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Society and Culture of Gujrat during the British Colonial Era (1849-1947)

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ABSTRACT

The article specifically engages with the transformation in Gujarat's social and cultural topography during the period of British colonial rule, that is, from 1849 to 1947. The paper examines how economic reforms, cultural interventions, and policies of the colonial authorities influenced daily life over aspects such as language and religion, attire and cuisine, and the patterns of communal residence. Using a qualitative historical method, the study draws upon archival materials including district gazetteers, census data, colonial administration documents, missionary accounts, and current newspapers. Colonialism brought new educational systems, linguistic stratifications, and material cultures to a region, but it also served to further isolate people along religious, social, and caste lines, according to the research. Reformist movements and colonial political structures exacerbated growing communal polarization, despite traditional traditions like visiting Sufi shrines and celebrating shared festivals originally fostering intercommunal cooperation. Changing eating patterns, fashion, and pastimes all attest to the pervasiveness of colonial modernity. This article explores the district of Gujrat and how it relates to larger discussions about colonial Punjab. It claims that Gujrat can be seen as a microcosm of how tradition, adaptation, and resistance met during that time.



Introduction

The colonial era in British India witnessed a number of socio-political and cultural transformations, and the district of Gujrat, lying between the rivers of Jhelum and Chenab, in the Punjab region, was not an exception. After gaining conquest over the Sikh Empire in 1849, Gujrat became an imperative base for the British in terms of governing, military recruitment, and land

reform. This land was highly conducive to farming and the military-minded population justified its strategic significance to the British Raj (Punjab Government, 1883).

This was the period when, over a span of more than a century, the social structure, cultural mores, and community life of Gujrat were undergoing profound change. The British government had introduced new methods of administration, jurisprudence, and education, challenging the local way of life while at the same time reinforcing certain aspects of social life. This was in tension with the deeply ingrained culture of the Gujrat, marked by local tradition, kinship networks, religious plurality, and caste structures-patterns which permeated everyday life in complex ways (Ibbetson, 1883). Among the distinguishing features of the colonial regime was its ability to categorize, investigate, and codify social stratification, especially through decennial censuses and settlement reports. These operations allowed the British to synthesize descriptions of caste, tribe, and religion into dominant discourses of social ranking, with far-reaching implications for how social groups imagined themselves and others (Cohn, 1996). Thereby, the culture of Gujrat during this period was marked by a complex and intricate admixture of tradition with colonial influence. The respective region has maintained its cultural effervescence in terms of oral traditions, religious ceremonies, Sufi practices, and local literary works. The emergence and growth of modern education, the printing press, and new ideas in the early 20th century left a lasting impact on society and helped to impart a distinct identity to the communities and regions (Gilmartin, 1988). At the same time, there existed inequalities based on class and caste, which existed, especially in rural areas, in which the pattern of landownership determined power and status distributions. This chapter aims at critically evaluating the socio-cultural context in Gujrat between 1849-1947 through a careful analysis of population, family and gender, religious, cultural, and educational and intellectual systems in place in Gujrat. This study evaluates the ways in which colonialism disrupted and consolidated institutions through the use of colonial gazettes, census reports, contemporary newspapers, biographies, and literature. It also emphasizes the lasting impact of colonialism on the cultural identity and socio-economic setup in Gujrat. The colonial transformation and development in Gujrat during this time are seen in the context of overall colonial Punjab but also in its specific, regional response to colonial power, religio-reform, and modernization.

Literature Review

An essential work in the field of colonial Punjab studies, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947* (1988) by Ian Talbot details the economic, social, and political changes that took place in the region when the Punjab was under British rule. Talbot describes how the Punjab had become a "sword arm of the British Empire" After 1857. On pages 82-86, Talbot discusses the changes in agriculture. This includes the effect of revenue policies and the development of canal colonization. While discussing the collapse of the Unionist Party in the text, the author shows how the balance of power between class politics and community politics in the countryside is always shifting. While the author provides sound macro-economic observations about the material studied in the text, there continue to remain areas for smaller focused studies within the text as well. By examining areas such as the hierarchy of agrarian societies, the continuity of culture, or communal tensions in Gujrat, one can better understand how the provincial paradigm can easily permeate the social prism of the smaller communities.

To fully grasp the cultural, social, and administrative aspects of Gujrat during British colonial administration, one must consult the *Gujrat District Gazetteer* (Punjab Government, 1915). The Gazetteer records the name of every district in Punjab, along with information regarding the population, ownership of land, agricultural system, commerce, educational institutions, religious

gatherings, and social morals. It was produced as a part of a larger survey of the province. The reconstruction of the history of Gujrat during the colonial period is simply not possible without the use of such empirical information, which includes data about population, literacy rate, occupational pattern, and so on. The utilitarian attitude of the colonial government is embedded in the Gazetteer, which shows emphasis on laws and order, production of agriculture, and taxation. While doing the same, it offers useful information about the anthropological side of the district regarding religious practices, holidays, caste systems, and local arts. The Gazetteer proves highly important to researchers of society and culture of Gujrat because it enables researchers of modern times to understand the developments of ritual cloth, food, shrines, and social interactions. But it requires a critical study because the colonial ideologies embedded behind such descriptions often contained elements of orientalism. Nevertheless, it proves highly important regarding the period of change during the colonial era.

