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Gujranwala Under the British Raj: The Politics of Control and Dissent

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Submission: August 06, 2026 Revised: August 21, 2026 Accepted: September 10, 2026 Available Online: September 25, 2026 Keywords: British Raj, Gujranwala District, Colonial Administration, Political Control, Resistance and Dissent, Punjab Politics, Pakistan Movement	The current chapter will discuss how Gujranwala during the era of the British Raj was a district that was characterized by this intertwined process of order and political awakening in the form of dissents. As soon as the Punjab was annexed in 1849, the rule of the British was consolidated in structuring a military-dominated bureaucracy and provinces and an effective district administration. In Gujranwala, there was widespread dependence of colonial rule on local loyal elements like Sikh chiefs and major landlords who were conferred honorific titles and also judicial and administrative powers. This helped in consolidating the rule of the British in Gujranwala in reliance on local notables who could control rural society and raise finances and manpower. Politics in Punjab had remained restricted for many years due to British reservations regarding Punjabi politics and their preference for a centralized administration. However, the beginning of the twentieth century introduced a slow process of constitutional advancement that enabled representation and restricted representation at the district level. Gujranwala also emerged as an important center for politics as a result of its proximity to Lahore, religious mix, and being a major source of recruitment for the war efforts of World War I. The dissents rose considerably following the First World War, especially in the campaign for opposition to repressive legislation and emergency powers.
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Introduction

Gujranwala is an important urban and industrial town of present-day Pakistan and is an important constituent part of the eastern Punjab industrial belt (Rana, Ali, & Mushtaq, 2025). However, its historic importance dates back prior to its modern development. Since the area of Gujranwala lies in the fertile plains of Rechna Doab and along an important communication route north of Lahore, the area was strategically located for commercial, military, settlement, and administrative purposes (Javed-Ur-Rehman, Ali, & Iqbal, 2025). While the exact founding date of the town is debatable, Gujranwala can be considered to be an essentially new town, as compared to Lahore, Sialkot, and Eminabad. One school of thought connects its development with the settlement of Gujjars in the 18th century, while other sources indicate that a town existed in the area at least since the 16th century (Rana, Ali, & Mushtaq, 2025).

According to local tradition, the name Khanpur Sansi is considered a precursor to the name given to the settlement, whereas recent literature has also focused on the importance of Sarai Gujran, which was located close to Khyali Gate, with reference to the battles fought by Ahmad Shah Abdali in the eighteenth century (Randhawa, 2025; Rana, Ali, & Mushtaq, 2025). The city of Gujranwala seems to have developed over time from groups of settlements, sarais, agrarian settlements, and networks of transportation into an increasingly important urban place.

The annexation of Punjab in 1849 brought about significant changes in the political and administrative setting of the area. The administration of Lord Dalhousie ensured that the newly acquired province came under the jurisdiction of the Board of Administration, which included Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence, and Charles Mansel (Douie, 1916). Later on, there was a restructuring of district administration, and in the period from 1851 to 1852, the upper Rechna Doab area was further divided into two districts called Sialkot and Gujranwala. The Gujranwala district was composed of four tahsils, namely: Gujranwala, Ramnagar, Hafizabad, and Sheikhpura (Punjab Government, 1935-36).

However, colonization went beyond the administrative borders into the fields of land settlement, revenue accounting, legal regulation, and the development of judiciary, which increasingly brought agrarian society under the documentary and bureaucratic control of the state. For instance, in Gujranwala, the Mahalwari system formalized the evaluation of land and revenue collection, and the process of differentiation of the court system from an administration-centered structure started after the Punjab Courts Act of 1884 (Rehman, 2018; Javed-Ur-Rehman, Ali, & Iqbal, 2025). Consequently, land and law became key tools of the colonial regime.

At the same time, the British colonizers needed cooperation with influential local actors. In particular, after the rebellion of 1857, chiefs, landlords, and other socially prominent mediators were crucial for maintaining the power of the colonial regime (Talbot, 1988; Rehman, 2018). One of the most illustrative sources in this context is Griffin's book *The Panjab Chiefs*, which was edited by Charles Francis Massy in 1890 and includes lists of notable families with their status in the colonial regime, such as the Sardar Mahar Singh Chachi of Gujranwala (Griffin, 1890). Thus, through the system of granting titles, honors, and administrative positions, the colonial regime incorporated selected local actors in the governmental system.

