

## CHAPTER-II

### SGPC: POLITICAL DIMENSION AND IMPORTANCE

The relations of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee with the British Government upto 1947, with the Indian National Congress (hereafter INC) and some other political parties; its role in the freedom struggle; its role and contribution during the time of partition; its relations with the Shiromani Akali Dal; its role in the creation of Punjabi suba in 1966; its relations with the Punjab government and also the government at the centre as well as its approach towards the politico-economic issues concerning the Sikhs till 1984 have been taken up in this chapter. It is worth mentioning that these issues occupy an important place in the history of the Sikhs in particular and Punjab in general. Moreover, they realized that their struggle for the liberation of Gurdwaras and the freedom struggle were not antagonistic to each other. These could be waged simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> However, the said Sikhs' movement, though possessing several points of contact with the Non-Cooperation Movement, maintained its separate identity. It was not subordinate to the freedom struggle. This was also accepted by the government. An official report stated:<sup>2</sup>

'It stands to the credit of SGPC that the Sikh movement was not allowed to come under the control of the Congress and Khilfat workers'.

At another place, the report mentioned:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchaya da Ithihas*, p. 121; K.L. Tuteja, '*Sikh Politics*' Kuruksetra, 1983, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *File No. 459/11/1921*, Home Political, NAI.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

'There is little common between the two movements (Gurdwara reform movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement) beyond hatred of British rule'.

Sir Edward Maclagan, Governor of Punjab, said:<sup>4</sup>

'Though the Akalis spoke of themselves as Non-Cooperators and though the movement has been stimulated by the Non-cooperation Movement....still the Akali movement as a whole has developed in the main on lines of its own and independently of the general Non-Cooperation Movement'.

Unlike the Muslim in Khilafat agitation, the Sikhs did not give the rein of the leadership of their movement to the Congress. Besides, the SGPC followed Non-Cooperation only as a technique; through it they wanted to strengthen and advance Gurdwara reform movement.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the SGPC kept its programme of Non-Cooperation quite separate from the political oriented programme of Congress. For example, in its initial stage, the SGPC only followed the boycott of liquor and British goods. It commended Panchayats with the 'ostensible purpose of resorting to process of purification.'<sup>6</sup> It never suggested boycott of courts, schools and titles.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, this, when the Congress decided to boycott the Prince of Wales' visit in July 1921, the SGPC had only adopted it after the confiscation of keys by the government.<sup>8</sup>

The question was why did the Sikhs keep the identity of their religious struggle separate? Why did they not permit that to become

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<sup>4</sup> *File No. 459/1921*, Home Political, NAI.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics, 1915-1922*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 326.

<sup>6</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and Sikh Awakening*, Jullundur, 1922, pp. 337-338; also see the statement of Bawa Harkishan Singh in *Akali Leaders Cases*, pp. 831-884.

<sup>7</sup> K.L. Tuteja, '*Sikh Politics*' Kuruksetra, 1983, p. 50

<sup>8</sup> *File No. 459/1921*, Home Political, NAI.

part of the Non-Cooperation Movement? Such a posture looked somewhat paradoxical. The fact was that the Sikh struggle for Gurdwara by its very nature was rooted in religion and was; thus, it circumscribed by the religious moulds. Also, that was largely on account of tactical considerations combined with self assertiveness that the Sikhs did not desire the Gurdwara reform movement to be captured and led by political character to their religious reform movement. They were bound to arouse doubts among the Sikh masses and thereby alienating their sympathy for the cause they were fighting. Again the politicalization of the movement would have provided a handle to the government to crush their movement by branding it as ‘political’.

The SGPC always supported the national leaders and their programmes. It actively participated in the freedom movement it stood determine with the nationalists for the cause of India’s freedom. It firmly opposed and protested against commissions appointed at different times to appease the Indians. As has been discussed in the first chapter; the anti-government character of the Gurdwara reform movement had brought the Sikhs close to the national struggle.

It is to be noticed that the Sikhs were divided on the question whether the Simon Commission should be sided with or not. Nationalist leaders like Amar Singh Jhabhal, Baba Kharak Singh, Mangal Singh, Sardul Singh Caveeshar (SGPC officials) were all for boycotting it.<sup>9</sup> Sardar Ujjal Singh held that by appointing an all-white Commission the British had over-dependend on the Principal of communalism and disunity.<sup>10</sup> An All Sikh Parties Conference at Amritsar on January 29, 1928 to consider the Sikh attitude to the Simon Commission. About 150 prominent Sikhs from various factions such as the Shromani Akali Dal,

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<sup>9</sup> The Rayat, 29,11, 1927.

<sup>10</sup> *The Mauji*, 21.11.1927. *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*,(hereafter PLCD) 13.11.1928, Vol. XI, No. 14, Lahore, 1928, p. 753.

Central Akali Dal and Central Sikh League including Baba Kharak Singh, President of SGPC, S.B. Mehtab Singh, Sardar Mangal Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, Harbaksh Singh, Sardar Amar Singh Jhabal, Master Tara Singh, Gyani Sher Singh, and Sardar Buta Singh attended it. The decision to boycott it was confirmed.<sup>11</sup>

The Commission first visited Lahore on March 10, 1928. Its visit was marked by hostile demonstrations by various political parties at the Lahore railway station. The Congress and the Akalis were prominent among the 30,000 demonstrators on this occasion. Baba Kharak Singh, Amar Singh Jhabal and Sardul Singh Caveeshar of the SGPC were in the forefront. Baba Kharak Singh led the demonstrators.<sup>12</sup> When the Commission visited Lahore for the second time in October, 1928 the story of demonstration against it was repeated.<sup>13</sup>

The Nehru Report came out in August, 1928. It purported to provide a frame work of a Swaraj constitution, recommended that there would be no communal representation in Punjab and Bengal.<sup>14</sup> A meeting representing different Sikh schools of thought was held on 19 September 1928 at Shaheed Missionary College, Amritsar to discuss the Nehru Report. Baba Kharak Singh, the President of SGPC, presided over this meeting. There was a heated discussion on a resolution moved by Master Tara Singh, SGPC Vice-President that the Sikhs would not relinquish their rights in so far as special representation had been allowed to minorities in other provinces. The resolution urged that the Sikhs should be considered as an important minority and given the same consideration in Punjab.<sup>15</sup> The Report revealed that assurances given to the Sikhs by the Congress in their Madras resolution were not fulfilled.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Akali Te Pardesi*, 18.1.1928; 22.1.1928 and 31.1.1928.

<sup>12</sup> *Akali Te Pardesi*, 14.3.1928; *Sher-i-Punjab*, 18.8.1928.

<sup>13</sup> *Akali Te Pardesi*, 2.11.1928.

<sup>14</sup> *All Parties Conference: Nehru Report*, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> Master Tara Singh *Meri Yaad*, Sikh Religious Book Society, Amritsar 1945, p. 101.

No doubt, the Lahore session of the Congress was important because it passed a resolution in favour of Complete Independence; and it also marked the end of the Nehru Report as a whole.

With the lapse of the Nehru Report and assurance given by the Congress the agitated Sikh community was pacified. An all parties Sikh meeting passed a resolution appreciating Gandhi's efforts and those of the Congress to meet the Sikh demands.<sup>16</sup> The gulf had thus been bridged and on 26 January 1930, a large number of Sikhs participated in the Independence Day celebrations.<sup>17</sup> Master Tara Singh appealed to the Sikh councilors to resign their seats in defence to the Congress programme.<sup>18</sup> On 6 March 1930, Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congressite Sikh leaders Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Amar Singh Jhabbal and others welcomed it. Jaswant Singh led a Jatha of the Sikhs to break the salt law.<sup>19</sup> However, there was a difference of opinion between Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh of the SGPC over the question of participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Baba Kharak Singh complained that despite Gandhi's assurance of including the saffron colour of the Sikhs in the national flag, it had not been done so far. Therefore, he refused to participate in the Movement till the "Sikh Safforon colour" was included in the flag.<sup>20</sup> In this connection resolution had been passed on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1930, in which it was pleaded that the Sikh safforon colour in the National Flag should be included. But Master Tara Singh did not want to boycott the Civil Disobedience Movement, as he considered it suicidal for the Sikh community to keep itself aloof from the national

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<sup>16</sup> *The Tribune*, 14 January 1930.

