



## **Christian Missionaries and Development of Women's Higher Education in the British Punjab**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> British Punjab, Women, Higher Education, Christian Missionaries, Kinnaird College,</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> <b>Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat</b>, Assistant Professor, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan Email: <a href="mailto:mdilshad@gcuf.edu.pk">mdilshad@gcuf.edu.pk</a></p> <p><b>Article History:</b> Published on 13-09- 2025</p>	<p>Initiation of women's higher education in the British Punjab is closely linked with the efforts of Christian missionary societies. They were the pioneers in the field of female higher education in the province and they started their efforts to establish institutions to achieve their objectives. The foundation of Kinnaird College was a landmark in their educational enterprise and it played an important role in fostering higher education for women in this region. Following the historical method, based on the analysis of different educational reports, Missionaries' biographies and autobiographies, reports of missionary conferences and other primary and secondary sources, this paper examines the role of Christian missionaries in developing and promoting higher education amongst the female population of the Punjab. It discusses how different missionaries' societies made Kinnaird College their Union institution and initiated their collective efforts to achieve their desired goals. The paper tries to explore the missionaries' efforts to improve the quality of education at their institution. It also focusses to bring forth the socio-academic impact of this pioneer missionary college on the female population of the province of the Punjab.</p>

- It is clarified that the paper has been extracted from the Ph.D dissertation of the author.

### **Introduction**

At the dawn of the twentieth century, female collegiate education was non-existent in the Punjab. The introduction of higher education for women in this region was closely linked to the work of Christian missionaries. It was a time when fostering of higher education among the women of the

Punjab was a gigantic challenge for the promoters of higher education. In spite of the encouraging situation of women's school education in the province,<sup>1</sup> the higher education was totally non-existent and not a single women's college was found in the province by the end of the nineteenth century. The prejudice against the college education of the girls was greater than that at school level and the questions were raised about the women's intellectual capacity to do work and their relevance of college experience.<sup>2</sup> The native reformers had the strong belief that the women were physically, mentally and spiritually inferior to their male counter parts and therefore majority of the women were deprived of higher education. Even the pioneer Muslim Educationist, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, believed that women's education should not precede men's education. He thought that it would be the men's education which would pave the way for women's education.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary the missionaries stressed the intellectual equality of women and were of the opinion that men and women should be taught the same scheme of studies. In fact the debate among the social reformers, the provincial government and the Christian Missionaries, on the aforesaid questions, hampered institutional development for women's higher education in the Punjab.<sup>4</sup> But with the turn of the century, the argument of the debate was shifted from the basic question 'whether the girls should be educated or not' to 'how far women's education should go'.<sup>5</sup> Christian Missions, known as institution builders, decided to start higher education for Punjabi women. Missionary societies such as the American Presbyterian Mission, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission made significant contributions in this regard.

This paper focusses on exploring and bringing forward the missionaries' efforts for the initiation of the higher education of women in the British Punjab. It tries to answer the questions such as what were the efforts launched by the missionaries to start women's higher education in the province? How different missionary organizations united to found Kinnaird College as their Union Institution? How Kinnaird College played a vital role in promoting the higher education among the female population of the Punjab? It also tries to explore the social and academic impact of the college.

### **Development of Women's Higher Education**

Assessing the academic field of the Province, the missionaries initiated their educational enterprise by adopting the system of co-education and also that of setting up separate girls colleges for the girls.

#### **1- Co-Education**

The social setting of the province made the missionaries' mind to select Lahore as the centre of their higher education activities. Lahore was the provincial capital of the Punjab and thus was recognized as the cultural centre of new English-educated Punjabi elite groups. As, men of these groups secured appointments in government service by attending the English- language

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, Rizwan Ullah Kokab, and Muhammad Hassan, "Christian Missionaries' Contribution towards Women Education In the Colonial Punjab (1849-1882)", *Elementary Education Online*, 2020; Vol. 19, (Issue 3), p. 3892.

