

India's Partition and the '*Crisis of History*' in the Early-Post Colonial Punjab

Ashish Kumar

Panjab University, Chandigarh

This paper argues that the partition of India in 1947 was not only a humongous humanitarian crisis, which caused the death and migration of millions of people, but it had also been a historical development that gave birth to a '*crisis of history*' in the early-post colonial Punjab. For over a century, the history of Punjab had been aligned with the history of India (or Indian Subcontinent) under the British Raj in the 19th and early 20th century as an integral part of it. But the partition of India, divided the Punjab region into two halves, and with the formation of two nation-states, viz., India and Pakistan, a question appeared before the Punjabi historians of East Punjab: How do we write the history of premodern Punjab? This paper argues that amidst a tug-of-war between Indian and Pakistani historians on the custody of the Indus Valley Civilization, Punjabi historians got embroiled in the Punjabi Suba movement in the decades following India's partition, and as the fault-lines between the Hindu and Sikh Punjabis widened, two competing history writing trends appeared in East Punjab with an aim to define 'Punjab', 'Punjabi', and 'Sikh' identities. One trend located the roots of Punjab and Punjabi identities in India's ancient past, whereas another trend developed the Sikh-Punjab-unison approach; it credited the Sikh Gurus and their Sikh followers for transforming Punjab into a distinct nation and Punjabi into a distinct nationality, and this trend thus endorsed the idea of Punjab as 'The Sikh Homeland'.

Introduction

Did partition of India in 1947 impacted the ways history of India, Pakistan and East Punjab was imagined in post-colonial times? This paper argues that it did. Name it either a 'genocide,' or a 'civil war,' there is no doubt that partition created a humongous humanitarian crisis on both sides of the border, and still Punjabi people – Hindu, Sikh and Muslim, are haunted by the memories of the communal frenzy, when neighbours had killed neighbours, kids were orphaned, women were raped and abducted, about ten million people had been uprooted and forced to cross border, and as a result, the Punjabi way of life was altered forever. Not only the Redcliffe Line divided the subcontinent, but it has also left a deeper wound on the mental landscape of the people of Punjab. Much has already been said and written on the factors responsible for partition and the trauma that it inflicted on the minds and souls of the people, in past decades, and this paper does not aim to repeat what has already been written by several eminent scholars -for the historiography of India's partition see Mahajan, 2016 and Gilmartin, 2015. This paper is not about politics behind the partition and its human cost; instead, it attempts to study the impacts of partition on 'history

writing' in the subcontinent, with a particular focus on the post-partition East Punjab. As the socio-political fabric of the subcontinental society in general, and Punjabi society in particular, was fragmented into thousands of pieces, the historians, like several other sections of society including political leaders, bureaucrats and ordinary people, were made to stitch all these splintered pieces of society together by developing newer historical narratives to serve the interests of the newly founded nations-states, viz., India and Pakistan. The historians in East Punjab, both Hindus and Sikhs, found themselves at a cross-road; on the one hand, they had to create a history different from Pakistan for their Indian nation, and on the other hand, they had to reimagine Punjab, Punjabi and Sikh identities after the departure of almost the entire Muslim population from East Punjab to Pakistan.¹ Since the history of the subcontinent that was developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries under the auspices of the British Raj, became increasingly disagreeable, it created a 'crisis of history' in India, Pakistan and East Punjab. How historians engaged with this 'crisis of history' in the subcontinent, particularly in East Punjab, is the central theme of this paper, which covers a period of about three decades following the partition of India.

Colonial Sketching of Punjab

The political boundaries of Punjab province have never been static, and after its annexation during the British empire in 1849, the British territorial frontier spread across the Indus right up to the base of the Afghan hills, and the Punjab province came into existence. This province comprised the entire land up to Afghanistan and Khelat in the west; up to Kashmir and Tibet in the north; up to river Jamuna and the North-western provinces in the east; and up to Sindh, river Sutlej and Rajputana in the south (Ross, 1883: 82-83). However, the locus of Punjab was suggested to be the confluence of the Panjnad and the Indus (Latif 1891, 11), and Punjab was defined as a land of five rivers (Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej, all tributaries of Indus) and five doabs (Bari, Rechna, Chaj-Jotch, Sindh Sagar, Bist Bisat/Jalandhar) (Ross, 1883: 82-83). Even though the name, Panjab literally denoted to the land of five rivers, Indus was considered an integral part of it (Latif, 1891: 3) and Punjab was suggested to be roughly 'a triangular plain bounded by mountains on the west and north-east, and a desert on the south' (Trevaskies, 1928: 5). After 1857, divisions of Delhi and Hissar were added to Punjab province (Latif, 1891: 3); however, when Delhi was made the new capital of British India, small area in the southeast of this province was separated and placed directly under the government of India. In 1901, the North West Frontier Province was separated and formed into a distinct administrative unit (Douie, 2003: 1-2). Compared to its altered political boundaries, the geographical area of Punjab, according to James Douie, comprised the North West Frontier Province, area of Delhi, native states dependent on Punjab government, Kashmir and some parts of the tribal areas beyond the frontier of British India in the early twentieth century (Douie, 2003: 1-3).

In spite of some overlapping along the peripheral boundaries, the provincial/political and the geographical limits of Punjab have remained roughly in congruence with each other in the colonial histories, which defined this region of five rivers as 'the natural gateway of the peninsula of India' (Latif, 1891: 16); having accepted it as an ancient region, the Persian term Panjāb (panj/five+ āb/water) and the Greek term Pentapotamia were correlated (Latif, 1891: 3) and the history of Punjab was turned into a record of the invasions of the Aryans, Scythians, Persians, Macedonian, Greeks, Kushanas, Hunas, Turks, Mongols and Afghans in the colonial writings (Ross, 1883: viii; Trevaskies, 1928: xv-xvi, 40-41, 44, 50-53). Owing of its being a gateway, Punjab was imagined as a land that 'from the time of Alexander to the invasion of Shah Zaman... has served a bulwark to India against all the invasions from the North and West' (Latif, 1891: iv). Amongst the several invading races, however, the Aryans, who defeated the aboriginal races, were identified as the most important fair-skin race that composed the *Rigveda* in the land of Punjab, and thus laid the foundation of the Hindu civilization; they first colonised Punjab and then the rest of India, and to maintain their racial purity, the Aryans were suggested to have instituted the caste system (Latif, 1891: 23-31; Trevaskies, 1928: 31-34). As the Aryans had been identified as the ancestors of modern Hindus, Punjab became an integral part of India's ancient history and ancient India's political history was traced from the age of an Aryan king Prikshit, who became the king of the Kurus, shortly after the Bhārata War on the bank of River Ravi, and Punjab became the land where the descendants of Prikshit, namely Pandavas and Kauravas fought the great war in a place called, Kurukshetra (Raychaudhuri, 1923: 1-15). The religion-based periodisation of India's history, which was first designed by James Mill in his magnum opus, *History of British India* (published in 1817) influenced the history of Punjab, which was roughly periodised along the religious lines: Early or Pre-Muhammadan, Muhammadan, Sikh, and British periods.² If one leaves aside all the invasions, early or Pre-Muhammadan history of Punjab then would appear to be an account of the arrival and spread of Aryans, their Vedic religion, emergence of Buddhist and Jain challenge to Brahmin orthodoxy, formation of caste system, and eventually triumph of Hinduism/Brahmanism, which was believed to have had caused the fall of Buddhism in early India (Latif, 1891: 23-51; also see Trevaskies, 1928: 29-66).

