

Cultural Syncretism in the City of Mandi Baha-ud-Din: Before and After Independence 1947

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ABSTRACT

The subcontinent has witnessed the arrival of innumerable peoples and settling down here. The fertile land and abundance of food production created conducive environment for the wandering tribes or aspiring conquerors to settle down and adopt this land as their home. This phenomenon required and provided basis for cultural syncretism in this region. The inhabitants of Indus Civilization left their mysterious imprints but Sumerian, Dravidian, Aryan, Scythian, Turk, and Arab came, flourished, and dominated others culturally and religiously. Even the Europeans, who began to arrive in India from 15th Century, left deep imprints to the culture of the Indian subcontinent. The same process took place in the far off places of the subcontinent like in the city Mandi Baha-ud-Din where the old population comprised the racial stock from Dravidians, Aryans and also Greeks as this area remained part of the Raja Poros state. Later, it was the part of administrative unit of Shahpur and then Gujrat during Mughals and the British

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rule, respectively. Mughal, Jat and Gondal castes of Hindus and Sikhs inhabited the area. The city came into existence as a market city in 1920s as a part of the British Agrarian System and observed inflow of people from the adjacent areas after this. The population composition changed owing to the mass migration in the result of partition of the Punjab. The new migratory influx introduced new relationships and in turn new cultural dimensions which resulted in syncretism of old and new traditions. The development of this amalgamation and blending or segregation of cultural traits is the subject of this article.

Introduction

This is the study of the miniscule, center of civilization; the city, where common men live, their characteristics combine or blend, to create a cultural syncretism. The culmination of British Colonial Raj in 1947 caused mass migration from and to the newly established countries of Pakistan and India which gave birth to new cultural dimensions. This article is an effort to search into making of new relationships among the migrants and the local communities¹ in a smaller city of Pakistani Punjab, namely Mandi Baha-ud-Din.² It seeks the process of assimilation and syncretism in the society before and after the mass migration in new settlements.

Cultural Syncretism before Partition

The British colonial Raj devised the canal system in the Punjab to increase revenue and strengthen its political hold.³

1 The word 'migrants' is used for the people who arrived in Pakistan whether in the result of riots or opted for migration to the newly established country. The local or local communities are those who were already living in the areas which were allotted to the migrants by the Pakistani government. In this case, most of the local people had been residing in the villages and city was inhabited by the Sikh and Hindu traders and merchants. The migrants were allotted houses mostly in the city, only those who had agricultural lands claim were given the lands in some nearby village.

2 Map denoting the city location is given in the end.

3 Imran Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), Introduction, 1-10. He suggests that the period of

It constructed barrages, dug canals and established irrigation department to regulate this system. Construction of Rasul Barrage on river Jhelum in Pabbi hills was part of this arrangement and canals were extended from this barrage to irrigate large areas.⁴ This arrangement further increased its fertility despite being situated in Chaj Doab (land between River Jhelum and River Chenab). It also resulted in the construction of the market city of Mandi Baha-ud-Din in 1920 as a part of the arrangement for accruing agricultural produce and transport it to other places through railways.⁵ It remained an administrative unit of Tehsil Phalia of District Gujrat before and for some time after the partition. Towns of Wasu, Sohawa, Rasul⁶ and Pindi Bahauddin were the renowned places even before construction of this barrage in 1920. Government Engineering School, Rasul was built in 1912 enhancing the importance of this area.⁷ The Arora Sikhs and Hindus were appreciated to settle in the city as middlemen, buying and selling the agricultural produce in the central market of the city. In addition, other families belonging to aforementioned religious groups and the Muslims from nearby towns like Bhera, Chakwal, Dalwal and Gujrat migrated to this area in search of better economic opportunities. The Christian community was also there, who were mostly the converts from Dalit, the lowest of the Hindu

imperialist rule in the Punjab can be studied in the context of three major themes: political entrenchment, revenue extraction and military requirements.

- 4 H. S. Williamsons, *Punjab District Gazetteers, Gujrat District*, Vol. XXV-A, (Lahore: The Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, 1921). Reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, 2007.
- 5 Williamsons, *Punjab Gazetteer of Gujrat*, Vol. XXV-A, 146, 157.
- 6 Rasul was Ram Nagar until it was renamed as Rasul after a person's name who was from a Sayyid family during Mughal Emperor Akbar's visit to Gujrat. M. Arif Barlas, a member of the Timurids Barlas whose tribe had also been residing in this village since first Mughal Emperor Babur's reign, writes in his unpublished work, "Ram Nagar se Rasul Tak," n.p. 20-21 that this village was founded by Raja Rama, and named it Ram Nagar. He was brother of Raja Moga, who founded Mong village in 120 BC at the place where Alexander of Macedonia defeated Raja Poro.
- 7 Williamsons, *Punjab Gazetteer of Gujrat*, Vol. XXV-A, 156-57.

caste system. These communities were living side by side in the city with harmony; making a viable social composition until the conflicts began to arise in 1947 till independence.⁸

The city was newly established, but the area has a long history of cultural syncretism, which can be found from the names of some villages like Mangat (an earlier tribe of Jat)⁹ and Puran (a village to the north of Mandi Bahauddin on the road to Sarai-Alamgir along the lower Jhelum Canal and the last police Chowki of the District Mandi Baha-ud-Din in North). We can find references of this region in the ancient Hindu religious scripture as well.¹⁰ There are old villages in Mandi Baha-ud-Din, which names are considered derivatives of the Dravidians or Aryan languages. Similarly, tribes like Dittu Chur, Pandowal, Ledhar, Churand, etc. also carry hints. The struggle for survival by Aryans as well as the Dravidian tribes might have left these names at places expressing their presence.¹¹ These tribes roamed about the area settling down and harnessing the land for their subsistence. Denzil Ibbetson, the KCSI officer in India identified dozens of castes living in the Punjab with major castes as Gondal and Jats.¹²