<sup>2</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, Abid Hussain and Najeeb Ur Rehman, "Winning Punjabi Women through Education: A Study of Christian Missionaries' Activities (1849-1900)", Vol. 5, No. 1, (2021), 168.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>5</sup> David Moles, 'Memsahibs, Goddesses and Whores: Debates over Women's Education in Late Nineteenth-Century India (February, 2000): 7.

<http://www.chrononaut.org/~dm/papers/education.pdf>

educational institutions, providing the prerequisite for the government employment.<sup>6</sup> The missionaries highlighted the utilitarian aspect of the education and set professional ideals to attract the female students to their institutions. They challenged the existing social values of the society, directly and indirectly and started higher education for women in the historic city of Lahore.

The missionaries initiated their efforts to foster women's collegiate education in Lahore. Finding themselves lacking in resources to establish separate colleges for women, they decided for the first time to adopt the policy of co-education. This was a difficult area to work as the society was not liberal enough to accept this mode of education for their girls. Even at school level, co-education was not acceptable to the native community. The girls attending boys' schools were considered to have little protection and were brought up in an atmosphere not conducive to the development of qualities of gentleness, reserve, and the quiet behavior which was inherent in the Indian ideal of womanhood.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the inspectresses reported that the feelings of the people in their circles were against this mode of studies.<sup>8</sup> But the missionaries took the first practical step in this direction, in 1902-03, by admitting two female students in the Forman Christian College, Lahore.<sup>9</sup> The F.C. College remained the only institution to provide higher education facilities to the women of this region, till the foundation of Kinnaird College, the first women's College in the Punjab. Although the performance of the college, in the early years, was below satisfactory due to the prevailing social intolerance towards co-education yet the missionaries, slowly but steadily, became successful in promoting this mode of instruction in the province. As, by the start of 1930s, many girls were found studying in boys' colleges and a distinct inclination towards co-education at the collegiate stage was observed<sup>10</sup>

## 2- Separate Girls' Colleges

The experience of co-education did not prove to be successful in the conservative society of the Punjab. The people were already not in favour of girls' education especially that of higher education, and the system of co-education at higher level was extremely unacceptable for them. Consequently the missionaries' efforts for the initiation of higher education of women, through co-education, bore little fruits. So they decided to try separate college for women and the foundation of Kinnaird College was the ultimate result of the decision.

### 2.1- Foundation of Kinnaird College

The Kinnaird college was started in and around Kinnaird Girls High School but, sensing the need for more room to grow, was moved to Lake Road in 1926.<sup>11</sup> The college administration acquired twenty acres of land near Lahore's canal, in 1933, and new buildings were constructed to accommodate the streaming numbers of girls studying at the college. The college was shifted to the new building in 1938 and this twenty-acre campus was humming with activity by 1939.<sup>12</sup>

The College provided the real base for the girls' higher education in the province. This premier women's educational institution was founded in 1913 by the Zenana Bible and Medical

<sup>6</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 58.

<sup>7</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the year 1930-31* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1932), 70.

<sup>8</sup> *Progress of Education in India*, 1902-1907, I, 260.

<sup>9</sup> S.K. Datta, *History of the Forman Christian College*, selection from the records of the College 1869-1936, 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the year 1930-31*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> Official website of Kinnaird College, <http://www.kinnaird.edu.pk/about-kinnaird-college>, accessed on 28-10-09 at 03-05 pm.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Mission, a British Mission devoted to the work for South Asian women.<sup>13</sup> The management of the college was, initially, interested in increasing the professional qualifications of the native Christian women but the missionary staff of the college had to address the long debating issues like the competence of the women for collegiate education and the relevance of college experience for women.<sup>14</sup> So, in the beginning the first Intermediate class, comprising six students, was started at Kinnaird Girls High School with Miss Joan McDonald as Principal of the college. The girls who desired to study beyond intermediate were obliged to study privately for degree examinations or to attend some boys' college.<sup>15</sup> Afterwards, the college was granted affiliation up to the B.A. classes, in 1916, on the condition that the collegiate classes were held quite separately from the school.<sup>16</sup> So after the compliance of the condition, the B.A classes were commenced in 1917, by admitting five students in the third year class.<sup>17</sup>

