

Sadia Sumbal\*

**Al-Mashriqi's Khaksar Movement: Orthodoxy and Contesting Religious Authority**

**Abstract**

*This essay argues that Inayatullah Khan al-Mashriqi's anti-imperialist stance and contestation of religious orthodoxy with a modernist vision of Islam as a "Religion of Science," challenged the traditional authority of religious ideologues and colonial state. This subsequently evoked a dualistic resistance against Khaksar. The anti-clerical stance prorogued Khaksar in Punjab's political landscape which was enriched with the socio-political influence of ulema and sufis. The article discusses the formation of Khaksar, a para military organization in the twentieth century Punjab in a particular context in which religious communities Muslims, as well as Hindus and Sikhs reformulated their respective religious ideologies to make them compatible with some measure of colonial modernity. Majlis-e-Ahrar was one example which espoused unitary nationalism with reformist bent, however Khaksar with an approach of anti-colonial nation-building, stood against the orthodox version of ulema and Sufi's Islam with a radical notion of reevaluation of Islam and developing an interlinkage with the truth of science. This modernist vision embraced exclusion of reformist ulema and traditional sajjada nashins who were instrumental in articulating religious symbols in the construction of anti-colonial nationalist ideas. Muslim discourse of religion came to be linked to discourse of nation state, as nation continued to be defined in terms of religion than in secular terms.<sup>1</sup> Khaksar's reformulated Islam did not contribute to the larger story of Muslim religio-nationalist discourse and decolonization in India and Pakistan.*

**Key Word:** Khaksar, Allama Al-Mashriqi, Ansar-ul-Muslimeen, Fauj-e-Muhammadi, Barelwi, Deobandi.

**Introduction**

During nineteenth and twentieth centuries socio-religious reform movements sought to reinvigorate religious and cultural traditions and exhorted their adherents to return to the fundamentals of their religions.<sup>2</sup> Underlying these socio-religious movements, new ideological formations took shape which drew upon religious authority to legitimize change. Among new ideologies, secular nationalism emerged as the most important discourse, Indian National Congress espoused. During the period marked by religious conflict, nationalism gave rise to

---

\* Dr Sadia Sumbal, Assistant Professor, History Department, FCCU, Lahore

<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth century the earlier debate about Islamic orthodoxy was now taken up with a new perspective. Reformist Islam was propagated with modern forms of communications. Religious belief and practice began to take place within the context of the assertion of identity as a distinct religious community. In the colonial world Muslim discourse about religion came to be identified with the discourse of nation-state. There was increasing emphasis on the social and cultural exclusiveness of the Muslim community which was later used to support the narrative of political struggle for a separate Muslim state. The narrative was based on the premise that Hindus and Muslims did not share values and thus formed two separate nations. See Peter Vander Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 62. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 6.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'socio' implies an attempt to reorder society in the areas of social behavior, custom, structure and control. The term 'religious' refers to the authority used to legitimize a given ideology. The term 'movement' refers to a group of individuals united and galvanized around the message of a charismatic leader or the ideology derived from that message. The authority is based on scriptures. Socio-religious movements called for the creation of egalitarian society, modifications in social behavior, rejected the role of priests and rituals they conducted, promoted the concept of monotheism. See Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2, 14.

communalism.<sup>3</sup> Both waves of nationalism and communalism grew concurrently, set the stage for the political battle combatted against the colonial state. The aim was to make new religious ideologies formulated by diverse religious communities Muslims, as well as Hindus and Sikhs, compatible with some measure of colonial modernity.<sup>4</sup> The central concern was to advocate the benefits of modern education based on the new social and natural sciences, conveying the knowledge in English language while simultaneously maintaining Muslim's own distinctive identity. Amongst Muslims, the most important modernist/reformist was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98). A noble scion of an educated family, he had been knighted for his advocacy of political loyalism and his contributions for Muslim education and intellectual development to grow a new modern Muslim middle class. Sir Sayyid's reformulation of religious doctrine along rationalist lines developed under the influence of reformist surge across Islamic world. Mashriqi's central concern was to synthesize scientific doctrines with Islam. This included often superficial and redundant references to the doctrines of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and other evolutionists.<sup>5</sup> The young Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi<sup>6</sup> became a symbol of liberal, secular, modern education, propagated by both the British and the reformist religious ideologues. The foundation of the colonial administration and most importantly the ideology of imperial rule was grounded in the state's relationship with rural kin-based communities. At the turn of the century, new associations attempted to mobilise popular support on issues of immediate concern<sup>7</sup>. They also reflected increasing pressure from urban Muslim leaders including ulema, popular orators etc. Muslim movements like *Khudai Khidmatgars* in the NWFP, *Majlis-e-Ahrar* and *Khaksars* in Punjab, all came in to being with the efforts of the former Khilafatists and pro-Indian National Congress nationalists.<sup>8</sup> *Khaksar* made its entry on the national political stage through espousing popular causes. Pan-Islamism dominated Mashriqi's socio-political ideas. He wanted to establish Islam of Prophet Muhammad. Like Hitler and Mussolini, he also used religion as dictatorial rhetoric.

