Remarking An Analisation

The American Presbyterian Mission in Colonial Punjab: Contribution in Social and Religious Fields (1834-1930)

Abstract

In 1834 John C. Lowrie, the first American Presbyterian missionary established a mission station at Ludhiana which marked the beginning of American Presbyterian Mission Society in Punjab as well as the onward journey and history of Christianity in the region. The article examines the contribution of American Presbyterian mission and missionaries in Punjab in the field of education, medical, religious, literary and social welfare work. The paper focuses attention on the efforts and the objectives of the American Presbyterian mission and missionaries to establish the "Punjab Mission" in the colonial Punjab. Having started their work at Ludhiana station, the American Presbyterian missionaries with the passage of time established stations at Lahore, Sialkot, Ferozepur, Ambala, Saharanpur and Hoshiarpur. They made strenuous efforts in Punjab to evangelise the native people. Their methods for fulfilment of said purpose included the preaching in bazaar, distribution of literature, spread of education, medical work among leper and orphans. This article also brings into light the role of some important missionaries like John Lowrie, W. Charles Forman, James C.R. Ewing, John Newton, Kali Charan Chatterjee, and Golak Nath in the field of education, literary activity and conversion.

Keywords: Presbyterian Missionaries, Ludhiana Mission, Punjab Mission. **Introduction**

American missionaries began to land on Indian soil from 1830 onwards. The efforts to this effect were made by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission which led to the formation of many American Missionary Societies in India. In 1833, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission of United States of America in order to inaugurate missionary work in India sent its first representatives, John Lowrie and William Reed in India who arrived in Calcutta with their spouses. Christian Missionaries like Alexander Duff, Charles Trevelyan advised them to choose Punjab for their mission activities which led them to select Ludhiana as the site of setting up their first mission station. The selection of the site in Punjab was owing to the fact that this was the land of Sikhs, the people of fine physique and unusually independent character who had already, in principle at least, discarded the old idolatry of Hinduism and broken in some measure, the bonds of caste and therefore might be considered to be in a favourable state to be influenced by the preachings of Christian missionaries. Another factor that influenced their decision was the invitation from Captain Wade, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana. With the purpose of starting a school in the city, Lowrie travelled alone after his wife passed away and after Reeds had departed. At Ludhiana in November 1834 by virtue of his efforts, he opened the first American Presbyterian Mission Station which was the first established anywhere

Maharaja Ranjit Singh proposed to John Lowrie that he should start an English school for sons of nobility in his state also. The negotiations to this effect failed since the missionary principles of teaching of the Gospel in study of literature and science was unacceptable to the Maharaja. In December, 1835 two missionary couples James Wilson, John Newton with their life partners arrived at Ludhiana. Only six weeks after their arrival Mr. Lowrie was obliged to return to America on account of ill-health. There he rendered his services as the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Mission. The Lowrie's successors carried out his mission. The missionaries in America decided to organise the Presbyterian Mission overseas including India in a way that it should effectively carry the



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programme of the mission. In tune with this decision, in December, 1836, six of the seven couples gathered together in Saharanpur for missionary meeting. The three clergymen present during the meeting on 17 December, 1836 organised 'The First Presbytery of North India' on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in the USA.³ In 1837, they decided to organise themselves into a mission. The Presbyterian missionaries started new school, which received opposition from the old school in United States. In 1840 the missionaries got divided into two branches, Ludhiana Mission and Farrukhabad (later Northern India) Mission.⁴ The American United Presbyterian Mission in the Punjab was known as the Ludhiana Mission of the Presbyterian Church till 1904 when its name was changed to "The Punjab Mission of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America."5 The reunion of the old and new school of Presbyterians resulted into the Kohlapur (later western India) Mission, which became the third mission in India of the Presbyterian Church in the USA.

