

Knowledge as Resistance: The Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore and the Shaping of Muslim Intellectual Horizons in Colonial Punjab

المعرفة كوسيلة للمقاومة: جمعية حماية الإسلام بلاهور وتشكيل الآفاق الفكرية للمسلمين في البنجاب الاستعمارية

Authors Details

1. **Dr. Razia Yasmin** (Corresponding Author)
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan. raziayasmin299@gmail.com
2. **Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad**
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan.

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☆Dr. Razia Yasmin ☆Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad

Abstract

This article analyses the literary and intellectual works of the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore of the colonial era (1884–1947), with emphasis on how the society used literature and education as weapons of resistance, identity formation, and cultural revival among Muslims in Punjab. To counter British sociopolitical marginalization and perceived cultural threat from Christian missionary and Hindu revivalist activities, the Anjuman endeavored to preserve Islamic heritage and enhance Muslim consciousness by fostering a strong literary agenda. It founded printing presses, printed Urdu textbooks and Islamic journals, patronized religious poetry and prose, and cultivated a new generation of Muslim writers and scholars. It contends that the Anjuman's literary endeavors transcended pedagogic purposes and existed as a tactical means of cultural assertion. Based on its writings and literary circuits, this research brings into perspective how the Anjuman reconstructed the Muslim public sphere and made literary production possible by synthesizing Islamic ideals and modern tastes. By placing the organization at the center of its narrative about Muslim literary horizons, this research provides new perspectives on the intersections of power, knowledge, and resistance in colonial South Asia.

Keywords: Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore; Colonial Punjab; Muslim literary culture; Urdu literature; knowledge production; anti-colonial resistance; Muslim identity; Islamic publishing; Muslim public sphere.

1. Introduction

The Muslim community in British India was actively involved in the revival of Muslims and the struggle for colonial Muslim legitimacy. They emerged as a result of political awareness and planned efforts to enhance their situation. Reform movements like Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore (AHIL) were realistic institutions that tried different mechanisms to meet their objectives, like establishing education and welfare centers, appointing missionaries, publishing newspapers and journals, establishing the Kutub Khana and a publishing house, and establishing a printing press etc. Although the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam is well known for its educational and welfare activities in colonial Punjab, its literary pursuits—such as the production of Urdu journals, Islamic tracts, school textbooks, and religious literature—have yet to be fully explored as an important aspect of Muslim cultural resistance and intellectual

☆ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan.

☆ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan.

formation. These literary productions were not adjuncts to its pedagogical mandate but played a key role in building a contemporary yet Islamic epistemological tradition that responded to colonial epistemologies and Christian missionary accounts.

Although highly relevant, the Anjuman's contribution to building Muslim public discourse, identity, and intellectual sovereignty through print culture and vernacular literature has been inadequately examined by scholars. This research fills this lacuna through a critical analysis of how Anjuman's literary output helped to create a resistant Muslim intellectual sphere in colonial Punjab. This research argues that the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore tactically utilized literary production, such as Urdu journals, religious tracts, educational textbooks, and popular Islamic literature, as a forceful instrument to develop Muslim intellectual identity, resist colonial and missionary discourses, and express a vision of modernity based on Islamic values. Through the examination of its literary works' content, circulation, and ideological basis, the study shows how the Anjuman utilized print culture to instruct and oppose cultural hegemony and reshape Muslim intellectual horizons within colonial Punjab.

2. Expanding Horizons: The Literary and Intellectual Mission of AHIL

Institutions initially have a limited scope of goals, objectives, and functions, but as they expand their activities to the height of growth, they become more comprehensive. Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore, founded in 1884, was an all-around institution that operated in different fields simultaneously. As the financial condition improved, the field of work expanded with the formation of new departments. It didn't require any particular provisions for its publicity department at first, but as its work progressed, it became necessary. Indeed, propaganda is essential to every movement's success. Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore was the most significant educational and Islamic body in North India, having one first-class degree college, four high schools, medical colleges, orphanages for boys and girls, and industrial schools. To express itself to others, the association started a newspaper and a magazine under the supervision of the association.

