CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Master Gurbanta Singh, an acknowledged Dalit leader of Punjab, was the product of the Ad Dharm Movement. He was initiated into this Movement in 1928 when he was just twenty years old. True to its fundamentals, he zealously worked for the cultural solidarity of the Dalits. Thereafter he moved to political activism. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1952 when it was characterized by inclusive and integrative culture. He remained a dogged Congressman right upto his death in 1980 in spite of the fact that flashes of degeneration in the party were witnessed quite early. There was no switching off loyalties to any other political dispensation. He would speak simultaneously the language of the educated urban elite and illiterate rural poor, but his identification was always with the latter. His position as a Dalit leader remained unassailable. He was never a group or faction leader and this unusual neutrality helped him in harmonising the severely antagonistic groups and factions in the Congress. He transformed the political discourse of the Congress in Punjab, as after his entry into politics, Dalits became the focus of Congress programmes and policies.

“While individuals are not independent of society in which they live, it is difficult to regard them as hapless pawns of impersonal forces,”
commented a perceptive political scientist\(^1\). Another equally perceptive political scientist states that people generally resent the glamour of political life which the politicians are habitual to don. People applaud simplicity, general and straightforward explanations\(^2\). This seems to be true of Master Gurbanta Singh who through the platform of Ad Dharam, forcefully challenged the ascriptive cleavages. Identification of the Dalits with the Congress of the Nehru era, and not with the communal and casteist organizations augured well in the politics of Punjab. Total demise of Scheduled Caste Federation and Depressed Classes League, dismal performance of Bhartiya Jan Sangh and not too good performance of Shiromani Akali Dal in the first three general elections to the Punjab Assembly spoke of the efforts made by leaders like Master Gurbanta Singh in inducting the secular Congress culture amongst the Dalits.

The Congress leadership before independence, though primarily Hindu, was nationalist to the core and was imbued with the values of secularism, democracy and socialism. After independence, the nationalist core started getting eroded because of the intense faction fighting among the top Congress leadership. Gopichand Bhargava and Bhim Sen Sachar groups, Partap Singh Kairon and Giani Zail Singh groups, after the death of Partap Singh Kairon, Giani Zail Singh and Gurmukh Singh Musafir groups

took a heavy toll not only of the higher values nurtured by the Congress Party, but also considerably weakened the organization which was thrown out of power in the 1967 assembly elections. Challenges from Akali Dal to the Congress on the question of Punjabi language compelled the Hindu leadership of the Congress to make space for non-Hindus like Jat Sikhs and also Dalit Sikhs. Partap Singh Kairon, a Jat Sikh and Master Gurbanta Singh, a Dalit Sikh belong to this category. The difference between the two was that whereas Partap Singh Kairon aggravated faction fighting and accelerated the decline of the Congress through over centralisation and dictatorial methods, Master Gurbanta Singh did all what he could do to blunt the faction fighting and stem the decline. Most the Sikh Congress leaders had Akali background which they exploited unabashedly. But Master Gurbanta Singh and Darbara Singh, another leader from Doaba region who became the Chief Minister of Punjab in 1980, stand as vivid exceptions in Punjab politics.

Considering that without political power, the condition of Dalits would not improve, Master Gurbanta Singh contested the first assembly elections in Punjab in 1937 from Jalandhar reserved constituency. As the voting rights were limited to certain specific sections of society, he was not able to win. There was a time when all the people did not enjoy the right to

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vote. Dalits were not allowed to cast their votes at all. There was also the system of casting the votes on religious basis. The votes of Hindus were meant for Hindus and those of Sikhs for Sikhs. The Master contested again in 1946 assembly elections as an independent candidate and handsomely won by defeating the Congress candidate Seth Kishan Dass, a rich leather merchant of Jalandhar. It was only after independence that he joined the Indian National Congress. Right since then, he had been in the Assembly by winning the 1952, 1957, 1962 1969 and 1972 elections. He lost the elections in 1967 when there was a general decline in popularity of the Congress. He was able to make up for this defeat first in 1969 assembly actions when he was one of the few congress winners and then in 1972 when he was elected to the assembly unopposed. When he was charged by the Opposition members that he had bribed the Akali candidate, he explained his position in the Assembly thus:

