Government of the Kashmir for an inquiry committee to be permitted into the valley. After getting no response, it forced its entry into the Kashmir. On their way Ata Ullah Shah Bokhari, Afzal Haq and Mazhar Ali Azhar addressed huge rallies at Gujranwala and Sialkot, which caused a lot of concern for the state government. Despite this, however, on the advice of Prime Minister Hari Kishan Kaul,<sup>42</sup> they received free passage, whereupon they put forward their demand for the establishment of a responsible government in the state. They also unsuccessfully attempted to woo Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference.

Failing on all these fronts, they organized *Jathas* (bands of Ahrar volunteers) with the aim to enter Kashmir from Sialkot on 6 October 1931 onwards. The *Jathas* were detained by the *Darbari* police (those loyal to the Maharaja). Nevertheless 'the stream of volunteers kept flowing – 2376 had crossed the border by the beginning of November'.<sup>43</sup> Soon afterwards, batches of 21 Ahrar volunteers sneaked into Kashmir. From the Punjab alone, according to one estimate, 45,000 volunteers entered and courted arrest. Such a massive invasion by Ahrar volunteers paralysed the state machinery.

David Gilmartin notes that the agitation expanded so rapidly that 'the sheer number of those arrested embarrassed the jail department and forced the opening of special camp jails'.<sup>44</sup> The Maharaja found it expedient to replace Hari Kishan Kaul with a new Prime Minister, Colonel E.J.D. Colvin, who was approved by the Indian Political Department and remained in office until 1936.<sup>45</sup> Hari Singh, in order to lower the political temperature, also constituted an Enquiry Commission into the 13 July episode headed by a senior officer in the Political Department of India, Sir Bertrand Glancy. Prem Nath Bazaz and Ghulam Abbass were amongst the co-members of the Commission. This step did not go far enough to appease the Ahrar, but owed much to their agitation.

The agitation in Kashmir proved to be a stepping-stone in the Ahrar's political ascent in Punjab. The Kashmir movement was closely mirrored in the subsequent Ahrar action in Kapurthala and this level of influence in local politics in these two states was rewarded with a foothold in legislative politics. By 11 February 1934, the Ahrar had three representatives in the Punjab Legislative Council, namely Chaudhri Afzal Haq from Hoshiarpur, Chaudhri Abdul Rehman from Jullundur and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar from Lahore.<sup>46</sup> Although

this was only a small beginning and revealed the limit of their influence to the urban middle class, the Ahrar were emerging as a serious rival to the Muslim League in appealing to this section of the Punjabi Muslim society.

### The Kapurthala agitation

Along with Kashmir, the Ahrar were involved in a powerful agitation in the Sikh princely state of Kapurthala.<sup>47</sup> It was situated west of the River Beas and although it had a Sikh ruler, Maharaja Jagjeet, 57% of the population was Muslim. The vast majority of the Muslims were poor peasants. Sixty per cent of the state income accrued through the taxes they paid, but the state expended a meagre sum of Rs. 8440 on poor Muslims as stipends and charity whereas Rs. 68,338 was allocated for the welfare of non-Muslims.<sup>48</sup> The agitation in Kashmir stirred the Muslim Rajputs who resided in the Begowal area of Kapurthala who suffered exploitation at the hands of Hindu moneylenders.<sup>49</sup> Since the Land Alienation Act (1900) was not in place in the princely states of the Punjab, moneylenders operated freely at the expense of peasants. Following a Muslim rally in Begowal, a boycott of Hindu shopkeepers was enacted. Hindu moneylenders and shopkeepers vociferously condemned this action and announced a 2-day-long strike. Consequently, Muslims seized the opportunity by setting up their own shops in Begowal and Bholeth areas. This development exasperated the Hindu shopkeepers who were moneylenders as well as retailers. They refused to advance further loans to Muslim peasants and pressed them for the immediate return of the money.