<sup>17</sup> *The Tribune*, 29 January 1930.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> File No. 210/1/1930, *Home Political*, National Archives of India (NAI).

<sup>20</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated June 9, 1930, SGPC Library, Sri Amritsar; *The Tribune*, 15 April 1930. Statement of Baba Kharak Singh.

movement.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, under his guidance, Shiromani Akali Dal resolved to support the Civil Disobedience Movement. They placed at the disposal of Gandhi the immediate services of 5000 Sikhs.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the Central Sikh League also decided to participate in the Movement. Master Tara Singh was taken as a member of the “War Council” formed by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to co-ordinate the Civil Disobedience Movement in Punjab.<sup>23</sup> On Kitchlew’s arrest, Master Tara Singh was appointed “dictator” of this body. While leading Sikh Jatha to help the Pathan Satyagrahis at Peshawar, he was also arrested.<sup>24</sup>

A large number of Sikhs participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Out of 7000 satyagrahis 3000 were Sikhs who were convicted in Punjab.<sup>25</sup> Duni Chand, a Congress leader from Punjab, also admitted that the “Sikh community has perhaps sent proportionately the largest number to jails and has made glorious sacrifices.”<sup>26</sup> The main cause of the participation of the Sikh peasantry was the depression in prices of agriculture goods and the fast deteriorating agriculture conditions in the province.<sup>27</sup> But, it was the news of firing at the Sisganj Gurdwara, Delhi, by the police which gave a new turn to the Civil Disobedience Movement among the Sikhs.<sup>28</sup> Montmorency, Governor of Punjab, wrote to Irwin, the Viceroy: “The repercussions of this firing

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<sup>21</sup> Durlabh Singh, *The Valiant Fighter* (Lahore: Hero Publications, 1942), p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> *The Tribune*, 10 March 1930; *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Kailash Chander Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, New Delhi: Ashajanek Publications, 1974, p. 54; *The Tribune*, 6 May 1930.

<sup>24</sup> Master Tara Singh, *Meri Yaad*, Sikh Religion Book Society, Amritsar, 1944, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> *The Tribune*, 10 April 1931.

<sup>26</sup> Duni Chand, *The Ulster of India* Lahore: 1936, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> File No. 230/1/1930, *Home Political*, NAI; AICC File No. 40/1931, NMML.

<sup>28</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated June 9, 1930, SGPC Library, Sri Amritsar; For details, see *Report on the Firing into the Gurdwara Sisganj*.

at the Sisganj Gurdwara at Delhi on the Sikhs have been very unfortunate. I am afraid it has brought in a lot of extremist Sikhs as a body in the movement. Formerly, we only have to deal with individual Sikh agitating for the independence cause. We shall now have to deal with the whole extreme wing.”<sup>29</sup>

The SGPC, though the supreme religious body of the Sikhs, immediately launched a campaign of boycott and picketing of foreign cloth shops in protest against firing at Sisganj Gurdwara.<sup>30</sup> Although Baba Kharak Singh, President of the SGPC, was anxious to maintain the distinct identity of Sisganj agitation, the latter certainly gave strength to the Civil Disobedience Movement.<sup>31</sup> It cannot, however, be doubted that the Sikh participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was limited as well as cautious. It is pertinent to write that the Sikhs as per the instruction of the SGPC did not indulge in violence at all. The loyalist Sikhs formed new bodies like Aman Sabha and Sikh Sudhar Committees to hamper the spread of Civil Disobedience Movement in the Sikh community.<sup>32</sup> Another straw came over the question of the “flag” which was used by Baba Kharak Singh and his allies to prevent the Sikhs from joining the Civil disobedience.<sup>33</sup> Even the Sisganj firing which once blazed the sky failed to generate much opposition amongst the Sikh community and gradually lost force.<sup>34</sup> Another reason why the Sikhs accepted the Civil Disobedience Movement in low key could be found in their continued obsession with the question of communal representation. The government had long been concerned with the

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<sup>29</sup> Montmorency to Irwin, *Halifax Papers*, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>30</sup> File No. 11/1&KW/1931, *Home Department Political*, NAI, New Delhi.

<sup>31</sup> AICC File No. G146/1930, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>32</sup> *The Tribune*, 10 June 1930.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Santanam to AICC, *The Tribune*, 2 November 1930.

<sup>34</sup> *The Tribune*, 11 March 1931.

problem.<sup>35</sup> The minority psychosis of the Sikhs naturally impelled them to think more in terms of adequate representation than the bigger issues like the Civil Disobedience Movement.

In the meantime, the Simon Commission submitted its report on June 7, 1930. It unanimously decided to continue the separate electorate and reservation of seats. In Punjab it did not disturb the statutory majority of the Muslims. For Sikhs the commission recommended that ‘their representation cannot be certainly reduced through it would be impossible to concede so large a percentage as 30% without doing injustice to the other communities in the province’.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the report was not accepted by the moderate and nor by the extremist Sikhs.<sup>37</sup> Ujjal Singh, a moderate Sikh leader, said:<sup>38</sup>

The report is from all points of view entirely unacceptable. The sooner it is buried and forgotten the better for Indian and for the British government.

The government of India also sent to the Home government in England on September 20, 1930, a dispatch containing its fresh proposal for the future constitutional reforms.<sup>39</sup> It recommended ‘a majority of two seats for Muslims over Hindus and Sikhs combined a proportion of 49% seats of the house as a whole’.<sup>40</sup> For the Sikhs, it only suggested

<sup>35</sup> D.A. Low, “Civil Martial Law: The Government of India and the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-34”, D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj*, (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977), p. 167.

<sup>36</sup> Indian Statutory Commission, Report, Vol. II, pp. 60-63.

<sup>37</sup> File No. 18/7/1930, Home Political; *The Tribune*, July 3, 8, and 13, 1930.  
<sup>38</sup> *The Tribune*, July 8, 1930.

<sup>39</sup> *Government of India Despatch on Proposals for Constitutional Reforms*, 1930.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*; Under this scheme, the total composition of the Punjab Legislative Council would be as under

Existing Population	Population of Punjab without Ambala Division	
Muslim	55.3%	61.8%
Hindus	31.8%	23.6%
Sikhs	11.1%	1.6%
Others	1.8%	2.0%

18% seats, little less than the existing share of representation.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the dispatch was also strongly criticized by the Sikhs. The Central Sikh League, Shiromanni Akali Dal and SGPC passed resolutions in condemnation of it.<sup>42</sup>

The Second Round Table Conference opened in London on 7 September 1931. Gandhi was the sole representative of the Congress. Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh represented the Sikhs.<sup>43</sup> Like the first Round Table Conference minorities Committees were again appointed.<sup>44</sup> Gandhi presented the Congress Working Committee's formula, which according to Coupland, was a "reproduction of the scheme of the Nehru Report".<sup>45</sup> As it was acceptable neither to the Muslims nor to the Sikhs, Gandhi did not press for it.<sup>46</sup> The Congress position on this question, therefore, was one of the greatest possible accommodations.<sup>47</sup> Finally, in the absence of any solution of the communal problem, the British government was requested to give its own verdict on the communal question.<sup>48</sup> On 16 August 1932, Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of England, on behalf of His Majesty's government, announced the Communal Award which retained the separate electorates, and three communities in Punjab were represented as follows:<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *The Tribune*, November 21, 27 and December 27, 1931.

