



## A Historical Analysis of Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram's Educational Contributions Toward Modernizing Punjab in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstract

Mian Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936) and Sir Chhotu Ram (1881-1945) were the prominent politicians, educationalists, agriculturists and were Education Minister, Revenue Minister, Agricultural Minister and member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in the Pre-Independence Punjab. This study while going through primary sources like Provincial Assembly Debates and Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain, secondary sources like biographies of Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram (Mian Fazl-i-Husain: A Political Biography by Azim Hussain, Sir Chhotu Ram: A Saga of Inspirational Leadership by Balbir Singh and Sir Chhotu Ram: Life and Times by D. C. Verma) and available research articles and journals on the life and achievements of Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram. This paper will discuss the policies, reports, acts, commissions and the committees introduced by the British government and the response of the educational entities appointed in educational institutions in Punjab by going through official documentation. It concludes that did Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram have an important role in modernizing the Punjab in 20<sup>th</sup> century by revolutionizing the educational sector.

**Keywords:** Mian Fazl-i-Husain, Sir Chhotu Ram, Education, Punjab in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### 1. Introduction

Both of Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram were well known as great reformer in undivided Punjab. Both of them tried to modernize the Punjab during 20<sup>th</sup> century by offering their services towards education sector in the Punjab. Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram introduced a lot of educational programs and acts related to it. They served their services for the Muslims and people of the rural areas. The 1930s is important to modernize the Punjab because of the ministerial era of the two prominent leaders, Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram. Mian Fazl-i-Husain remained as minister for six years and Sir Chhotu Ram remained for two years as a minister. Before being the minister, both were the Congressmen.

During their education ministries, the Punjab had uneducated sphere because of that people were living their life like uncivilized societies. Main authority was the British government. Due to this uneducated approach, people were disappointed by the colonial administration from the rural areas of the Punjab. Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram decided to promote the people through their efforts in the educational sector. Both of them started it from establishing school and other educational institutions including "gurukals". The response of this struggle was received to them as the huge number of the students in the institutions specially institutions for female education. The people also adopted a special representation in affairs and colonial administration's institutions. They did not promote only the literary education but also gave proper attention toward the technical and professional education in the Punjab. Due to their remarkable efforts, they were entitled as "Champion" and "Engineer" of social representation in the Punjab under British rule.

Basically, both of them were have the same social basis. Both were landlords but Mian Fazl-i-Husain struggled to promote Muslims of the Punjab and Sir Chhotu Ram raised his voice for the rural people specially peasant class of the Punjab. By their struggle, Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Sir Chhotu Ram tried to present the Punjab as an advanced and educated province as compared to the other progressive provinces of the India.

### 2. Services of Mian Fazl-i-Husain

Mian Fazl-i-Husain remained as minister from 1921 to 1926. He was considered as the great advocate of the Muslims for political, agricultural and educational reforms. During his ministerial reign, he tried to provide a lot of opportunities and facilities to the Muslims of the Punjab in colonial India. He remained as minister at six years in which he changed the cultural and educational sphere by his efforts and services in educational sector. The most highlighted educational services served by Mian Fazl-i-Husain were as following blow:

#### 2.1. Attention towards the Education

In 1924, Mian Fazl-i-Husain was elected again in the Punjab Legislative Council and remained minister until 1926, when he was transferred to as a Revenue Minister. There was no any attention towards educational sector in the Punjab. Mian Fazl-i-Husain was a man and leader with great vision and commitment. He was seeking towards improve every problem including major or minor which was necessary for the community's betterment. His

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tendency was not only towards the middle class and peasantry sector but it was also towards poor, peasants and uneducated people from rich, landlords and educated community. The British government was using just 2 *Annas* for a person's education in India but the other civilized country including Japan, England and United States were using 8 *Annas* for education per head. It was a fundamental cause because of that the nation building process was undermined in India. Mian Fazl-i-Husain paid his special attention towards the people's education as priority.

## **2.2. Education Programme**

Almost, only two percent people were getting education from total population of India. Mostly students were belonged to lower class where there was a great need to give opportunities for enhancing their education level. The literacy rate was very low in the Punjab and education had been reached at its anxious level. By looking to the situation, Mian Fazl-i-Husain estimated that just the education can change the destiny of the people in Punjab. For this purpose, Fazl-i-Husain formed an Educational Program, according which he allocated a lot of financial funds, expanded the establishment of institutes for education and enacted principles for managing the educational sector in the Punjab.

