

British Indian Army: Role of Punjab in the World War I

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The British Indian Army evolved out of the three presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, which had come under the control of the East India Company in the second-half of the eighteenth century. With the outbreak of the Sepoy mutiny 1857, both the administration and the Indian army were radically restructured. The Punjab's strategic location, the onset of the 'Great Game,' and what was believed to be the martial character of local people played an important role in placing this region in the center of British planning. This paper examines the role of Punjab in providing soldiers as well as generous politico-economic support to the British Empire during the World War I.

The origins of the British Indian Army were modest. It began in the 17th century as the East India Company's irregular force guarding a group of four factories with a few hundred men. A pioneer scholar of military history, Roy (2009), claims that with the passage of time, the colonial army became one of the largest employers in India. In the beginning, the presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras contributed significantly to the building of the colonial army. This first phase was popularly known as Bengalization of the British Indian Army, owing to Bengal's substantial contribution.

The prominence of Punjab and Punjabis in this Army began with the annexation of Punjab in 1849 and was reinforced by onset of the Great Game in general and World War I in particular. Heath (2005) has pointed

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out that the British fought two wars with Sikhs (1845-46; 1848-49) to annex Punjab in the Empire. The fearless fighting role of Punjabi people in the Anglo-Sikhs Wars and in the 1857 mutiny drew attention to their martial character, tall and sturdy physical build, and commitment and dedication to duty. These features induced the British to reconsider their recruitment policies in India generally and in Punjab, in particular. Punjab thus gained an important role in the British Army recruitment.

At the same time, Punjab had turned into a militarized and garrison state. Disproportionate representation of Punjabi recruits in the Indian British army played an important role not only in keeping the British Empire intact but in allowing for its expansion as well. In the aftermath of mutiny, the British Indian Army was largely recruited from Punjab, in a well-known phase sometimes termed "Punjabization." However, the role of Punjabi people in World War I has been remained overlooked and thus, the main focus of this paper is to examine this later stage of Punjab's contribution to the British military.

The British Indian Army

Robert Clive (1725-1774) played a pivotal role in the establishment of the East India Company Army. In 1757, he proposed the idea of sepoy battalions for the Bengal Presidency, commanded by British officers. The same model was followed for the Madras Army with six battalions, in 1759, and the Bombay Army, in 1767. Recruits for these battalions were engaged from local communities. The British Indian Army thus began with the employment of Indian troops by the East India Company in the three presidencies to protect its trading interests and stations. It is widely believed that the British Indian Army was one of the strongest armed forces during the colonial period.

The British Indian Army originated from the consolidation of three presidencies of the Bengal, Madras and Bombay. The British East India Company recruited local people to serve in its European regiments to protect its trade interests against local powers. Initially officers of these regiments, as well as their troops, were all Europeans. However, effective military force proved impossible without "native" troops, so local people were soon integrated into the regiments. In order to reinforce the Company's army, the Crown had started dispatching regiments of the regular British Army to India from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

In 1748, the armies of the presidencies were placed under the stewardship of Commander-in-Chief,

Major-General Stringer Lawrence (1697-1775), who came to be regarded as the "Father of the British Indian Army". In 1895 the three presidency armies were merged into an British Indian Army.

In aftermath of the Sepoy mutiny 1857, the three armies of former presidencies of the East India Company had been taken over by the British Crown. After the mutiny, the British government reoriented its recruitment policy by giving priority to the "martial races." The presidency armies were abolished on 1 April 1895, under the notification of the Army Department Order Number 981 dated 26 October 1894. This initiative led to the unification of the three former presidency armies into a single Indian army, divided into four commands: Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western. The British Indian Army fought many battles with local Indian kings to control them. Moreover, it challenged imperial powers, such as Russia.

Garrison State of the British Indian Army: Why Punjab?

