PREFACE

It is well known in history that the prop up of local elite or aristocracy was of vital importance to the British Government in India. It enabled the British to rule gigantic areas of land and massive populations with their superior diplomatic policies. The administration tried to win them over by providing concessions, benefits and liberal distribution of patronage. The Indian Chiefs responded in both encouraging and unpleasant ways. British occupation of Punjab after two Anglo-Sikh Wars and Revolt of 1857 resulted into British stalk for buddies Positive political strategies resulted into the birth of strong aristocracy in Punjab combining elements from all the communities. While setting their house, the British Government had never neglected the Sikh feudatory Chiefs. They spared no means to secure a dominant position for the Sikhs.

Without doubt, the decade of 1937-47 in the Punjab politics witnesses a dramatic change. The Government of India Act 1935 added new dimensions to the political environment in India which led to Provincial Autonomy. A detailed study of the said period from the National Movement point of view in Punjab has been done by many history students but present study focuses on three Sikh leaders, actively taking part in Punjab politics viz. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar
Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh. The word ‘trio’ has been used to signify these three Sikh leaders.

Most of the explanations of the Punjab history have been focused on the contribution of the Akalis, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Unionist parties in the Punjab politics. K.C. Gulati in ‘The Akali’s – Past and Present’ has primarily laid stress on the formation and working of the Akalis in the Punjab politics, providing little space to the aristocrats. Dr. K.L. Tuteja in Sikh Politics (1920-40) sees communitarian growth and the struggle for separate identity among the Sikhs from 1920-40. His work is an attempt to explain the intricacy and interrelatedness of various factors of Sikh politics. The study does not cover the last seven years i.e. 1940-47 which is crucial in the Sikh as well as Punjab history.

Ian Talbot’s ‘Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947’, explains the growth of Muslim League in Punjab during the decade which preceded partition. It gives a detailed account of the Unionist Party’s activities and importance of Muslim aristocracy’s relations with the British Government but provide almost no account of the Sikh aristocracy. Joginder Singh in his work Sikh Leadership (1999) brings out the brief biographical sketches of the religious and political Sikh leaders of Punjab.
Sukhmani Bal Riar in her study ‘the Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47’ has attempted to examine the politics that the Sikh leaders pursued during the last seven years before partition and independence. The limited span of study does not provide the actual picture after the enacting of Government of India Act 1935. Hence, present cram sets out to analyze the role of the trio leaders in the Punjab politics during the crucial decade (1937-47) and to understand the imperative that made the Sikh leaders to share political platform. It also examines nature of complexities, dynamics and problems that compelled them to join hands with the Congress, the British Government of India, the Akalis, the Unionists and the other contemporary organizations.

The present study has been divided in six chapters and a conclusion. The first Chapter Historical Background: Aristocracy and Punjab Politics describes the origin, development and growth of aristocracy in Punjab. Education, industrialization and Canal colonization widened the base of aristocracy in Punjab. In 1862 the British Government introduced the institutions of Sanads, Certificates and Titles which recognized a class of local elite. They in turn readily accepted rather welcomed the opportunity. With the reforms of 1919, these landed elites were inducted into legislative (responsible) politics through a restrictive mechanism lacking any electoral agenda. Very specific, limited and largely docile role was expected of these largely a non political and ideological elite, whose
loyalties totally lay with their self interests. This enhanced political role added to their laurels within their constituencies. Thus before the elections of 1937 these local elite became the formidable buddies of British Government and got appreciation as ‘Loyalists’

The second chapter Elections of 1937 and Formation of a Sikh Trio (1937-1939) is about Elections of 1937 which added new dimensions to the political environment due to the introduction of Provincial Autonomy. With the reforms of 1919, these landed elites were inducted into legislative (responsible) politics through a restrictive mechanism lacking any electoral agenda. Even while Sir Fazl i-Husain and Sir Chhottu Ram rallied them together as the Unionist Party, the personal and local loyalties were not ruled out. The three Sikh leaders Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh were actively involved in Punjab politics. Unknowingly a trio was in formation. Sikh leaders viz. Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh were rich and educated, former a Jat agriculturist, with large estates and later an Arora Sikh Agro Industrialist, are considered professed ‘loyalists’. Baldev Singh was a rich industrialist and entered politics on Akali ticket but later on proved practicing loyalist. On the basis of their riches, the three came into sight on the political state of affairs of Punjab.
Sir Joginder Singh was associated to Chief Khalsa Diwan and a close ally of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. He believed in representations and constitutional methods. From 1937 to 1942 he remained one of chief spokes persons of Sikh community. With his efforts Khalsa National Party was formed in 1935 to protect and promote the interest of the Sikh community. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia became the president of Khalsa National Party and Ujjal Singh was elected its secretary. No doubt Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh often supported Government but whenever communal issues rose they generally joined hands as a body with Akalis. The Akalis were being considered leaders of the Sikh masses and these moderates had neither the courage nor the energy to oppose Akalis but it is wrong to assume those loyalists were not liked by the masses. The three got elected in the election of 1937 from Gujranwala Shahadra (Rural constituency), Western Towns (Urban constituency) and Ambala respectively.

