CHAPTER 4

GANDHI AND THE GURUDWARA MOVEMENT

After having a broader understanding of Gandhi and the Gandhian mass movements it is essential to understand a long drawn struggle which was specific to the province of Punjab. It was a peaceful struggle which started during the Non-Cooperation Movement and advanced gradually by the Sikhs of Punjab for reforming their sacred Gurudwaras. It is commonly known as the ‘Gurudwara Reform Movement’ and ‘Akali Movement’. Analytical research works provides meager information about Gandhi’s approach during the struggle. In addition these sources misinterpret him due to lack of essential understanding. Thus basic query through the chapter is to locate Gandhi’s approach during the Gurudwara Reform Movement with a broader understanding which will help to trace the following related quires as; what made Gandhi to support the local struggle when he was already occupied with the bigger issues? What was Gandhi’s intent for guiding the leaders of the struggle which was local in its extent? How Gandhi dealt with the leaders of the Gurudwara movement? What was his line of action during the local struggle in comparison to a national mass movement?

History is full of such instances wherein the Government-appointed Sarbrahas of the Golden Temple were often used for glorifying the British rule and its functionaries. Moreover with the weakening of the Sikh control over the management and the increasing hold of officialdom the manager and the priests started taking their cue from the Deputy Commissioner and ignored Sikh opinion and sentiments in the day-to-day affairs of the temple. The Government appointed Sarbrah, having kept the appointing authority appeased, spent his time in appropriating the huge wealth of the Shrine, and consequently neglected his daily religious duties.245 Josh examines the Sikh opinion which was being ignored due

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to socio-political developments in the Punjab and which gradually gathered force against the offenders. Thus in the prevailing political environment, the anti-social and the anti-Imperial contradictions reinforced each other to produce a spontaneous mass mobilization of the Sikhs for reform of gurdwaras. It is important to record at this stage, that politically from among the Sikhs there were influential and powerful loyalists moderates, radicals and extremists, in relation to the British colonial power. However, the problem of gurdwara was so over-arching in its appeal and social constraint, that even loyalists had to bend to its pressure. The sacred cause combined the different groups for placing their opinion collectively but the approaches of the leaders were diverse which has been critically analysed by Tuteja. The leadership of the reform movement was probably divided into three sections. In the first group, the leaders like Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh and Bhai Jodh singh belonged to the Chief Khalsa Diwan. They mainly came from educated upper and middle classes and were not in favour of taking part in any agitation against the government. This group may be described as ‘communitarian collaborators’. The second group included prominent Sikh leaders like Baba Kharak Singh, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Mangal Singh, Hira Singh Dard and Master Tara Singh. Many of them were the leading members of the Central Sikh League which had developed a strong anti-imperialist perspective and was working as an ally of the Congress. In simple words, these Sikh leaders may be called as ‘communitarian nationalists’ since on the one hand they were fighting for the cause of the Panth and on the other enthusiastically associated themselves with the national movement spearheaded under the leadership of the Congress. The third section of the Sikh leadership was solely interested in the religious cause i.e., Gurdwara reforms. Some important names such as Sardar Bahadur Mehtab singh, Professor Teja Singh and


246 Partha N. Mukherji, Akalis and Violence, Amrik Singh (ed.), Punjab in Indian Politics, Ajanta, Delhi, 1985, p. 82.
Bawa Harkishan Singh belonged to this small group. In the initial stages, their strategy was to cooperate with the government in resolving issue of Gurdwara reforms. But when they found that the government was not willing to settle their religious problem as demanded by the Panth, their attitude underwent a change and they decided to join the anti-British movement with primary focus on Gurdwara reforms. Their strategy was purely guided by the perception of the community and they were willing to join with either of the above groups for securing Gurdwara reforms. Therefore they can be simply described as ‘communitarians’. However during the course of the struggle for reforms, they gradually found themselves more close to the communitarian nationalist Sikhs primarily for the purpose of reform and control of Gurdwaras. This group was keen to maintain separate identity of Gurdwara reform movement from the political movement led by Gandhi. The classification of the leaders indicates that only few leaders were being inspired with the ongoing non-violence non-cooperation wave. So firstly it is essential to know how these few leaders were inspired with the ideal? and how Gandhi’s appeal convinced them to approach him for his direction?

In general, Gandhi’s appeal for supporting the Non-Co-operation Movement to the communities of the Punjab was persistently based on the religion so to establish a link with their respective traditions as well as arouse their feelings for a peaceful crusade. Correspondingly his preliminary conversation with the youth of the Khalsa College, Amritsar will give a brief idea of the level of interaction between Gandhi and the Sikh youth.

My friend Mahomed Ali wrote an article, “Choice of the Turks”, which was confiscated. I tell you today that the time has now come to make up our minds about “Choice of the Believers of India” I have come here to ask the Sikh

students whether they wish to be loyal to the Empire or to Guru Nanak. Friends of your community are being sent to put down the great, freedom-loving Arab people who have done us no harm. The Government steals an anvil from you and compensates you with the gift of needle. After the torture which was inflicted on Sardar Gohar Singh, How can a Sikh draw the sword for the Government? How can we maintain cordial relations with it after the perpetrated by Bosworth Smith in Jallianwala? If you feel for the Punjab as much as I do, you can see that the Khalsa College gives up receiving grants, that it breaks off its connection with the Municipality and so you can make it truly Khalsa. If you do not succeed, you can leave it and be khalsa yourselves.²⁴⁸

Subsequently, the individuals inspired with his appeal started placing their individual share and in a similar manner the Sikh leaders found prospects in his ideal for exhibiting their passion of sacrifice non-violently. Grewal shares the observation of Akali regarding the spirited volunteers who were eager to reform their sacred environs. ‘The Rakabganj issue was taken up by the Central Sikh League when a few of the prominent individuals who had participated in the agitation of 1914 approached Sardul Singh Caveeshar at Lahore to revive the agitation. Caveeshar issued an appeal in the Akali of September 2, 1920: ‘Wanted 100 martyrs to save gurdwaras’. Within a fortnight, he received 700 offers. The method and the mood had changed. Before the band of martyrs (shahidi jatha) led by Sardul Singh reached Delhi to construct the demolished wall, the government had reconstructed the wall at its own expense and handed over the Gurdwara to the Khalsa Diwan of Delhi.’²⁴⁹ Seeing the vigor of the volunteers the leaders might have


approached Gandhi for formally taking the resolution. Mukherji provides information of the initial dialogue between Gandhi and the Sikh leaders.

The Central Sikh League, the organization that existed prior to the S.G.P.C and the Akali Dal, held its first session at the same time that Congress was holding its Amritsar session in 1919. The following year, in a special session of the Congress held at Calcutta, Gandhi’s resolution of non-violent non-cooperation with the British was adopted. The deep impression that the Mahatma created prompted the Central Sikh League to invite him to their second session at Lahore on October 20, 1920, where under the Presidentship of Baba Kharak Singh, the “Non-violent Non-cooperation resolution was adopted with the traditional vigour of the Khalsa”.