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- 8 Sadar Thana Record, Mandi Baha-ud-Din shows that there were feuds and violation of law, but this was mostly street crimes or relating to rural areas where fights on water used to occur at times but the political uprisings began in the beginning of 1947 in the shape of processions, corner meetings, chanting slogans or even looting of minorities. Similarly, 'Birth Record Register' dating until July 1947 manifests that communities were tolerant and accomplish daily life tasks in harmony.
 - 9 B. S. Dahia, *Jat: The Ruling Tribes*, Urdu trans. Sahibzada Ghulam Rasul (Lahore: Abdullah Publications, 2022). He explains in his book about Jats, their origin and enlists hundreds of Jat tribes entering and settling in the subcontinent through ages.
 - 10 It is also a local tradition that Puran is named after a Sikh Raja Puran Singh. M. Arif Barlas, interview with the author, via messenger, July 8, 2021.
 - 11 MBDin News, "District MBDin: Villages and City List," Facebook, September 17, 2021, <http://m.facebook.com/groups/mbdinnews/permalink/4496297280437450/>.
 - 12 Denzil Charles Jeff Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes* (Lahore: Superintendent, Government Printers, Punjab, 1916), 113.

Williamsons states that in this area main castes were Jat and Gujjars.¹³ Local tradition is that Gondal are the descendants of Dravidians and the Aryans as there is a wide variety of complexion found among them. Therefore, it may be suggested that the presence of the Dravidian names of places as well as the racial variation manifests the amalgamation of races most probably through matrimonial bonds or by war. Ibbetson also viewed that these tribes are called Jat at some places and Gondal at other.¹⁴ Similarly, the cultural and religious traditions would have been amalgamated as a town now included in Mandi Baha-ud-Din bears the name Wasu,¹⁵ which is the name of Lord Krishna's father; Wasudeva. This might be one of the oldest residents in the region as the etymology of the word also reflects Sanskrit roots. In addition, there is an ancient Hindu temple which has been converted into school for boys. A group of an ancient cult had been living there long before partition who used to bury their dead in salt.¹⁶ In the north of the city, the famous war between Alexander of Macedonia and the Raja Poro was fought in Mong village at the bank of the Jhelum River. Famous archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein travelled across the whole area from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan and concluded that the topography stated by the Greek historian Ptolemy and Arrian suggest the area of the war which is now Mong. Alexander crossed the river to surprise Raja Poro and finally defeated the latter.¹⁷ He built a

13 Williamsons, *Punjab Gazetteer of Gujrat*, Vol. XXV-A, 41-50.

14 Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, 113, 115.

15 It is spelt with 'W' in documents with same spellings, so author used it as such. Same is the case with other names.

16 Hasan Akhtar, a resident of Wasu and son of the famous poet, Daim Iqbal, interview with the author, Mandi Baha-ud-Din, November, 2014.

17 Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356–323 B.C.: A Historical Biography* (University of California Press, 1991), ISBN9780520071667–via Google Books.

tower of victory and another in memory of his beloved horse Bucephalus.¹⁸

The evidences prior to the partition of the province of Punjab illustrates, therefore, the city of Mandi Baha-ud-din had composition of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities; Hindu and Sikh communities were in majority whereas the Muslims were in minority in the city.¹⁹ The outskirt villages were also populated by a mixed population of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims but Muslims were in majority.²⁰ The rural areas of the city extending to District Sargodha (earlier district Shahpur) is called Gondal Bar (bar meaning a space on the bank of the river), where Jat tribes of Gondal, Ranjha, Tarars, Chadhars, Sahi and Lak²¹ had been living for centuries, and speak mostly Lehnda or Shahpuri dialect. Majhi dialect is spoken from the east of the city, comprising from Gujrat to the city and its suburb whereas Lehnda dialect is spoken in its west to Sargodha and Shahpur²² (the language maps are given at the end of the article). Sikh community living in the city also spoke Punjabi and used Gurmukhi script for writing

18 Michael Wood, *In the Footstep of Alexander the Great*, 189-190. Wood travelled from Macedonia to Pakistan and through Makran desert back to Babylon. This documentary was also presented by BBC, London.

19 *Municipal Committee Birth Record Register* shows this fact. The entries in the registers from 1945 to August 17, 1947 exhibited Sikhs and Hindus in majority showing Hindu population was 9.7 percent in Tehsil Phalia in 1941 census. MBDin was then a part of Tehsil Phalia. Slide shared by Ijaz Shafi Gilani, Gallop Pakistan in a webinar, May 3, 2021.

20 "1947 Pakistan to India Journey! Pritam Singh Mahna Story Mandi Bahauddin to Delhi," (November 29, 2018). Punjabi Lehar Youtube channel. 24:30, accessed April 2020. He was a resident of Rukan, Mandi Bahauddin, who faced riots with his family and finally migrated to India under security of Gorkha Regiment.

21 "TMA History," Accessed on June, 2014, <http://mcmandibahauddin.lgpunjab.org.pk/>.

22 Muhammad Sajid Ghauri, philanthropist, educationist, expert of languages of the area. Interview with the author, Bhalwal, March 20, 2014; Wilson, *Gazetteer of Shahpur*, 89. Mr. Wilson states that there are two dialects in Shahpur; dialects of the plain spoken in Jhang and Mooltan and the dialect of Salt range, spoken in Shahpur and places related to the plateau of North Punjab; "Major Punjabi Dialects," Accessed on July 27, 2020, rangpunjabi.org.

as number of buildings belonging to them bear inscriptions in this script.²³ However, Urdu was the language used in educational institutions in the Punjab, particularly the Muslims opted for it,²⁴ and declared it as their national language.²⁵

During the British period, numerous families migrated in the city from nearby towns like old town of Bhera,²⁶ which was then losing its importance as a trading and commercial center. Hence, Khawaja families from town of Dhalwal in Chakwal migrated to this region at the time of independence.²⁷ These families were allotted houses and lands in the mohallas of the city to dwell it as a commercial center.²⁸ However, after the creation of Pakistan, the Hindu and Sikh population migrated to newly established state of India and the Muslims mostly from Eastern Punjab and Northern provinces poured in and settled in the evacuee property in the city. This process was though carried on to 1950s but the records of the Birth Register does not provide any information about settlers in this region from August 17 to October 16, 1947 and from October 17 entries are almost of the Muslims with few exceptions of Christians, who decided to stay in this region.²⁹ The Muslim migrants from India

23 The inscriptions in Gurdwaras and the monument in Chillianwala manifest this. Pictures taken by author are given in the end of this article.