The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885-1947 (1988) by Imran Ali offers a revolutionary social and economic history of Punjab, analysing the effects of colonial agricultural policy and canal colonization. With the help of British actions, especially the creation of canal colonies, Ali shows how Punjab was turned into the Raj's agricultural "breadbasket" and how landlord dominance and peasant dependency were reinforced (Ali, 1988). Though income and production increased, inequality and rural indebtedness simultaneously increased, as the author argues in his analysis of colonial growth. Though Gujrat was no canal colony, as he had argued about the colonies, Gujrat was deeply implicated in the agricultural economy of Punjab, and his model illuminates the role of land tax requirements and the commercialization of agriculture in reshaping the nexus of caste and class. Moreover, the author illuminates larger developments that affected the social constitution of Gujrat as a colony in his analysis of the migrations, land settlement, and the relation between colonial masters and the colonized nation. Though the author Ali primarily tackles issues with economic import, his perspectives are essential for the understanding of the social and economic bases for changes in the communities and cultures of Gujrat and similar settings. The author's work adds significantly to the study of the social and cultural by illuminating the relation between the colonial material conditions and the movements, behaviours, and identity constitution.

An important source for those interested in colonial Punjab, Denzil Ibbetson's *Report on the Census of the Punjab, 1881* (1883) Besides demographic material, it provides ethnographic notes. The discourse in Ibbetson's report on caste, tribe, religion, and occupational groupings that culminated in his influential work *Panjab Castes* (1883) reaches well beyond demographic analysis. Whereas Ibbetson did emphasize the importance of kinship and occupation as organizing elements in Punjabi society, he framed these factors in functional and comparatively non-hierarchical terms (Ibbetson 1883). District demographic details such as religious compositions, literacy rates, and occupational classifications make the Gujrat census report extremely useful. While recording the cultural traditions, food habits, and housing patterns of the people, it gives an insight into daily life. Nevertheless, Ibbetson's discussion was influenced by colonial administrative interests, which presented the notion of a community in a way that often furthered prejudice and divisiveness. For reconstructing the social and cultural history of Gujrat in the late 19th century, the report, although flawed, remains an important original source. For any attentive student of history, the report identifies the British preoccupation with the classification of Punjab's plural society and gives a statistical framework for any discussion of long-term changes under colonial rule.

An extensive analysis of the social and economic systems that moulded rural Punjab during British administration can be found in G. Singh's *Agrarian Society in the Punjab, 1849-1947* (2004). According to Singh (2004), traditional agrarian interactions were changed by colonial policies such

as land settlements, the tax system, and commercialization of agriculture. This research highlights the dependence of peasant populations on landlords and moneylenders and shows how such displacement from land and indebtedness contributed to persistent economic inequalities. Two examples of wider social and political changes that Singh identifies as influenced by agrarian conflict are the emergence of peasant movements and the shifts in communal identities. Singh's discussion uncovers a complex interaction among land tenure, caste hierarchies, and everyday lived experience in Gujrat, a region in which agriculture continued to occupy a central role in society. When trying to make sense of material culture in places like Gujrat, his points about rural poverty, eating habits, and clothes made from agricultural products are very pertinent. Although focused on economics, Singh's work provides important context for understanding how Gujrat's society fit within the larger agrarian framework of colonial Punjab by shedding light on the fundamental causes of social and cultural development.

Sharif Kunjahi has been a great figure of poetry and literature influenced by the traditions of Ghanimat Kunjahi with untouched and shocking themes, he has left us a useful historical legacy in Punjabi, Urdu and English languages, on the basis of which the study can help to advance the work of Gujrat, especially *Tareek-i-Gujrat or Lafzu ki Ainak* his last major work (Kunjahi, 2000).

Tareek-i-Gujrat (Baig, 1870) is the only comprehensive and long history of Gujrat which was written by the Gujrat St. Extra Commissioner Bando Bast District Gujrat based on the rules of 1867-68. Mirza Azam Baig is also the author of *Tarikh Jhelum*, another important book of the nineteenth century. Dozens of Gujrat historians have used this book so far, declared and unannounced. A cursory glance at the contents of the book gives an idea of its thematic breadth and comprehensiveness. The first part of the book begins with a description of the physical and geological situation of the district and ends with detailed data on sources of irrigation, production and trade. The second part begins with the political and administrative conditions of the last one hundred years, the details of the general road, the list of Subedar, Patwari and police stations, the history of the various ethnic groups living in the district, customs, general marriage and death rites, women's and men's clothing, jewellery, food, religions, fairs and stalls.

Gazetteer of the Gujrat District was published in 1893 under a revised edition by Judy SP Davis (Government, 1921). The Punjab B Series, which was issued as Volume II of the District Gazetteers containing statistics and reports, was published in between 1905-09. The Gujrat Gazetteer part was first published in 1905 and then in 1912. Part I or the third edition of the Gazetteer was published in 1921 by HS Williamson, Deputy Commissioner. Williamson actually revised the Gazetteer of 1893 and made several additions. It has been used extensively in the historiography of Gujrat, with and without references.