The colonial power structure was embedded within a rich and complex social and cultural context. The case of Gujranwala highlights the role of neighborhood relations, occupational groups, festivals, and other kinds of collective activities (Akbar, Ali, & Iqbal, 2025). Late in the nineteenth century, Basant became an important element of urban sociability (Akbar, Ali, & Iqbal, 2026a), and pehalwani and akhara had connections with patronage, discipline, honor, and reputation, as wrestlers from Gujranwala became renowned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Akbar, Ali, & Iqbal, 2026b). While these institutions were not politically oriented per se, they were components of a wider social context in which colonial power structure and politics were embedded.

Nonetheless, until much of the nineteenth century, representative political participation in Punjab was restricted as the colonial administration relied extensively on bureaucracy, landlords, and local intermediaries (Talbot, 1988; Gilmartin, 1988). The Indian Councils Act in 1909 enhanced legislative councils and the elected element but political participation was still limited (Indian Councils Act, 1909). In turn, the Government of India Act in 1919 advanced constitutional reform and altered the nature of provincial and representative institutions (Government of India Act, 1919). Taken together, these measures made district politics part of provincial and all-India political development.

Gujranwala became well-known as a site of political unrest by 1919. The Disorder Inquiry Committee devoted considerable attention to the district with regard to the anti-Rowlatt agitation, hartals, disturbances, attacks on communications, destruction of government property, and application of martial law measures (Government of India, 1920). Hence, the history of British Gujranwala is not simply one of colonial governance or prolonged resistance but is rather defined by constant interaction between the means of control and acts of rebellion. Colonial power was exercised by means of bureaucracy, administration of lands and revenues, courts of justice, intermediary elements, patronage, and political representation while constitutional reforms and political activities created additional spaces for challenging that power (Rehman, 2018; Talbot, 1988; Gilmartin, 1988; Javed-Ur-Rehman, Ali, & Iqbal, 2025; Government of India, 1920). In this article, the focus will be placed upon the process of development of that interaction from the period of consolidation of British power after 1849 until emergence of organized political resistance in the twentieth century.

Political Development in Gujranwala

The British decentralized their control by giving land and titles to powerful landowners in the province. While the Indians developed a system of direct electorates and municipalities elsewhere with the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the province of Punjab remained handicapped with nine representatives in the Lt. Governor's council by 1897. Such a move was given recognition with the Minto-Morley reforms that provided only the 19% elected representatives in the Punjab province comprising two million people (Hussain, 1946). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the political situation started to change with the implementation of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms in 1919. This move led to the abolition of the Governor's Council and the formation of the Punjab Legislative Council composed of 94 members; 71 were elected members, while 23 were the nominated members of the Council. This Council

began its work in January 1921; its members were two from Gujranwala in the Punjab Legislative Council. In the First World War, Indian parties stood on the side of the British; the main reason for this was the promise of self-government in India. Due to the introduction of the idea of 'diarchy,' the people of the region became disappointed; the people of Punjab had made the largest sacrifices in the war a reality conceded to by the British, including King George V's recognition of the bravery of the armies from Punjab (Leigh, 1922).

The World War-I and Gujranwala

Gujranwala was a major recruiting ground for the British army under the Raj. The government made a public request for donations in order to cover the costs of the war. In this regard, two distinct forms of funding were amassed. We started by asking individuals to subscribe and, if they liked it, to share it with their friends. In addition, Gujranwala supplied a launch-hospital and aircraft for the war. The sum total included Rs. 2, 25,008 in subscription payments and Rs. 21, 36,355 in funds borrowed from local investors for the war effort. Allegiance and cooperation with the British government was on full display in the massive sums (Leigh, 1922).

The Revolutionary Movements and the Rowlatt Act & Resistance

In December 1917, Mr. Justice Sir Syddney Rowlatt, having taken the charge of the Sedition Committee, started to view the following:

1. The revolutionary movements of India and their procedure.
2. The formulation of laws to counter against any conspiracy the sedition Committee presented its report to the Indian Government on 15th April 1918. Mr. Justice Syddney Rowlatt wrote in his letter: -
3. "As directed by the order appointing us, we have on every occasion sat in Camera (Government of India, 1918)."

In the long run, the Rowlatt Bill was presented to the Imperial legislative Council in January 1919. In fact, these were the two Bills which were presented: -

1. Indian Criminal (Amendment) Bill no. 1 of 1919 (Which was positive in character).
2. The Criminal law (emergency power) Bill no. 2 (Deals with preventive measures).