24 Tariq Rahman, "Punjabi Language during British Rule," *JPS* 14, no.1, 34-36, Accessed June 17, 2021, https://punjab.global.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/sitefiles/journals/volume14/no1/14.1_Rahman.pdf.

25 Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad, "Naya Daur Conversation on Urdu as National Language of Pakistan," talk with Raza Rumi, June 26, 2021, YouTube channel (Accessed July 7, 2021).

26 Faiz Rasul Faizi, SST, Government Boys High School, interview with the author, Mandi Baha-ud-Din. His family had migrated to M B Din in late 1930s.

27 Many Khawaja families migrated from Dhalwal, the town of Chakwal.

28 Muhammad Bashir Warraich, District President All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association (APPSMA). Principal Al-Noor Public School System, Interview with the author, MBDin on April 12, 2020.

29 Town Committee Birth Record Register 1947-1950. They still live in harmony with the muhajirs in Ward no. 5, Kashmir Mohalla and behind Sadar Bazar streets.

who settled here found the city empty.³⁰ These migrants did not want to leave their places of abode and mostly obsessed for returning home, when situation becomes normal but it never happened in the subcontinent.³¹ The vacated property allotment procedures added to their misery, nevertheless they had to accept the reality of migration.³² These refugees have had formative impact on the development of both these post-colonial states as these were the people (non-elites), who experienced migration.³³ It was manifested by the changes in architecture of the earlier built houses and markets, as well as new social, economic and political relationships established in the city.

Social Composition of Mandi Baha-ud-Din 1947

Mandi Baha-ud-Din city population composition transformed completely after August 1947, as migrants from India got settled in the evacuee migrant property which was emptied after migration of Hindus and Sikhs to India. The migrants from India and from other nearby regions altered the social composition emerged in this region.³⁴ The migrants had lost

The oldest Catholic Church built before 1947 in Ward No. 5 and a Mosque are standing side by side busy in their respective clerics.

- 30 Mian Anwar Ali interview with the author on Ward 5, MBDin on February 5, 2014.
- 31 Joya Chatterji, "From Subjecthood to Citizenship: Migrants and the Making of Nationality in South Asia, 1947-55," 8, http://www.upf.edu/iuhjv/_pdf/Joya_Chatterji.pdf (Accessed on April 28, 2016). Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also acknowledged that at least half of the Muslims did not want to migrate to Pakistan. Nehru to Patel, October 6, 1947, in Durga Das (ed.) *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50*, (Navjivan Trust: Ahmedabad, 1972), Vol. 4, 400-401. Quoted in footnotes in Joya Chatterji, "Subjecthood to Citizenship", 8.
- 32 Joya Chatterji, 14-15. Muslim refugees were gathered in Delhi at Humayun's Tomb, Shahi Qala and Mosque etc. Most of them waiting for returning to their vacated homes and shops but feeling was there to accommodate the refugees coming from Pakistan.
- 33 Cabeiri Debergh Robinson, "Partition: Its Refugees, and Postcolonial State-Making in South Asia," *India Review* 9, no. 1 (January-March 2010), 68-86. DOI:10.1080/14736480903546600.
- 34 The migrants from Samana reached Layyah at first, from where they came to MBDin. The migrants from Dehradun first stayed at Lahore for few

almost all their belongings and had to struggle for survival. In such a scenario, caste played an important role. Qureshi families gathered in this region gradually and strengthened their family ties and helped one another in rehabilitation. Dewan families claimed for agricultural lands as they had left fruit farms in Thanesar. Most of them were educated and remained fortunate having recovered a large part of their property here and established in a brief time.³⁵ Sayyid families from Samana were also educated and had some relatives in Gujrat before partition, therefore, most of them settled easily, got jobs or initiated their businesses in the grain market, Bano Bazar and Sadar Bazar. A large number of Ghauri clan accompanied Sayyids as they both lived together in Samana. Despite having different beliefs, their cultural syncretism has been exemplary which further enhanced in this area. In addition to local Gujjar and Jat, several families came from Bhatinda, Amritsar, Malir Kotla, Ambala, Nabha, Basi, Chachroli (East Punjab).³⁶

A large Arain baradari from Basi Afghanan, Basi Pathanan and Samana along with other families or individuals belonging to various areas like Dehradun, Missouri (UP), Delhi, Karnal, Rohtak etc. Prominent among them were Sayyid and Ghauris from Samana, Khawajas from Ambala, Mian Arain from Basi Afghanan, Basi Pathanan, Samana and Malir Kotla, Qureshi and Sheikh from Dehradun, Rohtak and Sadhora, and Jat and Gujjar from East Pakistan;

months and then on informing some other relative came here and finally got allotment of houses and shop. Only four families were here when first immigrants entered the city after several months of Partition via Walton (Lahore) to Gujrat, Wazirabad route on carts or on foot. They found a Hindu and a Sikh family and two Muslim families in the city, the remaining city was like haunted empty houses. Interview with Mian Anwar Alig, February 6, 2014, Rana Naseem Khan, February 21, 2014, and Malik Rafique, 25 April 2014.

³⁵ Zaheer Ahmad Tabani, a journalist, poet and a property dealer, Thandi Gali Market, Mandi Bahauddin, March 17, 2020.