The large land owning Sikh families supported the Unionists essentially a common bond of political and economic opportunities. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia who had joined the Cabinet on behalf of the Sikhs as head of the Khalsa National Party said that the policy of his party was not destructive. On the contrary it was prepared to cooperate with any party in the future Government of the province provided it could do so on an honourable understanding.
The Unionist party and the Khalsa National party’s success in the elections could be attributed to the feudal character of Punjab’s political system. The role of the so-called ‘natural leaders’ a term coined by the British to address the Colonial intermediaries, all was important for the success of the Unionist Party. The ministry formed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was rightly described as a Unionist Coalition ministry which was the result of understanding with other political parties.

The moderate Sikh leaders became the part of that exercise which appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite sections of society, making the Legislative Assembly that was constituted on the culmination of these elections a widely representative of the elite of Punjab, having little to do with the masses.

The three Sikh leaders became the members of Unity Conference to counter communal riots in Punjab. Their chief concern was to appraise Government with Sikh point of view. In the beginning Baldev Singh uttered only those words, which were put into his mouth by Master Tara Singh but he never lost a chance to shake hand with Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh or Ujjal Singh. When Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was passed the three were vocal against this pact. Their parties were different but their approach was no doubt same. The formation of Unionist Ministry in Punjab appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite
sections of society. The opportunity for this trio to share political platform came in the form of Unity Conference which was designed to remove the communal virus from the Punjab on 26th June 1937 at Lahore.

Chapter third *World War-II, Cripps Mission and Task of the Trio Sikh Leaders (1939-1942)* deals with the prevailing political situation in Punjab and response of Punjabi society in general and the three Sikh leaders in particular when World War-II started. It ushered a new era of interrelationship between different parties. Since the nationalist leaders and the British Government could not reach at any agreement whereby the Indian leaders could play an honourable part in the War effort, the Congress Party decided to pursue a policy of non cooperation with the British Government. The Sikhs of Khalsa National Party pressed the Government for the protection of their interests in return for their military services during the war. Sikandar was coming closer to the Akalis’s because of the favourable effect it would have on army recruitment. Sir Joginder Singh started criticising the Punjab Government by saying: As you are aware, to the effect Sikhs have been deliberately insulted and should now devote themselves to deal with tyranny for which the Punjab Government is responsible in province. I have spoken to two of the signatories and pointed out to turn that the result use of their declaration may well be fall in Sikh recruitment which would clearly be in the worst interest of the community.
The Akalis on the other hand hated and feared the prospect of Pakistan, they saw co-operation with the Unionists in the war effort as the best defence against it. Their close links with the Congress had led them to adopt an attitude of non co-operation towards the War but soon they realized that the maintenance of Sikh connection with the army was vital for the presentation of the Sikhs as a separate entity. Although they did not openly support the Khalsa Defence of Indian League which was formed in January 1941 to promote Sikh army recruitment yet they nevertheless promised to supply 'parcharka' secretly for propaganda works in the villages in its favour. Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh supported War recruitment openly. The three leaders became active members of Khalsa Defence of India League which gave a chance to recruit in the army to the unemployed Sikhs youth and hundreds of graduates got the emergency King's Commission in the Indian Army.

The Akalis started exploring new ways to strengthen and consolidate their community against the danger of Muslim rule. The 'Akali sena', a volunteer organization of the Sikhs which was primarily formed to remove the threat of atheism in the community, was working to safeguard the Sikh rights and to oppose the Pakistan proposal. The sudden demise of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia in last week of 1940, forced the Akalis to see, however reluctantly which side the
Sikh bread was buttered. Desaunda Singh a man of no political standing and of an average acumen was selected to succeed Sir Sunder Singh in the Cabinet in preference to Ujjal Singh. Baldev Singh then a back bencher in the Congress-Akali Parliamentary Party in the Punjab Assembly availed the opportunity and formed a new party in the Legislature in March 1942 viz. United Sikh Party. The new United Sikh Party attracted some members of Khalsa National Party, some independent Sikhs and some Akalis. The three Sikh leaders remained quite active in the political scenario during this period.