2.1 Akhbar-e-Anjuman -e-Himayat-e-Islam: Voice of Reform and Revival (1926–1947)

A weekly newspaper, "Akhbar-e-Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam" (Urdu: Newspaper Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam), was launched in 1926. It was given free of cost to all members and others. Newspapers were priced at 5000. The goals and purposes of the newspaper were to publish helpful articles regarding the virtues of Islam and in favor of the Anjuman and its various branches, to respond to the criticism of the adversaries of Islam. Besides this, Islamic, historical, religious, and national articles were also published. For several decades, this newspaper authored articles for Islamia College Lahore, a women's orphanage, Medical College, and other entities that brought the country financial assistance from the Anjuman and carried out its aims and objectives successfully.¹

The Anjuman brought together various Muslim scholars and intellectuals who provided financial support as well as intellectual input. The Anjuman was linked with writers, lecturers, theologians, scholars, philosophers, and poets who made significant monetary contributions. The newspaper gained popularity and was copied by the best newspapers in India.² It debated national and international issues with great popularity and sincerity, proving its strength and power.³ Initially suffering a financial loss, the newspaper's importance in propaganda made it unsatisfactory. Himayat-e-Islam was popular in the Islamic world, with

¹ Khawaja Muhammad Hayat, *Mukhtsar Tawarikh Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore*, (1941), 16.

² *ibid*

³ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam Lahore(1941),18.

supporters from all walks of life. It did not take any holidays and published 52 pamphlets throughout the year. The newspaper's articles and editorials provided insights into the plight of Muslims, domestic politics, and anti-Islamic conspiracies. There was no area of national reform on which articles were not published in this newspaper from time to time. Its distinguishing feature was that it debated every emerging national and international issue with great popularity and sincerity, presenting its opinions with excellent arguments. It demonstrated extraordinary strength and power.⁴

One of the salient features of the newspaper Himayat-i-Islam is that it does not belong to any particular sect of Islam. The Anjuman was a joint association of all Islamic sects, and its supporters, patrons, and helpers included Muslims from all walks of life. This newspaper's policy of Himayat-i-Islam has rendered it popular among the Islamic community worldwide. It was regarded with love and respect by all sections of the Muslims, and his popularity grew day to day.⁵

In 1884, Hazrat Molana Maulvi Ghulam Dastgir Sahib Kasuri authored a pamphlet against Tehreef-ul-Quran, and the Kutabkhana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam was established in 1885. The association started publishing textbooks and compilations, earning revenue through financial assistance from senior writers such as Khan Bahadur Khalifa Syed Muhammad Hassan Sahib. The book House turned out to be an important source of revenue for the association, publishing books in Urdu, Arabic, and Persian, and making Urdu readers available to women's madrassas in 1924.⁶

2.2 Kutab Khana Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam: Knowledge in Print

Despite not having a printing press until 1927, Urdu printing was done by Farooz Printing Works, and English printing by the Union and Reading press. The association took special care to prevent forged books and covered Urdu rules in 1927. In 1932, the correct version of the Holy Quran was published, and by 1938, Haadi-e-Barhaq on Seerah of Muhammad PBUH was published, becoming popular in the Muslim community. Kutab Khana Anjuman's books, including the correct version of the Holy Qur'an, saw significant growth in sales.⁷ By 1940, the books' sales reached 108093, and annual income was Rs 148658. Anjuman appointed numerous distributors to increase sales and distribute books across the country.⁸ The Urdu compilations of Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam were removed from the Punjab education department's list of textbooks in 1903 after it was argued that they included offensive language against Hindus. A committee was established to get in touch with the education department and ask that the books be added to the textbook list. The committee successfully resolved the matter⁹ Kootab Khana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam apublished several important books, including the Holy Quran, Urdu dictionary, Farhang Urdu, Persian, and theology.¹⁰ In India, the Kootab Khana established a solid reputation, and both government and Islamic educational institutions read its printed texts. Furthermore, special

⁴ Annual performance report, Akhbar Himayat-i-Islam (1927)

⁵ Annual progress report Himayat-i-Islam newspaper (1937-38), 79.

