



Textbooks for History and Urdu in Punjab: Transiting from the Colonial to the Post-Colonial Period¹

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Background to Colonial India's 'Textbook Culture'

The focus of numerous studies on the development of education in colonial India has primarily been on the policy instruments intermittently issued by the British government from the first quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. The important landmarks in this timeline are the debates about government's responsibility towards the promotion of education and contestations among Orientalists, Anglicists and Missionary groups about the content and scope of such education. There has been a lot of discussion about the influence of policy statements such as Macaulay's minute on education of 1835 and Wood's dispatch of 1854. However, comparatively little emphasis has been placed on the ideological basis of these educational policies—especially through the medium of textbooks.²

Some notable exceptions are the works of Gauri Viswanathan (1998), Sanjay Seth (2007) and Krishna Kumar (2005). Viswanathan's seminal work has shown how the reading of English literary texts in schools was meant to promote a certain rational worldview conducive to the acceptance of Christian values and benevolence of British rule. Seth's nuanced study aims at showing the pedagogical processes of colonial education as a site of colonial governmentality and disciplinary regime aimed at producing desirable subjectivities. Kumar has coined the term 'textbook culture' whereby pedagogy was reduced to the contents of prescribed textbooks which were heavily supervised by colonial administrators and bureaucrats to ensure their dominance over the process of transmitting knowledge.



But the actual content of textbooks—especially vernacular textbooks at primary and secondary level for history and language—has not been extensively examined. A nuanced analysis of the contents of the textbooks produced in colonial Punjab during the twentieth century not only contributes towards the existing theoretical knowledge on colonial pedagogy as a tool of dominance but also opens up new avenues for exploring disputes about the ideas of past and religion as imposed by colonial administrators and challenged by vernacular literati. Rather than simply looking at the development of a positivist tradition of historical scholarship or the idea of religion as expressed in the debates of reform during the nineteenth century, this article will show that contestations about the ideas of history and religion were entangled and mutually influential. School textbooks were one of the main sites of such contestations and the principal medium through which ideas about history and religion were funnelled into the public sphere. Even though religion was ostensibly not taught in schools run or aided by the colonial regime, it was not possible to dissociate vernacular textbooks from religious influences.

The study of textbooks requires an understanding of the processes involved in producing them. There was a gradual process of bureaucratisation of education whereby the colonial state gradually sought to supervise education rather than taking direct responsibility for mass education. Prior to the emergence of a more centralised and bureaucratised education department, textbook production was largely outside the purview of the colonial state and was managed by missionary presses and autonomous organisations (Topdar 2015: 421). The earliest instance of an official textbook committee was the Calcutta School Book Society established in 1817. In the United Provinces, a curator of schoolbooks was appointed in 1844 (*ibid.*). It was, however, with Wood's Dispatch of 1854 that a government-supervised education system first came to be envisaged. Based on the recommendations of retired officers returning from India to England, it had introduced the policy of primary and secondary education in vernacular languages with English as the medium of instruction for higher education (Allender 2007: 46-7).

Following this major policy shift, provinces came up with their respective strategies. Textbook committees were established in different provinces. Initially these committees were responsible for both preparing and publishing textbooks, but, as operations increased, private printing firms had to be contracted. These publishers—of which the most famous example is the Nawal Kishore press of Lucknow



—enlisted the services of local intelligentsia to prepare textbooks in line with the curriculum and guidelines set by the education department, and presented them for approval by the textbook committees. These committees would usually recommend three such books out of which one could then be chosen by the headmaster of a particular school.

The textbook committee for Punjab, in one of its reports, also summarised the procedure for the selection of textbooks:

The book is received by the Reporter on Books, an officer of the Provincial Educational Service, usually selected for literary attainments. By him it is put up to the Director, who, unless the book is clearly useless for Punjab schools (e.g., a Greek Grammar), forwards it to the Secretary of the Text-book committee for criticism. By him it is sent to one or more (usually two, sometimes four) reviewers for report. These reviewers vary from Professors of Colleges, Inspectors or Inspectoresses of Schools, to Headmasters of High Schools. They are as a rule not members of the Text-book Committee. The reports received from the reviewers, together with a copy of the book, are laid before the next meeting of the sub-committee which deals with this particular type of publication. There are eight such sub-committees (for Urdu, History and Geography, Arabic and Persian, etc.). The sub-committee then formulates its recommendations as to the use, if any, that can be made of the work, e.g., as a library-book or alternative text-book. The recommendation of the sub-committee together with a copy of the work in question, is then submitted to the next General Meeting of the Text-book Committee which records its final verdict on the work. This verdict is transmitted to the Director of Public Instruction who, if the work is recommended for adoption, includes it in his next book circular. (Report on Progress of Education in the Punjab 1917: 57)

From the subcommittees of the textbook committee, it is possible to get a clearer idea about the subjects taught and tasks assigned to the committee. There were eight sub-committees in all. They looked at the textbooks for English language, literature and grammar, natural science and technical education, history and geography, Urdu language and literature, Hindi and Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, Gurumukhi and books for school and reference libraries (Preeti 2014: 275). By the first quarter of the twentieth century, the membership of the committee was not exclusive to European and official members. When the committee was reconstituted in the mid-1920s, it enlisted nine Europeans, two Indian Christians, seven Muslims, five Hindus and two Sikhs as its members (Report on Progress of Education in the Punjab 1927: 107).



The composition changed again in the 1930s as the Punjab Textbook Committee was replaced by the Punjab Advisory Board for Books. It was to comprise not more than 40 members. This included ex-officio members from the directorate of public instruction and central training college, officials from the Punjab education department, members of the Punjab legislative assembly, teachers from private educational institutions, fellows of the Punjab University and its various faculties, and nominees of the education minister (Report on Progress of Education in the Punjab 1936: 92). At that time, it was also recommended that the Department of Education should take over the printing of textbooks, but the suggestion was put on hold because of the petitions received from publishers (Report on Progress of Education in the Punjab 1937: 124).