Owing to various internal and external dynamics, Punjab emerged as a garrison and more militarized state of British Empire in India. With the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the British Empire had started sharing boundaries with the Tzarist Russian Empire, in Afghanistan. Talbot (1988) has pointed out that after the annexation, Punjab had become part of the 'Great Game,'¹ as threats of Russian expansion through Central Asia alarmed the British. In context of the threat of invasion from expansion of the Russian empire towards the Indian subcontinent, the British established a strong military infrastructure in Punjab in the mid of 19th century, in order to annex and guard its Afghan border to foil the Russia' s eastward and southward expansion through Central Asia.

During the 19th century, The Russian Empire emerged to rival the British as a major international power. Russia had been moving toward the British Indian Empire, and vice versa, leading to the fierce competition

¹The 'Great Game' refers to strategic rivalry between the British Empire and the Russian Empire (Khawaja, 2012 Empire). The period is generally regarded as between 1813 and 1907 for supremacy over Central Asia.

that is often called the 'Great Game.' The start of this conflict is generally considered to have taken place on 12 January 1830, when Edward Law, Earl of Ellenborough (1790-1871), President of the Board of Control for India, asked Governor-General Lord William Bentinck (1774- 1839) to establish a new trade route to the Emirate of Bukhara, in Central Asia.

Britain sought by this move to protect both India and their maritime trade routes and ports. The objective was to secure control of Afghanistan and to use the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Empire, the Khanate of Khiva, and the Emirate of Bukhara as buffer states to block Russia from gaining a port on the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean. Russia was suspicious of these commercial and strategic maneuvers toward the Central Asia, while Britain was apprehensive of Russia's plays to incorporate India- Britain's "Crown Jewel"- into its vast empire. The mutual suspicious resulted in an atmosphere of distrust and the constant threat of war between the two empires, which in turn affected the British Indian Army.

Yong (2005) has argued that the geostrategic location amidst fear of Russian attack had made Punjab one of the most militarized provinces of British India, to the extent of becoming the headquarters of the British Indian Army and its most significant and fertile recruitment ground. Punjab thus emerged as a strategic frontier of the British Empire to contain the Russian expansion towards the Indian subcontinent. These were the strategic concerns that compelled the British Indian Empire to restructure its recruitment policies towards Punjab. Verma (2008) noted that this status of Punjab led to the rather cynical name of "Arms-Pile of the Raj."

During the 1857 mutiny in the Central India, Punjab has fought for the British side. The British Empire appreciated Punjabis for their fearless fighting to suppress the mutiny. Cohen (1995:71) noted the outcome that the British punished the rebels and rewarded the loyalists. Khawaja (2012) argued that the British Indian army accorded Punjabi fighters priority in their recruitment policy owing to the perception of their superior adaptation to the harsh conditions of the turbulent frontiers. Soherwordi (2010) has argued that the 1857 mutiny compelled the British Indian government to restructure its recruitment policy towards Punjab. According to his view, the 1857 mutiny shifted the recruitment ground of the British Indian Army from Bengal to Punjab and NWFP (North-West Frontier Province) of the Subcontinent. Moreover, In the aftermath of the Sepoy mutiny, discontent had spread among people and soldiers alike, in

other states such as Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and part of Madhya Pradesh, so that they were no longer regarded as fit for recruitment. This shift is the reason that the period from 1857 to 1914 often referred to as 'the Punjabization of the Indian Army.'

One study, entitled "Migration, Mobility and Multiple Affiliations," by Rajan, Varghese, and Nanda (2016), points out that the British had divided Indian ethnic groups into two categories: Martial and Non-Martial. Jats, Awans, Gujjars, Balochs, Gurkhas, Pashtuns/Pathans and Rajputs were identified in the first category, with Punjabi people were regarded as the most martial among them. Priority accorded to these "races" in the Indian army led to accusations of 'divide and rule' by the British army officials. The British army's senior officers believed that these communities were better and braver soldiers and thus more suitable for the army services. As a result, by the first half of the twentieth century, the army was dominated by the soldiers from the North and Northwest of India. It was not only that the Raj considered them the prime "martial race." Many Punjabis chose to enlist in the army for their own reasons, leading to increased numbers of Punjabis in the British Indian army (Soherwordi, 2010).