The chapter also traces how Sikh delegation comprising Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Sir Joginder Singh and Master Tara Singh met Stafford Cripps on 27 March 1942 to discuss with him the possibility of having some redistribution of provincial power between the Eastern and Western Punjab in order to carve out a province in which the Sikhs would have the decisive voice as a large balancing party between the Hindus and the Muslims. Sir Stafford Cripps responded by issuing a draft declaration on 30th March 1942. It brought a whirl in Sikh politics because it could not offer any permanent solution to the national tangle and tended to create fissiparous communal tendencies. Sardar Baldev Singh was selected as president of Sikh All Parties Committee. He, along with Sir Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh, Tara Singh and Mohan Singh handed over a memorandum to
Sir Stafford Cripps on 31 March, 1942, which made clear the Sikh point of view regarding unacceptability of the proposals:

Cripps envisaged for loose federation giving provinces the right to opt out the Union. This clause was the first public admission of the possibility of Pakistan. The Sikh community was growing more and more uneasy and there was a feeling that it is the time to move in some direction or the other to ensure its survival but at the same they were not demoralized. In such a situation the Akali decision to encourage Sikh enlistment in the army on one hand and their support to the Congress on the other hand been dubbed as 'sailing in two boats'. Muslim League's happiness for their 'hopes fulfilment' but Jinnah's rejection that 'Pakistan was not conceded,' was another political move in Punjab politics.

The Sikh leadership was particularly worried about the 'unprecedented intensification of bitterness' between the Sikhs and Muslim as well as its adverse effect on the war effort. Akalis in any condition did not want to materialize Pakistan. Sikhs remained reluctant to enlist in the Indian Army. In an endeavour to encourage greater Sikh support for the War efforts, Major Short threw himself into the work of reconciliation with enthusiasm and was soon accepted by leading Sikhs. He worked for a Sikh-Muslim accord, which meant an alliance between the Unionists and the Akalis, most popular as Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact of 1942, was fully supported by Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh.
The Pact could ensure only a limited co-operation between the Akalis and the Unionist to mitigate the adverse effect of Muslim domination. The issues covered were meant to remove the existing irritants. Baldev Singh remarked in 1944 that his pact was meant to remove the ‘besetting curse of inter-communal bitterness, but could not do the same. Though the pact proved a snare yet it brought a considerable change in the complexion of Punjab Politics. Sardar Baldev Singh’s entry in the Punjab cabinet and Sir Joginder Singh’s placement in the Viceroy’s Executive Council enhanced the political importance of the Sikhs.

The fourth chapter The Punjab Politics : Demand for the Sikh Homeland and the Sikh Trio (1943-1945) covers the story of Sikh politics of two years 1943-45, when the Punjab politics entered into a critical phase. Akali Dal considered Rajagopalichari’s Sporting Offer of 29 August 1940 as unjust, undemocratic, anti-national and detrimental to the rights of the non-Muslim communities. Though the Akali Dal did not favour Rajagopalachari’s offer yet did not atuned to Khalistan. In August 1944 the Sikhs demanded the same rights in all provinces as had been given to the other minorities. Mohinder Singh moved an amendment seeking creation of an independent Sikh State. It was supported by Giani Kartar Singh. Master Tara Singh set the tone for doing that by declaring that the Sikhs who were a nation, would, see that, if and when India was divided the Sikhs
should not be made slaves either of Pakistan or Hindustan. Sardar Ujjal Singh intervened to suggest that Master Tara Singh should appoint a committee to evolve in consultation with all Sikh interests, a scheme for establishment of an independent Sikh State, if India was to be divided.

The 'Khalistan' move and the Azad Punjab schemes could not gather strength because of their inherent interests and the mutual conflicts of the Akalis, Congressite and Communist Sikhs. At times Master Tara Singh tried to clarify Azad Punjab scheme by saying it 'far from anti national and intended to be an alternative to the division of the country'. Ujjal Singh, who was one of architects of the building Azad Punjab wished that 'a happier name had been selected for this demand, which was intended to be province with in the Union of India. He said that the Akalis only want the separation of original Punjab from the western districts annexed to it by Maharaja Ranjit Singh just as Sind was separated from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar.

