CHAPTER THREE

Sikh Identity and Contesting Institutions in Post-1849 Scenario
The army was still largely made up of the levies brought by vassals. But the rank and file of the Sikhs soldiery were men with an ideology of their own, men who bore some resemblance to the troopers of Cromwell's New Army; even, perhaps, where their leaders had carried them furthest towards banditry, as in the Cis-Sutlej area.

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The annexation of Punjab in 1849 neatly divides the first half of Nineteenth Century as Sikh phase characterized more by continuities than changes leading to a sharp contrast with the overwhelming recasting of socio-economic landscape of Punjab. Colonial ethnographic writing is incessant in developing the theme of 'Sikhs' dissolving into 'Hindus'. Thus the discourse about Sikh vs. Singh dichotomy is founded and the rise of Singh Sabhas in 1870's or the British Indian army with its 'martial races' including Singh's eventually reconstruct the militant Singh identity in their own reflection and putting finally rest to the congenital ambiguity about its creedal autonomy. Along with these identity concerns, other transformations colonial state brought were mediated through their military-strategic considerations of Afghan or Russian designs. The harvesting of land revenue to bear the cost of colonial enterprise which later started pouring profits through its yoking to world market leading to commercialization of agriculture in order to pay the land revenue and assorted cesses, which taken together were higher than in Ranjit Singh's time. Another contrast was regarding the flexible demand of revenue according to actual harvests and it was collected in kind whereas during British administration a fixed amount was to be collected whatever the produce. Although the peasant-proprietor along with occupancy tenants were strengthened against the landlords, with an exception in some areas of west Punjab, their economic condition was increasingly getting precarious and rural indebtedness was the principal manifestation of agrarian distress. The moneylender class of banias, aroras, mohajans, khatris, etc., was primarily composed of Hindus who in their monopoly position of suppliers of rural credit at use rates amassed huge capital resources. Since, land had been transformed into private property under the workings of colonial state it was the main investment option for these moneylenders. Thus, we see the makings of a potential conflict based upon such social relations but expressed
through religious - communal articulation, once again in 1870's. These tendencies were crystallised during the controversy over Punjab Alienation of land Act, 1900 lead by 'urban classes' accusing the govt. of favouring the 'agricultural castes' against the natural functioning market forces.

Annexation also witnessed the realignment of provincial elite in Punjab along differential axes. The Frontier Muslims were comparatively well treated due to their strategic at Afghan frontier. The process of harnessing the Muslim support as the bedrock of British Empire was initiated by stoking majoritarian tendency - even during the pre-1849 phase. Those strategic alliances paid off during 1857 when Punjabi element of military remained loyal and crushed the rebels in Delhi. Thus, the Muslim elite escaped of Punjab escaped the govt. distrust against their co-religionists of Northern India. However, the demands of army recruitment coupled with prevalence of rural agricultural mores founded upon landlord-tenant relations want very far in determining their eventual socio-political formation. These exploitative social relations were buttressed through the rural Sufi lore that had significantly shunned its earlier role of trenchant social critique as well as religious tolerance. The urban educated Muslims were a rarity as compared to other communities.

One such community in Punjab, the Hindus, were well represented in an expanding colonial bureaucratic apparatus both as professionals as well as clerical salariat. Coupled with this were the flourishing moneylending enterprise and the resultant concentration of capital. Their well-built biradari system and location in urban centres greatly enhanced social mobility provided with a coherent world-view by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and his Arya Smaj. Loyalty to British was cultivated and harvested through getting into govt. jobs. Furthermore a phalanx of social institutions were created helping in sustaining the Arya enterprise to such an extent that their methods attained hegemonic status with other communities initiating these efforts. South-East Punjab had a different social structure where the jats were the main carriers of Arya Samaj ideology in their aspiration for a kshatriya status.

The case of Sikh elite in this scenario is quite curious. Post-1849 political order saw a substantial diminishing of their material resources due to the residual distrust harboured from 1839 onwards. Their jagirs were taken back, according to John Lawrence's policies, and coupled with the empowerment of peasant-proprietor; stage was set for their eventual eclipse, 1857, however, provided an opportunity to these elites
to fail out the British. Suitable rewards ensued in the form of rehabilitation of jagirs, etc; elevation through absorption into colonial state apparatus as honorary officials; and the category of 'natural leaders' regarding their respective communities were employed to buttress the colonial enterprise in Punjab. As the Sikhs, especially jats, included in 'martial' races as well as in 'agricultural' classes, aroused profound sympathy as hardy cultivators and appreciation for their military prowess. Profoundly conscious of their Khalsa tendencies which could come to fore anytime and along with loss of sovereignty fresh in their minds, the British relied upon Sikh 'natural leaders' a lot. Its attendant initiative was to wrest the effective control of Sikh shrines by courting the pujaris. Thus we can visualise the ruling faction comprising colonial state, natural leaders and pujaris working in consonance to entrench this bloc over the mainly rural-agricultural society which was otherwise provided the avenue of military service as route to prosperity e.g. land grants were preferentially given to military families.

The establishment of state apparatus in mid-nineteenth century Punjab also necessitated the influx of officials, babus and others from Bengal and North-West Provinces to prepare settlement reports, dispense justice through courts, etc. Situated primarily in urban centres they provided model of colonial social circle in Punjab. This process was further supplemented by linking Delhi as a division in Punjab in 1859. Robbed of their cherished cultural superiority a large number of Delhi intelligentsia sought refuge at other centres, including Lahore. The colonial policies regarding language, association - building, census operations, social reform, customary law, education and so on give us the essential mechanism constituting the official cultural policy. The respective elite was a participant, through imitation, as well as a product of these forces. Elites had another source of power, namely the masses in Punjab countryside whose cultural universe operated around and through popular cultural practices, which acquired concentrated meanings and tangible shape in and around popular shrines. The annual fairs, ritual practices, pilgrimages, etc. to such shrines have been extensively studied in contrast to high culture of Punjabi elite stirring to 'reform' these practices.

This view has conveniently classified these oppositely arraigned arenas as demonstrating 'epistemological' domains. Sectarian agenda propounded by social elite ultimately obtained victory through the instrumentality of 'print capitalism' in the general transformation characterised as 'communications revolution' in early twentieth century Punjab. This crystallization of exclusivist religious boundaries vanquished the
shared, diffused, ludic, enchanted universe of Punjabis. Our attempt is two-fold. Firstly, to people these shared spaces and to hear the faint, voice of those who visit these spaces and keep on chiseling their critique of existing conditions be it in political, social or sectarian sphere. These arguments, criticism, ambiguities, retreats, formulaic statements provide the mode to see alternative tendencies converge to set up a 'social field-of-force'. Analyzed this way these spaces become carriers of social values in differentiate relations of power. Thus, we can appreciate that were popular spaces were not hermetically sealed domains in which the ritual practice and seasonal festivity was an end in itself. We hope to show that this space did carry alternative visions, expressed in millenarian fashion as in case of Kukas; marshalling of print culture as in case of Gyani Gyan Singh, a renowned Nirmala scholar; or it could develop a sociology of Indic philosophical schoolof Vedanta Gulab Das; it could yield space for articulating the female voice as in case of Peero and Nurang Devi. These assorted figures infuse the 'silenced' popular cultural sphere with their endeavours, straddling such range that on one side we have an ethic of anti-colonial resistance taken from Anglo-Sikh wars giving way to composing histories of Sikh gurus, panth and contemporary sects on 'modern' lines and on the other hand we come across millenarianism with trenchant critique of colonial state, Sikh elite and Pujaris articulated by Kukas and the social scandal of a tawaif, Peero residing in the dera belonging to Sadhu Gulab Das. We nee to remind ourselves that this is perhaps the last generation who studied in traditional manner; witnessed the onset of a foreign power set to administer and transform indigenous society on a mighty scale and to fashion a way forward they articulated their vision in popular idiom with success so as to bridge the 'modern-premodern', 'elite-popular', 'Sikh-Sanatan' divide. To relegate these attempts as a manifestation of sanatan episteme is in essence to silence these voices. Quite like E.P. Thompson my attempt is to retrieve these now obscure sects, almost wiped off women poets, derisive treatment of Kuka social protest.

Collective dreams have a political charge. That is a major reason why no direct or simple link relates political economic to political action. In between stand meanings, concepts and visions with internal consistencies and a momentum of their own. Their structure bears testimony to the relations of power and production they are embedded in and shaped by. However, such interdependencies are never one sided. Patterns of thought, once established, acquire a causal power of their own to shape, often decisively, that is true particularly of the politically important act of ideology, this here
as the dream of an ideal society in relation to which goals are set and the existing reality judged. The causes and context of consciousness in mid-nineteenth century Punjab must be explored afresh, not simply pedalled.