One of the first individuals to respond to the emerging crisis in Begowal was Chaudhri Abdul Aziz, Vice President of the Majlis-i-Ahrar, who voiced his concern over the crisis that the Muslim peasantry had been plunged into; he formed an umbrella Zamindara League organization early in 1931. It gained momentum when it was joined by Ahrar volunteers, who, following their release by the Kashmir Government in February–March 1932, crossed over to Kapurthala. As in Kashmir, they fell foul of the State authorities. Abdul Aziz of Begowal was arrested and sentenced to 5 years of rigorous imprisonment for inciting trouble and disrupting peace. Despite these harsh measures, the Ahrar continued lending unequivocal support to the peasants.

In June 1932, the Muslims of Bholeth submitted a list of demands calling for the implementation of all those reforms that had already been carried out in other parts of India. Among their demands was the call for the introduction of the Punjab Land Alienation Act, the reduction in land revenue and the security of the non-transferable land of labourers and artisans against any act of forfeiting or confiscation.<sup>50</sup> The Maharaja, after sensing the gravity of the situation, constituted a committee headed by the magistrate of that particular area. It made little progress, with the result that communal tensions intensified. The Prime Minister of Kapurthala State, Sir Abdul Hameed, next invited the representatives of both the peasants and the commercial castes for parleys. The agriculturists mistrusted Hameed, who they thought was in league with the Hindu moneyed classes. As the Secretary General of Ahrar, Dasoha, District Hoshiarpur stated in the *Daily Zamindar*:

The peasantry and labourers of this Tehsil (Bholeth) are passing through a very critical phase. The Northern part of the Tehsil which is largely inhabited by the Muslims has fallen prey to the atrocities of the Police and Civil officers, who have made the lives of these poor fellows so miserable, that many of them are ready to migrate from the area.<sup>51</sup>

Disquiet caused by the upsurge among the ranks of Begowal Muslim peasantry remained unabated in the southern belt of Kapurthala State when another event that heightened

communal tension was unfolding, adding to the gravity of an already inflammatory situation.

When in the first week of January 1934, the Land Alienation law was enforced in Kapurthala mostly because of the pressure exerted by the Zamindara Movement, moneylenders and shopkeepers in response began their own civil disobedience.<sup>52</sup> They also put forward a demand for the establishment of an Executive Council to take care of the state's administration. Maharaja Jagjeet acquiesced to the demand and established a six-member Council, two of whose representatives were to be Muslims. This relative marginalization of Muslim opinion in a Muslim-majority state caused disquiet amongst the local population, although it inevitably pleased the *baniyas* (moneylenders). The Ahrar was now provided with a new Muslim cause in the state.

At an Ahrar Conference held on 3–4 April 1934, the representatives called for the establishment of a responsible Assembly, in addition to job opportunities for the Muslims in proportion to their population. The State's Prime Minister responded positively,<sup>53</sup> which duly agitated the non-Muslims. As Abdullah Malik, a known sympathizer to the cause of Ahrar explained 'in a bid to foil any such attempt to ameliorate the lot of the peasants, subjected to the exploitative modes of the affluent class (comprising of Hindu Moneylenders and Sikh officials, who were also engaged in the practice of lending money as a side business) it fanned the flame of communalism'.<sup>54</sup>

On 22 April 1934, Kapurthala State police baton-charged the Muharram procession at Sultanpur Lodhi. However, the real tragedy was yet to occur. In the month of *Muharram* (the first month in the Islamic calendar) in Sultanpur District, the *Tazia* procession (the procession that is taken out on the 10th day of Muharram in commemoration of Hussain's martyrdom) had a prescribed route through a particular street where a huge oak tree was obstructing its smooth passage. Apart from Hindus, Sikhs also revered that very tree, which according to them Bibi Nanaki (sister of Guru Nanak) planted many centuries ago. It was a situation ripe for mischief. Mindful of this, Master Tara Singh and Prof. Jodha Singh, the honourable members of the Gurudwara Parbandah Committee, Amritsar, published a joint statement in the daily *Tribune* on 30 April. In it, the two leaders categorically denied the sacrosanct status of the tree and also questioned its age. Unfortunately, that statement came when all the damage had already been done.<sup>55</sup> The Muslim processionists were adamant in passing through the contentious route with their *Tazia*, Hindus and Sikhs vowed to resist any attempt to cut the overhanging branches of the oak tree. The state authorities, rather than encouraging negotiations to resolve the dispute, sought to limit its impact by pre-emptive arrests of some 450 people in the days before the procession. They did not however manage to prevent the violence on the 10th day of Muharram in which 20 Muslims were shot dead and 33 were injured.<sup>56</sup>