Other than the power of recommending books through textbook committees, the main aspect of bureaucratised control of education in colonial Punjab was through the grant-in-aid system. According to this system, local community-run schools, which fulfilled the standards set by the newly established directorate of public instruction, were eligible for government support which, in turn, was being funded through an agricultural cess imposed by the government. There were numerous types of local schools in post-annexation Punjab which included Gurumukhi, Persian, Arabic and Quran schools and which catered to the interests and needs of different communities (Preeti 2014: 271). The grant-in-aid policy was to ensure government supervision of the content taught through a range of disciplinary measures in the name of teacher training, inspections by the officers of education department and the provision of textbooks.

Teaching Useful Knowledge in Colonial Punjab

Other than the debates on the medium of instruction, pedagogical techniques and content of textbooks, colonial authorities were also concerned about the long-term impact of the educational policies they imposed. Given the paucity of funds set aside for education, the colonial state was aware of its own inability to sponsor mass education in India. Only a tiny fraction of students had the means and the educational background to continue studying at university level. Most of them dropped out at secondary level. Considering these limitations, colonial authorities were eager to ensure a minimum standard of qualification, even at the primary and secondary level, to make sure that the students learnt 'useful knowledge' and were sufficiently exposed to



the civilisational values promoted by the colonial state. In addition, practical skills were to be encouraged. This would allow those students who were unable to continue education beyond primary and secondary level to find employment and become useful subjects.

In early 1920s, while discussing reforms and proposals for vernacular schools, a reform committee set up by the education department looked at the possibility of increasing the scope and content of curricula at the primary level. This would attempt to ensure the literacy of the pupil in the subjects taught at the basic level without burdening the teachers who were to teach numerous subjects. At this point, the committee discussed the question of the language and content of textbooks as well. It was found that the language of many readers was "too simple, and not altogether free from imperfections of style and idiom." The committee also decided that in the readers,

elementary lessons on the following should be included: geography; simple phenomena, e.g., day and night; home geography, food, clothing and shelter; the Punjab and very simple world geography; crops and cattle; ideas of sanitation and personal hygiene; the ideas of co-operation; the elements of village government; and incidents in the lives of great men and women. (Report on Progress of Education in the Punjab 1923: x-xi)

The committee was trying to find ways to make vernacular education, especially at primary level, less burdensome in schools which had limited institutional capacity and teachers had to teach many subjects. This is why the minister for education, Fazl-i-Hussain, agreed with the suggestion to put science, history and drawing together under the new subject of general knowledge "which would include useful information regarding methods of sanitation, hygiene, agriculture, elementary principles of administration and co-operation and the rudiments of history (mainly in the form of biography)" (ibid.: iii).

Another major policy initiative in Punjab from the 1850s onward was the introduction of Urdu as the vernacular language. This was done at the expense of Persian which was the court language even during the period of Sikh rule. Punjabi was considered of lowly status and a rude variant of Urdu language, not to be taken seriously. The imposition of Urdu as a vernacular and official language meant that not just government schools but various community-run schools had to acknowledge its importance and teach it up to secondary level across Punjab. Its status was not challenged in the province until 1947 (Mir



2010: 60). But this does not mean that the colonial state did not face any opposition to this language policy; rather, the scope of the challenge was different. In the case of the United Provinces, this challenge came from the increasingly influential Hindi laureates who demanded that Urdu be replaced with Hindi.

Eventually, it was the Devanagari script which was imposed along with Urdu for official purposes. In the case of the Punjab, however, such a demand for change of script was not popular enough to elicit a favourable response from the colonial state. But the challenge of popularising Urdu was the same for both UP and Punjab, as Persian remained popular (Rahman 2011). In case of the Punjab, the problem was further compounded by the lack of Urdu literati in the province, who had to be brought in from North India. The second half of the nineteenth century, therefore, saw the transformation of Lahore's literary scene, as luminaries such as Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad and Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, among many others, shifted to Punjab in search for lucrative government jobs in the education department.³

As the colonial state's intrusion into indigenous schools increased through such schemes as the grant-in-aid, the British introduced their preferred civilisational values in the texts taught in these schools. Tariq Rahman has given an extensive history of indigenous education and the texts generally taught in Persian in local makhtabs. For the British, teaching of such texts as Sa'adi's *Gulistan* and *Bustan* carried little intellectual merit. These were to be replaced with textbooks teaching practical knowledge, skills and morals to inculcate desired subjectivities and cultivate efficient employees in the service of the colonial State (Diamond 2014: 77-8). The need for the moral advancement of the native and the general idea prevalent in the colonial conception of the appeal of passion and religion (and not reason) to the native mind, led to the conclusion that symbols, fables and inspirational life lessons from all religions should become part of textbooks—especially for Urdu.

Such a policy was aimed more at reforming the native in a language of passion and religion that he understood and appreciated rather than necessarily promoting inter-communal harmony. Nor did the religious communities perceive it as such, as the demand for religious schooling, outside the domain of grant-in-aid, increased. This is why religious organisations like Arya Samaj and Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam came up with their own schooling network where pupils could be taught according to their religious faith. It is in this context that Parna Sen-



gupta's argument about "the close connections between mass schooling and the reproduction of modern religious identity" (2011: 21) can be read and extended further.

Teaching History in Colonial Punjab

The value and importance of James Mill's *The History of British India* (1817)—along with the works of such colonial administrators-historians as Henry Elliot, John Dawson and John Marshman—has largely been recognised in shaping the historiography of India from the nineteenth century onwards. While the theoretical framework set by it and its contestation by successive generations of Indian scholars and nationalists has been a focus of numerous studies, little attention has been given to the reproduction of Mill's schemata of Indian history in school textbooks. In this article the particular interest is in the role of language in narrating a fact-based chronology for school textbooks devoid of value judgements. A textbook written in English, for example, would not raise the issue of reverential or appropriate language in the same way as would a textbook in a vernacular language. Also, there would necessarily be differences on such historical events as the invasion of Somnath by Mehmud of Ghazna or the evaluation of the role of Aurangzeb towards his non-Muslim subjects. An analysis of the textbooks produced during the colonial period illustrates how such issues of language and historical interpretation were addressed.