Speaker, Sir, you know that Akalis have simply run away from contests in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur Districts. These people brought a person from England to contest against me. The same fellow contested in the last elections as well and he lost by a margin of 14000 votes. Now he tried again but when he saw the conditions in the villages, he ran back to England. In Jalandhar District, all the Akalis have run away from

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5 Private Papers of Master Gurbanta Singh
contesting. I have not bargained for my victory. The voters of my constituency have done me pride as I have won eight-nine times from the same constituency. They have loved me and so do I. In Kartarpur Constituency, no Akali can dare to oppose me.

Master Gurbanta Singh joined the Indian National Congress on two counts: one was that in the first Congress Ministry formed after independence, Prithvi Singh Azad, a Scheduled Caste Minister, presented a Social Disability Bill in the Assembly wherein those sixty-five castes were enlisted which were socially looked down upon. It was stated in the Bill that those who would not properly behave with these castes, will be liable to punishment. Ad Dharmis were not included in that list. It was a shock to the Master. He forcefully opposed the measure; second count was that the Industries Minister Punjab announced to nationalise raw leather. This measure was inimical to the economic interests of the Harijans of Jalandhar Division. The Master's arguments about leather industry and also the general conditions of the rural poor were very convincing. He stated in the Assembly:

Sir, if you look towards the rural areas, you will find that the only occupation on which people can fall back is agriculture.

A majority of the rural population consists of those people

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6 *Punjab Assembly Debates. 29 March 1972*
who cultivate the land of the land-owners. As a result of the Tenancy Act these landlords ousted the poor and sturdy peasants from their lands. In the circumstances, Sir, I would submit to the minister-in-charge that a majority of these people are sitting idle. They have got no work to earn their livelihood. Besides, our Harijans brethren are engaged in three industries, namely, tanning, weaving and shoe-making which provide them with the means of earning their livelihood. The circumstances obtaining at present clearly go to show that all these three industries have altogether been ruined. In view of the large-scale consumption of crome leather, the demand for country-made leather has considerably decreased. Prior to the partition of India, a widespread publicity was given to 'Khadi' but owing to the increased demand of mill-made cloth, nobody, excepting a few high-ranking Congressmen, liked to wear 'Khadi'. With the ruination of these three industries, I am to tell you, Sir, that a large number of Harijans have been thrown out of employment. I, therefore, feel that whereas we are determined to better the lot of the rural poor, it is necessary that we should develop industries in villages.\footnote{{\textit{Ibid}, 18 March 1953}}
Master Gurbanta Singh along with Mangoo Ram, founder of the Ad Dharam Mandal with whom he claimed the co-paternity of the Movement opposed both these measures but to no effect. He was advised by his followers and friends to join the Indian National Congress because, as an independent member, his voice was not audible in the corridors of power.8

Before partition, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had instructed four Non-Congress Scheduled Caste MLAs in the Punjab Assembly to support the Muslim League for forming the Government in Punjab. It had already happened in Bengal where Harijan MLAs became instrumental in the formation of the Muslim League Ministry. The Punjab MLAs had been assured that Muslim League would offer one Ministership and one Parliamentary Secretaryship to the MLAs. Master Gurbanta Singh and three others refused to extend the above-said support. Master Gurbanta Singh wrote back to Dr. Ambedkar that demographic situation did not warrant this kind of support to the Muslim League. It was unthinkable on the part a Harijan leader to oppose Dr. Ambedkar. But it was Master Gurbanta Singh’s courageous step which saved the situation from going astray and also established his nationalist credentials. All the eight Scheduled Caste

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8 Ibid.
MLAs including these four non-Congress ones stood with India at the time of partition⁹.

Master Gurbanta Singh became Minister for the first time in the Kairon Ministry which was formed in 1956. Although he had not supported Kairon in the factional fight and he remained supporter of Bhim Sen Sachar, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Kairon included him in the Ministry because of his being an experienced Scheduled Caste leader and legislator. It was also because Master's name was recommended by Pandit Govind Wallabh Pant, the then powerful Home Minister of India for inclusion in the Ministry¹⁰.