The North India Mission and the Punjab Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the USA under the Board of Foreign Missions elected two delegates each to the council of the three Presbyterian Missions of USA in India.7 This council constituted the following permanent committees: Evangelistic, Educational, Medical, Force, Policy and Finance. Each of the Missions had its Executive committee Department committees-Educational, Evangelistic, Medical and others. The national organisations were the Churches belonging to Allahabad, Farrukhabad, and Ludhiana Presbyteries. Presbyteries with the addition of Sialkot Presbytery made up the Synod of North India, which was one of the five synods in the General Assembly of the United Church in the North India. 8 Indian pastoral and other leaders were not allowed to become the members of the mission as well as the council. The Punjab Mission, Lahore and Ludhiana Presbytery started a new mission known as, 'Saharanpur Plan' which involved joint committees which served as an intermediary board in Punjab. Among several objectives of the Punjab Mission, mention may be made of the following:

- Direct evangelism, proclaiming the good news by word and in print in public and in private.
- Building up indigenous, self-propagating, selfgoverning and self-supporting Church.
- 3. The education of Christian community.
- The practical forms of service for the welfare of individuals and of society as would adequately express the spirit of Jesus Christ.⁹

Aim of the Study

The aim of this article is to examine the contribution of the Punjab Mission of the Presbyterian Church of the USA and missionaries in Punjab in the field of education, medical, religious, literary and social welfare work. The paper traces the various aspects of women missionaries' activities, their role and impact of their activities on society and religion of the colonial Punjab. The article assesses the role of the some important missionaries and acknowledges their

pioneering role in education, health services, the emancipation of women and conversion.

Review of Literature

Many historians have done the research work on the history of Christianity and Christian missions in Punjab. Limited research work has been done on American Presbyterian mission society missionaries' achievements in field of education, medical, literary, social reforms, religion and economic development, particularly in the region of Punjab during colonial rule. The 83rd Annual Reports of the Punjab Mission Society (1917), state important facts regarding working methods of the missionaries in their churches, schools, dispensaries and hospitals. This source focuses attention on the Zenana missionaries' contribution in imparting female education and medical services. Webster's A Social History of Christianity, North-West India Since 1800 (2007), focuses upon the social history of Christian community in the North-West India since1800. This work deals with social history of Christian community giving a brief information about mission societies and missionaries' works in different fields. Manpreet Kaur in her doctoral research work, A Women Medical Missionary in Action: Edith Brown and Christian Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana (2011), presents a comprehensive study of women medical missionaries in Punjab with the special focus on Christian Medical College and Hospital at Ludhiana. The work is helpful for enhancing one's knowledge about the health activities of the women missionaries particularly in Ludhiana. Sumera Kamboj, in her doctoral research work, Women Education in Colonial Punjab: A Comparative Role of Government and Non-Government Institutions (2014), traces the initial growth of the women education in colonial Punjab and gives a brief idea of efforts of the British to work upon its peculiarities, drawbacks and the difficulties faced by them. The missionaries contributed in the development of education by establishing various educational institutions for women. However, the proposed paper to focus on Punjab Mission of the Presbyterian Church of the USA, summarising Presbyterian missionaries' activities in order to present inclusive view of their role in society of the Punjab.

Methodology

During the present study a scientific research methodology has adopted. A large number of primary sources including, Annual Reports of American Presbyterian Mission Society, Reports on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies, Report on the Popular Education of the Punjab and its Dependencies, Gazetteer of the Punjab has examined. Also a wide range of secondary sources including relevant books, researcher articles in National and International Journals, related to the present topic has examined and made use. Interdisciplinary methods adopted in developing a holistic view and for a deeper understanding of the material related to American Presbyterian mission in colonial Punjab

With the passage of time, Punjab Mission expanded its branches in different cities of Punjab.

The second city after Ludhiana, which became the centre of missionary work in 1836 was Saharanpur. It was managed by missionaries belonging to Covenanter Church, which worked conjointly with the Presbyterian Church in USA. The condition of agreement between the two Churches was that all the property should belong to Presbyterian Board, but the ecclesial side of work should be related to the Presbytery of Saharanpur. The Presbyterian Church in America was pledged to pay the salaries of the foreign missionaries in India. The Church, however, was unable to meet its financial obligations and when later the Church was divided in America, the Presbyterian Board was obliged to support the entire missionary body connected with Saharanpur Presbytery. ¹⁰

The Saharanpur mission compound was one of largest buildings in the region. It occupied an area of fifty acres within which stood residential quarters for missionaries, several dwelling houses, an orphanage, one girls' school and a theological seminary. In 1854 J. R. Campbell designed and erected a beautiful building used for the congregational worship. He was then succeeded by S. Caldwell, J. S. Woodside and W. J. Calderwood. Charles W. Forman was made in charge to look after the work in the district from 1904 to 1908. After Saharanpur, the next station was Sabathu which had been occupied in 1836. The work was commenced here by James Wilson, William. S. Rogers along with their respective life-partners.