Kinnaird College was one of the major missionaries' institutions of the province and it brought about major changes in the lifestyle of its students and ultimately in the social structure of the society. This unique missionary institution performed a very critical role in reforming the conservative Punjabi society as well as in promoting higher education among the women of the province. The missionaries, through this institution, were able to break the shackles of social customs and norms which, in their view, were depriving women from their basic right of education. Although, in the beginning, the missionaries were unable to attract the students from the Hindu and the Muslim communities but with the passage of the time the prejudice was minimized and after 1933 the majority of the Students were found from the Hindu community. The Muslim community was also influenced, directly or indirectly, by this institution as its popularity forced the Muslim community to establish their own college, to prevent the Muslim girls from joining the missionaries' institution. The missionaries' effective interference, in the field of women's higher education, consistently tempted the other organizations to deliver in this field. So, this college from its inception to partition of the province in 1947, either by its quality of education or by the distinct ethos based on western ideals, provided a permanent source of promoting higher education in the province. The college remained the only institution in the province to impart collegiate education to the female students, till the foundation of Lahore College for Women in 1922. Both these colleges were the only women degree colleges in the

### **2.1.1- Kinnaird College as Union Institution of Missionary Societies**

The adoption of the new policy of qualitative improvement tempted the missionaries to direct their efforts to improve the quality of their existing educational institutions rather than increasing the number of their institutions.<sup>18</sup> Acting according to their policy, different missionary societies joined hands to make the Kinnaird College their Union Institution in 1919. The Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, the American Presbyterian Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the United Presbyterian Mission and the Punjab Indian Christian Conference became the members of the Association of the College. The Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church in Sothern Asia were also found to be providing financial support to the

<sup>13</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 56.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>15</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1917-18*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>18</sup> Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, "Blessing in Disguise: Recommendations of Indian Education Commission (1882) and Christian Missionaries' Educational Policy in the Colonial Punjab", *Jounal of Development and Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No. IV, (2021) P.877.

college in the subsequent years. The College was governed by a Board of Directors composed of the representatives of the members of the Association and some co-opted members.<sup>19</sup> The collective quality conscious efforts of the Christian missionaries bore fruits and the college, due to its distinct quality of instruction and discrete personality building features, achieved the status of an apex institution for girls' education.

The early days of the college were not without difficulties and the missionaries were facing financial problems, due to the World War I, as well as those of students' strength, due to the communal prejudices against the Christian missionaries and the higher education of women. As only a few Hindu, Sikh and Muslim Punjabi families were willing to expose their daughters to the influence of Christianity.<sup>20</sup> But the missionaries faced these difficulties judiciously and remained committed to achieve the basic object of quality instruction. So by 1920-21, only thirty eight students were on the rolls of the college but as a corollary to the missionaries' qualitative stress the college started to show gratifying results. As in the same year, Miss L. Fazal, a student of Kinnaird College, stood first in English in the University and in addition to winning a university scholarship, was awarded the Patiala-Sime Gold Medal. Miss Harkishen Lal, another student, also gained the Shah Din Asghari Khanum Gold Medal for heading the list of women candidates in Urdu.<sup>21</sup> The college also showed good results in the co-curricular activities and carried off the gold medal for the best woman speaker at All India Students' debate held at Hindu University Benares, in 1921-22.<sup>22</sup> In a nutshell, by 1930, the Kinnaird College acquired a reputation of standard-setting in certain social skills. Moreover, its admission standards, teacher-pupil ratio, extracurricular activities and fee schedule combined to set it apart as the most prestigious women's college of the region.<sup>23</sup>

The missionaries introduced many kinds of novel things for the purpose of enhancing the performance of their institutions. Here in the Punjab they, most of the times, focused on academic as well as the personality development features of the educational institutions. Kinnaird College, as the missionaries' Union institution, reflected their collective wisdom regarding their concept of quality educational institution. Here are some of its distinct features which won fame for the college and helped it in maintaining its distinct character amongst the contemporary institutions.