These Bills were formulated by Mr. Justice Sir Syddney Rowlatt, the Chairman Sedition Committee. Therefore, it was called the Rowlatt Bill and the Rowlatt Act was attributed to him solely after its approval. The first Bill was taken back during the discussion, and the second bill was passed by the majority of the members though all the native members unanimously opposed this bill. Later on, that bill verified by the Viceroy was implemented on 21st March 1919 as the Rowlatt Act (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 1994).

On 5th April 1919, lawyers' meetings at Gujranwala decided to issue a notice for a protest; accordingly, a huge public protest consistent mainly of Hindus was arranged for the evening, as they condemned the Rowlatt Act for being a disgraceful reaction to the loyalty shown by India. On 6th April 1919, a total strike was maintained in Gujranwala, and all bazaars remained closed; similarly, Ram Nagar was closed entirely, while Hafizabad and Wazirabad maintained a half-strike. As there were no major events between 7 and 10 April, restiveness prevailed due to events in Delhi and Amritsar. A number of joint meetings between Hindus and Muslims at Chuhan Kana, also called Farooqabad, and Sanglah resulted in a strike on 12 April at Chuhan Kana, Sanglah, and Hafizabad, followed by anti-Rowlatt speeches. In addition, a strike was arranged at a secret meeting at Wazirabad for 13 April, which was shifted to 15 April due to a Baisakhi fair (Government of India, 1920).

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Gujranwala on 13th April 1919

The events occurring after the 13th of April, 1919, prove to have far-reaching effects on the region of Gujranwala, as gathering crowds were spotted across the region due to events unfolding in the region of Amritsar. In an attempt to save the region from probable disturbances, the British administration made the necessary precautions to avoid the coming event. Colonel O'Brien was transferred on the 12th of April, and on the next day, Mirza Sultan Ahmad took over as the Acting Deputy Commissioner. European as well as American missionaries were asked to vacate the region, who departed on the evening of the 13th of April (Rehman, 2018).

On the next day, that is, the 14th of April, with the surfacing of rumors related to the dead calf found near the Katchi Bridge, the unrest between the two sections of society intensified substantially. This led to rumors that the authorities were involved in the act. This only led to further unrest among the local populace as people gathered in huge numbers and demonstrations took place against

the implementation of the Rowlatt Act with slogans that emphasized the unity between the two major communities; Hindus and the Muslim. Demonstrations took place by damaging rail traffic, communication lines, and setting fire to the Katchi Bridge and government buildings (Rehman, 2018).

Despite the efforts made by the leaders and officials of the area to return to normalcy, the situation only deteriorated, and police had to resort to opening fire after the repeated failure of the crowd to dissipate. During the disturbances that followed, the British authorities employed aerial attacks. At the towns of Gujranwala and nearby areas such as Dhullay and Garjakh, as well as the area near the high school known as the Khalsa High School, which is currently known as the Islamia College, bombs were dropped by aircraft that not only bombed the crowds at the location but also used a machine gun. Official reports indicate that at the location, eleven lives were lost, and twenty-seven people were wounded. Testimony given to the Hunter Commission cited the use of aerial attacks as a measure of deterring the crowds (Indian National Congress, 1920; Government of India, 1920).

The Situation of the other important places in District Gujranwala

The telegraph lines were damaged by the enraged populace of Tehsil Wazirabad. They tore down the Scotland Missionary Church and burned it down. At the Wazirabad railway rest house, about ten Europeans were taken in. The presence of the troops at the station caused the crowd to lick their wounds. In a similar vein, Tehsil Hafizabad saw broken telegraph lines and signals as well as a stoned train that assaulted Mr. Tatam, a Lieutenant in uniform from the military farm. However, he remained secured. In addition, telegraph connections were cut in Sheikhpura and Sanglah on occasion. By Sanglah, the train had been stoned. An assault took place at the Chuhan Kana train station. Under these circumstances, the Momin railway station was looted, and martial law was declared on April 18, 1919 (Rehman, 2018).

