CHAPTER-I

THE AKALIS AND THE DEMAND FOR PUNJABI SUBA WITH REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF VERNACULAR PRESS

After independence, the Congress Party had come in power in the Punjab. The Congress Party assumed power in the State with Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava as Chief Minister or Premier as the office was then known. Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava included in his ministry representatives from the Nagoke group of the Akali Dal, which was known for its pro-Congress sympathies in the pre-independence period.

The Akali Dal joined the Congress Party including such important leaders as Udham Singh Nagoke, Isher Singh Majhail and Swaran Singh. The Shiromani Akali Dal permitted the Akali members of the East Punjab Legislative Assembly to join the Congress. This was done on 18 March 1948. In June 1948, Giani Kartar Singh was included in the Cabinet in place of Isher Singh Majhail as a concession to the Akalis Giani Kartar Singh (who served as minister in the Punjab Government) and Baldev Singh joined the Congress.

Pre-independence Punjab had an absolute majority of Muslims with 53% of the total population, Hindus constituted 30% and Sikhs 15% merely. After partition the Hindus became a majority community with 61% of the population. The Sikhs became a sizeable minority with 33% of the population within six districts.

Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader saw in the Sikhs constituting a majority in a strategic province, the possibility of the Akali becoming the exclusive repository of power independently of the Congress. He
declared in February 1948; “We have a culture different from the Hindus and our culture is Gurmukhi and our literature is also in Gurmukhi script and therefore, we want to have a province where we can safeguard our culture and traditions”. He made it clear, however that he was asking for was not a sovereign Sikh State, but rather a province within the Indian federation. He recognized, that Hindus and Sikhs had close cultural and social relations, but did not fore close the possibility of an exchange of population if the relations worsened.

Before June 1947, the Constituent Assembly had been eager to consider statutory reservations for religious minorities. The Constituent Assembly’s Advisory Committee on Minorities and Fundamental Rights had in its report of 8 August 1947, recommended reservation of seats in the legislatures for ‘certain specific minorities’ which included Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Christians, but not Sikhs. These recommendations were adopted with certain modifications by the Constituent Assembly on August 27, 1947, and then included in Draft Constitution. Again, the Sikh minority was not mentioned as such by the Constituent Assembly.

On 24 February 1948, a special sub-committee with Vallabhabhai Patel as Chairman and with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and K.M. Munshi as members, were appointed to examine, among minorities problems affecting East Punjab and West Bengal, the question of safeguards for the Sikhs.

The Indian National Congress supported the demand for the linguistic reorganisation of the States in 1921 and continued to do so till after the partition. The Constituent Assembly of India appointed a
Linguistic Provinces Commission on 17 June 1948 under the Chairmanship of S.K. Dar (a retried Judge of the Allahabad High Court). Other members were Panna Lal and a Congress member of the Constituent Assembly Jagat Naryan Lal.17

The formal decision making Hindi a medium of instruction in the schools along with Punjab was announced in June 1948 by the first Premier of the East Punjab, Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava. This was a concession to those of the majority community who, inspite of being Punjabi – speaking proclaimed Hindi to be their mother tongue.18

On 15 July 1948, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel referred to the Patiala and East Punjab East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) as 'a Sikh homeland' when he inaugurated the new State. It has been formed two months earlier by merging the Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Kalsia together with the States of Malerkotla and Nalagarh19. The Pepsu came into political existence on 20 August 1948, when the Rajpramukh Gian Singh Rarewala took over the administration of the States.20

The Shiromani Akali Dal submitted to the sub-committee a charter of demands seeking for the Sikhs a separate electorate, 50 per cent seats for them the Punjab Legislature and 5 per cent in the Central Legislature and communal representation for the Sikhs.21 In November 1948, all the Sikh members of the East Punjab Assembly had drawn a list of 13 demands.22 The important among there were:

1. Representation be given to the Sikhs on the basis of 1941 Census without excluding Sikhs who had migrated to other provinces.
2. They should be given five percent representation in the Centre and reservations of seats in other provinces.

3. Posts of the Governor and Premier of the East Punjab should go alternately to a Hindu or a Sikh.

4. One Sikh Minister and one Deputy Minister be taken in the Central Cabinet.

5. Fifty percent representation in the Provincial Cabinet and the Assembly be reserved for them.

6. Gurgaon district and Loharu State should be separated from the East Punjab.

7. Forty percent seats in services should be reserved for Sikhs.

8. If the above demands were rejected, Sikhs Should be allowed to form a new province of seven districts, i.e. Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ambala.