Gandhi’s level of association in the initial phase of the Gurudwara Struggle
It indicates that initially these few leaders were able to convince the other groups and advanced the movement with their convictions for the non-violent non-cooperation action. The S.G.P.C. came into existence through a massive mandate of over 10,000 Sikh representatives assembled from all over the country, after the take-over of the Golden Temple necessitated the formation of a central representative assembled from all over the country, after the take-over of the Golden Temple necessitated the formation of a central representative body to regulate the movement and administer the shrines under their control. Sunder Singh Majithia, a moderate, became the first President. The First executive committee also being largely composed of moderates, the British remained more or less satisfied with the favorable outcome. Within six months the S.G.P.C passed a formal resolution in favour of “non-cooperation and passive resistance”. By July, 1921, Baba Kharak Singh an uncompromising nationalist, became the next president. With this

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Mukherji, pp. 78-9.
change in the leadership the gurdwara movement became fully integrated with anti-imperialist struggle for national independence.\(^{251}\) Interestingly, Brown acknowledges the alliance with the Sikh leaders to be a deliberate move but I am not able to locate any such information which indicates that Gandhi has planned to involve the leaders into such an alliance. Rather it was the Sikh leaders who found better prospects for their alliance with Gandhi and the Congress. ‘Gandhi’s greatest success, however, was in converting the Sikh League to his cause in October 1920, which gave him access to a network of subcontractors in some parts of the province. The way for this had been prepared by a growing accumulation of Sikh grievances against the government, which ranged from a dislike of government control of Khalsa College and of government-approved managers of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, to a belief that under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Sikhs were not getting the representation their importance and war-time services warranted.\(^{252}\) However her analysis while categorizing sub-contractors cannot be overlooked. The uncommitted approach of the leaders for the non-violence ideal was acknowledged by Gandhi while appreciating Sardul Singh Caveeshar zeal which is as follows. ‘Sardar Sardul Singh has always appeared to me to be one of the bravest of non-co-operators. He is a man of fine culture, scrupulously honourable. He has reasoned faith in non-violent non-co-operation. He is a staunch nationalist. He holds the Sikh doctrine dear as life, but loves nationalism equally well. Non-violence is not his final creed in everything. But is like that of Ali Brothers, his present creed for India’s salvation. I hope that the imprisonment of Sardar Sardul Singh will spur the Sikhs and the other Punjabis to greater effort in behalf of non-co-operation.\(^{253}\) Similar kinds of traits were exhibited by Baba Kharak Singh throughout his life which are noticed through *The Times*.


\(^{252}\) Brown, pp. 283-84.

\(^{253}\) CWMG, Vol.20, Notes, *Young India*, 6-7-1921, p. 328.
After Jallaianwala Bagh massacre Baba Kharak Singh joined the rank of those actively opposed British rule. He was instrumental in linking up the Sikh League with the Congress. Baba Kharak Singh was in the founder-President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. He took over the presidentship of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee from Lala Lajpat Rai in 1922 when the latter was imprisoned. Baba Kharak Singh spent a total of 20 years in jail during the freedom struggle. He also fought for the right of Sikhs to carry kirpans. He started kirpan factories four times to defy the ban. He fought communalism throughout his life and launched many morchas in support of the non-co-operation movement started by Gandhiji. When the Government banned the use of the Gandhi cap by prisoners, he stripped himself of all clothing except an underwear in the Dera Ghazi Khan jail. He spent for-and-a-half years in this jail without clothes as a protest against the Government action. Baba Kharak Singh was offered ministership in the Punjab in 1937, where provincial autonomy was introduced. He declined the offer because he thought it did not connote real freedom.254

Brief outlook of these few leaders indicates their partial obligation to the non violence ideal which was identified by Gandhi. Up till this phase of the Gurudwara struggle Gandhi was trying to comprehend the movement through the activities of the few leader’s. On 25 February 1921, he was informed about the sacrifices of the Akalis at Nankana Saheb. He personally visited the site to get the first hand information and assessed the various aspects of the tragedy in a following manner.

Everything I saw and heard points to a second edition of Dyerism more barbarous, more calculated and more fiendish than the Dyreism at Jallianwala...I am as ashamed to find that there are men to-day who are capable of the crime committed by some of India in that holy temple. Information is lacking to show why the Akali party went to the temple and whether they offered resistance to the murderers. They had all their Kirpans and most their hatchets. There are three possibilities that could have happened. (1) The party went by a show of force to take possession of the temple but were overwhelmed by superior force and died fighting bravely. (2) The party went merely as worshippers, had no intention of taking possession and were treacherously murdered without being able to defend themselves. (3) The party went merely as worshippers as in the second case, and were mercilessly attacked, but though able to defend themselves would not retaliate and willingly died being under a vow not to use violence in connection with the Gurdwara movement. The contention of my information who can only speak from heresay is that the party went and died as supposed in the third alternative. If it is so, the martyrs have showed courage and resignation of the highest order of which the Sikhs, India and whole world have every reason to be proud. It is a matter of greater satisfaction that the Sikhs with whom I have discussed the possibilities persist in believing the last.255

Dearth of evidences made him to trace the possibilities of the tragedy by being open through The Tribune. Considering the level of sacrifices, he thoughtfully communicated with the leaders of the group and introduced them with the broader prospects of the movement. 'In every case the

255 The Tribune, The Nankana Sahib Tragedy, 6-3-1921.
event will live in history. I hope that you will not take the credit of bravery for Sikhs only, but that you will regard it as an act of national bravery. The martyrs have died not to save their own faith merely but to save all religions from impurity. A friend has just now said that the Sikhs have passed their examination in suffering. I join issue with him and suggest to you that your examination has only just commenced. How are you going to use this newly acquired strength? The same friend drew my attention to the fact that your kirpans and your battle axes were part of your dress. So let them be. But I assure you that the time has not come for their use, if it is ever to come. All national association have recognized the present necessity of non-violence. Your kirpans must therefore remain scrupulously sheathed and the hatches buried. If you and I will prove worthy of the martyrs, we will learn the lesson of humility and suffering from them; and you will dedicate all your matchless bravery to the service of the country and her redemption.

His keenness for channelizing the movement was seen in this particular phase. He wanted to convey the basic line of action to be followed immediately by the masses involved with the movement. He made himself clear by stating that they have to begin afresh with his guidance so to achieve success in their endeavors.

The movement has been going on for some years both co-operating and non-cooperating. Sikhs have since the movement of non-cooperation, being acting in concert so far as the Gurdwaras movement is concerned. Time, however for adjudging the exact value of the martyrdom is not yet. It is more to the point to consider the immediate steps that should be taken. I can only think of the tragedy in terms of Indian nationality... Let the Sikhs beware. The Government will no doubt try to win them over to them by showing that they alone can punish the guilty... But if we have not yet visualized the wickedness of the system

236 CWMG, Vol. 19, Speech at Nankana Saheb, Young India, 16-3-1921. p. 398.
under which we are ignored and therefore at a crucial moment will not avoid the existing law courts, let us not thoughtlessly blunder into having our own Committee side by side with the Government Committee of inquiry...The whole of the Gurdwara movement requires overhauling.

There is no doubt a large party proceeding to Gurdwaras to take possession does constitute a show of force even though no violence is contemplated or intended. And in a well ordered society no individual, except under a process of law, is permitted to dispossess by a show of force or any undue pressure, even a wicked man who has been ostensibly in possession of public property, such as temples. If such individual action were permitted there would be an end to all good government and the weak would be left without the right of protection. Such attempt, therefore, on your part will be a negation of the Khalsa Dharm whose basis is protection of the weak. No one can be more eager for the real reform in our temples and removal of abuse than I. But let us not be party to measures that may be worse than the reform sought to be brought.257

Being inquisitive, he searched some new facts in relation to the religious beliefs and the stance of the Sikh leaders for various issues. Above all, he calculated the intensity of the sacrifices which according to him, if channelized, can symbolize a perfect example of the non-violence ideal. ‘Such has been the awakening among the Sikhs and so spirited is that community that either this awakening will deliver India from bondage within eight months or it will obstruct that deliverance. They have strength of both body and mind. They are brave with the sword. It may be said that they are strong of will, too. The Sikhs are believed to number some thirty lakhs. Till today I had thought of them as a sect of Hinduism.