Punjabi soldiers continued to play an important role during World War I. Although Sikhs were a minority community in India, they had figured prominently in the British Indian Army, serving in disproportionate numbers compared to Muslim and Hindu soldiers from Punjab. Holland (2005), in his work entitled "How Europe is indebted to the Sikhs," argued that it was their Guru who taught them to live with conviction and to sacrifice their lives, even for humanitarian causes. Sikh people set their minds to live or die for conviction and truth and to win the battle even by losing their lives. Thus, if Gurus were great, their Sikhs were equally so. This devotion earned for Sikhs the title of 'the finest soldiers of the world.' Historically, after farming, military service had been the most popular career among Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular.

When the British government took over the East India Company, the structure of all the three armies was entirely changed. In August 1858, the British Government had introduced a major shift in their organizational setup. For such drastic changes, the Peel Commission (1859) and the Eden Commission (1879) had stressed the need to maintain a disciplined,

professional and loyal army. The Bengal presidency had recruited its soldiers mainly from among high-caste Rajputs and Brahmans, with a majority of recruitment from the Purabiya region of Avadh and Bihar. Unlike the Bengal regiment, the Madras army had recruited locally and not from the higher castes. A similar situation had prevailed in the presidency of Bombay, whose army had included Eurasians and Jews. Majumdar (2003) has claimed that during the mid of 19th century, recruitment of low-caste people was prohibited in the Bengal Army. Therefore, the Bengal Army comprised only high-caste people, whereas constituency of the armies of other two presidencies, Madras and Bombay, stood in sharp contrast with regard to caste of recruits. The armies of these two presidencies were recruited from the local people, with the main selection criteria being caste-neutral.

The homogenous nature of the Bengal army was one of the factors that had contributed to the outbreak of the mutiny of 1857. Further, to avoid unity among the native soldiers, the Peel Commission report had recommended that “the Native Army” should be composed of different nationalities and castes, and as a general rule all the regiments should be mixed. In the year of 1895, the Eden Commission had recommended that the army of the three presidencies should be amalgamated to create the Indian Army, which was headed by a Commander in Chief. Under him, there were four commands: the Madras Command, the Bombay Command, the Bengal Command and the Punjab Command, each being headed by a Lieutenant-General. The former Bengal Army was split into Bengal and Punjab Commands. The title “Indian Army” began to be used officially from 1 January 1903.

Until 1856, the army of the three presidencies were largely recruited from their local region. The strength of the army had increased exponentially, to 214,985 native troops and 39,375 Europeans. Each presidency had its own commander-in-chief. The Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army automatically became the Commander-in-Chief of India. By 1857, the Bengal army comprised 137,000 regulars, including a cavalry of 20,000. It became the largest of the three forces, with men stationed all over India, as far as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The following table shows the strength of the three presidencies until 1857:

Table 1
The Army of the Three Presidencies, 1857

Army	Cavalry Regiments	Infantry Regiments
Bengal	41	118
Madras	13	61
Bombay	8	32
Total Native Army	62	211

Source: Majumdar, 2003

The perceived Russian threat to India was one of the major reasons for indigenous recruitment from the Punjab and NWFP. In view of the strategic importance of Afghanistan, Russia was the prime concern of the British Empire from the Northwest side. Russian- Afghan ties not only threatened India but to the entire empire as well. The Simon Commission of 1930 observed: "The North West frontier is not only the frontier of India; instead it was an international frontier of the first importance from the military point of view for the whole empire." The Russians were kept at bay by the British by their defensive arrangements on the border by maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer zone.