The special sub-committee of Advisory Committee on minorities rejected the demand of the Akalis for statutory safeguards. It said, “We cannot recommend either communal electorate or weightage in the legislatures, which are the main demands of the Shiromani Akali Dal.”

The Linguistic Provinces Commission or Dar Commission submitted its report on 10 December 1948. The members of the Commission observed that the acceptance of the demand linguistic province would be unpatriotic because that would weaken national unity at a time when every effort was required to preserve it. The Commission of this recommended postponement of the consideration
of this question on the plea that the time was not ripe for such reorganization 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.25

Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader criticised the Government of India's policy and expressed the opinion that the formation of linguistic provinces, "is sure to give rise to a demand for the separation of linguistic groups elsewhere. Claims have already been made by the Sikhs Jats and other and these demands will in course of time be intensified and become live issues, if once the formation of linguistic provinces is decided upon".26

Just eight days after the publication of the Dar Commission Report, the Congress Committee appointed at its Jaipur Session, another Committee known as 'JVP Committee' because of the initials of the name of the three Committee members (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhabhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya) to consider the recommendation of the Dar Commission.27

The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal announced holding of a conference at Delhi on 20 February 1949, to voice the grievances such as the alleged discriminatory treatment of Sikhs in the services, denial of constitutional safeguards and denial to Punjabi of its rightful place in the education and administration of East Punjab.28

The Delhi administration clamped a ban on the meeting in the whole of Delhi. Master Tara Singh and other leaders were arrested. The Shiromani Akali Dal held a protest day throughout Punjab on 2 March 1949 and on 4 April 1949 a Sikh convention was held at Amritsar which was attended by intellectuals, political leaders, professors,
businessmen, doctors and lawyers. It was there that a formal demand for a Punjabi-speaking State was enunciated in clear terms for the first time and a resolution to that effect was unanimously passed.29

The Akali members inside the Congress Party functioned as a separate groups under the leadership of Giani Kartar Singh and Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava became increasingly dependent on the support of this group to maintain his position as the Chief Minister.30

Bhim Sen Sachar, the leader of the Congress Assembly Party before 1947 criticized Dr. Bhargava for a secret deal with the Akali Dal. But Bhim Sen Sachar himself carried on secret negotiations with the Akali Party with a view to wrest political power.31 The Akali extended its support to Bhim Sen Sachar who became Chief Minister on 6 April 1949.32

The JVP Committee submitted its report on 1 April 1949 and practically reiterated the opinion expressed by the Dar Commission. The Commission said that it was not an opportune time for the formation of new provinces.33

The Advisory Committee upheld the view of the sub-committee and recommended at a meeting held on 11 May, 1949, that “statutory reservation of seats for religious minorities should be abolished”. In the Advisory Committee, however, the Sikh members, Giani Kartar Singh and Ujjal Singh were able to extract the solitary concession that Sikhs belonging to four of the Scheduled Castes – Mazahabi, Ramdasi, Kabirpanthi and Sikligar – should have the same benefits as their Hindu counterparts. The report of the Advisory Committee came up before the Constituent Assembly on 25 May 1949 and was adopted on the following day.34
The language issue assumed its political dimensions only in the year 1949, for it was preceded by the demand for a Punjab-speaking State and other concessions by the Akali Party. The press has played an important role during this time. It was alleged by the Akali press that this Sikhs were given discriminatory treatment and the Sikh representation in almost all the Civil Departments of the East Punjab Government was very low. Niranjan Singh writing about the role of vernacular press in 'The Tribune' said, “that vernacular press in Punjab has been inflaming communal passions by writing irresponsibly and with impunity.”

In February 1949, a Hindu dominated Municipal Committee of Jullundur resolved to introduce Hindi in Devnagri script in all schools. The Sikhs argued that the spoken language of the Punjab barring Haryana region, was Punjabi and Haryana should be separated from the Punjab and attached to the Hindi speaking region and Punjab in Gurmukhi script should be declared the sole language of the Punjab. But the Hindus opposed this suggestions. On 9 June 1949, the Senate of the Punjab University rejected the proposal of Punjabi being adopted as the medium of instruction. The Akali press and leaders charged, “that Punjabi University Senate was completely dominated by the communal Hindus.”