Two major studies on the history textbooks taught in Colonial Indian—more specifically in North India and the Punjab—have been carried out by Avril Powell and Jeffry Diamond. The two textbooks surveyed by Powell are *Waq'iat-i-Hind* (Indian Events) written by Maulwi Karim al-Din of Panipat, and *Itihas Timir-Nasak* (History as the Dispeller of Darkness) written in Hindi and then translated into Urdu as *A'inah-i Tarikh-Numa* (The Mirror of History) by Babu Siva Prasad of Benares. Before analysing these two texts, Powell gives a brief background of the production of textbooks in colonial India, especially prior to 1857. According to her, the translation and compilation of school textbooks had started at Delhi College in the early 1840s, patronised by its European principals, Felix Boutros and Aloys Sprenger, with the help of some of the Indian teachers belonging to the Oriental Department (Powell 2002: 96). In case of the Punjab and much of North India, this was overseen by the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI).



Waqi'at-i-Hind was published and distributed in Punjab around 1863 and was in great demand by the time its second edition was published in 1864. But the Directorate of Public Instruction decided to examine it for content that might be deemed objectionable to any religious community. Some controversy had erupted in the North West Provinces with regard to the contents of *Waqi'at-i-Hind*; therefore, before the third edition could be published, its contents were to be evaluated. The main objection was raised by Captain Pollock, the deputy commissioner of Lahore, who opined that Karim's book suggested a lack of Divinity for Rama. Also, the text referred to him simply as Rama without the suffix of 'ji' which was usually added as a mark of respect (ibid.: 102). The officer of Punjab DPI, Abraham Fuller, responded:

It can never be argued that because the Hindoos consider Ram Chundra an Incarnation of the Deity, that we are to corroborate their belief. The Government cannot undertake to teach false History, false Geography, and false Science and Philosophy, in order to please their prejudices, or suit the ignorance of its native subjects. At the same time, it can and should of course abstain from needlessly wounding their religious feelings. (ibid.: 103)

Fuller's spirited defence of a 'rational' approach to history was dismissed and the required changes in the text had to be made. But it does not mean that colonial authorities dealing with education allowed for excessive veneration of religious figures considered holy by local communities. With regard to contentious historical events, the policy was to keep the narrative descriptive and free of value judgments, rather than interpretative. The reason for this was twofold: first, Indian writers were mainly relying on a European model of historiography in general, and English histories of India in particular, in the writing of history textbooks. Karim al-Din's book had clearly been inspired by Marshman's work; second, an event-based, chronological account of the past helped to "facilitate the reduction of the cultural, religious and political influences of pre-colonial Indian histories" (Diamond 2014: 90-1).

A few more examples of history textbooks from the colonial period in the first half of the twentieth century and their content analysis will help explain these trends with greater clarity. The difficulty, however, is that not many textbooks have survived.⁴ One such example is *Dilchasp Tarikh-i-Hind* published in 1932. The author of the text believes that while Muslim historians were panegyric in their approach, it is English historians like Eliot and Dawson who, after meticulous



research, produced trustworthy and credible historical works. With regard to the issue of reverence for religious figures, the author is careful to use the prefix 'Hazrat' and plural endings for the Prophet of Islam and his Companions, both of which are marks of respect in Urdu.⁵

An important case study of history textbooks for this period is the text compiled by Ram Prasad, a professor of history at Government College Lahore, and Muhammad Iqbal—the poet-philosopher who is credited with conceiving the idea of Pakistan. Published in 1913, *Tarikh-i-Hind* is important not just because it carries Iqbal's name but also for its contents which serve as a prototype for so many other textbooks during the same period. From a cursory glance at available textbooks, it appears that the history textbooks usually started with a chapter on the geography and physical features of India. It was then followed by chapters on pre-historic social formations, Aryan invasions, Vedic religious beliefs and texts, the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, and the invasions of Persians, Greeks and central Asian hordes. The focus then shifted to the Muslim period with a particular interest in the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. During the colonial period, one third of each history textbook would usually cover this entire portion of Indian history, between the pre-historic and Mughal periods. The rest of the text would explicate the rise of British power, details about the policy initiatives of various governor generals, and expansionist wars and reforms introduced—both social and institutional—by the British rulers. This sequence, with some variations, continued till the 1950s, as will be shown later in this article.

Other than being an excellent example of the textbooks used for the teaching of history at school level, *Tarikh-i-Hind* has an added advantage of shedding some light on the life and ideas of Muhammad Iqbal. It is well known that Iqbal was born to a poor family and it was largely through scholarship and the financial assistance provided by his elder brother that he managed to go to Cambridge and Munich for higher studies. On his return to India, he initially resumed his teaching position at Government College Lahore but later resigned from it to focus on his career as a barrister as the main source of his livelihood. He was neither a very successful barrister nor is he known to have made much of an extra effort to woo clients beyond a certain limit. This allowed him to devote more time to his poetry and philosophical musings. But he had an extended family to support with limited financial means.



In order to bridge this gap, Iqbal resorted to various other sources of income. This included writing textbooks or, at least, lending his name to be used in a textbook. Towards the 1930s when his health had deteriorated considerably, thus bringing an end to his legal practice, Iqbal survived comfortably because of generous stipends from the states of Hyderabad and Bhopal. Iqbal is credited with textbooks for Urdu, Persian and history. In addition, he continued to offer his services as an examiner for various universities and paper setter for various examinations, including the Indian Civil Service (Hashmi 2010: 408). Over a period of about twenty years, as indicated by his income tax returns, Iqbal earned a total amount of Rs. 34,731 for these services rendered to universities (Mehmud 2015: 127).

Other than the pattern of the history textbook by Prasad and Iqbal, and its thematic focus which is peculiar to the colonial period, its content is also reflective of the prevailing trends and the limitations imposed by the directorate. It had to show neutrality towards religions, stay away from controversy and express loyalty to the British Empire. In the preface, the authors openly admit that "on matters where there is disagreement, no commentary has unnecessarily been made" (Iqbal & Prasad 1913: i). The content is, therefore, not too dissimilar from other history textbooks of the period but is considered controversial in the context of the specific status which Iqbal has acquired, especially in Pakistan as an ideologue.