257 The Tribune, The Nankana Sahib Tragedy, 6-3-1921.
But their leaders think that theirs is a distinct religion. Guru Nanak was its founder and Guru Govind Singh its defender. The Sikhs believe in ten gurus in all. Guru Nanak, of course, was a Hindu but according to Sikh leaders, he founded a new religion. At the same time he had apprehensions for their dynamism in the name of religion. As according to him it can obstruct the broader prospects of the movement if not channelized with an expertise. After being in touch with some of the leaders he found that it was not easy to convince the other groups as there were certain complexities while dealing with them. These intricacies are analyzed by Mukherji who reveals the presence of extremists group among the leaders of the Gurdwara struggle and their linkages with the past violent movements.

The militant tradition of the Ghadrites found its continuity among the Babbar Akalis, an extremist breakaway group from the main Akali movement. Like the Ghadrites, their areas of operation were confined to the districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, like them they sported similar firearms and exhorted the Sikhs to use violent methods such as annihilation and secret assassinations to achieve their objective. They derided the espousal of the Gandhian non-violence by the Akalis... In spite of all these influences and the long-standing martial tradition, the swelling ranks of the Sikhs supported and participated in the Gurdwara movement led by the S.G.P.C. and the Akali Dal, foreshewn to non-violence in thought, word and deed. If the glorious saga of sacrifice and martyrdom which began with Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur was once again repeated, this time the Sikh demonstrated their heroism with the instrument of non-violence.

259 Mukherji, p. 78.
Brown while analyzing the approach of the group of extremist leaders indicates the extremist group involvement in support of the non-cooperation tactic and not for the non-violence ideal. ‘As with the U.P. Kisans, Gandhi gave only guarded approval to such potentially violent subcontractors. However throughout 1921 his non-cooperation tactic found increasing favour among the more extreme Sikhs. In April according to the Punjab government the Sikh movement was ‘becoming more and more political and a less reforming one,’ and was ‘now almost entirely directed by avowed non-co-operators.’...By November the Punjab reported that ‘the closest possible connection exists between Khilafat and Congress Committees and various Sikh organizations. However this ‘closest possible connection’ jeopardized non-cooperation as Gandhi saw it, since its provincial exponents were not workers dedicated to non-violence but Akalis in black turbans carrying large kirpans, the steel daggers which were a mark of their faith.’

Gandhi was curiously examining the moves based on the communique of the Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Grewal observes the success of the phase due to various factors. ‘However, the number of protest meetings, arrests and punishments went on increasing till 17 January 1922, when all the Akali workers and leaders were released unconditionally and the keys of the Golden Temple were handed over to Baba Kharak Singh. The ‘first decisive battle for India’s freedom won’ was the telegraphic message sent by Mahatma Gandhi to Baba Kharak Singh. The keys were delivered to the Shiromini Committee as a politic measure in view of the large proportion of the Sikhs in the army, a large number of disbanded soldiers, an unprecedented Hindu-Muslim solidarity on the Khilafat issue and the threat of an intense civil disobedience at the beginning of 1922.

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261 CWMG, Vol. 22, Notes, Young India, 12-1-1922, p. 170.
262 Grewal, p. 160.
In this phase Gandhi’s guarded approval to the movement provided following outcomes:

(a) The Government of Punjab was not in a position to reject the demands put by the leaders of the sacred struggle due to various reasons and thus Gandhi’s guidance and support certainly aided weight in attaining their initial demands.

(b) Gandhi was intimated with the rise of the activities of the extremist group in the wake of non-violence movement which was a matter of concern for him. He was informed of these activities by ‘A Punjab Nationalist’ in such a manner. It is interesting to observe the peculiar activities of some of the Akalis in the wake of non-violent Gurudwara Struggle.

It seems you are not aware of the facts, or you will probably pause labeling the warlike Akali party as one of “effective non-violence”. The overbearing and disorderly conduct of Akali bands in Hoshiarpur District has necessitated sending military posse own there. At a meeting held at Bilaspur the other day within two miles of Hoshiarpur, about 2,000 Akalis were present. Rows of men with drawn swords formed themselves round a centre where the speakers were. The orators declared valiantly there was no government and that an Akali according to a prophecy would come from Kabul and, overpowering all opposition, establish himself on the throne of Delhi, and at a given signal expressed readiness to start revolutionary operations. The Akalis in Hoshiarpur have a commissariat and an intelligence service of their own; they employ camel sowars to watch what was going on. A large crowd gathered together outside the Court of a Magistrate engaged in political cases at Gauri-shanker and demanded the surrender of prisoners at their own terms. The pledge of non-violence has now been omitted from
the vow of the Akalis; and the service they undertook was not exclusively confined to the Gurdwara Reform. The meetings are the order of the day, and the substitution of the Sikh rule for the present Government is frankly put forward. Advices from Ludhiana declare that bands of Sikh enthusiast march to the Diwans with much pomp and parade, carrying swords and axes and hammers. They march through the bazaars in regular formation, and, when travelling in large numbers by railway, they refuse to pay for their tickets, sometimes even claiming the privilege of free travel, as they foolishly imagine that the country is theirs...

...At Smala the Akali speakers declared: “King George V is not our king. Sardar Kharak Singh is our uncrowned king.” Some men of the 23rd Pioneers returning from leave in the Kasur Tehsil have complained that they were threatened by the Akalis with the molestation of their women if they did not forthwith desert the Army and join the ranks of the Khalsa. These are, in short, some of the terrible facts which should persuade you to revise your opinion regarding the non-violent character of the awakening of the Sikhs in the central parts of the Punjab.263

A series of incidents led Gandhi to sense the threat of the aggressive forces against the religious support of the Non-co-operation Movement and finally after the Chauri Chaura incident he called off the movement immediately. Consequently charged with promoting hostility against the Government through his writings in Young India, he was arrested on March 10, 1922 and was pre-released in February, 1924. Even though, nothing has been shared in his writings about the progress of the Gurudwara movement in the years of his internment except the above

263 CWMG, Vol. 23, Notes, Young India, 9-3-1922, 1967, p. 45.
mentioned letter to him before his arrest in which he had been cautioned about the forceful activities of the Sikhs in the Central parts of the Punjab. However, his inquisitiveness to explore the Sikh history is seen through the readings during his internment and while acknowledging the ethical aspect of the Sikh teachings.