### **2.1.2- Building and Social Setting**

It is true that good work depends far more upon the personality and zeal of the teaching staff and on the pupils' keenness to learn than on commodious buildings and expensive equipment. But a certain minimum of accommodation and equipment, in the way, is however a necessary factor, if really good work is desired. In its absence energy is dissipated and enthusiasm is apt to cool. Kinnaird College was grown out from a girls' High school and therefore was in need of a building, commodious enough to fulfil the needs of the college.

The missionary management of the college sensed the need of more room to grow and shifted on the Lake Road building. But shortly after the shifting of the college at Lake Road, the building failed to accommodate the ever growing number of students in the college. The girls were streaming towards the college, but Kinnaird College along with Lahore College for Women, the only degree colleges of the province till the late 1930s, were consistently compelled to refuse

<sup>19</sup> *Directory of Churches and Missions in India and Pakistan* (Ootacamund: the World Dominion Press, 1951), 308.

<sup>20</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 61.

<sup>21</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1920-21*, 54.

<sup>22</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1921-22* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, Punjab, 1922), 133.

<sup>23</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 71.

admission to many students owing to lack of sufficient accommodation.<sup>24</sup> The missionary administration responded positively to the needs of the time and the Board of Directors of Kinnaird College as early as 1930 decided that the existing compound was not large enough to fulfil the needs of the college.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the funds were collected in America and in England for the purchase of land and negotiations for the purchase of site, a little outside Lahore, were proceeding.<sup>26</sup> In 1933, a twenty acres tract of land was acquired near Lahore's famous canal and new buildings were constructed to house the ever increasing number of girls who were streaming towards this institution.<sup>27</sup> By 1939 the college was moved to the new twenty acre campus and it started humming with educational activity. The new campus proved to be spacious enough to fulfil the futuristic needs of the college and the administration never faced the problem of accommodation, in the future.

### 2.1.3. Professional and Social Idealism

Christian missionaries used the social setting of Lahore to promote higher education by encouraging professional ideals for women, instead of their dependence on their male family members. They, throughout the second quarter of the twentieth century, promoted professional careers for educated women, through Kinnaird College. In their pursuit for professionalism, the missionary staff of Kinnaird College overruled the provincial government and University policies and directed students' life and extracurricular activities to teach them to be informed teachers and responsible citizens instead of training them for domestic roles.<sup>28</sup> 'Social training' of the students was another feature of missionary education at Kinnaird College. The missionary staff of the college encouraged women to develop their ideas of what women could accomplish, in case they were inclined to assume domestic roles as adults. The missionaries' stress on professionalism along with their personality building features for women won them fame and, by 1930s, students from almost all the religious communities of the province started to join Kinnaird College. In March 1931, 81 students were found on the rolls of the college, out of whom 39 were Christian, 20 Hindu, 12 Muslim, 8 Sikh, 1 Parsi, and 1 Jain.<sup>29</sup> The importance of the social and professional skills was determined by the students' generation and natal religion.

The native Christian community of the Punjab had neither the established patterns of seclusion nor the financial resources to keep their daughters at home until their marriage.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, about one quarter of the first Christian community comprised orphans who were in dire need of employment training due to non availability of families for their arrange marriages. So the Initial Christian students, often coming from a real financial need, started to attend the college mainly to get employment as teachers in the education department. The missionary staff of Kinnaird College responded positively to their needs as, during 1920s, they designed college life according to the needs of the Christian majority of students and helped Christian graduates in finding employment in the mission schools network.<sup>31</sup> The ever expanding network of girls' educational institutions created lots of teaching vacancies for women in the province. The

<sup>24</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1935-36* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, Punjab, 1937), 79. See also *Reports on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Years 1930 to 1939*.

<sup>25</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1930-31*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Official website of Kinnaird College.

<sup>28</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960' 57.