Following the Mutiny of 1857, long deliberations and discussion ensued over the recruitment policies of armies. Need was perceived to shift recruitment from Bengal to the Northwestern Provinces and Punjab. The richer war experiences of Punjabi people received priority over the intellectual ability and literary status recognized among the provinces of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras. For example, Falcon (1892: 107) noted that the Jat Sikh was "Hardy, brave and of intelligence too slow to understand when he is beaten, obedient to discipline, devotedly attached to his officers." Against strategic threats, the places and pattern of recruitment was reoriented giving important places to Punjab and NWFP. Table-2 is highlights the various places of the recruitment until 1895 as follows:

Table 2
Four Commands of the Indian Army and Its Recruitment Areas 1895

Command	Recruitment Area
Punjab	Punjab, NWFP
Bengal	Assam, Bengal, the United Provinces, parts of Central Provinces and Central India
Madras	Madras Presidency, the Garrisons in Hyderabad and Mysore and Burma
Bombay	Bombay Presidency including Sindh, Aden, Baluchistan, Rajputana, and Parts of Central India and the Central Province

Source: Marston, 2014

Punjab had long maintained a very close military relationship with the British. In his study, Fox (1985) noted that after the Anglo-Sikhs wars, reorientation of relations between both sides had taken place. As during the Anglo-Sikh Wars, Punjabis showed exceptional valor and bravery to the British Indian Army. On the other hand, the British officials recognized the boldness and warlike qualities of the Punjabi people. The Indian recruitment handbooks and army histories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries studied by Constable (2001: 1-2) repeatedly argued that the self-sufficiency, physical and moral resilience, as well as orderliness and hard work, fighting tenacity, and above all, a sense of courage and loyalty characterized the martial race. In 1933 Major-General George MacMunn wrote about the Sikhs: "As a fighting man, his slow wit and dogged courage give him many of the characteristics of the British soldier at his best."

Responding to the contribution of Punjab, the empire had recognized the efforts of the Sikhs and Punjabis. It might only be a slight exaggeration to say that the British had maintained an imperial presence in India and abroad based on the contribution of the 'Black Lion'. Given these dynamics and strategic considerations, a chain of cantonments had mushroomed in the region and converted it into 'Province of Cantonments'. Consequently,

Punjab became the chief supplier of soldiers for the British Indian army and emerged as a nursery for the British Indian army.

Punjab and World War I

With the opening of World War I, enlistment of the Punjabis in the British Indian army grew exponentially, surpassing other provinces of India in recruitment for the British Indian Army. Holland (2005) has pointed out that British government sent Punjabi soldiers to several military fronts overseas. The period from 1890 to 1914 is often referred to as 'the Punjabization of the Indian Army.' Punjabi soldiers fought in Mesopotamia, France, Gallipoli, Salonika, Somaliland, Egypt, Persia, Aden, West Africa, and Palestine, as well as the Northwestern and Northeastern frontiers of India.

Consequently, Punjab played a very significant role in the ultimate victory of British forces. In addition to manpower, Punjab also supplied funds and materiel in considerable amounts for the various military initiatives. It has been argued that even heavy bombardment did not dishearten Punjabi troops' pursuit of victory. Thus, the role of Punjabis in the World War I had remained the watershed event in the military history of colonial Punjab. But the saga of the great contribution of Punjab particularly in World War I has largely remained missing from the pages of history.²

Marston (2014) and Jarboe (2015) had demonstrated that in 1857, the Punjabis had constituted about 44% of the Bengal Army and the Punjab Frontier Force, which constituted a quarter of the entire armed forces. By June 1858, of the total 80,000 'native' troops in the Bengal army, 75,000 were Punjabis. Until 1901, Punjab (which also included the NWFP) and Nepal together made up about 44% of the entire Indian Armed Forces. It was further increased to 57% in 1904. Punjab had contributed 349,689 out of a total population of 20 million.