The implementation of Martial Law in Gujranwala

On 16 April 1919, the Seditions Meeting Act was imposed on Gujranwala, and the city came under Martial Law. Later, tough notices were dished out by the military authorities to crush any kind of public defiance and to assert the authority of the colonial power. In accordance with Martial Law Rule No. 2, a warning was issued to the merchants that any shopkeeper who closed down his shop or failed to supply goods at reasonable prices to army or police personnel would be arrested and punished physically, including flogging. Another notice under Martial Law (Notice No. 7) indicated the concern of the colonial power about the lack of respect for imperial officials, European civil and military servants, and government representatives. The people of Gujranwala were directed to show obvious marks of respect when meeting such officials. They had to dismount from their horses or vehicles, lower their umbrellas, and give the salute with the right hand. These instances show the forceful nature of British colonial rule in Gujranwala during the period of turmoil following the 1919 disturbance (Rehman, 2018).

Martial Law Activities in Gujranwala

Following the unrest of 14 April 1919, martial law was imposed in Gujranwala and other major cities of Punjab, serving not only to restore order but also to suppress political opposition. From 16 April onward, mass arrests were conducted in both cities and smaller towns, largely under the Defence of India Act rather than martial law provisions (Zulfiqar, 1996). Prominent local figures were publicly humiliated, properties were confiscated, and local representatives were removed, creating an atmosphere of fear. In Gujranwala alone, 179 arrests were recorded, and public flogging was used as a punitive measure, with sentences ranging from five to thirty lashes. Despite internal criticism, colonial officials justified these actions as necessary to reassert authority, and at least twenty-four individuals were publicly flogged in Gujranwala (Indian National Congress, 1920; Zulfiqar, 1996).

Summary Courts

It was clear that the cases for the violation of the Martial order were few. The Summary Courts were empowered to inflict the fines of Rs. 100 and the penalty of lashes. These summary courts were also tasked with the cases put up for the people who caused the speeches to be delivered and the strike to go to (Zulfiqar, 1996).

Connection of Uprising: British Narrative

Before the Hunter Commission, some British officials referred to the disturbances in Punjab as part of a conspiracy that related, in some way, to the revolution in Egypt, Afghanistan, as well as some influence from Bolsheviks as well as Germans. However, during a later period, these statements were accepted as mere speculations that lacked evidence. Mr. Thompson, a Chief Secretary, admitted in front of the Hunter Commission that there was a lack of evidence regarding the international relations that the revolution might have been related to. Lieutenant Colonel A. J. O'Brien, a Deputy Commissioner in Gujranwala, referred to some foreign elements,

yet failed to do so during cross-examination as well, coming to the final conclusion that the disturbances in Punjab did not result from some conspiracy; rather, it came as a result of spontaneous action.

The validity of martial law was also challenged by a member of the House of Commons, namely, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in the Imperial Legislative Council on the 10th of September, 1919. He requested the authorities to furnish information regarding arrests, trials, executions, and casualties. William Vincent of the Home Department replied that the figures presented were as follows: "852 arrests, 1,437 trials completed, plus cases from municipal courts and special tribunals, a preliminary statement to the data which may require modification." The official figures also disclosed the following information: "official figures disclosed that there were 334 deaths, of which 301 were from the district of Amritsar, 14 from the district of Lahore, 17 from the district of Gujranwala, and 2 from the district of Gujrat. A total of 18 people were executed and 1,226 were imprisoned (Official Figures)." Moreover, the validity of the figures was also contested by the member when he claimed that over 1,000 people were killed at the site of the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy and the government was trying to hide the figures while failing to render assistance to the wounded people (Mittal, 1977).

Statements of the British Government

There was a wide gulf between the reports of the Hunter Commission and the Congress Inquiry Committee. It was reported in the Hunter Commission that 11 people were totally killed in Gujranwala during those incidents. But when Madan Mohan Malaviya asked the killings, 17 citizens had been killed in Gujranwala, he was informed afterwards. Similarly, the number of wounded men was also not accurate.

The Congress Inquiry Committee 1919–20 also made note of this. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- The British commanders responsible for the widespread injustice acted in the most heartless manner possible.
- The Very Highness People wrote letters and telegrams to Viceroy Lord Chelmsford, but he paid them little mind. The horrific behavior of the Punjab government was proven by this.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was slandered before the Imperial Council for claiming that the government had twisted the facts, which was eventually proven beyond a reasonable doubt (Indian National Congress, 1920).

Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Gujranwala

His administrative career started in Gujranwala as a Settlement Officer in 1889, and later, he was appointed as the Deputy Commissioner. During his six-year tenure there, he had an intimate knowledge of the region and society, which he later drew upon for his publications. His account exposes a typical colonial mindset that regarded Punjabi society as better handled by paternalism and unofficial justice rather than institutions of representative governance. The connection of O'Dwyer with Gujranwala was marked by his association through the installation of the "O'Dwyer Gate," showing his prestige and loyalty to the empire. The events of April 1919 transformed this dynamic entirely. During the disturbances, large-scale destruction of government property occurred in Gujranwala. The colonial government employed drastic methods like air bombing to regain control (O'Dwyer, 1988). With the withdrawal of Martial Law and the declaration of public pardon in December 1919, popular discontent against colonial oppression emerged. The Municipal Committee deleted O'Dwyer's name from the entrance and his picture from all public buildings in a gesture of collective remembrance of the humiliation, floggings, and violence dished out during O'Dwyer's administration. By the end of 1919, O'Dwyer was called back to Britain and succeeded as Governor of Punjab (O'Dwyer, 1925).

The Abolition of the Rowlatt Act

Consequently, the martial law proclaimed in the Punjab region, including the Gujranwala District, was revoked in June 1919; nevertheless, the Rowlatt Act was still in effect. After the proclamation of the general pardon in December 1919, the Rowlatt Act gradually became of little consequence as previously and was not feared by the public in general. At the same time, the Government of India Act of 1919 was fully enacted and allowed Indians to be accorded some form of political franchise. This was the same year in which the FIRST Punjab Legislative Council was formed on 8 January 1921 and completed its term on 27th October 1923 (Rehman, 2018). The British government revoked certain repressive laws, such as the Rowlatt Act and the Press Act, on the recommendations of the Repressive Laws Committee in March 1922. This removed the major obstacles to political activity and communication. It ushered in the next phase of politics. Political developments were notable during this phase in Punjab (Riddick, 2006).

The Representation of Gujranwala in the Punjab Legislative Council

Institutionalizing religious participation in Punjab's politics was the demand for separate electorates, which was first accepted for Muslims in the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 and then extended to Sikhs via the Government of India Act. Gujranwala was granted Muslim and Sikh seats in the Punjab Legislative Council under the Government of India Act, 1919. The continual political engagement of Muslims and Sikhs within the colonial constitutional framework was ensured by the inclusion of Gujranwala MPs in each succeeding Legislative Council from 1921 to 1930. This representation reflected both rural and urban communities (Punjab Legislative Council, 1921; 1925; 1927; 1930).

With the expansion of provincial representation and the replacement of the Legislative Council with the Punjab Legislative Assembly, the Government of India Act, 1935 brought about these changes. Indicative of the increasing political significance of the area, Gujranwala had numerous representatives in the first Assembly, which ran from 1937 to 1945 and was elected in 1936 (Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937). Under the latter era of colonial rule, Gujranwala was represented by both Muslim and Sikh members of the second and last Assembly, which was formed in 1945 and lasted until July 1947. This highlights the district's continuous importance in the legislative politics of Punjab until independence (Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1947).

The Political History of Gujranwala (1920-1947)

Punjab and Bengal were the most heavily impacted regions of India by the series of political changes that started after 1920. In Punjabi politics, Gujranwala is a pivotal figure. The fact that it is so close to Lahore, the Punjabi capital, is the main attraction. In Gujranwala, Muslims made up the majority. In addition to them, the area was home to Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Jains (Ali, Javed-ur-Rehman, & Shabbir, 2021). The agricultural sector employed the vast majority of the population. Regarding matters of faith and government, each individual held their own opinion. Because of this, Gujranwala became home to supporters and employees from nearly every major political and religious party. The groups' respective leaders convened meetings in which the major political party leaders took part. On various occasions at Gujranwala, these esteemed figures included M. K. Gandhi, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Molana Muhammad Ali Johar, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, and many more. It aptly encapsulates the precise assessment of this city's political importance (M. I. Shamim, personal communication, July 20, 2016).

Akali Movement and Gujranwala

In 1920, the Akali Movement got underway. Its primary goal was to free Gurduwaras from the control of foreign rulers; at the turn of the twentieth century, the British government had taken control of numerous Sikh Gurduwaras and placed Hindu managers over them. The Sikh Volunteers were also essential to this cause. At first, this uprising amounted to little more than agitation. It then took on the persona of a violent party. Concerning this matter, a clandestine gathering was also organized in Gujranwala by the movement that began in 1921. Additionally, a Hindu manager pleaded with the Gujranwala D.S.P. via telegram to assist them in their fight against the Akalis. The forcible occupation of the Gurduwaras by the Akalis was the primary cause. Among the notable Akali leaders from Gujranwala were Babu Labh Singh and Akali Baba Sanat Singh (Singh, 1997).