The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah in 1944 talks for an agreement, had diverse effect on the political parties and groups in the Punjab. The Akalis felt relieved because of their apprehensions that any agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah on the basis of Rajagopalachari formula would be inimical to the Sikh interest. However, they continued their agitation for creation of a separate political unit
dominated by the Sikhs and a hint was even thrown by some of the Akali leader for securing the help of the British for its realization. Baldev Singh and Joginder Singh in different public addresses were criticizing Pakistan scheme. The idea of Pakistan was 'adherent' and 'obnoxious'. The Sikh would not agree to live in the Pakistan of League description. Congress and particularly Mahatma Gandhi wanted Akali-Congress alliance in Punjab.

Chapter fifth Transfer of Power and The Sikh Leaders (1945-1946) traces the circumstances leading to British Government of India's decision to transfer the power in Indian hands. Towards the end of 1944, a few non-party public men decided to form a conciliation committee to devise ways and means for an agreed constitution. The initiative for the settlement was taken by the liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at the suggestion of Gandhi. He favoured the holding of a representative conference to carry on the dialogue with the League leaders. The Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Harnam Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh, Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh preferred the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications or an irremovable composite executive in place of parliamentary system which had failed.

The Sapru Committee recommendations had a mixed reaction in the Punjab. It submitted its report in March 1945. The Hindus welcomed the
acceptance of principle of the individuality of India and Joint electorates. The Akalis criticized the Sapru Committee proposals because these accepted the principles of parity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Wavell's proposal of a new Executive Council with entirely Indian members except for Viceroy and the Commander in Chief was a step towards full Self Government. Master Tara Singh was invited unwillingly by Wavell to represent the Sikhs in the Shimla Conference where Sardar Baldev Singh was also present. The two Sikh leaders were not cordial with each other but remained in constant touch during conference. Sardar Baldev Singh's association with Congress was disliked by the Akali leader Master Tara Singh. Sir Joginder Singh, one time favourite of British Government, was kept scrupulously out of all negotiations. On the day of 23 June, 1945 Wavell proposed that the Executive Council to have five Hindus, five Muslims, one Sikh, one Scheduled Caste, as suggested by Jinnah.

Election of 1946 in Punjab province brought some new issues especially the matter of Sikh seats. Baldev Singh’s close association with the Congress was clear. He was trying to bring Akalis and Congress nearer but the matter of seats broke down all negotiations. With the initiative of Sardar Baldev Singh and his association with Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, a new party viz. Punjab Panthic Board was formed. Sardar Baldev Singh was elected the
President while Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh were Deputy Leaders.

The three leaders were the main members of the Punjab Panthic Board and were successful in the election of 1946. The election results shattered a severe blow to the Unionist Party. On 11 March 1946, Baldev Singh represented Akalis in the Congress-Akali – Unionist coalition ministry. The announcement and the arrival of Cabinet Mission to discuss the granting of independence too furthered the political activity in Sikh circles.

The Panthic Pratinidhi Board amplified the demand of 'Sikh State' that included a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their shrines with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property. If the argument of the Muslim League was that Muslims had ruled over India, the argument of the Akalis was that the Sikhs had ousted the Mughals and established their own rule. In fact by creating a 'Sikh State' the British would only return to the Sikhs what they had directly got in trust from them.

At the same time the idea of Khalistan with transfer of population and creation of a new state stretching from Jamuna to Chenab in which Sikhs would be able to act as a balancing power between the Hindus and Muslims, was much debated. Sardar Baldev Singh, on 12 May 1946 made a statement 'Between Ravi
and Meerut should stretch the Jatstan." Cabinet Mission report of 16th May was a bolt from the blue as it left the Sikhs at the mercy of the Muslims.

The Panthic Pratinidhi Board was against the scheme of Cabinet Mission as the position of Sikhs was entirely ignored in the Punjab while the arrangement made for the grouping of provinces made it possible for Muslims to secure all the advantages of Pakistan, without incurring the danger inherent in it. Master Tara Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh wrote to Lord Pethick Lawrence on 25 July, 1946 to clear their position. Lord Lawrence in his reply said, "The estimate of importance of your community would never depend upon the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad in view of anxieties you have expressed on the behalf of your community". Sardar Baldev Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, Master Tara Singh complained against the placement of Punjab in Group B. The transfer of power phase, Gurudwara Elections, formation of Interim Government and to make the best out of critical scenario was eye catch of the period. Baldev Singh's hidden move to be the member of Interim Government on 2 September 1946, to pacify Panthic Board, Akali-Congress cordial relations, is a part of study.