While distinguishing the first phase of anti-imperial resistance in the mid-nineteenth century Punjab to its eventual development in the twentieth century we focus on the general conditions and precipitating factors; the social resistance and spread of the movement; and role of leadership of the Khalsa army.¹ The heavy losses inflicted upon the British forces during the Anglo-Sikh wars had contributed a lot towards diminishing the British aura amongst the native troops. Many of them returned to their village feeling that a well-trained army can defeat the British as were the case in the Anglo-Sikh wars.²

A number of scholarly works account for patriotism in Sikh forces as a direct influence of egalitarian Khalsa traditions which lead them to consider themselves as equal partners in the plunder and this was a major reason considered for these voluntary armed bands to come together as ‘Dal Khalsa’ or the federal army of Sikh mists. Ranjit Singh’s victories are attributed to this spirit and he is supposed to have appreciated this fact by persisting with the tradition. It is significant that Ranjit Singh’s rule was referred as “Sarkar Khalsa” except for a brief period in 1845 when the Lahore army was almost the ruler, then the official documents used title of ‘Sarbat Khalsa’.³ This change from ‘Sarkar’ to ‘Sarbat’ also points towards the active memories of the eighteenth-century Sikh struggle and its institutions. This factor again confirms the hypothesis that the Khalsa army enjoyed a degree of popular respect considering them carriers of eighteenth-century Sikh struggle. This continuing impact of the individual Khalsa soldiers and their army in the Punjab countryside, in fact, provides us the essential armature to attempt the social history of rural resistance in Punjab—from mid-eighteenth century to early-twentieth century as dialogically expressed through popular cultural production. Prof. S. R. Kohli mentions that during 1807-1813 the Punjabi element in army recruitment was negligible and the Hindustanis, Gurkhas and Afghans were

² ibid., p.15-16. Authors stress further research on the impact of Sikh army’s patriotism on the native troops that can balance the lopsided view that army’s loutish behaviour was solely responsible for the demise of Lahore Darbar. Also William Edward; Reminiscences of A Bengal Civilian, p.12). Kaye mentions in Vol. I, p.495 that the native regiments who lead the rebellion in 1857 i.e. IInd Grenadiers and 434th and 70th regiments had participated in the Kandhar & A-S wars.
³ ibid., p.16
numerically greater in the regular army. Post-1818, the Punjabi element became dominant in all aspects of the army. These were filled up with Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Rajputs.\(^4\)

The daily chronicles of Lahore Darbar demonstrate the fact that during 1844-45 when almost all the nobility were making overtures to the British only the Khalsa army was desperately striving to defeat these initiatives. When the authority was eroded largely due to persistent conspiracies and counter-moves then the army revived its traditional _panchayat_ – system and sought to sustain the government.\(^5\) Both George Campbell’s ‘Memoirs’ along with Major Broadfoot provide the necessary evidence to the discipline maintained amongst the troops.\(^6\) Regimental panchayats kept their patriotism intact and strove to keep up troop discipline. Cunningham mentions that when the need arose to initiate broader mobilization against the British, “the regimental panchayats came at agreements with the ruling factions to conduct negotiations and had stopped functioning as independent authorities (p.263). Cunningham further describes in this context:

“Every Sikh considered Khalsa Raj his own. Besides carrying his gun he was putting up with other laborious tasks with equal agility and commitment. He pulled cannons, manoeuvred oxen and carts and loaded and un-loaded the boats. In contrast the British troops were just paid mercenaries and carried their jobs listlessly. The young ones were absolutely stout, agile and committed”.\(^7\)

Even after the declaration of March 1, 1846 the Khalsa forces did put up spirited resistance against heavy odds when the British dictated their ruler’s policy. However, now their battle was of a different nature. Now the rebel forces were fighting under the command of rebel leaders against the British army that asserted it as the benefactor of

\(^4\) ibid., p.23-24 “Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s policy was to recruit mixed platoons in order to check potential rebellions in the army. Major Broadfoot mentions in his letter on 4.1.1845 that “Sikh” is used to describe the entire army of Lahore Darbar in common parlance.”

\(^5\) ibid. p.17. For more details, see the British political agent at Ludhiana. _Major Broadfoot’s different reports expose published in ‘Secret Consultations’ no. 33, 56 & 58 (on 20.6.1845) no. 34 (15.8.1845) and no.113 (20.12.1845) cited in Hari Ram Gupta.

\(^6\) ibid., p.18 Emboldened by such efforts they declared to push back the British to London. (Gyani Gyan Singh: _Tawarih Guru Khalsa_, p.238).\(^6\)

\(^7\) ibid., p.20 (Cunningham, p.263, Also Lord Gough on Sikh army: Life of Lord Gough, Vol.I, pp.368-69)
the child-Maharaja. Even in such a complicated situation, Khalsa army did win some battles.\(^8\) The battles fought at Multan under the leadership of Diwan Mulraj demonstrated the new offensive to British designs\(^9\) prompting the Lawrence brothers (Henry, George and John) to crush all the anti-British Sardars along with the resolve to crush rebellious Khalsa army and disarming ordinary Punjabis to keep the fledgling order intact.\(^10\)

After the Bhiyrowal treaty in December 1846 Maharani Jindan emerged as the pole of rebellion in which she was helped by some incidents like cow-slaughter to provide beef for British sepoys and entering Golden Temple with shoes on, etc. and many of the estranged Sardars gathered around her and called her “Khalsa di mata”. Thus maharani versus British contradiction was the source of Anglo-Sikh War.\(^11\) Coupled with this development, popular discontent surfaced in the form of resistance in the erstwhile Sikh areas and Jalandhar Doab with the estranged Sardars becoming the focal point of this upsurge. Not only the soldiers of Punjab army but even the native sepoys of British army were invited to join the popular revolution. A general declaration was issued asking the Khalsa to reorganize once again to liberate the Maharaja and his mother from the clutches of ‘Sahibs’. Hoshiarpur and Una were the epicenters of rebellion in the British occupied Jalandhar Doab. Baba Bikram Singh Bedi was sending messages that the government is about to collapse. The other rebel leaders in Doab were the popularly revered Sodhi Ladha Singh of Kartarpur, Raja Narayan Pal of Katlek Ram Singh of Nurpur, Jodh Singh, Sunder Singh, Lal Singh Muraria and S. Arjan Singh of Ranghar Nangal.\(^12\)

While Diwan Mul Raj and S. Chattar Singh Attariwala were organizing the rebellion in far away corners, Lahore become the center of public speculation on the result of rebellion. Lahore was now a meeting place for the rebels to consult and recruitment center for Multan and Attari forces.\(^13\) Lahore was rife with rumours

\(^{8}\) ibid., p.22  
\(^{9}\) ibid., p.22-23  
\(^{10}\) ibid., p.25  
\(^{11}\) ibid., p.25-26  
\(^{12}\) ibid., p.26-27[Resident of Lahore Sir Frederick Currie to Governor General Lord Dalhousie on 4.10.1848 in Secret consultation no.621, dated 7.10.1848 cited on p.27-28. “Widespread discontent against our occupation of Punjab is evident all over. Besides all Hindus and some Muslims are specific impact is seen on the army or the disbanded soldiers”.

\(^{13}\) ibid., p.27-28[This is proven by the statement of a rebel spay Lehna Singh before Major Makesun the Superintendent of cis-Sutlej states. The recruits were served langar at the mausoleum of Maharaja Ranjit Singh while passing through Lahore. Secret Consultation no.236, dated 25.11.1848]
predicting that the general rebellion will break out as soon as the Resident and his loyal Sardars are attacked during the Royal Darbar on the occasion of Dussehra festival which cautioned the British and they took exemplary measures to avoid any mischief. Currie reported on the broad-base of rebellion," All the employees of the (Khalsa) Darbar and general masses are in favour of the rebels. Some sympathize with them but most are actively helping their cause. Bigger Sardars are also discontented like them, but they are looking for the right moment."15

The rebellion failed due to multiple factors; firstly, Jindan was taken away from Punjab and thus a central pole was removed and an all-encompassing rebellion was never allowed to bear fruit. Secondly, Maharaja Duleep Singh was kept outside the reach of rebel leaders who made attempts to kidnap him whereas earlier Raja Sher Singh and later Bhai Maharaj Singh were leading the rebellion in his name only. Thirdly, inadequate supplies along with the arousal of sectarian feelings amongst, the frontier tribes against the Sikhs; tax relief and other inducements were offered to employ them against the rebel Sardars especially in Hazara, Bannu, Derajat and other places. Perhaps the most significant factors was the mutual suspicions in different rebel parties, their interests clashed, their mutual envy, enmity, grudges and family disputes were greatly enhanced e.g. Sher Singh and Diwan Mul Raj developed differences soon after their unity in Multan. Many Sardars were playing the double game between the rebel Sardars and the government e.g. the successors of S. Sham Singh Attariwala were responsible for the arrest and exile of their uncle S. Chuttar Singh Attariwala’s entire family due to a long standing family dispute. To top it all, the priests of Golden Temple who had earlier declared the firangis as sworn enemy of the Khalsa now in 1849 led the population in welcoming them.16

Multan province was the richest and well governed under Diwan Mul Raj who was the first to rebel against the British to restore Maharaja Duleep Singh’s sovereignty.17 Annexation of Multan invited deep popular resentment and many ballads (vars) were composed on this subject.18 Bhai Maharaj Singh was the first one to join Diwan Mul Raj in this endeavour with his one thousand troops in June, 1848. Sodhi

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14 ibid., p.28-29
15 ibid., p.29.Secret consultations nos. 138 & 157, dated 25.11.1848
16 ibid., p.30-32[p.40) – Cuningham on Sham Singh Attariwala’s death, p.311 (Spirit of Guru Gobind and his mysterious Panchayati Raj)]16
17 ibid., p.47-48
18 ibid., p.54-55

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Ladha Singh started recruitment in Doaba and Hoshiarpur district. Emissaries were sent to cis-Sutlej riyasats, Sardars and zamindars to join the battle for safeguarding their common culture and dharma. Maharaja of Patiala was invited to lead the insurrection of all the Punjabis offering him a way to keep his worldly possessions intact while also saving his Dharma, the supreme value. Similar letters were also issued to the Raja of Nabha, Sardars of Bhadaur and Malod, Gopal Singh Singhpuria, Sobha Singh Kalsia and to Dina Singh of Bhadson.19

Diwan was also active in forging a Sikh-Afghan alliance against the British. His emissaries were spread out in Bannu, Kohat, Hazara and Peshawar. He was issuing appeals to Dost Mohammad Khan and his brother Sultan Mohammad Khan. A real breakthrough was achieved when S. Chattar Singh rebelled against the British in Hazara region helped by these Afghan lords. Diwan categorizes the British as common enemies of Hindus and Muslims in this context.20 Diwan Mul Raj was instrumental in weaving an all-Punjab alliance led by Rajas, Sardars, etc. in the name of Dharma, against the British. The defeat of this endeavour also paid put to horizons of a shared Punjabi identity. Mass-supported rebellion and its attendant conceptual advances had the potential to usher into a new phase. Its defeat led to various reform movements led by the ex-Khalsa soldiers with an eye on political aspects of their respective dharma.