The prominent Akali chief Sardar Avatar Singh was also a Gujranwala. An important Akali Dal convention took place at Gujranwala prior to Pakistan's division. From all throughout India, about 80,000 Sikhs took part (Mukherjee, 2004). From September 29th to October 1st, 1945, that meeting went on. It described Babu Labh Singh's elevation to the position of Khalasa Panth (Nayar, 1966).

Indian National Congress and Gujranwala

After 1920, Indian National Congress became politically active in Gujranwala, wielding quite influence in the town and its suburbs. Primarily, Hindus from the business section formed the base for the Congress support system, while Sikhs and Muslims also joined in Congress meetings. A number of serious political rallies were held in the name of Congress in Gujranwala, highlighting the emerging role of Gujranwala as a city of great political importance (Mukherjee, 2004).

The magnificent conference of Satyagraha, held on 12 April 1930, exercised a great fascination upon the leading national contingent. Jawaharlal Nehru was attended by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlu, Chaudhary Afzal Haq, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, and other leading figures of the freedom movement. Large public processions and meetings exhibited popular enthusiasm and political mobilization. The fact that local leadership was actively involved in the actions and the repressive attitude of the colonial authorities against municipal officials who were sympathetic to Congress activities underlines both the greater influence exerted by nationalist politics in Gujranwala and the restrictive character of British rule (Nasim, 1982).

Khaksar Movement and Gujranwala

In 1931, Allama Anayat Ullah Mashraqi established the Khaksar Movement. Its primary goal was to adhere to the 24 aims. The three main ones were:

- Allah's absolute dominion
- The integration of the country
- Helping people

Here, the Khaksar Movement's officials were stationed in India's major cities, and commanders were chosen to oversee the organization's infrastructure. According to Zaman (1986), Sheikh Aziz-u-Din was delegated the role of President of District Gujranwala and Nabi Bakhsh was selected as Secretary of Conveyance from Talwandi Musa Khan. Because their training, uniforms, and other symbols were allegedly reminiscent of an army, the British government outlawed the Khaksar Movement on March 19, 1940. Therefore, it may have negative societal effects. In Lahore, eight Khaksars were apprehended after protesting against it. It was Gujranwala who owned seven of them (Yousaf, 2004).

The Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam and Gujranawala

The Majlis-E-Ahrar-E-Islam was formed in December 1929 by leading religious and political personalities such as Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Chaudhary Afzal Haq, Habib-Ul-Rahman Ludhianvi, Maulana Mazhar Ali Khan, and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. This group earned popularity and spread its roots in Gujranwala, where its headquarters was also established in the vicinity of Sialkot Gate. The leading Ahrar personalities used to visit this city and generated support for the group. The Gujranwala region posed an important base to the Ahrars, especially owing to their large number of Muslim brethren. The impact of the Ahrars in Gujranwala was visible during the By-Elections to the Punjab Legislative Council in 1933, in which their leader, Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, won comfortably. The Ahrars, in addition, were ardent supports of the Kashmiri Muslims, who passed through the province of Gujranwala (Chawla, 2011). Sahibzada Syed Faiz-ul-Hassan Shah Sahibzada Syed Faiz-ul-Hassan Shah was the President of the Punjab Chapter of the Punjab Majlis-e-Ahrar. The Punjab-based Ahrar got considerable help from Sahibzada Syed Faiz-ul-Hassan Shah in organizing in Gujranwala (Awan, 2008).

The Sikh Organizations in Gujranwala

The Khalasa Educational Council, Gujranwala, which established Khalasa High School in 1889, was the first Sikh educational institution in the Punjab. The Sikhs' fight for equality in education is plain to see here. The new structure was formally inaugurated in 1912 by Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab Sir Louis William Dane. There was a boarding house and a large hall constructed there as well. In 1917, Guru Nanak Khalasa College (also known as Islamia College) was founded in Gujranwala. According to I. Javed's personal communication dated August 10, 2016, Sardar Sanat Atar Singh was its founder (Rehman, 2018).

Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi traveled to Gujranwala and other parts of Punjab where Martial Law was imposed following the Jallianwala tragedy. After that, he visited Ranjit Singh's birthplace and the Sikh orchards, where he helped restore the land's once-beloved fruit trees after the British government had abandoned them. Khalasa College was also visited by Mr. Gandhi. Along with Ram-Nagar (Rasul-Nagar), Mr. Gandhi also went to Akal Garh (Ali-Pur) (Coward, 2003).