In this thesis *Society and Culture of the Punjab (late eighteenth-early nineteenth century)* (Bala, 2011) helps me to have an in-depth literature of historical background of region during 19th century. He explains the political power shifting from Mughals Empire to Sikh Empire. He also discussed the class structure of Punjab during this period. He discussed the society, class structure, economy and overall social life of the people. He sheds light on the role of gender and status of women in the society. Author discussed the patriarchal system with the main dominant society during this period. Various literature produces with the help of existing literature of Urdu, Punjabi and Persian language. This thesis is a worthwhile contribution in the understanding of socio-political life of Gujrat history during 19's century.

There are many other researches have been done on Gujrat, Pakistan by various academic persons according their own perspective.

Research Methodology

To investigate the societal and cultural shifts that occurred in Gujrat from 1849 to 1947, this study uses a qualitative historical approach, drawing on archival and oral history sources. Punjab District Gazetteers, Census of India Reports (1881-1941), British administrative documents, missionary reports, and sessions of the Punjab Education Department are crucial archival materials that comprise the heart of the analysis. The official norms, statistical data, and administration views can be extracted by analysing these documents, which can be accessed by internet archives as well as library archives of universities. This work draws on locally situated cultural sources-narratives, folktales, and biographies-which provide details on quotidian life that are usually missing in colonial records. Guided by thematic analysis, the research focuses on education, language, dress, diet, and social practices. Triangulation of archival materials and scholarly literature ensures the credibility and comprehensiveness of the interpretations. Such an approach provides a better insight into how cultural adaptation and resistance came into being in Gujrat as an outcome of the interaction between indigenous traditions and colonial modernity.

Demographic Composition and Societal Structure

The demographic composition of Gujrat district during the colonial era reflects both natural population growth and the state's efforts to count and regularize its inhabitants. Throughout its tenure, the British administration carried out decennial censuses, starting in 1881, which gave many valuable insights into the socioeconomic setup in the region. According to the 1881 Census Report, Gujrat had a population of 705,892, which increased to 804,831 by 1901 and to 970,484 by 1941, thus marking a continued growth trend throughout the colonial period (Ibbetson, 1883; Census of India, 1941).

Rural and Urban Gujrat

Historically, during the colonial era, the nature of the Gujrat District was predominantly rural, with more than 85% of the population residing in rural areas. The few towns in the district were the cities of Gujrat, Kharian, and Jalalpur Jattan which was an administrative and a military base (Baig, 1870). The rural area was mainly agricultural; the villages were organized on the principle of caste and kin, with some *mohallahs* or quarters where groups of communities resided.

Ethnic and Tribal Demographics

The British administration distinguished the people of Gujrat on the basis of ethnic and tribal affiliations, eminently underlining the martial skills of a number of clans. The Jats, Rajputs, Gujjars, and Awans were substantial farmers and also formed an important basis for military recruitment (Omissi, 1994). The colonial classification system further consolidated caste and tribal identities which were more fluid in the past. The Jats, whether Muslims or Sikhs, were described as hardworking agriculturalists and "a distinguished agricultural and military race" (Ibbetson, 1883).

Religious Organizations

Gujrat was a district characterized by religious diversity. In the early 20th century, Muslims were over 75% of the population, while Hindus comprised 15% and Sikhs 9%, including smaller Christian and Jain minority (Census of India, 1931). The district's Muslim population was primarily Sunni, although notable Shia communities were present. Religious life was influenced not just by official religious organizations but also by the significant impact of Sufism among

Muslims and reformist groups like the Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha among Hindus and Sikhs, respectively (Gilmartin, 1988).

Caste, Class, and Social Hierarchy

Social stratification within the social structure of Gujrat had deep roots based on castes, which were present despite religious diversity. Based on the social stratification of the Muslims, stratifications were sustained based on ashraf-ajlaf divisions, where Sayyids and Mughals and Pathans were at higher social levels as elites, whereas the weaver and laborer castes like Julahas (Weavers), Kumhars (Potters), and Mochis (Cobblers) were of lesser social status (Alavi, 1972). In the Hindu social structure, Brahmins, Khattris, and Aroras enjoyed a prestigious status, whereas the untouchables, particularly chuhars and chamars, remained relegated and confined to menial work.

Patterns of landholding perpetuated the traditional structures of class. Large landholders (*zamindars*), many holding proprietary rights through the British land settlement scheme, exerted considerable political as well as social influence. On the other hand, tenants and landless agricultural workers remained economically insecure and socially subservient (Punjab Government 1915). *Biradari*, based on kin and caste relations, served as one of the primary institutions for the regulation of marriage, property matters, and other communal affairs.

Familial Structures, Kinship Dynamics, and Gender Interrelations

The pattern and organization of family and kinship relations in Gujrat served as an integral part of the region's social framework. These associations also had other implications, including the control of individual behaviour, as they extended to a wider social and economic role. The Gujrat families remained rooted in the patriarchal systems and caste systems during the British regime, 1849-1947, in which newly established formations, proposed through British colonial control, were also being incorporated.