On 2 May, the Working Committee of Majlis-i-Ahrar met at Lahore and expressed its grief over the tragedy of Sultanpur. Ironically, no one but Ahrar took a serious note of the incident with the exception of the daily *Inqalab*. The Ahrar constituted a deputation comprising Abdul Ghaffar Ghaznavi and Abdul Gaffar Akhtar on 27 April 1934. It went to Phagwara, Begowal and Sultanpur to investigate the whole affair. It laid the blame squarely on the Hindus and the Sikhs and the negligence of the state authorities. The Central Majlis-i-Ahrar announced that it would commemorate 11 May as the Sultanpur day.<sup>57</sup> The State Government published its own report on 7 June 1934. It held that the Inspector General Police, Major Kothewala, was guilty for the massacre and he was immediately dismissed. Nevertheless, this hardly brought any gratification to the Ahrar. Its leadership demanded far sterner action and claimed that the State authorities had enacted a travesty of justice.<sup>58</sup> The Kapurthala Movement was a very important link in the chain of events that enhanced the credibility of the Ahrar. Just as in Kashmir, it established its credentials as an organization

that reposed firm belief in the politics of activism and agitation combining socialist ideals in a Muslim framework. The Ahrar were however stopped in their tracks in the July 1935 Shahid Gunj affair in Lahore.

### The Shahid Gunj affair

Ahrar volunteers never flinched from courting arrest, taking out processions in protest or resorting to civil disobedience. However, the Ahrar was involved in not only agitational activities but also social service. In this respect, it displayed similarities with the Khaksar movement, which was also active in the Punjab at this time. The social service dimension of the Ahrar's activities was especially evident at the time of the 1935 Quetta earthquake. After the calamity had hit Quetta, 'Ahrars performed outstanding service in connection with the relief work . . . Among the camps set up by non-government agencies the most organized and helpful was that of the Ahrars'.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, their primary mode of mobilizing support was through public agitation and it was this that was to ultimately result in their decline, most notably around the issue of the Shahid Gunj mosque.

The issue of Shahid Gunj revolved around a Mosque (Abdullah Khan Ki Masjid), located in the *Landa* bazaar at some distance from Lahore Railway Station. Khan-i-Saman of Dara Shikoh (the kitchen in-charge of the Crown Prince of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan), whose name was Abdullah Khan, built the mosque in the seventeenth century. Before the onset of the Sikh rule, the mosque was in use. When the Sikhs rebelled against the Mughals, the Governor of the Punjab Nawab Moin-ul-Mulk was entrusted with the task of quelling the resistance. During those days, adjacent to the Mosque was a *kotwali* (a police station), where criminals or dissidents were executed. One of those fighting against the Mughal state was Taru Singh who was bough to this *kotwali*, tortured and executed. The Sikhs subsequently built a *samadh* (a monument for the dead) on the spot where Taru Singh had breathed his last and named it as Shahid Gunj, which was subsequently converted into a Gurudwara. Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh's assumption of power in the Punjab in 1799, three *Bhangi* Sardars (Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh) established their writ over Lahore (1765–1799). At this time, the Sikhs occupied the mosque and the *granthi* (priest) of the Gurudwara started using it as his residence and took rent for the shops attached to the building. The arrangement remained the same even after the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849.

The promulgation of the Gurudwara Act in 1925 caused a considerable change in the Shahid Gunj scenario. That Act nullified the control of the *Mahants* (priests) over the Gurudwaras and the trust properties worth *crores* of rupees. The *Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee* (SGPC) assumed control over the Gurudwaras as laid down in the Act. Soon after the Act was invoked, the Sikh occupants of the mosque and the property attached to it approached the tribunal set up under the Act and 'prayed for exemption from this regulation under the plea that the Mosque building and the attached shops were their personal property'. In these circumstances, the secretary *Anjuman-i-Islamia* (Islamic Association) of Punjab, Syed Mohsin Shah, also filed a petition claiming the Anjuman's right over the mosque and the property attached to it. However, the tribunal dismissed the claims of both parties and declared the mosque and the building as the property of the Gurudwara. The Sikh occupants challenged the tribunal's verdict in the High Court, but *Anjuman-i-Islamia* did not file any appeal. A division bench of the High Court affirmed the decision of the tribunal in December 1934 and the building was transferred to the Lahore branch of SGPC in March 1935.<sup>60</sup>