The discovery of the Harappan civilization in the Indus valley in 1924 changed the chronology of India's ancient history (for a detailed narrative on the discovery of the Harappan civilization see Lahiri, 2005) and with the finding of Mohenjodaro in Sindh on the bank of Indus and Harappa in Punjab, on the bank of Ravi, Punjab's importance in the meta-narrative of India's history further crystallised. Having been associated with the non-Aryans, the Harappan civilization was identified as the bronze age urban civilization of India that flourished in the third millennium BCE in the plains of ancient Sind and Punjab and maintained trade-relations with that of the Mesopotamian civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. With the discovery of this civilization, India's history became five thousand years old, and the cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa became much older than the migration of the Aryans (roughly in the mid-second

millennium BCE) into Punjab from central/west Asia (see Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta, 1953: 15, 21-25). The Aryan invasion theory that has been made an integral part of India/Punjab's ancient history by the early 20th century, was reworked by Mortimer Wheeler (1944-48, Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India) to explain the fall of the Indus Valley civilization; as the Indus cities were associated with the non-Aryans (particularly, Dravidians), he identified the Aryans as the invaders of these cities. The Vedic god, Indra was accused by Wheeler for massacring the people of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, and the Aryans were even branded as savage and barbarians (Wheeler, 1953: 90-93) by the time India gained its freedom, and Punjab was partitioned in the year 1947.³

Partition and the Remaking of Subcontinent's History

The partition of India in 1947 and the creation of two nation-states, viz., India and Pakistan, was not simply a division of the subcontinent, but also of its shared past; the remains of the Indus Valley civilization were mainly confined to Sind and Punjab with Mohenjodaro in the former and Harappa in the latter as key centres of this five thousand years old civilization. Due to the partition, while Sind had gone entirely to West Pakistan, Punjab was bifurcated, and Pakistan received West Punjab with Harappa and East Punjab became part of India. Having been studied as a birthplace of an ancient Hindu civilization in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, Sapta-Sindhu-Punjab's boundaries changed overnight, and subsequently, a common history of the entire subcontinent that had been constructed in the 19th and early 20th century, was challenged with the publication of Mortimer Wheeler's *The Five Thousand Years of Pakistan* (1950). The mounds of Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley, which according to India's first Prime Minister (from 1947 to 1964), Jawaharlal Nehru (2004: 41) had provided a five thousand years old antiquity to Indian culture or civilization, were all gone along with Harappa and other major Indus sites to West Pakistan, and therefore, according to Mortimer Wheeler (1950: 24-26), these same mounds of Mohenjodaro, due to their geographical location within West Pakistan, conferred 'a sort of basic unity to Pakistan itself in our historic consciousness'; as a result, by depriving India of its long claimed antiquity, now Pakistan was attributed by Wheeler, the five thousand years old lineage. Owing of the Partition, whereas West Pakistan had acquired all the major sites including Indus cities, Taxila and sites of Gandhara culture, almost all the sites connected with the Sultanate rulers and the Mughals had gone to India; having foreseen such impacts of partition on the archaeological landscape of the subcontinent, Wheeler has assigned the custody of Indus valley to Pakistan, and suggested Indian archaeologists need to end their obsession with the Indus and shift their focus upon 'the Ganges which may almost be said to have given India a faith' (Wheeler, 1947-1948: 3-5).

In this way, Wheeler laid down a framework ('post-partition-political-boundaries' centric-approach') for future historians who were expected to follow post-1947 political boundaries as the chief criteria for designing

historical narratives for their respective nation-states. Because Pakistan as a nation-state lacked any definite history textbook of its own prior to 1947, Wheeler's framework was accepted by scholars in Pakistan (see Ahmad, 1965: 35, 40), and accordingly, Pakistan was called one amongst 'the great "oriental" countries'; Pakistan's roots were located within the urban culture of the Indus Valley Civilization by identifying this culture as 'proto-Pakistan culture' and alongside it, a call was given for 'a new branch of learning' termed "Pakology" which was aimed to 'be devoted exclusively to the study of the great heritage that belongs to Pakistan' (Ali, 1964: iii). As relations between India and Pakistan strained after the 1965 War, the idea of an integrated subcontinent of India and Pakistan as a historical reality was questioned in Pakistan by holding Britishers alone responsible for the artificial creation of it. The British Raj was blamed for making 'India of the British... a unit' by cutting Pakistan's historical affiliations with central and west Asia, and for this artificial unit (named, India) Indian scholars were suggested to have been busy seeking 'unity in diversity' in their studies and solitudes' (Dani, 1965-66: 1). By identifying the Indus Zone as a geographical reality, Ahmad Hasan Dani (1965-66: 1) called Pakistan with its Indus roots as a country that historically maintained 'living contact not only with the Indian system but also with those of China, Central Asia and the West'. Based on it, Dani (1965-66: 1-2) proclaimed that 'We are no more a part of India than that of these other areas,' and even challenged the so called 'Frontier' tag that the British had invented 'for Peshwar region because of their territorial limit on this side'. In Dani's view, 'the great divide between the systems of the Indus and the Ganges' was a historical divide, where had been situated 'the historical Kurukshetra, the battle-fields of Panipat and Tarain, which in history have decided the fate of India' (Dani, 1965-66: 2-3) From this same historical divide, Dani seems to have drawn justification for the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947 and the making of two nation-states, India and Pakistan.

Scholars in India, having the enormous weight of more than a century old historical writing on Indian culture and civilization, were hit hard by the partition of the subcontinent, and the projection of Pakistan as a five-thousand-year-old nation pushed them to reinvent India's historical past. Any acceptance of Pakistan's antiquity by Indian scholars would have undermined the antiquity of Indian civilization, and by giving up their claims upon the Indus cities they would have endorsed for the subcontinent a new historical chronology, according to which, Pakistan with its roots in the Indus Valley Civilization (dated c. third millennium BCE) emerged as a nation about a thousand years before India that had its cultural roots in the Gangetic valley (the Aryan civilization, dated. c. mid-second/first millennium BCE). In India, not only the title of Mortimer Wheeler's book on Pakistan was called 'not quite correct,' (Puslaker, 1950: 28) but also a call was given for the 'systematic work in Rajasthan and Cutch' for the search of the Indus Valley culture so that the loss 'of the great chalcolithic sites of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro and numerous other contemporary sites of that culture' could be compensated (Vats, 1951: 2). The discovery of the Indus sites, such as Rupar (in 1954) in East Punjab, Sothi (in 1950) and Kalibangan (in 1960) in Rajasthan and Lothal (in 1954) as well as

Surkotada (in 1964) in Gujarat, all within the post-colonial boundaries of India helped Indian archaeologists to justify Indian cultural roots in the Indus Valley Civilization (for a brief overview of the discovery of the Harappan sites see: Chakrabarti, 2013: 151-204). One Punjabi scholar, Buddha Prakash (1976: 2), even coined the term Harappa-Rupar civilization to place the East Punjab at an equal footing with that of West Punjab, where the site Harappa was located. In their quest to find post-colonial India's Indus Valley roots, archaeologists in India had integrated Wheelerian approach in their writings, and as their official areas of activities were confined to post-partition India, they began studying India's archaeological past from the post-partition-political-boundaries' perspective.