Many scholars have made an indepth study of *Khaksar* movement, Allama Mashriqi's religious philosophy and his agitational politics in nationalist struggle in India.<sup>9</sup> However his contestation of religious orthodoxy, ulema and

---

<sup>3</sup> Communalism, defined as ideology which emphasizes as the social, political and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion and stresses on differences and even antagonism between groups. Muslim communalists are highly conscious of the Muslims within India as a cohesive community, to which they devote their loyalty. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis* (Lahore: Minerva Book Shop, 1943), 186. Bipan Chandra defines communalism, a belief that because a group of people follows a particular religion, it has as a result, common social, political and economic interests. There is a vast body of literature on the subject of communalism. Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (Delhi: 1984); For some of this scholarship see M. Hasan (ed.) *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (Delhi: 1981); K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture* (Delhi: 1991); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 260. For an excellent critique of the literature on communalism see R. O'Hanlon, 'Historical Approaches to Communalism: Perspectives from Western India', in P. Robb (ed.) *Society and Ideology, Essays in South Asian History* (Delhi: 1993), 247-266.

<sup>4</sup> Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: 1989)

<sup>5</sup> Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978)

<sup>6</sup> Inayatullah Khan was born in 1888 near Amritsar, a trading city in the British Indian province of Punjab. According to one source, his father was a silk merchant, while another account describes him a medium-level government employee and petition writer who also received a moderate income from agricultural land. He spent the first 30 years of his adult life as an educationist and civil servant in British colonial service. He quit government service in the stormy days of 1919 and started participating in politics. He wanted to bring an inter-communal unity to dismantle British rule. He pioneered a movement against mullahism. See Shan Muhammad, *Khaksar Movement in India* (Delhi: Meenakshi Parakashan, 1973), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Harnik Deol, *Religion and nationalism in India: The case of the Punjab* (London: Routledge, 2000), 54.

<sup>8</sup> See Samina Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab, Majlis-i-Ahrar 1929-1949* (London: Oxford University Press, 2010), 160-164 and Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in North West Frontier Province 1937-1947* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999)

<sup>9</sup> Shan Muhammad, *Khaksar Movement in India* (Delhi: Meenakshi Parakashan, 1973) Syed Shabbir Hussain, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius* (Lahore: Jang Publishers Press, 1991); A.D. Muztir, *Khaksar Tehreek Aur Azadi-e-*

sajjada nishins has not been discussed so far. Markus Daechsel discussed the dualistic and contradictory structure of Mashriqi's "fascism" which insisted upon redefining of colonial modernity. It should be interpreted as the starting point of a new and much darker formation that arguably continued into the present.<sup>10</sup> Nasim Yousaf discussed the Mashriqi and brutal massacre of *Khaksar* by British government.<sup>11</sup> This article shows how Deobandi and Barelwi ideologues launched a counter movement against *Khaksar* in Salt Range regions including Bhera, Attok and Pindi Gheb and structured a para military organization on the model of *Khaksar*. The article unravels that it was not only colonial state which contested *Khaksar* but its extreme anti-religious orthodoxy disposition evoked vehement opposition from ulema and Sufis of all denominations.

The account in this article is based on the original detailed colonial archival record about *Khaksar* movement, their anti-colonial political activities and colonial policies to contain them. The documents include confidential letters of Deputy Commissioner Mianwali to Chief Secretary Punjab, to Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division and to superintendent of Police, confidential fortnightly report from Superintendent of Police Mianwali to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Criminal Investigation Department, Punjab and Punjab Police Department confidential Weekly Diary. These historical documents are available in the Deputy Commissioner Record Office of Mianwali, which have never been utilized.