The last set of books I should like to mention are the histories of the Sikhs by Cunningham, Macauliff and Gokulchand Narang. All those books are good in their own way. It is impossible to appreciate the present Sikh struggle without understanding their previous history and the life of Gurus. Cunningham’s is a sympathetic record of events leading to the Sikh wars. Macauliff’s is a life-story of the Gurus giving copious extracts from their compositions. It is sumptuously printed publication. It loses its value because of its fulsome praise of the English rule and the author’s emphasis on Sikhism as a separatist religion having nothing in common with Hinduism. Gokulchand Narang’s is a monograph supplying information not available in the two works mentioned.\textsuperscript{264}

\textbf{Gandhi’s level of association in the last phase of the Gurudwara Struggle}

The Gurdwara Movement advanced through the intense phase of Guru-Ka-Bagh affair during his internment. However, he was linked back to the movement after his release in February, 1924 by a member of Punjab Provincial Congress Committee\textsuperscript{265} for inquiring the level of support during the Jaiton firing issue. After understanding the ongoing state of the movement through correspondences, newspapers, and telegrams from the Punjab he thought of asserting by being open. He proposed the leaders to pause for reorganizing their approach as well as clarifying their stance in the emerging conditions.


\textsuperscript{265} Letter from Dr. Satyapal, 23-2-1924, CWMG 23:559-60.
Non-violence urged, I am not unaware of the fact that non-violence is not your final creed. It is therefore doubly incumbent upon you to guard against any violence in thought or word creeping in the movement. Over 25 years of the practice of non-violence in the political field has shown me as clearly as daylight that in every act of ours we have to watch our thoughts and words in connection with the movement in which we may be engaged. Non-violence is impossible without deep humility and the strictest regard for truth and if such non-violence has been possible in connection with movements not termed religious how much easier it should be with these like you who are conducting a strictly religious movement. I have deemed it necessary to reiterate what I used to say about non-violence before my imprisonment because I have observed during my brief study of the two events of the past year that we, who claim to be engaged in a non-violent movement have not fully in thought and speech conformed to our creed during the past two years as we certainly did not during the previous years. I am sorry to have to say that what I wrote about ourselves in Young India during the three months prior to my arrest holds truer to-day that it did then. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that had we practiced non-violence in the sense I mean during all these five years we would not only have achieved our common goal but there would be to-day no differences and quarrels between Hindus and Mussalmans. It drawing your attention therefore to the necessity of non-violence in your special struggle about your Gurdwaras I do not wish to be understood to mean that there has been greater disregard of the essentials of non-violence amongst you than amongst the other communities. But a word of caution is more necessary in your case because you have never flagged. You have been
incessantly active in the pursuit of your special goal. I would therefore have you to search yourselves and if you find that you have not been true to the standard you set before yourselves to cease further demonstration for the time being and perform the necessary cleaning process before beginning a new, and I doubt not that your efforts will be crowned with success. I remain your friend and servant, (Sd.) M. K. Gandhi. 266


In spite of the Akalis giving a clear demonstration of their strict adherence to the principle of passive sufferings at Nankana, Guru-ka-Bagh, Jaito and other places and a number of independent observers including the Congress leaders testifying to this; and of the S.G.PC. formally condemning violent activities, confirming their belief in non-violence and categorically stating that ‘their movement was neither anti-Hindu nor anti- any other creed’ with no desire of establishing Sikh Raj, the Mahatma showed himself unable to form a correct assessment of the Akalis and their movement and suddenly withdrew his support to their cause at a very critical juncture. Whether this shift in the Mahatma’s stand was due to his fears about the Akalis becoming violent and Jaito repeating the history of Chauri Chaura or in keeping with his policy of suspending the movements when they grew too strong and went beyond the control of

266 The Times of India, Mr. Gandhi and Akali’s, 26-2-1924, p. 7.
his trusted lieutenants is a question which needs further investigation.267

Sikh leaders also misunderstood Gandhi’s stance during the critical phase of the movement. *The Times* observes Akalis stance at the time of Gandhi’s advice. ‘It is further understood that as the Akali’s cannot comply with the message of Mr. Gandhi they have sent two of their representatives to see him in Poona and thus explain to him the present situation. Some of prominent Akali’s interviewed stated that Mr. Gandhi’s message appeared to be based on wrong information supplied to him and in this respect people mostly suspect Lala Lajap-t-rai. They think that if they give up their present devices of sending out these bigger Shahidi Jathas the results would be similar to those witnessed after Bardoli. They believe that as they have tried their strength of non-violence, they don’t see any reason why they should disappoint such huge crowds that are pouring into Amritsar eager to march on Jaito. Far from being frightened or wavered by Mr. Gandhi’s message they have received it with apathy.’268 However, Gandhi clarified the general misapprehensions by issuing an open letter to ‘The Associated Press’.

My friends informed me to my surprise that there was a general misapprehension in the Punjab that, after the Nankana tragedy I had expressed an opinion that the Gurdwara movement should have been postponed till after the attainment of swarajya and that my recent letter was intended to renew that opinion. I never once expressed the opinion attributed to me, as can be amply verified from my writings and speeches of the time. My recent letter was merely an advice to suspend and not necessarily to stop altogether the sending of the impending Shahidi Jatha till after deliberation with a Committee of non-Sikh

267 Mohinder Singh, pp. 76-77.

friends, and full introspection and searching of the heart.\textsuperscript{269}

Now what interests me is why Gandhi advised the leaders to suspend the movement at such a critical phase? He firstly advised the leaders and the masses to pause and think for the further line of action. Secondly he issued a statement which is very essential to take into account as it was not merely a statement but a change in Gandhi’s line of action due to various reasons.

(a) Seeing the constricted attitude for their religion and partial attitude towards the non-violence ideal he gave maximum authority to the leaders to take the decisions of their sacred struggle so as to avoid a conflicting dialogue. After much introspection he preferred to merely advise the Gurudwara struggle and not to channelize the movement for the broader objectives.

(b) Being experienced enough he foresaw the repercussions of entangling the Nabha issue with the Gurudwara Reform struggle which later was exploited by the Government to weaken their support. Therefore, he advised them to disengage the issues for the improved results. He had apprehensions regarding Nabha issue therefore gave the essential advice to follow before supporting the Maharaja of Nabha.

If I am entirely satisfied as to the nature and implications of the present Akali movement and the methods adopted to gain the end, I should have no hesitation in throwing myself heart and soul into it and even in burying myself in Punjab, if it became necessary in order to guide the movement...The satisfaction that I require is on the following: (1) The strength of the Akalis. (2) (a) A clear manifesto publicly stating the minimum, which I understand to be the performance of the Akhand Path ceremony in Gangsar Gurdwara, the Sikhs openly and

\textsuperscript{269} CWMG, Vol. 23, Interview to Associated Press, 9-3-1924, p. 235.
sincerely declaring that it has no political end and that they do not desire, through the Akhand Path movement, in any shape or form, to carry on an agitation, directly or indirectly, for the restoration of the Nabha Maharaja. The agitation which the Akalis intend to carry on in connection with such restoration will be purely a separate movement.

(b) In connection with the movement for control of gurdwaras in every case of disputed control or possession, the matter should be referred to arbitration. In the case of historical gurdwaras, it will be assumed that all such gurdwaras must remain in the control of the S. G. P. Committee. But the question of fact whether a particular gurdwara is or is not historical will be a subject matter of arbitration, and the burden of proving that it is so will lie on the shoulders of the S. G. P. Committee. With reference to all other gurdwaras, all the facts in dispute should be a subject matter of arbitration. In the event of the party in possession of such gurdwaras declining to surrender control to the S. G. P. Committee or to refer the matter in dispute to arbitration, the Akalis would be free to take such direct action as is consistent with the non-violence in the strictest sense of the term.