Rani Jindan was the brain of resistance whereas Bhai Maharaj Singh can be called it's moving spirit. A loyal disciple of Baba Bir Singh Naurangabadi, he was revered by a great number of Sikhs especially in majha region. Many sardars of Lahore Darbar were loyal to him. So he possessed the necessary authority to lead such a movement. His first action was to bless the ‘Prema conspiracy’ (Sikh Sardar on 21.4.1847 at Shalamar Bagh Lahore). Indeed this plan was the first anti-British act which included some Lahore regiments, influential sardars and close confidantes of Rani Jindan, Bhai Budh Singh and Bhai Buta Singh.21

19 ibid., p.56-57
20 ibid., p.57-58[ Diwan Mul Raj – a Hindu Punjabi patriot (d. Buxor, aged 36) A. united front attempted in mid-nineteenth century Punjab defeated by force. Next phase is 1907-08 ‘Pagri Sambhal Jatta’ agitation, followed by a proposal to send Hindu and Muslim jathas in solidarity with the Akalis during the Gurdwara Reform movement in 1920s. An emerging alliance of Dr. Kitchloo, Satyapal, S.S. Kaveeshar, Hira Singh Dard was a solid platform, which could not take off.)

21 ibid., p.64-65
Bhai Maharaj Singh evaded arrest for three long years due to public support, a fact endorsed by Lord Dalhousie in 30-09.1848," the peasants, general populace and sardars are openly sympathising with him. Even the personnel following him are not showing any urgency to arrest him, if not being friends with him."^22 Bhai Maharaj Singh took extensive tours, mobilizing against British during the time between the Prema conspiracy and Diwan Mul Raj's rebellion in Multan. He went from village to village campaigning to teach a lesson to the enemies of Khalsa. On hearing about Multan rebellion he welcomed it and immediately left for Multan recruiting soldiers on the way. He was well-received everywhere and reached Multan. However differences emerged soon after between Bhai Maharaj Singh and the Diwan and he left for Hazara to join S. Chattar Singh through a circuitous route of Pakpattan, Muktsar Anandpur, Jwalamukhi and Punjab Hills. His popularity in Majha and Doaba ensured safe passage and potential for recruitment were main reasons for this choice.^23

Bhai Maharaj Singh's stature was a constant worry to the British. He was considered a divine person by the Sikh forces which added to his mystique. Bhai Maharaj Singh took great pains to ensure supplies to Sikh troops and participated in the battles at Ramnagar, Chheliyanwala and Gujarat.^24 However after the defeat at Gujrat, no sardar accepted Bhai Maharaj Singh's plan for another battle and Bhai Maharaj Singh decided to continue on his own. He left for Jammu and Kashmir and his headquarter was at Devi Batala in remote hills. He continued his efforts to kidnap Maharaja Duleep Singh. Another plan was to attack the British cantonments of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur. Local pujaris and saints were involved to benefit from their influence and for having access to their monetary riches. Emissaries were sent all over Punjab (a la Diwan Mul Raj) and contacts were established with Baba Bikram Singh's followers at Una. He undertook a tour to personally inspect the preparations.^25

Bhai Maharaj Singh was arrested and kept in Jalandhar jail but later on sent away from Punjab to avoid public disturbance. The other political prisoners included S. Chattar Singh, Sher Singh and Avtar Singh of Attari, Lal Singh Muraria, Mehtab Singh Majithia, Diwan Hakam Rai, Kanwar Krishan Singh and S. Arjan Singh. Bhai Maharaj Singh passed away on July 15th, 1856 during his incarceration in Singapore.^26

^22 ibid., p.65-66
^23 ibid., p. 66-67
^24 ibid., p.68
^25 ibid., p.6972
^26 ibid., p.73-75
Bhai Maharaj Singh was immensely popular across the religious divide, a fact endorsed by British officials.\textsuperscript{27} Bhai Maharaj Singh did not cultivate any ill feelings against the British and had strictly ordered his troops not to kill British officers during raids on cantonments. His other qualities included mastery of details, comprehensive preparations and enduring enthusiasm. His organizing skills coupled with the traditions of ‘sewa’ of his dera complimented each other.\textsuperscript{28}

The salience of Š. Chattar singh Attariwala’s efforts resides in endeavoring to diminish the Muslim communal feelings fanned by the British in Hazara region. He organized a joint rebellion against the British thus helping to stave off bitterness caused by the earlier defeat of Syed Ahmed Shah Barelvi. This continued to be the general attitude of the British administration to consolidate their rule. Seen in such a context, the rebellions in Multan, Bannu, Kohat, Peshawar, rebellions of Sikh forces and popular discontent in Jalandhar Daoō and central Punjab were all interconnected.\textsuperscript{29} An important aspect of these rebellions was to ask the Sikh regiments to rebel and those who responded to Chattar Singh Attariwala’s appeal were imbued with millenarian beliefs that Punjab will regain its sovereignty after two and half years. Thus Chattar Singh’s call led to further deepening of this sentiment and others also joined a united front of Multan, Punjab and frontiersmen against the British.\textsuperscript{30}

Baba Bikram Singh Bedi’s resistance had a unique character of its own even while being a part of the general resistance at Multan and other regions. His endeavour was significant because his region, the Doaba, was under the direct British occupation. He had also refused the pension offered to him by the Lawrence brothers. The son of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi he ascended the establishment in 1834 after his father’s death. His jagir was confiscated on his refusal to hand over his artillery to the British. Baba Bedi also got the Sodhis to join in the resistance alongwith asking Chattar Singh Attariwala to gather the Barakzai Pathans. He participated in the second Anglo-Sikh war and was the only person of note to support Bhai Maharaj Singh’s proposal to fight

\textsuperscript{27} ibid., p.75-78
\textsuperscript{28} ibid., p.77-78
\textsuperscript{29} ibid., p.79-83
\textsuperscript{30} ibid., p.85-92 Even after the surrender of Sikh forces at Mankyala village on March 12, 1849 and house arrest of Attariwalas in their village, they continued to be a source of resistance for Punjabi Patriots [Secret consultation nos.54-55, 24.11.1849] Brahmins and Bhais were the linkmen all over Punjab. These factors lead to exile of Attariwalas and other ruler Sardars. Chattar Singh died on December 27th, 1855.
for one last time, at the Rawalpindi meeting. However, he surrendered along with the Attariwalas. He was sent to house arrest at Amritsar where he died in 1863.\(^{31}\) Sher Singh and Baba Bedi employ the discourse of ‘bubble-like ephemeral existence’ to launch and arouse the rebels against the British.

Rani Jind Kaur’s aspiration was to get back Lahore throne for her son and next generations.\(^{32}\) Showing remarkable forthrightness she did away with purdah and made attempts to lead a disciplined life.\(^{33}\) She ascribed her escape to magical powers.\(^{34}\) Her letters to political prisoners of Punjab were captured, further investigations revealed her other initiatives of secret nature in Allahabad, Kanpur and Lucknow, inciting the Hindu and Sikh sepoys in the British army. Confiscated documents included predictions about the Maharani and her son by an Allahabad astrologer.\(^{35}\) She died in 1863.\(^{36}\)

Appeals to Dharma were made in different ways, the other aspect being appealing to the Sikh regiments. Millenarian predictions, appeals to Sardars, Rajas, religious leaders, mobilizing popular support through extensive campaigns – are some of the features associated with this primitive rebellions (which again had internal weaknesses) organizing efforts were reduced to the military and conspiratorial aspects. Deep-seated social disturbance, long-drawn political–military conflicts, frequent material losses or damages create an environment in which the end of the world seems imminent.\(^{37}\)

After their defeat and annexation of 1849, the restiveness took many forms e.g. social reform (the Nirankaris); scholarly pursuit and materialist thought (Gulabdasai sampraday); militant ethic, boycott of British, organizing a parallel apparatus with political vision, a puritanical code coupled with millenarian predictions, recovering a Sikh way to liberation (Sant Khalsa and the Namdharis). Thus the elements employed by the Namdharis show advances made in the traditional diverse structure and its limitations in an altered scenario of 1860s to 1870s. However, their martyrdom kept alive the anti-imperial sentiment in the Punjab countryside. Elements of this discursive structure were alive till the Ghadarites attempted at inducing rebellion in the British

\(^{31}\) ibid., p.93-102
\(^{32}\) ibid., p.105
\(^{33}\) ibid., p.108
\(^{34}\) ibid., p.123
\(^{35}\) ibid., p.40
\(^{36}\) ibid., p.132
army during First World War. The Akali movement makes a radical break with this paradigm when it focuses on organizing the masses for a non-violent movement without appealing to the army and operating within the public spaces.

Historiography of the Namdhari movement is available in nationalist,\textsuperscript{38} imperialist\textsuperscript{39}, as a study in millenarianism\textsuperscript{40} and as a Sikh sect.\textsuperscript{41} However these accounts offer a general narrative account of the Kukas, who were obliterated, thus, paving the way for Singh Sabha Movement. Their (in)significance is realized through conduct of Singh Sabha movement learning not to annoy the Raj otherwise the Kukas’ fate will be theirs.

Some recurring themes in Namdhari discourse traverse Sant Khalsa versus Malechh Khalsa; debate with Kesgarh granthi regarding who is a better Sikh?; caste question; Khalsa army; Ram Singh delineating his legacy comprising of Baba Bir Singh, Bhai Maharaj Singh, and so on. Along with such political stance, its social-ideological arm had a much active dimension regarding women e.g. marriageable age, anand marriage, participation in Kuka affairs.