The Joint Family System and Patriarchy

The typical family system existing in Gujarat under colonial rules was joint family, which consisted of more than one generation residing in one home and sharing labour as well as earnings. Such a type of family system existed in many well-settled agricultural communities such as Jats, Rajputs, and Gujjars (Alavi, 1972). The patriarchal family exercised its authority through its head, who held supreme control over issues of land, marriage, and economics.

Succession and property rights are according to patriarchal practices. Under customary law, land had to be passed down through the male line, and women had nominal or no proprial rights (Punjab Government, 1915). These traditions were regulated and codified by British land revenue settlements, which helped to formally and authoritatively enshrine male domination in matters of succession and ownership (Cohn, 1996).

Kinship Networks and *Biradari* System

In Gujrat, lineage or kinship extended outside the family through a complex system of lineage or caste relations called '*biradari*'. *Biradari* stood as one of the prime units of rural social organization. "The *biradari* is a complex of kinship ties that include close kin as well as people related to the kin through the same caste or clan-marriage ties." It comprised of people related through 'blood ties' as well as those belonging to the same caste or related through 'clan-marriage ties'. Also, 'such kinship ties include people (Alavi, 1972; Eglar, 1960). Arranged marriages were generally held within *biradari* or between collaterally related *biradaris*, and a high degree of endogamy existed in the upper castes. The caste *panchayat*/social council was an important factor

in regulating *biradari* customs and punishing a breach of them, such as inter-caste marriage and disregard for family honour (Ibbetson, 1883). These systems also ensured that the social order was maintained, apart from serving as a check in the formal systems of justice and administration under colonial rule.

Matrimonial Traditions and Societal Responsibilities

The institution of marriage under colonization was an individual contract as well as a social one, with traditions and economic expectations. Among Muslims, the Nikah ritual included legal documentation known as Nikah Nama. While among the Hindu and Sikh communities, religious ceremonies had immense social stature (Rose, 1911). A girl's marriage was thus an obligation within the family, with particular stress on the *jahez* or dowry, especially within the middle and higher classes. Arranged marriage was prevalent, and early marriage was common, especially among females. The average age of marriage among girls in Gujrat was 13.6 years, while among males it was 17.9 years according to the Punjab Census of 1921 (Punjab Government, 1923). This was commonly associated with high rates of maternal deaths as well as limited education for women.

Status of Women

The condition of women in Gujrat under the colonial rule was affected by the patriarch tradition and religious texts. Women's work included household chores and relating to children, as well as participation in seasonal farm labour. Women of lower castes and artisan families did more work in terms of earning, including working as farm laborers, weavers, or midwives (Eglar, 1960).

The education of women was limited during the colonial times. Despite the opening up of missionary and governmental educational institutions to promote females' literacy, conservative elements hindered the spread. For example, in 1921, the literacy rate among females in Gujrat was 2.4%, while among males, it stood at 11.9%. The restrictions on the free movements of females due to the practice of purdah further limited their activities (Government, 1921).

The practice of purdah was strictly followed in upper-class Muslim families, but such constraints were also seen in Hindu and Sikh sects; however, the disparities were more pronounced on a regional and caste-conscious pattern. The code of honour followed by these people was intricately tied with the observation of feminine behaviour, and deviance could lead to dire consequences.

Gendered Effects of Colonial Legislation and Reform

British reforms in marriage law, inheritance, and widow remarriage affected women from Gujrat unfairly. The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act (1856) and amendments to Muslim Personal Law provided some relief to widows; however, effective administration remained poor. In rural areas, families remained rigidly loyal to traditional law to the point that it rarely ever helped women assert property and divorce rights. (Minault, 1998).

Though reformers like the Arya Samaj among Hindus and Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam among Muslim communities advocated education of women as well as opposed practices like child marriage and dowry, these movements largely remained limited to the urban classes (Gilmartin, 1988). In rural communities, transformation was not possible for most women, as the role of the sexes remained rigidly demarcated even during the colonial period.

Education and Literacy (1849–1947)

Education in Gujrat during the colonial period evolved from traditional and religious learning to modern institutionalized schooling, which was a result of colonial policy in Britain. This directly

or indirectly altered literacy levels, class mobility, gender equations, and cultural identity. The colonial administration aimed at forming a breed of intermediaries in favor of the British Colonial Empire, while the local masses responded in different ways by accepting, resisting, or recreating new forms of learning. This article shall focus on the development in institutionalized education in Gujrat between 1849 and 1947.

Conventional Education Prior to Colonial Reforms

- Whereas, in Gujrat, prior to British colonization, education was by large confined to religious and ethical teaching in *maktabs*, *madrasas*, *pathshalas*, and *gurdwaras*.
- Muslims *maktabs* and *madrasas* taught Arabic, Persian, Quranic interpretation, hadith, and jurisprudence. Hindu *pathshalas* emphasized Sanskrit, mathematics, and merchant accounting (*bahi khata*).
- Sikh *gurdwaras* provided facilities for reading the Guru Granth Sahib and training in the Gurmukhi script.

