Development of Postal System in Colonial Punjab and Evolution of Muslim Nationalism
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Abstract

This study[1] assesses the development of postal system in colonial Punjab and explores the role of modernized postal system in the spread of nationalist sentiments among Muslims of the province. The paper seeks what measures were taken to modernize communication network in the province? how had the same system served the interests of the British Empire? And then how, on later stage, it had been proved beneficial for the Muslims of Punjab to use it for their political objectives? The study explores that due to the control on communication networks and information-exchange, the British dominated the Indian subcontinent. The colonial masters had not only imported the scientifically developed system but also subordinated the local communication networks. While the British aimed to use the postal system to solidify their control, this system ultimately contributed to the rise of Muslim nationalism and encouraged sentiments of independence among the masses. This study shows the dual role of postal system in strengthening both the oppression and the sentiments of liberation. The paper has been produced on the basis of primary source material which includes the Punjab Administrative Reports, published by British government as well as the statements of officials and the Indian Post and Telegraphic Acts available in the Punjab Archive, Lahore. The newspapers, books and research articles are other important source material.

Key Words

Postal System, Colonial Punjab, Muslim Nationalism

Introduction

The postal system in Punjab traces its written records in the Sultanate era, when a network of postal runners was available. It was important for ruler to stay in touch

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[1] This article is a part of MPhil research of the principal author under the supervision of the second author.

with what was happening all over the vast empire.[2] So, they built a special system where messages could travel quickly. This system was called *Dak ka nizam.[3]* The earliest method of communication in India was discovered by Arab traveler Ibn Battuta. He describes that:

> …In Hindustan, they have two types of messengers: horsemen and footmen. Both are commonly called *El Wolak.* Horse-messengers are usually part of the Sultan's army and are stationed every four miles. Foot-messengers are placed every mile, in building called *El Davah*…[4]

During Mughal period, the same system was entitled as "*Dak Chowkis.* The system facilitated communication across the vast Indian subcontinent. The dak runners guaranteed the timely delivery of mail and traveled through a network of relay stations. In Punjab, there were traditional and informal arrangements of postal network before the British rule.[5] These local postal networks were operated by local rulers through foot runners, camel riders and postal pigeons. Punjab was occupied by the British under the command of Lord Dalhousie in 1849. During the British colonial era, the postal system evolved and modernized with the establishment of railway and telegraph lines and introduction of stamps. This paper deals with the measures, taken by the British Raj for the establishment of communication network in Punjab and looks into British administration's efforts to set up post offices for political, commercial and welfare reasons.[6] It also investigates the way, the Postal System served the interests of both i.e. the British Empire and the Indian communities in 19th and early 20th century? After giving background of the early communication methods in India, paper mostly focuses on the development of postal system in Punjab under the British rule and their policies, related to the introduction of stamps, uniform penny postage, postal and Telegraphic Acts, the

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[2] Fozia Umar, "British Rule in Punjab, Ph.D. Dissertation, Islamabad: QAU, 2021,02.

[3] Geoffrey Rothe Clarke, "Postal and Telegraph Work in India," *Journal of Royal Society of Arts* 71, no.3680 (June 1923):11.

[4] Samuel Lee, trans., *The Travels of ibn Battuta*, Vol.1 (London: The Public Library of Cambridge, 1829), 101, https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.21238/page/n136/mode/1up.

[5] Daniel Headrick, "A Double-Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India" *Historical Social Research* 35, No.1 (2010): 54.

[6] Sheetal Bharat, *Where the Runners Went: British Motivations Behind Postal Policy and Allocation in Colonial India* (Riverside: University of California,2012), 3.

establishment of the railway and the telegraph lines etc. Due to the control on communication networks and information exchange, the British dominated the Indian subcontinent. They have not only imported the scientifically developed system but also subordinated the local communication network.[7] While the British aimed to use the postal system to solidify their control, this system ultimately contributed to the rise of Muslim nationalism and encouraged sentiments of independence among the masses.[8] This study shows the dual role of postal system in both oppression and liberation.

