CONCLUSION

The movement for redrawing State boundaries on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity has had a long history. Formation of linguistic provinces was one of the early demands of the Indian National Congress in its struggle for achieving self-government. It had accepted the idea of reorganisation of States as early as 1920. There were number of Congress resolutions supporting this idea before partition. After partition, there began a new phase of history in Punjab. As a result of mass migration the Sikh population heavily concentrated in the north-western districts of Punjab. Most of these districts now became Sikh majority districts to have significant political implication after independence in India. The Akali leadership felt that there would be no escape from the political domination of majority community. Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader raised the demand of Punjabi Suba by the exclusion of certain area from the then existing State of Punjab.

The demand got impetus when Constituent Assembly rejected the demand of the Akalis for statutory safe guards, they made a demand for the creation of Punjabi – speaking State population known as Punjabi Suba. Punjabi Suba has been defined differently by different political parties and leaders of different political parties. Some events at this time gave a handle to Akalis to spread Punjabi Suba movement further. The Sikh leadership had hoped that after independence it would be possible for the Congress to help them for the protection of their identity through constitutional safeguards. But after independence, all assurances were ignored. The Sikhs strongly
felt that they had been betrayed by the Congress Party. The Centre Government viewed the Punjabi Suba demand as potential threat to the present secular regime and to Indian unity.

As far as the demand for Punjabi Suba is concerned, the language problem has played vital role in the State. In April 1948 Punjab was declared a bilingual province both Punjabi in Gurmukhi and Hindi in Devnagri script as its languages. It gave Punjabi and Hindi equal status in government schools for primary classes. In February 1949, a Hindu dominated Municipal Committee of Jullundur resolved to introduce Hindi in Devnagri script in all schools. The Sikhs argued that Punjabi in Gurmukhi script should be declared the sole language of the Punjab. The Hindus opposed this suggestion. Then in order to settle matters the Sachar Formula on the language question was adopted on 1st October 1949. The importance of the Sachar Formula lay in the fact that the government accepted the Akali claim that the Punjab could be demarcated into Hindi speaking and Punjabi-speaking regions. Sachar Formula later became the basis of Akali Dal’s demand for the division of Punjab. The formula met with the severe criticism at the hands of the Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj, the Jan Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha. The organisations and the Hindu vernacular press started a continuous and often offensive campaign against the claim of Punjuab as to be regional language and Punjabi Suba. The main opposition to the demand for Punjabi Suba came from the Hindu businessmen from the Punjabi region of the province. They felt that if a Sikh majority Punjabi-speaking province was created it would be controlled by the Sikhs and they would not find themselves. The Hindu dominated vernacular press advanced every type of argument to prove that a Punjabi Suba was prejudicial to
the defence and security of the country. In the heated communal atmosphere, the press carried on the campaign in the bitterness of language.

From 1948 onward, the Sikhs fought for a uni-lingual Punjab. Their insistence on Punjabi and Gurmukhi script was for them intrinsically linked with the preservation of their separate identity. Hindu press began to reproduce pre-partition Sikh writings written in the period when Sikhs feared they would find themselves in Muslim Pakistan as a helpless minority, as a proof that the Sikhs represented by the Akali Dal, wanted a sovereign Sikh State.

As a consequence of the independence, a new political state called PEPSU came into being in July 1948. Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader welcomed the formation of Pepsu but again advocated the merger of the Sikh majority areas of Punjab into Pepsu and formation of a Punjabi – speaking State. So Akalis were not satisfied with the formation of Pepsu. The Government wanted to give them, Pepsu as a concession but they were not happy with this plan.

We have discussed that, while other States, after the independence of India, were redemarcated to make them linguistically homogeneous, Punjab was left out. The fear of the Hindu-Sikh tension was propounded as the reason for this discrimination. The Hindus had, hence, declared themselves to be Hindi-speaking. The Sikhs had by now learnt how agitations had erupted in regard to such demarcations in various parts of the country. There were riots in Bombay among the Maharashtrians and Gujarati claimants of the administration. In Andhra, Sri Sriramula had died after a prolonged fast which he had undertaken until death, demanding the creation of
Andhra. And so on and so forth. The Sikhs had also decided to continue their agitation for the same reasons thus. The demand of the Akali Dal for Punjabi Suba received incidental support from some Hindu leaders and organisations in the Haryana area, an area that the Akali Dal desired to exclude from the Punjab. The Hindu leaders demanded the separation of Haryana area from the Punjab. The leaders from the hill districts demanded merger of their areas into Himachal Pradesh. These two parallel trends in Punjab reinforced the Akali demand for the creation of Punjabi Suba.

With the change of leadership at the Centre due to the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, there was a change in the thinking pattern of the new leadership regarding the demand for Punjabi Suba. Lal Bhadur Shastri became the Prime Minister of India. Partap Singh Kairon resigned from the Chief Ministership in June 1964. It was then the anti-Punjabi Suba front got weakened.

It may also be stated that the Akali Dal had to encounter with tough opposition from certain sections of Hindus. The issues raised by them were given communal colour. The masses who were fed on such propaganda had not argument. They did not know of the commitment made by the Congress during the colonial rule when the Punjabis and particularly the Sikhs participated valorously on all fronts of the freedom movement whenever they were called upon to do so. The Hindu dominated vernacular press advanced every type of argument that the demand for Punjabi Suba was an attempt to prove that Punjabi Suba was prejudicial to defence and security. The Bhartiya Jan Sangh and Arya Samaj opposed the demand. The Harijan Sikhs also opposed the demand because of their fear that as an economically
and socially under privileged group, they would come under non-Harijan Sikhs. Leftist Parties (CPI and CPM), P.S.P. and Swatantra Party felt that non-acceptance of the demand was not only an act of injustice but also matter of discrimination against the minority community.

Before 1 November 1966 in the bilingual Punjab, Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was taught and learned by the residents of all the area in the erstwhile Punjab. But after reorganisation neither Haryana nor Himachal Pradesh chose Punjabi as their second language.

The credit for the making of Punjabi Suba goes to Master Tara Singh for keeping the agitation alive, although on communal lines. The new leader who took the responsibility of Suba was Sant Fateh Singh. Master Tara Singh was the saver of the Panth who though did not see the Punjabi Suba taking its birth yet he was the integral part of the movement which culminated in the birth of Punjabi Suba.

Between 1947-1966, the press played a major role in highlighting the politics of Punjab. The vernacular press was most voiceorous and had the maximum impact. Last but not the least it may be said that formation of the Punjabi Speaking State failed to fulfill the political aims of the Akalis.