These systems were largely informal, with no central curriculum, and of decidedly mixed quality, depending on the level of local elite and religious endowment support (Grewal, 1990).

British Educational Policies in Punjab and Gujrat

The annexation of Punjab in 1849 marked the beginning of educational policy formulation by the British. From their earlier diffidence, the colonial rulers later came to realize that modern education could act as an agency of administration. Wood's Despatch of 1854 laid the foundation for government-funded education it advocated secular learning, vernacular teaching at the elementary level, and English instruction at the higher levels.

Missionary Instruction

- The Church Christian missionaries, especially the CMS and Presbyterian Missions, established education centres in the Gujrat city and neighbouring regions.
- The CMS School at Gujrat offered English-medium education, Christian morals, and Western scientific education.
- Sponsored schools in the region had students enrolled by lower-caste groups as well as women, promoting a revolution in society though it triggered opposition in the upper classes (Ibbetson, 1883).

Public Educational Institutions

Towards the end of the 19th century, educational institutions at the district level were established in Gujrat during the sponsorship of the Punjab Education Department. These institutions were secular, promoting a kind of indirect loyalty towards British rule and discouraging political dissent.

Language, Curriculum, and Identity

The selection of language used as a political instrument throughout the colonial era. Although Urdu and Persian were previously preferred in Muslim educational institutions, English supplanted Persian in top schools by the 1870s. Punjabi, although widely spoken, was predominantly omitted from formal schooling (Grewal, 1990).

The curriculum embodied British priorities:

- English, mathematics, geography, and cleanliness were prioritized.
- Indian history was minimized or shown with a colonial prejudice.

- Moral lessons praised British virtues such as loyalty, punctuality, and diligence (Minault, 1998).

Gender and Education

Male Education

Colonial records indicate that male literacy in Gujrat increased somewhat from around 3% in 1850 to approximately 12% by 1947 (Ibbetson, 1883). The majority of recipients originated from:

- Zamindar (land-owning) families
- Khatri
- Syed
- Arain communities
- City artisans and merchants

Peasant and lower-caste males frequently faced educational deprivation owing to economic constraints or caste discrimination.

Women's Education

Women's schooling was far more constrained. Conservative gender standards inhibited the majority of households from enrolling their daughters in educational institutions. Nevertheless, missionary and subsequently Anjuman-operated girls' schools provided opportunities: Zenana schools instructed in reading, sewing, cleanliness, and fundamental mathematics. In the 1920s, middle-class Muslim and Hindu females in Gujrat were obtaining elementary education.

Educational Reform Initiatives and Cultural Reactions

Islamic Reform Movements

Motivated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Aligarh Movement, regional Muslim leaders in Gujrat founded educational institutions that integrated Islamic principles with contemporary education. The Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam established educational institutions for both boys and girls in locales such as Kunjah and Kariana.

These institutions prioritized:

- Islamic ethics and Urdu
- English for progression
- Rejection of missionary influence (Minault, 1998)
- Arya Samaj and Hindu Organizations

The Arya Samaj advocated for Vedic education and established gurukuls and *pathshalas*. Their objective was to mitigate Christian proselytization and Muslim preeminence in Urdu-medium institutions (Ibbetson, 1883).

Education and Political Awareness

Post-1919, the educated young of Gujrat started their involvement in nationalist politics. Schools evolved into venues for:

- Discussions on self-governance,
- Gandhian impact via non-cooperation movements,
- Communal identities intensified via separated education.

In the 1930s, students from Gujrat engaged in the activities of the Muslim League, Congress, and Khaksar (Gilmartin, 1988). Schools had dual functions both instruments of control and as catalysts of resistance.

Literacy, Caste, and Social Ascendancy

Literacy progressively emerged as an indicator of social position. Educated persons, regardless of lower caste status, might secure employment in:

- Revenue departments
- Railways and postal services
- Private enterprises and legal chambers

The system remained hierarchical, with the majority of top positions allocated to British officers, while linguistic difficulties, specifically insufficient English proficiency, hindered genuine mobility (Grewal, 1990).

Education and the Legacy of Partition

By the 1940s, Gujrat had a small but vibrant educational culture. Its multilingual graduates, fluent in both Urdu and English, were well-positioned to hold key positions in the post-Partition administration and media. The communalized structure of education, with separate schools and curricula for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, presaged the catastrophic splits that reached its culmination in 1947 (Gilmartin, 1988).

A Look at the Religious Population of the Gujrat District

The Muslim population was the majority in all censuses, starting from 1881 to 1941. The Hindu and Sikh minority was the second significant population, while the Christians were a minority population. Rajput, Jat, Syed, and Arain communities were one of the main constituent elements of the Muslim population and had dominance over both rural and urban areas. There was a large proportion of the Hindu population in urban cities, mostly Gujrat city, and Jalalpur Jattan, belonging to the Khatri, Bania, and Brahmin castes. Sikhs were also a majority in the north-western *tehsil* and especially in the areas near River Jhelum, and were mainly Jat Sikhs (Saleem, 2012).