<sup>43</sup> As there was a dispute between Master Tara Singh and Giani Sher Singh over the nomination of Sikh representatives for Round Table Conference, the government decided to send those Sikh representatives who attended the *First Round Table Conference*.

<sup>44</sup> *Proceedings of Minorities Committees*, pp. 1340-1345.

<sup>45</sup> R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem 1833-1935*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1968, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> *Round Conference, Second Session, Proceedings of Minorities Committees*, pp. 1347-1349.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC date March 1, 1932, SGPC Library, Sri Amritsar; *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Templewood Papers*, NMML, New Delhi.

	<u>Reservation of Seats</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
General (Hindu)	43+1 to women	27.42%
Muslims	86+2 to women	51.42%
Sikhs	32+1 to women	18.85%

The Muslims thus secured a statutory majority, whereas the Hindus and the Sikhs gained nothing by the Award. The Communal Award was strongly condemned by the Sikhs. It was denounced as a “scrap of paper” which should be buried along with the Simon and Nehru Reports.<sup>50</sup> The position of the Sikhs, therefore, became very untenable in this arrangement. Sardar Bhag Singh, on behalf of the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee, came out with the statement that the Khalsa would resist to the last man any attempt to establish a communal Raj in the Punjab. A Council of Action was created to cope with the exigency. It consisted of 17 members. They took a vow before the Holy Granth that they would fight against any communal majority that might be unforced upon the Province.<sup>51</sup>

A meeting of Council of Action took place on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1932 at Shahdara near Lahore. It decided to create a voluntary army called “Akali Shahidi Fauj” (Akali Martyrs’ Army) of one *lakh*. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1932, over thirty leading Sikh leaders belonging to the SGPC executive committee issued a manifesto commenting on the objection taken by Dr. Mohammad Iqbal on its language. The manifesto read that when the Muslims regarded safeguards essential for their own community, so they should not grudge the same to others. The Sikhs, on the conclusion of a

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<sup>50</sup> File No. 41/4/32, *Home Department Political*, NAI, New Delhi.

<sup>51</sup> *Majithia Papers*, File No. 48 and 154, p. 11; *Mitra Register*, 1932, Vol. II, pp. 340-342.

Diwan on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1932, also observed the Sikh Rights Day.<sup>52</sup> Sardar Ujjal Singh, in his letter to the daily *Tribune*, Lahore, also denounced the Award. However, the Governor wanted to win the sympathy of all sections in order to make him look acceptable to all elements in the Province. On August 4, 1932, he called Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Sampuran Singh, Gyani Sher Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh at Shimla and assured them that he would fight against the Communal Award. This made the Sikhs inclined towards Sir Sikandar and their stand, i.e., their united opposition to the Communal Award became weak.<sup>53</sup> The Council of Action denounced this action of the Sikh leaders, in its meeting on August 14, 1932.

The sub-committee of the SGPC met on August 11, 1932. This sub-committee had all the important men like Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh, Sir Jogendra Singh, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Raja Sir Daljit Singh, etc. The said Sikh leaders issued a statement on August 17, 1932, from Shimla. Criticizing the Award of the Prime Minister, they held that the Sikhs had lost faith in justice and wisdom of the British Government that did not care for the rightful representation of those who paid 40% of the land revenue. The Punjab Government Fortnightly Report to the Government of India for the fortnight ending August 31, 1932, read that the Award “has been received in the rural areas with apathy and in political circles with dissatisfaction by the Hindus and the Sikhs, and on the whole with disguised satisfaction by the Mohammedans”, to observe September 17, 1932, as Anti-Communal

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<sup>52</sup> *The Akali Te Pardesi*, 31.7.1932; *Mitra Register*, Vol. II, Calcuta, 1930, pp. 342-43; P.G.R., Fortnight ending August 15, 1931, G.O.I., *Home Department Political*, File No. 18/10-32, NAI, New Delhi.

<sup>53</sup> *The Tribune*, 6.8.1932; *The Akali Te Pardesi*, 6.8.1932; Tarlok Singh, *Social History of Modern India*, Delhi, 1972, pp. 293-94.

Award Day. It also resolved that the Shromani Akali Dal should recruit Akali Shahidi Fauj.<sup>54</sup> It was decided that a new body called “Guru Khalsa Darbar”<sup>55</sup> should be created and entrusted with the task of pioneering the agitation against the Award. On August 31, 1932, the Council of Action appreciated the resignations of Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Sampuran Singh from the RTC and the Advisory Committee. On September 17, 1932, the Sikhs observed Anti-Communal Award Day. They passed resolutions asking the Government to take back the Communal Award, as that decision did the greatest injustice to the Sikhs of the Punjab.<sup>56</sup> The Hindu and the Sikh members walked out of the Punjab Legislature on November 7, 1932. They pointed out the following defects in the Award:<sup>57</sup> The Award divided Punjab into various groups and obstructed impartial Government; it established permanent majority of a religious group and gave it more than it asked for. It did not give any weightage to the Sikhs as it had given to minorities in other provinces, and it did not give the Hindus even their due (according to population); it discriminated in the matter of weightage; and in other provinces separate constituencies had been proposed to protect minorities but in the Punjab it was proposed to be done to protect a majority. It was, however, found that the Sikhs though unanimous in rejecting the Award, were not agreed on the form of action to be taken in this respect. The extremists wanted to take to the

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<sup>54</sup> *The Khalsa Te Khalsa Advocate*, 20.8.1932; P.G.R., Fortnight ending August 31, 1932, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/11-32; *The Akali Te Pardesi*, 22.8.1932, and *The Akali*, 21.8.1932.

<sup>55</sup> Harjinder Singh, Dilgeer, *Shiromani Akali Dal, Jullundur*, n.d., p. 126.

<sup>56</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated October 30, 1932, SGPC library, Sri Amritsar; *The Akali Te Pardesi*, September 2, 1932; *The Tribune*, September 18, 1932.

<sup>57</sup> P.L.C.D., Vol. XXII, No. I, Lahore, 1932, p. 65; *The Khalsa Te Khalsa Advocate*, 12.11.1932.

Congress creed and tactics of Civil Disobedience. It was realized that if the Sikhs failed to get the Award modified they should refuse to accept the new constitution.<sup>58</sup> Baba Kharak Singh impressed upon the Khalsa Darbar not to yield on any point in the coming Unity Conference until the interests of the Sikhs even outside Punjab were also safe.<sup>59</sup>

Gyani Sher Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh, Kartar Singh Cambellpuri of the SGPC and a few representatives of the CKD were all present in this conference. The Conference agreed to give in Punjab 51% seats to the Muslims, 20% to the Sikhs, 27% to the Hindus and the remaining 2% to the rest of the communities. It also agreed to give 30% seats to the Muslims in the Central Legislature as well. It was strange that the Sikhs accepted this absolute majority in favour of the Muslims in Punjab. Gyani Sher Singh even issued a statement to the effect that if the safeguards for the Sikhs were satisfactory they should be prepared to agree to the allotment of 51% representation to the Muslims.<sup>60</sup> The Sikhs might have agreed to such a thing to give a jerk to the British who thought that the Indian leaders could in no case come out with an agreed solution by conceding 51% representation in favour of the Muslims. It meant status quo for the British so far as the exploitation of the Indians was concerned. Or, the Sikhs might have done it to test the good faith of the Muslims. It could also be said that since the Sikh leaders were busy maneuvering in connection with the coming Gurdwara elections, to be held in April, 1933, they might not have been able to pay full attention

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<sup>58</sup> G.O.I., *Home Department Political*, File No. 41-4/32, NAI, New Delhi Punjab Government letter No. 16789, dated 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1932.

<sup>59</sup> *Mitra Register*, 1932, Vol. II, pp. 343-45; *Proceedings of the Bengal Sikh Conference* held at Calcutta on 30.11.1932.