⁶ Annual Performance Report Kootab Khana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam 1927 p 75

⁷ Annual Performance Report Kootab Khana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam 1938 p 81

⁸ ibid

⁹ Annual Performance Report Kootab Khana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam,(1938-39),72.

¹⁰ Annual Performance Report Kootab Khana Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam (1945), 63-65.

book sets for Muslim boys and girls were created and authorized by the education administration only for Islamia Schools.¹¹

2.3 Advocacy through Journalism

Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam started a magazine in 1885.¹² This magazine was distributed free to the members of the association, which numbered in the thousands. The magazine had four sections. In the first part, articles were published denying the opponents of Islam or on the virtues of Islam, or on the benefits of the association. Part II would cover Islamic historical events. In Part III, annual performance reports of other branches of the association were written and in the last part IV, diaries of Anjuman and income and expenditure tables were given.¹³

2.3.1 Voice of the Ummah: Defending Islam through Print

Anjuman-e-Hamaat-e-Islam magazine played its role in responding to non-Muslims' objections to Islam and supporting to precepts of Islam. Many useful articles were published in it to answer the objections of the enemies of Islam. For example, Mr. Gibbon, a British official and authoritative historian, wrote of the Prophet's family: With the royal blood of Iran, the family of the Prophet became honorable and noble. In response, the magazine wrote that Mr. Gibbon did not write such an article because of Mr. Gibbon's unfamiliarity with Arab nature or national history, but because of prejudice. Expressing biased views in the guise of research is an art in which Christian historians, and especially the British, have excelled over nations around the world.¹⁴

In July 1894, an article in Rasala Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, "Mr. Flint and his comparison between Judaism, Christianity and Islam," was published. The article referred to Mr. Flint's book "Theism," which aimed to teach a true Christian conversion from Islam. The article raised questions about whether such a book could be taught in the education department of the Government of India and why the government claimed they have nothing to do with religion. The article included the editor's opinion and the opinion of the newspaper's editor. The Aligarh College Education Committee was notified of a book by Mr. Flint, "Theism," which aimed to prove Christianity as a superior religion to Islam and contained false condemnation of Islam. The book was included in the university text, causing concern among Muslims who had sent their children to learn English, math, and physics in English schools, rather than competing with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The book aimed to teach students to become Christians and reject Islam, but concerns were raised about its inclusion in India's education department and its potential to promote forced Christianity. The Aligarh College Education Committee criticized the book for slandering Islam and promoting Christianity over Islam. The editor of Himayat-i-Islam believed Mr. Flint's ignorance and prejudice led to his slander.¹⁵

In January 1894, Ahmed Asad, Shaykh Islam of Constantinople, published an article titled "Principles of Islam" in response to a letter from a German Christian seeking permission to become a Muslim. The letter expressed happiness at the Christian's desire to become a Muslim and explained that Islam does not require approval or religious rituals to unite servants with God. It explained that in Christianity, God cannot be found without a pastor,

¹¹ Proceeding of managing committee meeting,(1903). 34-35

¹² Hayat, *Mukhtsar Tawarikh Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam*

¹³ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1893),13.