<sup>29</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1930-31*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 72.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

missionaries also offered scholarships for the education of Christian girls and help them in seeking some employment after graduation. In this way education of a daughter became a good investment for the family which induced the Christian families to educate their daughters. All these factors went on to the dominance of Christian women in the teaching profession, till 1930.<sup>32</sup>

The Hindu girls started to dominate the students' body of the college from 1933 till the partition of the Punjab in 1947. The early Hindu students, contrary to those of the Christian community, came from economically privileged families of the Hindu community. These families did not send their girls due to any financial constraints rather for the purpose of their social accomplishment. The parents were determined to find suitable matches for their daughters from the professional classes of the society and socialization of the girls was considered to be a good merit in this regards. English education and university degrees through Kinnaird College became a social accomplishment for the Hindu girls, in this way, the prestige of English education from the Kinnaird made it an attractive investment for Hindu families who wanted their daughters to marry professional men.<sup>33</sup>

The Muslim students' representation at Kinnaird College was found to be lower than that of the Christians and Hindus, till 1947. In fact very few Muslim families allowed their daughters to join Kinnaird due to their fear of Christian influence and disapproval of the lack of purdah arrangements.<sup>34</sup> Rather the Muslim students were attracted towards Lahore College for women, which was a secular government college offering purdah facilities.<sup>35</sup> The few students who joined Kinnaird College did so, on the inclination of their Western-educated father or some other relative.

In a nutshell the missionaries, by presenting education as a professional or social accomplishment, were able to induce the students which ultimately went on to the development of Western ideals and the feelings of disregard for the prevailing conservative attitude of the Punjabi society. The utilitarian factor, attached with teachers' training, and the socialization of the students through English education were the glaring features of Christian missionaries' higher education.

#### **2.1.4. Western Culture**

Grown out of a high school, Kinnaird College, by 1920, was able to establish itself as a separate institution with a distinct ethos based on Western ideals. The ideals of the college shaped a distinct philosophy of life which fostered common characteristics in the adult lifestyle of its students, irrespective of their diverse religious identities. The Christian staff imbued the students with moral and social values and college life influenced almost all patterns of adult social interaction. It comprised lessening of gender segregation for educated women, all aspects of marriage arrangements—from the age of the bride to the choice of suitable husband and to their expectations of married life—and other aspects of life.<sup>36</sup>

The dormitory of the college and the extracurricular activities were the only means to influence the social aspect of students' lives. As the curriculum of the college was dictated by the University of the Punjab and the college staff was involved only in the above said two areas of college activities. More than half of the students of the college used to live in the college hostel

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 75-78.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>35</sup> *Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab for the Year 1930-31*, 71.

<sup>36</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 70.

and residents students continued to comprise between half and three-quarters of the total enrolment of the students, till 1947.<sup>37</sup> Most of these students, during the early days of the college, lived in a small compound with the Christian missionaries and therefore had the opportunities of frequent interaction with the missionary staff. This interaction developed a familial solidarity, centred upon the mission staff's ideals, among the staff and resident students. They took their meals together at the college as members of one family.<sup>38</sup> This matter of common dining room, contradictory to the Hindu caste dietary exclusiveness, was one of the significant features of Kinnaird College's hostel-life.

In addition to this the Muslim tradition of purdah was also non-existent at Kinnaird College. Even day students at college were not able to spare themselves from interacting with the male community, due to the appointment of part-time male teachers. The missionary staff thought the students' training of self-reliance and responsibility, by allowing them some social freedom under guidance, as the part of the function of the college which induced the students to give up the restriction of purdah<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, the college was involved in the coeducational public debates. The students of the college were consistently showing good results in their debating and declamation competitions with both male and female candidates at university level. This activity of participating in the mixed debates was a serious violation of purdah restriction which was not without objections, even from the families which were not observing purdah.<sup>40</sup>

I.T. McNair, the Principal of the college, enhanced the Kinnaird College's ethos, developed in 1920s, by her emphasis on women's civic training and conviction that women's education should be intellectually equal to that of men.<sup>41</sup> The students were urged to develop a sense of responsibility, as members of the college community, and a 'civic spirit' that would stay with them after graduation.<sup>42</sup> For this purpose the college life was structured to give students experience in different kinds of social settings, through the system of committees to conduct the daily affairs of the college. The students, with the help of a staff member, were involved in running the extra-curricular activities such as debates, social service, etc.<sup>43</sup>