This paper has been produced on the basis of both the primary and the secondary sources. The primary sources include the Punjab administrative reports, published by British government as well as the statements of officials, official letters, and the Indian Post and Telegraphic Acts. The prominent archival material includes Original Mutiny Telegrams, Queen's letter of congratulation for the completion of Telegraph line, Telegraphic addresses and opening of new telegraph offices. The newspaper, journals, books and research articles are other important source material.

Why is there Need to Explore the Postal System of Punjab?

Huge literature has been produced on the history of Punjab with different perspectives but rare works have been produced on the evolution of Punjab's postal system. Only a few authors have focused on scattered aspects of colonial infrastructure in British Punjab but not in context of the evolution of postal system of the province and its role in the spread of nationalist sentiments among the people. Sheetal Bharat's *Where the Runners Went: British Motivations Behind Postal Policy and Allocation in Colonial India[9]* is an excellent work. She describes that the British established the postal system for three main reasons: to facilitate political control, to promote commerce, and to provide welfare service. She explains that the British postal system was used to collect news, and to declare their authority over the Indian population. But she has not touched the dual role of postal system by serving both the British and the Indian populace. Her focus is general postal system of colonial India and only passing references are given by the author on Punjab's postal system. Deep Kanta Lahiri Choudhry's *Telegraphic Imperialism: Crisis and*

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[7] The postal system of British India: a means of colonial expansion and administrative domination (nomadit.co.uk)

[8] Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1929), 129.

[9] Sheetal Bharat, *Where the Runners Went: British Motivations Behind Postal Policy and Allocation in Colonial India* (Riverside: University of California,2012), 3.

Panic in the Indian Empire 1830-1920[10] deals mostly with the impact of the telegraph on the British colonial administration in India. She argues that the telegraph was not just a tool for communication but it became a powerful tool for the British control on Indian subjects. But she could hardly touch the impact of the telegraph on the Indian nationalist movement. Geoffery Rothe Clarke's *The Post Office* of *India and its Story*[11] is another valuable work but it deals mostly with the expansion and modernization of the postal system under British rule. He discusses the impact of postal system on Indian literature, language, and cultural identity.

The Punjab's case was different from the other parts of the British Empire in India as it was demographically split into three regions with the Muslim domination in western Punjab, the Sikh supremacy in central Punjab and the Hindu majority in eastern Punjab. All works available on postal system have explored the evolution of the system in whole of India's context. This paper is an attempt to fill the existing gap in research in perspective of proving that postal system was instrumental in spreading the idea of nationalism among Punjab's communities including Muslims and in widening the influence of nationalist leadership during the last years of the colonial rule specifically. Muslim League's ideology of Pakistan was no exception in this regard, which could get acceptance in the province only during last years of the colonial rule. This study supports Daniel Headrick's assessment 'the colonial masters built the postal system to solidify their control, it ultimately facilitated communication and collaboration and then, paved the way for Indian independence,'[12] and applies the same framework on the province of Punjab. After the annexation of Punjab to the British territory, the means of communication had developed. Despite its primary purpose to strengthen British control, the postal network unconsciously facilitated communication among Indian nationalists. The facilitation in that regards, made it easy for the leadership of the political parties to spread their message of independence and separate nationalism to their communities. Muslim League leadership utilized this modern mean of communication at maximum and mobilized the masses of Punjab.

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[10] Deep Kanta Lahiri Choudhury*, Telegraphic Imperialism: Crisis and Panic in The Indian Empire 1830-1920* (Shantiniketan: Visva Bharati University,2010), 129.

[11] Geoffrey Rothe Clarke, "Postal and Telegraph Work in India," *Journal of Royal Society of Arts* 71, No.3680 (June 1923):484. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41356204

[12] Daniel Headrick, "A Double-Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India" *Historical Social Research* 35, No.1 (2010): 53.