³⁶ Professor (retd.) Niaz Gujjar migrated from East Punjab; some Ghauris from Bathinda and Chintawali in East Punjab.

gathered in this region, retaining their ethnocentrism, cultural traits, political ideologies creating a latent city structure.³⁷ A large number of Bihari migrants settled in the city after separation of East Pakistan in 1971. Afghan refugees and Pathans of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province added to this cultural combination after 1979. The Biharis stayed at a colony, which was constructed partially for them on the empty space between the city Railway Station and the Mohalla Sufipura. These wretched people remained helpless for a long time living in camps (jhuggis), and mud houses there. They worked hard, did menial works, served as servants even in shops or houses in the city. Their women also rendered their share in all these laborious works even they sold vegetables and fruits or other daily articles on temporary stalls. Majority of them, however, assimilated in the mainstream or moved to Karachi in 1980s,³⁸ after the formation of Muhajir Qaumi Movement (later MuttahidaQaumi Movement) in Sindh. Unlike the Biharis, the Afghans and the Pathans were fortunate as they acquired land and houses for their residences within the city as well as in its outskirts. They did labour but many of them soon became shopkeepers in the main market. However, they were not liked by the earlier businessmen who remained suspicious of them and their speedy progress. On the other hand, the tribal pride and Asbiyyah of these Afghans and Pathans also prohibited them to mingle in the society.

People who migrated after 1947, confined mostly within the walled city, and adjacent mohallas—Munshi Mohalla, Gurrah Mohalla, Islampura, School Mohalla and nearby town of

37 These migrants were among the total of 2% who migrated from UP to Punjab, the rest of 71.2% were those who migrated from East Punjab to West Punjab. The ratio of migrants from UP was high in MBDin city after Sindh where it was 27%. Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1994), 103-106.

38 Ambreen Tahira, Assistant Professor of Urdu, Government Post Graduate College for Women, MBDin. Her family has been residing in Kashmir Colony adjacent to the Bihari Colony which is now renamed as Faisal Colony.

Wasu and Qila Gujran. Increase in population caused outwards expansion of these areas, occupying surrounding agricultural lands. Expanding families needed housing and more place for economic activity; for fulfillment of basic needs and auxiliary services, therefore, they directed towards the slums and then to the agricultural areas. Initially, the city expanded vertically but later horizontal expansion occurred overlapping villages at circumference. The land holders and farmers, too, preferred selling their lands to the businessmen of the city on their own terms, raising the price of land which decreased agricultural land.³⁹ This interaction brought different communities together by observing the cultural traits of one another, participating in traditional festivities and adopting these partially.

The struggle of migrated families as well as the local population to converse with the changing realities of 1947 gave rise to a new society with multi-dimensional socio-economic variants. It became possible because the migrants opted to search their relatives or acquaintance and tried to gather their biradaris at one place. This phenomenon provided them social cohesion and strength in the struggle of rehabilitation.⁴⁰ To set aside the grief and miseries of migration,⁴¹ they adopted new social relationships and

39 The development and expansion of the city has been taking place in a pattern that appears like the Burgess Model plan of cities. Michael Pacione, "Model of Urban Land Use Structure in Cities of the Developed World," *Geography* 86, no. 02 (April 2001): 99, http://jstor.org/stable/40573537?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference&reference_tab_contents (Accessed March 26, 2021); Mike Jenks and Rod Burgess, *Compact Cities: Sustainable Urban forms for Developing Countries* (London: Spon Press, 2000).

40 Muhammad Ibrahim, "Role of Biradaris in Power Politics of Lahore: Post-independence Period," PhD Diss., BZU, Multan, 2009, iii. Baradariis primarily a colonial product and the post-colonial state continued to use this system, particularly the dictatorial regimes, who protected, projected and entrenched the baradaris in this system of power.

41 A number of writers have penned down the miserable stories and events of this largest ever migration and slaughter in history. Ishtiaq Ahmad, Khushwant Singh, Ian Talbot, Yasmin Khan and Wazira Fazila and Gyanendra Panday are among them. These stories have also been

adopted the business as shopkeepers, merchants and/or that of a middlemen fetching agricultural produce from the fields, and articles of need and luxury for both urban and rural consumers. They traveled frequently and extensively to the markets of the big cities and established a busy market full of buyers and consumers, talkative salesmen and businessmen keeping eyes on the interests, needs and capacity of the customers. Consequently, the civilized and skillful maneuvering of the seller has been attracting the buyer consistently making the city as the lucrative place for expanding businesses.

Cultural Syncretism after Partition

Cultural syncretism in the city witnessed multi-layered development. Initially, the interaction among migrant families for security, integration, preserving socio-political identity created a new pattern of tapestry of culture and society. This process combined the traits of migrants from different areas of undivided India, particularly owing to the fact that "the concentration of the Muslims was very urban in north-central and north-south axis and highly rural in the eastern and western peripheries of India."⁴² The migrants from North India carried the *Ganga-Jamna*⁴³ Civilization with them, their manners in daily life, culinary styles, dressing, customs and traditions, language and dialects had characteristics of flourishing civilization for centuries were striking for the indigenous local people. Yet, the clustering of Eastern and Western Punjab, United Province, Central Province and even a few from Bengal and Bihar and those of the local

dramatized by the electronic and film media of both the countries. The print media has also reported the events as *Times* reported on September 4, 1947 of a 20 miles long refugee line comprising about 200,000 people trying to enter Pakistan from Qasur Border. Khalid B. Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase* (Karachi: OUP, 1978). 263.

42 Baleshwa Thakur, *George Pomeroy, Chris Cusack & Sudher K. Thakur, "City, Society and Planning: City, Vol, 1* (Delhi: Ashok Kumar Mittal Concept Publishing Co., 2007), xxvii, 219-32.

43 The migrants call their culture by this name.

population at this rendezvous manifested somewhat syncretic pattern in the city not earlier than the last decades of the 20th Century. It may be attributed to the city composite properties of intermixing, mingling, trading, propelling cultural activities, politicizing for safeguarding rights and struggling to establish and develop.