In Punjab, one in 28 males was mobilized; whereas in the rest of India, this ratio was one out of 150. It can be argued, then, that after the 1857 mutiny, the other castes and classes, as well as other regions, were

² Indian Soldiers of World War I

Available At: http://indiandiasporaclub.com/file/2014/12/Indian-Soldiers-of-WORLD-WAR-I-ver-final_.pdf (Accessed on 18 March 2017).

practically ignored in the new recruitment policy. With the opening of World War I, the strength of British Indian Army had increased exponentially. During the war, 380,000 Punjabis soldiers enlisted in the British Indian Army, including 231,000 combatants. Thus, during the war, Punjab had mobilized 480,000 soldiers for the various theatres of war. According to another estimate, Punjab supplied 54% of the total combatant troops in the Indian Army during the World War I.

Different figures are provided for the totals in historical literature. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the UK gives a count of 1.2 million soldiers from the subcontinent. According to Omissi (2016: 5-6) and Mazumder (2013: 15), during the war years through December 1919, 1,440,437 men were recruited, including 877,068 combatants and 563,369 non-combatants. By the end of the war, Punjab had provided some 360,000 combat recruits: almost half of the total force from the Subcontinent), including 136,000 Muslims, 88,925 Sikhs and 23,000 Hindus.

British ICS officer Leigh (1922: 13), in an excellent account of the history of the British Indian Army, stated that of the total number of the Indian army personnel, half the number was provided by the Punjabis, the majority of them being the Sikhs. Further, Leigh (1922: 41) revealed that before the opening of World War I, 100,000 of Punjab's soldiers were serving in the British Indian Army, comprising of fifty percent of the total forces. With the opening of World War I, the number had increased to 400,000 combatant soldiers. According to these estimates, Punjab mobilized 40% of the combatant soldiers during the World War I for the British imperial army. Throughout the war period, Punjab had remained much ahead of other provinces in the "Recruiting Clock," as the following table shows:

Table 3
Recruitment of Martial Races (1914-18)

Races	From 28 July 1914 to 31 July 1915	From July 1915 to 31 July 1916	From 1916 to 31 July 1917	From July 1917 to 31 July 1918	From 1 Aug to 30 Nov. 1918	Total From July 1914 to 30 Nov. 1918
Punjabi Muslims	15,597	33,302	23,938	54,460	19,229	136,126
Sikhs	12,293	14,973	16,231	31,265	14,160	88,925
Rajputs	6,248	7,676	9,313	25,266	13,687	62,190
Gurkhas	10,430	17,418	12,040	13,208	2,493	55,589
Jats	6,307	9,449	11,591	18,018	9,874	55,239
Hindu-stani Muslims	1,777	3,435	7,372	15,826	7,943	36,353
Pathans	3,699	5,958	4,647	8,412	3,128	27,857
Dogras	3,699	3,954	5,391	7,836	2,611	23,491
Garhwalis	1,139	1,165	1,231	2,761	871	7,167

Source: Roy, 2013: 82

The above table establishes the extent to which Punjab became a source for military recruitment during the World War I and remained so for recruitment in the British Indian Army. On the other hand, prominent military historian of colonial India Yong (2010: 374-75) has disagreed with

Leigh (1922) about the military mobilization during World War I, citing different statistics. In his work, "An imperial home-front: Punjab and the First World War", Yong states that Punjabi martial races had formed 54 percent of the entire British Indian Army during the World War I. Omissi (2012: 41) has also pointed out that despite being a minority community in India, Sikhs figured disproportionate in the army, compared with numbers of Muslim and Hindu soldiers from Punjab. Thus, with the opening of World War I, more than one million soldiers had been mobilized from India and out of these, near about half number of troops had recruited from Punjab. According to a study by Major Amin (2001)³, entitled "Ethnicity, Religion, Military Performance and Political Reliability" the British Army mobilized 1,097,642 from the Indian Subcontinent during the World War I, of which Punjab supplied 446,976 soldiers, including 349,688 combatants. Moreover, Punjab provided 97,288 non-combatants in the World War I.