(3) Full assurance and, therefore, a document intended for publication, signed by all the principal leaders or on behalf of the S.G.P.C., giving a description of the methods which will clearly set forth all the implications of non-violence. By the term I do not wish to convey that non-violence is to be regarded in the document referred to above as the final creed of the Sikhs, which I know it is not. But I do understand their methods, so far as this Gurdwara movement is concerned, will be absolutely non-violent, that is to say, the Akalis will be non-violent in thought, word and deed in connection with all persons, whether Government officials, English and otherwise, or
whether members of the public belonging to any denomination whatsoever, who may be regarded as opponents of the object of Akalis movement. Absolute adherence to truth I regard as an integral part of any scheme of non-violence, whether it is temporary or permanent and whether it is restricted to persons or places. It, therefore, admits of no diplomacy, as we understand the term, and it rejects altogether the prevailing normal idea that it is legitimate to have surreptitious methods with regard to opponents. It follows that there is to be no secrecy. (4) That the movement is neither anti-Hindu nor anti any other race or creed. (5) That, the S.G.P.C. has no desire for the establishment of Sikh Raj and, as a matter of fact, the Committee is purely a religious body and, therefore, as such can have no secular object or intention.

As to the restoration of Nabha Maharaja: In my opinion, whatever the true facts may be, the Maharaja has by his writings made it practically impossible for his well-wishers to carry on an effective agitation for his restoration. If, however, he makes a public statement that all the writings were practically extorted from him and that he is quite willing and anxious that all the facts against him should be published and if he is prepared to face all the consequences of the agitation, viz., deprivation of titles, annuity, etc., and if all his allegations regarding duress can be proved, it is possible to carry on an effective and even successful agitation. In any event, when the declaration of the kind mentioned is made by the Maharaja, the agitation should be an all-India agitation. The Akalis should merely assist in the observation of faith. M. K. Gandhi.270

270 Statement on Akali Movement, 4-3-1924, CWMG 23:218-220.
Gandhi’s open letter was questioned for being based on wrong facts and which further led to be the basis of the Akali deputation headed by Sardar Mangal Singh. Gandhi counseled the leaders of the deputation to place a comprehensible accountability of their approach and to modify their strategy in accordance to the Struggle-Truce-Struggle\textsuperscript{771} strategy. He asked them to give a written statement so as to reassure their conduct in accordance to his advice and guidance.

In my opinion, in order to bring the whole of the Akali movement to a successful issue, it is absolutely necessary that their minimum should be unmistakably stated. This alone can evoke universal approval and sympathy, provided that the minimum is just and reasonable in the sense that it appeals to the reasons of a common-sense, god fearing man. It will not, therefore, do to say that a particular claim is a religious claim. All religious claims must necessarily appeal to reason.... It follows, therefore, that a large body of men cannot be deputed to assert the right of S.G.P.C.’s possession, but one or at the most two men of undoubted integrity, spiritual force and humility may be deputed to assert the right. The result of this is likely to be the martyrdom of these pioneers. My conviction is that from that moment the possession of the Committee is assured, but it may so happen that martyrdom is postponed and intermediate stages such as prinpricks, serious assault or imprisonment might have to be suffered. In that case and in every case till actual control is secured, there must be a ceaseless stream of devotees in single or double file visiting the gurdwara in assertion of the right of the Committee. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that, if the possessor for the time being may consent to submit to arbitration, the

\textsuperscript{771} Chandra, p. 509.
Committee should be ever ready to accept the offer when the asserting of the right by means of satyagraha ceases. In such a case, it goes without saying that if there are any of the devotees who have been imprisoned in prosecution of the object of the Committee, they should be discharged simultaneously with the acceptance of the arbitration.\textsuperscript{272}

Some misunderstandings were clarified during the discussions with the leaders of the deputation. Gandhi even sent his representative Mr. Panikkar to observe the reports of the struggle. In spite of that Gandhi was keeping a constant vigil on the reports. One of his correspondences with Mr. Panikkar indicates Gandhi position while the struggle. ‘How is it possible to issue any statement after reading the Onward Special? There is not a trace of the religious spirit about the writer, and it so highly coloured and untruthful. It is impossible for me to throw myself heart and soul into a struggle which, claiming to be religious, requires to be supported by inflammatory and untruthful writings. You may read this to our friends. Yours is a very delicate position. I hope you will have the strength and the courage to live up to the creed we profess.’\textsuperscript{273}

He advised the leaders with the nitty-gritty’s of his line of action so to avoid the counter strategies of the Government of Punjab. ‘If the plan suggested by me is adopted by me is adopted, any number of men may march in and at any time of the day. It will be found in practice that no authority can possibly afford to play the game of seesaw with a people so determined... But if my advice is accepted, for the time being no Jatha will be dispatched, but negotiations should be by a third party with the State authorities with a view to clearing away misunderstanding and removing the deadlock.’\textsuperscript{274}

Mukherji simply analyze the strategies of

\textsuperscript{272} CWMG, Vol. 23, Advice to Akalis, 9-3-1924, pp. 229-30.

\textsuperscript{273} Letter to K. M. Panikkar, 5-4-1924, CWMG 23:373.

\textsuperscript{274} Advice to Akalis, 9-3-1924, CWMG 23:233-34.
Gandhi and the Governor of Punjab for disentangling both the issues. ‘Both the British and Gandhi insisted on the separation of the secular from the sacred in the Akali movement, but for completely different reasons. For the former, it was a matter of political concern to permit the Sikhs to take over the control of gurdwaras without disengaging sacred from the secular. Hence the prolongation of the estrangement between the Hindu Mahants and Akalis until such times the gurdwara was defined as an exclusively sacred complex. Gandhi insisted on this differentiation with a view to facilitate their secular integration with the rest of the country. That is why he was so keen on making Nabha an all India issue, provided there was a prima facie case to take up the cause. For Gandhi this a preparation not only for strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle, but also to lay the foundations of a free and secular India. While, on the one hand the gurdwara movement acquired national prominence, the Nabha issue marked the initiation of the Akalis into secular politics, which transcended sectional boundaries; thus the “particular” was distinguished from the “universal”.’

However, Grewal indicates regarding Governor Hailey’s counter strategy and the new fronts during the Gurdwara movement.

However, after the release of Mahatma Gandhi on 5 February 1924, the Congress support became less enthusiastic. Mahatma Gandhi wanted the political issue of abdication to be completely separated from the religious issue. The Punjab Governor, Malcolm Hailey was as much keen to separate the religious from the political issue as to split the Akali leadership, to divide their resources by opening new fronts and to alienate Hindus and Muslims from their cause by attributing political designs to them.

275 Mukherji, pp. 110-111.

276 Grewal, p. 162.
The Government of Punjab being in a complex situation could not openly confront the sacred movement but the Sikh leaders themselves gave them an issue to weaken the movement at a critical phase. ‘By combining a religious ceremony the Akhand Path- with their politics they imagined themselves secured against interruption, but the State officials were equally Sikhs and were thus able without religious irregularity to bring the whole affair to a close. “Akali foothold in Nabha State was gone. The S. G. P. Committee felt much chagrined. Howls were raised in the Akali press. The story about the interruption of the Akhand Path was invented and all sorts of lies were manufactured to support it… the story … made a direct appeal to the Sikh mind. A Sikh correspondent points out in Punjab paper that “the movement is tottering… the Government, it appears, was giving them a long rope to hang and they are hanging themselves.”’ Moderate minded Sikhs, who claim to be in the vast majority, have long deplored the quagmire into which a body of false prophets have led their community and though they have not hitherto intervened because they hoped the turmoil would end itself or because they looked to Government to deal with it their disappointment at the failure of the Birdwood inquiry, last hope, they say, of settlement by compromise and the growing disorder in the community have at last stung them to action…

“A new Sikh Publicity Committee has been formed to combat the S.G.P.C’s mischievous propaganda. A central Sikh Reform Committee has arisen to counterpart the political side of the S.G.P.C. activities… No wonder that in their extremity the S.G.P.C have wangled a sympathetic resolution out of the Congress Committee and have given Mr. Gandhi “full satisfaction on the points he raised” in order to get his hitherto despised help to ginger up a dying movement.” The Times indicates the way new Akali leadership supported the Government so to weaken long drawn struggle and acknowledged Gandhi’s astute advice too.