The Central Sikh League

The Central Sikh League was established in Amritsar in December 1919. The Sikhs' political rights were its primary focus. This group's foundational meeting place was Gujranwala in August 1921. Additionally, the renowned Sikh organization in Gujranwala, "the Parbandhak Committee on Temples," was established. The Central Sikh League eventually came to control of. They begged the government to keep the Darbar Sahib (Amritsar) vacant. On the eve of Guru Nanak's birthday, on November 21, 1921, at the Golden Temple in Darbar Sahib, a gathering of protesters gathered at Gujranwala and Gujar Khan to call for the immediate deployment of Sikh soldiers (Rair, 2006).

The Muslim Organizations in Gujranwala

Because Muslims made up the vast majority of Gujranwala's population, the city's economic and educational conditions were completely out of this world. Under those conditions, the local Muslims here did a great service with their plan for self-sufficiency.

The Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, Gujranwala

In 1884, Lahore became home to the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam. Primarily, it aimed to raise and groom Muslim orphans and educate Muslim boys and girls on both a religious and secular basis. On May 10, 1891, the Anjuman was established in Gujranwala. Sheikh Ghulam Muhiy-u-din, a lawyer with the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, was personally invited from Lahore to Gujranwala for this purpose. It was the Anjuman's local efforts that led to the collection of the contribution. A Girls' School was later founded thanks to the Anjuman's companions and their efforts (Saeed, 2006).

The Anjuman-e-Islamia, Gujranwala

The Anjuman-e-Islamia was set up in 1885 in Gujranwala. This organization would manage for a single Primary School till 1891. Later, it was promoted to Middle and then High School. *Khan Bahadur* Molvi Mahboob Alam was retired from his service and returned to Gujranwala. Seeing the school's state deeply troubled him, and he spent the remainder of his life providing educational services. The school was greatly enhanced by it. The Mahboob Alam Islama High School was renamed in 1911 in his honor. Mr. Babu Ata Muhammad, a lawyer, served as secretary of the Anjuman during that period. Haji Rahim Bakhsh was also its president. Mir Jalalpuri and Hafeez Jalandhari were poets who shared their works during the 1923 Anjuman-e-Islamia annual conference (Saeed, 2006).

The Anjuman-e-Khuddam-ul-Muslimin, Gujranwala

During the Khilafat Movement in 1923, an Anjuman was created at Gujranwala in the name of the Anjuman-e-Khuddam-ul-Muslemin. Its primary goal was to advance Muslim social matters, fostering Muslim brotherhood, tolerance, and sympathy. When it became urgent, they urged Muslims to take care of their bodies by exercising regularly and eating a balanced diet so that they could withstand the onslaught of anti-Islamic forces (Saeed, 2006).

The Role of Gujranwala in the Pakistan Movement (1940-1947)

Subsequent to the Lahore Resolution of 1940, this demand for a homeland for Muslims escalated, leading to an emergent Pakistan Movement. This All-India Muslim League not only mobilized Muslims but also involved people belonging to different sections and classes, including members of the trading community, peasants, students, and landowners. Gujranwala was also an ardent center of this movement, with a Muslim League office being set up there since 1935. The role of local leaders was also important to build on the momentum. The Muslim League's program started gathering more momentum after Mian Zia-ul-Haq took over as the president of the City Muslim League in 1943, focusing on politics through unity and collective activity. These measures brought people into politics and made Gujranwala a significant hub of Muslim League politics during the final days of British colonialism (Mian Iqbal Mehmood Dhariwal, personal communication, August 20, 2016).

The Quaid-i-Azam's Visit of Gujranwala

In May 1944, the request of Mian Zia-ul-Haq, the President of the City Muslim League, for Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was on his way to Kashmir, reached him. He initially hesitated due to fear of unnecessary public expenditure. He finally agreed after being assured that a public meeting would not take place. Quaid-i-Azam, along with Miss Fatima Jinnah, made a brief visit on the 8th of May 1944, at the Dak Bungalow, after which they were received by the local leadership of the Muslim League as well as the people. Arrangements were made for the women also. Quaid-i-Azam accepted a contribution of Rs. 1,000, made by the City Muslim League towards the party fund, before leaving for Kashmir (Zia-ul-Haq, 1983).

