

2. EDUCATION

Enthusiasm among young Mohyals to pursue higher, as also technical and vocational education, was the manifest objective of its various schemes – which facilitated the process, by grant of scholarships and other means. They were also encouraged to appear at the competitive examinations. An Education Fund was established as early as December 1891. And in 1897, out of a total corpus of Rs. 2,228- a sum of Rs 2,000- was placed at the disposal of the Managing Committee of the DAV College, Lahore for giving scholarships to Mohyal students. Inspired by it, individual Mohyals also established similar endowments.

- (i) Bakshi Gokul Chand Memorial Fund (1901) for Industrial Training scholarships to Mohyal students.
- (ii) Raizada Narsingh Das Scholarship to a Vedic student in DAV College.
- (iii) Bakshi Ram Das Chhibber Industrial Scholarships – 15 scholarships at DAV Industrial Middle School.

Mohyals continued to donate liberally for the Education Fund and it was always in excess. Girls' education was also encouraged.

Mohyal Ashram

Lahore was the centre for higher education and students from all over Punjab, Kashmir and NWFP (now Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan) came there. It was called the Oxford of India. It was felt very early by GMS that a Boarding House was needed at Lahore for the stay of Mohyal students coming from outside. So a Boarding House was opened for them in a rented building in Anarkali Bazar, Lahore, in 1895. At one time there were 13 students in it but it was not functioning smoothly and had to be closed down. *In the Mohyal Conference in 1909, it was decided to construct our own building for the purpose* – to be called Mohyal Ashram. It was an ambitious project at that stage and paucity of funds was a big impediment. The first donation for the Ashram came in February 1911 from Bakshi Ganpat Singh Datt of Malkhanwala, whose wife had expired and who donated all the gold and silver jewelry of his late wife to GMS for construction of a room in the name of his wife. An amount of Rs. 883- was realized from the sale of these ornaments. It was in this year itself that a plot measuring 5 Kanals and 19 Marlas was purchased from a Muslim vendor and the price of Rs. 2975- could be met, partly, by a loan of about Rs. 700 from the Bank on the surety of the then President and Vice President ! *At the Gujranwala Conference in 1915, the Conference authorized the General Mohyal Sabha to undertake the construction of the hostel and complete it* but the problem of funds remained. Rise in prices due to the First World War added to the woes of the organisers (the office bearers of GMS). Without going into further details, a mini Boarding house was constructed in 1921, under the supervision of Mehta Dhera Mal Datt, at the total cost of Rs. 25,217, which included Rs. 10,000- transferred from the Education Fund. With more donations – 5,000; 8,000; 2300 and some smaller contributions – the project was completed in 1927, at the total cost of Rs. 46,502. It

had 37 single occupancy rooms, six triple occupancy rooms for students plus kitchen, guest room and office premises etc.

It is note-worthy that (a) A problem had been identified (need for a Boarding House in Lahore) (b) The final solution was to construct our own building for it. (c) The project was not abandoned if GMS did not have funds of that magnitude (d) The focus did not waver even if it took a quarter of a century to complete it. (e) *Mark who is taking the decisions? Not the President and other office bearers of GMS* (f) Mohyal Conference – in other words the General Body of Mohyal community – gives the directions for each move. (g) And who were the Presidents receiving and executing the directions? They were stalwarts in their own right: Ch. Jagan Nath Datt 1906-07 (Secretary, Ch. Hira Singh Datt); Mehta Dhera Mal Datt 1908 (Sh. Ram Rattan Chhibber); Bk. Jog Dhian Bali 1910-12; Sh. Ram Rattan Chhibber 1913-28. Bhai Permanand Chhibber also acted as Secretary. You find these names among the list of Founding Fathers, given above.

The community was discussing and taking decisions: The Office Bearers were doing the difficult part of executing these. The tail was not wagging the dog.

So, it was a truly democratic functioning. The *Mohyali Biradari* (not supposed to be highly educated lot, at that stage) took the decisions at Conferences, *after prolonged discussions*; the Office Bearers executed these, as best as they could; reporting back their problems, if they could not execute.

Reverting to our discussion: What was the result, if any, of these actions by GMS to *exhort* the community towards higher education and trying to facilitate it?

According to the Shahpur Gazetteer of 1897:

When the figures are compared by castes, at the top of the list come the Mohial Brahmans, whose occupation is chiefly service in the army, offices; then come the Hindu trading castes of Khatri and Arora ...”

It is remarkable, when you consider that, even then, Mohyals were a very small community, as compared to Khatri etc. Khatri and Aroras of business community, constituted the bulk of the Hindu population.

And now, extracts from the Gazetteer of Jhelum District of 1904, pp. 120-121:

The Muhiyals – The Muhiyals do not number more than some eleven thousand souls in the Province and they are rather widely distributed though their principal habitat is the Jhelum district ... Though numerically unimportant, they are a stirring and enterprising race, and frequently rise to prominence in the service of government which they enter in large numbers. They make excellent soldiers but it is chiefly in civil appointments that they have earned distinction. They are remarkable among the Hindu population ... Mehta Sham Das of Kala, himself a Chhibber... has supplied most of the information that follows ... They claim to have exercised at various times and places sovereignty over wide areas ...It is a fact worth noticing as illustrating the ready adaptability of the Muhiyals that in the days of the Muslim rulers they sometimes adopted the Muslim names, such as Izzat Khan and Nawab Khan, while

retaining their own religion. (These are Urdu/Persian words – cultural effect - and not Muslim religious names like Mohammad, Hussain etc.: RT MOHAN)

The British were then setting up their rule in Punjab. The Mohyal community did not have any vocational or professional expertise, like business etc. The Government departments like Railways, Post Office were expanding. Modern education was the right advice at the right time for our community, which it accepted with alacrity.

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