The fundamental aspect remains their opposition to the Raj and its methods of ‘swadeshi’ struggle and not their exclusivity, or dress, etc. Their ethic of rahit of poor rural folk based on substantive issues is also significant. Rather than looking for a separation of religion and politics, Kukas come across a group in which changes in the self of religion have an inherent secularizing function by expanding the frontiers of political engagement. In a way, this is a shared pattern in the peasant and tribal uprisings, jacqueries in West Europe, etc. The discontent was not generalized; other

\textsuperscript{38}Fauja Singh: \textit{Kuka sMovement} considers them as precursor of the Ghadar movement being the first outbreak of anti-Raj impulse. For him the kukas provide a crucial counterweight to the Sikh role during 1857. Disregarding other constitutive elements he underscores the political motivation in their conduct.

\textsuperscript{39}Written primarily by Raj administrators, it focuses upon Religious reforms of the righteous coupled with seditious potential, demanding repression; settled down after ‘sufficient’ measures were taken.

\textsuperscript{40}McLeod, W.H; He considers that it conforms to the classical 4-phase pattern of such sects, namely internal contradictions of the Sikh society; channeling of the rural discontent; essentially a religious reform movement which dabbled in inconsistent, confused ‘political activities.

\textsuperscript{41}As in the works of Grewal, J.S., Ganda Singh; \textit{Kukian Di Vithia}, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, year not mentioned.

demonstrating such features as an individual guru; British fall first due to Russian intervention then through Maharaja Daleep Singh; their initial parallel with the Nirankaris; Rawalpindi to Bhaini (Biradar – Suba).
forces at work by the Raj were creating new constituencies of social support and Kukas were marginalized which they also seem to have accepted.

Letters of Baba Ram Singh gave form to the everyday speech of used by people.\textsuperscript{42} Strong emphasis on equality between humans and upon higher social groups as anti-God (anti-Sikh) is reflected in his hukumnamas.\textsuperscript{43} Intellectual consistency (BRS' later letters) and principled conduct remains an issue; their rejection of capitalism (Britishers) was often backward – looking, negative and unrealistic.\textsuperscript{44} In the hands of men and women simpler and less theologically sophisticated, especially in this time of revolutionary crisis... teachings were easily pushed over... (to extremes)\textsuperscript{45} "Given them this breakdown of confidence on the own hand and the prevalent millenarian enthusiasm on the other, it is hardly surprising that men and women, faced with an unprecedented freedom of choice, passed rapidly from sect to sect, trying all things, finding all of them wanting (Punjab during 1850-1900)\textsuperscript{46}

Kukas had a definite idea of future religious life of piety but their social ideological vision did not go beyond a political storm helped by the Russian or through restoration of M. Daleep Singh. It also suggests that return to MRS reign was the Kuka vision. The general refrain of treating Maharaja Ranjit Singh era as fallen is put into perspective by Kukas fervent insistence on rahit on one hand and a longing for Maharaja Ranjit Singh reign on the other as complementary and not antagonistic phenomena.

For the purpose of this study, we intend to take up two different but complementary sources in order to gain an insight into the matrix as well as the dynamics of constituting the Namdhari self-identity. The status and unquestioned authority of Baba Ram Singh within the Namdhari social universe is a well-known phenomenon. His ardas and hukumnamas thus provide us with a valuable source of delineating this process. His audience was composed of lay followers not particularly known for their cultivation of scholarship rather their simplicity coupled with their laboring traditions. Their feelings of separation from their 'Satguru' are expressed in 'Baranmahas' composed by Chanda Singh, Sant Nihal Singh and an Ustatnama by Kahla Singh. We can derive an understanding of the Namdhari self-identity by weaving

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\textsuperscript{42} CH, p.153
\textsuperscript{43} ibid., p.22
\textsuperscript{44} ibid., p.123
\textsuperscript{45} ibid., p.190
\end{flushright}
these narratives – from above and below, respectively. The discursive continuities; shifts and ruptures; selections and omissions; silences and emphases amply demonstrate the imaginations and their continuing variations. Significantly these texts are all composed after the initial confrontation with the British government resulted in violent repression on the movement whose one consequence was the internment of Baba Ram Singh along with eleven of his Subas. With the remaining followers in Punjab under strict surveillance; leadership in jails and; the prophecies of Russian intervention as a precondition of Baba Ram Singh’s return to Punjab, constitutes the discursive field in which the above-mentioned imaginations are situated.

Who is a Sikh – value-based Sikhi and its derivatives; Nam as internal glue along with material benefits; Ramdaspura – Ramsarovar; Putting oneself to test – a radical stance. Not me but the prophecies of 10 Gurus to his followers.; Pujaris are roundly condemned.; identity Udasis and Nirmalas; gurmat as orthopraxy vs. manmat/1867 debate with Kesgarh granthi ;Damdani Taksa1 and Nihangs were considered with favour; Sant Khalsa Vs. Malechh Khalsa (Khalsa is not enough); BRS love and longing for Punjab; Deep concern for everyday life of his followers possibility of shared vision with the Khalsa.; ‘Kukâ’ – courting potential dishonour to confront the pujaris regarding the prophecies; Ten Gurus – GGS – Khalsa – BBS- BMS – BRS47.

Chanda Singh’s Baranmaha is supposed to be composed during 1872-1884, the phase of continuing hardships faced by ordinary Kukas. Their religious duty had an umbilical relation with their anti-British political stance. The popular domain impacts on this text in a variety of ways e.g. in the manglacharan his primary loyalty is towards Baba Ram Singh addressed as Satguru followed by Hindu deities and Guru Nanak’s bani. Placing Baba Ram Singh in the line of avatars it has taken recourse to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Elements of Punjabi vars are also discernible regarding the millenarian war between Russians and the English. Its consummation is attempted through ‘asursanghar’ derived from the ‘Chandi Di Var’ of Guru Gobind Singh. Our contention is that these seeming divergences of influence should not be considered a limitation of their endeavour with respect to a homogenous ideal but its relevance is underwritten by their effort to carve a liberationary discourse from their received tradition and existential conditions.

46 ibid., p.190
47 its continuity can be traced to Bhakna, Ghadar, Communists.
These three narratives take the ‘Sant Khalsa’ category coined in 1857 as their starting point after Baba Ram Singh’s Hajro episode. This invention of new terminology is predicated by the irrelevance of ‘Khalsa’ because it includes the fallen Sikh nobility, religious persons belonging to Guru clans and the thorough degradation of the ‘pujaris’ which includes the Sikh granthis, the Gurdwara personnel, etc. The self of ‘Sant Khalsa’ was pitted against ‘Malechh Khalsa’. The British were contemporary malechhas and battle against them was a fundamental religious duty. However, the servility of the components of Malechh Khalsa necessitated the new order of the ‘Sant’ in the body of Sant Khalsa, whose distinctive initiation ceremony, strict adherence to Namdhari rahit, special concern for cow welfare and a thorough boycott of British institutions. Thus we arrive at a peculiar situation in which elaborate rahit procedures for inculcating purity of the self is conjoined with an equal emphasis on such secular issues as attitude towards the state. This stretching of limits on both sides results in an ambiguity paradox which will unveil in the coming phases to pose challenges for the reconstitution of Namdhari self-identity.

Surviving in a situation of all round social attitude of hostile indifference the Kukas consider themselves as the moral custodians of the Panth with Bhaini turned into Ramdasapur by establishing Baba Ram Singh’s dera. Ramdasapur in this context displays the polemical finesse which challenges the notion of Amritsar as the religious center of the Sikhs. Bhaini is Ramdaspura only through the act of naming after Baba Ram Singh but henceforth his moral vision will determine the content or substantive dimension of what does it mean to be called a Sikh or Khalsa (p.524-25).

Another noteworthy feature is the tirade against caste practices and varna hierarchy. The Namdhari rahit with its robust espousal of social egalitarianism reminds one of similar emphases in the rahit discourse of Bhai Nand Lal Goya and Bhai Mani Singh (This point needs further elaboration in which the Rahitnama genre and its mutations need careful reinvestigation and analysis). This elaboration of the social space has a futuristic dimension when Russia would be the agent of apocalypse to destroy the British. The Kukas would deliver the order of the divine to Russia and the Russians would be duty bound to hand over the rein of Lahore. The great upheaval wrought over Punjab would result in all-round destruction and only those would survive who will come to Baba Ram Singh’s beneficence. Thus the contemporary condition of severe social isolation is sought to be overcome by the predestined return of Baba Ram Singh whose actual realization is made contingent upon the Russian intervention. In the Sant
Nihal Singh's baranmaha, Baba Ram Singh's imprisonment is presented as a voluntary exile (banvas) due to divine orders and thus the British agency is erased in his account and consequently the Russian dimension is also muted and the onus is now upon the sangat to seek forgiveness to ask for his return. Kahla Singh's Ustatnama enlists multiple restorations of Gurmat; of the Sikh Raj; of the status of cow — in order to establish 'Satjug' on earth. The secular dimension of the welfare of people is entrenched as a cardinal element of the panth. Thus, the initial attempts towards secularizing the self of Sikhism are underway. Any new project to restore Sikhism to its pristine heights would necessarily include Sikh Raj and gurdwaras, rahit, welfare etc.

The peasant and tribal uprisings of the colonial period have been looked at in different ways. The British administration considered them as problems of law and order; the rebels were portrayed as primitive savages resisting civilization. The nationalists later on tried to appropriate the peasant and tribal histories for the purposes of anti-colonial struggle and projected them as the pre-history of modern nationalism. Eric Stokes would call them 'primary resistance', i.e. a traditional society’s act of violent defiance, from which usually follows the imposition of colonial rule in response.’ Others like D.N. Dhanagare would regard the peasant rebellions as ‘pre-political’, because their lack of organization, programme and ideology. Ranjit Guha, on the other hand, has argued that “there was nothing in the militant movements of … (the) rural masses that was not political.”