Development of Postal System during Colonial Rule

The pre-British period observed the postal communication in Punjab, which was connected with the figure of runner, who carried mail from place to place. Muslim rulers had paid great attention to establish an effective postal system which played significant role in strengthening their rule. However, the base of the system was traditional, common people could not get benefit of that system. The British East India Company took control over India through the method of both direct and Indirect rule. Initially, there was lack of organized communication system in British India. In 1766, the early efforts had been done by Lord Clive to introduce a regular postal system. Under that system, the *zamindars* (feudal lords) were made responsible to supply runners and to carry mails. This system relied heavily on local *zamindars* for delivery of mail and gradually, it was expanded to fulfill the political and commercial needs of the company. Later, Warren Hastings laid the groundwork for more organized mail service. Hastings implemented a few adjustments: Post offices were expanded and the cost of letter delivery was reduced. Despite of these reforms, it was a disorganized process. By the mid nineteenth century when the company consolidated its territorial control, it felt need for strong postal network to maintain authority and to facilitate communication across vast distances.

The Indian Post Office Act 1837[13] was introduced, then. The postal system of three presidencies were carried under single administration through this Act. It also showed the distance between important post offices so then the rate of postage was calculated. This Act laid the foundation for more organized postal system and created the imperial post for major routes and district post for local services. East India company built network for both commercial and military control in India. They used postal links not just for communication but also as a tool for military purposes. These developments transformed the postal landscape in colonial India. However, the 1837 Act established an absolute monopoly of the East India Company over the transportation of letters. Postage was still imposed according to distance; for example, the cost of a letter from Calcutta to Agra was 12 *annas* and from Calcutta to Bombay 1 rupee.[14] At that time, it was quite difficult to

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[13] The Post Office Act 1837, Retrieved From:
https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/acts/1837-07-17_Act-1-Victoria-cap-76.php
[14] Ibid.

communicate both inside and outside of Punjab. The French Scientist Victor Jacquemont, while traveling through the region in 1830, described:

> …Mail delivery was like a "slow and unpredictable adventure, it relied only on runners and a network of travelers' bungalows...[15]

After the seizure of Punjab in 1849 the British had established Board of administration for the implementation of administrative and economic reforms. The board was abolished in 1853 and Lord Dalhousie appointed John Lawrence as commissioner of Punjab. Punjab was divided into administrative divisions and districts. Due to the strategic importance, British invested heavily in the communication networks of Punjab.[16] Although before the annexation of Punjab, the British had already ruled most of the subcontinent. From the mid eighteenth century onwards, the East India Company transformed itself from a trading monopoly to a territorial ruler. It had created well-established system of communication for political control. But there was a need to make it more systematic and to maintain law and order. So, they introduced administrative and infrastructural reforms such as establishment of post offices, formulation of Post office Act 1854, work on telegraph, and the construction of railway lines to connect major cities of Punjab.[17]

In 1850, a report was commissioned into the working of the Post Office. This report introduced uniform postage rates dependent on weight alone (previously charges had been calculated on weight and distance both).[18] The recommendations of this report led to the introduction of 1854 Post Office Act. The previous reforms had a mixed success with some areas persisting in old practices. The uniform

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[15] Clarke, "Postal and Telegraph Work, 484.

[16] https://archives.punjab.gov.pk/colonial_era.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Salman Anwar, "The Impact of Annexation of Punjab by East India Company for Consolidation of British Rule in Indo-Pak Sub-Continent," *Journal of Indian Studies* 10, no. 1 (June2024): 20. https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/indianStudies/PDF/2_v10_1_24.pdf.

postage system was introduced under the Post Office Act 1854.[19] It replaced the local and imperial postal services with a single unified postal service for whole of the British Punjab.

Originally, the district post in India was managed by District officers or the local officials and it worked separately by the imperial post, but in order to increase the efficiency of this service, the imperial powers ordered the local officials to transfer the management of post offices to the imperial post.[20] The mastermind behind this Act was Marquess of Dalhousie. The greatest advancement, introduced in 1854, was the introduction of postage stamps and the fixing of postage rates for letters regardless of distance. The number of post offices were also grown rapidly.[21] In 1854, there were 700 post offices but 12,970 in 1900.