Notwithstanding discrepancies in statistics of soldiers in World War I, scholars such as Leigh (1922), Fox (1985), Talbot (1988), Mazumder (2003), Yong (2010), Roy (2011) and many more provide convincing evidence that Punjab remained the fertile recruitment ground for the British Indian Army and supplied a very substantial proportion in the building of British Indian Army. As Yong (2010) mentions, due to its top contribution in the recruitment, Punjab emerged as an imperial front for the World War I. The following table further clarifies Punjab's contribution in World War I according to various scholars of the colonial history of Punjab, based on official records.

³ Defencejournal. com . (2017). Ethnicity, Religion, Military Performance and Political Reliability. Available at4 : <http://www.defencejournal.com/2001/feb/ethnicity.htm> (Accessed on 28 August 2017).

Sir Michael Francis O'Dwyer (28 April 1864 – 13 March 1940) was appointed as a Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab in 26 May 1913 till 26 May 1919. During his tenure, Jallianwala Bagh massacre (13 April 1919) took place (Lloyd, 2010: 365).

Table: 4

Punjab' s Recruitment (Combatants) in the World War I - 1914- 1918

Area	Kaushik Roy	Omissi & Mazumder	M.S. Leigh	Official Records
Punjab	349, 688	360,000	480,000	415,000
Rest of India	388,209	517,068	497,000	570,000
Punjab share (%)	47. 4	41	49. 2	42. 2

Source: Roy, Omissi, Mazumder, Leigh, Official Record of Calcutta

During World War I, Punjab gave full political and military support to the empire and rendered services. In their studies, Mittal (1977: 102-103) and Lloyd (2010: 365) note that a resolution regarding the war in the Punjab Legislative Council came up for discussion on September 19, 1914, by O'Dwyer.⁴ On behalf of Punjabi Sikh aristocracy, Sardar Daljit Singh M.L.C. had assured O'Dwyer of full support, remarking that, "There will be no greater honor for us than to shed our blood in service of our Empire." Similarly, on behalf of the Muslim community, Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi, another M.L.C., promised full 'support of the mighty flag under which they enjoy the priceless blessings of liberty and prosperity.' Other members of the Legislative Council, notably Sir Protul Chandra Chatterji, Sardar Sunder Singh, Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Dass, Rai Bahadur Hari Chand, Nawab Ibrahim Ali Khan of Kunjpura, Rai Bahadur Bakhsi Sohan Lal, Lala Kanshi Ram and Sardar Gojjan Singh, supported the resolution.

War Loans & Funds

The British government pursued many practical strategies for winning the World War I, for which lot of men and materiel were required. Toward this end, F.E. Wilkins (Editor of the "Civil and Military Gazette") made the proposal to secure loans and funds from Punjab. The British government took up the initiative of inspiring people from India, and Punjab in

particular, to raise war loans and funds. Responding to the appeal, the Indian Subcontinent supplied a lot of war loans and war-supporting materials. In his study, Marston (2014) observes that Punjab not only contributed men in substantial number, but also money and materiel in a generous way to the British Empire.

A 1917 report entitled, "Administration of Punjab and Its Dependencies," mentioned that, with the approval of British Government, an appeal was made to Punjab to provide seven airplanes, valued at approximately at Rs.75,000 each. Further, Beotra (1997: 36-37) and Nanda (2010: 126) note that British officials had also promised to name the airplanes after the five rivers of Punjab plus the Indus and Jumna.