For example, while talking about the origin of Islam, the book says: "A new religion was born in Arabia. The founder of this religion, Hazrat Muhammad *sahib*, was born in 570" (ibid.: 63 emphasis added). This style of referral towards the prophet, certain critics claim, is not at all supported by other writings of Iqbal who always showed utmost reverence towards the figure of Prophet Muhammad. The text is critical of, or talks in disparaging terms about, certain other figures, who were otherwise heroically evoked in Iqbal's poetry. This includes figures like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who is condemned for his prejudices and his actions against the non-Muslims; Akbar, meanwhile, is discussed appreciatively, again in contrast to Iqbal's other works (ibid.: 141-2). Similarly, it talks about the *majnunana zulm* (lunatic tyranny) of Siraj-ud-Dawlah of Bengal and the fainting of Tipu Sultan upon his hearing the news of the advancing English army (ibid.: 222, 271).

About the war of 1857, the textbook takes a clear stance in favour of the British by calling the mutineers *namak haram* (ungrateful wretch), *chalak fitrati admi* (men of wicked instinct), *sharir mufsadi*



(troublemakers), badbakht (wretched), zalim (callous), mujarim (criminals) and makkar (cunning) (ibid.: 323-4). Towards the latter-day viceroys of British India, the text adopts a reverential tone and addresses them with plural endings.⁶ This particular example shows that textbook writing in vernaculars varied from region to region. Francesca Orsini has described textbook writing as a 'soft' way of pursuing an ideological agenda open to Hindi literati (2009: 100). She backs up her claim by citing Hindi textbooks on history collating Indian nationhood with Hindu selfhood. One plausible explanation would be that Hindi textbooks were mainly used by Hindu pupils in North India, with the majority of Muslim students opting for Urdu alternatives.

But such an option was not widely available in Punjab, where the bulk of students had to be taught the same textbook in the same script, making for a more inclusive and religiously neutral historical narrative. Because of these aspects of the textbooks, critics like Rafi-ud-Din Hashmi have refused to accept *Tarikh-i-Hind* as a representative of Iqbal's writings. In his opinion, Iqbal must have simply lent his name to the project without properly scrutinising its text. Hashmi claims to have found alternative copies of the text which carry the exact same details but with slight variations in the text. Not all the 'objectionable' content from the variant copies, however, has been expunged.

But even some deletions in the text allow Hashmi to make the claim that the textbook would first have appeared as a sample copy for the approval of the textbook committee. It was when Iqbal read the text in its printed form, hypothesises Hashmi, that he found some text to his disliking and asked for its removal before further distribution.⁷ A more plausible explanation is that while Iqbal was surely limited by the restraints enforced by the textbook committee in writing about history, his idea of the past found expression in the realm of fancy where he imaginatively adopted literary tropes to conjure up the picture of the past which did not admit to the superiority of modernity and gave the 'will to power' to the Muslim community.

Teaching Urdu in Colonial Punjab

The interest of such a towering intellectual figure as Iqbal in getting involved in the textbook industry shows its considerable profitability as well. This was even more so for textbooks and readers compiled for the teaching of Urdu language and literature. Not only did they cover a larger market comprising Punjab, the United Provinces and the Madras



presidency, they were also taught at various grade levels. This was unlike history which was compulsory only for higher grades. Hence, a greater number of Urdu textbooks from the colonial period have survived because, unlike history, they were taught at various grade levels over a large area. Given the profitability of this venture, numerous publishers competed with each other to have their textbooks accepted. For this purpose, they tried to enlist the services of leading figures of the Urdu literati. Another reason for the survival of Urdu textbooks in comparatively large numbers, therefore, is their association with leading Urdu writers.

The issues of religious neutrality and reverence for holy figures, in addition to non-judgmental description of history, were also a concern in textbooks of language and literature. They should not, for example, invoke Allah, but rather God more generally, at the beginning of the book; better still, they should insert a more generic description of the Universe and its mysteries. Similarly, they had to cover such figures as Ram 'ji', the 'Prophet' Muhammad and 'Guru' Nanak, among others. Depending on the religious affiliation of the author of the textbook, it was possible that the author would favour his own religion by including more chapters about it, but it could not disrespect other religions or totally ignore them if it was to stand any chance of getting approved for government-run schools which were attended by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. While it was possible for communities to have their own schools where instruction in Hindi, Urdu or Gurumukhi could be imparted, for all practical purposes the number of such schools remained limited and the major access to education was through government schools which were monitored by the Directorate of Public Instruction.

An additional feature of Urdu textbooks during the colonial period, along with its concerns with historical and religious neutrality, was the promotion of a specific kind of literature in conformity with the moral standards of the Victorian age. This is why classics with "the frank and uninhibited allusion to sex in the medieval Persian classics [...] were discarded and new ones in Urdu as well as Hindi were substituted in their place" (Rahman 2011:26). Not only were these texts 'decent', they also incorporated the moral precepts of the 'modern' world. In Tariq Rahman's words:

These texts endorsed new, modern, values instead of the older, medieval ones. At the ontological level the world was seen as an ordered, rule-governed, causally functioning cosmos. The medieval world, on the other hand, was magical. That is, it had



no order as rules were superseded by miracles and cause and effect were held in abeyance by enchantment. [...] Thus, while the medieval texts were theological, linguistic or literary; the modern ones were scientific and analytical. [...] The modern texts, on the other hand, endorsed middle class virtues: order, good management, frugality, sobriety, hard work and sexual modesty—just the very things Muslim reformers wanted to reform in their decadent society. The new texts also taught respect and admiration for the British government, regard for the rule of law and other modern, civic virtues. Hence, modernity was very much a part of being a colonial subject of the British Empire in India. (Rahman 2011: 26)

These modern values were to be imbued in the textbooks as well. Among the values described above, the said textbooks promoted the concept of 'natural poetry'—a theme beloved of certain British officers and scholars of Punjab who patronised such poetry in the late nineteenth century. A corollary of this regard for naturalism was a fascination with global geography and an exploration of its many wonders. This was true not just for Urdu but for Hindi textbooks as well. Summarising the contents of a Hindi reader published in 1911, Orsini comments "Simple natural and physical descriptions of nature, a poem in praise of education and a final one on God who is presented as a well-meaning creator without sectarian specifications, concluded the book" (2009: 100).