Contrary to them, non-archaeologist historians, based in different Indian universities, developed a cultural approach to overcome the 'crisis of history' that had been created by India's partition. The publication of the book, *5000 years of Pakistan* and journal, *Ancient Pakistan*, raised several theoretical questions before the Indian scholars, who now had to write history of the Indian nation either from the point of view of the post-1947 political boundaries, or accept an approach that would transcend these political boundaries. It was realised that if the history of India was written entirely on the basis of the post-colonial political boundaries, then historical developments in mainland India that had happened owing of the historical changes (viz., the incursions of Kushanas and the Hunas) in central Asia, could not be adequately explained. To address such concerns, A. K. Narain (1968: 27-28) opined to break the political boundaries of post-colonial India to write 'the history of the Indian Union ... in the right perspective' and he suggested to include in this history 'not only what happened in Pakistan but also what happened in Afghanistan and Central Asia.' However, he advocated to retain the idea of the 'nation state,' while writing India's history from 'pre-historic times down to the 19th century' (Narain, 1968: 27-28) in order to discard every possibility that would endorse 'a multi-nation theory' and 'may thus lead to the disintegration of the very basis of Indian society and culture' (Narain, 1968: 24-25). Indian nation's composite personality was underlined (Narain, 1968: 26) and the motto 'unity in diversity', which was first conceptualised by R. K. Mookerji in 1913 (Mookerji, 2008) and integrated in the meta-narrative of India's history by Jawaharlal Nehru in his magnum opus, *The Discovery of India* (first published 1946), was made the guiding principle of the history textbooks that were published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) from the 1960s onwards. Not only India's distinctive geography, but also Hinduism under the leadership of the Aryan race were suggested by Mookerji, to be the key unifying elements⁴ amidst the heterogeneity of languages, races, creeds and regions in the subcontinent including both India and Pakistan; owing to it being part of the Hindu geography (e.g. the Sapta-Sindhu-Punjab), Mookerji argued that Pakistan could not be kept outside the cultural geography of India, and therefore, he suggested that the 'political division of India cannot obliterate certain national and historical memories on both sides of the division' (Mookerji, 2008: 25-30).

In the 1960s and after, Mookerji's idea of geo-cultural unity, however, was adopted in the NCERT textbooks for history, but instead of identifying Hinduism/Aryanism as a key unifying force, R. S. Sharma (1977: 1) - one of the authors of history textbooks, located the roots of India's underlying cultural unity in the fusion of different races, viz., pre-Aryans, Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Huns, Turks, and also religions, viz., Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Instead of following Wheeler's suggestions, authors of these NCERT textbooks adopted an approach different from the Indian archaeologists; they conceptualised pre-modern India, comprising the entire land from the Hindu Kush to the Seas, as 'one geographical unit,' and here, despite all the regional, religious, and linguistic diversity, the presence of an underlying cultural unity was emphasised upon. This 'cultural approach' whereas rejected the presence of Pakistan either as a country or an idea ('proto-Pakistan') in the premodern times, it also enabled the Indian historians to trace the origin of India as a nation as well as an idea ('Bharatavarsha') from ancient times, and accordingly, a five thousand years old India's history was introduced in the form of NCERT textbooks with an aim to help 'Indian children from the far-flung parts of India - and their adult counterparts - in seeing their country as an entity that transcends region and religion' (see 'Forward' by L. S. Chandrakant in Thapar, 1966). Not only this, aim of these textbooks was to 'enable the child to connect the life of a local and a regional community with the life of the nation and to learn to think in national and indeed, international terms' (See 'Forward' by L. S. Chandrakant in Thapar, 1966). With the acceptance of India as a 'geo-cultural unit,' the post-1947 political boundaries for the study of India's premodern history became irrelevant; the entire Punjab region (including both, West and East Punjab) was identified as a birth-place of India's history (Singh, 1970: 2); and in the 1960s the same geo-cultural approach for the study of Punjab region gained acceptance in East Punjab at a time, when two history writing trends were competing to provide a historical definition to the expressions, 'Punjab,' 'Punjabi,' and 'Sikh'.

Making of the '*Crisis of History*' in East Punjab

The partition of India was simultaneously a partition of the Punjab region, whose political boundaries, like India, have never been static except for a brief period under the British Raj. In spite of being divided in 1947 and then again in 1966, Punjab's regional identity was suggested to have been rooted within its distinctive culture (Prasad, 1966: 15-16), and the irrelevance of the post-partition political boundaries of East Punjab, West Punjab, and Haryana were emphasised upon for the study of Punjab's history (Chhabra, 1966: 18). After partition, the population symmetry in East Punjab changed drastically. Muslims, who constituted the majority (about 53 percent) in pre-partition Punjab, had all gone to Pakistan; as a result, according to the 1951 Census, Hindus came to constitute about 62 percent and the Sikhs about 35 percent of the population in East Punjab; as both, Sikh and Hindu refugees migrated to East Punjab, the scramble for land as well as urban property left by Muslim evacuees, created

tensions between them (Narang, 1983: 14, 80-81; Singh, 1966: 291); the 'abolition of separate electorates and communal privileges' that the Sikhs had enjoyed under the British Raj were no longer available to them (Singh, 1966: 293) and as a result, they now had to compete with their Hindu counterparts for various administrative posts. These tensions between the Sikhs and the Hindus further intensified, when the Akalis raised the demand for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking Suba to protect the interest of the Sikhs (Narang, 1983: 92-94). On the other hand, the Arya Samaj, not only identified Sikhism as an offshoot of Hinduism, but its leaders 'spearheaded the movement which held that it was no longer necessary for the Sikhs to remain as a separate entity as a religion' (*panth*), and after the creation of Pakistan, Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa that was created to protect Hindus from the Mughals, it was argued was no longer more needed, and therefore Sikhs were asked to 'come back to the Hindu society and be absorbed by it' (Narang, 1983: 96; see also Singh, 1994: 1877). The Sikhs were particularly alarmed, when leaders of the Arya Samaj, during the course of the 1951 Census, appealed to Hindus in Punjab and PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) to write 'Hindi as their mother tongue, irrespective of whether they were Punjabi speaking' (Narang, 1983: 102). The Akalis responded sharply by further intensifying their demand for Punjabi Suba, and because the Hindus of Punjab had disowned the Punjabi language, the Sikhs now claimed to have become 'the sole custodian of the Punjabi language and culture' (Singh, 1994: 1878). This demand of Punjabi Suba that had begun in the 1940s with the demand of Sikhistan for the Sikhs, had worried the Punjabi Hindus and the Congress leaders immensely, and a fear of another partition that had been suggested by some of the Sikh leaders, loomed large in their minds (Jeffrey, 1987: 59-61; for a discussion on the demand of a separate Sikh state, see Singh, 1994: 1878-1881; Oberoi, 1987: 38-40). To address this fear, it was felt there was a need to rewrite this region's history with the aim of situating Punjab within 'the wider context of national history with which it' was expected to 'naturally blend and integrate' (Chandra, 1965: 4; Potdar, 1965: 12-17; Saksena, 1968: 1-24).