## **2.3. Team Formation**

For quick promotion of the education, Mian Fazl-i-Husain formed his own team in which Sir George Anderson paid his great role as Director of the Public Instruction. Fazl-i-Husain guided his team with confidence and his team also helped him confidently to improve the education at its advanced level. He was also supported by his Council due to which he had been sowed the seed about educational importance in the people of the Punjab.

## **2.4. Anglo-Vernacular Schools**

Mian Fazl-i-Husain just bounded the Education Department to pay its full attention with Anglo-Vernacular instructions in urban areas. Due to this, the primary education was transferred towards the rural areas. Educational expenses of the students were measured on the merit and obtained grades in examinations. These reforms helped to increase the number of students in primary schools and other educational institutes. The strength of students was increased almost 10 times that was measured before taking the responsibility by Mian Fazl-i-Husain as an Education Minister.

## **2.5. Educational Reforms Program**

The Muslims of the Punjab were very backward in the education as compared to the other countries. Mian Fazl-i-Husain forced to the people for providing education to their children by his efforts and activities. These efforts caused to remove all their educational demerits and to secure their positions in the British administration. Mian Fazl-i-Husain formed an Educational Reforms Program and allocated a remarkable amount as budget for the educational sector. Because of it, the Punjab was ranked as most educated and advanced province as compared to the other provinces in British India. Mian Fazl-i-Husain's Educational Reforms Program was not restricted at primary education but it also provided opportunities to the students for their further education. He previous administration had been disappointed and ignored most of the student for their adult education therefore Mian Fazl-i-Husain took the responsibility to remove illiteracy from the Punjab and that's why Punjab was entitled as an educated province by the Educational Commissioner of the Government of Punjab.

## **2.6. Scholarship Programs for Muslims**

Muslims were facing a crucial time including discouragement and disappointment by the colonial administration in Punjab. In Fazl-i-Husain's special decision for education of Punjab's Muslims, he decided to award scholarships for military families and the other Muslims of the Punjab who were taking education in the Anglo-Vernacular Schools in the British Punjab. By seeing the sensitivity of the Muslim's conservation, Fazl-i-Husain appointed Muslim headmasters and teaching staff in schools and educational institutes.

## **2.7. Tendency towards Anjuman-e-Himayat-i-Islam**

Mian Fazl-i-Husain was offering his services to Anjuman-e-Himayat-i-Islam and Islamia College Lahore for proving modern education to the Muslims. But during the ministerial period of Mian Fazl-i-Husain, the religious organizations including Anjuman-e-Himayat-i-Islam were also specially supported and granted through providing extra funds for expanding their educational institutions. The number of students had been increased to 42% while Hindu students were still remained at 20% in the short period of two years under Mian Fazl-i-Husain's education ministry. And literacy rate had increased from 2 percent to 7 percent by his efforts.

## **2.8. Employments Quotas for Muslims**

Mian Fazl-i-Husain was a great supporter of Muslim's rights in colonial India. He is credited as the main reformer for establishing a scheme for employment quota in Provincial and Indian Civil Service (ICS) for the Muslims of the Punjab. He also reserved several seats in King Edward Medical College and Government College Lahore for the Muslims. Due to this effort, Mian Fazl-i-Husain was well known as the "Engineer of the Scheme of Employment Quota for the Muslims" in India.

Mian Fazl-i-Husain was one of the prominent leaders who did struggle for the Muslims of undivided Punjab in British India. His efforts were to incite the political awareness in the Muslims through the education and involvement in government affairs. Due to his struggle, Muslim's representation had increased at 50 percent almost in all of the affairs and institutions during the British government in India.

### **3. Services of Sir Chhotu Ram**

Sir Chhotu Ram remained as minister from 1924 until 1926. Once, when Mian Sahb's ceased from ministerial services and he asked Chhotu Ram to become minister of education and other departments then Fazl-i-Hussain went to Delhi for a few days and Chhotu Ram was in control of the departments under Fazl-i-Hussain. Upon his return from Delhi, Fazl-i-Hussain had become area's Revenue Minister, while Chhotu Ram took the responsibility of Education. Educational services of Sir Chhotu Ram have given in detail as following:

#### **3.1. Anglo-Sanskrit Jat High School**

Sir Chhotu Ram was from a Jat family therefore he started his efforts by promoting the Jat community in the Punjab. For this purpose, Sir Chhotu Ram established an Anglo-Sanskrit Jat High School in Rohtak District in 1913. The Britain were trying to implement just English script in educational courses but it was difficult to learn for the indigenous pupils of the rural areas. Due to have Sanskrit as their local language in the rural areas, Sir Chhotu Ram solved this problem by establishing a multi scripted including English and Sanskrit educational institution. It was the beginning of Sir Chhotu Ram's educational efforts for the peoples of rural areas in undivided Punjab.