Places of Worship and Institutions of Many Religious Faiths

Madrasas and Mosques

In addition to serving as places of worship, mosques in Gujrat also served as social hubs, notably during the Friday sermons (*khutba*) and the gatherings that took place throughout the month of Ramadan. Built during the Mughal era, the Shahi Masjid in Gujrat city was a major emblem of Islamic history. It was constructed during the time period.

Education in Arabic, Islamic law, and Persian was provided via madrasas. Madrasas were also utilized to combat the influence of missionaries and to maintain Islamic identity with the growth of reformist groups such as the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith (Ali, 2004).

There were also *dharamshalas* and temples.

Hindu temples such as the Shivala Mandir¹ performed both religious and community functions in their respective communities. *Dharamshalas* were establishments that offered accommodation to

¹ Located in the Kashmiri Mohalla district of Sialkot

pilgrims and were supported by donations from the local community as well as endowments from merchants (Ibbetson, 1883, page 231).

Certain Sikh Gurdwaras, such as those located in Lalamusa and Dinga, served as places of prayer as well as places of learning Punjabi. These Gurdwaras frequently maintained Gurmukhi schools and langar kitchens. These areas helped to cultivate a strong sense of community solidarity and safeguarded Sikh identity in the face of increasing tensions within the community (Singh, 2004).

Churches and the Work of Missionary Organizations

The latter half of the 19th century saw the establishment of missionary churches, notably those belonging to the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic religions. According to Webster (2007), the CMS Church in Gujrat city was constructed in the 1870s with the purpose of catering to the rising Christian community, particularly Christian converts from the *chuhra*s and low-caste Muslim populations.

The Most Important Religious Celebrations and Rituals

Festivals were essential for the expression of culture and the maintenance of social solidarity. Local variations of the festivals frequently had similar practices and symbolic overlaps, despite the fact that each denomination had its own unique celebrations.

Muslim Festivals

- Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha were widely celebrated throughout all villages with community prayers, animal sacrifices, and feasts. These festivals were observed by Muslims.
- Milad-un-Nabi, also known as the Prophet's birthday, became more popular in the early 20th century, particularly as a result of the influence of Bareilvi.
- The celebration of Muharram included processions, the creation of tazias, and the recitation of poetry elegies known as *marsiya*s² (Gilmartin, 1988). This was accomplished by Shia families and Sunni adherents in particular.
- Diwali, Holi, and Raksha Bandhan were three of the most important Hindu holidays that took place annually. Up until the 1930s, localities such as Gujrat and Kunjah frequently had religious celebrations that included both Muslim and Hindu participants.
- The festivals of Janmashtami and Navratri were celebrated in temples with folk music, puppet performances, and community feasts. These festivals were more socially significant.

Sikh Celebrations

Vaisakhi was the most significant Sikh holiday, and it was celebrated with religious processions, fairs, and wrestling tournaments amidst other activities. During Gurpurabs, which are celebrations of the births of Sikh Gurus, scripture recitations (known as *akhand path*), singing of kirtan, and the distribution of *karah* prasad were all performed.

Relations between Different Communities and Shared Spaces

Intercommunal concord was observed in everyday life in colonial Gujrat, notably up to the 1930s, notwithstanding doctrinal disagreements that existed between the communities. The Urs of Sufi

² Marsiyas are elegiac poetry or laments, generally composed in Urdu and Persian that commemorate the death of a venerated individual, predominantly Imam Hussain and the martyrs of the Battle of Karbala (680 AD). Marsiyas hold significant prominence in Shia Muslim culture and are chanted throughout the month of Muharram to memorialise the tragedy of Karbala.

saints, Basant celebrations, and wrestling tournaments were all examples of fairs (melas) that were frequently attended by several people at the same time. Sufi shrines received donations from Hindu merchants, and Muslim artists constructed idols for Hindu Temples.

Colonial Governance and Societal Change in Gujrat (1849–1947)

The colonial era in Gujrat (1849–1947) was characterized by significant administrative and economic reorganization, as well as profound community changes. The British colonial policy, ostensibly impartial, produced new divides and community identities among religious factions. Gujrat, well known for its ethnographic Diversity Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, saw massive transformations in the matters concerning relation with other communities, which include land ownership, representation, religious institutions, and movement. The policies of the British Government in regards to matters of the census, religious endowments, and special electorates made way for massive communal compositions.

British Censuses and the Formalization of Communal Identities

Religious identity became strictly defined in the colony through the decennial census. The process of denominationalization of the population began with the first census in 1871, reaching all of India. In Gujrat, there was a clear demarcation between Muslims who comprised a large majority, Hindus, and Sikhs who shaped the sectarian demographic paradigm that would soon drive state interventions (Dirks 2001).