<sup>60</sup> Harjinder Singh, Dilgeer, *Shiromani Akali Dal, Jallundur*, n.d., p. 127; P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.12.1932, G.O.I., *Home Department Political*, File No. 18/15-32, NAI, New Delhi.

to this problem.<sup>61</sup> This was pointed out by the Nehru Report and the Communal Award. The Sikhs naturally found themselves nowhere. The Sikh Leaders were sore even with the Congress. Sardar Amar Singh held that that was a betrayal of the Sikhs and it was confirmed by the fact that the Congress went against the Sikhs in the RTC. The Sikhs were deceived.

So, in order to eliminate the statutory majority of Muslims, they started demanding a national government with a complete abolition of communal representation.<sup>62</sup> But they warned that if the communal representation was retained, the Sikhs must secure 30% seats to protect their interest and also identity.<sup>63</sup>

The demand for a Sikh Home land for the Sikhs had its genesis in the 1930s when India had become a mosaic land of communalism due to the separate communal electorates. The demand was counter-poise against the demand of the Muslim League and the Congress Party. Indian National Congress demanded complete independence for India whereas at the all India Muslim League conference, in his presidential address, Sir Mohammad Iqbal emphasized upon the formation of the “Moslem State” in the north-west part of India consisting of the Punjab, the N.W.F.P., Sind and Baluchistan.<sup>64</sup> The Sikh leadership had been highly influenced by these developments in the Muslim League politics. Sardar Ujjal Singh presented a memorandum at the Round Table Conference (1937) demanding the re-organisation of Punjab. The

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<sup>61</sup> Proceeding of the SGPC dated June 17, 1933, SGPC Library, Sri Amritsar.

<sup>62</sup> The nationalist Sikh leaders of the Central Sikh League had strongly advocated the complete abolition of separate representation in the national interests.

<sup>63</sup> Resolution of Central Sikh League, *The Tribune*, 11, October 1927.

<sup>64</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated March 1, 1932; for further details see M.V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1969, pp. 81-82.

memorandum was signed by 64 leading Sikhs, mostly the members of the general assembly of the SGPC. It was on the basis of Pakistan resolution that India was divided into two sovereign states i.e., India and Pakistan in August 1947.<sup>65</sup>

Immediately after passing of the Lahore Resolution, the Sikh politics also moved towards the idea of Sikh home land. The Attari conference of the Akali Dal and SGPC in March 1940 passed a resolution stating its opposition to the demand of Pakistan “tooth and nail”. It further emphasized that the power should be transferred to the one central authority. In case the demand of the Muslim League for separate state was acceded to, the separate state for the Sikhs should also be granted, was the firm demand of the SGPC’s leadership.<sup>66</sup> In one more meeting of October 26, 1945, S. Ajit Singh presented one more resolution (Gurmata) against the partition of the country. This was an annual meeting of SGPC that deemed it a duty to warn the entire Sikh Panth of the impending danger of the partition. The Muslim League’s increasing demand for Pakistan was highly dangerous to Panthik existence.<sup>67</sup> While Lord Wavell had announced that the structure of the

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<sup>65</sup> For the Original Draft of the Lahore Resolution see C.H. Philips & Others (ed); *The Evolution of India And Pakistan: 1857-1947, Select Documents*, Vol. IV, London: 1962.

<sup>66</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated April 3, 1940, February 27, 1943, and October 26, 1945; V.N. Narayanan, “The Crusade For Khalistan”, *Express Magazine*, 1 November 1981, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Although the idea of the creation of a Pakistan in India is a product of the communal propaganda of the Two Nation Theory being carried on by patriot like Lala Lajpat Rai, Professor Hardayal M.A. etc. since 1920-24, but this idea took a practical shape in the minds of the Muslims in 1930-32 after the Muslim League presidential speeches of Dr. Mohd. Iqbal. That he delivered under the cunning policy of the British against setting up *Swaraj* or Republic and to keep away Muslims from Hindus. Therefore, majority of the capitalist Muslims, who were already against freedom started advocating this cause and became champions of Pakistans. To hinder the formation of a national government as a Republic at the departure of the English in the near future, they made a plan for the partition of the country area wise on the basis of majority of principle with the help of Muslim Nawabs, affluent people and

Indian Government would be decided through a constituent assembly after the elections of state assemblies, decks were being cleared for the creation of Pakistan through the statements of a prominent member of the Labour ministry, Sir Stratford Cripps. The Muslim League had already declared to contest elections on the question of Pakistan. The Congress opposition to Pakistan was being toned down through Congress President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's statement at Sri Nagar and Congress Working Committee's resolution at Poona. The communists were openly supporting Pakistan.<sup>68</sup> These circumstances had increased the danger of Pakistan's creation. On behalf of the entire Panth, this meeting desired to declare in categorical terms that Sikhs would never accept the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan since the Governmental structure of India was to be decided by the representatives of the members of India's assemblies, the meeting appealed to all the country men to send to the assemblies only those persons who were against the idea of Pakistan so that the country and the Sikh Panth could be saved from this danger.<sup>69</sup> In the end, the meeting appealed to the entire Panth that in order to stop this danger, every Sikh should be ready to make any sacrifice to save the unity of the country and the Panth from this calamity.<sup>70</sup> This kind of feeling of the SGPC in particular and the Sikhs in general was not only a great service to the Panth and the country but it was indeed a matter of great significance and credit for which the SGPC could feel proud. Again in March 1946, the SGPC stressed upon the establishment of the separate

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the fanatic Mullahs. This scheme was almost certain to materialize on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 with the partition of the country. Being the earliest inhabitants of Punjab, the Sikhs thought it necessary to pass this *Gurmata* in the committee.

<sup>68</sup> Gurdwara *Gazettee*, Amritsar, October 1945, p. 41.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*; also see view of the Local Government's on the Recommendations of the Indian Statutory Commission, October-November 1945, pp. 231-232.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*; Council of State Debates, Fourth Session, Vol. II (Delhi 1945), 148, pp. 156-58, NAI, New Delhi.

home-land for the Sikhs. It was on the basis of this, the Sikhs “bluntly rejected the proposal and regarded that the Sikhs were not treated at par with the Muslims under the proposals of the Cabinet Mission.”<sup>71</sup>

At the time of the partition of India, the Sikh leadership was approached by the Congress as well as the Muslim League separately to join India or Pakistan. The Maharaja of Patiala, Hardit Singh Malik, Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh had a meeting with Mr. M.A. Jinnah in Delhi. When Mr. Jinnah was asked about the clearer picture about the share of the Sikhs in the cabinet, the Parliament, the judiciary and the armed forces, he promised them to agree whatever the Sikhs desired.<sup>72</sup> The Sikhs were also encouraged by the British officials like Penderal Moon to join hands with the Muslim League and to decide to link their fate with Pakistan.<sup>73</sup> Similarly Shaukat Hyat Khan (Son of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan) also promised that the justice would be “meted out to all freely and equally” and their rights would be fully secured. But Sikhs and their leadership were not prepared to join Pakistan on the basis of the above stated generalities.<sup>74</sup> In the month of July 1947, the legislators of the Punjab-the Hindu and Sikhs passed a resolution in favour of the partition of the country.<sup>75</sup> The resolution further stated: ‘In the divided Indian Punjab special constitutional measures are imperative to meet the just aspirations and rights of the Sikhs’.

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<sup>71</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated March 9, 1946; J.C. Hadson, *India Census Ethnography: 1901-31*, Lahore, 1931, p. 155; For further details see Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), pp. 81-82.

<sup>72</sup> For further details see Hardit Singh Malik, “*Khalistan: Let us Keep Gur Cool I*”, *Indian Express*, 12 November 1981, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> For further details about the role played by Penderal Moon see, *Divide and Quit*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1961, pp. 84-87.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82. And also see Gopal Singh, “*Khalistan: A Rajinder to Malik Hardit Singh*”, *Indian Express*, 14 November 1981, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Cited in S. Singh, “*Khalistan: the Politics of Passion*”; *Hindustan Times*, Sunday Magazine, 4 October 1981, p. 1.