To write history of the Punjab region, a theoretical framework was borrowed from the colonial history of Punjab (see the section above on 'Colonial Sketching of Punjab'), and the existence of Punjab as a distinct geographical unit (termed as Sapta-Sindhu and Pancanada: for details see, Sircar, 1997: 25-45) from time immemorial was accepted, and religion-based periodisation for Punjab's history was integrated in the historical narratives of this region. In the decades following the partition, the regional history of Punjab was expected to transcend the post-colonial political boundaries of Punjab region to serve the Indian nation by instilling the sense of nationalism in the hearts and minds of the people, and therefore, a call was given alongside to set the history of India as well as Punjab, free from the influence of western thoughts and concepts (Narang, 1965: 5-9). By tracing back antiquity of the Punjab region and Punjabi identity to a hoary past, ancient Punjab was identified as a cultural region that included the areas of East and West Punjab, parts of Sind and even including considerable portions of modern Afghanistan (Prakash, 1964: vi-vii). Because

Punjab was considered an ancient region, therefore, all the major historical figures including Chandragupta Maurya, the Gupta rulers, Harshavardhana, Sher Shah Suri, Hyder Ali and Ranjit Singh were identified as Punjabis (Gupta, 1976: 31). 'Punjabi' identity, was, thus, suggested to have cut across the religious identities (viz., Hindu, Sikh, Muslims) of the people, and it could apparently be assigned to any person residing/born in the Punjab region. In other words, Punjab, it was argued, belonged to all the people of Punjab, irrespective of their religious identities, and thus, residence/birth in Punjab was suggested to be the source of Punjabi identity.

As the major phases (e.g., Indus civilization, the Vedic age, etc) of India's early history were played out on the landscapes of Punjab region, the early history of Punjab became the early history of India and it was opined that the history of the Indian subcontinent had begun in ancient Punjab. But, following colonial writings, this region continued to be treated as a 'gateway' or 'simhadwara' to the Gangetic valley, as well as a 'battlefield,' where Punjabis as 'sword-arm of India' fought the foreign invaders throughout their history to protect their motherland (Vig, 1966: 37-38; Prakash, 1964: 1-2; Narang, 1965: 9). While scholars in India and Pakistan were putting forth conflicting claims of ownership of the Indus Valley civilization, Buddha Prakash coined the term 'the Harappa-Rupar Civilization' and argued that this civilization 'acquired a distinct individuality and developed a unique personality in the Punjab and Sind and the neighbouring regions' (Prakash, 1976: 2). Noticeable is the presence of both Harappa and Rupar in West and East Punjab respectively, which indicates an attempt to make Punjab one of the key centres of India's first urban civilization. In Prakash's view, the Aryans were the rural folk in the Indus Valley Civilization, while the Rigvedic non-Aryan Panis lived in the Indus cities and exploited the Aryans. Such a view not only rejected the central Asian identity of the Aryans but also rationalised the Aryan invasions by calling it a struggle between the rural Aryans and urban Panis. In this way, first the Indus people were identified with the Aryans, and then these same Aryans were suggested to be 'the original residents of the Punjab rather than immigrants from any foreign land' (Prakash, 1976: 3-4). Not only this, the Aryan Punjabis were even argued to have produced the religious works like the Vedas and the *Mahabharatas*, and secular literature like the *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini (Vig, 1966: 46). By identifying the Punjabis with that of the Rigvedic Aryans, Punjab was suggested to be the cradle of the Harappa-Rupar-Vedic culture, and thus it became a land where Hinduism under the Aryans took its first roots.

Not all scholars agreed with Buddha Prakash's views on the Aryans; in fact, several scholars in Punjab continued to portray the Aryans as foreign invaders, who subjugated the native populations and established, after destroying the mega-cities of the Indus Civilization, village settlements. These Aryan invaders were called 'barbarians' and they even were compared with a village pig by L. M. Joshi (1997: 3), according to whom, the way a 'village pig, even if you bathe it in scented water, and anoint it in perfumes, ... will not feel happy there, but will go straight back to the dung-heap to take its ease,' in a same manner, the Aryans after subjugating the Indus people, abandoned their cities and settled

down in rural huts. Even though Punjab was Aryanised first, it was argued not to have remained the centre of Brahmanical orthodoxy in the post-Vedic period (Joshi, 1997: 3), and owing to the constant movement of foreign invaders, the region of Punjab was believed to have developed a unique culture, which was open, flexible, and lacked orthodoxy (Gupta, 1997: 182-183). The region of Punjab was visualised as a land where the Iranians, Greeks, Scythians and Parthians and many other foreigners of various racial and cultural backgrounds intermingled and the culture that developed here due to such intermixing of races was suggested to be the key factor that distinguished this region from rest of India (Joshi, 1997: 8-9). In Buddha Prakash's writings (1964: vi), Punjab was imagined as a 'melting-pot, in which varied cultural materials were transformed into an *exiliv vitae* for strengthening the stamina of man in his endeavours for higher schemes of life.' Owing to it being a 'melting pot', Punjab was argued to 'have developed a glaxis-culture, which is characterised by an assimilative spirit, resilient outlook, bellicose temperament, practical standpoint, independent tendency and a somewhat liberal bent of mind' (Prakash, 1964: 7). Punjab thus was suggested to have been historically different from the people of the Gangetic valley, where people were conservative and believed in caste hierarchy (Prakash, 1964: 7).

The history of Punjab was visualised as a history of foreign invasions, which turned Punjab into a region that experienced a perennial march of armies; while foreign invasions and fusion of races were imagined as the foundation-stones of Punjabi culture, nationalist scholars such as Buddha Prakash (1976, 1964), Hari Ram Gupta (1976, 1975) and Dashratha Sharma (1968) from Punjab and also from other parts of India failed to cultivate any stable identity – both, cultural and political, for Punjab and Punjabis in the decades following the partition (See also, Singh 1980; Kirpal 1971; Singh 1970; Saksena, 1968; Narang, 1966; Vig, 1966). The foreign invasions that were believed to have shaped Punjabi culture, were grouped into two categories: first, the invasions of Aryans, Greeks, Kushanas and Hunas, which resulted in merging of the invaders in the local population and adoption by the invading forces of the indigenous culture as well as religious beliefs. In the second category, the invasions of Turks, Mongols and Afghans were included and since the invaders of this second category neither abandoned their own identity nor adopted indigenous culture/religion, they were characterised as foreigners in India. While the invaders of first category were suggested to have contributed to the growth of India's society, economy, culture, art and literature, the invaders of second category were blamed for robbing India of its wealth, for destroying urban/rural settlements, temples, works of art, and also for massacring/enslaving the people in the subcontinent (Gupta, 1975: 6-7; see also for similar views Singh, 1963: 10-12; Singh, 1967: 30-33). Just as in India's meta-history, the medieval age was called the age of foreign rule, and thus a dark phase (Ray, 1967: 1-30), in a same way, Punjab's history was chalked out. The age of Mughal rulers was termed as 'the Moguls' night of doom' (Narang, 1965: 8-9); Muhammadan rule over Punjab for nearly six centuries was identified as a time of slavery; and the Sikhs were called liberators of Punjab from the foreign rule of Mughals (Sharma, 1968: 42; Gupta, 1944: 41-

42), and they were identified as the Hindus or proto-Hindus (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta, 1953: 540-542, 735-737).