Economic Development and Syncretism

The migrants' ardent desire of returning or seeing their birthplace faded soon, and they accepted this *Hijrat* as Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him),⁴⁴ and embarked on efforts to rehabilitate themselves. Their struggle exhibited the obsessions to retain their earlier urban characteristics while relating life to the new set of social and economic infrastructure. They established relationship with the people and elites of rural areas and kept these intact as these were the basis of the trade and commerce activities and the survival of the city. It owed to the mode of production built by the British Government accruing agricultural produce from rural areas to the grain market in the city from where it was taken to other markets through railways. Sayyid, Dewan, Qureshi and Arain families who were allotted agricultural lands in the neighbouring villages adopted cultivating, farming as their means of earning. They established good relationship with the rural landed elites as well,⁴⁵ as the continuous flow of agricultural produce from the rural areas to the city was essentially lifeline of the city trade and subsistence of the new settlers, too. Consequently, it was an imperative for them to cooperate in financial matters. This

44 The interviews with the migrant elders disclosed their passion and love for their birth places. A YouTube channel, Punjabi Lehar has been conducting a number of interviews with Punjabi migrants of Punjab on both sides of border, which expresses same desires still flaming in them.

45 Interview with Zaheer Ahmad Tabani. The provision of labour and turn for water to irrigate the fields is not possible until the owners or farmers of the neighbouring fields have good relationship or those who are powerful may monopolize the turn. The migrants were not in such position to fight or use power so they opted for cooperation and tried to settle issues according to a system.

phenomenon helped the migrants and the local population in building harmony on economic level by establishing friendship and maintaining it at challenging times. It also led amalgamation of cultural traditions, need to communicate led to adaptation in language and dialects. It has been a very significant phenomenon as the groups of migrants had their own significant dialects of Urdu or Punjabi and the locals spoke their own Majhi or Shahpuri Punjabi dialectics.

The pride of being Urdu speaking could not bar the migrants to be receptive of these adaptations as it was also essential for their profession. However, this change is more prominent among the men who used to deal in businesses and had to interact with the customers at their shops. Females at home are not adequately adept in learning Punjabi other than their own dialect as they are less exposed to the activities outside home. They are stricter even at public places in following their family or cultural traditions like at schools, colleges or other institutions. This attitude is reinforced by the fact that Urdu is preferably spoken in public schools and English Language in private schools. Therefore, boys who have broad exposure to the world after school/college as well are more congenial and amalgamated. It is also considered essential for them as mostly they have to administer their business, their shops after school/college. On the other hand, the local populace observed for long the setting in the new trends in the city; maintaining the cultural alienation and distance initially, however, the economic ties had to be established as the relation of production requires the flow of agricultural produce to the city markets for consumption there and to fetch to other cities. Building economic and commercial ties and exchange of agricultural produce and its return was imperative for both the rural as well as the urban communities.

Majority of the migrants adopted the shopkeeping business utilizing the presence of empty shops and grain market. The peasants and villagers had to come to the city for annual shopping, seeds, fertilizers and related items as the nearest market in reach was situated in the city. Consequently,

manifold process of economic and social activities had begun that was an imperative for co-existence. The professional affinities and transactions often took place based on confidence building and reliability between the trading parties which was extended gradually to the families and communities. The customers-shopkeeper relationship was nevertheless stronger and was maintained.⁴⁶

The new shopkeeper in the city also innovated to fill his shop with the essential and latest articles by travelling routinely to Lahore, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Gujranwala and even NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Karachi in Sindh. They turned the market into a thriving place, where needs and luxuries were available, attractive for the customers from city and villages alike. These shops were like hives for the villagers particularly at the time of harvesting when they have enough to spend not only to fulfil their needs, but the marriages or other ceremonies also held at this time. Therefore, farmer turns towards the city for shopping. Moreover, the persons abroad send remittances to their families, the purchasing pressure increases in the city. Customers are not just a customer but a guest, enjoying the hospitality of the shopkeeper as well. Family, connections are built and if the customer stays in the city, they are warmly welcomed in the houses of some friend shopkeeper/businessmen. Generous hospitality and exchange of gifts take place which paves the way towards understanding of cultural traits and sometimes adopting of these.

Political Process in Syncretism

A smooth and continuous political process participated by the groups or communities in a specific culture and place is a conducive actor for creating harmony which in turn helps in

46 The shopkeepers in the city favourite customers have been from the villages, particularly at the time of harvesting or those whose family members are abroad and receive foreign remittance. Frequent discussions held with shopkeepers dealing in cloths, general items, luxurious items, large shopping centres and seed proprietors.

spreading understanding and cohesion among the communities, in this case migrants and locals. Both have almost common political background before independence by actively taking part in freedom movement. However, the political elites in Mandi Baha-ud-Din were the landlords who belonged to the rural areas with their large land holdings, whereas the political activists among the migrants mostly belonged to the middle class of their respective region.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this experience proved beneficial for them in understanding the political and social relations they were now in. The heads of the migrant biradaris were mostly educated and influential persons at their places in India. They also led their people here and began to steer the socio-political drive of the city. Similarly, the Chaudhris or influential families from the local biradaris or clans had been participating in the political process before the partition. Therefore, a local and an urban political elite emerged, which needed more sound relationships and understanding of the cultural fabrics of the existing society. This cooperation and coordination in politics may extend to sociocultural spheres blending customs and traditions as well as retaining originality for some others. Contrarily, if resistance and obduracy exist among the participating communities or groups, deviance may be more apparent.

Cultural Syncretism

Language

The vernacular language of the migrants from North Indian region was mostly Urdu, however, every region had its own dialect. Migrants from Samana spoke *Samana Shahi*

47 Chaudhry Jahan Khan of Bosal and Chaudhry Ghulam Rasul, MLA led the processions and meetings during the freedom movement in Mandi Baha-ud-Din. While Rana Muhammad Naseem was targeted by the Hindu rioters as he was an active member of All India Muslim League in Bathinda. Dr. Muqbil Rizvi and Shakoor Ghauri migrated wearing veil from Samana as they were also target owing to the same reason. Interviews with Rana Naseem Khan on February 21, 2014 and Ali Muhammad Ghauri on January 23, 2019.