**Formation of Punjabi suba:** Punjab, immediately after the partition, was faced with a number of problems. The SGPC and also the *Akali* party extended its whole-hearted support to the Congress in all political matters.<sup>76</sup> In fact, Master Tara Singh gave a rebuff to the Pakistan propaganda that there was a demand for a Sikh state in the following words: “The bogey of the Sikh state in the East Punjab, is being conjured up by the Pakistan propaganda machine in order to create ill will and dissensions between the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Hindus and the Sikhs will rise and fall together. Their fates were inextricably linked”.<sup>77</sup> However, the demand for a Punjabi speaking state was made in February 1948. Master Tara Singh denounced the Government of India’s policy of not referring the question of demarcation of boundaries of Punjab to a Commission. Changing drastically his earlier stance, he observed, “We have a culture different from the Hindus. Our culture is Gurmukhi culture and our literature is also in the Gurmukhi script.” He added. “We want to have a province where we can safeguard our culture and our traditions.”<sup>78</sup> *The Tribune* in its issue of November 12, 1949, wrote, “Why the Sikhs should show such a dread of the so-called Hindu majority in Punjab, when they are ready to accept the Hindu majority at the Centre which has a far greater power than the provinces, we don’t know? The logic of the communal fanatic defies rational understanding. He is so desperately keen on promoting his own claims and he forgets that other interests and claims are to be reckoned with.”<sup>79</sup> It was then

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<sup>76</sup> *The Statesman*, 2 December, 1947.

<sup>77</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, 21 September, 1947.

<sup>78</sup> *Akali Patrika*, 11 October, 1949.

<sup>79</sup> *The Tribune*, 12 November, 1949.

and thereafter that the Congress openly started opposing a linguistic state in Punjab.<sup>80</sup>

Amarjeet Singh Ahluwalia, Gursewak Singh and Tarlochan Singh in a meeting interrupted him during his speech by shouting slogans, “Le Ke Rahenge Punjabi suba.” Nehru declared, “I will not allow India to be divided again. I will not allow any further trouble. If there is any trouble in any part of India, I would put it down with all my strength.”<sup>81</sup> But, after many ups and downs the State Reorganisation Commission was set up. It had three members with Syed Fazil Ali as Chairman and H.N. Kunjru and K.M. Pannikar as members. The Akali Dal under the guidance of SGPC leadership submitted memorandum urging the formation of a Punjabi speaking state. It urged the formation of Punjabi suba by merging the Punjabi speaking areas of Punjab, Pepsu and Rajasthan on the basis of language.<sup>82</sup> The efforts to achieve their end were stepped up by all the political parties, with a view to check the popular upsurge and maintain peaceful conditions. Meanwhile the Punjab government imposed ban on shouting of slogans including that of “Punjabi suba”. It threatened direct action-‘morcha’. But the Government of India declared that it was prepared to meet the challenge.<sup>83</sup> On May 10, Master Tara Singh led out the first batch of 10 volunteers in defiance of the ban.<sup>84</sup> The climax was reached on 4 July, 1955 when the police raided certain buildings attached to the Golden Temple in a bid to flush out the so-called aiders and abettors of the

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>81</sup> A.S. Sarhadi: *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 221.

<sup>82</sup> Devinder Pal Sandhu, *Sikhs in Indian Politics: Study of a minority*, New Delhi, 1992, pp 91-92.

<sup>83</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Revolutionary Terrorist Movement in the Punjab, Teaching Politics*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 1976, p. 291.

<sup>84</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1983, p. 321.

movement from their sanctuaries.’<sup>85</sup> Later the police teargassed a crowd pressing close to the precincts of the shrine. It was complained by the SGPC authorities that some shells had landed inside the parkarma. The Sikh community took umbrage at the police action and charged it with interference in the religious affairs of the community. SGPC passed a resolution against the police action on Harmander Sahib.<sup>86</sup> The charge against the Chief Minister was that he had pampered them. So he offered his resignation to Pt. Nehru and it was accepted.<sup>87</sup>

At the Punjabi suba conference held in Chandigarh, Master Tara Singh disclosed his intention of launching a mass movement on a vast scale. In preparation, a silent procession was to be taken out in Delhi on March 5, 1959. The government acted swiftly and took him into custody. The Delhi march did take place with Sikhs participating from all over the country and also from all sections of the community. The procession ended in a religious ‘Diwan’ at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj. Within a week, Master Tara Singh was released from Jail.<sup>88</sup> Soon after, he declared that he would contest the SGPC’s President Election of 1960. The following resolution was passed proposed by Harnam Singh, retired Judge of the High Court, and seconded by Gurnam Singh and the retired Judge of the High Court, later the Chief Minister of the Punjab, who had just entered active politics:

"This meeting has given anxious consideration to the permutation of the 26 members' language committee to consider the ways and means

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<sup>85</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, Ashjanak Publication, New Delhi, 1974, p. 163.

<sup>86</sup> Proceeding of SGPC dated 16-10-1955; also Ashok, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee the Daa Panjah Salah Ithihas, p. 281.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1983, p. 328.

to solve the linguistic disputes, but after consideration of the whole matter, the committee records:

- (a) That the committee is being organised to unsettle the formula settled several years ago;
- (b) The committee has been formed in utter contravention of the statutory provision formulated in November, 1956;
- (c) That the recommendations of the Good Relations committee (two man committee) had already been rejected by the Shiromani Akali Dal, SGPC and the Chief Khalsa Dewan.

"This being the position, no useful purpose will be served by considering and reconsidering the report that has already been rejected by the Sikhs. The only solution of the linguistic trouble of the Punjab is to bifurcate/ divide the Punjab on the basis of Punjabi and Hindi.

"In these circumstances, the SGPC does not feel justified in participating in the Language committee set up by the Punjab Government.<sup>89</sup> The Congress nominees in the 1960 election were fielded under the banner of a Sadh Sangat Board.<sup>90</sup> Shiromani Akali Dal secured 132 seats out of 139. The Board secured 4 seats only, while the pro-communist Desh got only one. Master Tara Singh was elected President of the SGPC for the purpose to achieve its goal. The SGPC boycotted the 26 members committee appointed by the government to consider the language issue.<sup>91</sup>

To launch a morcha for the Punjabi suba, it became necessary for the leadership of the Sikhs to first break away from the Congress. The working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal directed its legislators

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<sup>89</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, pp.319-320; proceeding of the SGPC date 7-3-1960, S.S. Ashok, p-313.

<sup>90</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, Ashajanak Publication, New Delhi, 1974, p. 169.

<sup>91</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p.318-319.

to resign, but only five of them accepted this directive.<sup>92</sup> On 30 April, Master Tara Singh announced his intention to march to Delhi. He was going with the avowed object of leading a procession to press for the formation of a Punjabi suba. But he was arrested on 21 May along with five Sikh legislators who had resigned from the Congress party.<sup>93</sup> Then a reign of terror was created throughout the state. Despite all this the Shiromani Akali Dal stuck to its programme of sending a 'Jatha' of 11 men to Delhi without Master Tara Singh.<sup>94</sup> It was opening a war on two fronts. Its volunteers were going to court arrest both in Delhi and Amritsar simultaneously. The movement gained momentum as the time lapsed. Every day Jathas would come out of the precincts of the Darbar Sahib, peacefully and courted arrest. The routine courting of arrest at Amritsar was 21 daily, whereas it was 11 at Delhi. Even government admitted that 26,000 Sikhs were arrested headed by Master Tara Singh, President of the SGPC. In his absence, Sant Fateh Singh, the then Senior Vice President of Shiromani Akali Dal took over as dictator of the 'morcha'. He was then a non-entity, but rose in power and stature in no time. Because of his advisers and admired techniques, he began to clear the position regarding the nature of the Punjabi suba demand.<sup>95</sup> He stated, "We are not concerned with percentages; that we want the Punjabi suba to comprise the areas where Punjabi language is spoken; that it is immaterial whether the Sikhs are in majority or minority in such an area." On 29 October, 1960, Sant Fateh Singh wrote a letter to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru drawing his attention to the large scale arrest of the Sikhs on fake charges suppression of the entire Sikh press and reign of terror let loose by the government. In a firm reply, the latter made it

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<sup>92</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis: Short History*, Chandigarh, 1966, p. 129.