Jullundur as mission station was started in 1847,¹² after Golak Nath,¹³ the first convert and the first Indian clergyman was sent there, to set up the mission. This was both civil and military station. The diocese of Golak Nath Memorial Church could fulfill the needs of Jullundur congregation

The mission station at Lahore was established in 1849¹⁴ due to the efforts of John Newton and Charles W. Forman, who acted as the pioneers. The mission compound comprised of about twenty acres. The Newton Memorial Church, the Lady Kinnaird Girls School, the *Zenana* House and Forman Christian College were the mission's principal institutions.

Another missionary station centre was setup in one of the military cantonments of the Indian Army at Ambala, by J. M. Jamieson and his wife. Two mission houses were built in the compound, comprising about twenty acres near the city. 15

John H. Morrison and his wife opened a mission station at Rawalpindi in 1853. Morrison along with other Lahore missionaries from time to time had been extending their itineration for preaching as far as Rawalpindi. They had discovered that the community of *Mehturs* there seemed anxious to be instructed in the Gospel and so the mission determined to make it as one of its stations.

The work in Dehra Doon was started in 1853 by J. S. Woodside. The mission compound had an area of twenty two acres. ¹⁶ Dehra Doon became famous for its Christian girls' boarding-school, which from humble beginning, grew not only to a splendid size but to a position of large influence in the native Christian community of Northern India. ¹⁷

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The Mission had established a station at Hoshiarpur in 1867. The suggestion to establish a mission there had come from H. E Perkins, the Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur. The station was occupied in the first instance by Goora Das Moitra. However, very soon he gave the charge to Kali Charan Chatterjee who was the sole missionary there. Kali Charan Chatterjee remained in charge of the station for more than thirty years. A girl's school and an orphanage were established there in 1888 under the efficient charge of Mrs. Chatterjee.

Ferozepur was taken up as a sub-station of Lahore in 1870 and for ten following years it was conducted by native ministers till John Newton's arrival in Ferozepur in the beginning of 1881²⁰ but in 1882 it was developed by the mission as one of its principal stations. Towards the close of the year 1888 Mr. Jones joined the Ferozepur mission and actively engaged himself in the learning of the vernacular. The native Christian convert, originally a Hindu of Khatri caste, Puran Chand Uppal rendered valuable services for a long period of time to the Ferozepur station.

Besides the aforementioned stations, the mission had setup substations including Jagraon, Morinda, Rurki, Khanna, Ropar, Rampur, Jaghadhari, Muree, Gohrawaha, Morinda, Garhdiwala, Tanda, Fazilka. At all these stations missionaries actively performed their mission activities.

In Punjab, the Punjab Mission showed a great enthusiasm in developing and spreading English education based on Christian principles. They believed that education was one of the best means for christianising the whole society. To achieve their goal of evangelisation the missionaries established a sizeable group of educational institutions. Mr. Lowrie founded an Anglo-Vernacular school with the help of British officer, C. M. Wade at Ludhiana in 1834. In this school both Afghan and Sikh pupils were imparted education. The school at Ludhiana was known as the Lodiana Mission High School. At the time of revolt of 1857, the school got destroyed by rebels but it was rebuilt after the suppression of the revolt. In 1864-65 there were 348 students on the rolls, out of which 250 were Hindus, 90 Muslims and 8 from the other religious communities. 22 The school faced a serious setback in term of massive numerical decrease of students in 1873-74 as during this time, a large number of students were drawn towards a newly established Hindu School in the town.2

The boy's school known as Rang Mahal School was founded in the early year of the mission by Dr. Charles. W.Forman²⁴in Lahore.It was started with just three boys sitting under the tree, but within a year it moved into a building and had fifty nine pupils on its rolls.²⁵ The school consisted three departments, viz. main school, branch school and night school for boys. At the main school, twelve out of 372 students were Christians and the teaching staff of twelve comprised six Christians.²⁶ In 1887 there were 588 boys in main school, 549 boys in the branch schools, 555 students in high school thus making a total of 1,992 students.²⁷ Dr. Forman was the Principal of Rang Mahal school. The school was one of the