Urdu, Dehradunian's dialect was slightly different, Sadhora and Rohtaki dialects still have words like old Hindvi, which were used by Amir Khusrau in his Hindvi poetry.⁴⁸ However, the ones who were more educated and were part of the Pakistan Movement were sensitive and mostly prefer to speak Urdu.⁴⁹ These communities are consistent in their dialects but the male members have learnt Punjabi dialects for their commercial and social needs. Their female family members at home took long to familiarize and learn the local dialects. The migrants from Eastern Punjab speak Punjabi dialects of their respective area. Similarly, Majhi and Shahpuri Punjabi are the local dialects spoken in rural areas as has been discussed earlier too.⁵⁰ However, the Punjabi speaking people who are more than 80 percent in the area also prefer speaking Urdu while interacting in offices, institutions or at social places where gathering comprises both migrants and the locals. Moreover, the State's emphasis on Urdu as preferred language in education system and as a national language caused to undermine the status of regional languages.⁵¹ This State policy created distinction between both communities and barred a productive assimilation of languages. The migrants are though less in number as is obvious from the table 1 below. The rise in population in the city was low until the end of 1980s and became double in 1998 census and the migrants

48 Moazzam Siddiqui, (September 23, 2020), Webinar held by Indian Diaspora Washington DC Metro: Khusrau Rayn Suhaagkii. Amir Khusrau used the words dur dur Muay (دردر موئے) get away bad man and دوارے door or to be present before someone, moga (موگا) means hole, are still used by these migrants.

49 Mian, Dewan, Qureshi and Sayyid families prefer to speak Urdu while in gathering or at institutions, though they use their own particular dialect at home.

50 Niaz Muhammad Gujjar, Assistant Professor (retd.) migrated from East Punjab, now lives in city outskirts Qila Gujran, speak east Punjab dialect, while Imtiaz Ahmad Gondal, Assistant Professor (Chemistry's) dialect is Majhi.

51 Mubarak Ali, *Barr-e-Saghir mai Musalman Muashray ka Almiyah* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1993).

were concentrated there whereas rural population was already in majority, and it increased with a higher ratio. Dr. Mubarak Ali opines that the Muslims who belonged to ruling elite or the upper class in Sultanate or Mughal period in India kept segregation from those of lower classes whether Hindu or Muslims.⁵² This attitude persisted even after the establishment of Colonial Raj and the same behaviour was carried on after creation of Pakistan. The migrants felt pride of being a part of the Pakistan Movement and bearer of Urdu language which was now proclaimed as the national language. This phenomenon led to a slow pace of syncretism and assimilation in the society, particularly in the city where the families of the migrants settled and flourished into baradaris in terms of blood as well as caste relations.

Table 1⁵³: CENSUS RECORDS MBDIN (URBAN AND RURAL) 1951–1998

Administrative Unit	Area in Sq. Km	1951	1961	1972	1981	1998
Mandi Bahauddin Tehsil	759	158,851	190,981	286,173	338,983	478,946
Rural		141,680	168,686	250,001	294,187	365,444
Urban		17,171	22,295	36,172	44,796	113,502
Mandi Bahauddin MC		17,171	22,295	36,172	44,796	99,496

52 Ali, *Barr-e-Saghir mai Musalman Muashray ka Almiyah*, 48-55.

53 Muhammad Riaz, Deputy Census Commissioner, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). September 18, 2018, (via email.) These figures were also cross checked by Survey of Pakistan. The population of the MBDin Municipal Committee increased at pace with a ratio of 3.7 and reached the figure of 198,609, according to the census of 2017, whereas the total urban population rose to 217,207 with a ratio of 3.5. & Muhammad Sarfaraz. Chief Statistical Officer. Data Dissemination & Support Services, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Islamabad. November 9, 2020.

Marriage Relationship, Ceremonies, Culinary Arts and Sports

Matrimonial relationships generally prove an effective way for cultural syncretism, but in this region kinship relations were preferred for marriages until population rise at pace and equitable standards became difficult to maintain. Even then, the migrants sought relationships within their families or castes because of the cultural differences with local population.⁵⁴ It may be due to the fact that the early generation entered the city was insecure and exhausted due to upheavals of migration. Therefore, they made efforts at first for rehabilitation socially and economically. They focused to their existing families and tried to be more cohesive from within. The heads of the families, the youth or those who born just after the creation of Pakistan gradually secured prosperity. Furthermore, city's expanded circumference increased the number of members of baradaris in this region. The rural migration into the city was also increasing essentially for the better facilities whatsoever these were but far better than the village, particularly viewing the persisting of feudalism in Pakistan. The landed elites had not manifested their interest practically in socioeconomic change of the people living on their jagirs or areas of influence.⁵⁵ However, economic interaction in the city brought many changes in customs of marriages, birth or even death in the villages like marriage ceremonies of Maayun, Mehndi, Ubtan blended with local customs. In addition, the villagers come to the city to fulfil the requirements of these functions, purchasing clothes and luxuries relating these customs or dowries for bride and bridegroom creating another economic activity which again

54 The migrants faced discrimination while interacting socially. The migrants regretted that their customs and habits were mocked by their local fellows at institutions as well as at social gatherings, even they were called with contempt by the elders of the local counterparts. Shahnaz Akhtar, frequent discussions were held with her.

55 Mubarik Ali, "Jagirdari aur Jagirdarana Culture", Chapter 6, *Jagirdar and Bartanvi Raj*, (Lahore: Mashal, 1996), 104-135.

strengthened the prospects of cultural harmony. Nevertheless, the inter-marriage between both communities is still rare.