Chapter sixth Whither Punjab-Violence Partition and Freedom (1946-1947) peeps into political turmoil after Jinnah's outburst of 16 August, 1946,
final good bye to constitution and constitutional methods. The year to follow was of turmoil, chaos, mass killings, and violent turns. Master Tara Singh's slogan of February, 1947 "Kat Ke Denge Apni Jaan, Magar na Denge Pakistan", stirred the Punjabis. S.B. Ujjal Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh in company of Giani Kartar Singh were suggesting more than one alternative and waiting for constitutional machinery to work. The case of Punjab and the Sikh community was pleaded by sending delegation as they were still in hope for betterment.

On 18 April 1947 Sardar Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh met Lord Mountbatten and agreed unanimously that Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and bloodshed. Minorities in Punjab were bleeding and the Governor could do little. March 'riots' and April resolutions made it clear that Punjab has to be partitioned. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh's demands were less extreme than those of Tara Singh, Kartar Singh and others. Mountbatten Plan of June 1947, added fuel to fire Sardar Baldev Singh accepted the principle of division on 3rd June after consulting Akali Dal Working Committee's meeting. Sardar Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh continued to plead the case of Sikhs with both hot and cold way. Mountbatten, Jenkins and other British authorities in India were diplomatically succeeded in their policy of 'appeasement' and 'snubbing' the Sikhs. Hence the 'black chapter of partition' was
written on the very heart land of India i.e. Punjab. Sardar Ujjal Singh lost his valuable properties and lands in this political calamity.

As regards their position in Punjab politics after partition, S. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh secured important positions in the Union Government. The former became the first Defence Minister of Independent India and later was to continue the portfolio of Industries and Civil Supplies.

The last chapter **Conclusion** brings out the findings of this study that The aristocracy was not only imbibed but wedded in Punjab politics during the crucial decade from 1937-1947 A.D. No doubt with the changes in political mechanism, change in the attitude of men of letters and riches was evident. Community, Nationalism, Minority and Identity Crisis made them flickered and knowing their limitations the aristocrats could not follow one line. Before the elections of 1937 these trio leaders (Sir Joginder Singh, S.B. Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh) did not appear on a common platform but after the elections they shared each and every political move, opportunity and even philosophy, without caring of their political parties. The three believed in making the best out of a mole.

After my prayers to Almighty, it is my cherished desire to gratefully acknowledge my sincere indebtedness to my supervisor, **Dr. Kulbir Singh Dhillon**, Professor of History and Dean Student Welfare, Punjabi University, Patiala. It
would not out of place to add that without his sincere and perennial guidance, this work could not have seen the light of day.

My sincere thanks are also due to all the faculty members in the Department of History. I will remain beholden to Prof. (Dr.) Sukhinder Kaur Dhillon, Professor and Head, Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala and Dr. Dalbir Singh Dhillon, Formerly Professor and Head, Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala and presently Chairman, Punjab School Education Board and Dr. Pushpinder Kaur Dhillon, Department of Law and incharge, evening studies for their valuable suggestions, inspiration and cooperation during the course of my research.

I am also thankful to Sardar Paramjeet Singh, office incharge of Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala for his valuable support in completing this thesis.

I am also thankful to DAVCMC, Delhi, Principal Dr. B.B. Sharma, D.A.V. College Abohar and Mrs. Shashi Sharma, Head, Library, D.A.V. College, Abohar. I will be failing in my duty if not thanking Prof. Dr. Dhiraj Sud, Department of Chemistry, SLIET Longowal, who guided and encouraged me spiritually as well as morally.

I am also thankful to the staff of National Archives of India, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh, Central Sikh Library, New Delhi, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha
Library, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab Historical Studies Library, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab State Archives, Patiala, Panjab University Library, Chandigarh, Dwarka Das Library, Chandigarh, Punjab University Extension Library, Ludhiana, Guru Nanak Dev University Library, Amritsar, Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar, Kurukshetra University Library, Kurukshetra who had been very kind and helpful during the entire period of my research work.

I would also like to thank all my sisters (Dr. Dhiraj Sud, Seema, Babita and Dr. Suman Sud), aunt Suraksha Sud, my husband Advocate Lukhwinder Handa, Kids Pranat and Kulnoor, my parents in laws Mrs. & Mr. Jaswant Rai Handa for their constant love and affection during the course of completion of this work and allowing me to devote evenings and holidays over a number of years to cherish my dreams into realities.

Last but not the least I would like to thank Mr. Avtar Singh (Prop. Kamal Computers) for completing this manuscript.