Both as Minister and member of the Opposition, he fought for the rights of ruralities in general and Harijans in particular. He prevailed upon the farmers to use fertilizers for increased production as at that time i.e. in the late 1950s food production was low and farmers were not getting remunerative price for their produce. During Master Gurbanta Singh's Ministership, Punjabi farmers got the maximum price for sugarcane in the whole of the North India. The sugar mills were made to pay some quantity of sugar as well to the farmers. He was reprimanded by the Central Government for increasing the sugarcane prices¹¹. The farmers were given subsidy on fertilizers. The Central Government fixed Rs. 105 per quintal as

¹⁰ Private Papers of Master Gurbanta Singh.
¹¹ Janta College Kartarpur, Biography of Master Gurbanta Singh, n.d.p.16
price of wheat. But in Punjab farmers were given Rs. 113 in 1974 when he was Agriculture Minister in Giani Zail Singh Ministry.\(^\text{12}\)

Master Gurbanta Singh's major concern was the welfare of Harijans. The starting point was the memorandum submitted to His Excellency, Sir, Geoffrey Montmorency, the then Governor of Punjab, on 10 October 1929. The memorandum explained the situation both normatively and empirically and it truly became the 'Magna Carta' for the welfare of Harijans. It was stated in the memorandum: “The downtrodden community comprises three million souls in the Punjab and seventy Million in the whole of India, who are disgracefully called the “Sudras” or untouchables. This community belongs to an ancient race which ruled India about 5,000 year ago, prior to the invasion of India by the Aryans. These bands of outsiders from Central Asia defeated their forefathers and treated them ruthlessly. They were foreign cruel masters in a way which spoke volumes of the barbarous mentality of the so called “Civilized Aryans.” The rest of the conquered race, who due to their self respect, refused to be enslaved were driven away to take shelter in the jungles. The Aryans whose present descendants are called high class Hindus, have all along been treating them with the most inhuman brutality. Inspite of the fact that there are some highly educated and capable men in the community, they are not given any honourable status in the society. No

\(^{12}\) _Punjab Assembly Debates. 7 March 1974_
right of ownership vests in them. The Dalits even have not the right to safeguard their individual life. The religious scriptures of the Hindu religion like Manusamriti are replete with the sayings that the Ad Dharmis have been created to serve the high class Hindus, that they have no right to hold any property, that even wanton murder of a Dalit involves the high class Hindu in no difficulty. The officials have appropriated all their rights. All the dealings of the government with the Hindus mean with the high class Hindus only. The result is that grievances of the Dalits cannot reach the government. It was further stated that the Dalits are in the worst condition from the political point of view. Not even a single member of their community has ever been nominated to the local legislature or to any local body. Referring to the electoral system, it was stated that the present system of electorate can not be of any use to them because the high class Hindus are steeped with caste prejudice. Therefore the only method open to them should be separate electorate wherein their political, social and even moral salvation lies.”

Master Gurbanta Singh stuck to the core of this memorandum throughout his political career. As Minister of Agriculture and Transport, he stated that his first priority would be distribution of whole of the Government owned wasteland in the State amongst Harijans, landless peasants and agricultural labourers. That was the time when Dalits were not

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13 Private Papers of Master Gurbanta Singh
given the rights to have their own land. It was not possible for the Harijans to have control over the landholdings. They could not purchase new land. Patwaris were always playing frauds with them. The required facilities were not provided to the Harijans. There were many factors behind it. But the malpractices supported by the government gave a way to create such conditions. It was not expected from the government; rather it was the foremost duty of the government to provide total security and protection to the poor. But sadly, it did not perform its expected functions in a required way. The Master emphatically argued that each rural poor, particularly the Harijans should get at least five acres of canal irrigated land. They should get a house worth Rs.500/-. He said that Rs.250/- would be given to them for agricultural implements. Need of the hour was that new agriculture techniques and instruments should be made available to every cultivator but if government did it, its benefits were enjoyed by the rich ones only. The poor were always prone to be discriminated against in that case too. He also prevailed upon the Government to build colonies for Harijans and dig wells to provide them safe drinking water and irrigational facilities.