Subscription for contribution of funds remained open through 15 March 1916. During the only short period, Punjab demonstrated exceptional enthusiasm for aiding their colonial masters. Within the short span of time, Punjab had contributed more than Rs. 1,452,900 for the "Aeroplane Fund," greatly exceeding the expectation of the British officials. These funds proved sufficient to purchase more than 50 airplanes. British official gave a number and name to each airplane. It is worth mentioning that each district of Punjab contributed significantly, with several providing more than one airplane during the World War I. Military officers of the British government like Leigh (1922) noted that all classes and creeds of Punjab contributed funds to the World War I effort. The contributory list included the ruling chiefs, officials and non-officials, urban and rural residents, college students and school pupils, artisans, traders, bankers and professional men. In his study, Leigh (1922) stated that from all the divisions of Punjab province, a total of Rs. 5,171,328 was contributed to the war fund. Punjab District Gazetteers (1936) which the British published include extensive accounts highlighting role of Punjab in supporting World War I, as summarized in the following table:

Table: 5
Airplanes and their contributor: 1914- 18

Serial No.	Name	Contributor
16, 17, 40, 44	Lahore	Lahore District
21, 39	Ferozpur	Ferozpur District
27	Lyallpur	Lyallpur District
21 (A) & 41 (B)	Rawalpindi	(A) Rawalpindi District (B) Rawalpindi and Attock Districts & Poonch State
30	Mianwali	Mianwali District
38	Amritsar	Amritsar District

Source: Punjab District Gazetteers, 1936

Table: 6
Punjab's Contribution in Cash to the War Funds: 1914- 1918

Division	Punjab Airplane Funds	Imperial Indian Relief Fund	Hospital and Ambulance Funds Red Cross	Total Contributions
Ambala Division	127,781	304,865	366,735	799,381
Jullundur Division	1,49,318	3,37,422	4,16,566	903,306
Lahore Division	2,10,810	3,59,561	3,83,695	954,066
Rawalpi Division	2,77,850	176470	4,74,866	929,186
Multan Division	1,34,595	3,35,273	3,51,696	821,564
Total	9,00,354	15,13,591	19,93,558	4,407,503

Source: Punjab District Gazetteers, 1936

Mittal (1977: 108) has mentioned that with the opening of World War I, the Imperial Indian Relief Fund was established, in order to relieve the distress among the families of those who had gone to the war fronts. The decision was taken to assist the widows and orphans of those who had died during the war services. For this purpose, funds totaling nearly twenty lakh rupees were collected from all classes and localities from Punjab. All districts contributed at least Rs. 10,000 for the Imperial Indian Relief Fund. Notably, Lahore had contributed more than Rs. 140,000, followed by Ferozpur (more than one lakh); Lyallpur (nearly one lakh); Ludhiana (more than Rs. 80,000) and Ambala (approximately Rs. 70,000). In 1918, the British government published a report entitled 'Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India'. This report mentioned that with the opening of World War I, a lot of loan and funds had been collected, in which Punjab had contributed very generously in funds covering airplanes, imperial Indian relief, hospital, ambulance, red cross, recruiting etc.

Casualties of World War I: Punjab's Paralysis

During the World War I, the Indian Subcontinent mobilized nearly one and a half million soldiers for the colonial masters. As noted above, Punjab had played a very significant role. These soldiers had fought very bravely and shed their blood for maintaining and protecting imperial interests. During World War I, many Indian soldiers gave their lives, suffered wounds and endured imprisonment. Kapur (2010: 39) has provided data for casualties in the British Indian Army soldiers in World War I, which are summarized in the following table:

Table 7
Casualties of British Indian Army: 1914- 18

	Died	Missing	Wounded	Prisoners Of War	Total
Indian Officers	681	43	1448	214	2,390
Indian Rank	25,456	2,940	57, 540	5,928	93,083
Followers	11,100	176	782	1,315	13,788
Total	37,237	3,159	59,770	7,457	109,256

Source: Kapur, 2010: 39

Here, it is also essential to show the casualties of Punjabi soldiers along with the other contributions. As Yong (2002) has pointed out, being an imperial front for the World War I, Punjab was entailed in the larger scale of the war. Owing to greater mobilization, India suffered at a massive level. Saleem (1995: 453) argued that, compared to European partners, India suffered the numerous casualties. British districts like Rawalpindi, Ludhiana, Mianwali, Jhelum, Jullundur, Jind, Ambala and Lahore, all lost more than 3 percent of their army men. Rawalpindi suffered a particularly heavy loss during the World War I, given its substantial share in the British Indian Army. Jhelum was the second district which was most affected by the war. Highlighting the loss suffered by Punjab, a member

of the Sangat Group (2008) has rightly pointed out: “Thousands of Punjabis died in the First World War; I think that in one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th Century, they were cannon fodder.”