Table-1: Religious Demographics of Gujrat District (1871–1941) Source: Punjab Census Reports (1871–1941)

Census Year	Muslim	Hindus	Sikhs	Others
1871	71.2	19.4	8.3	1.1
1881	70.9	20.1	7.8	1.2
1901	69.8	21.0	8.5	0.7
1931	70.4	18.9	9.8	0.9
1941	70.6	17.2	11.3	0.9

Communalization via Electoral and Political Frameworks

The "separate electorate" system, introduced by the Indian Councils Act in 1909 and extended by the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935, entrenched communal representation. This further reinforced the impression that the assertion of political rights and claims for representation might better be accomplished along the lines of religion. These tendencies would prove highly consequential in Gujrat. Muslim landlords and leaders sided with the Unionist Party, purportedly representing the interests of the Muslim peasantry, in contrast to Hindu and Sikh minorities, who aligned with the Indian National Congress and Akali Dal, respectively (Talbot, 1988). This constitution, despite all appearance of democracy, compromised the secular political mobilization and accentuated sectarian divisions.

Religious Organizations and British Sponsorship

The British policy of non-intervention in religious affairs led to favouritism at times. In Gujrat, the British patronized Muslim pirs and *sajjada nashins* and helped them become middlemen between the colonial government and the rural Muslim population (Gilmartin, 1988). In the Indian subcontinent, the religious trusts in the Hindu and Sikh religions were also given official status by the enactment of the Religious Endowments Act in 1863. In this manner, the patronage network

increased the prestige of religious leaders, thereby making the community power structure possible.

Education and the Emergence of Communal Awareness

The education system in Britain further systematized the inequality within communities. Developing separate educational institutions for Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in Gujrat formed parallel structures for upholding religious identities. The missionary school system introduced Christian religious education; paradoxically, this led to an equal reaction from Muslim and Hindu reformist sects.

Table-2: Religious Affiliation of Schools in Gujrat District (1900–1940) Source: Punjab Education Reports (1900–1940)

Year	Govt. Schools	Secular	Muslim Schools	Hindu Schools	Sikh Schools	Christian Missionary School
1900	12		7	5	2	3
1920	22		13	9	5	6
1940	34		18	14	9	8

These unique educational systems impacted the youth of Gujrat on the ideological and religious benches to exhibit community-centric stories of exclusivity.

Societal Strife and the Route to Division

In the 1930s and 1940s, the community divide in Gujrat emerged as a form of tension, boycotts, and minor episodes of violence. Although not as acute as in urban Punjab, the number of cases of sectarian conflict rose in Gujrat. The Muslim League won the loyalty of Muslims in the aftermath of the Lahore Resolution in 1940; the Hindus and Sikhs expressed an increasing feeling of apprehension about their chances in a possible Muslim-majority Pakistan (Jalal, 1985).

Apparel, Cuisine, and Everyday Existence in Gujrat during the Colonial Period (1849–1947)

During the colonial period in Gujrat (colonial era: 1849-1947), societal life was a combination of colonial as well as indigenous elements. Clothing denoted social as well as religious identity, whereas the local cuisine preserved cultural continuity.

Attire: Identity, Modesty, and Social Hierarchy

Clothing in Gujrat during the colonial period represented a powerful expression of identity, being deeply linked with the religious, culture, and socioeconomic divides in the region. For Muslims, the conventional kurta and shalwar represented the regular garments, which were matched with a turban, symbolizing grace and manhood. Variations in turban designs as well as in the tying mechanism represented a clear indicator of ones' social, as well as ethnic identity (Rose, 1909). *Sherwanis* or *Achkans* were also well-accepted for ceremonial gatherings and functions, especially within the growing middle class modelled on British administrative systems. These were an indication of status and also an accommodation to modern colonial fashion trends among those involved in administrative and missionary-related education systems (Talbot, 1996). For women, dress was heavily implicated in modesty, femininity, and marriage status. The *shalwar kameez* with a *dupatta* or *odhani* enjoyed widespread usage among Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh women; at the same time, distinctions according to textile type, pattern, and embroidery often indicated

community, class, and region differences. In rural areas, Hindu and Sikh women commonly wore ghaghras or lehenga cholis, profusely embellished with mirror work and bright colours. (Grewal, 1990). Jewellery was basic in nature, with silver ornaments such as *naths*, or nose rings, *karras* or bangles, and *payals* or anklets, mirroring gender and rank but above all wealth. Above all, British influence provided new sartorial possibilities for urban males in the shape of pants, shirts, and fez hats, which reflected their entry into colonial administrative environments as well as Western educational establishments (Gilmartin, 1988, p. 109). Despite this influence, traditional clothes remained persistent at least among people in rural areas. The persistence of indigenous costumes testifies to the way in which Gujratis continued cultural tradition amidst state persecution and social change. Dress was functional and symbolic, a quotidian declaration of community affiliation, appropriate gender roles, and generational values.