Since 1849, the East India Company had decided to construct a telegraph system along the railway lines. The telegraph became an urgent necessity on account of the Afghan war and the impending war with Burma.[22] The first line, between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour, opened in 1851 and was used to send shipping news from the coasts to Calcutta. In Punjab, the work on Telegraph was started in 1853. The major lines were completed before 1855. This remarkable speed of construction resulted from both strategic needs and Lord Dalhousie's personal interest in the plan. Telegraph communication was essential for effective and safe railway signaling. In 1851 telegraphs had been extended over 4,250 miles of India. This linked forty-six receiving stations, which were operational from Calcutta to Agra and to the northwest. There were around 17,500 miles of telegraph lines by 1865. By the end of the century, it reached 52,900 miles.

After 1860, elaborative measures were taken for expanding railway network in Punjab, especially to join Multan, Peshawar and Lahore. New Railway lines were opened in 1873 to connect Lahore cantonment with Karachi port.

With the passage of time, political awareness grew in Punjab. The events like Ghaddar movement (1914), Jallianwala Bagh incident (1919), Unionist Party

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[19] The Telegraph Act of 1854, Retrieved From: https://wipolex-res.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/in/in116en.pdf.

[20] Ibid

[21] General Department, (Home), July 1863, Proceeding, No. 385, Punjab Archives Lahore.

[22] Ibid

(1923), rise of Muslim League, 1946 elections and Civil Disobedience Movement spread awareness in the province and made the people politically active.

Evolution of Muslim Nationalism in Punjab and the Postal System

The development of postal system and spread of Muslim nationalist sentiments in Punjab during British rule were two interconnected historical processes that had deep impact on the region. After the annexation, the British recognized the importance of postal service to control the newly annexed territory and to connect it with the rest of the empire. Punjab was religiously diverse region with three dominant belief-systems i.e. Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. Muslims, in Punjab, were slow to engage with western education and colonial administration, whereas the other two communities responded quickly to the need of the time. Hindu and Sikh elites, particularly Arya Samaj and Singh Sabhas dominated early political and social reforms.[23] While the British projected the postal network to strengthen their control. This network allowed messages to travel quickly, including the criticism of British rule. The communication and awareness due to transformation of news strengthened the rise of Nationalist movement only during last years of the British rule and then, the people united against British rule.

The telegraph played role in 1857 uprising but in two very different perspectives. British leaders like Sir John Lawrence and Montgomery believed that telegraph helped them to keep control over regions due to quick transmission of news, especially in Punjab. Sir john Lawrence of the Punjab claimed that the telegraph saved them. On the contrary, Indians believed that telegraph was a weapon that was used against them.

Punjab's loyalty during 1857 revolt had strengthened its strategic importance in British eyes.[24] Muslim and Sikh forces played a vital role in the imposition of British authority in the rebellious areas of the British empire. After the revolt, the

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[23] Salman Anwar, "The Impact of Annexation of Punjab by East India Company for Consolidation of British Rule in Indo-Pak Sub-Continent," *Journal of Indian Studies* 10, no. 1 (June2024): 22.

[24]Ian Talbot, Punjab Under Colonialism: Order and transformation in British India, https://punjab.global.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/sitefiles/journals/volume14/no1/14.1_Talbot.pdf.

Company's ruling period was over and the Great Britain established Crown's rule. Punjab was important for them because of the loyalty.[25] At the same time, the shift of power marked change in the general attitude of administration of India and the Crown's government introduced the Post Office Act 1866.[26] It further reduced postage fee on letters and newspapers. With the passage of time, the Act 1866 proved to be quite unsuitable to fulfill modern needs, so the Post Office Act 1898[27] was framed to deal with the new requirements of postal system. This act gave the authority to postal officers to seize any postal article that they found to be rebellious. So, the new Act granted the monopoly of British administration over the transfer of letters and news. The British colonial masters did not introduce any major reforms related to the postal system of Punjab during the 20th century. Except the Indian wireless telegraphy Act 1933, no new Post Office Act was passed and the amendments were made in the existing post office act 1898 for their own interest and to suppress the freedom struggle.