The rebellions... were not apolitical acts; they constituted political action that demonstrated, although in different ways, the political consciousness of the peasantry. As Guha has shown, they exhibited, firstly, a clear awareness of the relation of power in rural society and a determination to overturn that structure of authority. The rebels were quite conscious of the political sources of oppression and this was demonstrated in their targets – the Zamindars’ houses, their grain stocks, the moneylenders, the merchants and ultimately the state machinery of the British, which came forward and ultimately the state machinery of the British, which came forward to protect those local agents of oppression. A clear identification of the enemies was matched by an equally clear marking of the friends. What we often find in these peasant rebellions is a redefinition of the relationship of the oppressed to the language, culture and religion of the dominant classes, although the protests took myriad forms. The rebellions were political action,

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different from crime, because they were open and public. There were public conferences, assemblies, and planning which definitely spoke of a programme. There were grand ceremonies of rebel marches. Drawing on the corporate labour activity reinforced the public character as the Santhals characterized the rebel actions as their traditional hunting activity; but now hunting had acquired a new political meaning.49

As for the leadership of these peasant rebellions, it came from the ranks of the rebels themselves. Since the leaders belonged to the same cultural world of the peasant and tribals whom they led, they could provide more effective leadership. The mobilization took place along community lines, an exception being the Rangpur uprising.50 The colonial rural societies experienced varying degrees of tension between class, caste, ethnic and religious groups, which were articulated in a violent condition of oppression and poverty in the countryside. Religion in many cases provided the bond of unity among the poorer classes and the leaders were the holy men who promised a new millennium to be achieved through supernatural means. In pre-Capitalist societies, where class-consciousness was ill developed and class ideology absent, religion provided an ideology for rebellion. The holy leaders referred to the loss of a moral world and thus expressed the anxieties of the peasants in religious idioms. Religion thus provided legitimacy to their movements. In such revolutionary messianism, the charismatic leaders were thought to be endowed with magical power; their empowering was thus an act of God. The rebellion was therefore divinely ordained and legitimized through reference to a higher authority. This provided both an ideology as well as motivation for peasant action.51 The rebels' own perception of time plays a significant role as well. There is often an evocation of history in the conception of a Golden Age in a distant past. An urge for the restoration of that imagined golden past provided an ideology for peasant action, the Faraizi and Santhal rebellions being prime example of that.52

I have forsaken thematic continuity over chronological evolution of these hukumnamas by Baba Ram Singh to appreciate his views and voice. The numeral at start of paragraph conveys the number of hukumnama.

49 ibid., p.167-68
50 ibid., p.168-69
51 ibid., p.168
52 ibid., p.168-69 Apart from the more organized movements described earlier, violent armed rebellions, social banditry or general 'lawlessness' were endemic in the first century of British rule in India.
1. This foundation of Sant Khalsa has been lain by the Guru himself men are not enough to overturn it... it is Guru's will that I along with my sangat endure this suffering.53

2. These are the only Sikhs worth their salt. If the earlier ones were authentic then why did they condemn Guru's Sikhs? Why would they stop them performing bhog of akhand paths. I have also stayed with Sikhs at Lahore and you know rather well the Sikh condition in Lahore. Prostitutes, homosexual relations, meat, liquor were commonplace whereas piety, reading bani was extremely rare. Have you ever seen them conducting akhand paths in such numbers even when nobody prohibited the same. Even now except for the Namdharis, who performs this? Do they have the heart to call themselves as Sikhs.54

The pujaris, mahants, granthis, gyanis all are one in calling us tankhahia and you just compare the bhogs performed by these tankhahias and these so called 'true Sikhs'55

Who is a Sikh, seems to be their rallying cry, their ideology and motivation all rolled into one defining question. The rest of discursive elements appear as derivatives of this poser.

3. Everyone should perform prayers with a stout heart otherwise the offerings render one hollow and corrupts the mind. The pujaris have suffered due to this. That's why the Islamic way has scored over the Gurumat and all the gyanis, dhyanis, Bedis, Sodhis have degenerated on this count. The leading Muslims constantly convey this to me.56

Thousands rever me, despite my ironsmith origins along with offering thousand of rupees. Since you are a Brahmin, prayers by you will be more effective.57

Prayers have a material benefits also – that a 'low-born' is revered only due to prayers) caste consciousness.

53 Ganda Singh, Kukian Di Vithia, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, year not mentioned, p125On Sant Khalsa – Guru's will.
54 ibid., p.125
55 ibid., p.125-26
56 ibid., p.128 Prayer as an internal glue to keep intact the fledgling social organization as was witnessed during medieval Christianity where crusades and asceticism complimented each other .
57 ibid., p.129
4. Not the Guru rather I am his messenger... No one should indulge in female infanticide and bartering of girls should come to a stop. Sikhs have suffered heavily on this count. And the cow slaughtering malechhas will come to an end, as has happened in past. Messenger of guru passing strictures against female infanticide and barter amongst Sikhs while simultaneously protection of cows and opposition to malechhas are upheld as principles. And those who are Namdharis should call this village as Ramdaspura Not the others but the sangat should call Ramdaspura. Ramdaspura was suggested by Baba Ram Singh according to Chanda Singh.

If I am the designated figure as prophesied by Guru then I will reach the dera any day. And if I am not the same then why to have my *darshan*, you must think over it.

To desist his followers from visiting him, he takes a radical stand of putting his own self to test-a radical stance in any case. The baranmaha writers calibrate this eventuality by linking it with Russian intervention as a pre-requisite for Baba Ram Singh’s return to Punjab.

6. Take care that words are not joined together. These are written with great care at the cost of prayers... write correctly. I am not the Guru.

This heightened concern about correct spellings or words is striking. Does it emanate from his act of publishing the Adi Granth from Lahore at the press of Diwan Buta Singh?

8. No point in sending ardas to (Maharaja) Dalip Singh, a beef-eater, he is of no use to us.... I would not have been imprisoned if I had some magical prowess. It is the word and the Guru which possesses magic so pray.. Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru Supreme over and above any Guru, hence it is the Shabad Guru. Dalip Singh’s help is discounted on account of his ‘malechh’ conduct – emphasis on his lack of magical prowess with Guru Granth as supreme.

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58 ibid., p.129
59 ibid., p.130
60 ibid., p.130
61 ibid., p.132-133
62 ibid., p.135

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10. Accord your beneficence to the poor and the cow. These Namdhari are the poor. As you deem fit. As the Guru had proclaimed, disorder would reign, each one will suffer. So has happened in the thirty-fourth. Now the rest should also follow... Guru had proclaimed that along with Bhai Jaita would descend from the western side to save the Sant Khalsa. So this Bhai Jaita is the same fellow, was the saviour. 63

His tone is humble regarding the Namdhari and their condition with an unshakable faith in God/Guru as their solitary hope. Baba Ram Singh attempts to temper their excessive emphasis on his own role as the saviour and cites the (‘Sau Sakhi’) prophecies as a measure of hope. The western direction implying Russia is the functional arm of these distant prophecies). However, this focus on prophecies, apocalypse, Russia, etc. leaves no space for any strategic, organizational advance for that we have to wait until the 1920s and the Akali movement.

11. Prahladsar Pothi.. Prem Sumarg.. pujaris have given up on the true path, thus they are anti-Guru. It is not I but this Khalsa belongs to the Guru and this is heartening... Since these pujaris have sought to disobey the Guru’s proclamations... You do not require their ardas for your purpose, they are evil, thieves... I had many considerations before accepting anyone, firstly the Udasis, then the Nirmalas then I got baptized through the double-edged sword. Now the word(Nam) is my solace.64

Listing the approved texts – Prahladsar Pothis and Prem Sumarg – for their prophetic sayings. It is the correctness of these sayings which forms the asset for Baba Ram Singh to join issue with the pujari class who have given up on this path and their criticism of the Namdhari is a misdemeanour against the Guru and the panth. It is their conduct that renders them incapable of any grace. His critique also includes the Udasis and Nirmalas. However, in this listing of his former associations Baba Ram Singh highlights a process which has historical parallels. As the remarkable historian Christopher Hill notes: “Given then this breakdown of confidence on the one hand, and the prevalent millenarian enthusiasm on the other, it is hardly surprising that men and women, faced with an unprecedented freedom of choice, passed rapidly from sect to sect, trying all things, finding all of them wanting.”65 This seems to be the general social condition in the Punjab during the nineteenth century. Sadhu Gulab Das’s biography also shows similar characteristics.

63 ibid., p.136-37.
12. Without *gurmat*, no utterance, even bani, is of any use. The condition when bani is read but is not practiced is manmat. Later on bani also gets shelved.  

BRS is strikingly clear on issues of a value-based manner of being a Sikh. This rendering is bereft of any sectarian closure and principled conduct is made the lynchpin of their order. So rather than hankering after or striving to demarcate the sectarian boundaries, Baba Ram Singh is waging an ideological contest within the Sikh movement. In the process, he is putting forward the strenuous test for his fellow and would be Namdharis. His debate with the Kesgarh granthi (1867) elaborates this formulation. Christopher Hill remarks: “The eloquence, the power, of the simple artisans who took part in these discussions is staggering”.  

13. People keep on maligning us by calling us liars, I am called a *thoka* (a pejorative for carpenters), we are variously attacked. However, we are at peace. Never to show our back to the Guru and his command qualifies as *sidq*... I am not the Guru, merely a messenger.  

The importance of a Sikh term is enunciated in time of crisis.  