#### **3.2. Jat Gazette**

During the period of British administration, peasantry class in the rural areas was hardly disappointed and depressed financially by the moneylenders. Peasant were surviving under the pressure of loan taken by the moneylenders because of that the *Zamindars* were facing loss of their lands and cattle etc. Due to this situation of peasantry class, Sir Chhotu Ram decided to publish a magazine named as "Jat Gazette" in 1915 in which he wrote about the problems of farmers and injustice of the moneylenders and stakeholders. At that time, the Districts Commissioner was Alistier who was a great fancier of peacock hunting. When people said him to stop peacock hunting, he did not stop that. The people requested to Sir Chhotu Ram and then he wrote against him in his magazine. Due to Chhotu Ram's unlimited writing and criticism, Commissioner Alistier banned the peacock hunting himself and also apologized.

#### **3.3. Jat Heroe's High School**

In 1921, the parents and boys belonging with peasant families had understood to the importance of education. Mostly boys of the *zamindars* were moving to the schools for being educated. By seeing this interest and tendency, Sir Chhotu Ram again established a high school at Rohtak District named as Jat Hero's High School in 1921. The boys of *zamindar* families were interested to take admission in it that increased further day by day.

#### **3.4. The Resolution of Punjab Legislative Council**

The students from peasantry classes had the issues of fees in their courses. After being an Education Minister, Sir Chhotu Ram passed a bill in Punjab Legislative Council as a resolution for providing a special fee concession to the boys of peasant families in 1924. Due to this effort of Sir Chhotu Ram, there had come a remarkable increase numbers of the student's admission from the rural areas of the Punjab.

#### **3.5. Schools at Jhajjar and Bahadur Garh**

When Sir Chhotu Ram became Education Minister, he was reported for ruinous administration in the schools at Jhajjar and Bahadur Garh which were established in 1925. These schools were running under District Board but Sir Chhotu Ram ordered to take over both of schools by the Education Department.

#### **3.6. Primary and High Schools**

In the rural areas, most of the people were learning only religious and traditional education to the children due to their traditional norms and values. Sir Chhotu Ram started to establish primary schools in the rural areas of Punjab. Already established primary schools were also ordered to upgrade their educational level at Middle standard. Because of this upgrading policy, most of the high schools came into establishment.

#### **3.7. Intermediate College at Rohtak**

After existence of the primary and high schools, there was a huge need for the higher standard educational institutes. It was required for the students to improve their education at advanced and adult level. For fulfilling this gap, Sir Chhotu Ram established an Intermediate College at Rohtak District. It was established to provide a bridge for the student among their education and further achievements in future.

#### **3.8. Rasul Engineering Institute**

The Rasul Engineering Institute was established in 1873 named as the University of Engineering and Technology at District Mandi Bahauddin under the Punjab University as School of Oriental College, Lahore. Then it was also established at Rasul due to increase the population in 1912. During the ministerial period of Sir Chhotu Ram, he was

informed that there was no any provision for the *zamindar* boy's admission in this institute. Sir Chhotu Ram ordered to reserve almost 50 percent seats for the villagers and *zamindar* boys in it.

### **3.9. Veterinary College at Lahore**

Veterinary College was first established at Lahore in 1882 for providing education about the veterinary surgery and medicine. The College was conducting four year programs including Undergraduate, Post-graduate and Doctoral programs on the basis of grades obtained in matriculation and further education. Having higher qualification students were also allowed to submit your applications for admission and employment according to the requirements of prospects. The numbers of students were round about 99 in 1899 which were increasing slowly until 1930s. But the British administration decreased the provision for the students of peasant families in the college. But Sir Chhotu Ram ordered to increase provision for admission at 50% for the students of the rural areas in the Punjab.