¹⁴ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1894),14

¹⁵ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1894),9-10

and only teaching religious issues is necessary. The article guided ordinary and new Muslims on the necessary principles for a true Muslim to follow. In 1895, the Indian government proposed a draft law regarding the Hajj pilgrimage in the subcontinent. The People's Association petitioned for revision, and amendments were published in the magazine. This allowed people to express their views on the draft, and the government was made aware of public trends. On September 19, 1895, legislator Mr. Alexander Mackenzie stated that the government intended to reform the system, and other speeches from Muslim and British members of the legislature also participated in the debate. The draft Hajj was approved after the recommended amendments on October 13, 1895.¹⁶

2.3.2 Mobilizing Minds: Journalism as a Tool for Reform and Resistance

In January 1894, the magazine "His Excellency Hazrat Nawab Sahib Bahadur" carried an article praising his princely munificence and pity for the indigent poor of Bahawalpur state. He dined orphans under the charge of the association in January and sent cash to clothe them. Subsequently, he exerted himself on behalf of bringing up and educating orphans under the patronage of the association. The article also sanctioned 10 stipends of Rs. 50 per month in honor of late Viceroy and Governor General of India Lord Lansdowne, and advanced a one-year stipend of Rs. 600 for 1894. In 1894, Nawab Shah Jahan Begum of Bhopal State contributed Rs. 2,000 to Anjuman, the first instance of an Islamic state contributing a lump sum of Rs. 2,000 to an association. Himayat-e-Islam magazine employed this to encourage AHIL members and regular Muslims to sponsor Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam for furthering its educational, welfare, and propagation work.

In 1904, Sheikh Abdul Qadir, editor of "Observers,"¹⁷ highlighted the religious differences between Christians and Muslims, highlighting the Christian focus on missionary causes and education, while Muslims lacked institutional fervor. He pointed out that Muslims no longer have a passion for their religion like Christians, who spend their lives and money on religion. Christians nowadays propagate their religion across the world, living in huts and devoting their knowledge to mankind.¹⁸ Numerous Muslims gave their contribution toward this cause following the publication of Sir Abdul Qadir's article in the journal. Other provinces within the country started supporting the association as well, apart from Punjab. This influenced the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, which aimed to revitalize Muslim society through education, welfare, and publishing. The editorial increased awareness among Indian Muslims about their social and educational responsibilities, leading to increased financial and moral support. The Observer contributed to Muslim modernism and reform.¹⁹

Proceedings of the annual meetings of AHIL were regularly published in the magazine, providing members with detailed and safe speeches and poems. Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam Lahore's Annual Performance Reports were also published. The magazine also featured reports from various institutions, including Madrasa and College, Mardana (Islamia College), Boarding House, Orphanage Women and Mardana, Compilation Association, Magazine, Library, Broadcasting, and all committees and sub-committees. This monthly magazine

¹⁶ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1895),6-7.

¹⁷ The Observer, edited by Sheikh Abdul Qadir, was an influential English-language journal in colonial Punjab that served as a platform for articulating the political, educational, and religious concerns of Indian Muslims

¹⁸ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1895),6-7.

¹⁹ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1904),22-23

provided direct information about the development and needs of each department, enabling members to address issues and plan for the future.²⁰

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²⁰ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1904),15-16

²¹ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1894),9-10

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2.2.3 Pages of Progress: Reporting Welfare, Education, and Institutional Growth

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2.4. Conferences of Conscience: AHIL's Annual Public Meetings Since 1884

Since its establishment in 1884, AHIL has held annual public meetings to create national awareness among Muslims. The association's public campaign was designed to explain its work and collect the maximum contributions. The executive meeting was first held on September 24, 1884, and the meetings have become popular due to their literary and social significance. These classes in Punjab province were a huge success of Urdu literature, and they succeeded due to the strong level of administration by the association via various administrative committees. The Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam served as a center of hope for the Muslims of north India.²⁵