15. It is surprising that the Damdamis prohibited the (Namdhari) sangat from offering prayers by force. The Damdami taskal in this sense was considered slightly apart from his usual distrust of the pujari class. That is why he is surprised.  

16. It was Guru’s saying that with the exception of Sant Khalsa, the rest would join Malechh Khalsa. They are all the same, like the Britishers (*bille*). Malechh Panth’s annihilation is prophesied and the time has arrived. The guru’s grace knows no bounds. Sant Khalsa is perceived in splendid solitariness whereas the Malechh Khalsa has become a shadow of the Britishers.  

17. Be kind to your servant and they will respond... take care to remain united, as two brothers, together, do not be separated at the behest of womenfolk. Here a certain folksy understanding about women seems to underpin his pragmatic advice to
two brothers. In the everyday affairs, this famed radical attitude towards women had yet some ground to cover.

18. You are my own flesh. If any one from Punjab comes we would take an excellent care. His concern for any one from Punjab is transparent.

21. By traversing this long distance, you have proven your Sikh credentials I do not have an iota of Guruship in me. You are my body and soul. I am overwhelmed even at the sight of a mere bhangi from Punjab. Even the glimpse of a Punjabi is extremely rare. His concern for Punjab is continuing. This demonstrates the fact that although the organization had formally spread to far off centers, Punjab was the epicenter of their universe.

24. Visiting the prostitute harms the body, wastes money, dharma is deserted, image is tarnished in the community. The bhangis, Muslims all visit prostitutes, anyone who comes in their contact looses his Hindu standing. As Guruji says one does not become a Muslim until one comes in their contact, so the English, Brahmins, Kurangis, Muslims are all alike. And, in your house your wife would get the disease on contact and abstinence is also a sort of wrongdoing.... You have been reckless. BRS is very much alive to the everyday life of his followers even to the extent of advising and dilating on the question of venereal disease. Derived from visiting a prostitute the ethical, medical, social and economic consequences are detailed by him. Of course, the clincher remains the Guru's injunction in a Rahitnama which is stretched to a logical conclusion of treating Britishers, Muslims and others as one against the Namdhari.

27. Visit the gurdwaras. Ask for their version of imposing the tankhah, note down whatever they may say. Do not indulge in skirmishes or to make any request. Write down the names of all miscreants present there, and then we will see what the Guru wishes. Baba Ram Singh asking to prepare a digest of the reasons proffered for imposing tankhah on the Namdhari.

72 ibid., p.145.
73 ibid., p.147
74 ibid., p.150
75 ibid., p.153
28. I have discovered new meanings of other Sakhis (on my return) I will disclose those.\textsuperscript{76} His power to decipher new meanings from Sakhis is a marker of his salience and authority.

29. I may figure in the one indicated by the Prahladsar pothi. Then I will come to Punjab on my own. And if I am someone else then why at all to visit me. Then there are innumerable carpenters like me, even better are found in Punjab and if someone says that I am the same Ram Singh of the twelfth place, then he should obey, whatever I may say (about not visiting him)... and if he comes to know that I am not the same son of a carpenter who is called by the name of Ram Singh then why to come all the way. Moreover, to be called a kuka is an invitation to infamy all over the country.\textsuperscript{77} His strenuous efforts to desist his followers from visiting him continue and new accretions are made over his usual stance of undergoing the test of proving his credentials. Significant is his perception about courting the potential dishonour by calling oneself a Kuka. One is reminded of Sainapat's familiar characterization about the Khalsa in the early-eighteenth century.

31. (I pray to the Guru to)... mend the breach with the Khalsa, which at present indulges in denigrating the Guru's command.\textsuperscript{78} Baba Ram Singh keeps alive the possibility of a shared vision with the Khalsa. They are not totally given up. They are asked to follow the Guru's command, which the Namdharis are adhering to. However, rather than extending a logic Baba Ram Singh is asking them to believe in prophecies and it seems there must be a current of opinions against their insistence of this) his detailed response to such insinuations is found in hukumnama no.33. Can we say that in the absence of a general outlook-except in social reform, boycott of the English institutions coupled with their own conception of time and space which had a cyclical nature their rejection of British colonialism was often 'backward looking, negative and unrealistic', in the words of Christopher Hill.\textsuperscript{79}

37. Blue is the colour of malechhas, even the Nihangs have fallen prey to the evil influence of this colour. Earlier Naina Singh was prudent then he consorted with a chuhri, then hit a cow while buying vegetables then he did, later on fought amongst

\textsuperscript{76} ibid., p.153
\textsuperscript{77} ibid., p.154
\textsuperscript{78} ibid., p.156-57
\textsuperscript{79} ibid., p.156-57
them, then picked up battle with the British...\textsuperscript{80} Nihangs were considered comparatively pure and potential allies however, their hostility is explained by their blue attire alongwith other coordinates.

40. If the Guru brings me along to Punjab....the centrality of Punjab\textsuperscript{81} He is consistently asking his followers to confront the pujaris regarding the prophecies contained in relevant texts.\textsuperscript{82} Baba Ram Singh prohibits his followers not to address him with excessive epithets and yearns for broad-based information rather individual focus.\textsuperscript{83}

44. You see that after the ten Gurus, the guru established Guru Granth Sahib which is the Guru eternal. However, in our Khalsa a phenomenon has occurred. First they showered their 'grace' on Bir Singh and then on Maharaj (Singh) now I am the one to invite their wrath.\textsuperscript{84} In a unique manner with immense historical value Baba Ram Singh delineates his position. The gurus and Guru Granth are supreme. But in the corporate affairs of the Khalsa panth especially in his times he chooses to place himself in the lineage of Baba Bir Singh Naurangabadi and Bhai Maharaj Singh who led anti-British charge in their own time and were the targets of entrenched interests within the Sikhs. There is a definite advance in this proposition because a tangible current of anti-imperialist resistance is celebrated and contemporanised. Its next manifestation is seen in the Ghadar movement, which appreciates the Namdhari resistance. The first president of the Ghadar Party, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna mentions the definitive influence of a Namdhari, Baba Kasar (Singh) cultivating anti-British sentiment in him even though baba Kesar did not adhere to the Namdhari r\textsuperscript{ahit}. In a way, the Kukas' anti-imperialist stance secured their place in the evolving historical dynamics in the Punjabi. In this context, the centrality of the Khalsa army is noteworthy.

45. Do not imply that Ram Singh is imprisoned due to reciting bani and we will meet the same fate. I am here due to my own ill luck.\textsuperscript{85} He is responding to popular view in Punjab- however, a note of despair is unmistakable in these lines.

\textsuperscript{80} ibid., p.163
\textsuperscript{81} ibid., p.165
\textsuperscript{82} ibid., p.166
\textsuperscript{83} ibid., p.167
\textsuperscript{84} ibid., p.170
\textsuperscript{85} ibid., p.171

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And as for your mentioning about the disarray in panth... Anxieties about the Namdharis' potential disarray are being expressed with Baba Ram Singh striving to invoke the Guru's word as the only solace. However, the refrain about their unfortunate karma is getting voluble. His internal sentiments are echoing the external adversity.

50. File an appeal by consulting Mangal Singh, hire a white lawyer, ... you haven't done the right thing by not appealing till day. Now file the appeal immediately... these folks wanted their pound of flesh and they have got it... I had no inclination that they will mistreat me. I was scapegoated for all their doings. Only if the government might care to ask me I informed the government whatever I know. To save their skins I was made the accused. Boycott of British institutions now gives way to filing appeals in their court even hiring a white--hitherto malechh--lawyer. Without mentioning the prophecies, the government and his foolhardy followers are castigated by him. Confronting an all round disaster he is distraught but valiantly struggles to keep his composure. His karmic vision is foregrounded. His intention of performing Hindu rituals at his death is repeatedly mentioned. According to Baba Ram Singh coupled with his karma, the widespread opposition to him is also responsible for his misfortune. His total dejection comes through. Even the solace of Nam has deserted him. He has hardly anything to offer to his followers. Baba Ram Singh leaves everything to his followers' wisdom.

There is not any scholarly claim in these utterances in the kuka adherents whether leaders or followers. While it shows the relative unity of their discourse it also hints towards their distance from centres of learning that were otherwise flourishing during this period. While fighting for the Sikh raj and afterward the Sikh community managed to support a fairly sophisticated educational programme. Many Sikh villages had a gurmukhi school, with was part of the local gurdwara and supported a bhai qualified to offer the basic tools of Sikhism education; while these schools were sustained by local Sikhs, larger centers of learning, the scholars bungas, and taksal, ran on royal patronage and the support they received from various Sikh chiefs. Apparently,
the network was sufficiently dense that in several instances large donations of land were offered to the Nirmala ascetics for setting up new centers of Sikhism learning. 90

Built during the later half of the 18th century around the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Bungas were both a mechanism of defence as well as significant seats of Sikh vernacular education up to the 1870s. The Sikh learning owes much of its evolution and furtherance to the teachers in these bungas. Various Sikh missionary orders of Nirmalas, Udasis, Granthis, Gyanis, etc. were operational on the grants received by the Sikh Chiefs. Instruction included advanced learning of Sanskrit, Vedant, etc. as well as other specialized instruction in music, calligraphy and medicine. In the 1800s Amritsar was a great center of Sikh education. About 300 dharmsahalas were devoted to the promotion of Gurmukhi education. 91

Imparting the Rag Vidya (vocal and instrumental music) the Bungas of Ragis Kahan Singh, Charat Singh and Dhanpat Singh were very famous. The Bunga of the Ahluwalias was an academy of music. The Maharaja of Kapurthala was the chief patron of this center. Raja Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was himself adept in Rag Vidya. The young trainees having attained suitable proficiency in the basic ragas were trained in advanced courses and specialized in ragas and reginis. Particularly, great stress was laid on how to sing the Japgi, the Asa di Var, Sohila and the Sodar. At the initial stage, some rudimentary knowledge of Gurbani was imparted and afterwards the higher ragas were taught. A Gurumukhi pathshala was attached for this purpose in the Ahluwalia Bunga. The Ahluwalia Bunga specialized in instrumental music with its courses on rabab, sarangi, mirdang and kacchawa, the musical instruments used in the Golden Temple. Many a ragis and rababis were trained for service at the Golden Temple as well as for other Sikh Shrines. The music centers of the bungas welcomed all pupils earnestly interested in learning music notwithstanding their hereditary occupation or otherwise.