Lahore was a major city in British era. It was not only the administrative center but also a hub for Muslim intellectuals and politicians. Lahore produced newspapers *Inqilab, Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Zamindar* in Urdu. Muslim newspaper like *Zamindar, Inqilab* and *Watan* were spreading ideas on political rights, communal identity and grievance of Muslims. The circulation of these and other newspapers was possible by using postal service.[28] These newspapers discussed the issues related to the British policy of divide and rule, the importance of Muslim unity and the growing demand for separate Muslim political representation. The 20th century press concentrated on the politics of the country. The newspaper and journal represent the sentiment and thoughts of the people during the stormy period of political movement and disturbance in the country. The *Comrade* of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and *Zamindar* of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan discussed the Muslim sentiment against colonial masters. The comrade played an important role in formulating the political policy of Muslim India. Although the British government tried her best to repress

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Post Office Act 1866, Retrieved From:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1969/48/pdfs/ukpga_19690048_en.pdf

[27] The Indian Post Office Act 1898, Retrieved From:
https://www.indiapost.gov.in/VAS/DOP_RTI/TheIndianPostOfficeAct1898.pdf

[28] https://www.nazariapak.info/Pakistan-Movement/role-press.php.

the Muslim press but it protected the Muslim community. *Zamindar* strongly supported the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and its objectives. *Zamindar* succeeded to bring a revolution among the masses and motivated them to achieve their goal.[29] Postal system was also used to circulate the literature that was vital for political consciousness. Iqbal's poetry and philosophical work, which emphasized the need for Muslims to revive their identity and establish an autonomous state, that were widely spread through the postal system.

The third aspect of the usage of postal system to spread idea of Muslim nationalism among Muslims was correspondence or letters, written to and from Muslim League's leadership. The correspondence between Iqbal and Jinnah particularly in the late 1930, shaped the demand for separate Muslim state. Iqbal in his letters expressed the need of political autonomy for the Muslims of subcontinent. These letters sent through the colonial postal system. Iqbal letters cleared and further shaped Jinnah's thoughts for an independent Muslim state in northwest of India. Iqbal wrote a letter to Jinnah and said that:

> …. there is a solution in the enforcement of the Law of Islam and its further development in the light of modern ideas. After a long and careful study of Islamic Law I have come to the conclusion that if this system of Law is properly understood and applied, at last the right to subsistence is secured to everybody. But the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India….[30]

Iqbal emphasized that implementation of Shariah and its adaptation to modern ideas had not achieved in a non-Muslim dominated state. He suggests that a free Muslim state is necessary for the proper enforcement of Islamic law. This

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[29] Ibid.

[30] https://franpritchett.com/00islamlinks/txt_iqbal_tojinnah_1937.html

reflects his encouragement for a separate Muslim state, which eventually became the foundation for the creation of Pakistan.

Iqbal in his letter to Jinnah highlighted that:

> …Some Muslims in the Punjab are already suggesting the holding of [a] North-West Indian Muslim Conference, and the idea is rapidly spreading. I agree with you, however, that our community is not yet sufficiently organised and disciplined and perhaps the time for holding such a conference is not yet ripe. But I feel that it would be highly advisable for you to indicate in your address at least the line of action that the Muslims of North-West India would be finally driven to take….[31]

In his letter, he emphasized the need for political unity among Muslims and to struggle for separate Muslim state. The leaders chose letters as a safer way to discuss sensitive political matters.