The Urdu textbooks for colonial Punjab during the twentieth century followed a similar pattern. Iqbal, in collaboration with Hakim Ahmad Shuja (1893-1969), compiled four Urdu textbooks for the students from class five to eight. While at the time of publication of *Tarikh-i-Hind* in 1913, Iqbal was a prominent Muslim poet and intellectual, by 1920s and 1930s he had been knighted, participated in the round table conference and been elected to the Punjab Legislative Council as well. All his four textbooks carried the requisite ingredients described above. In the preface for the class six textbook, the compilers refer to the need of texts which, while maintaining a literary quality and content which held the interest of the students, should be reflective of the recent trends in the language which had opened it up to new developments in world literature and rational sciences. In addition, Iqbal and Shuja vowed to cultivate love for the motherland (*madar-i-watan ki muhabbat*), moral values and an ethical worldview which would make students bold rather than timid.

The textbook for grade five starts with a poem by Altaf Husain Hali. It is titled *Khuda ki Qudrat* (God's Nature) which, as explained by the



title itself, glorifies the creator of the universe without any explicit religious content or reference to any specific religion. It also carries an essay by Hali on the "Blessings of the British Empire" in which he talks about the chaos and violence preceding the coming of the British and advancements made in industry, promotion of education and maintenance of law and order because of their benevolent rule in India. In addition, there are chapters on such diverse figures as Queen Victoria and Helen Keller, and themes including good health and gluttony. The textbook for class six has a more interesting mix of poetry and essays on such themes and personalities as Raja Harish Chandar, James Fergusson and Alexander the Great. For class seven and eight, compilers included "marsiyas" by Mir Anis and poems or essays on Ramchandra 'ji' and his exile.

All the four Urdu textbooks—which Iqbal compiled—contained a poem on India. Written for class six it starts with this couplet:

*Hum Bharat Mata ki Sewa mai tan man dhan ko laga dain gay,
Hum kaisay Jawan hain Bharat ke ye duniya ko dikhla dain gay.*⁸

In the service of mother India we bequeath our body mind and wealth

For what men of India are we, shall show our courage to the world. (Iqbal & Shuja 1929: 16)

For the class seven textbook, Iqbal chose one of his own poems titled *Mera Watan* (My Country). It talks about the religious plurality and philosophical and scientific achievements of India. Iqbal did not choose his famous poem *Saare jahan se acha Hindustan humara* which has become a national song in independent India. But even this poem and others included by him for the textbook were published or reprinted at a time when Iqbal had become a strong critic of the Western idea of nationalism and was clearly developing conceptual alternatives within Islamic religious traditions.

There were other prominent members of the Urdu literati who also wrote or compiled textbooks, although no one could quite compete with the towering stature of Iqbal. One such example is a textbook written by Sayyid Mumtaz Ali, first published in 1934. It carries a specimen of "natural poetry" in the form of a poem on dawn and exemplifies the geographical imaginary of the period by including a chapter titled *Bambai se London* (From Bombay to London). The textbook also tries to connect to the wider world with a chapter on the discovery of Australia (Ali 1947a). Another textbook by Mumtaz Ali in



the same series for advanced level students carries a chapter on the journey to the South Pole (Ali 1947b).

One textbook, *Urdu Middle Course, Hissa Chaharam Athween Jamat ke liyay*, is an interesting example of how the various religious and historical traditions of Punjab were accommodated. It starts with Altaf Husain Hali's *hamd* which is an invocation of a powerful Deity rather than being religiously particularistic. It has various chapters on historical figures such as Aristotle, the Maha Kavi (great poet) Kalidas, and cities like Taxila and Constantinople. The geographical landscape of its contents is extensive as well, with chapters on Nagpur, Rangoon, Gwalior, Bhopal and Lucknow along with "Negros of Nigeria" and the people of Japan. A chapter on government councils introduces administrative/political structures. The chapter about British rule in India describes the arrival of the British as a purely commercial/profit-driven venture which was later transformed into political dominion as they tried to offset the attempts of French expansion in the region (*Urdu Middle Course* 1946).⁹

The best example of an Urdu textbook, and perhaps the most popular for its time period, is *Sarmaya-i-Urdu* for matriculation students by Hafiz Mehmud Shirani (Shirani 1944). It is full of classical texts such as *Bagh-o-Bahar* by Mir Aman, *Nairang-i-Khayal* by Muhammad Husain Azad, *Muqaddama-i-Sher-o-Shairi* by Altaf Husain Hali, *Khiyalistan* by Sajjad Haider Yaldaram, *Ibn-ul-Waqt* by Nazir Ahmad and *Fasana-i-Azad* by Ratan Nath Sarshar among others. Except for Mir Anis's *marsiya* and a poem on the victory of Khyber—a battle fought against the Jews during Prophet Muhammad's lifetime—by Hafiz Jallandhari, there is no religious content in the poetry. The poems of Iqbal are *Himala*, *Abr-i-Kohisar*, *Ek Arzu*, *Dagh*, *Haqiqat-i-Husan*, *Ek Sham*, *Sitara* and *Sitaron se Aagay* which, once again, are reflective of the naturalistic poetry which was favoured for teaching purposes.

The Postcolonial Continuities and Discontinuities

There was a visible continuity in the content of Urdu textbooks, and to some degree in that of history textbooks, between the colonial and postcolonial periods. For example, *Jadid Urdu Course, Middle Skulon ki chatti jamat ke liyay* was reprinted by its publisher in 1949 (*Jadid Urdu Course* 1949). The title of the book carries a small Pakistani flag which is the only visible change to have taken place as the contents of the



book remain the same. It includes Munshi Durga Suhaye Suror's poem *Sita ji ki Darkhast* (Sita's request). One of its couplet is:

*hamrah apnay bun mai mujhe Nath lay chalo,
rekha tmharay charnon ki hon saath lay chalo.*

(Take me besides you to the jungle of your banishment O Lord protector

I'm meant to follow your footsteps take me with you). (ibid.: 59. Translation my own.)