As far as the intellectual equality of men and women is concerned, Kinnaird's Principal McNair, in 1933, was glad to know that men's and women's colleges were to follow the same procedure of granting degrees to their successful candidates in the university examinations. In 1936, she strongly argued against the inclusion of domestic science in the curriculum, in a university committee appointed by the Vice Chancellor to explore the question of female education in reference to Indian social needs.<sup>44</sup> The British Vice Chancellor of the University was inclined to take in domestic science in the curriculum and presented the matter by saying: Would it not be possible to make the women's education of a far more practical kind than it is now, so that no woman can obtain any kind of diploma or degree without being really well-trained for what is bound to be the main occupation of 99% of her sex? I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that education has got to fit people for the battle of life, but if education is

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>38</sup> Staff, *Kinnaird college for Women, Lahore* (n.p., 1923), 11-12. cited in Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 62.

<sup>39</sup> Staff, *Kinnaird college for Women, Lahore*, 11-12. Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> E.M. Edwards, *Kinnaird College Records, 1922-23*, 9. Ibid., 64.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>42</sup> I. T. McNair, *KCR 1938-39*, 13; interview with Mangat Rai cited in Ibid., 64..

<sup>43</sup> *Kinnaird College, Lahore; College Handbook* (Lahore: the Punjab Religious Book Society Press, 1950), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ishwar Das to the Vice Chancellor, 11 June, 1936, cited in Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 67.

going to unfit the women for the places they will have to occupy in life, it will become harder and harder to obtain a strong public opinion in favour of female education.<sup>45</sup>

McNair differed fundamentally with the views of the Vice chancellor and said that domestic science should be based on science to have some academic value. Therefore, its introduction must be preceded by the introduction of teaching of science in the girls' high schools and colleges. In fact she was against the inclusion of domestic science in the curriculum therefore, realizing the acute financial problems in introducing the science classes at school and college level, she attached the matter with the introduction of science.<sup>46</sup> In this way Kinnaird College continued its previous policy and the Vice Chancellor's directions were not followed by the college administration.

## 2.2- Impact on the Society

### 2.2.1. Academic impact

Christian missionaries' educational efforts had long lasting impact on the society in terms of educational condition of the female population of the province. They were the pioneers in establishing their network of institutions for women's formal education in the Punjab and their efforts initiated a new era in this important field of education. The missionaries, with the strong support of the imperial government, were able to foster the tradition of female education in this region, by the end of the nineteenth century. But their efforts, till that time, were restricted only to school education only. With the turn of the century they started their efforts in the field of higher education and, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, they were able to fashion it in the Punjabi society. As their foundation of the first women's college at the queen city of Lahore was followed by the others and more colleges for women were founded in the province.<sup>47</sup>

It is a notable fact that although the missionaries did not have numerical dominance, in terms of educational institutions, yet they were able to induce the others to work in the field of women's education. They set high standards of quality education and, by their effective interference, they were able to create an atmosphere of competition with the other educational agencies. For instance the Hindu and the Christian communities responded positively to the missionaries' efforts in the field of women's higher education but the Muslim community reacted through the work of Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam (Association for the Service of Islam). Anjuman was working for the education of Muslim women, since its inception in 1884, and was able to create a network of girls' schools and orphanages in different parts of the province where girls were taught Urdu and the Qur'an, as well as mathematics, needlework and other crafts.<sup>48</sup> By the mid 1920s, it took up the issue of women's secondary or collegiate education and initiated its efforts in this field which were culminated into the foundation of Islamia College for Women, Lahore, in 1939.<sup>49</sup> Anjuman was also conscious of quality of education at its institutions. It attempted to make an arrangement for the higher education for the girls according to the Islamic concept of education and Islamia College for Women was a classical example in this context.