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277 The Times of India, The Sikhs, 12-7-1924, p. 10.
The formation of the new Shiromani Sikh Sudhar Committee at Amritsar with the object of counseling moderation to Sikh reformers and guiding their activities into less murky channels than they have recently frequented shows that an influential section among the Sikhs is beginning to realize the errors of Akali ways. Almost from the start the leaders of the Akali movement played a double game. While posing as purely religious reformers they made it clear by their actions that they were in reality trying to turn a religious grievance into a weapon against Government; while making a great parade of their belief in non-violence, they were so truculent in their demeanor as to draw a word of protest even from Mr. Gandhi. Led astray by the whisperings of Congress politicians, they have exploited the feeling of the ordinary Sikhs against the rich mahants until a question of religious reformation has become mixed up with the abdication of the Maharajah of Nabha and all sorts of irrelevant matters.\textsuperscript{778}

*The Civil and Military Gazette* reveals the other side of the story as how Akali campaigners were seeking grounds to charge the Government for some or other reasons and how they were been disliked by the local people for their campaigning activities. ‘In order to fully appreciate the happenings at Jaito it is necessary that readers should know how Jaito became the centre of such great attention on the part of the Akalis. I came to know that soon after the abdication of the ex-Maharaja the Akalis began to send their emissaries to the state territory to inflame public feelings against the change of the regime that had taken place. The Akalis had centered their hopes on an internal rising of the state people; but they were disappointed because barring a few spasmodic aberrations, nothing of importance happened. This unusual attention shown and the frequent

\textsuperscript{778} Ibid., Sikh Reform, 9-7-1924, p. 8.
visits paid roused very intense resentment among the Nabha Sikhs felt strongly against the invasion of the bands of other ilaquas, for instance Malwa which has been, the Nabha people say, traditionally hostile to them. This plan of the Akalis having been barren of results they got on the look-out for some pretext for the furtherance of their agitation in the Nabha territory. It was alleged that an unprecedented sacrilege had been committed by the Nabha authorities having interrupted the Akhand Path, but it was stoutly denied as a baseless insinuation advanced for obvious purposes.\textsuperscript{279} It was the extremist group among the leaders who was obdurate and trying to influence the other groups for their approach which has been noticed by \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}. \textit{It is also understood that the Executive committee was pressed by responsibilities of Shiromini Akali Dal to modify the present tactics of the Shahidi Jathas marching to Jaito so that they may in future offer slight resistance instead of voluntary submission to arrests. The executive committee, however, could not comply with their request.}\textsuperscript{280} Following analysis helps to understand the new arrangement in the last phase of the Akali movement by the Governor Hailey. It is important to notice that Government took advantage of the issues for which Gandhi had apprehensions and cautioned to reorganize.

This dual approach was given coherence with the arrival, in 1924, of Sir Malcolm Hailey as Governor of the Punjab. Hailey’s approach was simple: he would not feed the SGPC’s propaganda machine by attempting anything dramatic. He had assessed the enthusiasm for the movement was ebbing, was not prepared to provide the excuse for a revival by taking a repressive policy or by making a major concession. He also realized that the SGPC and the Akalis were able to dominate the Sikh

\textsuperscript{279} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}: Lahore, Experiences of a Sikh Journalist- Jaito happenings, The cause of the present trouble, 9-3-1924, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{280} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}: The Gurdwara Bill, Extreme Akali Attitude, 26-6-1925, p. 9.
countryside because there was a total absence of alternative leadership. He therefore created anti-Akali associations in the Sikh districts, and with tacit official support, these associations significantly undermined the SGPC’s support in the Sikh districts. By 1925 Hailey’s success was complete. He had effectively stopped the Sikh political unrest, removed the grounds for further gurdwara disputes by the passing of the 1925 Sikh Gurdwara and Shrines Act, curbed the SGPC’s potential for future political intrigue, and most importantly, secured the allegiance of the Sikhs and successfully maintained the Sikh recruiting districts. 281

Thus, leaders by being inflexible and ignoring Gandhi’s advice at a critical phase gave space to the counter strategy’s of the Governor. On the other issue Gandhi asked for the written statement from the Maharaja of Nabha. ‘On the issue of the restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha, once again Gandhi proved his maturity. When representations of the Akali Dal met the Maharaja in his Dehra Dun exile, he refused to give a public statement in favour of any inquiry claiming innocence, nor was he prepared to give them an authenticated copy of the representation. Without these two documents the Akalis would have no substance to demand an enquiry into his “wrongful” abdication.’282 Maharaja directly requested Gandhi for his help but he conveyed the same approach which was advised to the Sikh leaders. ‘I may inform you that I read the papers regarding your case and discussed it with several Sikh friends long before you wrote to me, and I told them that it was not possible even for the Sikhs to help you, and that any attempt made by them would but injure your cause and their own movement. I am still of opinion that the mixing up of your case with the Gurdwara movement was a serious

282 Mukherji, p. 107.
After weakening the struggle Government pacified the leaders by accepting their rational demands which was appreciated by Gandhi. ‘Both the Punjab Government and the Sikhs are to be congratulated upon the happy ending of the Akali movement. It has required the self-immolation of hundreds of the bravest in the land. It has required the imprisonment of thousands of brave Akali’s. The public is familiar with the tale of their sufferings in the jails. Such marvelous sacrifice could not go in vain. Let us hope that the gurdwara reform will now proceed steadily and without a hitch. The Government deserves the congratulations, too, on their release of Akali prisoners and relaxation in the stringency of conditions regarding the Akhand Path.’

There were certain learning experiences for Gandhi during the movement. The local leaders from the different parts of the country started approaching the Congress members for the support. But he guided the Congress to assist the local movements up to certain level and to refrain themselves from their crucial matters. ‘The representatives from Kerala asked me if they should not have a resolution of the Congress supporting the movement. I told them that I did not like the idea. What they wanted was moral support. It would have been given by the Committee for the asking, if they had sent a resolution to the President. My responsibility in dissuading them was, therefore serious. But I am convinced that all local movements must be self-reliant and that the A.I.C.C should give its moral support only in exceptional cases. The talk with the members was followed by the resolution regarding the Sikhs. The members when they found me settling the draft of the resolution asked me again whether, in view of the Sikh resolution asked me again whether, I should not relent. I told them that the Congress had already taken up the Sikh cause and that, therefore, it could not very well now refrain without giving rise to the suspicion it had given up the Sikh cause.