Speaking on the East Punjab Utilization of Lands (Amendment) Bill, 1956, he said:

As absentee landlord who does not cultivate the land has no right of ownership. I have already stated that there is lot of

\[14\] *Punjab Assembly Debates, 6 May 1957*
unemployment in our state. So to deal with this menace, we have brought the bill. As you do not know as to how much attachment a farmer has for his land, he can fight and die even for four inches of land. Murders take place. A farmer who does not know what is the condition of his land and how much land he is possessing has no right to possess it. We immensely need land for food production. Landless tenants can also be settled on that land as well. Most of the tenants have become jobless.... Sir, before now the Harijans had to face this difficulty that they had perforce to leave villages and come to towns because they were not allowed to graze their cattle there. By this legislation the Harijans who live in villages will be able to have a sigh of relief and in future they will not be forced to migrate to towns. Previously, whenever any Harijan went out of his village in the quest of a job his house was occupied by the zamidars who never relinquished possession of that house on his return. Now according to this Bill they will be made the proprietors of the houses occupied by them.\footnote{Punjab Assembly Debates. 4 September 1956}

After few months Master Gurbanta Singh told the House during a debate that under the Land Utilization Act, 46,315 acres of land had been
distributed among the Harijans. 4,890 acres was lying with the Government which would be shortly distributed. Five thousand acres of wasteland had also been distributed among Harijans\textsuperscript{16}.

At one point of time, Master Gurbanta Singh argued in the Assembly that if “all Harijan MLAs and Ministers spoke in one voice, then the social and economic betterment of the Harijans would be ensured. They should know that Indian system kept a big chunk of Indian society now numbering 42 lacs in Punjab, socially, economically and religiously backward. The Harijans were not to be blamed for this situation. In India great Saints, Rishi and Munis came, they preached that the Harijans are our integral part, integral part of the country; their condition must be reformed. But in India, the atmosphere was such that we revered them as Gurus, Rishis and Munis; we accepted their other teachings, not the one regarding the Harijans. Mahatma Gandhi was so greatly obsessed with their reformation that he lived in the slums with them. At that time the circumstances were not favourable for Harijans in India. But Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation struggled a lot to provide reservations for that class of backward people. Once there was a standoff between the Congress leaders and the Dalit leaders on the question of reservation. Mahatma Gandhi went on fast unto death. He said: “The Harijans could not go out of the Indian society. They

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 16 May 1957.
are my integral part, integral part of India. If Indian society does not accept them, I shall leave this country.\textsuperscript{17}

It was immediately after independence that Master Gurbanta Singh as a member of the Assembly started the crusade for the rights of Harijans. Participating in the Debate on Supplementary Demands for Grants, he pleaded the case of Harijan students. He stated that the Harijan students did not get fair deal. The instructions of the Government were in fact honoured more in their breach rather than in their observance. In fact Harijans had to struggle a lot in order to improve their status and circumstances in the society. But it was the unfortunate fact of the time that the government did not take any substantial step for the welfare and the betterment and development, progress and advancement of Harijans. No separate educational institution was started in the country to improve their education and their intellectual level. The Harijan Welfare Scheme launched by the government had not ameliorated the lot of Harijan students though it had been put into operation with effect from 1st October 1948. The crux of the problem was that the instructions of the Government were not rigidly followed in the educational institutions. So their circumstances did not change to the required extent.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Punjab Assembly Debates, 19 April 1963
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 19 March 1953
Regarding the rehabilitation of Harijan refugees, when Master Gurbanta Singh argued in the Assembly that the Government had not done justice to them, the Government started taking the situation seriously and proper steps were taken to improve the situation. He bluntly stated that more attention had been given to non-Harijan refugees. In order to rehabilitate the refugees Zamidars, huge sums of money were given to them in the form of taccavi loans, but the refugee Harijans were totally ignored. If at all the loans were sanctioned for them, the Patwaris compelled them to offer illegal gratification. The Harijans had to undergo great struggle in the country in order to establish their identity in the society which need be protected with a strong hand by the government. He categorically stated that had the Harijans not supported the Congress candidates during the last general elections, tables would have been altogether turned and today some other party, not the Congress, would have got the privilege of adorning the Treasury Benches of the august House\(^\text{19}\).