<sup>93</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, Ashajanak Publication, New Delhi, 1974, p. 169.

<sup>94</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 326.

<sup>95</sup> A.S. Narang, *Storm over the Satluj in Akali Politics*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 154.

clear to him that there could be no Punjabi suba. On this Sant Fateh Singh announced his decision to go on to fast-unto-death on 18 December, 1960, for the achievement of Punjabi suba.<sup>96</sup> Sant Fateh Singh began his fast-unto-death on the schedule date in the presence of a huge gathering. Pt. Nehru made a personal appeal to him to give up his fast. He also invited him for talks to Delhi.<sup>97</sup> Later, on 8 January, 1961, the Prime Minister Nehru said: “.....but essentially Punjabi is the dominant language and should be encouraged in every way. Now I add one word to this because Master Tara Singh mentioned it to me about Sant Fateh Singh’s having an oath and he should not be asked to break it. I do not like asking any person to break a solemn oath, but I am convinced that what I have said and what I am stating today and the fact that I have placed before the country with regard to the Punjabi language, clearly meets the substance of what Sant Fateh Singh said. Oaths are not taken with regard to some legal aspect or statutory ways of looking at things, but about the substance of things. And therefore what I have stated should be quite enough for Sant Fateh Singh to meet this difficulty and give up his fast”.<sup>98</sup>

SGPC’s Working Committee had a brief meeting near the venue of the fast. It requested Sant Fateh Singh to give up his fast as the working committee was satisfied with the statement of the Prime Minister. So he agreed.<sup>99</sup> After breaking his fast he met the Prime Minister at Delhi on 8 February, 1961. During these negotiations, Sant Fateh Singh emphasized the linguistic basis that made Pt. Nehru more considerate

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<sup>96</sup> Gulshan Rai, *Formation of Haryana*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> Gulshan Rai, *Formation of Haryana*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, p. p. 99.

<sup>98</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 343-344.

<sup>99</sup> Gulshan Rai, *Formation of Haryana*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987, p. 100.

than he had been before.<sup>100</sup> There were two more rounds of talks, one on March 1, 1961 and the second on 12 May, 1961. The negotiations with the government did not bear any fruit. In sheer exasperation, Master Tara Singh undertook to fast-unto-death unless the Punjabi suba was conceded. He began his fast on August 15, 1961 in the ‘sanctuary’ of the Golden Temple. The government refused to yield. After 43 days without food, the old warrior’s spirit was broken and he gave up the self-imposed ordeal. He saved his life but killed his political career.

Sant Fateh Singh met the Prime Minister on February 7, 1963 and presented cheque of Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the SGPc as its contribution to the National Defence Fund.<sup>101</sup> Speaking at a conference on February 16, 1963, Sant Fateh Singh said, “Our immediate objective is to drive out Chinese. The movement for the formation of Punjabi suba *has* been slowed down, as it is a domestic problem. This demand will not be pressed during the emergency. We will again take up the issue after the Chinese are driven out.”<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, Partap Singh Kairon, who had checkmated the Punjabi suba movement to a large extent, had to face an enquiry on charges of corruption.<sup>103</sup> Early a deputation of the joint opposition Sant Akali Dal legislators had given a memorial to the President, Radha Krishnan, enumerating 32 charges of corruption, nepotism and favoritism against the Chief Minister. On 22 October, 1963, the Prime Minister had recommended to the President to have an inquiry made by some high authority into the charges leveled against the Chief Minister.<sup>104</sup> Finally, on the recommendation of the S.R. Dass Commission, Kairon was left with no alternative but to resign from

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<sup>100</sup> R. Brass Paul, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1974), p. 321.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Revolutionary Terrorist Movement in the Punjab, Teaching Politics*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 1976, p. 390.

<sup>104</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 394-95.

office. Ram Kishan succeeded him.<sup>105</sup> His departure from the political scene was a major event in Punjab politics, He was the one who had not given way or surrendered despite the tremendous sacrifices, which the Sikhs had made for the attainment of Punjabi suba.<sup>106</sup> Then Sant had two meetings with Shastri Ji on 7 and 8 August, 1965. Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda and Home Secretary L.P. Singh were present at these talks. The Sant made clear that his patience had been exhausted and unless the 'justice' to the Sikhs by the centre denying them Punjabi speaking state was quickly righted the Sikhs would be forced to resort to direct action.<sup>107</sup> Shastri assured him that he would do everything possible to remove the sense of grievances from their minds. A similar statement was made by Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Home Minister of India. But on 16 August, 1965, Sant declared that he would begin his fast-unto-death on 10 September, 1965 and immolate himself on 25 September exactly at 9 a.m.<sup>108</sup> However, in view of the armed conflict with Pakistan, Sant Fateh Singh decided on 9 September to postpone his fast.

The cease-fire took place on September 26, 1965 on the intervention of the Security Council; Soviet Union and U.S.A Soon after the Government of India appointed a Cabinet Committee and a Parliamentary sub-committee for the fresh examination of the Punabi Suba issue.<sup>109</sup> The Cabinet committee consisted of Indira Gandhi (the then Information and Broadcasting Minister) Y.B. Chavan (the then Defence Minister) and Mahavir Tyagi (the then Rehabilitation Minister), would from time to time, advise the Parliamentary Committee to be set

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<sup>105</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee Daa Panjah Salah Ithihas*, p. 180.

<sup>106</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 398.

<sup>107</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 180.

<sup>108</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past of Present*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 180-81.

<sup>109</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, pp. 416-17.

up with Hukam Singh, Speaker, as its President.<sup>110</sup> How Punjabi could be denied the benefit of the very national principle, while the people of other states were already enjoying the right to have life and work under their own linguistic state”.<sup>111</sup> Y.B. Chavan being conscious of the Sikhs unqualified support in Indo-Pak war supported Kamraj and he observed, “A decision on the demand for a Punjabi state would not be delayed because of the geographical position of Punjab.”<sup>112</sup> Besides, Sant Fateh Singh opposed Master Tara Singh’s demand for independent Sikh State or for self-determined political status of the Sikhs. He also remarked “Our demand has been a Punjabi suba as part of India. Bharat is my country and each particle of this land is sacred to me. How can we leave our home?”<sup>113</sup> A resolution was passed to recongnize the sacrifices made by nemoures Sikhs in the struggle for achievinig for Punjabi suba. Almost all the members present in the meeting not only admired their contribution rather they also highlighted their dedication and devotion to the cause of the achieving the goal i.e. the Punjabi suba.<sup>114</sup>

The Parliamentary Committee submitted its report on 18 March, 1966. It recommended that the Punjabi speaking region be constituted into a unilingual Punjabi State, the Hindi-speaking region be formed into Haryana State and the hill areas of the erstwhile Punjab be merged with Himachal Pradesh. The recommendation was officially accepted on 21 March, 1966 by the Government of India. A Punjab Boundary Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice J.C. Shah with Subimal

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<sup>110</sup> Gulshan Rai, *Formation of Haryana*, Delhi, 1987, p. 120.

<sup>111</sup> P.C. Joshi, “*Triumph of a Just Cause Punjabi Suba: A Symposium*”, National Book Club, New Delhi, n.d., p. 82.

<sup>112</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, 10 March, 1966.