The Punjab government decided to take the initiative in the matter. The Chief Minister Bhim Sen Sachar and Gaini Kartar Singh jointly decided to form 'Sachar Formula' on 1 October 1949. The formula demarcated Punjab into Zones, one Punjabi-speaking and the other, Hindi speaking for determining the medium of instruction in the schools. The Punjabi Zone consisted of the districts of Amritsar,
Jullundur, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, all the portions of Hissar district, lying to the east of Ferozepur, Patiala side of the Ghaggar river, Ropar and Kharar tehsils of Ambala district, to the Hindi Zone were assigned the districts of Gurgaon, Rohtak, Karnal, all portions of Hissar district lying to the south of Ghaggar river and Jagadhri and Naraingarh tehsils of Ambala district and Kangra. The remaining areas Shimla, Ambala, Chandigarh and Sirsa were declared bilingual. The importance of the Sachar formula lay in the fact that the government accepted the Akali claim that the Punjab could be demarcated into Punjab - speaking and Hindi-speaking regions. The formula was widely acclaimed by the Sikhs including the Akalis, though they criticised the right of the parents to choose the medium of instruction for the education of their children.

Bhim Sen Sachar's ministry lasted only for six months making way for Dr. Bhargava again. By this time the Akalis had failed to get any constitutional safeguards. In the Bhargava ministry, they began to feel rather ineffective.

The Sikhs baffled by such moves demanded linguistic state. Master Tara Singh in a signed article that appeared on November 1949 in the daily ‘Ajit’ said, “according to my estimate this province will be composed of 7, 8 or 9, districts of the East Punjab and more people may call it a Sikh area because there will be more religious, cultural and social affinity and oneness. This will be a province based on language alone. It may be given the name of Punjabi Suba”.

In a signed article, contributed to the Punjab monthly Sant Sipahi, Master Tara Singh declared that whatever name might be given it, he wanted an area where Sikhs were free from the domination of the
Hindus who constituted the monthly community. This area, he explained, would be Sikh homeland within the Indian Union, but enjoying internal autonomy on the same pattern as Jammu and Kashmir. Another important observation he made was that the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (Pepsu) should not merge with Punjab and proposed that the Punjabi speaking areas of the existing Punjab should be joined with Pepsu, so that “he could rightfully demand for it the status which Kashmir enjoys”.47

The proposal of Sachar Formula met with severe criticism at the hands of the Hindu organizations like the Arya Samaj, the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha.48

The Working Committee of Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a resolution on 28 May 1950 for the creation of Punjabi-speaking State on the basis of language and culture.49

In July 1950, the Shiromani Akali Dal issued a show cause notice to the Panthic MLAs who had merged in the Congress Assembly Party in early 1948, why they should not leave Congress Party and have a block of their own.50 This move of the Shiromani Akali Dal sparked of a strong opposition of the Congress amongst the Sikhs, which made the Congress High Command mobilize its forces amongst the Sikhs to oppose the creation of a linguistic State, it was then that Partap Singh Kairon, the then President of Punjab State Congress announced his opposition to the division of the State on a linguistic basis.51

The Punjab Pradesh Congress led by Sardar Partap Singh Kairon and Bhim Sen Sachar criticized the Congress Government, headed by Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava. The Central Preliminary Board advised
Gopi Chand Bhagava to resign. On 16 June 1951 Bhargava resigned as a Chief Minister and President’s rule was clamped in Punjab which was lifted on 4 April 1952.\(^{52}\)

The Headmasters and Principals of Khalsa High School retorted by calling a meeting on 23 May 1951 and resolved that the right of Punjabi should be safeguarded and Sachar formula should be implemented immediately.\(^{53}\)

The Hindu press began quoting from the Sikh writings and resolutions preceding partition to show that the latter were aspiring for Sikh state and were continuing with the same ambitions in the new set up. Quotations from pamphlets, papers and articles by Sikh writers of the pre-partition days were profusely given in Punjab Hindu press to engender communal feelings and to show that the Sikh and their organisations the Akali, were aspirants to a Sikh State and that their communalism must be curbed in ‘Secular India’ and they must be made to understand their places.\(^{54}\)

The Akali press and leaders started a counter propaganda which was intensified during the Census. Both the Hindu communal and Akali papers warned their communities that they should be careful about false entries by the Census staff.\(^{55}\)