Commenting upon Panchayat Gram Bill, he said that the Bill provided that wherever 10 percent of the population comprised of the Harijans, its Panchayat would include one Scheduled Caste member. They did not beg of it to give them one seat. They did not cringe. They demanded their rights. So far as the question of reservation of a seat was concerned, what this meant was that whether the Harijans constituted a population of

\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*, 27 June 1952
10 percent or 50 per cent, they would be entitled to have only one seat with the result that they would have a very inadequate representation in the Panchayats. He wanted an amendment in the bill because he felt that in a large number of villages there would be more than 5 or 6 panches on account of their larger population. If the schedule castes had population lower than 10%, they would not get any representation. They were the poorest and the most oppressed people and, therefore, it was necessary that they should have their representative in every panchayat. If they had no voice in any panchayat, they would never receive any justice from it.20

Master Gurbanta Singh's understanding on the question of Punjabi Suba involved many aspects. One was the status of Punjabi language. It was quite surprising that he as a Sikh Harijan leader opposed the declaration of Punjabi language as their mother tongue. The Harijans of Doaba region, under the guidance of the Master declared Hindi as their mother tongue. The Master declared in the Assembly: “We intentionally asked for Hindi. We got this done with vengeance. It was done only on the threats of the population living in the villages of these areas. They threatened us on the platform and through the press. The protagonists of Punjabi threatened boycott of those who would enter Hindi in the census. They told us that they will not allow us to use the fields for satisfying natural calls. They will make our life miserable. They will kill us. But the

20 Ibid., 16 March 1949
Harijans of Jullundur refused to be cowed down by their threats. They did not want to be suppressed in this manner. They took the lead and a bold step. They told the protagonists of Punjabi that in the democratic set up of the country, no one can dominate over others in the matters of religion and language. Everyone has a right to have his own say. We wanted to take off the yoke of domination of one community over the other. This was how we got entered Hindi as our mother tongue”.  

Master Gurbanta Singh also argued that if Mahan Punjab came into existence by merging Pepsu, Himachal and Delhi, it would increase the strength of Harijan members in the House. He argued that in the Assembly of new Punjab, there would be the 154 members and the Harijans, who represent the poor, would be 29 in number. If Harijans would have unity, they should be able to press their leaders to pay immediate attention to the poor. It was because of their poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and lack of ownership of the land, that they were prone to look towards the leaders, who seemed to them very charismatic. Although some Harijans were fortunate to have a lot of money, but due to the lack of their personal land, they could not get the opportunities to improve their conditions to a great extent. Harijans who were illiterate, poor and landless people would effectively say that they should be provided with land, industries and

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handicrafts to get employment. It was also one of the demands of the people of Harijan castes that they should be given the right to have their own land so that they are in the position to start any work. They would, therefore, be freed from want and hunger\textsuperscript{22}. He said that he was threatened by some members of the Assembly that if he supported Mahan Punjab, he would not get the votes in the next assembly elections. He told these people that he bothered more about the interests of Harijans and less about votes. If the leaders who gave him the Congress ticket and supported him, got his support also in turn in the Assembly\textsuperscript{23}.

Another aspect was that the creation of Zonal Councils had satisfied the demands of Mahan Punjabis. The propagators of Mahan Punjab, the Master argued, wanted a greater Punjab, but now with the formation of Zonal Councils, they had been given a still greater Punjab. Whereas the propagators of Mahan Punjab wanted Himachal to be included in Punjab and Pepsu, the Zonal Councils have brought in their orbit Rajasthan, Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir also. So far as the Punjabi Suba demand was concerned, he argued, they should also be happy that they have got a separate region of their own conception.\textsuperscript{24}

When the demand for Punjabi Suba was in the air, Harijans also started demanding their separate region consisting of Punjabi speaking

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\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Punjab Assembly Debates}, 23 March 1956
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}
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people. In this way they wanted to have their separate identity. The region consisted of Punjabi-speaking areas. They could get their grievances redressed and difficulties removed.25