### **Al-Mashriqi's interpretation of Islam**

Inayatullah Khan first emerged on the political and religious horizon of Muslim India with the publication of his first volume of *al-Tazkirah*, a religious-philosophical work in 1924. He believed in the Darwin's theory of evolution, based on the idea of struggle for existence. He used religion as a means to gain worldly powers. His interpretation of Islam as a 'scientific' social Darwinism contradicted with orthodox perspective of religion.<sup>12</sup> His central concern was to reformulate Islam as a "Religion of Science." His book *al-Tazkirah* contained all significant elements of his religious doctrine. According to him the concepts in evolutionary biology provided scientific guidance in relation to Islam and Quranic interpretation in the light of science. To build an Islamic government over the whole of India and to develop Muslim community in to a unified whole, it was imperative to demonstrate Quranic teachings in to political actions.<sup>13</sup> Mashriqi's "scientific" understanding of Islam called into question the religious morals that transcended the boundaries of Reformist thinking. He emphasized upon the ethical aspect of Islam for spiritual development which reduced the mundane practices like neglect of prayer, drinking alcohol, adultery, insignificant and no more sinful.<sup>14</sup> Mashriqi's scientific interpretation of Islam undermined Prophetic conduct (the sunnat) as a source of Islamic law and guidance for Muslim community. Although Mashriqi refrained himself from denying the divine model of Prophetic authority both in *al-Tazkirah* itself and later publications. He tried to combine the "scientific" interpretation of history and divine guidance. *Al-Tazkirah* was not just a "modern" commentary on the Quran; it was an attempt to unfold the dissemination of Islamic message wholistically. Mashriqi developed a more public and activist political vision and shifted his focus from intellectual writer to political activist. He was much influenced by totalitarian ideas in the West and in 1931, founded the paramilitary *Khaksar* movement ('the humble

---

*Hind: Dastawezaat* (Islamabad: Qomi Idara barai Tehqeeq Tarikh-o-Saqafat,1985); Khaksar Hakeem Ahmad Hussain, *19March1940 ke Khaksar Shuhda: Ail Khnchkaan Saniha jo Qiam-e-Pakistan ki Buniad Bana.* (Lahore:MaktabaHuriyyat,1990); Khaksar Sher Zaman, Sir Syed Jinnah Mashriqi (Rawalpindi: Madni Publications,1990).

<sup>10</sup> Markus Daechsel, 'Visionary of Another Politics: Inayatullah Khan 'al-Mashriqi' and Pakistan' in *Muslims against the idea of Muslim League: Critiques of the idea of Pakistan* Ali Usman Qasmi, Megan Eaton Robb,eds. (Newyork: Cambridge University Press, 2017) also see Markus Daechsel, 'Scientism and its discontents: the Indo-Muslim "Fascism" of Inayatullah Khan Al-Mashriqi', *Modern Intellectual History*, 3, 3,Cambridge University Press, (2006)

<sup>11</sup>Nasim Yousaf, 'Khaksar and Jallianwalabagh Massacres: The Bloodbath that ignited the Freedom Movement' *World Tribune Pakistan*, March 19, 2018. ; Nasim Yousaf , 'Khaksar Movement Weekly "Al-Islah's" Role Toward Freedom' *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2011) NasimYousaf, 'Allama Mashriqi and the Khaksar Movement', *World History Encyclopedia*,USA.

<sup>12</sup> Daechsel, 'Visionary of Another Politics, 78

<sup>13</sup> Hussain, *Al-Mashriqi:The Disowned Genius*, 34

<sup>14</sup> Daechsel, 'Scientism and its discontents, 4.

ones'; lit. 'those with ashes on their head') while Inayatullah Khan (1888–1963), was known as 'Allama Mashriqi' ('Sage of the East').<sup>15</sup> He believed Muslims needed moral rejuvenation by spiritually uplifting them through such an organization which could organize them in to an actively mobilized force. The *Khaksars*, created a tumult in late colonial politics and were greatly admired and supported by Muslim middle-class and petty bourgeois all over Muslim North India. Clad in khaki uniforms with strict military disposition, *Khaksar* represented an Indian version of Mussolini's Fascism or Hitler's Nazism. The unique and popular symbol was the spade which the soldiers carried like a rifle in parades and used as a weapon to defend themselves against law and order forces.<sup>16</sup> During 1935-1940, *Khaksar* movement was much organized and at its peak, when it remained engaged in a drawn battle with the government. The political actions of *Khaksar* mobilized its adherents and forged them in to a collective community to give them sense of empowerment. He suggested that to comprehend Islam in the Darwin's social framework, Nazism was the only option for national unification.<sup>17</sup> He constructed his para military organization on the idea of *Jihad bi-l-saif* (lit. "religious effort with the sword") as it was the most upright action in view of God's commandments regarding Jihad. "To leave the martial way of life is equivalent to leaving Islam." Mashriqi construed military discipline, crucial for training oneself to believe in *Tauheed* the unity of Allah, the Prophetology and to follow the fundamental elements of Islam, the ritual prayers, paying zakat, performing pilgrimage and fasting in the month of Ramadan.<sup>18</sup> All these rituals of Islam were marked by military drill. The confession of faith really meant that the true Muslim had to relinquish all worldly gains.<sup>19</sup>