The atmosphere was so much charged with communal poison that a number of communal riots took place in various towns like Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ambala.\(^{56}\)

The first general election in the country held under the new constitution in October 1952 gave Akali Dal the opportunity to take the issue to the voter. The election was fought on the basis of the Punjabi Suba. The Akalis lost the election but the leadership also
realized that to win a political battle, they will have to strengthen their religious base.57 In October 1952, the Akalis wrested the office of the President of the SGPC from Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke who was a pro-Congress Akali. In Pepsu Akalis formed a United Front Ministry on 20 April 1952.58

The formal support came to the Akalis from unexpected quarters. Towards the end of 1952, Potti Sriramula who was a prominent Gandhian advocate of the provincial autonomy, died on fast for the creation of Andhra. Four days later the Prime Minister announced the separation of Andhra from Madras as a Telugu-speaking State on 19 December 1953. The movement for linguistic state gathered fresh momentum.59 Master Tara Singh was now in a better position to fight the battle. The first shot was fired in February 1953, when another All Party Sikh Convention was held at Amritsar which demanded the appointment of the important Commission to go into the question discrimination against the Sikhs. On 27 December 1953, the Government of India appointed the States Reorganisation Commission to go into the problems of redemarcating the state boundaries in the country.60

The Working Committee of All India Congress Committee in its meeting in April 1954, decided that All Congress Committee and Congressmen should have freedom to represent their point of view before the States Reorganization Commission.61

Almost all the political parties and other organizations met the States Reorganization Commission on 18 April 1955 at Patiala. The Akali delegation, the Communist Party, the deputation of Ganganagar Citizens, the Batinda District Citizens Committee and the Barnala
Citizens Committee demanded the creation of a Punjabi speaking State.62

The Hindu political parties and other organisations such as the Jan Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the All Parties Maha Punjab Front Samiti in their joint memorandum opposed the Akali demand. The Samiti advocated its demand for Maha Punjab comprising the Punjab, Pepsu, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and few western districts of the united province.63

On 21 January 1955, during an interview with the Chief Minister Bhim Sen Sachar, Master Tara Singh said, “that he did not believe in a linguistic Punjabi State. What he had in mind was a Sikh State wherein the Sikh would be a numerical majority.”64

The States Reorganization Commission report submitted on 30 September 1955. The Commission rejected the demand of Punjabi Suba on the ground that the problem in Punjab was not linguistic but communal. On the other hand, the Commission recommended the merger of Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh. Master Tara Singh denounced the report as ‘decree of Sikh annihilation’.65

The newspaper ‘Akali Patrika’ writes that the Commission has not acted with justice. From the view-point of the Sikhs, there could be no other report worse than this.66

The Akali’s alleged that it was a conspiracy to destroy the Sikh nation and the States Reorganization Commission had delivered, “Sikhs bound hand and foot to the slavery of an aggressively communal group”.67
The newspaper Pratap writes that the proposal to unite Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh into one unit is good.68

The newspaper Naya Zamana writes that the Commission has adopted a communal line and has thus further complicated the communal situation in the Punjab.69

The report met with scathing criticism at the hands of the Sikh legislators both Akali and non-Akali. The Akali leader Bhai Jodh Singh, speaking on the subject said if Punjabi Suba had been formed, the communal parties would have vanished and the parties would have been formed on political rather than communal basis.70

The Akali Dal made a common cause with the other language groups. A five members Akali delegation headed by Master Tara Singh met the Prime Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Pant on 23 November 1955 to represent their point of view. As a result of the negotiation a compromise formula was evolved known as 'Regional Formula'. The formula divided the Punjab State on linguistic basis, with a view to safeguards the interests of the two language groups.71

The Regional plan was not accepted by a certain section of Hindus and the people of Haryana. The Hindu Mahasabha at a conference held at Karnal on 25 June 1956 resolved that the Regional was no solution to the Punjab problem.72 The Arya Pritinidhi and the Arya Pradeshik Pritinidhi Sabhas held a joint convention at Ambala on the 9 September 1956. In that convention, they opposed Regional Formula and put the demands.73 On 2 October 1956 under the Chairmanship of Master Tara Singh, the convention of Akali Dal held at Amritsar unanimously decided that it was desirable that the Dal should again repose confidence in the Congress and its leaders so far
as its political programme is concerned. It further resolved that the Dal would concentrate on and confine itself to the religious, education, cultural, social and economic fields for the betterment of the Sikhs.74