Master Gurbanta Singh was instrumental in opening deras and schools in the villages dedicated to Bhagat Ravidas which functioned as lower caste cultural and educational centres. It is in these deras that the preachers would highlight the oppression of untouchables and accelerate the self-awareness among them. It was to a great extent due to the teachings of sacred morals of Bhagat Ravidas that the problems of untouchables were duly addressed to in our society. This resulted in their becoming a political force in Punjab. In a way Master Gurbanta Singh was both a product and representative of that force.26

Even after the formation of Punjabi Suba, the concern for the development of Hindi as a national language and not as a link language remained major concern of the Congress. Master Gurbanta Singh expressed this concern during an assembly debate when he stated: “I admit we live in Punjab and Punjabi is our mother tongue, but Hindi is our National Language. Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the English were ruling here, anyone who did not know English was considered illiterate. On the same pattern, those who do not know Hindi will be illiterate. But the Government has

25 Ibid
reserved a grant of Rs. two lacs only for the development of Hindi, which is just ridiculous. We established Punjabi University, Patiala for the development of Punjabi language and also established Kurukshetra University for the development of Hindi and Sanskrit. But now in Punjab, no such steps have been taken”.

Reacting to the Akali stand on transfer of Chandigarh and other Punjab speaking areas, Master Gurbanta Singh presented the Congress viewpoint wherein he defended the Congress Government at the Centre. He dubbed the criticism by Akali Dal of the Chandigarh-Fazilka Abohar Accord as only a political ploy. The Governor's Address had stated that the Central Government had done injustice to Punjab on the questions of transfer of Chandigarh and Punjabi Speaking areas to Punjab. In 1971 certain problems like transfer of Chandigarh and many other Punjabi Speaking areas to Punjab arose. Under the High Command of Akali Party, a high level meeting attended by every political party except Congress Party, was organized. Masterji stated that “When the question of Chandigarh and Fazilka was settled in Delhi, the Akali High Command met in Amritsar and decided to uphold the decision as if it was a right one. Then this question came before the All Parties meeting. Except Congress, all other parties said that they approved this decision. Congress Party said that it was not acceptable to the party. Sardar Gurnam Singh who was the Chief Minister

at that time went to Amritsar and offered juice to Sant Fateh Singh. I don't know whether he played trick upon the Sant, but his own hand made the Sant take the juice. Then how can they say that the Central Government did injustice to them. Whatever decision the Central Government took, it was only after committing Sardar Gurnam Singh and Bansi Lai. They celebrated the decision by declaring holiday and lightening Punjab”.  

Master Gurbanta Singh's last Assembly election was that of 1972 when he was elected unopposed. These elections were held under the President's rule with D.C. Pavate as the Governor of Punjab. The report which Pavate sent to President of India in which he had recommended the invocation of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution speaks of the total decay of the political system in Punjab. Both the Akali Dal and the Congress had unabashedly contributed to this sordid phenomenon. Grabbing power at any cost and retaining it at any price seemed to have been the sole motivating factor in the melodramic happenings in Chandigarh. It was further stated that the democratic processes were vulgarised and devalued by the scheming politicians with apparently no respect to principles. Faith of the people in democracy was corroded by the way its practitioners and custodians treated it. Even in this degenerated scenario, Master Gurbanta Singh was elected unopposed.  

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28 1bid., 23 February 1969.
29 D.C. Pavate, My Days As Governor (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. 1974) pp.207-08
Master Gurbanta Singh, although was a Dalit leader and spoke emphatically for them, yet as a congress leader and legislator spoke on every important issue relating to Punjab.

**Importance of the Study**

Master Gurbanta Singh remained member of the Punjab Assembly for full three decades from 1946 to 1977 with a brief interval of two years from March 1967 to January 1969. He spoke on every aspect of Punjab politics in the Assembly. An analysis of debates in the Assembly during this period gives a comprehensive picture of Punjab politic with Master Gurbanta Singh in the focus. It also provides an understanding of the Dalit politics in Punjab as well. The issues of farmers, Dalits, Punjabi Suba, Mahan Punjab, state autonomy, corruption both in politics and bureaucracy, empowerment of Dalit women in particular and also the level of debates, rich contents, and concern for the dignity of the House have got articulated in the course of the study.