<sup>45</sup> D.O letter no. 372-9, F. L. Brayne, Vice Chancellor, Punjab University, to Bishop....., Commissioner of Rural Reconstruction. Simla, 10 June, 1936,I. copy in Kinnaird College files Ibid., 67.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Queen Mary's College and Lahore College for women started their work in this field. Furthermore, *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* also took up the issue of secondary or collegiate education for women by 1925, see Sarah Ansari, 'Winds of Change?' The Role of Women Activists in Lahore before and after Partition', 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>49</sup> Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 176.

## 2.2.2. Social Impact

Education of women is considered to be one of the most powerful forces to the social reformation. The Christian Missionaries promoted it as a remedy to the depressed position of women in the Punjabi society. Higher education holds more important place, in this regard, than that of the school education, because of its critical role in moulding the lifestyle of the students under instruction. So the progressive evolution of higher education in the Punjab, during the twentieth century, generated long lasting social impact in shaping the established social patterns on the modern lines. Although the immediate effect of missionaries' efforts was relatively smaller than it was expected yet it was enough to provide them a launching pad in their pursuit to reform the society.

Punjabi women were performing the role of subordinate to their male counterparts, for centuries. The women, irrespective of their class, community or religion, were heavily dependent on their male family members and were confined to their domestic roles. A sharp line between the roles of men and women was drawn by the restriction of purdah. The missionaries propagated the equality of women and their slogan was well echoed in the activities of Kinnaird College, the missionaries' Union institution. Some serious violations of purdah were observed in its academic as well as extracurricular activities. Therefore the alumnae of Kinnaird College, even from the Muslim families, were willing to drop purdah restrictions.<sup>50</sup> Independence of women was also dreamt through their socialization and encouragement for professional ideals. As the missionaries, through Kinnaird College, promoted female intellectual quality and encouraged women to consider professional careers after graduation.<sup>51</sup> So, women's world was expanded from their domestic roles, as wives and mothers, to the non-domestic by including social work and other activities beyond their kin groups.<sup>52</sup>

Missionary institutions also attempted to develop familial relationships among the students, irrespective of their religious identities. Although they were not fully successful in their efforts to bring students out of their religious boundaries yet some kind of familial ties were found to be exist among the students. They shared common educational experiences which helped them to evolve their concepts of life. The same tradition was also found in the other educational institutions and many of the women, who participated with vigour in the pro-Pakistan agitation of the mid-1940s, had shared common educational experiences which shaped their political responses.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore English education brought about changes in all the religious communities of the Punjab. The Christian converts, the Muslims, the Hindus and all other communities were heavily influenced by the streaming wave of English educational institutions. Kinnaird College, the Union educational institution of the missionaries, had separate value for different religious communities. The Christian converts were found it beneficial for them due to its material benefits, pouched in its teacher training activities. The Hindus were induced to send their daughters to this institution due to its unique socialization feature, which was considered helpful in finding suitable matches for the girls. There were very few Muslim families who sent their daughters to Kinnaird College, because of its anti Islamic social agenda.

Although the missionaries were not able to make the women equal to men and the issue, still in twenty first century, is the centre of debate in this region, yet the missionaries, through

<sup>50</sup> Michelle Maskiell, 'Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women 1913 to 1960', 69-83.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>53</sup> Sarah Ansari, 'Winds of Change?' The Role of Women Activists in Lahore before and after Partition', 3.

their educational institutions, were able to foster changes that allowed educated women more social options than their uneducated contemporaries. Moreover, their quality management strategy hindered their approach to all and sundry of the province and their influence at that time was limited to the lives of the few. The results of their 'downward filtration' policy trickled down slowly and the upshot of their efforts is still pending, in terms of social equality of women.

## **CONCLUSION**

Christian missionaries laid the foundation of women's higher education in the British Punjab by breaking centuries-old barriers against female learning. Although their work was intertwined with religious motives yet its long-term impact extended far beyond missionary goals. By introducing schools and colleges for women, they created a ripple effect that stimulated social reform, expanded professional opportunities, and redefined women's role in society. In this way the legacy of missionary efforts remains an essential chapter in the history of women's education in South Asia.

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