On 24 November 1956, the General body meeting of the Akali Dal decided to delete from the Akali Dal’s constitution those clauses which related to the national aspiration of Sikhs as a separate political entity. It was further resolved that in regard to political activities the members of Akali Dal should join the Congress Party.75 After some hesitation, the Akali constitution was amended in accordance with the wishes of the Congress Party. Many Akali leaders joined the Congress Party, but Master Tara Singh decided to stay out, saying “I will consider the question of joining the Congress after general elections.”76 On 1 November 1956, Pepsu and Himachal were merged into Punjab.

After the Assembly election, Partap Singh Kairon was elected as the leader of the Congress Assembly Party on 3 April 1957.77 During the election Master Tara Singh made strong speeches against the Congress Party declaring that it was futile to repose confidence any more in the Congress Party as “the Congress Party has deceived us.”78 After the election were over, Master Tara Singh said that he would now again stand for the independent entity of the Sikh Panth.79

When some Hindu communal organisations launched ‘the Hindi agitation’ in 1957 with the goal of removing any compulsion in the teaching of languages. Akali leaders in the Congress Party threatened to revive the demand for Punjabi Suba if the Hindi agitation continued.80 On 23 December 1957, the Hindi agitation ended without laurels.
Master Tara Singh attacked not only the Congress Party, but also Partap Singh Kairon personally. He said, “I have been against Sardar Partap Singh Kairon since long ago. Any political power in his hands is dangerous.”81 Master Tara Singh revived the demand for Punjabi Suba and agreed to the Regional Formula but added that “even the Regional Formula had been implemented it would not have satisfied fully their demand.”82

The second Punjabi Suba Conference was held at Chandigarh. Master Tara Singh announced that he would take out a silent procession of the Sikhs at Delhi to demonstrate against the interference of the government in the Gurdwara administration on 15 March 1959. Master Tara Singh was arrested on 13 March 1959. Sardar Atma Singh, Master Partap Singh, Sardar Sarup Singh staged a walk-out from the Assembly.83

In his communication from Dharamsala jail, Master Tara Singh wrote to the Prime Minister suggesting arbitration on the issue of government’s interference in the Sikhs religious affairs. Master Tara Singh got the reply on 21 March 1959 through which Pandit Nehru rejected the arbitration proposal.84 Master Tara Singh was released on 21 March 1959. The proposal for arbitration was rejected by the Prime Minister on 5 April 1959 on the ground that there was nothing to be referred to arbitration.85

Master Tara Singh announced that the would go on fast upto death from 16 April 1959. A few well-meaning friends interceded and Nehru invited Master Tara Singh on 11 April 1959 for talks.86

In the meantime the election to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee become due and was held in January. The
election results were declared on 19 January 1960. The Shiromani Akali Dal secured 132 seats out of 139. All the Akali members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee took a pledge at the Akal Takht on 24 January 1960 to work for the achievement of a Punjabi province with single minded devotion and with all the resources at their communal.87

Master Tara Singh was re-installed its president in March 1960. This grand victory of the Akali Dal was clean verdict of the Sikh masses in favour of the manifesto of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the demand of the unilingual Punjabi-speaking State. The press had mixed reaction about Master Tara Singh’s demand. Some relevant extracts are given here under from the various important newspapers.

The Tribune88 writes: Right or wrong, large sections of public opinion in Punjab are vehemently opposed o the demand of Punjabi Suba.

Ajit writes89: Master Tara Singh believes in issuing fiery statements. To create sensation has been his life long ambition. Every contest or morcha is described by him as the last morcha or a critical period of struggle for the Sikhs. He always calls everything a crusade or a holy war.

Naya Zamana writes90: Master Tara Singh is thinking on communal lines and his demand for a Punjabi Suba has also become communal. His demand on communal lines has given a chance to many and particularly the Hindu communalists to disown the Punjabi language. Master ji alone is responsible for this state of affairs.

Akali Patrika91: On the one side, Master Tara Singh is preparing for a Punjabi Suba movement and on the other, Jan Sanghites and
Arya Samajists are preparing for a counter move. Both the sides are trying to incite the Hindus and the Sikhs by playing on their feelings. The government should be alert in view of the deteriorating situation.