<sup>113</sup> A.S. Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, Delhi, 1970, p. 449.

<sup>114</sup> Proceeding of the general meeting of the SGPC held on 20h March 1966; also coated by Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee Daa Panjah Sala Ithisas*.

Datt and M.M. Philip as members was constituted.<sup>115</sup> The Commission submitted its report on the division of Punjab to the Central Government on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1966. It reorganized the state by giving Hindi speaking area to Haryana, Punjabi speaking area to reorganized Punjab and hill areas (including Kangra and Shimla districts) to Himachal Pradesh. After minor modifications, the Shah Commission report was introduced as 'Punjab Reorganization Bill' (1966) and was approved by both houses of the Parliament in September, 1966.<sup>116</sup> On 18 September, 1966, received the President's assent and Punjab was divided once again, this time into three parts.

The SGPC leadership reacted sharply; it put pressure on the Union Government for the inclusion of Bhakra Dam, Punjabi speaking areas Chandigarh in Punjab. The Sikh leader Sant Fetej Singh issued a statement warning that the Government would be responsible for the consequences that might follow if Chandigarh went to Haryana.<sup>117</sup> Leadership of the SGPC held that Punjab was the jeweled crown of India at one time and its boundaries extended from Peshawar right up to gates of Mathura. Those who had the good fortune of seeing the glory of Punjab had very sad day when it was cut down to eleven districts. The partition of the county in 1947 had already crippled Punjab. It limped on to resecure place of honour in the country. The 1966 partition impaired it beyond repair for all times to come. What has been the gain, only

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<sup>115</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Revolutionary Terrorist Movement in the Punjab, Teaching Politics*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 1976, p. 311.

<sup>116</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Revolutionary Terrorist Movement in the Punjab, Teaching Politics*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 1976 p. 312.

<sup>117</sup> *The Statesman*, 10 June, 1966; for further details also see the proceedings of the general meeting of the SGPC dated November 18, 1966.

sentimental victory of the Akali Dal that they got a Punjabi suba with a majority of the Sikh population? In fact, many people, even from amongst the Sikhs and particularly those who did not see eye to eye with Sant Feteah Singh pointed it as a Punjabi Subi (feminine gender of Suba).

The reorganization of Punjab into two states, i.e., Haryana and the Punjabi suba, was the triumph for the Akali Dal, in fact the SGPC which was looking after the administration of the Gurdwara s. However, the formation of the Punjabi suba did not satisfy the Sikhs because all the Punjabi speaking areas had not been included in it. Moreover, Chandigarh was also kept outside it. It was made a joint capital of Haryana and Punjabi suba. Darshan Singh Pheruman had a fast unto death (August-October 1969). He scarified his life for the inclusion of Chandigarh into the Punjabi suba after 74 days of fast. Realizing the gravity of the issue in January 1970, Mrs. Indira Gandhi announced that Chandigarh would be given to Punjab and a part of Fazilka *Tehsil* and Abohar to Haryana. This award was to be implemented by January 1975. The decision of course remains till day unimplemented. However, this decision was also resented by the Sikhs because Fazilka and Abohar are not contiguous areas to Haryana. Therefore, a corridor would have to be given to Haryana.<sup>118</sup>

This analysis speaks plainly the role played by the Congress Party. It caused the frustration among the Sikhs as well as other political parties elsewhere in other provinces which laid emphasis the state autonomy. It was this background which led the Sikh leadership to adopt the controversial Resolution at Anandpur Sahib-popularly known as the 'Anandpur Resolution', 1973. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution

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<sup>118</sup> S. Singh, Dangerous apathy to *Khalistan*". *Patriot*, 1 April 1981, R. No. 14, p. 3.

(1973) was the mile stone in the Sikh politics. It was being considered to be Sikhs 'Magna Carta'. It demanded that:<sup>119</sup> "The authority of the Centre should be confined to the defence of the country, foreign relations, communications, railways and currency while all the residuary subjects should be placed under the jurisdiction of a new Punjab. The province of Punjab should have the right to frame its own constitution for these subjects".

It is not out of place rather important to mention in brief about the Nirankari Sant of Delhi who was much different from the successors of Baba Dyal Singh, the founder of the Narankari sect. The Sant Nirankari's based there teachings on the Sikh scriptures. However their leader Baba Avtar Singh also composed his own *Avtar bani* and *yug purush*. Their decreasing reverence for the Granth Sahib, coupled with their belief in the living guru, made the Sant Nirankaris extremely unorthodox in the eyes of the Sikhs nurtured on the doctrines of the Singh Sabhas. The publication of a book on the nature, affluence and influence of the Sant Nirankaris brought them into clearer focus.<sup>120</sup>

On the Baisakhi of 1978 the Nirankari Baba Gurbachan Singh held a congregation at Amritsar. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, (who had succeeded to the headship of the Damdami Taksal at chowk Mehta, near Amritsar in 1977), who subscribed to the twin doctrine of Guru Granth and Guru Panth, regarded Baba Gurbachan Singh's congregation in the holiest city of the Sikhs on the day when Guru Gobind Singh had instituted the Khalsa, as an affront to the entire Khalsa Panth.

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<sup>119</sup> Cited in "Divided *Akalis* Crops in Dark", *Indian Express*, 3 August 1981, p. 6.

<sup>120</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, The Sikhs of the Punjab, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 215-216; for more details see Balwant Gargi, *Nirankari Baba*, Delhi, 1973.

Encouraged by his open resentment over the Sant Nirankari Congregation, a number of Sikhs went there with the idea of stopping its proceeding. The Nirankaris were ready. Their bullets proved to be more deadly than the traditional swords of the Khalsa. They (the latter) as a result, lost many more lives than their opponents. So the Akali government took legal action. In June, 1978 however, a Hukmnama was issued from the Akal Takht to all the Sikhs that they should not keep any connection with the Sant Nirankaris and they should discountenance their heterodoxy. The Hukmnama referred to Baba Gurcharan Singh's false claims that he was an Avtar and to his turning from the Shabad-Guru to preach the workship of a human being.<sup>121</sup> The SGPC in its resolution denounced the killing of many innocent Sikhs by the supporters of Baba Gurbachan Singh in the said conference.

S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President SGPC gave a five point's programme to the members of the SGPC in particular and the Sikhs in general to carry out for the emancipation/ betterment of Sikhism. The Programme he gave to be carried out is as such: (i) To propagate Sikh religion, purity of Sikh ideology and to spread the principles of Sikhism among the Sikh masses; (ii) To protect and safeguard the political existence of the Sikhs; (iii) To strengthen the Sikh institutions and to see that their democratic character remain intact; (iv) To get solve the various problems of the Sikhs living abroad (in various countries); and (v) To reform the management of the Sikh gurdwaras. This programme was unanimously accepted in the general meeting of the SGPC.<sup>122</sup>

The idea of Khalistan was thrown out by Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan through a half page advertisement in the New York Times in

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<sup>121</sup> *Gurdwara Gazettee* July, 1978, p. 28.

<sup>122</sup> Proceedings of the general meeting SGPC held on March 28, 1979 (see appendix III for details).

