

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF GENERAL MOHYAL SABHA

In the nineteenth century, legions of Christian Missionaries followed the British soldiers into India. Brow beating the Hindus for their idol worship and eulogizing superiority of western education were their favourite weapons. They were keen to redeem the souls of heathens, without taking a measure of the depth of spirituality of Indic religions. During that period of foreign cultural offensive, Swami Dayanand came out with emphasis on Hindu Dharma as enunciated in the Vedas alongside the need for (the unavoidable) modern education – with our national cultural underpinning. The Arya Samaj and Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) educational institutions were the great ramparts against cultural storming by the British Colonial power. There was a mass resurgence for this mission and the Mohyals were in the forefront of this crusade at Lahore, as in other several places.

Engaged in social reforms in Hindu society, the Mohyal crusaders decided to do something for their own community also. They established a Mohyal Mitter Sabha (Friends of Mohyal Society), on 24 May 1891, at Lahore. The small Mohyal community was widely spread. So, the next important step was to have its own journal and the first issue of Mohyal Mitter came out in September, 1891.

The clarion call for Mohyals to organize themselves had an instant effect. Local Sabhas were set up in Abbottabad, Jhelum, Pind Dadan Khan, Gujrat, Kanjrur , Rawal Pindi, Sialkot in 1891: and Shahpur, Quetta, Jammu, Lakhanwala and Sirinagar in 1892. Other places also followed this lead. 500 copies of Mohyal Mitter were being published in 1895 and its yearly subscription was Rupees two (not an insignificant amount for those times). In 1901, the name of the Mohyal Mitter Sabha was changed to the General Mohyal Sabha (GMS). The local sabhas affiliated to it were called Mohyal Sabhas. These are the more popular names about the Founding Fathers: Bakshi Ram Das Chhibber of Bhera, Bk. Jog Dhian Bali of Lahore, Bk. Gokul Chand Chhibber of Abbottabad, Ch. Ganesh Das Datt of Lahore, Mehta Dhera Mal Datt of Miani, Rzd. Maharaj Kishan Vaid of Jheur Kotly, district Sialkot, Mehta Lal Chand Mohan of Hardowal, Ch. Ram Bhaj Datt and Ch. Hira Sing Datt both of Kanjrur and Rzd. Barkat Ram Vaid. We bow in obeisance to these stalwarts, and all others, who worked hard to sway an archaic Mohyal society. They had honed their skills for social service in Arya Samaj and it is interesting to note from old records, particularly the proceedings of the Annual Conferences, how meticulously and persistently they went about their objectives, with a missionary spirit. It appears that Mohyal Conference, lasting two or three days, was the occasion for stocktaking, introspection and forwards planning.

Following three ASSOOL or *Guiding Principles*, were laid down for the Mohyal Mitter Sabha.

- 1.To promote unity, bonding and mutual inter-action among the Mohyal community and to work for its welfare.

2. To give practical shape to those principles and customs which were laid down by the Mohyal elders on the occasion of establishing the Community and to reform such (unhealthy) customs as have been adopted from other communities.

3. To enthuse the community for acquiring higher education and arrange for the maintenance and education of orphaned children. (Emphasis added)

It is our considered view that, with changing times, the nuances may be different, but these Guiding Principles remain very relevant for the community even in the present times. Kindly keep these guidelines in mind, vis-à-vis the present times, as we proceed with this discussion.

Having laid down these Guiding Principles, our Founding Fathers tried to identify the specific problems of the community and the course of action that the organisation could take for their redressal, in consultation with the whole Biradari. According to the July 1893 issue of Mohyal Mitter, an Agenda of following points (identified problems) was prepared for the consideration of Mohyal Conference (proposed conclave of Mohyal community) for their consideration and decision for follow-up action.

- (1). Joining of Armed Forces.
- (2). Dastur-al-amal Mohyali : Code of Social Conduct for Mohyals.
- (3). Matrimonial Reforms.
- (4). Help and Education of orphans and widows.
- (5). Mohyal Boarding House.
- (6). Exchanging views on social customs of Mohyals.

The First Mohyal Conference could not be organized before 1902. A conference, as envisaged, was a sort of community's *chintam shivir* and not just a gala show, or routine approval. The progress made, in respect of each problem, was periodically checked during each subsequent annual conference and course correction made, if necessary. Thus, the whole community remained involved from 'identification' to 'resolution' of the problem. This is how the event of Mohyal Conference came to be so popular and important. Now we survey the action taken on important issues.

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