The chief seats of Sikh learning in the early-nineteenth century were Amritsar and Damdama Sahib in Bathinda. In Amritsar, the Golden Temple and the bungas were popular centers of learning. The bungas played an important role in imparting

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91 ibid., p.11-14 Hans&Sagar
indigenous education to the Sikhs. These bungas belonged to orthodox Sikhs and other dispensations, like Udasis, Nirmalas and Seva panthis. A number of poets were the product of these bungas.\textsuperscript{92} Broadly, the Sikh learning comprised of Sikh religious literature, Hindu religious and philosophical works, rhetoric and prosody. Vedant however, was the major subject in the Hindu religious writings.\textsuperscript{93}

There were four major traditions in Punjabi literature. The first was the Sikh religious literature in the form of janamsakhis and gurbilas. The vedante dialect was the third. The fourth belonged to kissa poetry, which was, to some extent, secular in character. Its exponents were mostly Muslims. The Sikhs to some extent also adopted it. However, kissa literature was not in the curriculum of religious education.\textsuperscript{94} The janamsakhi genre was developed by the Sikh community in early-sixteenth century to spread the myth of Nanak and discuss his doctrines. The expression of piety was J.S. genre for their own ends. “Thus the period of the geography of the conflicting claims to religious loyalty called forth an intense janam-sakhi debate to constitute its Golden Agriculture. After the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675, the genre did not remain relevant. The Sikh struggle for power in the mid-eighteenth century necessitated a new genre the new condition and the Gurbulas genre. Its main purpose was to cultivate a militantly heroic spirit with a built in social urgency even at the cost of doctrine.” In this sense, gurbilas is just the opposite of janam-sakhi. The orthodox janam-sakhis never departed from doctrine. With the rise of Sikhs to power the spiritual supremacy of Guru Nanak did not remain problematic and emphasis on political urgency was lost. Consequently, e.g. janam-sakhis and gurbilas literature of late -18\textsuperscript{th} to early- 19\textsuperscript{th} century are full of ‘magic and the decline of religion.”\textsuperscript{95}

The Vedantic literature in Gurmukhi has an important place in the literature of Punjab. The catalogue of Gurumukhi manuscripts records a total of 1857 manuscripts i.e. 1189 major and 394 works on variety of subjects. A cursory reading of the manuscripts on Indian philosophy suggests that they are mostly on vedant and just a few on yoga. Sikh literature contains a number of commentaries of Gurbani, written by Udasis and Nirmalas which are Vedantic interpretations.\textsuperscript{96} The earliest works on Vedant

\textsuperscript{92} ibid., p.12-14  
\textsuperscript{93} ibid., p.13  
\textsuperscript{94} ibid., p.13  
\textsuperscript{95} ibid., p.13-14  
\textsuperscript{96} ibid., p.14 Out of them, the manuscripts on Sikh literature including Gurbani exegesis, janam-sakhis, gurbilas, Mahima Prakash and other hierarchal works are 301 in all. In includes 121 manuscripts on a
in Gurumukhi are claimed to belong to the second half of the seventeenth century. 97 Like Vedantic literature the riti or scholastic literature was very popular in Punjab. Some exponents of this tradition are said to have been associated with the court of Guru Gobind Singh. They were Amrit Rai, Kavi Vrind and Sukhdev, Amrit Raj wrote chitra vilas; Vrind wrote Vrind Vinod Satsai and Bhava Panchasika. The mid-seventeenth century was the period of generic of scholastic poetry in Punjab. It remained prevalent in Lahore. His works are on prosody, rhetoric, and nine-feelings (nav rasa) etc. 98 In the second half of 18th century, important riti works were translated. They were Mati Ram’s has Raj and Lalit Lalam, Bhanu Duttk Rasik Priya and Kavi Priya, Kavi Deuts has Biles and Padmakar Jagat Binod. Some Sanskrit riti works were also translated into bhakha eg. Kavi Nihal translated the Kavya Prakash by Mammat under the title Sahit Siromani. 99

Santokh Singh died at the age of 56 in 1844. He started his career as a Katha performer at Buria. Nanak Prakash and Gyan Prakash Suraj Granth are in the form of Katha. 100 His commentary and his works on history have Vedantic elements. His riti style is patently there. His Garab Ganjani Tika discusses the alankars of Guru Nanak’s Japuji. His merit lies in Sikh historiography. He surpasses Sarup Das of Mahima Prakash and Kesar Singh Chhibber of Bansawali Nama. In Santokh Singh Vedant and and the riti poetry are socially significant. 101

Like other works of Sikh literature, Nanak Prakash’s nature is cognitive. In such works, literature and doctrine are complimentary as well as autonomous. The historical study of such literature needs a different approach. It is not only essential to look into the doctrinal aspect of the work but also to analyse the genre. Both the aspects are rooted in the socio-political conditions of the period. 102 The chief interest in taking up the study of Nanak Prakash is to find its hierarchical outlook from the perspective of his

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97 ibid., p.15 Some of the prominent Vedantic scholars of the period were Dyal Anemi, Anath Puri and Kavi Sukhdev. Kavi Sukhdev is also said to be associated with the court of Guru Gobind Singh for some time. The earliest Vedantic literature in Punjab was taken up by the Handalis. Manohar Das Niranjani wrote Gyan Manjari, Vedant Paribhasha, Gyan Churan Vachnika, Sat, Prashan Uttari and Khat Prashmi. Amritdhara and Vedant Vivek Granth Satik were the works of Bhagwan Das Niranjani. The rise of Sikh power revived literature on Vedant especially by the Udasis and the Nirmalas. The Sikhan Di Bhagatmal and the Mokh Panth Prakash by Gulab Singh Nirmala are two major works of the period. However, throughout the Sikh period, the translation of the Shankar's commentaries was undertaken.

98 ibid., p.16
99 ibid., p.16
100 ibid., p.19
101 ibid., p.20
literary imagination. The evidence on early-nineteenth century society and politics can be understood against this backdrop. In Nanak Prakash, the continuity of the literary tradition has a parallelism in the continuity of administrative institutions.

The work is based on a number of sources. They are Bala janam-sakhi, Gyan Ratnavali, the Miharban janam-sakhi, the Adi Sakhian, the B-40 janam-sakhi and the Puratan janam-sakhi. Other works used are Mahima Prakash by Sarup Das Bhalla, Sikhan Di Bhagatmal, Varan by Bhai Gurdas and Guru Nanak’s composition entitled Siddh Gosht. There are a few sakhis in the work whose sources could not be traced. Besides, the poet has made use of the Hindu and Muslim mythology. The work narrates the legend of Kala Bhushand, Dattatreya, Prehlad, Vrah, Dhru Pankar and an account of Emperor Karan. Furthermore, the work bears the influence of Dasam Granth, bhakti literature and the poetic tradition of riti literature. Even in the first canto an invocation, the direct borrowing from the Gyan-Ratnavati can be seen. However, the major part of the work is based on the janamsakhi material.

As the Bala janam-sakhi is the most popular janam-sakhi, dependence on it underlies the element of popularity. The popularity of the Bala janam-sakhi lies in the exception and treatment of the theme. The work claims to have been written in the presence of Guru Nanak. Other elements that lend popularity to it are elaboration of narrative in order to give a ‘lifelike picture’, exactness and specificity of material and the detailed characterization. It is the only janam-sakhi that gives chronology of events, names of relatives of Guru Nanak and also the names of islands and seaports said to be visited by the Guru. Adding new sakhis in order to enhance its popularity further enlarged the tradition. Also, there is a ‘greater emphasis on detail in the later janam-sakhis. Similarly, the characterization and other elements are expanded. The redactors of later Bala janam-sakhi do not hesitate even to include some sakhis from other traditions, particularly from the Puratan janam-sakhi tradition. All the popular elements are present in Nanak Prakash. It adopts the pattern of the Bala tradition wherein Bhai Bala is the narrator of the account of Guru Nanak in the presence of Guru... The poet’s special interest in the tradition is apparent from the fact that he makes an effort to come to terms with the doubt of the readers regarding the genuineness of the Bala janam-

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102 ibid., p.3
103 ibid., p.3
104 ibid., p.4
105 ibid., p.24
sakhi. In this regard, the poet’s approach is not rational, but devotional.\textsuperscript{106} The other element that seems to have contributed in relying mostly on the Bala material is the fictional element.\textsuperscript{107} In the Nanak Prakash, the attitude of the poet towards the Bala tradition is paradoxical. Though the poet condemns the Handalis for polluting the original janam-sakhi yet he does not make any effort to recognize the anti-Sikh stance of the janam-sakhi. Though the poet excises the sakhi of Baba Handal and yet Nanak Prakash contains the idea of instantaneous redemption. A touch is sufficient for the knowledge of all the three lakas and God.\textsuperscript{108} One can discern a contradiction between doctrinal aspect held by the poet and the pulls and pressures exercised by his patronage, advanced by the Sikh rulers.\textsuperscript{109}