October, 1971 after his brief spell as a Finance Minister under Lachhman Singh Gill. Whatever the superficial historians or self-interested politicians and public men may say about its antecedents, the idea of Khalishtan was altogether a new idea.<sup>123</sup> In the 1970 it was treated as a hoax and Chauhan was treated well by some eminent Congress leaders during his visits to India. In the late 1970s the defunct Sikh Students' Federation, originally founded in the 1940s was revived as the all India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) by Bhai Amrik Singh, son of the deceased Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale, who was closely linked with Sant Jarnail Singh.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, separatist ideas began to be aired. An announcement was made on June 16 1980, about the information of Khalistan by Balbir Singh Sandhu who put himself forth as the secretary – General and Jagjit Singh Chauhan as the President of the National Council of Khalishtan. Ganga Singh Dhillon a US citizen addressed the Sikh Education conference at Chandigarh in March 1981 to expound the idea that the Sikhs are a distinct Nation. His links with Jagjit Singh Chauhan and with the President of Pakistan were known to his Indian supporters including Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi and Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Nevertheless the SGPC did pass a resolution in 1981 that the Sikhs were a nation.<sup>125</sup> The National Council of Khalistan and the Dal Khalsa stood for an independent state for the Sikhs.<sup>126</sup>

Sant Harchand Singh Longowal presided over a world Sikh convention in July, 1981 which directed the Akali Dal to plan dharm

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<sup>123</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, The Sikhs of the Punjab, p. 216.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

yudh (righteous war) to pursue the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Early in September the Akali Dal mobilized support for its demands and gave a call for demonstration before the parliament to present their memorandum of grievance to the speaker of the Lok Sabha. Only a few of the volunteers were permitted to enter the capital. On September 21, however the Akalis were able to present a list of forty-five grievances to the prime Minister.<sup>127</sup>

The Shiromani Akali Dal organized to block the canal (nahar roko) an agitation on April 24 1982 with the support of the communist parties' at a village close to Kapuri from where the water of the Satlej was to be diverted to Haryana. Some of the volunteers were arrested. A month later another agitation was launched at Kapuri itself, which also failed to mobilize the peasantry. On July 26, 1982 the Akalis decided at last to launch their righteous war dharma yudh with effect from August 4. It started with Parkash Singh Badal courting arrest with a large number of other volunteers.<sup>128</sup> The dharm yudh for the political, economic cultural and religious demands of the Akalis gained increasing momentum in August and September. It became more and more difficult for the government to find room for the protesting volunteers in the existing jails. It is worth mentioning that on March 30, 1983, the SGPC not only admired the dharm yudh rather passed a resolution appreciating the passing of this resolution under the supervision of S. Harcharan Singh Longowal President of the Shiromani Akali Dal.<sup>129</sup>

The number of violent incidents had begun to increase steadily before the imposition of President's rule in October 1983. In 1982 about

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>128</sup> *The Tribune*, April 25, 1982, p. 7; also *The Hindustan Times*; J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, The Sikhs of the Punjab, p. 222.

<sup>129</sup> Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC held on March 30, 1983.

sixty such incidents had taken place. In 1983 the number rose to nearly 140. The monthly average by September 1983 rose to nine. In October the number of violent incidents rose suddenly to thirty six and in May. 1984 shot up to over fifty. There were bank robberies, thefts of weapons, cutting of telegraph wires, setting fire to railway stations, attacks on policeman, bomb explosions, murders of Nirankaris, murders of public men, and attacks on ministers. There was also the breaking of idols, damage to temple, sacrilege of gurdwaras, firing on Hindu shopkeepers, killing of cigarette seller, firing on Jagrata and Ram Lila crowds, indiscriminate firing and finally, the killing of Hindu passengers taken out of buses.<sup>130</sup>

On February 8, 1984 the Akalis organized a bandh to demonstrate their strength and their trust in non violent agitation. It was a success. A tripartite meeting was held on February 14 and 15, 1984 which was attended by five cabinet ministers and five secretaries five of the Akali leaders and fifteen leaders from the opposition parties.<sup>131</sup> It came close to a successful settlement. It was at this juncture that anti Sikh violence was orchestrated in Haryana to frustrate settlement.<sup>132</sup> In the absence of any initiative from the centre, Sant Longowal gave call in May for non cooperation with effect from June 3 the day which operation bluestar was to start.

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<sup>130</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, The Sikhs of the Punjab, p. 223; for further details it will be more useful if the newspapers such as *The Tribune*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India* and even some vernacular papers of this period are consulted.

<sup>131</sup> For the tripartite and also the secret meeting of the Akali leaders and their meetings with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Minister, see white paper on the Punjab agitation, p 91-97, also coated by Dr. J.S. Grewal in his book, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, pp. 5-6.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

The question of army action in the Punjab was first discussed in December 1983<sup>133</sup> Indira Gandhi decided finally in favour of the army action in April 1984 however when Sant Longowal declared on May 23 that that morcha for non-cooperation would start on June 3 Indira Gandhi emissaries met Parkash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra on may 27-28 to suggest that Akali leaders should negotiate settlement instead of launching a morcha. The Akali leaders were prepared to pick up the old threads but on June 2 it became clear that nothing short of the demands in the Anandpur Sahib resolution was acceptable to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.<sup>134</sup>

On June 3 the Punjab was cut off from the rest of the country and movement within the state made impossible by the presence of troops everywhere. On the morning of June 6 tanks were used against 'the enemy' in the Akal Takht. Meanwhile, tanks and helicopter were used, among other things to deter the thousand of agitated villagers from converging upon Amritsar and several other gurdawaras in the state were taken over by the army. The crucial action temple complex was over before the nightfall of June 6. A large number of pilgrims including women and children died in cross firing. The infuriated troops shot some young men dead with hands tied at their backs with their own turbans. Some died of suffocation in the 'prisoners camp' setup in a room of

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<sup>133</sup> Chand Joshi, *Bhindrawale: Myth and reality*, p. 19. In this discussion the idea figured that army action would consolidate Hindu votes in favour of the Congress; quoted by Dr. J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, p. 226.

<sup>134</sup> The Prime Minister broadcast to the nation on June 2, 1984, referred to settlement through negotiations but there was hardly any point in it by them for the text of the broadcast, white paper on the Punjab Agitation, p. 105-09; also see J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, p. 226.

Guru Nanak niwas. According to one estimate the total casualties of officers and men were about 700 and of civilians about 5,000.<sup>135</sup>

The Sikhs were outraged at the attack on the Golden Temple complex and the destruction of Akal Takht. All sections of Sikh opinion from the urban sophisticates sipping scotch in their bungalows in Delhi to the peasants in the fields were horrified at what had happened. Even those who had never condoned secession could not get themselves to justify the army action.<sup>136</sup> Two congressite Sikhs resigned from the parliament. The two best known historians of the Sikhs returned 'honours' received from the President of India. Operation Bluestar revived the memories of Ahmad Shah Abdali in Sikh imagination. Action from prime minister Indira Gandhi came too late and it proved to be too much.<sup>137</sup>

In its interim committee held on 10.7.1984 the executive committee of the SGPC strongly condemned the army action on Akal Takha, Sri Darbar Sahib and other gurdwaras. By doing so the government of India had not only tried to crush the spirit of the Sikhs but had also violated the fundamental rights of the Sikhs. It also demanded the immediate withdrawal of troops from the Darbar Sahib complex.

Besides the Anandpur Sahib resolution, there are certain other pending demands of the Sikhs in general in which the SGPC is also interested namely, the recognition of the SGPC as the only religious representative body of the Sikhs, enactment of an All India Gurdwara

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<sup>135</sup> Chand Joshi, *Bindrawale: Myth and reality*, p. 161; J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.3, p. 227.

<sup>136</sup> M.J. Akbar, *India: The Siege within*, Harmondsworth, 1985, p. 205.

<sup>137</sup> Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's last battle, p. 13; also see Chand Joshi, *Bindrawale: Myth and reality*, p. 75.

Act,<sup>138</sup> declaration of Holy City status to Amritsar, renaming of a train after Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), installation of a transmitter at Harmandir Sahib<sup>139</sup> and the like. The political demand of the Sikhs included the redrawing of the boundaries of the Punjab in such a way as to incorporate contiguous Punjabi speaking areas of Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, of course, without parting away with Abohar and Fazilka; more autonomy for states, setting up of more industries in Punjab; exclusive control over the waters of the Ravi, Sutlej, Beas and the Bakhra Dam and the like.

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<sup>138</sup> Proceeding of the general meeting held on November 28, 1973.

<sup>139</sup> Proceeding of the SGPC March 12, 1978.