### **Al-Mashriqi's contestation of orthodoxy**

Inayatullah's education and academic excellence greatly supported him in building his career as a thinker and political activist. His indepth insight in to the classical sources of Islam established his intellectual ascendancy over clerics. His knowledge was of the orientalist. The traditional religious ideologues, the ulema and Sufis were not at par with him and held a contentious relationship with them. The *Khaksar* movement was distinctively religious, puritanical and based the rationale of the movement on a reinterpretation of Islam, which Mashriqi expressed in his writings.<sup>20</sup> His objective was described as thorough reforms in a progressive and economically flourishing society. With a non-sectarian approach, he invited followers from all religions to discuss doctrinal issues, provided non-Muslims acknowledged *Al-Akhirah* and *Tauheed*.<sup>21</sup> His movement had two important dimensions, one is militarist training and social service and the other is anti-religious orthodoxy. He attacked the religion of 'Mullah' with contemptuous vehemence. Calling Islam of the mullah, as old feudal religion, he expressed his dislike for traditional religionists by challenging their political authority as, "their poverty, ignorance, vileness, destitution, helplessness, dumbness, filthiness and their tatters, all these clearly indicate that whatever they be, they can never be the leader of this nation." He further maintained that "I attach no significance to Shia, Sunni, Hanafi, Shafi, Deobandi, Barelvi, Wahabi, *Muqalid* and *Ghair Muqalid*, they all are preparing for Hell."<sup>22</sup> This led an open collision, orthodox denounced his movement as "heretical."<sup>23</sup>

Mashriqi's puritanical reinterpretation of Scripture contested and attacked the same customary modes of religious practices, the veneration of saints as miracle-making holy men or intercessors between mankind and God, the participation in certain community festivals with their associated customs. Dressed in brown uniform, carrying a

---

<sup>15</sup> Yousaf, Nasim Yousaf, 'Khaksar Movement Weekly "Al-Islah's" Role Toward Freedom' *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2011),4.

<sup>16</sup> Sarfraz Hussain Ansari, 'The Modern Decalogue: Mashriqi's Concept of a Dynamic Community' Institute for Strategic Studies, Research & Analysis (ISSRA) National Defence University, Islamabad (2019),Vol.5, No.1(2013).

<sup>17</sup> Daechsel, 'Scientism and its discontents',8.

<sup>18</sup> NasimYousaf, 'Allama Mashriqi and the Khaksar Movement', *World History Encyclopedia*,USA. Also see, <http://archive.org/details@nasimyousaf>.

<sup>19</sup> Daechsel, 'Visionary of Another Politics', 7.

<sup>20</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: a social analysis*, 270.

<sup>21</sup> Muztir, *Khaksar Tehreek Aur Azadi-e-Hind*, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Inayat Ullah Mashriqi, *Tazkira*, vol,1(Amritsar: Matba Roz bazaar), 90.

<sup>23</sup> Dietric Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India, 1900-1947* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), 226.

spade, its military camps, a thorough military drill and parade, enjoyed great popularity among Muslim youth and particularly the people of Salt-Range tract with their martial tendencies felt attracted to this organization. Mashriqi articulated his idealism in a quite dynamic way and motivated a reasonable number of educated people to join the movement. Dr Nur Muhammad Khan (Khanki-Khel, Mianwali district) and Hakim Abd-ur-Rehman Khan were among the first to join.<sup>24</sup> Mashriqi was more of a spiritual than a political leader for them. The political gatherings of *Khaksars* used to be carried out in the mosques. Like *Majlis-e-Ahrar*, the followers of *Khaksar* movement used rhetoric and slogan mongering to whip up religious emotions. Politically inert people were more amenable to the religious movements. To rally them around a common cause of Islam was not a difficult task. The members of *Khaksar* from Salt Range participated in the historical assemblage of *Khaksars* in Delhi. Hakim Abdur Rehman Khan was one such example.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Ansar-ul-Muslimeen and Fauj-e-Muhammadi, counter movements to Khaksar***