After securing the possession of the building, SGPC embarked on an extensive renovation of the compound. Initially the reaction of Muslim leaders was quite moderate. They constituted a committee, the Anjuman-i Tahaffuz-i Masjid Shahid Gunj (committee for the protection of the Shahid Gunj mosque).<sup>61</sup> As the work progressed, Muslims started thronging to the place of work; some of them came there to protest and some just to watch. Mala Singh, one of the masons, fell to his death. Muslim newspapers claimed that his death was a punishment for perpetrating a sinful act of demolition of a mosque. Thereafter, the site drew larger crowds of Muslims and the tension with the Sikhs palpably increased. The Deputy Commissioner forbade the Sikhs to touch the mosque. He also persuaded the Muslims to disperse and posted a police guard around the compound. Nevertheless, the tension continued to mount despite the Deputy Commissioner's assurance that the structure of the mosque would not be 'torn down until a final settlement was made'.<sup>62</sup> Governor Emerson also after meeting the Muslim notables agreed to consider the proposals put forward by them. However, to the chagrin of the Muslims, the mosque was razed to the ground by the morning of 9 July. Muslims felt cheated by the Governor and tempers rose to crescendo proportions. Notable by their absence from this mobilization were the Ahrar.

On 14 July a public meeting at Mochi Gate was held, Zafar Ali Khan being the main speaker. He chastised the Ahrar's opportunism and said 'despite great efforts to bring the Ahrar leaders to the assemblage they had refused to come'. Thereafter the bubble of Ahrar's popularity was said to have burst. Immediately after the meeting, Zafar Ali Khan formed a group, the Majlis Ittehad-i Millat (association for unity among the Muslims) and the enrolment of the *Niliposh Razakars* (blue shirt volunteers) began with the intention of embarking upon a civil disobedience movement.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, four persons were expelled from Lahore: Zafar Ali Khan, Syed Habib, Malik Lal Khan and Mian Ferozuddin. On 15 July public meetings were banned by the British and press censorship was stiffened.

The Ahrar leaders perceived the Masjid Shahid Gunj issue as a conspiracy against them. They also saw Zafar Ali Khan as a stooge of the Unionists who had been their arch enemies.<sup>64</sup> The Shahid Gunj incident remained unresolved, despite the popular protests. Feroze Khan Noon, in his correspondence to Fazl-i-Hussain, divulged that some Ahrar leaders, wanting to forge an electoral alliance with the Sikhs in the forthcoming elections, kept quiet about the Shahid Gunj issue.<sup>65</sup> Abdullah Malik contends that the Ahrar stayed away from that contentious issue because joining the fray could have put its leadership in jail, which would have amounted to handing over the electoral victory to the Unionist party in a silver platter.<sup>66</sup> Malik also asserts the collusion of Zafar Ali Khan with Governor Emerson against Ahrar because of its soaring popularity.<sup>67</sup> Zafar Ali Khan and his newspaper *Zamindar* along with Sayyid Habib's the Daily *Siyasat* launched a condemnatory campaign against the Ahrar even though the *Zamindar* had previously been such a staunch supporter. Consequently, the Ahrar movement was permanently undermined in its Punjab heartland.

### Sectarianism and decline

The Ahrar's major impact came in those political moments where it was able to mobilize the peasantry and the exploited through a religious idiom against the existing powers of the state. However, there was always an undercurrent of sectarianism in their politics, particularly when it came to the Ahmediyya. As Indian politics became increasingly communalized, the Ahrar seemed to also become increasingly sectarian. Although its mobilization in Kapurthala ignored the Shia-Sunni divide (as it was defending a Muharram

march), and its last large-scale mobilization ostensibly carried on this practice by preaching Muslim unity, it was always nevertheless within an overarching framework of Sunni hegemony. Ultimately, this strategy backfired.