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largest and the best known schools in Punjab. In Rang Mahal School a college department was opened by J. A. Henry in 1864 which could work only for short while and had to be closed after his death. In 1886 the college classes were reopened by Dr. Forman and H. C. Velte with a class of 22 students. The number of students on the roll rose to 68 in 1888. The college was the first to start F. Sc. and B.Sc. classes in the province.²⁸The hostel of the school accommodated a large number of students of the college but the accommodation still was not enough. C. U. Aitchison, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab gave grant of Rs. 20, 000 and an average area of five acres for the construction of additional rooms in 1889.29 recognition of the remarkable services rendered by Dr. Forman to Lahore Mission College, it was renamed after his death in 1894 as Forman Christian College. The main objective of the college as stated in the annual report of the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was in these words: "Its chief object is evangelistic, it is to be an agency for great good, as it is believed, In leavening the public mind with the principles of Christianity, and in leading any young men to Christ as their savior, and to his service as the work of their lives."30 After Dr. Forman, Dr. James Ewing joined as the Principal of the college. He put in his sincere efforts for the development of the college on account of which the enrollment of the students rose to 368 in 1902. The school received the total grant of rupees 12,000 from the Government in the year of 1915. 31 The British Government conferred upon Dr. Ewing an honorary knighthood and the Punjab University bestowed upon him the honorary D. Litt degree as mark of his valuable contribution toward the development of the higher education in 1917.

The Presbyterian Mission popularised the need of education among girls. The Kinnarid High School for Girls, Lahore was founded in 1879 which was raised to the level of a high school in 1886. Anglo-vernacular classes to train young women for higher teaching work in schools were opened in 1901. In 1913 a college department was got affiliated to the Panjab University.³³ Mrs. Chatterjee ran two girls' schools with sixty nine students in Hoshiarpur³⁴. Women's Normal School in Saharanpur was started under the supervision of Mrs. Wherry and Mr. Kelso. The school was meant for the wives of the students who were studying in the Mission Boys' School. The contribution of some important lady missionaries was notable, like Mrs. Rosa Harris, Mrs. Anderson and the Misses. E, each of whom had six schools in Lahore for boys and girls with an average of twenty three pupils in each school.

With the modern education, religious education was seen as an opportunity for the missionary teachers to interact with the youth. Bible studies and daily worship were considered the best mode to interfere in the religious beliefs and practices of the non-Christian students. That was why Bible study became the most important subject in the mission educational institutions. Special Bible classes were conducted at missionary schools where missionaries themselves were involved in the

teachings of the Bible. Only trained Christian teachers were appointed in the educational institutions for the teaching of the Bible.

The Presbyterian missionaries had realised the fact that the modern education could provide only government jobs to the educated but it could not provide any training for independent living. Since they wanted to create a self-reliant Christian society, they considered essential to impart industrial training to pupils. In consonance of this policy, the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church developed an industrial school at Saharanpur. Boys were taught carpentry, cabinet making, blacksmithing, mechanics and tailoring. ³⁶ In 1916 there were eighty two students in the industrial school.³⁷ A majority of villagers in Punjab were engaged in occupation of agriculture and this led to the introduction of agriculture mission in Moga. Highly moved by the poverty of a large number of converts in Moga, Ray Harrison Carter drafted the 'Moga plan' for their betterment, by way of establishing a village school and a training school for imparting agricultural education.³⁸ Industrial and agricultural training gave greater independence and opportunities to the pupils. With their diversified educational activities, American Presbyterian missionaries made the notable contribution to the progress of modern education in Punjab.

The growing importance of medical work was one of the marked features of the Presbyterian mission activity in Punjab. Medical work had received the attention of missionaries even earlier but it came to occupy a committed attention on their behalf in their programme after 1880.