To contest *Khaksars* and its anti-religious orthodoxy campaign, the religious ideologues of all denominations, Deobandi, Barelwi, Ahl-e-Hadith and all other religious groups rallied the ulema and Sufis to launch a counter movement from Salt-Range tract. In order to diffuse the enchanting effect of the military parade of *Khaksar*, a military organization, *Ansar-ul-Muslimeen* was established at Texila in which *Ahrar* had a pivotal role. *Ahrar* leaders particularly Maulana Gulsher, Ghulam Ghaus Hazarwi of *Jamiyat Ulema-e-Hind* (JUH) and Maulana Muhammad Daud Bin Mufti Ghulam Rabbani of Bhoi Gaar (district Attok) assisted its formation, a retired soldier of Taxila Muhammad Jaan gave them training and caution in the parade. Clad in brown kameez shalwar, with a green badge called "Nusrat" (success), instead of spade (belcha), they carried a bamboo club in their hands, chanting the slogan of "Main" "saar" paraded through the streets.<sup>26</sup> *Ansar-ul-Muslimeen's* impact and role was restricted to its own locale. To expand its influence, the *Ahrar* leaders invited the leading Deobandi, Barelwi ulema and sajjada nishins included Sahibzada Fakhar-uz-Zaman (Kot Chandana) Maulana Sahibzada Zain-ud-Din Makhadwi (Tarag Sharif) Zahur Ahmed Bugwi (Bhera) and Maulana Abdul Haye (Bhoi Gaar, district Attok) to set up another semi-military organization called *Fauj-e-Muhammadi*, in which *Ansar-ul-Muslimeen* was merged.<sup>27</sup> The organization was set up with a reformist approach. Most of the Ulema had their nexus with *Jamiyat Ulema-e-Hind* (JUH) and *Majlis-e-Ahrar* due to their Deobandi persuasion. Barelwi ulema and sajjada nishins shared the view with Deobandis that reforming the masses was an urgent imperative<sup>28</sup>. Barelwi also shared Deobandi revulsion towards false practices, not in conjunction with sharia but surrounding Sufi tombs. This also negated the common misconception that Barelwis were less concerned about sharia than Deobandis.

The prominent ulema who held designations in *Fauj-e-Muhammadi* were, Maulana Gulsher as patron, Muhammad Khan (Moch, district Mianwali) as president, Maulana Fakhr-uz-Zaman Chishti (Kot Chandana, district Mianwali) as salar, Muhammad Akbar Khan as Nazim-e-Umumi (general and miscellaneous affairs), Hafiz Maulvi Ghulam Jillani as Nazim-e-Talimaat.<sup>29</sup> The rural pirs and sajjada nishins whose influence was quite entrenched in their respective rural areas were sucked into the political mainstream to mobilize people along religious lines. The prominent ulema were, Sahibzada Nur-ud-Din Chishti (Tarag Sharif, district Mianwali), Sufi Allahdad Khan (Rais Isa Khel, district Mianwali) Maulana Ilm-ud-Din Deobandi (khateeb Jamia masjid), Maulana Zain-ud-Din Chishti (Sajjada nishin Tarag Sharif), Maulana Zahur Ahmed Bugvi (Bhera), sufi Sher Muhammad Zargar (Mianwali) Maulana Abdul Haye (BhoiGar district Attok) and Sufi Abd-ur-Raheem Maskeen (Musa Khel, district Mianwali).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Sahibzada Anwar Ahmed Bugvi, *Tazkara-e-Bugvia* (Bhera: Majlis-e-Markazia Hizb-ul-Ansar, 2004), 793.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Umar Farooq, *Maulana Muhammad Gulsher Shaheed* (Multan: Bukhari Academy, 1992), 89.

<sup>26</sup> Letters of Qazi Shamsud Din, Hari pur Hazara, October, 22 1990.

<sup>27</sup> The prominent members were Maulana Fakhr-uz-Zaman Chishti (Kot Chandana), Sahibzada Nur-ud-Din Chishti (Tarag Sharif), Sufi Allahdad Khan (Rais Isa Khel) Maulana Ilm-ud-Din Deobandi (khateeb Jamia masjid), Maulana Zain-ud-Din Chishti (Sajjada nishin Tarag Sharif), Maulana Zahur Ahmed Bugvi (Bhera) See, Maulana Abdur Rehman Mianvi, *Mahnama Shams-ul-Islam* (Bhera: 1938), 44.

<sup>28</sup> Maulana Muhammad Ramazan, *Mianwali District* (Mianwali: Muslim Bazaar Publisher, 1985), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, Malhowali, District Attok, unpublished personal diary, 79.

<sup>30</sup> Maulana Zahur Ahmed Bugvi, *Islami Jihad* (Texila: Idara-e-Aaliya Muhammadia Askaria, 1939), 16.

The aims of *Fauj-e-Muhammadi* were to: unite Muslims and help the believers in their distress; refrain from debates and manazras; live in conjunction with sharia; eliminate false religious practices (*bida'at*); struggle for the economic uplift of Muslims; serve humanity regardless of religion, creed and nationality; to make all possible sacrifice for the glory of Islam; live a soldierly life, away from political factions and religious sects.<sup>31</sup>