The members did not perhaps appreciate my reasoning. But they cheerfully submitted to it.\textsuperscript{285} He while experiencing the local movement introduced the limits of sacred in comparison to the political movement as well as local in comparison to the national movement. ‘Vaikom satyagrahis undoubtedly arrived at a delicate state, so many leaders having been picked up by the Travancore authorities. Appeal has been made to all-India leaders to lead the movement. It is a question how far a local movement, on reaching a critical stage, can be turned into an all-India movement. All India sympathy I can understand and that Vaikom satyagrahis are having in abundance, but to concentrate active energies of leaders from different provinces on a single local movement seems to be a difficult, if not an impossible, task.\textsuperscript{286}

\textbf{Level of interaction between Gandhi and the Sikh Community}

Now, it is important to discuss those experiences which led him to modify his line of action. Initially his support to the struggle was limited and it helped only in adding the force of the non-violence ideal for pressing the Government decisions. He actively linked himself with the movement during the Nankana Tragedy. During the Nankana tragedy he found scope to channelize the masses and leaders in exposing the violent forces by proving the strength of his ideal of non-violence. He initiated his line of action by linking the ideal with the religious traditions of the community. He initiated the dialogue by exploring the religious beliefs of the community. Gradually he found the leaders with the constricted approach for their religious beliefs. An interesting incident shared by Gandhi through his writings and which is as follows.

I am very glad to find that Sikh friends resent my classing them with non-Hindus. I assure them that I had no such intention whatsoever. During my first tour in the Punjab I happened to say in the speaking of the Sikhs that, in my opinion, they were a part of the Hindu community. I did

\textsuperscript{285} Notes, \textit{Young India}, 3-7-1924, 1967, CWMG 24:346.

\textsuperscript{286} Interview to Associated Press of India, \textit{The Hindu}, 14-4-1924, CWMG 23:437.
so because I knew that millions of Hindus believed in Guru Nanak and that the Granth Saheb was filled with the Hindu spirit and Hindu legends. But a Sikh friend who was present at the meeting took me aside and said with gravest concern that my inclusion of the Sikhs in the Hindu community had given offence, and the friend advised me in future never to speak of the Sikhs in the same breath as Hindus. During my tour in Punjab, I found that the caution given by the friend was well-given. For I noticed that many Sikhs regarded themselves as belonging to a religion distinct from Hinduism. I promised the friend never again to refer to the Sikhs as Hindus. Nothing would, therefore, please me better than to find that the separatist tendency is confined only to a very few Sikhs and that the general body regard themselves as Hindus.  

So he discovered that both kinds of believers are there in the Sikh society. Moving to next step he started connecting the ideal of non-violence with the religious teachings of their Gurus. He wrote an article to teach his modern ethical insights through the example of one of their Guru. This particular article was criticized at the same time was bounced back to Gandhi many a times up to 1946. Gandhi was asked to clear his standpoint for their Guru which is as follows.

During his visit to Patna for the A.I.C.C., Sardar Mangal Singh dew my attention to an article in Young India entitled “My friend, the revolutionary” in the issue dated 9th April last. He told me that many Sikh friends were offended because they thought I have described Guru Govind Singh as a misguided patriot whereas I had glorified Krishna. The Sardarji asked me to take an early

287 Notes, Young India, 22-5-1924, CWMG 24:105.
opportunity of explaining what I meant by the passages he
drew my attention to... My belief about the Sikh Gurus is
that they were all deeply religious teachers and reformers,
that they were all Hindus and that Guru Gobind Singh was
one of the greatest defenders of Hinduism. I believe, too,
that he drew the sword in its defence. But I cannot judge
his actions, nor can I use him as my model so far as his
resort to the sword is concerned... I read in Yeravada
Prison all the writings that I could lay my hands upon
regarding the Sikhs. I read portions of Granth Saheb. Its
deeply spiritual and moral tone I found to be uplifting. In
the collection of hymns we have at the Ashram, we have
some of Guru Nanak’s also. At the same time I do not
quarrel with the Sikhs for considering, if they wish,
Sikhism as totally distinct from Hinduism. But the Sikh
friends will pardon me for avowing my belief when I am
asked to express my belief when I am asked to express my
opinion about Sikhism. Yet again he was asked to
clarify his stance for their Guru by the same leader. 'Thus
writes Sardar Mangal Singh: (2) Several years ago while
discussing the thesis of non-violence in Young India you
said that ‘Guru Govind Singh was a misguided patriot’ or
words to that effect. When fiery speakers mention this it
makes a great sentimental appeal to the Sikhs. I think you
should explain.'

However, his non-violence non-co-operation wave influenced a
community of untouchables for reforming their society. Their struggle
for securing rights is commonly termed as Vaikom Satyagraha. Being
centered for their struggle some Sikhs helped the satyagrahis of
Vaikom by way of free kitchen. Being in touch with the Vaikom

288 Sikhism, Young India, 1-10-1925, 1968, CWMG 28:263-64.
289 For the Sikh Friends, Harijan, 5-7-1942, 1979, CWMG 76:248.
Gandhi calculated the gesture to be unreasonable as according to him the community should be left to its own and there should be no interference by any non-Hindu community in a matter which was specifically concerned with the Hindus. His categorization of the Sikh community among non-Hindu communities was questioned which has been discussed above.

I cannot but regard it as charity that a large number of people, who are well able to feed themselves, should feed themselves at the kitchen and unwillingly be partakers of charity of which they do not stand in need, and this I say irrespective of the fact whether Sikhs be regarded as a part of the Hindu society or not. I would expect the Kerala friends to have self-respect and courage enough courteously to decline such assistance even if Sanatni Hindus offered to establish a kitchen. I can conceive the possibility and necessity of such a kitchen in a famine-stricken area where people are starving.290

Correspondingly, the Sikh awakening showed their signs immediately by passing resolutions in concern to their idea for including Sikh black color in the Swaraj flag. Being aware of their constricted approach he was prepared to channelize them patiently with reason. ‘A friend has just drawn my attention to a resolution passed by the Sikh League inviting me to include the Sikh black colour in the national flag. These friends forget that all other colours are represented on the white strip. We must not be parochial, provincial or clannish. Hindu and Mussulman colours are specially represented, not so much for the numbers they represent, as for the fact they have remained apart for so long and that their mutual distrust has been an effectual bar against the realization of national aspirations. The Sikhs have never had any quarrel with Hindus. And if one has the Sikh colour separately represented, why not the Parsi, the

Christian and the Jewish? I hope the Sikh Leaguers will see the unpractical nature of their suggestion.  

It was not only the religious believes on which Gandhi and the Sikh leaders have divergent approach but during the last phase of the movement Gandhi’s advice for reorganizing and modifying the basic strategy did not appealed them. Due to their divergent approaches in his first phase of guidance, he tactically changed his position to an advisor in the next phase of their religious Gurudwara struggle. Mukherji observes the differences which emerged between Gandhi and the Sikh leaders in the second phase of his guidance.

By far the most important part of S.G.P.C’s response to Gandhi was with regard to the concept and practice of non-violence. while they agreed “in principle on the question of non-violence and its method and implications too”, they registered their difference of opinion with him on two points, “about the question of the alleged show of force involved in a considerable number of men practicing satyagraha at the same time and the question of disobeying the order of arrest”.

Mukherji went far in analyzing Gandhi’s organizational skills as according to him Gandhi was successful in executing his satyagraha technique during the struggle of the Gurdwara Reform.