As a 'doorway', 'entrance', 'borderland', or 'watch-tower' of the Gangetic valley, Punjab was made a land always in flux in writings on the ancient history of this region. In spite of being the centre of the Indus cities and of the Rigvedic culture of the Aryans, the region of Punjab was treated as a periphery of the Gangetic valley - the core of India's Hindu-Aryan civilization, and the Punjabis as mere sentinels, guards, and doorkeepers of this core, which was actually composed by the non-Punjabis. Being a doorway/entrance/borderland of India, theoretically Punjab's history was tied to the history of the Gangetic valley or the Madhyadesha (Joshi and Singh, 1997: vii, x), and therefore, any independent history of ancient Punjab outside the purview of the Gangetic valley, could not be developed. Despite the consistent emphasis upon Punjab's distinctive geo-cultural identity, the historical formation of this very identity in the writings of the nationalist historians, for instance, Buddha Prakash (1964, 1976), Hari Ram Gupta (1976) and L. M. Joshi (1997) in Punjab has always remained vague and arbitrary. Although the concept of a 'melting pot' attempted to provide some theoretical stability to this geo-cultural identity of Punjab and Punjabis, the continuous emphasis upon the role of invasions in the making and unmaking of the Punjab region in the historical writings of the early post-colonial decades kept this region's identity in perennial chaos. Neither ethnically, nor culturally, and not even politically, could ancient Punjab be assigned in their writings any specific identity except that of a '*khichadi*⁵ region'. This inability of the nationalist scholars to explain the formation of Punjabi identity in ancient times allowed the Sikh historians to claim the origin of this identity under the Sikh Gurus and their follower Sikhs in late medieval times.

The Making of the '*Sikhic*' Punjab

By the time Punjab was partitioned, the rise of the Sikhs as a religious and political community in India's meta-history had been styled as a national struggle against the foreign rule of the Mughals (Gupta, 1944: 36-38, 40-42; see also, Sharma, 1968: 42; Singh, undated: 13, 22, 28, 1974: 18); Maharaja Ranjit Singh was projected as a founder of the Sikh kingdom (termed as, 'national monarchy') in the North-West of the Indian subcontinent and the Sikhs as the Hindus or proto-Hindus in the nationalist history of India (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta, 1953: 540-542, 735-737). This idea of 'Sikh nation' or 'Sikh nationality' was first suggested by the colonial scholars (see for instance, Forster, 1798: 102-104; Malcolm 1812: 105-113), and according to one such scholar, J. D. Cunningham (1918: 38, 90), whereas Guru Nanak had reformed the otherwise degenerated Hindu religion through his teachings, Guru Gobind Singh fired 'the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality' and 'inspired them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent'. Sikhism was identified as a reformation - an improvement of otherwise degenerated Hinduism, Guru Nanak was projected as a reformer, and both the British administrators and Tat Khalsa reformers believed that Sikhism needed

to be protected from popular Hinduism, which was perceived as 'an all-consuming jungle which threaten to stifle the reforming impulses evident in more 'rationalistic' ... Sikhism' (Ballantyne, 1999: 198-200, 207-208, 2002: 8-9). Having internalised such an idea of being a distinct nation subjected to a Hindu threat, a large number of Sikhs, when after the partition found themselves stranded in different refugee camps in India, they felt insecure, helpless and cheated. 'The question began to be raised, "The Hindus have got Hindustan, the Muslims have got Pakistan, what have the Sikhs got?"' (Narang, 1983: 93).

Not only they had to leave their homes and properties, but also most of the Sikh religious sites were left behind in West Pakistan. Haunted by memories of communal frenzy, these uprooted people needed to restart their lives afresh in India. With the influx of Sikh refugees into East Punjab, for the first time in their history, the Sikhs came to constitute a majority in the population in the area between the Ravi and the Ghaggar, and 'in the Sikh princely states and the districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Ferozpur, Sikhs came to represent more than half of the total population' (Grewal, 1990: 182). The population symmetry that partition created, provided an opportunity to Sikhs, and the demand for a Punjabi Suba was vociferously made by the Akali leadership, with a plea to secure the interests of the Sikh community 'from the tyranny of the communal majority' (Narang, 1983: 92-93; see also, Oberoi, 1987: 39). The demand of Punjabi Suba became a hotly contested issue in the politics of East Punjab in the 1950s and 1960s, and the conflicts between the Arya Samaj and the Sikhs, which are argued to have first begun in the late 19th century with attacks by the Arya Samajists upon the Sikhs and their Gurus, were refreshed (Jones, 1973: 457-475; Singh, 1961: 119-123; Grewal, 1990: 187-189, 196; Narang, 1983: 136-138). Not only did leaders of Arya Samaj opposed the creation of Punjabi Suba, but they also even refused to identify Sikhism as a religion different from Hinduism (Narang, 1983: 95-96).

In a response, Sikh scholars appear to have concentrated their energies to historicise the origin of Sikhism and Sikh identity, and in their writings, the regional (Punjab), linguistic (Punjabi), and community (Sikh) identities were merged in each other (see preface by Singh, 1963: vii-ix). Without deviating much from the existing historiography of the colonial, nationalist and Tat Khalsa scholars, the Sikh historians, for instance Ganda Singh (1956, 1971, 1974) and Khushwant Singh (1963, 1966) created Punjab's history with a focus on the Sikh Gurus, their tryst with the Mughals, formation of Sikh kingdom, and political fortunes of the Sikhs under the British Raj (See for a comment on Tat Khalsa approach to Sikh history, Ballantyne, 2002: 7-9; Oberoi, 1987: 35-40). In this history of Punjab region, even though the origin of Punjab as an amorphous geographical region was traced back to the Aryan-Vedic times ('Sapta-Sindhu-Punjab', i.e., land of seven rivers from the Indus to Yamuna), and from the name Pancanada (meeting place of these seven rivers) the origin of the Persian name, Panjāb in the medieval times was accepted, but the origin of Punjab as a distinct nation and Punjabi as a distinct nationality was associated with the rise and growth of Sikhism alone. From a historical point of view, the period of seven hundred years of the Sultanate and Mughal rule was called the phase of foreign

rule in Punjab's history, and Sikhs were projected as Punjab's liberators. Under the able guidance and leadership of the Sikh Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs were argued to have emerged as a nation (Singh, 2012: 1-2, 3-7, 32-36; see 'Preface' of Singh and Singh, 1950; see also, Singh, 1963: 13-14) and 'story of the Sikhs' was argued to be 'the story of the rise, fulfilment, and collapse of Punjabi nationalism' (Singh, 1963: vii).