The AHIL annual conferences inspired many thinkers and authors. Giving speeches at meetings by outstanding scholars, writers, poets, politicians, and country leaders, it was involved in the political, social, and educational affairs of Muslims. A few of the important personalities were Maulana Hali, Shibli, Deputy Nazir Ahmad, Akbar Allahabadi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abdullah Tonki, Mirza Abdul Ghani Arshad Gor Gani, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Sir Sheikh Abdul Qadir, and Chaudhry Khushi Muhammad Nazer. and the most high-ranking poet Allama Iqbal, who created a new era of life for Muslims with their handsome speeches.²⁶ Great Urdu authors, such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Maulana Hali, and Deputy Nazir Ahmed, have delivered inspiring speeches, highlighting the literary and cultural importance of the sessions. The Punjab Muslim leadership has also co-operated fully, with addresses by Allama Iqbal, Justice Shah Din, Sir Zulfiqar Ali, Mian Fazal-e-Hussain, Mian Bashir Ahmed, Sir Abdul Qadir, Maulana Salahuddin, and Dr Syed Abdullah. These, too, along with others such as Agha Hashar Kashmiri, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Ehsan Danish, Hafeez Jalandhari, Syed Mohammad Jafari, Khawaja Dil Mohammad, and Khushi Mohammad Nazer, too served the literary cause with all their might.²⁷

²³ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1904),22-23

²⁴ Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam ka Mahwari Risalah (September,1904),15-16

²⁵ Hayat, *Mukhtsar Tawarikh Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam*

²⁶ Hayat, *Mukhtsar Tawarikh Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam*

²⁷ ibid

Annual sessions of the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Punjab greatly benefited and contributed significantly to Urdu poetry and literature. These sessions, conducted for fundraising and literary purposes, played an integral part in the formation of the literary atmosphere of Punjab. Several poets and writers made their appearances on the platform of Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, becoming beacons for Muslims. Their essays, lectures, and poems influenced Muslims with passion.²⁸ Their work in Urdu poetry and literature is important to the history of national poetry written in Urdu. These individuals are the ones whose literary palate developed in the school institutions of the Anjuman.²⁹ Anjuman's Golden Jubilee annual conference took place from 23rd to 26th December, 1938. The success of this conference was substantiated by the manifestation of national spirit, which enriched the conference. During this meeting, as the government representative of Punjab, the great Muslim personality, His Excellency Major Sardar Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Prime Minister of Punjab, his comrade, Honorable Khan Bahadur Justice Sheikh Din Muhammad, MA, Judge High Court, came and contributed Rs. 25,000 from the government.³⁰

2.5 Literary Luminaries and National Leaders: Voices That Shaped a Generation

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3. Conclusion

The Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore was an instrument of change in colonial Punjab by using the power of literature and knowledge to counter cultural hegemony and express a dynamic Muslim identity. Through its dynamic print culture, which included newspapers, magazines, textbooks, and religious pamphlets, the Anjuman not only worked to defend Islam against orientalist and missionary attacks but also engaged actively in remaking the Muslim public sphere. Its literary pursuits were much more than ancillary to its educational work; they represented a conscious and calculated mode of intellectual resistance. By disseminating Islamic principles, resisting colonial epistemologies, and creating a sense of cultural identity among Muslims, the Anjuman's publishing activities nurtured an indigenous knowledge tradition that combined Islamic principles with progressive educational

²⁸ Shahnaz Majeed, *Farogh-e Urdu mein Anjuman* (PhD diss., Punjab University, Lahore, 1992).

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Hayat, *Mukhtsar Tawarikh Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam*

³² *ibid*

objectives. Organizations like the Akhbar-e-Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, the Kutub Khana, and the Himayat-i-Islam magazine provided critical forums for sharing religious, social, and political ideas, enflaming communal awareness among Muslims and generating support for their socio-political development. In reconstituting Muslim mentalities in the environs of British domination and communal conflict, the Anjuman defined itself not simply as an educational or philanthropic institution but as a guardian of Muslim dignity and freedom. Its universalist ethos, inter-sectarian appeal, and persistent devotion to religious and cultural regeneration mark it as an important figure in the larger landscape of South Asian Muslim reform movements. Finally, the literary activism of the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam illustrates how knowledge—when grounded in cultural authenticity and directed towards social awakening—can be an effective tool of resistance, empowerment, and identity formation during periods of hegemonic oppression.



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