In the early 1950s, the education department of the Punjab Government, in addition to school textbooks, commissioned the publication of books which carried historical tales. The purpose of these books, as noted by one of the authors in the preface, was that children like to listen to stories. The stories written were to be such that they would inspire children with courage and the sentiment to help others, build their character and motivate them to serve the nation, religion, country and the humanity at large (*Tarikhi Kahaniyan* 1952: a). These books had stories about Moses, Umar b. Abdul Aziz, Tipu Sultan, Napoleon, Ram Chandar, Muhammad b. Qasim, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Iqbal among others. The chapter on Ram Chandar 'Ji' is about his bin bas or exile. The content of such storybooks published by the newly constituted Textbook Board became explicitly Islamic in the 1970s.¹⁰ There were no non-Muslims to be found in these stories and only Muslim personalities and "heroes" of medieval and modern times were included.

Even when some early changes were made in the textbooks, they were mainly concerned with expunging material relating to non-Muslims. *Aala Urdu hissa saum bara'i Jama'at Hashtam* textbook was officially prescribed by the education department for class eight. It was written by such eminent writers as Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, Mirza Maqbul Beg Badakhshani, Sayyid Viqar Azim, with M. A. Makhdumi as editor (*Aala Urdu* 1957). The textbook had a classical streak in it with such authors as Ghalib, Mir Anis, Mir Amman, Nazir Ahmad, Muhammad Husain Azad, Altaf Husain Hali, Muhammad Iqbal, Abdul Halim Sharar and Maulwi Zaka Ullah. There was some religious content in the form of *hamd* and *marsiya* poems. Muhammad Husain Azad's essay on Alamgir's invasion of the Deccan is not included as an apologia for Aurangzeb but for the aesthetic pleasure of Azad's prose (ibid.: 67). The poem chosen from Iqbal's poetry is *Bazm-i-Anjum*. This too is included because it corresponds to the concept of 'natural



poetry', rather than choosing from his more explicit poetry glorifying Islam, which became a norm for the later period.

While a clear break with past practices begins in the 1960s, some visible changes could be seen in the 1950s as well. Sayyid Viqar Azim's *Achi Kitab, Chothi Jamat ke Liyay*, approved by a government circular in 1957, is one such example (Azim 1961). It starts with a chapter on "Bismillah". It is about a seven-year-old boy called Khalid. "He was told by his father that all Muslims are the creations (banday) of Allah, there is only one God and Hazrat Muhammad is His last Messenger" (ibid.: 9). There is a chapter on Humaray Nabi (Our Prophet) and Sirat-i-Rasul (Biography of the Prophet). Now the focus of geographical exploration is Sarhad ki wadiyan aur hasin manazir (The Valleys and Beautiful Scenery of the Frontier Province) and Sakhar ka band (Sakhar Barrage). What can be considered exotic is Mashriqi Pakistan ke Mahi Gir (Fishermen of East Pakistan). There are no chapters on personalities and events of 'general' or 'global' interest.

With a lesser degree, the same holds true for the idea of history and its teaching in the postcolonial period. One of the earliest samples of history textbooks in Pakistan is *Tarikh-i-Pak wa Hind* by Riaz-ul-Islam, Shaukat Ali and Z. H. Zaidi (1953). Written by three young scholars who later became Pakistan's leading historians, this book continues with the past tradition of history textbooks. The first 18 chapters focus on the pre-Muslim period with an introductory chapter on the geography of India in its entirety, the people of India and the sources of Indian history. It is followed by the usual account of the Indus valley, the Ramayan and Mahabharat, Buddhism, Jainism, the Greeks, Ashoka, the Gupta Empire, Chinese pilgrims' accounts and the Rajput states.

One obvious reason for this continuity was that it was not immediately possible to change the content of textbooks. But the fact that the content changed little till the late 1950s and only got a systematic ideological reorientation in the 1960s clearly shows the transitive and evolutionary nature of the concepts and ideologies which were developed to shape the contours of Muslim identity and Pakistani nationalism.

Instituting Muslim Nationalism in Urdu and History Textbooks

By the time Ayub Khan came to power in 1958, Islam as the *raison d'être* of Pakistan's creation and the vision for its future was well



established. In Ayub Khan's estimation, no systematic effort had been made to fully utilise this ideology for strengthening national cohesion and developing a modern concept of law-abiding citizenry. He saw the root cause of this deficiency in the education system which failed to articulate a vision of Islam compatible with the national needs of Pakistan. One of his earliest measures was, therefore, to setup a commission on national education in 1959. The main task of this commission was to stress "the need for a reorganisation and reorientation of the existing education system so as to evolve a national system which would better reflect our spiritual, moral, and cultural values" (Report of the Commission 1960: 1).

The idea was to use Islamic ideology to develop citizens of the modern state. The commission's report is filled with references to such 'Islamic beliefs' and practices as honesty, social justice and rationality. "These concepts of spiritual and moral values, of nation building, of scientific development, of enlightened citizenship, and of public services" were to be the guide of Pakistan's educational system (ibid.: 13).¹¹ The report did not just limit itself to recommending the teaching of Islamic studies as a compulsory subject from class one to eight, but also impressed upon the teachers and scholars of this field the need to adopt an objective approach with additional expertise and up-to-date knowledge advancements in the fields of economics, philosophy, sociology, psychology and political science (ibid.: 211). Only then the project of a modern Islamic citizenry could be realised through the medium of education.

The commission did not simply envisage the ideal citizen and his making through education, but emphasised the need for an emotional, personal link with the country and the basis for which it stood. As the report said,

a citizen must have a deep and abiding love for his country [...] conceived not as a vague sentimental feeling, but as a genuine appreciation for the spirit of Pakistan [...] characterised by a pride in the nation's past, an enthusiasm for its present, a firm confidence in its future, and a conviction that every citizen has a basic responsibility to contribute what he can to the growth and strength of the nation. (ibid.: 229)

To make a transition from theoretical conceptualisations of Islamic ideology to practical demonstrations of affiliation and loyalty towards the state and obedience to it as law-abiding citizens, schools were to organise assemblies for the singing of the national anthem and compo-



sing a "national pledge" embodying the sentiments of love and loyalty for the country (ibid.: 232). A flag hoisting ceremony was to take place at least once a month. Similar activities were recommended for colleges on a weekly basis.