Faced with the opposition from the Hindu communal section and unwillingness of the Punjab Government to enhance the status of Punjabi language, the Akalis once again renounced the demand for Punjabi Suba under Master Tara Singh.92

Master Tara Singh launched an agitation for a Punjabi Speaking State. He was arrested alongwith other Akalis at Amritsar on 24 May 1960.93 Sant Fateh Singh began his fast unto death for the achievement of Punjabi Saba but on the advice of Master Tara Singh, he gave up his twenty two days fast on 18 December 1960.94 Sant Fateh Singh met Pandit Nehru at Delhi on February 1961. At this meeting, the Prime Minister again turned down the Sant's demand for the creation to Punjabi Suba. He refused to concede the demand even in principle. Sant Fateh Singh had series of meetings with Pt. Nehru. Pt. Nehru and Sant Fateh Singh met on 24 and 25 August 1961 but the meetings proved abortive. The door of negotiations was closed with Pt. Nehru's statements made in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on 28-30 August 1961. In Parliament Pt. Nehru declared that the demand for Punjabi Suba was communal one even though presented in linguistic terms.95 As stated, Master Tara Singh had gone on fast. He had said, "I will get a Punjabi Suba or I will die."96

But Master Tara Singh climbed down, on the assurance by government through the Maharaja of Patiala, Malik Herdit Singh, etc. to appoint a Commission to look in to Sikh grievance. Thus Master Tara Singh ended the 48 days fast on 1 October 1961. The Enquiry
Commission comprising S.K. Das, former Chief Justice of India, M.C. Chagla and C.P. Ramaswamy Ayyer were appointed. The Akali Dal decided to boycott the Commission on the ground that the terms of reference were not satisfactory. Some Hindu newspapers charged that Partap Singh Kairon as Chief Minister endeavouring to establish a Punjabi Suba but his Punjabi Suba covered the entire Punjab rather than half the Punjab which the Akalis want.

The Commission gave its report on 9 February 1962 rejecting the suggestions of any discrimination against the Sikhs as they were over represented in the public services and in the Punjab Cabinet.

Two rival Akali Dal led by Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh came in to being in 1962. Master Tara Singh was dislodge from the Presidentship of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in October 1962. Sant Chanan Singh, a right hand man of Sant Fateh Singh elected the new President. The emergence of this new rural peasant leadership broad based the campaign for the achievement of the Punjabi Suba by secularising the objective of the demand. In the meantime China attacked India in October 1962. Sant Fateh Singh temporarily suspended the Punjabi Suba movement. After the war the movement had to start again but the campaign against Partap Singh Kairon had reached its climax. Master Tara Singh, Devi Lal and 25 other public-men met the President of India, Dr. Radha Krishna and presented to him a written memoranda containing serious charges against Partap Singh Kairon. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru passed away on 27 May 1964. The Das Commission’s findings went against Partap Singh Kairon. He resigned on 14 June 1964.
In July 1965, Master Tara Singh returned to the Akali politics and raised the slogan of a 'self determined status for the Sikhs within the Union of India. At a press conference on 14 July 1965, Master Tara Singh after scathing criticism of the Congress and Sant Fateh Singh declared that he decided to re-enter politics to ensure the dignity and the honour and freedom of the Panth. Sant Fateh Singh’s announcement of his decision to go on a fast into death from 10 September 1965 and to immolate himself if he survived the fast for 15 days was followed by his meeting with the Prime Minister Lal Bhadur Shastri on 7 and 8 August 1965.

In the meantime war between India and Pakistan broke out on 5 September 1965. Sant Fateh Singh had to postpone his fast. The war ended on 28 September 1965. Now the Central Government was more favourably inclined towards Punjabi Suba demand by Sant Fateh Singh and his contrubution made by the Sikhs in the defence effrots. A Cabinet Committee of Y.B. Chavan, Indira Gandhi (the Minster for information) and Mahavir Tyagi was setup to go into the question of Punjabi Suba. This Committee was to seek from time to time the advice of a Parliamentary Committee to be set up jointly by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. On 10 January 1966, Lachman Singh Gill, General Secretary of the S.G.P.C and Rawal Singh, a member of its Executive met the Committee and presented the case of Punjabi speaking State. Members of Shiromani Akali Dal and Master Tara Singh personally met the Committee at Amritsar and revived their demand for Punjabi Suba.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister on 20 January 1966. She was against the idea for Punjabi Suba. In the arising
circumstances Mahavir Tyagi, an important member in the Committee resigned from the Cabinet. Gulzari Lal Nanda, the Union Home Minister always opposed the creation of a Punjabi speaking State. The Congress Working Committee under the Presidentship of Kamraj in a meeting on 9 March 1966 adopted a resolution favouring a Punjabi speaking State. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was firm in her decision said, “The Working Committee has passed a resolution and now we (government) have to implement.”