When Quaid-i-Azam returned from Kashmir on the 28th of July, 1944, his request to stop in Gujranwala was accepted again. A reception was arranged outside the Sheranwala Bagh railway crossing, where people accumulated to welcome Quaid-i-Azam as well as Miss Fatima Jinnah. Quaid-i-Azam expressed his views on the efforts of the Muslim League in the region before moving on to Lahore despite signs of exhaustion from the long travel, while slogans were raised by his supporters (Zia-ul-Haq, 1983).

Election 1945-46 and Gujranwala

It needs to be noted that, under the separate electorate principle, a limited number of seats were reserved for Muslims, which were allocated for the Central Assembly. Hafiz Abdullah, the election contestant of the Muslim League, contested the election from the district of Lyallpur. Due to the large electoral district, the leadership of the Muslim League, located in the city of Gujranwala, actively supported the election campaign. Ultimately, the election results came out positively, as the Muslim League came out as a clear winner in the district, winning the election against the combined opposition from the Unionist, Ahrar, Khaksar, Hindu, Sikh, and

other parties. This winning trend was a harbinger of the 1946 provincial election results, as the candidates, Chaudhary Zafarullah Khan in the city of Gujranwala, representing the city, along with Chaudhary Salah-ud-Din, the elected member from the city of Wazirabad, were elected as winning candidates, clearly reflecting the popularity of the Muslim League, thus infusing the city (Zia-ul-Haq, 1983).

Civil Disobedience against Public Safety Ordinance

Despite the Unionist Party's Allied Government's best efforts, the Muslim League Movement in Punjab was steadily gaining ground. That is why Prime Minister Khizar Hayat was so concerned. A ban on "the Muslim League National Guards" was imposed in the Punjab by Khizar Hayat's "The Public Safety Ordinance" on January 7, 1947. Civil disobedience was declared by the Muslim League leaders in opposition to the ordinance. A large procession was held on the mall. Additionally, the Muslim League's Punjab Assembly members took part. In all, there were seventy-nine of them. Seventy-four of them ended up in prison (Ahmad, 2007).

In the Gujranwala District Jail were held the members of the Punjab Assembly, Salah-u-din Chattah and Mr. Chaudhary Zafar Ullah Khan, as well as other Muslim League leaders such as Mian Manzoor Hussain, Mian Zai-Ul-Haq, Hakeem Niaz Ali, Molana Abdul Rashid Jami, and Barrister Chaudhary Muhammad Sharif. For thirty-six days, people participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. "India will be liberated by June 1948," the British prime minister said in Parliament on 20th February 1947. Despite things not going his way, Khizar Hayat managed to make the most of it. On March 2, 1947, he left the Ministry. All of the political detainees were released after a few days (Ahmad, 2007).

Conclusion

Historically, the Gujranwala region under the British Raj was a site of colonial regulation and popular opposition. Right from the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the British imposed a largely centralized and militarized form of administration upon the region. The administration of Gujranwala was based upon the exercise of strong executive power, extensive bureaucratic controls, and the utilization of collaborator local leaders—Sikh chiefs and influential landlords—who were provided with land and various judicial and administrative dispensations. This colonial system of administration ensured that there was political order and that land revenue and military recruits flowed in regularly. It also ensured that the masses had no real role to play in the administration of the country. Gujranwala was politically quiet for a number of decades. This was not because of popular support but because of oppressive policies and the unavailability of political institutions. Nevertheless, with the introduction of constitutional reforms in the twentieth century, there was some political freedom. Legislative councils and assemblies introduced local representation in addition to political awareness. The social diversity of Gujranwala and its proximity to Lahore made it politically important. The Rowlatt Act Affair and incidents in 1919 constituted a decisive turning point. The imposition of martial law, public hangings, and aerial bombing made visible the repressive base of colonial power and dispelled earlier illusions about the benevolent nature of rule. Gujranwala's role in the final decades under British rule is characterized by its becoming a strong base for political activism, and the city made a significant contribution to the anti-colonial movement and the Pakistan Movement. Hence, while the British ruled by power and patronage, it is the power and patronage that contributed to its downfall.

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Interviews

1. Interview with Mian Iqbal Mehmood Dhariwal, Advocate, son of Mian Zia-ul-Haq (Late), President, City Muslim League Gujranwala (1943-1947), 20 August 2016.

2. Interview with Mian M. I. Shamim, Advocate and Pakistan Movement worker, 20 July 2016.
3. Interview with Professor Iqbal Javed, Former Associate Professor, Islamia College (Khalsa College), Gujranwala, 10 August 2016.



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