The headquarter of *Fauj-e-Muhammadi* was in Taxila which was the center of *Khaksar* movement. The other two centers were Bhera and Kot Chandana (district Mianwali). The salt range's military belt provided substantial number of recruits to this movement. *Fauj-e-Muhammadi* installed first military camp at Taxila to make a show of power and to counter *Khaksar's* martial activities, recruited five thousand young Muslims in two years.<sup>32</sup> The recruits were called "Raza karan-e-Islam." The member ulema and razakars of *Fauj-e-Muhammadi* started a mass contact campaign in towns and villages and mobilized them against the ideas of Mashriqi. For this purpose they held speeches and seminars, a joint seminar of all religious organizations was held on 30 September 1938<sup>33</sup>. Maulana Zahoor Ahmad Bugwi addressed a large gathering at Jamia Mosque Attok where activists from various places like IsaKhel, Tarag, Moch, Kalabagh, Kot Chandna and Thathi, Bhera, Talagang, Pindi Gheb and Taxila had assembled. On 22 October 1938 volunteers paraded in Idgah Taxila and a resolution was passed against Mashriqi in which the leading ulema addressed and asserted that he did not qualify to represent the Muslims.<sup>34</sup> The movement took on a more aggressive tone when the leader of *Hizb-ul-Ansar* Bhera, (district Sargodha) Zahur Ahmed Bugvi announced the merging of military wing of *Hizb-ul-Ansar*, *Juyush-e-Hizb-ul-Ansar* in to *Fauj-e-Muhammadi*,<sup>35</sup> which strengthened the alliance between the various ideologues of *Majlis-e-Ahrar*, *Jamiyat ulema-e-Hind* and Barelwi sajjada nishin of all sectarian denominations.<sup>36</sup> This was a second occasion after *Khatm-e-Nabuwat* that ulema developed a concensus among themselves and opposition to Mashriqi, served as a unifying element. Both *Ahrar* and *Khaksar* founded in a dual capacity as religious groups and registered public associations. There was almost a full convergence of their public life with their religious activities.<sup>37</sup> These ulema felt their authority in crisis, as Mashriqi with contemptuous vehemence condemned their religious beliefs. Through the platform of *Fauj-e-Muhammadi*, Maulana Gulsher of *Ahrar* tried to organize more vigorous preaching of Islam, promoted better religious education and observance of religious duties. He also stressed on raising awareness about fundamental religious doctrine. He accelerated his efforts to improve the economic plight of Muslims and to reduce the economic power and influence that Hindu commercial communities exercised on them<sup>38</sup>. Having said this, the leadership of all these organizations and anjumans were mainly concerned to constitute a Muslim community who is unified and devoted followers of reformed Islam, more conscious of its distinctive religious identity and strong enough to fight the militant Hindu onslaught.<sup>39</sup>

### **Anti-Khaksar policies of colonial government**

British government clearly understood that the actions and political policies of *Khaksar* were not threatening to the colonial rule, it was infact *Khaksar's* popular support, street power and its ability to whip up people's emotions by portraying a volatile and militarized impression of Islam that could set aside the government's emblem of power.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid,89.

<sup>32</sup> Fortnightly *Zia-ul-Islam*, Amritsar, May 22, 1939, 11.

<sup>33</sup> See Hafiz Muhammad Hassan, unpublished diary (Talagang: Gulsher Academy Talagang, District Chakwal), 67.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Umer Farooq, *Azadi ki Inqilabi Tehreek* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Ahrar, 2000), 134. Also see Sahibzada Anwar, *Tazkara-e-Bugvia*, 794.

<sup>35</sup> Maulana Abd-ur-Rehman Mianvi, *Shandar Ijtima aur Amlī Muzahira*, in Monthly Shams-ul-Islam, Bhera, Nov. 1938, 46.

<sup>36</sup> M. Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan: 1947-1958* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1976)

<sup>37</sup> Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, 163.

<sup>38</sup> Daily Azad, Lahore, August, 20, 1946, P.2

<sup>39</sup> Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) also see Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression: The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu of Mid-20th Century India and Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Mashriqi envisaged the wearing of uniform and the regular conduct of physical training and military parades of *Khaksar* soldiers as essential condition for generating martial dexterity and the implementation of an Islamic system. The movement had its strongest impact in the Punjab, however towards 1939 *Khaksar* became increasingly irrelevant.<sup>40</sup> The British government declared its publications objectionable and imposed a ban particularly on the display of shovels and on military marches. Suppressing private armies was considered legitimate as World War 2 had commenced, *Khaksar* defied a ban by the Punjab government subsequently Mashriqi was arrested and provincial government declared the *Khaksar* an unlawful association. Massacre of the *Khaksars* on 19 March 1940 was one of the cruelest killings of innocent people in the history of India. Numbers of the Allama's followers were shot dead by the police after deliberately defying curfew orders in Lahore's Old City. This was less than a mile away from Minto Park, where the Muslim League delegates were gathering for their historic annual session of 23 March 1940.<sup>41</sup> It occurred only three days prior to the Muslim League's session of Lahore Resolution. Muslim League had a difficult time in controlling the emotions of people. In Muslim League's annual session of Allahabad, Jinnah passed a resolution, o strongly condemned the brutal massacre of *Khaksars* and demanded the release of prisoners and elimination of all restrictions over *Khaksar*.<sup>42</sup> *Khaksars*'s resistance to the British during ban was marked as the toughest and longest fight in the Indian freedom struggle.<sup>43</sup> The war and the beginning of oppositional agitation by the Congress through the Quit India movement in 1942 made it difficult for *Khaksar* to regain their legal status.<sup>44</sup>