Table 8
Punjab Casualties: World War I

Sr. No.	Casualties	Number
1	Died	12,794
2	Missing	1,083
3	Wounded	20,536
4	Prisoners of War	2,562
5	Total	36,975

Source: Saleem, 1995: 453

Thus, Punjab's contribution towards the World War I was very significant. Ironically, the contribution of the region has remained overlooked and behind the curtain. As mentioned above, it is crystal clear that Punjab role regarding men and material was very significant. A distinguished scholar working on World War Studies, Singh (2010: 161) argues that the British empire was indebted to Punjabis for men and material support not only for the World War I, but for World War II as well.

World War I & Punjab: Awards and Honors

Leigh (1922: 110) reported that the heroic qualities of Punjabis soldiers were recognized by British officials. This British official's report also mentioned that Punjab had highly decorated regiments for “Distinguished Service in the field” and “For gallantry and devotion to duty in the field.” Leigh's report stated that Punjabi officers and non-commissioned officers had remained ready to take on responsibilities in the absence of British

officers. They had never worried about their dangers and pains when engaged in war operations. They were committed and determined not to leave their posts and bunkers until death. Here is an example of Sepoy Partab Singh mentioned by Leigh (1922):

Sepoy Partab Singh, a Jat Sikh, 90th Punjabis, Chuga village, Ferozpur District, was awarded the Indian order of Merit, 2 Class, for very gallant conduct and devotion to the duty nearth, Nasiriyah, Mesopotamia, on July 24 1915, when he had two bullet wounds, in the upper part of his right arm, didn't pause to bind up the wounds, and refused to go back. He had continued the attack and was again wounded. He had two fingers cut off and was unable to handle his rifle. He again refused to go back and busied himself in helping to bind up the wounds of others and assisting them.

Picture. 1

Punjabi Soldiers in Mesopotamia during World War I



Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zw2q7ty>

(Accessed on 13 August 2017).

For the commemoration of the sacrifices, the British government honored these war soldiers. Military historians and British officials have documented the numerous orders and decorations bestowed on the British Indian Army. Thus, Punjab had played a very significant role in

the World War I. Below the table summarizing honors according to Punjabi soldiers in the war:

Table: 9
Decorations for Punjab: 1914- 18

Sr. No.	Decorations	British District
1.	Victoria Cross	3
2.	Military Cross	19
3.	Order of British India, 1 st Class	3
4.	Order of British India, 2 nd Class	82
5.	Indian order of merit, 1 st Class	7
6.	Indian order of merit, 2 nd Class	324
7.	Bar to Indian Distinguished service medal	3
8.	Indian Distinguished service medal	981
9.	Indian Meritorious service medal	411
10.	Miscellaneous Rewards and special promotions	30
11.	Foreign Decorations	175
	Total	2038

Source: Leigh, 1922: 110

Conclusion

The combination of the strategic necessities of the Great Game and the death of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh (1780-1839) brought Punjab under the British Indian government. Moreover, the mutiny of 1857 had obliged the British Indian government to reorient their recruitment policy. Thus, Punjab took on an important role in military recruitment, shifting Bengalization to Punjabization of the British Indian Army. During the World War I, the recruitment from Punjab grew exponentially. About half of the combatants came from Punjab. Punjab also generously extended money and materials to the government. Despite their substantial casualties, they had remained part and parcel of the British Indian Army

during not only during World War I but during World War II as well. A number of Punjabi soldiers were highly decorated. In conclusion, Punjab's contributions were monumental in British victories during the World War. As for what one can learn from this paper, the authors leave it to the readers in the context of except foreign land, own soldiers had fought against its people?

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