INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The coalition ministry which had ended with Khizr Hayat's resignation in March 1947 was revived after 15 August 1947, without the Unionists and those legislators whose constituencies were left in the new Punjab.¹ In pre-partition days, the Sikhs were barely 13 percent of the population. They disappeared without a compact base in any sizeable area. The partition of Punjab solved the communal minority problem in the West Punjab because all Sikhs and Hindu migrated to East Punjab. After partition, Sikhs formed a majority in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jullundur, Hosiarpur, Ludhiana and Ferozepur. They found themselves concentrated in a large contiguous territory.²

After independence, the Congress Party had come in power in the Punjab as well as in the Centre. Formation of linguistic provinces was one of the early demands of the Indian National Congress in its struggle for achieving self-government. The plan for linguistic reorganisation for powerful support from the Nehru Committee (1928). In 1928 the Indian National Congress appointed a Committee under Pandit Motilal Nehru to draft a democratic constitution for India's Swaraj, on the issue of language and State. The Motilal Nehru Committee of the All Parties Conference (1928), upheld the linguistic principle by stating that though geographical, economic and financial principles should partly govern the redistribution of provinces, the main consideration must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned.³ The Congress Party accepted the formation of linguistic provinces and supported this idea⁴. But after independence, the Congress had second thought. After
independence, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru while conceding the linguistic principle remarked, “first thing must come first and the first thing is the security and stability of India.”

In 1948 the government appointed a Linguistic Provinces Commission to examine the question of linguistic States on 17 June 1948 under the Chairmanship of S.K. Dar, a former Judge of the Allahabad High Court, Dr. Panna Lal, former Advisor to the Governor of U.P., Jagat Narayan Lal, a member of the Constituent Assembly from Bihar. Associate members included Andhra, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka, three from Bombay (one each from Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra) and two from the central provinces and Berar (one each from Maharashtra and Mahakoshal).

The Commission’s report, which was submitted in December 1948, put a strong case against the immediate formation of linguistic States on the ground that circumstances obtained in independent India were very different from those characterising periods when the Congress had declared itself in favour of reorganisation of provinces. The Commission recommended postponement of the consideration of this question on the plea that the time was not ripe for such reorganisation in larger interest of the Indian Union. In its report, it recommended despite its reservations the formation of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra on linguistic basis.

In 1948, a Committee was appointed by the Indian Nation Congress at its Jaipur Session to review the position in the light of the report of the Dar Commission. This Committee known as the J.V.P. Committee (consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya). Its report was adopted by the
Congress Working Committee in April 1949. This Committee also suggested the postponement of redistribution of the provinces on linguistic basis under the plea that such a step would cause serious administrative dislocation and political and economic instability".9

As a consequence of the independence, a new political State called Pepsu came into being in July 1948. It consisted of Patiala and other Princely States in the East Punjab, comprising Patiala, Kalsia, Nabha, Jind, Malerkotla, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Nalagarh.10

Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader criticised the Government of the India’s policy of not referring the question of demarcation of boundaries of the Punjab to the Dar Commission. He said, “We have a culture different from the Hindus. Our culture is Gurumukhi 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 tradition”.12 Answering the criticism the his demand smacked of communalism, he declared that he wanted the right of self-determination for Panth in religious, social, political and other matters and added that “if this was dubbed as communalism, he was a communalist”.13 Harbans Singh writes in his letter to the editor of The Tribune’ on 12 May 1949 that, ‘the Sikh demands were described as communal and anti national by members of the majority community and their press especially in the East Punjab.’14

The Punjab Government submitted is proposals popularly known as “Sachar Formula”15 on the language question on 1 October 1949. The proposals were signed by the members: Bhim Sen Sachar, Gopi Chand Bhargava, Ujjal Singh, Kartar Singh.
In order to counted the Akali demand of the Punjabi Suba and the claim of Punjabi as the regional language of the Punjabi-speaking area, the Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj, the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu vernacular press started a campaign that the Hindus of this area should declare Hindi as their mother tongue.16

The Akali Dal manitesto of 1952 elections elaborated the reason for demanding a Punjabi speaking State that the Shiromani Akali Dal is in favour of the formation of provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis.17

The formal presentation of this case was made to the States Reorganisation Commission established by the government of India in 1953.18 In October 1955 the Commission rejected the demand for Punjabi Suba or Punjabi speaking State. The Commission rejected the demand for Greater Delhi or Vishal Haryana demand and recommended the merger of the districts of Mahendergarh and Jind into the Haryana region19. Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava20 speaking in the Parliament gave figures from various departments, and as represented in ministries, Parliament and State Legislatures, to prove that Haryana had only 5.5 per cent representation.21 He admitted that the demand for separate Haryana like Punjabi Suba, was a product of frustration.22 Pandit Sri Ram Sharma, M.P. and Dewan Alakh Dhari, ex-Chief of Alwar supported the demand for Haryana Prant.23

The Maha Punjab demand was supported by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jan Sangh and the Arya Samaj. They criticised the demand for the Punjabi Suba as a purely communal demand,
camouflaged as a demand for a linguistic State and advocated the formation the Maha Punjab comprising the Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh and a few districts of western U.P. which would be more suitable in the changed political situation of the State after the partition. The Hindu dominated vernacular press condemned the Akali demand for Punjabi Suba. The newspaper ‘Pratap’ writes, “If Punjabi Suba was created, the Hindus would not find themselves”.