Women missionaries made efforts for the alleviation of the sufferings of the host society. They established a number of dispensaries, hospitals for medical help for the people. The Presbyterian mission opened up three hospitals for women and children, the Philadelphia hospital at Amabla, the Women's hospital at Ferozepur and Denny hospital at Hoshiarpur. At each of the three hospitals there was a dispensary.38 Each dispensary was kept open for four or five hours every day. Some women missionaries' contribution in hospital work had been appreciable. Jessica Carleton in 1886 helped build the Philadelphia hospital in Ambala. The Women's hospital at Ferozepure was erected in 1893 chiefly due to the exertion of Mrs. Newton, who spent 35 years in the mission service with her husband John Newton, of which 26 years were spent in Ferozepure. The Denny Hospital was carried on by Dr. Doora Chatterjee. The pioneer doctor not only treated the patients but also trained the staff whose services were required to run the dispensary and the hospital. Since it was necessary that all the employees of women's hospitals be women, ³⁹ in 1903 on the invitation of American Presbyterian missionaries, Zenana and Medical Mission sent Miss. Jerrom to carry on Zenana work in the city. The dispensary at Hoshiarpur treated 11,310 patients in 1908. Fibi Isa Das was the in-charge of Lahore dispensary and Miss. Thiedi carried out dispensary at Ferozepure. In

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the year 1914 a dispensary was opened at village Wagha under the medical charge of S. C. Das. 40

The missionaries took part in activities aimed at alleviating social misery and promoting social reforms. At the time of epidemics, women missionaries were pressed in to service and their compassion and care reduced considerably the misery of people suffering from leprosy for which they established asylums. Out of four leper asylums established by the missionaries, two were at Saharanpur, one meant for men and other for women, one was at Ambala and one was at Sabathu. Whereas leper asylum at Sabathu had been established in 1844, that of Ambala came into being in expenditure 1858.The annual on establishments were partly borne by contributions of Europeans, partly by a definite sum furnished by 'The Mission to Leper in India' and partly by voluntary contributions received from several parts of the United States. Mrs. Morrison the in-charge of the leper asylum in Sabathu rendered very sincere services to the leper patients in 1887. 41 In these lepers asylums daily prayer of bible was conducted. Missionaries helped the natives at the time of famine, earthquakes or other natural calamities. The Famine of 1837 had left many children without parents. In 1838, James Campbell missionary at Saharanpur received thirty orphan boys from Agra and Mathura which led to the setting up of the Saharanpur orphanage. 42 Earlier orphanage had been established in 1888 at Hoshiarpur, which was under the efficient charge of Mr. Chatterjee. During the famine of 1897, the Presbyterian missionaries from U.S.A employed 200 men and women at Jullundur to save the natives from starvation. There were 196 boys in the Saharanpur orphanage in 1903, about half of whom were the ingathering from the famines of 1897 and 1899.4

During the earthquake of 1905 in Punjab, James C.R. Ewing worked hard for the relief work for which he was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal by the Government of India in 1906.44 In the year 1909 the leper asylum at Sabathu under the superintendence of Dr. M.B. Carleton was one of the largest asylums in India. There were several European English women lepers admitted in the asylum. To serve and attend them, an English lady, Miss Kemp, came from London in 1930. While serving the lepers, she herself was afflicted with the awful disease of leporasy. The example set by the missionaries, led to the rise of humanitarian social work in Indian society. Inspired by their zealous and meritorious social service, many native socio-religious reform organisations also took up the cause of social work in India. Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission rendered appreciable services in relieving sufferers from flood, famine in late nineties.

The preparation of Christian literature, including the translation of the Bible was an important service undertaken by each mission. The Punjab mission had distinguished itself for this service as it had to its credit, the setting up of the first printing press in Punjab. Sincere efforts in this direction were made by J. Newton who founded in 1835 the Ludhiana Mission Press. The press published books