Khawaja families migrated from Ambala and adopted the goldsmith's business in Ambala Market, (the name of the market was given by them). They soon became established and used to express this in their family functions in a most festive way. A marriage ceremony in their families lasts for days, each day with a different function. The barat—the procession of the groom is the culmination point, which is accompanied with a band, decorated cars, even limousine is used for carrying newly-married couple which then takes rounds of the city.⁵⁶ A decorated baghi (charriot) is also used sometimes to follow old tradition.⁵⁷ The rural traditions of simplicity blended with East Punjab and North Indian customs and traditions and practiced by both in various intensities.

The culinary art of the migrants was manifested in an amazing manner. They used to cook strange foods according to the local inhabitants.⁵⁸ The innumerable methods of cooking vegetables, grains, rice and meat with rich spicy flavours are unusual for the simple life pattern of village life. Baking and dining got a significant place in commercial life of the city. Various migrant families became associated with their own taste and dishes and opened small corner hotels for the shopkeepers in the market and customers providing delicious food on cheaper rates.⁵⁹

56 Khawaja Shamim, owner of Yaseen Plaza started this tradition in 1960s on his son's marriage and this biradari still practice this.

57 Mirza Nazir, a dealer of grain market, took his engineer son's marriage procession on chariot with musical bands and throwing away currency notes all the way.

58 Sumera Liaquat Mirza, a class fellow of the researcher declared arvi k pakoray کے پکڑے اورو, besan ki khandviyan بسنکی پیاس strange foods.

59 Mehryahotel started by migrants from Nabha; Khan hotel by Sherwani pathans and Taja hotel by Rana family of Kot Addu.

Pakorras and Samosas with special plum, tamarind and apricot sauces are any time favourite snacks. Food Streets begin to open at sunset outside the Committee Market, surrounding the Committee and the nearby DHQ Hospital building, extending to the main city to Cheema Chowk. In this area, life looks cherishing in the evening with spicy smoky aroma of kababs, roasts, tikkas, fried meat (chicken, beef, mutton and fish available according to affordability), and also sweets to accomplish the feast like kheer or qulfi etc. In addition, the traditional food of the villages has also been adopted by them. The delicious and popular dishes are cooked in large gatherings or marriage festivities and are enjoyed by the people at villages or in the city. The expatriates who belong to the villages often indulge in the business of constructing huge marriage halls in the suburb of the city or in the villages. These gorgeous buildings express the mixing of local as well as modern architectural characteristics. The food items served here are also a mixture of local traditional and the continental. However, the youth from villages often visit the city Food Street in the evenings for the satisfaction of zest.

The migrated people were equally interested in games; particularly outdoor sports until the end of 1990s. Regular sports held in the city as well as between the rural and urban youth. The city was the center of various games, particularly football, kabaddi, cricket, hockey and judo karate. There were five grounds in the urban space of the city—Cinema Ground, Gurah Ground, City Ground, Quaid-i-Azam Ground and Railway Ground.⁶⁰ Football and cricket were the most

60 These grounds have been converted now into other functional places like Thana Ground was the property of first Girls College in the city and its administration finally took over its possession and have built Girls Hostel for their students. *Gurha* Ground has become a full fledged Football Stadium, though it is used for Hockey and Cricket games too. City Ground witnessed numerous intra-city and inter-city tournaments, has been converted into a beautiful and well-managed Mian Waheed udDin Park to save it from land mafia. Quaid-i-Azam Ground is mini-stadium now whereas the Railway Ground has become deserted due to its use of as dumping place.

favourite and every mohalla had its own team. Many clubs of these games⁶¹ were always busy in playing some tournaments with appreciation of the citizens who participated watching and encouraging the games and players' performance. Many of these clubs were patronized by some wealthy person having interest in games, who also arranged financial support for their clubs, or give away prizes in cash to the individual players and their teams to encourage them and promote games. Sheikh Muhammad Dawood (late) remained patron of Municipal Committee Football Club for a long time. He himself was also a good player of football but did not opt for it as a profession being a member of a rising well off and politically active Sheikh family, while Haroon Yousuf of Ghauri clan continued playing and made his place in the national football team as a captain. Tariq Qureshi played badminton at national level and the city also gave famous cricketers, Amir Malik and Hasan Ali to the national team. However, the outdoor games on club level became limited owing to the grounds occupied by land mafias, and indoor games like badminton are played mostly.⁶² The spacious footpaths were also utilized by the young children as their grounds for playing many outdoor childhood games, however, the havoc of increased traffic as well as converting houses drawing rooms into shops have halted this healthy activity at mohalla/street level.

Games are not confined to the city. Kabaddi and volleyball are the favourite games in the villages. Young guys spend their free time in playing these games in empty grounds outside fields. They may be observed often while passing through the rural areas. These guys are the best players in school/college teams in the city whereas the urban youth is

61 There was famous Cricket Club of Morning Eleven, Super Asia, Tohid Eleven, Green Star, Paradise Cricket, Shining Star, Wasu Cricket Club and Saifi Eleven. Interesting matches in different tournaments were enjoyed by the crowd in these grounds.

62 The sportsmen, youth, doctors, officers go to the sports complex to play badminton in Quaid-i-Azam Ground. They arrange tournaments with teams of adjacent towns and cities on personal level.

more interested in the games mentioned above. However, both rural and urban teams often hold tournaments of various games in the city grounds and stadiums as well as in the villages wherever the space is available there (in the villages). Youth from the rural areas as well as the city positively participates in these events. Prizes and trophies are given away by the patrons who is/are often some wealthy persons of the area or by collection of fees as participation requirement by the players and teams.⁶³ This spirit of games plays a significant role in decreasing the cultural gap between the youth, however, the exacerbating intolerance in the society owing to the sectarianism and lack of a genuine political process has been causing this process to proceed at much slower pace.