*Khaksar*'s strictly anti-British disposition was alarming for the British government as well as its local allies, the landed aristocracy, who were mostly the members of Unionist Party in Salt-Range tract including Attok, Mianwali, Sargodha, Bhera and Taxila. The *Khaksars* proved to be yet another thorn in the flesh for the British and their allies who felt visibly intimidated of its increasing popularity and provocative statements and the government kept a strict watch on the movements and activities of *Khaksars*.<sup>45</sup> The confidential report of Deputy Commissioner Mianwali presented to the chief Secretary Punjab vividly reflected the government's severe reservation about the organization, as it was mentioned that carrying arms was a common practice, frequently resulted in riots and murders, so rule 54 of the Defence of India should be extended to this district and order of the government must be explained to the organizers of processions and leaders of the volunteer organizations. This rule was applied during the days of World War two in the year 1940.<sup>46</sup> In another confidential letter of Deputy Commissioner to the Superintendent of Police, criminal investigation department, declared *Anjuman-i-Khaksar* an unlawful association.<sup>47</sup> It was followed by a notification order of the Punjab government regarding an official ban imposed on the organization and the members had been warned to abandon all political activities, assemblies, drills of military nature and display of arms. It was further said that under Rule 17(i) of Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908, any one who assisted the operations of organization, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term extended to six months. Under Rule 17(ii), any one assisted in the management of organization or arranging meetings, shall be punished with imprisonment extended to three years. This offence was declared cognizable and unbailable<sup>48</sup>. After this declaration the government ensured the arrest of a member of *Khaksar* where ever found. A vigorous search operation and investigation was carried out to find the details about the dissident members of *Khaksar* along with their ranks and those who still maintained nexus with the organization. The Chief Secretary Punjab instructed the Deputy Commissioners of all the districts of the Punjab to provide details of all *Khaksars* in the districts, the salaries, janbaz,

---

<sup>40</sup> Ian Talbot, Punjab and Raj (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988),145.

<sup>41</sup> Hussain, *19March1940 ke Khaksar Shuhda*, 65. Also see Zaman, Sir Syed Jinnah Mashriqi, 128.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid,48.

<sup>43</sup> Yousaf, 'Khaksar and Jallianwalabagh Massacres, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan, a political biography 1892-1942* (Islamabad: National Institute Of Historical and Cultural Research,1985),66.

<sup>46</sup> Confidential letter of Deputy Commissioner, Sardar Iqbal Singh to Chief Secretary, March 11, 1940, Letter No.2419-47,B.D.S.B

<sup>47</sup> Confidential letter of Deputy Commissioner Mianwali, Sardar Iqbal Singh to the superintendent of Police, March 22, 1940, Letter No. 1858-86-C.D.S.B under Punjab government Notification No: 1997-H-G-40/13882

<sup>48</sup> A Confidential Notification No, 1997-H.G/40-1382, March, 19 1940 issued to A.K.Kaul Superintendent of Police Mianwali

rank and file who have dissociated themselves from the movement.<sup>49</sup> The Superintendent Police returned the letter with remarks that *Khaksar* movement had lost its foothold and is generally confined to Mianwali city, in the locality called wandha Ali khelanwala with approximately one hundred members in Mianwali and eighty three in the other village. According to another confidential report, the two Janbaz, Dost Muhammad and Din Muhammad identified, were arrested under section 17 of Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, presented before Additional district Magistrate who bailed them out since the enquiry report received a documented evidence of their disconnection with the *Khaksars*.<sup>50</sup> The police department's confidential weekly diary reported that any clash between *Khaksars* and the British government in the urban areas like Lahore had turned the local politics of *Khaksars* quiescent.<sup>51</sup> In this regard another report indicated that due to strict surveillance there existed no regular office or store-house of *Khaksars* which substantiated the complete termination of their politics in the district.<sup>52</sup> However, the *Khaksars* in Mianwali diverted their focus towards Lahore where they occasionally engaged in agitation and defiance against the officially imposed ban. A confidential diary of Police department reported the departure of a "Jatha" of *Khaksar* consisted of ten people<sup>53</sup> for Lahore, it stated, " they had their uniforms concealed in their beds and spades tied in a bundle. This group had left for Lahore with the intention of breaking the ban recently imposed on the *Khaksar* movement under the defence of India act. They had proceeded at the command of Zulfiqar Ali Khan of Murree, the Naib Hakim-e-Aala (Assistant Governor) of the Western Punjab."<sup>54</sup> The counter efforts of Maulana Gulsher and his associates, combined with state's anti *Khaksar* policies curtailed *Khaksar* Movement in the region.<sup>55</sup>