On second level, postal system played crucial role in shaping and training local leadership to learn not only the message of the Muslim League i.e. Pakistan ideology but also to learn techniques and methods to spread that ideology among common people. A number of letters had been written to Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah by Muslim students of Punjab to get guidance on circulation of Pakistan ideology and then to mobilize Muslims for the cause of an independent state. Quaid-i-Azam, had taken the responsibility of uplifting the Muslim League in 1936 and then focused on the organization of the students.[32] Muslim students were already upset by the injustice they had to face in the educational institutions. On the call of the Quaid, they responded willingly. Punjab Muslim Students Federation was founded in September 1937. Students actively used their abilities and services to promote the session of the Muslim League that was held in March 1940. After that, Quaid-i-Azam directed his attention towards meeting the students personally. He appreciated their efforts for the nation and sent motivational and

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Naumana Kiran Imran, People's Role in Struggle for Pakistan, 1940-1947 (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2021), 2.

passionate letters and messages to the student. In March 1941, Punjab Muslim Students Federation organized the first Pakistan Conference which was enthusiastically attended by Quaid-i-Azam. In this meeting, Quaid-i-Azam motivated students to struggle and to make progress.[33]

Quaid-i-Azam suggested the students to arrange various study circles in multiple areas to spread political and economic consciousness among the common people. Students energetically acted upon Quaid's advice by arranging such meeting points. In this regard, the Secretary of PMSF in correspondence with Quaid-i-Azam wrote:

> …Punjab Muslim Students' Federation has decided to start study circles in every college. The object underlying is to educate Muslim students so that they may be able to understand political and economic problems facing our country and nation. We are also opening a Pakistan Library in our Lahore office. Literature on Pakistan will be available to our members from the library. Working Committee of the Punjab Muslim Students' Federation has sanctioned a substantial sum for this object. We need help from the League home study circle in this connection. We will write to them and I hope you will be kind enough to recommend our case…[34]

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[33] Naumana Kiran, "Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mass Mobilization: A Case study of Punjab" *Journal of Historical Studies (Historicus), Vol. LXXI. Vol. 3,* (December 2023). https://www.phs.com.pk/index.php/phs/article/view/298/149.

[34] M. Ilyas; Secretary PMSF to Quaid-i-Azam-i-Azam, February 14, 1943, F/1101, Quaid-i-Azam Papers (QAP), National Archives (NA), Islamabad cited in Naumana Kiran, "Punjab Muslim Students Federation and Pakistan Movement," *Pakistan Perspective*, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, Vol. 18, No. 2 (December 2013): 64.

Similarly, local and provincial Muslim women leaders also followed the same strategy.[35] The postal system played vital role to allow communication between Muslim League leadership and influential local female figures. Their correspondence, carried out primarily through letters which were crucial to coordinate the Pakistan Movement and to promote the cause among the masses. Fatima Begum, known for her leadership and mobilization efforts among women in Punjab, had regularly updated as well as pursued guidance from Quaid-e-Azam by letter-writting. Through these exchanges, she reported on her progress, organized efforts, and conveyed messages of support and solidarity. She started her efforts from Jinnah Islamia College. She delivered inspiring and emotional speeches on daily basis in the morning Assembly to prepare the girls to perform their national duties since its establishment. Students and teachers of her college were very active to serve as host of the female guests of the ML to make the 1940 session of the ML successful.[36] Fatima Begum arranged a separate session of the Muslim Women League at Jinnah Islamia College, Lahore after the annual conference of the ML.[37] Many girl students and other distinguished ladies delivered speeches and sang Pakistan songs which reflected their feelings about Pakistan and their spirit to come in the practical struggle to achieve it. Fatima Begum sent a letter to Quaid and invited him to come to Lahore to inspire the girl students.

> We hope you have, by now, received an invitation for the Punjab Muslim Girls Students Federation, urging you to stop at Lahore and inspire the daughters of Islam with a renewed zest to work side by side with their brothers for the achievement of the common goal. We are trying to

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[35] Naumana Kiran, "Political Awareness among Women in the Punjab: A Case Study of Their Role in the Pakistan Movement," *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan* Vol. 20, No.2 (2013): 53.