**Review of Existing Literature**

Study of the leadership of Master Gurbanta Singh as a Dalit leader particularly in context of Assembly debates is an arduous task as no written material is available in the books. Only scanty references are available even in seminal works on the Congress in Punjab. Following literature which provides just the pattern of study has been reviewed.
Jasdev Singh Sandhu’s edited work *Giani Kartar Singh: A Commemorative Volume* is a volume on Giani Kartar Singh. It is the premier systematic study of the personality and vision of this great ‘son of the soil’. The articles in the book aim at looking at Gianiji’s contribution to socio-political life of the Punjab, especially the Sikhs. It also tries to articulate the social, political and economic ideas of Giani Kartar Singh and to interpret and relate them to the modern context. The reminiscences of friends and colleagues which form Part –1 of the book bring to focus several episodes which are suggestive of the basic goodness and simplicity of the man. Part – II of the book comprises research papers on different aspects of the life and thought of Gianiji. A few original documents used as appendices have their own significance for the researchers.

Prem Chaudhary’s *Punjab Politics: The Role of Sir Chhotu Ram* is a study of the political career of Chhotu Ram as leader of the Hindu Jats of Haryana region. The author argues that his political career was launched by the British officials. Their open support of him as a ‘Jat leader’ against the leaders of other factions of Jats in the initial years helped him emerge rather easy as “The strongest man” in the District. Casteism fostered by the British therefore provided Chhotu Ram the basis of successful political organization. In his hands Casteism took the centre stage promoting “Jat interests” at their surface level; it was enlarged to encompass “Hindu zamindar interests” in the context of the entire province. Both these slogans
proved successful; the first at the local level in ensuring a safe constituency for Chhotu Ram for over twenty years, and the second at the provincial level in the widely acclaimed recognition of Chhotu Ram as the leader of Hindu zamindars of Punjab. Creation of such a strong caste political position enabled him to construct a highly stable and enduring political alliance with the Muslim Unionists.

AS Narang’s *Strom over the Sutlej: The Akali Politics* is the seminal work on Punjab politics particularly the Punjabi Suba phase. He has intellectually analysed the parochial and regional movements in India with a particular emphasis upon the movement for a Punjabi-speaking state which stirred Punjab politics for full two decades. The movement generated lot of communal bitterness which kept the communal cauldron boiling for a long time. But the movement also witnessed the emergence of moderate Akali leadership which had a soothing impact upon ruffled politics. The author has also graphically discussed the machinations of the ruling party particularly in the post-Nehruvian era in which over-centralising tendencies took toll of democratic politics Punjab being the chess board on many occasions. Author’s analytical understanding on the Suba formation has been profusely used in the thesis.

*Selected Works and Speeches of Dr. Safuddin Kitchlew* edited by his son Toufique Kitchlew explains that Dr. Kitchlew took active part in India’s freedom movement that indeed was an epic struggle in the history
of mankind. Educated in England and Germany Dr. Kitchlew began his political career in Punjab in the early twentieth century and gained national prominence as the leading organizer of anti-Rowlett Satyagraha in 1919. He was strong critic of British imperialism and was always a supporter of radical approach in the struggle against the colonial rule. Closely associated with the Indian National Congress, Dr. Kitchlew often held responsible positions in this organization. He was respected throughout the country as a dedicated leader who made enormous sacrifices for the cause of India’s freedom. His contemporary national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru and others admired him for his fearlessness and commitment. Dr. Kitchlew not only wrote and spoke about India’s freedom struggle, he also wrote about the international issues particularly the dangerous aspects of imperialism.

DC Pavate’s *My Days as Governor* is a seminal study on the role of Governor and coalition politics in Punjab. The study covers five years of Punjab politics starting from 1967 to 1972. It was in 1967 that the first non-Congress Akali led Government was formed in Punjab. The Government remained in office only for nine months when an Akali leader Lachman Singh Gill revolted against Sant Fateh Singh. He caused major defections in the party and formed a Congress-supported Government. In the objective study, one finds the true colours both of the congress and the Akalis during this period. The description of Punjab politics during this period by a South
Indian Pavate is very illustrating. He discusses the first split and then the second split in Akali Dal in February 1970 and also split in the Congress Party on the issue of supporting Gill. Pavate dealt with four Chief Minsters. One gets a scholarly peep into the making of these leaders.