The Ahrar were involved in a movement called *Madeh-i-Sahaba*, which translates as eulogizing the companions of the Prophet in United Provinces (UP).<sup>68</sup> Its main target was the Shia practice of revering Ali to a higher status than the other Caliphs (companions). One of the Ahrar spokesperson Atta Ullah Shah Bukhari, while addressing a public gathering in Lucknow (a city with a Shia majority among the Muslims), referred to the second Caliph Umer with a suffix *RaziAllaha* (may Allah be pleased with him). Someone from the gathering told him: ‘alluding to the first three caliphs with so much of deference is legally proscribed here in Lucknow’.<sup>69</sup> But Bukhari kept on quoting the companions of the Prophet reverentially. He also said, ‘to respect some personality is not crime though abusing him is definitely a crime’. His speech ended peacefully and Bukhari went back to Lahore and broached the issue in the meeting of the Ahrar working committee. The working committee deputed Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar to investigate the issue. The report he presented is summarized below:

Before 1905 Shias and Sunnis lived like brothers and participated in the Tazia procession, in which Hindus also took part without any sectarian misgivings. As Shias were in majority so most of the municipal committee members adhered to *Asna Ashari* faith. It was in 1905 that a split occurred between them and one faction called in a Shia *Maulvi* (religious Scholar) by the name of Maqbul Ahmed from Rampur. He exacerbated the sectarian difference. Consequently, Shia-Sunni riots took place for the first time in the entire history of Lucknow. Therefore, Hindus stopped joining Muslims in the *Tazia* procession. And Sunnis set up their own *Karbala* outside the city and started taking out their own procession. To investigate Shia-Sunni riots the government set up a commission under a British officer Mr. Piggot and thereby the sectarian divide got perpetuated.<sup>70</sup>

In these circumstances, the Ahrar decided to launch a movement against the UP government. From the different cities of UP and Punjab, Ahrar volunteers started pouring in to Lucknow. After disembarking from the trains, they used to enter the city by reciting these verses:

Hain Kirnain Eik hi Mushal ki  
Abu Bakar, Umer, Usman Ali  
Hum Martaba Hain Yaraan-e-Nabi  
Kuch Farq Nahin in Charoon Main<sup>71</sup>  
(Rays emanating from the same lamp  
Abu Bakr, Umer, Usman and Ali  
Companions of prophet have equal status  
There is no difference in these four.)

While reciting these verses they courted arrest in large numbers. Concurrently, the fifth Shia political conference was held in Lucknow in December 1937, which was presided over by Prince Ikram Hussain, son of the last Nawab of Awadh. A Resolution was passed that added further fuel to the fire in which it was said: ‘we warn the Government and



Sunnis to respect the rights and sentiments of Shias. Our status and rights are practically ignored and *Madha-i-Sahaba* movement is anti-Shia which aims at extirpating Shia political influence'.<sup>72</sup>

More than 1000 people were imprisoned during the agitation. Eventually the governor of UP intervened and with the help of Sunni notables of Lucknow the Majlis-e-Ahrar was pleaded to stop that movement, which it did, although unrest kept resurfacing from time to time throughout the 1940s. In the long term, the movement intensified the sectarian division within the Muslims and its impact is explicitly visible in the present-day state of Pakistan. Indeed, sectarian militants such as Haq Nawaz Jhangvi (1952–1990), the founder-leader of *Sipah-e-Sahaba* (Army of the Companions of the Prophet) Pakistan, have acknowledged the legacy of Atta Ullah Shah Bukhari and his colleagues in *Majlis-e-Ahrar*. By organizing solely on a religious issue and without any base in the peasantry, the legacy of the Ahrar in this context is the exacerbation of religious conflict rather than decline in exploitation.

The Ahrar decline, according to Shorish Kashmiri, began as early as in 1931 with the desertions of its founding members like Zafar Ali Khan and Ghazi Abdul Rehman. It was however the Shahid Gunj affair that began the rot and this was completed by the changes in all-India politics in the 1940s. The Pakistan demand in the Punjab, as elsewhere in India, changed the terms of political discourse.<sup>73</sup> The Ahrar opposed the Pakistan demand but also became estranged from Congress and *Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind* (JUH).<sup>74</sup> It tried hard to bounce back to the political mainstream by passing the *Hakumat-i-Ilahiyya* resolution, but no gains accrued.<sup>75</sup> That resolution meant promulgation of the Islamic System as ordained by Allah and his Prophet. *Hakumat-i-Ilahiyya* deprecated any geographical or ethnic solution to the communal problem that confronted India at the time.<sup>76</sup> It also widened the gulf between Congress and the Ahrar because the latter chose to focus on this aspect instead of lending support to the Quit India Movement in 1942.