Sant Fateh Singh expressed his gratification to the Congress Working Committee and hoped Hindu-Sikh unity in the proposed Punjabi Suba would persist. He said that “our demand has been a Punjabi Suba as part of India. Bharat is my country and each part of this country is sacred to me. How can we leave our home.”

A Boundary Commission under the Chairmanship of justice Mr. J.C. Shah was set up to demarcate the boundaries of New Punjab and Haryana. The other members were Shri Subimal Dutt and Mr. M.M. Philip. The Commission submitted its report on the division of the Punjab to the Government on 31 May 1966. The Commission recommended the inclusion of Kharar tehsil in Punjab and declared Chandigarh to be a Union Territory.

The Punjab Reorganisation Act was approved by both the houses. It received the President’s assent on 18 September 1966. Sant Fateh Singh opposed the reorganisation of Punjab. The Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh) held demonstrations to oppose it. However, ‘inspite of Sikhs’ opposition the Bill was passed. The Act provided bifurcation of Punjab into Punjabi Suba and Haryana from 1 November 1966.
FOOT NOTES

1. The Tribune, 12 June 1948.


3. Udham Singh Nagoke was elected member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly. He was elected President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee from 1948 – 50 and 1950-52. He was a member of Rajya Sabha from 1953 to 1960 and a close associate of Partap Singh Kairon. He was the President of the Punjab Swatantar Party; participated in the Punjabi Suba agitation 1960; died on 11 January 1966. Singh, Joginder, Sikh Leadership: Early 20th Century, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1999, p. 338.

4. Isher Singh Majhail was born at the village Shahbajpur, Chak No. 68 district Lyallpur on 11 January 1901. He was member of Nagoke group which was known for nationalist learnings and elected member of the Punjab Assembly 1946. He was a minister of rehabilitation in 1947-48 and 1949 to 1951 in Bhargava ministry. He became President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in 1953., Singh, Joginder, op.cit., p. 215.

5. Sardar Swaran Singh was the Sikh representative in Khizar ministry. He said on 10 May 1947 that the Sikhs were determined not to remain under Muslim domination. He reiterated the Sikh demand for the division of Punjab to secure a fair distribution of the population, property and


7. Giani Kartar Singh was born in a Jat Sikh family at Amritsar on 1901. In 1946, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. He remained General Secretary of the Akali Dal for several times. Kartar Singh is known to be author of the most of the political formulas like the Azad Punjab Scheme, Sikhistan, Sachar Formula and Regional Formula. Nayar, Baldev Raj, op. cit., p. 138.


22. The Tribune, 18 November 1948.
25. Ibid, p. 112.
26. Ibid., p. 120.
30. The Tribune, 10 April 1949.
32. The Hindustan Times, 7 April 1949.
33. The Tribune, 2 April 1949.
34. Akali Patrika, 26 May 1949.
42. Papers Relating to Hindi Agitation in Punjab, (Chandigarh, Public Relations Department, 1957), p. II; see Appendix-III.
43. *Akali Patrika*, 4 October 1949.
46. *Ajit*, 27 November 1949; also see Lamba, Krishan Gopal, Dynamics of Punjabi Suba Movement, *op.cit.*, p. 45.
55. *Ajit*, 14 February 1951.
64. Ajit, 22 January 1955.
66. Akali Patrika, 12 October 1957.
67. The Tribune, 7 October 1955.
68. The Pratap, 11 October 1955.
72. The Tribune, 26 June 1956.
73. Pratap, 10 September 1956.
74. Akali Patrika, 3 October 1956.
76. Akali Patrika, 2 December 1956.
77. The Hindustan Times, 4 April 1957.
78. The Tribune, 16 February 1957.
79. Ibid., 5 March 1957.
80. Akali Patrika, 19 November 1957.
82. The Tribune, 6 October, 1958.
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