The Sikh historians thus transformed Sikhs into a Punjabi nationality, Sikhism into a revolutionary religion of Punjab, and Sikh history into Punjab's history of freedom struggle against foreign rule of the Mughals (see for instance, Singh, 1963: 13-14; Singh, 1976: 333-340). As 'Sikhism questioned some of the cardinal principles of Hinduism such as caste system, sanctity of Sanskrit language, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva Trinity, belief in the divine origin of the Vedas, etc.,' it was argued that Guru Nanak had established a religion different from Hinduism and therefore, Sikhism cannot be called an offshoot of Hinduism (Singh, 1969: 6-8, 9-24). By distinguishing Sikhism from Hinduism, a distinct identity of Sikhs was claimed, and Sikhs were turned into ideal Punjabi nationalists. While the Punjabis were styled as the frontier guards of India historically, the Sikhs, who came into existence in the late medieval times, became the Punjabis who liberated India from foreign rule, and Ranjit Singh was glorified as a secular, but Sikh ruler and his kingdom as the Sikh, but a secular kingdom. The conquest of Punjab by the Aryans was accepted, but the Aryans and their orthodox Brahmin descendants were distinguished from the true Punjabis; according to Ganda Singh, Punjabis did not 'accept the Vedic or Brahmanical culture' and they, despite losing freedom to the Brahmanical Aryans, always stood against their religious dogmas (Singh, 1976: 333-334).

A dichotomic division of Punjabi society between the true Punjabis, having traits like liberal, unorthodox, and martial, and the opposite of it, orthodox and dogmatic outsiders living in Punjab (in other words, illiberal, thus false-Punjabis), was thus invented, and a perennial struggle between liberal Punjabis and orthodox Punjabis became an integral part of Punjab's history. In this way, the definition of 'Punjabi' was based on certain characteristics, and mere residence in Punjab was rejected as a sole criterion to define true 'Punjabi' identity. Following this approach, although ancient Punjab's historical association with the Aryans and Vedas was accepted, but the Brahmanical Aryans of the Sapta-Sindhu and their Vedic beliefs were identified as illiberal – in other words, un-Punjabi in character; and these same people, their caste hierarchy, and their polytheistic beliefs were held responsible for allowing India to be enslaved by different invading races throughout Punjab's history. Having lost their freedom at numerous occasions to foreign invaders in ancient and medieval times, the illiberal Punjabi Hindus, particularly Brahmins and Rajputs, were argued to have lost 'all sense of honour and self-respect' under Muslim rule; 'Like dumb driven cattle they meekly submitted to the rod of the foreigners', and the kshatriyas, instead of defending the *dharma*, their country and its people, were condemned for allying with foreign rulers (Singh, 1978: 6-7). Neither their country nor their temples, could Brahmins save from the wrath of the invaders; according to Ganda Singh (1978: 7), the Hindus failed primarily

because of the caste system, which divided them ‘into water-tight compartments of the privileged and power-mad few and of the working and serving masses, of the exploiters and the exploited, of the superior castes and the lower ones, who were further discriminated against as depressed *sūdras* and condemned untouchables’. Contrary to the supposed false-Punjabis, i.e., Brahmins and Rajputs (Kshatriyas), the Jat peasantry of the central plains of Punjab was suggested to be the backbone of Sikhism and in Sikh histories, Jat castes were turned into an ideal-prototype of a true Punjabi (See, Singh, 1963: 14-16; see for a comment on the centrality of Jat-Sikhs in Punjab’s history in J. S. Grewal’s writings: Josh, 2022). As a result, the role of Dalit-Sikhs in the rise and growth of Sikhism in Punjab and beyond did not get much attention of the Sikh scholars, whose writings, in spite of praising the anti-caste teachings of the Sikh Gurus, appear itself to be lopsided along the caste lines.⁷

Early Indians were further argued to have failed to develop ‘the concept of India being one country as the common motherland of the whole Indian people,’ (Singh, 1979: 1) and following it, the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak was projected to have been the earliest Punjabi, who ‘looked upon the entire country to the south-east of the Indus as ‘one Hindustan and the Punjab as a part thereof’ in the first quarter of the 16th century (Singh, 1979: 1). Guru Nanak was a contemporary of the Lodhi rulers of Delhi, and he is argued to have been a ‘revolutionary religious and social reformer’ (Singh, 1974: 1-2), and Guru Nanak and his nine successors are argued to have harnessed ‘the spirit of tolerance and’ given ‘it a positive content in the shape of Punjabi nationalism’ in a Punjabi society that was divided into Hindus and Muslims (Singh, 1963: 14). As the Hindus and the Muslims had forgotten the ‘oneness of God,’ Guru Nanak preached the unity of God as well as brotherhood of mankind. While Guru Nanak rejected the caste/class distinctions, Guru Gobind Singh is argued to have created a uniform Sikh community of the Khalsa (Singh, undated: 10, 13). Since the Brahmins could not see the shudras and untouchables freed from their shackles, according to Ganda Singh (1976: 336), they called Guru Nanak ‘as a *kurahiya*, a heretic’; but in spite of their opposition to the Sikhs, the path that the Sikh Gurus showed instilled the sense of patriotism and sacrifice in the Sikh community, and the Sikhs are argued to have not only freed Punjab from foreign rule, but they also created, ‘under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the first half of the 19th century, a place of strength and honour on the international map and made a gift of it to India to stand as a sentinel on its North-Western frontier to defend it against all future invasions from that quarters’ (Singh, undated: 9-10). Not only the Mughals but also the Hindu Rajas of the Shivalik hill were blamed for acting against the ‘common national ideal,’ which the Sikh Gurus created by rejecting the caste system (Singh, 1974: 16). For the fall of the Sikh kingdom that had been created by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Hindus (particularly, Dogras and Poorbias) were blamed for supporting the British armies, and the Sikhs, who lacked trust in the Poorbias, were argued to have avoided taking part in the mutiny of 1857, which aimed to re-establish the authority of arch-enemies of the Sikhs, the Mughals (Singh, 1971: 51).

The support that Sikhs extended to the Indian government in 1962 (Indo-China War) and 1965 (Indo-Pak War), seems to have convinced the Congress leadership of their loyalty to Indian nation, and it eventually paved the path for the creation of Punjabi Suba with a Sikh majority, on November 1, 1966. With the establishment of Punjabi Suba, after the separation of Haryana and transfer of some parts to Himachal Pradesh, the tendency to merge community identity (i.e. Sikh) and regional identity (i.e. Punjab) that had evolved in previous decades, further intensified, and as a result, the semantic expressions, Sikh and Punjabi, became coterminous and coeval in Sikh or/and Punjab histories (see for instance, Singh, 1963, 1966; Singh, 1956, 1967, 1974, 1978, 2012). This community-centric history received an overwhelming support from the then Punjab governments, which 'lavishly celebrated anniversaries from the Punjab (but notably the Sikh) past' in 1967 (three hundredth birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh) and in 1969 (the five hundredth birthday of Guru Nanak) (for details see, Jeffrey, 1987: 66) and established a new university in Punjab, Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar in 1969 (Webster, 1996: 406, 412). To further substantiate the union of Sikh and Punjabi identity, Ganda Singh (1968: 71, 1981: 2-3) questioned the very idea of 'ancient Punjab', and he even contested the reliability of those studies which showed the origin of Punjab and Punjabi identity in the Aryan-Vedic-Hindu past of this region.⁸ The Muslims were argued to have introduced the art of history writing ('semitic art') in India, and on the other hand, the possibility of writing any reliable history of ancient Punjab on the basis of early Indian literature was rejected. Since the early Indians lacked historical sense due to their beliefs in the illusory nature of the world (*maya* and *mithya*), Ganda Singh (1968: 71, 74) argued that 'we are, comparatively, in the dark about the history of that period, however glorious and great it was'.