In another major policy decision, in 1965 Ayub Khan's regime sought a major overhaul of the school curriculum and textbooks with a heavy dose of ideological indoctrination. In line with Ayub Khan's vision, the designing of the curriculum and selection of textbooks for schools had already been centralised through the establishment of a Textbook Board in both wings of the country. The West Pakistan Textbook Board was established in 1962 (it was renamed as Punjab Textbook Board in 1971). For primary and middle classes, the syllabus was to be prepared by the Directorate of Public Instruction; for secondary and higher secondary education, by the Intermediate Education Boards; and for polytechnic institutes by the Board of Technical Education. At times, the textbook board would appoint a committee of experts to write a particular textbook in accordance with the syllabus or ask for manuscripts through open bidding (Ahmad 1974: 67).

In order to realise Ayub Khan's vision, a committee was constituted to inculcate patriotism and Islamic ideology. In its deliberations, the committee pointed out the measures taken so far to achieve the stated goals. While religious instruction had been made compulsory from class one to eight, it observed, proposals were floated for "promoting love of the country within the framework of Muslim nationalism" (Ideology of Muslim Nationalism 1965: 6). This required spelling out the concept of Muslim nationalism in clear terms. The Governor's conference held between 1 and 4 June 1965, observed that the "message of Muslim nationalism had to be carried to every corner of the country through the text books and other literature to the new generation who were unfamiliar with the reasons behind the creation of Pakistan" (ibid.: 11-2).

In order to show compliance with the decisions of the Governor's conference, the West Pakistan Textbook board reported that a number of textbooks were being prepared for primary and middle classes in Urdu, Sindhi and Pashto in which an "Islamic ideology and message of Muslim nationalism will find prominent place" (ibid.: 20). The syllabi of Social Studies for classes one to ten were thoroughly overhauled with special emphasis on Islamic ideology and a message of Muslim nationalism. 'Islamiyat' or Islamic studies was made a compulsory subject for class nine and ten as well. A comprehensive programme of



lectures for school was also prepared to achieve the goals set by Governor's conference (ibid.: 40-1). Similar developments were reported by the textbook committee of East Pakistan.

The ideological apparatus established during Ayub Khan's time was to be formally instituted in textbooks which were to serve as the medium through which a certain vision of history was to be promoted, resulting in the inculcation of strong patriotic feelings and firm belief in a distinct and superior Muslim identity.

The draft curriculum for English Medium Schools, prepared by the Government of West Pakistan's Education Department in 1964 recommended a focus on great personalities. This included, for social studies in class nine, such figures as the Prophet Muhammad, Abraham, Jesus, the first four Caliphs of Islam, Fatima Jinnah, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, and Sheikh Saadi. For class five, these included: Imam Husain, Khalid bin Waleed, Tariq Bin Ziyad, Rabia Basri, Abdul Qadir Jilani, Data Gunj Bakhsh, Razia Sultana, Queen Victoria, Florence Nightingale, Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan and Allama Iqbal. Travellers and discoverers like Ibn-i-Batutta, Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Captain Cook, Marco Polo, Hieun Tsaung were also to be taught to classes four and five (Draft Curriculum 1964: 67).

For social studies in class six, however, there was to be a section on ancient civilisation. It included the Indus Valley civilisation, the Aryans and their lives/religion, the spread of Buddhism, Hinduism, the invasion of Alexander and then the Muslim period (ibid.: 81-2). There was to be a section on citizenship as well, with discussions relating to the concept of citizenship, the obligations of a citizen, the concept of democracy and the welfare state; student participation in charitable and welfare societies of the school, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Junior Red Cross Society, was to be encouraged (ibid.: 82-3).

The most drastic disconnect with the past could be seen in Urdu textbooks produced since the late 1960s. There were no more privately published textbooks. All textbooks were still compiled by a panel of eminent writers but their content had become overtly Islamic. One of the earliest examples is *Adab Paray* for higher secondary students compiled by Dr Waheed Qureshi, Dr Sayyid Abdullah, Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mihr, Sayyid Imtiaz Ali Taj, Hamid Ahmad Khan, Dr Muhammad Sadiq and Maulana Salah-ud-Din Ahmad. The poems of Iqbal included in this textbook are *Fatima b. Abdullah, Masjid-i-Qurtuba* (The Mosque of Cordoba), *Tariq ki Duwa* (Tariq's Prayer) and *Khitab ba Jawanan-i-Islam* (Address to the Youth of Islam) (*Adab Paray* 1972).



This became the standard pattern from 1970s onward. One notable exception was *Muraqqa-i-Adab (Ghiyarnvi Barhnvi Jamat ke liyay)* compiled for intermediate students during the heyday of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's "Islamic Socialism", by Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan, Professor Qayyum Nazar and Professor Sajjad Baqir Rizvi (*Muraqqa-i-Adab* 1975). In this textbook, Iqbal's poem *Lenin Khuda ke Huzur* (Lenin in the presence of God) was also included. Further, reflecting the socialist rhetoric of Bhutto's period, Ehsan Shahid's poem *Ek Jagirdar se* (To a Landlord), and Josh Malihabadi's *Kisan* (Peasant) was also part of the textbook. But this was simply a temporary deviation, as ideological indoctrination was re-introduced in the 1980s. The curriculum committee for Urdu in 1988 clearly specified the aims and objectives of the curriculum to be understanding and following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, the Companions, the Ahl-i-Bait and eminent spiritual religious personalities and to love the Islamic world, respect the revered figures, books and places of worship of other religions and to be aware of the virtues (fazilat) of Jihad (*Nisab-i-Urdu* 1988).