in almost every language and script being used in Punjab. In the year 1838, which was the first year of its working, this press printed 57,743 tracts and 500 portions of Bible for distribution at fairs and evangelistic gatherings among people at individual requests. 46 By 1844, the mission published Pilgrim's Progress, a religious paper and 128 page brief Bible histories in Punjabi as well. 47 John Newton's comprehensive grammar of Punjabi language (1851), Levi Janiver's the first Punjabi dictionary (1854) and Newton's New Testament in Punjabi (1868), represented translated works in the modern Punjabi language. Newton came to be known as the father of the modern Punjabi language. 48 The religious paper was published by mission, the Makhzan-i-Masihi in 1867 at Allahabad. 49 In 1873, the semi-religious newspaper, Nur Afshan was started by E. M. Wherry. 50 It was the only Christian newspaper printed in Urdu language. The mission usually distributed books and tracts; for instance, 25000 copies were distributed by the Ludhiana missionaries in 1885 and 56,708 copies in 1908. In Punjab, a significant activity was the distribution of literature. The press continued to print a large number of pages every year and it was reported that in the year 1888, the total number of pages printed up to the end of October this year was no less than 144, 41, 714 pages. Eighty-two Muslims on a monthly salary of rupees 422-4-9, three Hindus on the monthly salary of rupees 23-6-6 and thirteen Christians receiving monthly salary of rupees fifty had been employed in the press. Missionaries did their best to reach out to the people in a meaningful way.

The Ludhiana Mission Press also published Persian tract entitled, "A sermon for the whole world". ⁵¹ Captain Wade also helped to start Persian newspaper named, *The Lodhiana Akhbar*, about thirty copies of which were circulated. ⁵² The Ludhiana press brought out tracts like *Mangal Samachar* (literally meaning good news). ⁵³ Besides Bible, the Punjab Mission sold more than 11,000 Bible portions. At least 38,000 pieces of literature other than Bible and Bible portions were distributed free of cost in 1930. ⁵⁴ To achieve the aim of evangelisation, the missionaries conducted religious classes, *bazaar* preaching, Sunday classes and distribution of religious literature.

religious propaganda, Through reforms and educational activities, the missionaries tried to convert people. In the beginning the movement of conversion by missionaries in Punjab was not very fruitful. The movement got momentum when mission society constructed churches at each of their stations. The main obstacle in the way of conversion was Hindu caste system along with the dominance of Brahmans as well as rigid restrictions on conversion in Islam. Unable to establish contact with upper Hindu castes, the missionaries tried to convert the depressed classes of the Punjab. They converted Punjabi Chuhras and Meghs to Christianity. In 1914 Presbyterian missionaries had baptized 3,523 people. There was a net increase in the numbers of Christians which amounted to 4,708 as against 1,841 in the year 1916⁵⁵. The total baptized Christian community in the year 1917 numbered 28,132 as against 23,424 in 1916 and 18,018 in 1913, which P: ISSN NO.: 2394-0344

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establishes the fact that the baptized Christian community increased over fifty-five per cent⁵⁶. In Punjab mass conversion movement began to make its mark by the year 1930. According to the Punjab census of 1930, the population growth rate among Christians was about the same as among other Punjabis.

Conclusion

Though the Punjab mission and the missionaries' contribution in education and social services cannot be underestimated, yet one cannot ignore the fact that their prime concern was evangelisation. To achieve this aim, they started religious classes, bazaar preaching, Sunday classes, and conversion movement besides extending financial help to the converts. Their good organizational structure, the publication of their works, the conduct of conferences, seminars etc. played an instrumental role in achieving their aims. Zenana missionaries were also involved in medical work, humanitarian work, female education and social services but all these activities were guided and directed by evangelical motives. All the mission activities revolved around 'civilizing mission'. To preach Gospel among natives and make them understand the principles and tenets of Christianity was a prerequisite for civilizing mission. The positive impact of the activities of the Christian Mission was that it inspired native organisations, such as Arya Samaj, Anjumans and Singh Sabhas to take up and work for the cause of their own people, especially in social and religious fields. Emulating the example of Christian mission, they carried religious reforms, opened up various educational schools and colleges, established orphanages, took up relief measures during natural calamities, provided medical facilities, gave religious instruction at educational institutions etc. The negative impact, however, was the competitiveness among all organisations to vie one another in the race which led to the promotion of interests of the particular community and religion which the native organisation represented and the emergence as well as growth of communal tension among people of Punjab.

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- at Calcutta. He took the charge of Lahore station in 1855 after departure of Newton to Ludhiana than Forman purchased property for the construction of Rang Mahal school at Lahore. Than Rang Mahal school become main school for his life.
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