Despite identifying Sikhs as a distinct nation, they were never projected as being against the Indian nation; according to Ganda Singh (1974: 69), the Sikhs have always been 'the staunchest advocates of Akhanda Hindustan, the undivided India'. If Tara Singh, representing the Sikhs, had not 'refused the offer of Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah for a separate Sikh State in Pakistan, and decided to sink or swim with India,' it was argued that the entire Punjab would have been lost to Pakistan (Singh, 1974: 69-70). The emphasis on the Sikh's belief in Indian nation and their identification in the histories of Punjab as sentries of India's borders, whilst projecting them as an integral part of Indian nation, they simultaneously claimed a distinct religious and community identity for themselves – different from the Hindus in the decades following India's partition. Punjab Suba was styled as a promised land of the Sikhs, termed as 'The Sikh Homeland' (Singh, 1966: 305; Oberoi, 1987: 27, footnote 3; Grewal, 1990: 8).

Conclusion

The paper started discussion with a focus on India's (also of Punjab's) partition that caused a crisis of history and pushed the historians on both sides of the Redcliff Line to reinvent histories for their respective nation-states. The crisis

of history that partition of India precipitated is still raging on in the 21st century, and the intensity of it one can guess from the consistent attempts of the rightwing intelligentsia in India to rename the Indus Valley Civilization as the Saraswati Civilization by identifying the Aryans not only as indigenous to India but also as the builders of the Harappan cities (See for details Kumar, 2022). Amidst the tug-of-war between Indian and Pakistani historians on the custody of the Indus Valley Civilization in the decades following the partition (for details see, Kumar, 2020: 1-27), the fault-lines between the Hindu and Sikh Punjabis had widened due to Punjabi Suba movement in 1950s-60s, and two competing history writing trends appeared in East Punjab with an aim to redefine 'Punjab', 'Punjabi', and 'Sikh' identities.

The nationalist scholars, for instance, Buddha Prakash (1976, 1964), Hari Ram Gupta (1976, 1975), Jagannatha Aggrawal (1971), B. P. Saksena (1968), Dashratha Sharma (1968), Bisheshwar Prasad (1966), Prabodh Chandra (1965) and D. V. Potdar (1965), having a fear of another partition along communal lines in their hearts and minds, integrated Punjab's history in the meta-history of India to project Punjab as an integral part of Indian nation. Following such an approach, the birth/residence in Punjab (instead of any religious identity) was advocated as a criteria to define Punjabi identity of an individual, and the Sikhs, who had been identified as Hindus (offshoot of Hinduism, or Proto-Hindus), were projected as the valiant guards of mother India against foreign invaders/rulers (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta, 1953: 540-542, 735-737). On the other hand, after the loss of their land and loved ones in the communal frenzy of partition, Sikhs were anxious about their future in a Hindu majority India, and therefore, Sikh scholars, for instance Ganda Singh (1956, 1960, 1967, 1974, 1978, 2012) and Khushwant Singh (1963, 1966) appear to have taken a different stand. Not only to rationalise the Punjabi Suba ('the Sikh homeland') demand, but also to counter the identification of the Sikhs as proto-Hindus, they historicised the connection between Punjab, Punjabi and Sikh identities. Sikhism was argued to have been a religion different from both, Hinduism and Islam (Singh, 1969: 22; Narang, 1969: 7), and a distinction between true Punjabis, such as Jats, and false-Punjabis, such as Brahmins and Rajputs was underlined by characterising the former as liberal/martial and the latter as orthodox/unmanly. While the presence of Punjab as an amorphous geographical region (Sapta-Sindhu-Punjab, Panchanada) in ancient times was acknowledged by the Sikh scholars - Khushwant Singh (1963: 5, 9-14) and Ganda Singh (1967, 1974, 2012), the same scholars associated the origin of Punjab as a distinct nation and Punjabi as a distinct nationality exclusively with the rise and growth of Sikhism alone.

Neither of these two competing history writing trends could resolve the crisis of history that had emerged in early post-colonial East Punjab due to their different definitions of Punjab, Punjabi and Sikh identities. The failure of scholars of both camps (nationalist and Sikh) to develop a common agreeable consensus on Punjab's history appears to have further deepened the crisis of history in the late decades of the 20th century (see for a discussion on conflicting views on Punjabi and Sikh identity, and its impacts on Punjab's politics:

Bombwall, 1986; Singh, 1994), when Punjab owing of a power tussle between Congress and Akalis had been pushed into more than a decade (1980s-1990s) long political turmoil (see for details, Sathyamurthy, 1986). As normalcy returned to Punjab by the turn of the century, a need was felt in East Punjab and Punjabi diaspora to develop a fresh approach to resolve this crisis of history. It has led to the formulation of the concept of 'Punjabiyyat' ('a sense of belonging to Punjab') as a guiding light for the studies on Punjab's medieval and modern history in recent decades, and following it, an emphasis is laid upon Punjab's history that would transcend caste, ethnic, religious and geopolitical (East Punjab, West Punjab and Punjabi diaspora) boundaries to develop a common Punjabi identity in a globalised world (see for instance, Singh and Thandi, 1999; Singh, 2012; Malhotra and Mir, 2012).

Notes

¹ From the 1941 Census, it appears that Muslims constituted the majority (about 52.88 percent) in the Punjab Province, and compared to them, Hindus (29.79 percent) and Sikhs (14.62 percent) were in minority. This population symmetry drastically changed after partition, and according to the 1951 Census, the population of East Punjab comprised Hindus (62.28 percent), Sikhs (35 percent) and Muslims (1.80 percent) (Narang, 1983: 14-6, 18).

² Syad Muhammad Latif divided history of Punjab into following sections: Part I- The Early Period; Part II- The Mahomedan Period; Part III- The Rise of the Sikhs; Part IV- The Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; and Part V- Period Following the Death of Ranjit Singh. See content section of Latif, 1891: xvii-xix). In a similar manner, Hugh Kennedy Trevaskies has divided the history of Punjab into following chapters: Chapter I- The Dawn of History; Chapter II- the Making of the Punjab; Chapter III- The Sword of Islam; and Chapter IV- The Coming of the English (including sections on The Rise of the Sikhs; The Sikh Kingdom; The Sikhs and The English); and Chapter V – The Punjab under the British. See content section of (Trevaskies, 1928: ix-xiii). On the other hand, James Douie has divided the history of Punjab into: Pre-Muhammadan Period (500 BC- 1000 AD); Muhammadan Period (1000 AD- 1764 AD); Sikh Period (1764 AD -1849 AD); and British Period (1849 AD -1913 AD). See content section of (Douie, 2003: ix).