Similarly, during Zia's regime, Pakistan Studies was made a compulsory subject for undergraduate degrees, including for the students of medicine and engineering. A special textbook was prepared for this level by the joint effort of the Federal Ministry of Education, the University Grants Commission and Allama Iqbal Open University among other institutions. The members of the course committee and course team included Shariful Mujahid, Muniruddin Chughtai, Abdul Hamid and Dr. Safdar Mehmood among others. It skipped the entire period of pre-Muslim history and the physical geography of the subcontinent. It was divided into chapters as follows: the Pakistan Ideology; the Land of Pakistan; the Shaping and Evolution of the Muslim Society in the Subcontinent; the Pakistan Movement; the Struggle for Pakistan; the Role of the Ulema; the Establishment of Pakistan; Efforts for the Implementation of the Islamic System in Pakistan; Pakistan and the Islamic World (Aziz 2012: 102).

This has since become the standard pattern for all the textbooks for Pakistan studies for matriculation, intermediate and undergraduate studies. The historical legacy of the pre-Muslim period was disowned and the physical geography of the entire region became irrelevant. Pakistan was no longer to seek its historical roots and traditions in South Asia but in the wider Muslim world. The 'exotic' was not the far flung tribes of Africa or the South Pole but the 'familiar' geography of the Muslim world and its rivers. The vision of the region no longer



extended to Lucknow and Bombay, but was narrowed down to the cities of Pakistan. To extend Aminah Mohammad-Arif's analysis, the Islamisation of time and space had taken place in Pakistani textbooks (Mohammad-Arif 2007).

Conclusion

The vernacular textbooks during the colonial period were not devoid of an ideological agenda. The notion of fact-based history was intended for the pre-colonial part of Indian history. Rather than appraising the rich civilisational heritage of India's ancient and medieval empires, these textbooks focused on narrating events and battles in the name of maintaining neutrality in the historical narrative so as not to offend different communities. The same approach was not used for the colonial period of Indian history, which clearly reflected a positive bias in favour of British rule and its various civilisational contributions. It was not, in other words, a critical understanding but particular ideologised schemata of the Indian past which were promoted through vernacular textbooks.

That such an idea about the past was fiercely contested can be seen in other narratives about the past in multiple forms ranging from scholarly works on history to historical fiction and poetry. So while Iqbal had to operate within the disciplinary regime of the colonial state in contributing to a textbook on history, his literary works and political-philosophical writings suggested a totally different outlook. The ostensible notion of religious neutrality is also eroded in the case of Urdu textbooks of colonial Punjab, when we consider the fact that religion or religious inspired moral lessons were added for the moral progress of colonial subjects. Rather than necessarily adding to pluralistic coexistence, this exacerbated the demand for separate schooling systems for different religious communities. The idea of imperial cosmopolitanism was thinly veiled under geography lessons on different continents and their races, while the concepts about literature were expressed in the form of natural poetry in Urdu textbooks.

The ideologisation of textbooks can as such be seen as a point of continuity between the colonial and postcolonial periods in terms of policy, albeit with an emphasis on a different set of values. But this link with the colonial antecedent also shows the impact of political exigencies in shaping the content of textbooks and the possibilities which exist in reshaping them. This is clearly drawn out in the case of both history and Urdu textbooks. Till the 1960s, it was possible to



trace the history of Pakistan without unyoking it from the larger history of India. Similarly, the themes, poets and their particular verses selected for Urdu textbooks are more reflective of the shifting nature of the political agenda being followed than a development in the literary tradition of the language itself. It is then not the content of textbooks as such but the textbook culture itself, which includes both its pedagogical limitations and ideological burden, that needs to be re-imagined in order for a more meaningful transition from colonial subject hood to postcolonial citizenry.

Endnotes

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² I have benefited from the comprehensive review of existing works on textbooks in Sudipa Topdar's work. See: Topdar 2015.

³ For an overview of North Indian Urdu literati's contributions to Punjab, cf. Diamond 2011.

⁴ For example, I could only find a few textbooks from the colonial period and these too were dumped in the library of Punjab Textbook Board. These are from different years and not always the recommended text for the same class.

⁵ It says: "*Mazhab Islam ke bani Hazrat Muhammad thay. Aap 570 mai Arab ke Qabila Quresh mai shehr Macca mai paida howay.*" *Dilchasp Tarikh-i-Hind, Hissa Awwal* (Dilchasp Tarikh-i-Hind. Lahore: Gulab Chand Kapur and Sons, 1932), pp. 141-2.

⁶ For example, it addresses Lord Curzon as *aap* and *unhon*.

⁷ See Rafi-ud-Din Hashmi's chapter "Tarikh-i-Hind: Chand Tasrihat" in Hashmi 2004.

⁸ As Nasir Abbas Nayyar's close reading of the textbooks compiled by Iqbal and Shuja suggests, however, the texts even on nationalism, along with other material, were not ideologically neutral as they might appear from the outset as they reinforced the civilizing mission of the British. Nayyar's book is an excellent account of numerous other Urdu textbooks for the period, mostly published by Munshi Nawal Kishore Press of Lucknow. See Nayyar 2014, pp. 88-108.

⁹ Another textbook by Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (1950), *Urdu ki tisri kitab ba tasvir primary ki chauthi jamat ke liyay*, was originally approved by education department of Punjab in 1934. It was still being taught in postcolonial Pakistan while carrying a distinct imprint of colonial emphasis on naturism. It starts with a chapter on Sun. It has chapters on Baba Guru Nanak, Japanese children, Municipal committee and Bombay.

¹⁰ Examples include Abdul Latif (1975a), *Asr-i-hazir ke Islami qu'aid* (Islamic Leaders of the Contemporary Age), which had chapters on Jinnah, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, Raza Shah Kabir, Jamal Abdul Nasir and Sukarno; Abdul Latif (1975b), *Panj Ganj* (Five Treasures); Abdul Latif (1975c), *Tarikh-i-Islam ke eham aur zarin waqiat* (Important and Golden Episodes of Islamic History); and Shafiqi Ehadipuri (1977), *Musalman sipah salar* (Muslim Military Commanders).

¹¹ In order to develop such an ideal citizen type, the seventh grade *Geography and Civics* textbook, for example, published in 1962 included such chapters as "What It Means to be a Good Pakistani" and "Standing in Queue". See: Rosser 2003, 126-7.



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