*Khaksar* movement could have proven vital to the Pakistan movement if it were properly coordinated and had a well-defined political idealism. However *Khaksars*, instead had developed animosity with the League on the partition plan thereby lost momentum in the 1940s; amidst the growing communal conflicts. These movements had a violent character with no set objectives. So they reached their pinnacle point very early but their descent was as quick as was their ascent. Demagogy and eloquent speeches could not sustain movements for long. The Unionist leaders in the district also strived hard to torpedo these movements.

## **Conclusion**

Transformation brought about by colonial government through Christian missionaries, English education, rapid expansion of imperial bureaucracy triggered a series of religious reform movements among all major religious communities in colonial India in the 19th century. Waves of nationalism and communalism set the stage for the political battle to be waged against the colonial state. The new ideological formations having sprung up as a result of socio-religious reformist movements, were the fore runners of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle.<sup>56</sup> Reformist movements by ulema, *Majlis-e-Ahrar*, and Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi's *Khaksar* movements were part of this socio-religious renewal. Mashriqi also aimed to reformulate Islam to benefit from colonial modernity. In an attempt to give a modern version of Islam he contested and challenged the authority of ulema and sajjada nishin who emerged as custodian of Islam in colonial moment. He attacked the religion of mulla with contemptuous vehemence. As a case study of Salt range areas, the movement had its stronghold in Taxila. The whole salt range belt was dotted with shrines and Sufi silsilas, calling in question the authority of reigius ideologues, led to an open collision, which became a dualistic resistance to repress *Khaksars* in the face of colonial repressive policies against the movement.

<sup>49</sup> Confidential letter No. 2001-29-C.D.S.B, March 23,1940 from Chief Secretary J.D.Penny, Esquire to Deputy Commissioners of Punjab.

<sup>50</sup> Confidential Letters No, 186-S.B, 175-S.B, from Chaudhry Ghulam Rasul Superintendent of Police Mianwali to The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Criminal Investigation Department, Punjab, March 21, 1940

<sup>51</sup> Police Department Confidential Weekly Diary No.ii, March 23, 1940

<sup>52</sup> Confidential report No.1887-91-C.D.S.B OF Sardar Iqbal Singh, P.C.S, Deputy Commissioner,Mianwali, to the Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, March,24,1940.

<sup>53</sup> 1. Sher Muhammad s/o Gorang Pathan of Mohalla Khanaki Khel,Mianwali 2. Abdul Sattar s/o Sufi Hayat Khan 3. Muhammad Musa Ali 4. Dost Muhammad s/o Muhammad Azam Khan (BalloKhel) 5. Usman of YaruKhel 6. Mistri Ramazan s/o Karim Bakhsh (carpenter) 7. Abdul Aziz s/o Fazal Illahi (Mochi) 8. Yaran s/o Sultan Mirasi 9. Muhammad Iqbal (tailor) a janbaz

<sup>54</sup> Police Department, Confidential Weekly Diary No. 11, March 9,1940

<sup>55</sup> Jaanbaz Mirza, *Karwan-e-Ahrar*, Vol.5 ( Lahore: Maktaba-e-Tabsara,1981) ,429-430

<sup>56</sup> Deol, *Religion and Nationalism in India*,21.

The ulema and sajjada nishins denounced Mashriqi and his movement as heretical and kafir. *Khaksars* stressed upon the glorious past of Islam and the ideal of a new Muslimized world. Their rehabilitation of Islam had been taken by British government in the aggressive sense of Muslim sovereignty over the entire world which could be achieved by training Muslims on military lines. The *Khaksar's* violent tendencies and belligerent action gained impetus from its controversial and revolutionary underlying world view which could pose a potential threat to British rule in India and as well question the religious authority of ulema and Sufis. The growth of the All India Muslim League and the development of Muslim nationalism based on singular Islamic identity challenged the *Khaksar* support base during 1940s. The partition of India and establishment of an independent Muslim homeland, Pakistan on the basis of two nation theory, left *Khaksar* politically irrelevant. In an environment of exclusion, marginalization and social censure, these volunteer movements and corps meant political assertion, protection of religious authority and to register their presence in the public sphere.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics Of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century* ( London: Cambridge University Press,2001),342.