The Regional Formula divided the Punjab State on linguistic basis. The plan was not acceptable to the Punjabi Hindus and the people of Haryana. The Regional Formula could not satisfy the Akalis for long time. Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh raised the demand of Punjabi Suba from time to time. The agitation became more and more vigourous that the government had to accept Master ji as challenge. The Parliamentary Committee submitted its report to the Lok Sabha on 18 March 1966 in which it suggested that the State of Punjab should be recognised on linguistic basis. The Punjab Hindus opposed to the recommendation of the Committee. The leaders of the Jan Sangh, Arya Samaj, Ekta Samiti and even Congress met Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Home Minister of India and discussed the report with him and placed their doubts and apprehensions before him. Although Congress was not in favour of the formation of Punjabi Suba. The various political parties like Communist Party, Parja Socialist Party supported the demand for Punjabi speaking State purely on the merits of areas having Punjabi speaking population. Thus the State was recognised on linguistic basis on 1 November 1966 and Haryana as the seventeenth State of India came into existence. After independence, Jullundur became a major centre of journalism in
Punjab, being just across the border from Pakistan and also a large city with considerable facilities where many refugees settled down. The Tribune was established in Lahore in the nineteenth century and had become identified with the country’s freedom struggle, set up first in Ambala. The Tribune soon regained its lost glory and when the new city of Chandigarh came up found a permanent home for itself there in 1957. The newspaper ‘Ajit’ was started in 1940 from Lahore. It claimed to be spokesmen of the Sikh community and had the blessings of the Akali Dal. After partition, it was dominated by Giani Kartar Singh and his group. The Minister opposed the demand for formation of a Punjabi-speaking province and this policy was supported by the paper. After he left the ministry, the paper changed its policies and supported the demand for a Punjabi-speaking province. The paper converted from Urdu into Punjabi in 1955. The newspaper ‘Akali Patrika’ a paper in Punjabi of pre-independence vintage, had migrated from Pakistan and was the leading Punjabi daily in India with its base in Jullundur. The newspaper ‘Naya Zamana’ of the Communist Party of India was founded in 1951, and Jagjit Singh Anand who was once a member of Parliament became its editor. This paper was founded in Jullundur. In Punjab, the well-known Urdu daily newspaper ‘Pratap’ was founded at Lahore in 1919 by Mahashe Krishen and published from there under his editorship till 1947. Jullundur had already become the home of the papers which migrated to India with their owners from Pakistan like Pratap and Ajit. During 1923, the Hindustan Times was founded. First editor was K.M. Pannikar (a Minister in Patiala State) and Delhi was the home of this paper.
The Sikhs had no paper of their own in the pre-partition time except the ‘Ajit’ and ‘Akali Patrika’. The pre-partition press of the Punjab consisted mostly of the daily paper like Pratap, which belong to the Arya Samaj section of the Punjab Hindus. The vernacular Hindu press tried to mould Hindi public opinion. This again had a serious impact on the Sikhs.33
FOOT NOTES


4. *See Appendix -1, p. 7-9.*


10. *The Tribune*, 16 July 1948; for details see Chapter V.

11. He was born in a Hindu family in a small village near Rawalpindi. He graduated from college in 1907 and decided to devote his life to the service of Panth. Before independence, he raised the demands of Azad Punjab and Sikhistan. Master Tara Singh led several militant agitation in support of Akali claims, first against the British Government, then the Unionist


15. According to this, the State was divided into two linguistic regions, Punjabi and Hindi. It was decided that English and Urdu would remain the official and court languages and were to be progressively replaced by Hindi and Punjabi. See *The Hindustan Times*, 2 October 1949.


19. Along with the demand for the Greater Delhi or Vishal Haryana the idea for a Sikh State sprang up as early as 1942. The Hindu leaders opposed the Sachar Formula. Before partition, the demand was supported by Motilal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi. Mittal, S.C., *Haryana: A Historical Perspective*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1986. p.11.

20. Thakur Dass Bhargava, an advocate of Hissar was President of Harijan Sewak Sangh, MLA (Central) 1926-30 and 1945-47-


28. Sant Fateh Singh was incharge of the morcha for Punjabi Suba in the absence of Master Tara Singh. Master Tara Singh was arrested in the Akali agitation of 1960. He introduced a new convincing note into the Akali agitation for the Punjabi Suba by presenting this demand on purely linguistic consideration. He had series of meetings with Pandit Nehru. The defeat of Akalis in the elections of 1962 was followed by a divisions among Master ji and Sant Fateh Singh. The Sant Akali Dal won the elections of 1965 and faced the challenge of Master group very boldly and lost no time in intensifying his efforts for the realisation of Punjabi Suba. He continued his
struggle after the formation of Punjabi Suba. Lamba, Krishan Gopal, *Dynamics of Punjabi Suba Movement*, op. cit., p. 164.


32. Bhatt, S.C., op. cit., p. 84.