Another significant aspect of the Akali movement was that, though the Sikhs were socialised into violent militancy, their capacity progressively to imbibe the non-violent spirit and their demonstration of it to a degree and extent that the whole country witnessed, was matchless. This process of transition provided a “laboratory” for Gandhi to make important formulations on non-violence.

291 Notes, Young India, 18-5-1921, CWMG 20:107.

under the concrete conditions of an on-going movement. It testifies to the phenomenal leadership capacities of the Akalis, that they were able to put into practice their non-violent struggle to the satisfaction of the strictest taskmaster, Gandhi without his direct assumption of leadership of the movement, unlike in other parts of the country. Although this is directly not our subject matter of concern, it is significant to note the increasing Akali involvement in secular matters. The Jat Sikh peasantry had provided the back-bone of the gurdwara movement. Now, their problems started receiving Akali attention. Their progressive integration with the Indian national movement led to their unequivocal decision to become a part of the Indian nation. The spirit of non-violence penetrated the peasantry as a strong value.

Initially he saw the scope of executing his satyagraha technique and took certain basic steps too. While being in constant dialogue with the leaders of the Sikh community he found their constricted approach to misunderstanding his ethical viewpoint. So, before joining the movement for the second time he clarified his intent for not channelizing their religious movement for the broader objective but will only take the position of an advisory in their local struggle. Subsequently, he advised the leaders with the nitty-gritty’s of the satyagraha technique but it was overlooked by the leaders due to their divergent approach for the passive resistance. He rather gave them approval for his guidance on the Nabha issue due its political base. Therefore, due to the divergent approaches on the basic issues he did not found better prospects for the success of the Gurdwara movement at the national level. Mukherji indicates that their approaches were convergent while Tuteja observes that while being divergent on some issues they were ally.

293 Mukherji, p. 111.
This only points to the fact that given the logic of non-violent action which the Akalis adopted the probability of disobeying an order of arrest was remote. This only reinforces my contention that, in substance, the Gandhians and the Akali approaches to the practice of non-violence was convergent rather than divergent. The other point on which the Akalis recorded their difference with Gandhi was on the presence of large numbers of satyagrahis at a time, which may give the impression of a ‘show of force’ some. Here again there was some misunderstanding. Gandhi did not suggest the “limitation of satyagrahis” to “one or at most two”, as the Akalis understood him to mean. What he was insisting on was the form in which these numbers could record their assertion which would take care of the problem of ‘show of force’. The significance of the Sangat in Sikhism could not be affected by a certain form of its presentation.294

However, Singh again misinterprets their divergent approaches. ‘It is interesting here to note that Mahatma Gandhi who was mainly responsible for the Akalis shifting from purely religious agitation to passive resistance against the Government and was a source of inspiration to the Akalis also advised them to suspend their movement and to stop sending more Jathas to Jaito. Here the Mahatma seems to have neglected the fact that it was he and his lieutenants in the Sikh League who brought the Akali’s from religion to politics and persuaded them to formally join the movement of non-cooperation by launching a frontal attack against the bureaucracy which was backing the vested interests in the Sikh Shrines.’295 Singh overlooks to see the broad ethical approach of a leader like Gandhi as his intent was not to involve religion into politics but wanted to channelize their spirit for a broader objective.

294 Ibid., p. 105.
295 Mohinder Singh, pp. 75-76.
Rather the Sikhs were not able to understand his broad intent due to their constricted approach. Thus the existing research work on the Akali Movement has provided certain space to work on ‘Gandhi and the Gurdwara Movement’. Gandhian component through the Gurdwara movement cannot be confined within a constricted approach and therefore should be considered beyond.

**Conclusion**

Initially his support to the movement was limited. He actively linked himself with the movement during the Nankana Tragedy after seeing the sacrificing spirit as he found scope to channelize the masses and the leaders. He clarified his intent to expose the violent forces and for strengthening the force of the non violence ideal. He saw the scope for the execution of his satyagraha technique and took certain basic steps too. He initiated his line of action by linking the ideal with the religious traditions of the community so to establish a long lasting bonding between the two. He started the dialogue by exploring the religious beliefs of the community. Gradually he found some men with the constricted approach for their religious beliefs and some to be liberal. His ethical viewpoint was misunderstood due to the constricted approach of the leaders linked with him. Gandhi’s guarded approval to the movement in the first phase provided certain outcomes: (a) The Government of Punjab was not in a position to reject the demands put by the leaders of the sacred movement due to various complications and therefore Gandhi’s guidance and support certainly aided the movement in attaining their initial demands. (b) Rise of the activities of the extremist group in the wake of non-violence movement was a matter of concern for him.

In the second phase he firstly advised the leaders and the masses to pause and think for the further line of action. Secondly he issued a statement which clarifies the tactical shift in his line of action. (a) Seeing the constricted attitude of the leaders for their religious beliefs and partial attitude towards the non-violence ideal he gave maximum authority to the leaders to take the decisions of their sacred struggle so as to avoid a conflicting dialogue. After much introspection he preferred to advise and
not to channelize the struggle for the broader objectives. (b) Being experienced enough he foresaw the repercussions of entangling the Nabha issue with the Gurdwara Reform movement which later was exploited by the Government to weaken their support. Therefore, he advised them to disengage the issues for the improved results. He had apprehensions regarding Nabha issue therefore gave the essential advice to follow before supporting the Maharaja of Nabha.

Subsequently, he advised the leaders with the nitty-gritty’s of the satyagraha technique but it was overlooked by the leaders due to their divergent approach for the passive resistance. It was not only the religious believes on which Gandhi and the Sikh leaders had divergent approach but during the second phase his advice for the changing the strategy did not appealed them. He rather gave them approval for his guidance on the Nabha issue due its political base. We observed that Governor Hailey exploited the same issues for which Gandhi had apprehensions and cautioned before. Gandhi always tried to keep his maneuvers flawless so that the opponent should not get the chance to weaken his struggle and that’s why he advised the leaders for the minimum show of force and disentangling the sacred and political issues. Thus it can be construed that Sikh leadership by being inflexible and ignoring Gandhi’s advice at a critical phase gave space to the new leadership and the counter strategy’s of the Governor. He was misinterpreted by the Sikh leaders regarding his assertion for the suspension of the movement. Chandra’s analytical research work guides to trace the calculated strategies of Gandhi while being advisory in their struggle. It also helps to comprehend that his strategy certainly would have guided the struggle at a significant phase, if seriously taken into account.

The entire political process of S-T-S’ was an upward spiraling one. This strategy also assumed advance through stages. The nationalist strategy, under Gandhiji’s leadership, was based on the assumption that by its very nature a mass movement could not be carried on or
sustained indefinitely or for a prolonged period, that a mass movement must ebb sooner or later, that mass movements have to be short lived, and that periods of rest and consolidation, of 'breathing time,' must intervene so that the movement could consolidate, recuperate and gather strength for the next round of struggle. 

Non-co-operation Movement was followed with an all round distrust among the religious communities. In the emerging state of affairs, the statements made to calm the environs were further taken with suspiciousness. Gandhi opted the rational way to continue the dialogue by means of open letter, statement to Associated Press and asking for straight confessions from the Sikh leaders which was also apprehended by the leaders. Therefore, due to divergent approach with the Sikh leaders on the basic issues, he did not found better prospects for achieving his broader objectives through the Gurudwara struggle. However, Gandhi was persistently trying to convince the Sikh leaders with his broader approach so to rise above the conflicting dialogue.

\[\text{Chandra, pp. 509-10.}\]