Culinary Heritage: Tradition, Adaptation, and Colonial Interruption

The eating habits of the people of Gujrat during the British colonial period had an agrarian orientation, being closely linked with rural life rhythms and religious and agricultural cycles. Gujrati diets varied little-whether Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh-with wheat, millet, pulses, and seasonal vegetables, supplemented with ghee, mustard oil, and domestic spices being the dominant component of every meal (Singh, 2004). The staple meal was *roti* with vegetables, though meat was consumed less frequently; this depended on the religious group, as Muslims were given meat more often, but Hindus never had beef, as their religion forbade this. Milk, yogurt, and buttermilk were staple foods for rural and urban areas alike; these foods were used more liberally during the summer season. Religious prescriptions influenced dietary needs to a great extent; for instance, Hindus did not consume beef, Muslims forbade the consumption of pork, although halal meat was allowed, and Sikhs followed lacto-vegetarian meals or consumed meat, depending on caste background and individual beliefs (Grewal, 1990). Food was thus a very important marker of collective identity and played a significant role in social and festive gatherings-holidays and marriages, among others; traditional dishes like *kheer*, *halwa*, samosas, and *pakor*as were characteristic of shared food identity on festive occasions such as Eid, Diwali, and Baisakhi.

The British economic changeover in Punjab greatly influenced food availability in the region. The agro-export model of transition encouraged the development of export-oriented crops like indigo (*neel*), cotton, and wheat, resulting in some cases of acute shortages of food grains in the market due to the purposeful effort of the British Government to create scarcity (Ali, 1988). The metropolitan diet was increasingly supplemented by imported commodities such as refined sugar, tea, and condensed milk, especially among middle-class families susceptible to colonial preferences (Bayly, 1999). In the rural area of Gujrat, the culinary culture was more self-contained, and made heavy use of prepared grains, pickled vegetables, and homemade butter.

Everyday Existence: Patterns, Responsibilities, and Rural-Urban Disparities

Life in Gujrat, as an agricultural area, still carried on in the same manner as its typical activities, depending on the realities as well as potentials offered by the dimensions in which the period of colonization existed. Life in the countryside involved activities which were governed by the cycle of nature depending on the timing set according to the agricultural cycle offered by nature at certain times of the year. Men would rise before dawn to work the land or attend to their animals, whereas women would be involved in either managing the household or working at grain mills, butter processing, or the loom (Gilmartin, 1988). The village *baithak* or *chaupal* was the hub of social interaction, which brought together men in the evening for chatting and talking, solving disputes, and storytelling.

The division of life into the household utilized gender differentials. The roles played by women, though largely confined to the home, were the backbone. In the rural areas, there was a lot of field work done by women, especially in the lower classes. Though the female literacy rate remained very low, there were a few missionary schools which imparted basic education to females in the urban centers of Gujrat and Jalalpur Jattan (Lahori, 1877). The male education system developed partially in vernacular and Anglo-Mohammadan schools, which brought into existence a class of colonial interlopers. At the same time, urban existence had its rhythm. The town of Gujrat, developed because of railway connectivity, developed as a small commercial, artisan, and administrative hub. The establishment of printing presses, tea houses, and cinema halls in the early 20th century marked the beginning of an alteration in social habits. Rhythm and timing transformed from natural rhythms to clock-measured ones that synchronized with railway timings and office hours of the government (Talbot, 1996). Notwithstanding all these, social norms, religious and cultural events remained indispensable in rural and urban setups as they helped bridge the gaps which emerged out of rapid change.

Conclusion

The era of colonial rule by the British is a highly significant phase in the social and cultural history of Gujrat. It has been made amply clear through this research that colonialism is not simply a phenomenon in the realm of administration and economic change but pervades all aspects of life. It also shows how Gujrat is a microcosm of what was occurring elsewhere in colonial Punjab. During the colonial era, governance brought changes in the social fabric of Gujrat due to land revenue systems, census activities, education reforms, and political setup. Although such steps brought a marked improvement in administrative governance, they also reinforced a system of social and religious divide, which was more flexible and less pronounced before colonial intervention. A demarcation of religious identities based on census, electorates, and government patronage to religious bodies also raised communal awareness. These practices that had hitherto facilitated inter-community cohesion, like joint celebration of festival events, religious pilgrimages to the shrines of Sufi leaders, and sharing common cultural spaces began to be replaced with the rigid definitions of religious affiliations, castes, and communities.

It can be argued that colonial transformation also came through one of the most effective colonial manners: the "culture of education." Western education and the English language introduced a sort of narrow gateway into the world of upward mobility. The access to education was based on class, caste, gender, and religious affiliations. Examples of such cultural spaces which promoted literacy and politics include missionary schools, madrasahs, and government-run schools.

In Gujrat too, life was a reflection of this colonial impact not merely on their dress, diet, and recreational activities but also with regard to rural and urban attitudes. These improvements and changes with regard to dress and diet, and recreation activities, indicate the degree to which modernity had entered but had not eradicated indigenous customs. These patterns, however, were more evenly retained in the villages and more syncretic in the urban culture.

In sum, the cultural and social change that occurred in Gujrat during the colonial period did not proceed along a straight line of modernization or degradation but is a complex and constantly evolving function of colonial policy and cultural tradition. "The legacy of this period, and of all periods of imperialism generally, is a complex of effects that persist well beyond a given date, such as 1947, and that shape materials in unexpected ways." Included in this larger historical and cultural narrative of colonial Punjab, this research project emphasizes the role of district histories in understanding the long-term effects of colonialism in South Asia.

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