G.S. Bhargava’s *Bhim Sen Sachar: An Intimate Biography* is a vivid account of Bhim Sen Sachar who was the second Chief Minister of the Punjab after partition. Bhargava writes that drawn to the Arya Samaj in his teens by its ethical appeal and accent on public service, Sachar became the most ardent follower of the Lion of Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai, whose call to the youth of the country found Sachar in the Indian National Congress in the early 1920’s. Soon came the spell of Gandhiji which lasted till the end of his life in 1976. The spiritual dimensions of Sachar’s hectic life were marked by his devotion and loyalty to Nehru as his political guru with whom he did not hesitate to differ when he felt that principles were at stake. Even when past eighty he readily resisted the 1975 ‘emergency’ to find himself in jail. The study makes an objective analysis of the factional politics, splits, intrigues, corruption and many more issues dominating congress and Punjab politics of the time.

*Minority Politics in the Punjab* by Baldev Raj Nayyar is a scholarly study of the Punjabi Suba Movement in Punjab. Nayyar has sought to understand the basis and dynamics of this specific demand for the formation of a new state out of the territories of Punjab in North West
India. Since independence in 1947, Nayyar argues that demand of Akali Dal has overshadowed the politics of Punjab. The study of this problem is basically a study of state politics. He has examined the nature of the demand, its origin, strategies employed by Akali Dal to secure it and the prospects of its achievements. He has also examined the status of the Congress Party in the state. It has become a study of different orientations communal, secular and the nationalist.

The Political Party System of the Punjab State, India: A Study of Factionalism by Paul Wallace, which is an unpublished thesis is a scholarly analysis of factionalism in the Congress Party form 1920 to 1966 i.e. the formation of the Punjabi Suba. He has delved deep into the causes and the forces becoming responsible for the factionalised politics of the Congress both before and after independence. It becomes a very interesting study as it highlights the intense faction fighting in the Congress even before independence when the party was leading the Nationalist struggle. The Satya Pal and the Bhargava groups, thereafter Sachar and Bhargava groups, Kairon and Darbara Singh groups dominated the Punjab politics throughout this period.

Methodology

The study will be primarily documentary study. The private papers of Master Gurbanta Singh and the Debates in the Punjab Assembly wherein Master Gurbanta Singh has massively and meaningfully contributed will be
thoroughly analysed. To impart empirical content to the study, some of the Congress leaders of that period will be interviewed.

**Hypothetical Questions**

In the course of Study, following hypothetical questions have been attempted to be answered:

1. How Master Gurbanta Singh was able to synthesise his Dalit politics which was definitely sectarian in nature with his nationalist credentials?

2. Why did he not stick to the Ad Dharm Movement which he so laboriously built alongwith his mentor Mangoo Ram? Was it a hindrance in his Congress politics because Congress politics had come to be associated with Dalit cause?

3. Why did he join Congress whereas in Ad Dharm Mandal he was one of the few top leaders and the Mandal subscribed to his innate philosophical thinking?

4. He lost the assembly election in 1967 and was defeated by the Republican Party of India. Did it mean that this Party had got greater legitimacy than that of the Congress. How long this legitimacy remained intact?

5. How could be afford to criticize the ruling Congress Party to which he belonged in many capacities?

6. How did his politics evolve during the Kairon era?
Chapterisation

1. Introduction
   In this chapter, the problem has been introduced

   In this chapter, role of Master Gurbanta Singh in organizing the Ad Dharm Movement has been analysed.

   In this chapter role of Master Gurbanta Singh as a leader of the Dalits has been analysed in context of his being a member of the Indian National Congress.

   In this chapter, Master Gurbanta Singh’s role as a legislator has been studied. This is primarily a study of the debates in the Assembly from 1946-1977.

5. Conclusion
   This chapter carries the findings of the study.