Consequently Congress turned its back on the Ahrar and so did its political ally JUH, thus marginalizing the movement and leaving its leadership little option but to quit politics. Yet, its brief political career – its capacity to mobilize the peasantry and its mixed ideological appeal on economic and religious registers – provide an important case study in the politics of late colonial Punjab.

## Notes

1. For details on the correct usage of the word 'Ahrar', see Steingass, *Arabic–English Dictionary*, 269.
2. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi calls 'Ahrars' a minor and insignificant non-League group like the Momins, the Shia Conference and the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind in one of his important books. For full reference, see Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 241. Similarly Ikram in *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* does not mention Ahrar at all. For full reference see Ikram, *Modern Muslim India 1858–1951*, 202–238.
3. Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*.
4. See for details Minault, *The Khilafat Movement* and Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics*.
5. Kashmiri, *Bou-e-Gul, Nala-e-Dil, Dood-e-Charach-e-Mahfil*, 310.
6. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 70.
7. *Ibid.*, 9; also see Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan*, 55.
8. An interview with Hamza Alvi at Lahore in 2004.
9. Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. IV, 150, quoted in Javed Haider Syed, "Pakistan Resolution and Majlis-e-Ahrar," 402.
10. For details, see Taqi-ud-Din, *Pakistan ki Siyasi Jamatain*, 105.
11. Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 15.

12. See Hassan, *Legacy of Divided Nation*, 66; also see Kashmiri, *Bou-e-Gul, Nala-e-Dil*, 305–21; and Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan*, 27.
13. For a brief reference, see Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 61.
14. Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan*, 27.
15. Conversely, Ashique Hussain Batalvi states in his celebrated book *Iqbal Key Akhree Do Saal* that Ahrar had an impression that the Nawabs of various Muslim princely states and Muslim traders and Seths (businessmen) from Bombay had contributed generously in the League fund, specifically for the elections. Its leadership, therefore, was expectantly looking towards the League to bear the election expenses of the Ahrari candidates. Chaudhri Afzal Haq and Maulana Habibur Rehman were hoping that the exorbitant sum to the tune of at least Rs. 100,000 would be set aside for the election expenses exclusively for Ahrar candidates. When the reality dawned on them (that the League had no lavish funds), they decided to part ways and resigned from the Muslim League Parliamentary Board. For details, see Tajud Din Ludhyanvi, *Majlis-e-Ahraraur Tariekhi Tahrief ki Yalghar*, 5–13; and Batalvi, *Iqbal key Akhri Doo Saal*, 321.
16. According to the concept of *Khatami Nabuwwat*, ‘Prophethood (nabuwwat) ceased with the death of the Holy Prophet and that no new prophet (nabi) shall appear hereafter is said to be deducible from the following verses of the Quran: Sura XXXIII, verse 40, Sura III, verse 81, Sura V, verse 4’. See for reference, *Report of the Court of Inquiry*, 185.
17. For detail, see Ali, *The Ahmadiyyah Movement*. Also see Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*.
18. Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography*, 269.
19. *Ibid.*, 159–60.
20. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 168.
21. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 86.
22. Taqi-ud-Din, *Pakistan ki Siyasi Jamatain*, 176.
23. Qasmi, *Mufaker-e-Ahrar*, 160–61.
24. Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan*, 55.
25. Haq, *Mera Afsana*. Also see Qasmi, *Mufaker-e-Ahrar*, 160–61.
26. Azhar, *Masala-e-Shaheed Gunj*, 38.
27. See for details on Unionist Party, Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*.
28. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 209.
29. For details, see Husain, *Fazal-i-Husain: A Political Biography*, 226–66. Also see Batalvi, *Iqbal key Akhari Do Saal*, 320.
30. The Ahrar leader included representatives of other sects, like Dawud Ghaznawi from the Ahle-Hadith and Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, who were of *Shii* descent, a cooperation that was based less on common doctrinal ground than on shared allegiance to the congress. For details, see Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, 78.
31. For the details of Glancy Commission, see Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. I, 314–5; and Haq, *Tareekh-i-Ahrar*, 125–6.
32. For details, see Ludhyanvi, *Ahrar Aur Tehrik-e-Kashmir 1932*.
33. Schofield, *Kashmir in the Crossfire*, 100.
34. Salik, *SarGazasht*, 264.
35. For the general details, see Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. I, 236–7.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir”, 231.
38. Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. I, 181.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir, 1931–34,” 231.
41. Ahmed, *From Martial Law to Martial Law*, 129.
42. Raja Hari Kishen Kaul was the Prime Minister of Kashmir. Previously he was civil servant from Punjab and had replaced G.E.C. Wakefield as Prime Minister. The Government of India characterized him as ‘a noted intriguer’ and urged his replacement by another British officer. In February 1932, Lieutenant Colonel E.J.D. Colvin was appointed prime Minister by Maharaja of Kashmir. See Huttenback, *Kashmir and the British Raj*, 140–2.
43. Copland, “Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir, 1931–34,” 234.
44. Gilmarten, *Empire and Islam*, 47.
45. For details, see Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. I, 255–79.
46. *Ibid.*, 411–2.