³ Following the World War II (1939-1945), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored a series on world history. As a part of this ambitious series, Leonard Woolley prepared the history of ancient India, in which he identified the Aryans as barbarous, un-civilized, and pastoral invaders. Woolley held the Aryans responsible for destroying the Indus cities and massacring its people. R. C. Majumdar, from India, was a member of the national commission of India, which was associated with the UNESCO's world history series, and he raised several objections on the negative depiction of the Aryans in this series. None of his objections were addressed satisfactorily by Leonard Woolley. Majumdar expressed his doubts on the idea

of wholesale massacre of Indus people by the Aryans, and he suggested the possibilities of some other factors behind the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization. For details see R. C. Majumdar, 1959: 1-15; Sir Leonard Woolley, 1963: 397, 405-407).

⁴ ‘...the oldest expression of this unity [of India] was the name Bharatavarsha, which the ancient Hindu applied to India – the full significance of the name indicating the Aryanisation of India’ (italic in original) (R. K. Mookerji, 2008: 32-33).

⁵ An Indian dish made of rice and lentils.

⁶ The expression ‘Sikhic’ is used in a sense, ‘pertaining to Sikhs’, ‘belonging to Sikhs’; here, the author has deliberately not used the expression ‘Sikh Punjab’ or ‘Sikh’s Punjab’ because that would imply an agreement with the Sikh centric approach to Punjab history. The expression ‘Sikhic Punjab’ which this author considers a historiographical construct, refers to an idea/view of some of the Sikh scholars, with which not all scholars in and outside Punjab entirely agree. In this paper, the works of two Sikh scholars viz., Ganda Singh and Khushwant Singha are mostly used to discuss the community centric approach to Punjab’s history. Among the scholars, who disagree with such an approach are included Harjot Oberoi and Tony Ballantyne. While Harjot Oberoi (1987: 35-40) identifies the Sikh and Sikhism centric history of Punjab as part of the ‘Tat Khalsa tradition,’ Tony Ballantyne (2002: 7-9) uses the expression ‘normative tradition’ for it, and according to Ballantyne (2002: 9), Ganda Singh was among the most notable scholars of this tradition in the early post-colonial East Punjab. Noticeable here also is the recent works of Surinder Singh (2022), who has shifted the focus away from the Sikh centric history of Punjab, and brought into discussion regional tribes/clans (e.g., Gakkhars, Jud, Janjuhas, Mandahars), Jogis, Sufis (e.g., Chishtis, Suhrawardis, Qadiris), Sikh Gurus, love-legends (e.g., Hir-Ranjha, Mirza-Sahiban, Soni-Mahiwal), folk tales (e.g., Dulla Bhatti), Mughals, urban life (e.g., Lahore), and lower castes to discuss the formation of Punjab and Punjabi culture in the medieval times. In his work, history of Sikhism/Sikhs is considered as a part and not as a substitute of medieval Punjab’s history.

⁷ Based on the accounts of British writers and 1881 Census, W. H. McLeod (2008: 91-94) identifies the Jats (about 66 per cent) as the majority in the Sikh population; however, he also acknowledges the presence of other caste groups, viz., khattris (2.2 per cent), kamboh (1.7 per cent), Arora (2.3 per cent), Tarkhan (6.5 per cent), Lohar (1.4 per cent), Nai (1.2 per cent), Chhimba (1 per cent), Chamar (5.6 per cent) and Chuhra (2.6 per cent), which were in minority compared to the Jats. On the other hand, Surinder Singh (2023: 310-311, 2022: 291-337) has mainly used the Sikh scripture and the Perisan records to draw our attention to the diverse social base of Sikhism without projecting the Jats as the backbone of it. It appears from Singh’s work that not only Jat peasantry but many lower caste professionals including Tarkhan (carpenter), Lohar (blacksmiths), Nai (barber), Sunair (goldsmiths), Chhimba (cotton printer), Machhi (water carrier), Dhobi (washerwoman), Kumhar (potter), Teli (oil presser),

Chandal (outcaste) and several others had embraced Sikhism. Based on the Persian chroniclers, Surinder Singh (2022: 507-509) underlines 'the preponderance of low castes among the Sikh warrior bands' in the 18th century, and it is suggested that the 'Sikhs, by opening their doors to the low castes, acquired three valuable characteristics – rapidly increasing numbers, enviable martial skills and an indomitable spirit of sacrifice.' Although, both W. H. McLeod and Surinder Singh acknowledge the diverse social base of Sikhism, their perspectives on Sikh community are different. McLeod whereas has analyzed the Sikh community by quantifying the numerical strength of different caste groups within it in the 19th and 20th centuries, Singh makes no such attempt. Surinder Singh's main focus is upon the anti-caste attitude of the Sikh Gurus and their teachings, emancipatory character of Sikhism, and the caste diversity of the members of Sikh community in the 17th and the 18th centuries.

⁸ The articulated consciousness of Punjab as a distinct region and Punjabi identity for its inhabitants was formed, according to J. S. Grewal, in the late medieval times. Therefore, use of the expressions, 'Saptasindhu', 'Madar Desh' and 'Panchand' for ancient Punjab was questioned by Grewal and he argued that 'we know precious little about these 'regions' (assuming for the sake of argument that they represented regions) in terms of geography, polity, culture of self-image' (Grewal, 1995: 5). Not only this, according to him, the term Punjab first appeared in the *Akbarnama* (last quarter of the 16th century) for the province of five doabs (i.e., Lahore Suba) under the Mughals (Grewal, 1995: 5-6, 1974: 2) and therefore, the expression 'land of five rivers' for Punjab is a misnomer. The Britishers, in Grewal's view (1995: 5), employed the expression 'land of five rivers' 'as a metaphor, meaning nothing more and nothing less than the British Punjab,' and following them, Indian historians have begun using it for the study of pre-modern history of this region. If we accept Grewal's views, then the origin of Punjab as a clearly definable geo-cultural unit cannot be located in pre-Mughal times simply because the epithet, the Persian term Panjāb had first come into a geo-administrative use under the Mughals. Grewal here failed to take into account the Sultanate official letters of Naib-i-Multan (*Insha-i-Mahru*, dated about 1340-41 CE), in which the Persian term Panjāb that either included the shiq of Multan or had been intimately connected with it, had appeared about two centuries before its reference in the *Akbarnama* (see for details, Grover, 1985: 10; Kumar, 2019: 21). In his later writings, Grewal (2004: 9-10) partially revised his approach and took up a task of writing a history of prehistoric, ancient and early medieval Punjab. Even though he acknowledged the possibility of having a systematic history of early Punjab, but this early Punjab (Sapta-Sindhu, Vahika, Madra, Pancanada) always remained for him a metaphor before its appearance in the *Akbarnama* (see for details, Grewal, 2004a: 1-3, 1999: 41-45). Curiously, the use of the expression 'prehistoric, ancient and early medieval Punjab' by Grewal has been termed by Anshu Malhotra and Farina Mir (2012: xx) as anachronistic in their book, which reconsiders Punjab but without taking into account this region's ancient past.

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