[36] Naumana Kiran Imran, "Fatima Begum: A Narrative of Unsung Hero of Pakistan Movement" *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan* 54, no. 02(July-December 2017): 270.

[37] Ibid.

popularize the Muslim League in the
Punjab through our womenfolk.[38]

Elections 1946 were a great test for Muslims to pass, if they wanted to have a separate homeland. Fatima Begum was part and parcel of the Muslim League's election campaign 1946. She visited many urban and rural areas to convince Muslim women to cast their vote for Pakistan.[39] She made extensive tours of West Punjab specifically. She wrote to Jinnah while giving report to him about her tours:

> During the last week, I visited Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat, Wazirabad and Gujranwala and addressed women's meetings at all these places. They had the desired effect everywhere and I was also able to enroll about 400 members in the women's section of the League. A lady from Jhelum who was formerly a Congressite has now become a staunch Leaguer.[40]

The marginalized communities in Punjab including religious minorities, lower-caste groups, and the economically underprivileged played a unique role in the freedom movement of Pakistan. Quaid-e-Azam's message of equality and his opposition to caste-based discrimination vibrated deeply with these groups and it encouraged them to support the demand for a separate nation. These communities showed their solidarity to Jinnah in their letters. Post offices in Punjab served as essential communication centers, particularly for rural and marginalized communities. The low caste groups of the Punjab were also main contributors in the Pakistan Movement. Their role was very important on individual basis as well as on collective level. Especially during the last two years Muslim masses of Punjab played a key role in the making of Pakistan. The Muslim masses showed their strength and unity by casting votes

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[38] S. Q. Hussain Jafri, ed. Quaid-i-Azam's Correspondence with Punjab Muslim leaders (Lahore: np, 1977), 400.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Amarjit Singh, "Foundation of Pakistan: A Study of the Women Leadership of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* Vol. 45 No. 1 (June 2008): 7.

for the Muslim League in 1945-46 elections.[41] They also actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Although during the freedom Movement, the Muslims of rural Punjab suffered yet they continued their efforts and sacrifices.[42] It was possible due to this system to bring consciousness among various sections of the society including students, women, middle class, businessmen, low-cadre government employees etc. about their responsibilities and then they played significant role in Pakistan movement.

Conclusion

The study has explored the evolution of postal system during British colonial period. Initially, the British East India Company depended on local postal networks and private couriers, which were insufficient for their expanding needs. In the course of expansionism, the colonial masters had introduced various Acts related to postal and telegraph system. The 1837 Post Office Act had introduced the concept of centralized postal operations under the East India Company and abolished private postal services. Whereas the 1854 Act introduced postage stamps and postal network was further strengthened. The post office Act of 1854 solidified British control, regulated telegraph operations and granted exclusive rights to the government. This infrastructure played a critical role during the 1857 uprising and it allowed the immediate communication that assisted British authorities in suppressing the rebellion

The study has explored that the postal system had not only facilitated colonial governance but unconsciously raised communication and unity among Indians and laid groundwork for future nationalist movements against British rule. The introduction of railways, telegraphs, and postal services not only facilitated governance and trade but also integrated Punjab into the broader Indian economy. By the mid-20th century, the modernization of communication networks became

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[41] Naumana Kiran, "Role of the Marginalised Groups of Punjab in Pakistan Movement: 1940-1947," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 36, no.1 (2015):144.
[42] Ibid.

influential in shaping political movements that ultimately led to independence. It may be concluded that the postal system played a dominant role in the freedom movement. The Muslims of Punjab like other communities of the province took the system as one of the major means of resistance. It helped in shaping the views of educated people. During the days of freedom struggle, the modern means of communication including postal system were used to create awareness among the people of Punjab over the values of freedom, nationalism and patriotism. Ultimately, postal services of Punjab played significant role in two ways: one in circulating Quaid-i-Azam's messages and Muslim League's ideology among masses of Punjab and second in getting guidance from the central leadership to keep the movement alive and to achieve Pakistan. In addition to it, postal services also communicated the same ideology through their circulation services of newspapers.

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