47. See for details, Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. I, 324–9.
48. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 165.
49. Qasmi, *Mufaker-e-Ahrar*, 174–5; and Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 142–6.
50. Qasmi, *Mufaker-e-Ahrar*, 187–90.
51. Qasmi, *Mufaker-e-Ahrar*, 186–7.
52. For details, see Haq, *Tareekh-i-Ahrar*, 164–6; and Malik, *Punjab ki Siyasi Tahrikain*, 188–9.
53. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 166.
54. Malik, *Punjab ki Siyasi Tahrikain*, 202.
55. For further details, see Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 154–7.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 164; and Malik, *Punjab ki Siyasi Tahrikain*, 197–201.
57. Malik, *Punjab ki Siyasi Tahrikain*, 203–4.
58. *Ibid.*, 204.
59. For details, see Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol. II, 193–201.
60. For details, see Ahmed, *From Martial Law to Martial Law*, 130–1.
61. A wide spectrum of Unionist Muslims, lawyers, journalists and biradari leaders like Mian Abdul Aziz became the members of the committee, to find legal means to protect the mosque and press for the peaceful settlement of the issue. Report on the Shahid Gunj affair by Mian Abdul Aziz, n.d. (Abdul Aziz collection); F.H. Puckle, chief secretary, Punjab to deputy commissioners, 19 July 1935 (NAI, Home Political, file 5/14/35), quoted in Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 100. Also see Gilmartin, “The ShahidGunj Mosque Incident,” 146–68.
62. Ahmed, *From Martial Law to Martial Law*, 132.
63. Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 101.
64. See for details Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 242–6.
65. Malik, *Book of Readings*, 559.
66. Malik, *Purani Mahfilain*, 102.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Haq, *Tareekh-e-Ahrar*, 218–43.
69. Taqi-ud-Din, *Pakistan ki Siyasi Jamatain*, 195–7.
70. Farouqi, *Imam e Ahl e Sunnat Hazrat Allama Muhammad Abdul Shakoor Farooqi Lucknavi*, 214–55.
71. Quoted in Taqi-ud-Din, *Pakistan ki Siyasi Jamatain*, 196.
72. *Ibid.*, 197.
73. Ahrar vehemently opposed the Lahore Resolution. They were particularly opposed to the idea of transfer of population based on religion. For Ahrar’s point of view, see Azhar, *Humarey Firkawarana Faysaley ka Istadraj*, 162–9.
74. Kashmiri, *Sayaad Ataullah*, 117.
75. Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan: 1947–1958*, 27. For *Hakumat-i-Ilahiyah* and its conceptual exposition, see Azhar, *Humarey Firkawarana Faysaleyka Istadraj*, 244–7.
76. Azhar, *Humarey Firkawarana Faysaleyka Istadraj*, 247.

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