### **3.10. Government Agriculture College, Lyallpur**

The Punjab Agriculture College and Research Institute was established at Lyallpur in 1909. Different laboratories including chemical, botanical, entomological, and other labs were available to students at this institution. There also developed a major agricultural academic hub. However, the students of agricultural college were also eligible to apply for the jobs of land revenue administration like the literature or science degree holders were eligible. The college's goals were both of to do research on agricultural problems in both lab and field and to provide a all-rounded education in all fields of the agricultural sciences. Implementation of practical training came into existence in rural middle schools after approving by Provincial Conference on Agricultural Education held at Shimla in 1917. In 1919, the schools had adopted agricultural education also in the Punjab. During 1922 to 1923, agricultural education was being taught in almost forty four indigenous middle schools by degree holder agricultural professors. At first, Khalsa College offered agriculture classes at Amritsar in 1923. Sir Chhotu Ram gave huge provision to *zamindar* boys for their agricultural education after being Education Minister. The Government Agricultural College also introduced one-week programs including fruit growing, fruit preservation, dairy farming, beekeeping and poultry farming.

### **3.11. Medical School at Amritsar**

In 1864, Government Medical College was established as a Medical School at Lahore. This Medical School worked in undivided Punjab's capital Lahore until it's shifting to Amritsar in 1920. It was one of the oldest medical institutions in India. It was permitted to award the Licentiate of State Medical Faculty Diploma after four years of schooling. In 1925, Sir Chhotu Ram allocated fifty percent seat for the student of rural areas for medical education.

### **3.12. Primary Education Act**

In 1926, Sir Chhotu Ram also enacted Punjab Primary Education Act. Due to his efforts regarding Punjab Primary Education Act, the number of students raised at its peak strength. The people of rural areas specially, peasant class started to send their children in the schools for education. The number of schools also increased to promote the education at primary level in the rural areas of the Punjab.

### **3.13. Accordance with Arya Smaj Schools**

During 1930s, Arya Smaj was opening the schools where the Hindu students were getting the education of science and arts subjects. It was the source of despicability and disappointment for the other communities including Muslims and Christians in British governance. Before Chhotu Ram's ministerial period, these schools were against the grant-in-aid system. But after taking over Chhotu Ram's ministerial charge, he suggested all of the schools with equal educational strategies and ethics without any religious discrimination. Due to this, the education sphere was changed and education was promoted to make an educated nation without any religious and cultural dissents of the people.

### **3.14. Educational Institutes for Females**

During Sir Chhotu Ram's ministry, there was concerning the lack of female education in the rural areas of the Punjab. The girls were studying in home schools but boys were going to get education in boarding schools. The female education was considered as sin at that time. Sir Chhotu Ram was seriously shocked to hear that there was no any provision or facility for the education of girls in Punjab's region. For promoting the female education, he held some meetings with eminent Arya Smaj leaders to establish "*Gurukals*" in rural areas. He was convinced to know that the "*gurukals*" were not only the source of female education but these were also beneficiary for the girls as home economics. Most of the prominent leaders picked up this idea and started "*gurukals*" by collecting funds and grants in the rural areas of the Punjab. That's why, Sir Chhotu Ram are well known as the "Champion of Female Education".

Sir Chhotu Ram determined the alternative power of education for the rural peasant class. But there was overall illiteracy in Punjab, so when Sir Chhotu Ram became development minister, he allocated a huge budget for education including opening schools in rural areas and providing reservations to students from peasant families in professional and technical institutions. In 1924, he was also successful to pass the Punjab legislative council's resolution running the government to provide concessional treatment to students of the rural class. This led to an

unexpected rise in the number for admissions of these students. To educate the rural community, he established almost two thousand libraries and night classes for rural students. Sir Chhoru Ram not only disseminated education for general education as priority, but also the foundation of several institutions for technical education and female education.

#### 4. Conclusion

During their brief tenure of little more than a decade, Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Chhotu Ram were connected to the ministries of agriculture, industry, revenue and education. They were mortified set on devoting themselves entirely to the huge bulk of work that had to be done in these sectors specially, in the educational sector. Due to the high rated illiteracy in the Punjab, they noticed that no matter how little including everything. Even their harshest detractors had to acknowledge the remarkable progress and achievements in educational section of the Punjab. Before they would accept a purchase, they would make sure everything was above board. If an eye witness is required, Mian Fazl-i-Husain's remarks should be enough. As Unionist Party leaders, Sir Chhotu Ram and Mian Fazl-i-Husain did excellent work as minister. Their work is not possible to achieve by any leader of any political party in any of the province of the British India. Having had eminent degrees of skill, industry, sincerity, enthusiasm, perseverance, tenacity, bravery, and independence, they have awarded the respect of the Unionist leaders in the Punjab. Due to a remarkable struggle by them, Punjab is highlighted as a well educated and advanced province as compared to the modernity in the other provinces during 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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