Conclusion

Modern anthropologists opine that if one goes back long enough (about 200,000 years) human beings were all descended from a common set of ancestors in Africa. Migration, climate change, search for food and break up of land mass separated people, generating evolutionary paths and considerably different customs, folkways and languages. History tells that there has been rarely any place in the world which has not witnessed group/s or cultures seeking for better conditions of life. Similarly, forces of assimilation and syncretism are always functional in a society these may be productive if this process carries on positively by adopting the cultural traits of the communities at a given place and time. It may be destructive or deteriorating if there is resistance and intolerance towards others lifestyle. This process may be accelerated or decelerated in the presence of conducive or impeding internal and external forces. The Indian subcontinent has been witnessing the arrival of numerous races, who lived here, fought one

63 Sheikh Mubashir Amin, a badminton player who won frequently local and district badminton championships could not find place in the national level. He plays in the city and trains the youth and those who are interested in the game, interview with the author, August 25, 2018 in Mandi Baha-ud-Din.

another, mingled and assimilated culturally and religiously. However, ruling class or the conquerors had a discriminating policy towards the conquered. The Aryans destined the Dravidians as Sudras, the Turks also maintained a racial pride. The setting in of British Raj was a culmination point of this process, however, the process of cultural and religious syncretism carried on at the common man level. They were more syncretic in their culture and religion.

Common man in society was enriched by assimilation of cultural and religious traditions of various people arriving and settling in different areas. However, the period after independence slowed down the process, though in Pakistan the Muslims were in majority as Hindus and Sikhs migrated to newly established state of India, leaving a nominal minority in Pakistan. They are even in dozens at some places like in Mandi Baha-ud-Din. The main communities became locals and migrants (both Muslims) but with different sets of ideas, values and cultural traditions. The Migrants mostly carried the civic culture whereas the locals had rural background clearly divided into landed elites and their tenants. These facts made the assimilation process much slower and even after seven decades of independence, except a few both communities retain their cultural traits as before. There is a wide chasm between local and migrant communities despite some cultural activities and economic bond which brings both together at times, however, the major hindrance is political segregation on the basis of political instability and joining hands of the rural political elites with the dictatorial regimes. The same elites are the representatives of the political parties. The financial stability based on landholdings is the fact that endows the local elites a hegemonic role in the political arena leaving the migrant population on the backfoot in the city. This political process increasing the identity differences into biases rather than to minimize and to create a cohesive nature of society. Further, religious extremism in Pakistan has also been creating the feeling of segregation not only among different sects in the city as well but also rural and urban divide is getting stronger.

It is vital that the state must play its role through education and conducive policies that may help to reduce the differences in the society. The use of modern technological apparatus, expansion of internet and social media is influencing the youth, who at several times set asides the traditional conventional rules of their families and move ahead with more congenial and flexible behaviour that may lead to a positive cultural syncretism in all spheres of life.

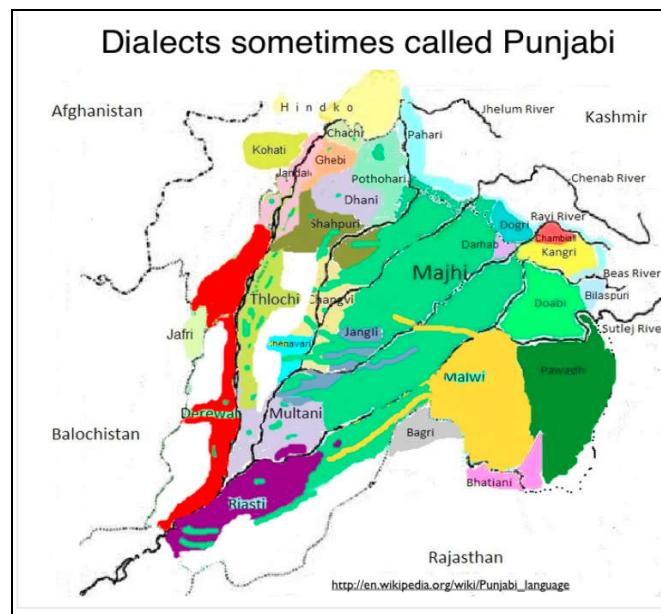


Figure 1. Punjabi Dialects spoken in different areas of both Punjab

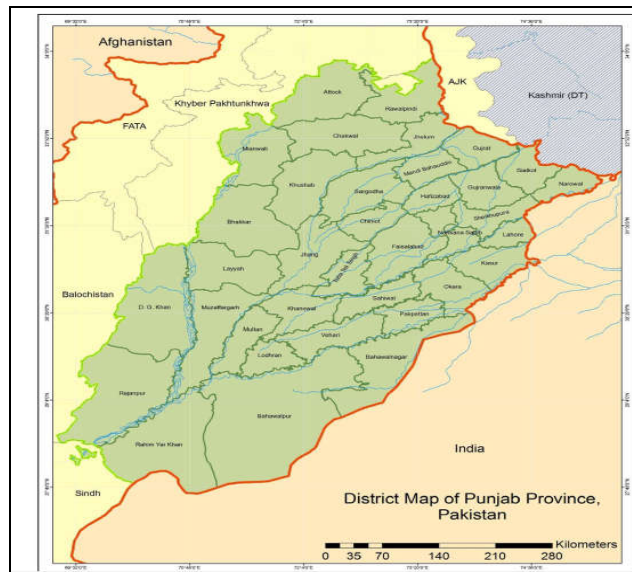


Figure 2. Districts in Pakistani Punjab; district MBDin was established in 1993. Maps District MBDin was restructured by taking parts of Shahpur and Gujrat District keeping the British constructed city of MBDin as center. It has border with Districts of Jhelum, Gujrat and Sargodha. Map taken from: https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/import/downloads/pk_bpsd_pakistan_province_maps.pdf.



Figure 3. Inscription in Gurmukhi on a wall of Gurdwara Bhai Banna, Mangat, Mandi Baha-ud-Din, pictures taken by the author on March 18, 2014.