Nanak Prakash describes the greatness of Bhai Bala. Even Kalu Mehta considers him a wise and trustworthy person. In fact, it indicates the dominance of the Jats... In fact, the predominance of the Jat in Santokh Singh’s work merely reminds us that the Sikh rulers were Jats. In the Gur Pratap Suraj, the narrators of the account of the ten Gurus, Bhai Ram Koer is a Jat. He is said to have a ruling ancestor.\textsuperscript{110} Poet excludes the Sakhi that narrates the higher spiritual status of Baba Handal but not of Bhai Bala. Similarly, the Handali doctrine does not seem to be anti-Sikh in the nineteenth century because with rise of Sikh power, Sikh devotionalism became irrelevant. The underlying idea of inequality of the Handali doctrine suits the ruling class well. Santokh Singh curtails much of the detail from the Sakhi of Swarnpur, utopian city of the Bala tradition. Poet is of the opinion that the Sikh rule was Satyug. It suggests obliquely that the Sikh rule is the transformation of utopia into reality.\textsuperscript{111}

It is also significant that the Vedantic ideas were propounded in the form of Guru Nanak’s instruction to Bhai Lehna before his installation to guruship. In late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century there is an influx of the Vedantic ideas in Punjabi literature. This has a social significance. This rise of Sikhs to political power was a significant development. It was viewed as the establishment of satyug in kaliyug. Its implication is that there is no possibility of change in future. The Vedant suited the

\textsuperscript{106} ibid., p.25
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., p.27
\textsuperscript{108} ibid., p.27-28
\textsuperscript{109} ibid., p.27-28
\textsuperscript{110} ibid., p.29-30
\textsuperscript{111} ibid., p.30
The Handali theology and Vedant have a common basis. Not only the social inequality is taken for granted by the Handalis but also their attitude towards the state is ambivalent. Their idea of equality remains an illusory utopia. The vedant has no faith in social phenomena. It works in favour of status quo, social and political. The heterodox material does not indicate an individual choice only. In fact, the choice has been conditioned by the contemporary society.

The content of janam-sakhis has three salient parts; the image of Guru Nanak; its doctrinal basis and its efforts to give meaning to the genesis of the Sikh faith. A corpus of sakhis is constituted of traditional material. But the selection of material and their arrangement is intentional. The Bala tradition preaches its own doctrines. As the Handalis have no scripture it advocates the fetishes of spirituality. The basic doctrine of Handals is that of the degree of Yogic adeptness. Spiritual strength is serially arranged. There are four categories of the redeemed in Handali doctrines of spiritualism; Slok, Samip, Sarup and Sayij, Bjs.

The self-image of the Sikh, in the Adi-Sakhian is significant for the cohesion of the Sikh community. The Sikhs were beyond the evil influence of the kalyug. They feel that both the Hindus and Muslims were spiritually poor. Hence to be a perfect Hindu or Muslim one had to be a Sikh. This self-image gives a sense of pride to the community. By making the Sikhs conscious of the present, and articulating their relationship with the Mughal Empire the janam-sakhi helps them to organize politically.

In the characterization of Bala, he is portrayed as a wise, pious and equal to Guru Nanak... Bala is said to have declined the offer of guruship. He said that guruship should be entrusted to someone else. The Handalis appealed to the Jats to have Jat Gurus inventing a Jat utopia. The Bala janam-sakhi not only exalts Handal over Guru Gobind but also puts forward the Jat claims through the characterization of Bala. The further ascendance of Bala in Nanak Prakash is manifestation of the rise of Jats as ruling class. Bala’s decline of the offer of guruship provides them justification as a

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112 ibid., p.34-35((264) - J.S. Ahluwalia and N.R. Ray have failed to see the social relevance of the process of vedantization.
113 ibid., p.35
114 ibid., p.41
115 ibid., p.43
116 ibid., p.46
117 ibid., p.47-48
118 ibid., p.50
ruling class. The rise of Baba Buddha in Santokh Singh’s Guru Pratap Suraj and Kavi Sohan’s Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin points in the same direction.\textsuperscript{119}

As we know Janam-Sakhis do not discuss Sikh theology as a whole but expound key principles. They are: the nature of Guru Nanak’s guruship, the line of succession, and the idea of time.\textsuperscript{120} Guru Nanak’s guruship lies, in fact, in his relation with God, Gurus, Sikhs and Panth.\textsuperscript{121} Nanak Prakash as janam-sakhi is nothing but a vehicle of magic and superstitions, which speaks of the lack of religious dynamism during the period. Whereas the janam-sakhi takes up the doctrinal aspects the Gurbilas is primarily concerned with the socio-political urgency. The Maharaja Ranjit Singh reign, all these genres had formally collapsed, thus the Nanak Prakash is a double failure. It lacks all the dynamic elements of both the janam-sakhi and the gurbilas.\textsuperscript{122}

In the janam-sakhi genre, the shabads of Guru Nanak are used to ‘lend a semblance of realism or moral support to the narrative preceding it.\textsuperscript{123} The historical make-believe of janam-sakhi writers lie in the facts made from the shabad. Santokh Singh is more concerned about the fictional element of the bani. He is not aware of the institutional use of the janam-sakhi tradition.\textsuperscript{124} For him, ‘nam’ is supreme and should be remembered even at the cost of ignoring other works because it is ‘nam’ that liberates man from Yamas. In fact, nam is emphasized in a way that it amounts to departure from the basic tenets of Sikhism. Indirectly, it suggests that nam is necessary even if it is antithetical to any idea like nam, the concept of sewa is also discordant. According to him, sewa is the service of the Guru in the form of washing his clothes and feet. The major thrust is on providing comfort to the Guru. Even the social norms have been ignored at places. A Sikh sells his daughter in order to serve the Guru... Santokh Singh’s concept of sewa is, in fact, an aspect of his conception of Guru-Sikh relationship, visualized as one between master and slave of his time.\textsuperscript{125} This notion of key Sikh doctrines actually serves the communitarian notions, Also important is the literal meanings gives to these symbolic terms. No wonder Singh Sabha and Bhai Vir Singh eulogize Santokh Singh.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} ibid., p.50-1
\item \textsuperscript{120} S.S. HANS, Janam-Sakhis as a Performing Art, Journal of Sikh Studies, GNDUL, Vol.IX, No.1, p.16, p.59
\item \textsuperscript{121} ibid., p.59
\item \textsuperscript{122} ibid., p.65
\item \textsuperscript{123} ibid., p.70-71
\item \textsuperscript{124} ibid., p.70-71
\item \textsuperscript{125} ibid., p.78-79
\end{itemize}
Poet feels the need for communal harmony. But he provides its solution in the realm of religion.\footnote{ibid., p.91} Nanak Prakash is the only source that emphasizes the need to minimize the distinctiveness of the Sikh community in order to provide stability to Sikh rule. Fateh Singh Pratap Prabhakar by Ram Sukh Rao juxtaposes Guru Nanak and Lord Krishna, Har Mandir and Thakurdwara or Jwala Mukhi Temple, the Guru Granth and the Mahabharata\footnote{ibid., p.92. See Joginder Kaur, (ed.) Ram Sukh Rao's Sri Fateh Singh Pratap Prabhakar, Patiala, 1980, (Ph.D. Thesis), p.64.} Guru Nanak as chakravarti – Literalisation from Bhai Gurdas' connotative use of the term.\footnote{ibid., p.118} Panth gives way to sangat, gurdwaras, satnam – literalisation. Though the political power weakens the religious bond yet social inequity had to the legitimized by the political hierarchy.\footnote{ibid., p.118-9} Muslims are portrayed to have an inferior status.\footnote{ibid., p.121}

Social order consisted in four social entities, king, merchants, Brahmins, and the Sikhs.\footnote{ibid., p.123} Portraying Sikh rule as satyug in kalyug the Handali or Vedantic theological orientation shows the reflection of the contemporary society.\footnote{ibid., p.123-24}

Gyani Gyan Singh offers a number of openings into the mutual relations between popular and scholarly domains within popular culture in nineteenth century Punjab operating through his biography; his relations with other sects; and his later involvement in Singh Sabha movement and the attendant controversies.

During the period when the ecclesiastical social doctrines were being developed this spirit and type of Sikhism did not exist at all. The society of that day inhabited regions that had been recently cleared, the population was sparse, the death rate high; means of communications were primitive and life itself was insecure. The social system was intelligently organized on an individualistic basis in direct dependence upon nature, an association that was based partly upon brute force, quite rationalistically conceived, and upon the sentiments of inward reverence and loyalty. High culture and literature were limited to the smallest groups, popular thinking was dominated by phantasy and symbolism.\footnote{ibid., p.123-24} Both in the spiritual and temporal realm the social fabric was held together by habit and custom, by reverence and faith, agreement and loyalty, by means
of the customs involved in the holding of property in common, and in the absence of a money economy traffic in goods, is the natural basis for the existence of the individual group. The only sovereignty that existed was that of the popular cultural practices; there was no sovereignty of the state, or of the economic production, or of science or art.

The popular cultural universe and warlike spirit of feudalism manifested through feudal principle of honour constituted a foil for the ecclesiastical system impelling it to a vigorous assertion of its existence, while preventing it from degenerating into mere hypocrisy or sentimentality. Popular narratives ethicalised the feudal spirit—by consecrating its militarism to ideal ends—by transforming the idea of honour into an obligation towards God and man. Cultivating a virile loyalty towards an ethical human choice for instance remains a principal feature of qissas. Thus, a strong secular lay civilization, governed by the ideals of chivalry, came into being along with strong ecclesiastical institutions.

By and large the characteristic of traditional peasants in a collectivity, which both tends to inhibit permanent social differentiation within the peasantry and to facilitate, or even impose, communal action. This vague consciousness of 'peasantness' as a variant of subalternity, rests on the mutual recognition by peasants of the similarity of their relation to nature, to production to non-peasants. Ideally, humanity is the limit of this consciousness, and the political action that corresponds to it is the brief but vast millennial sweep or surge that is supposed to embrace the whole world. Nevertheless, such sweeps are necessarily as brief as they are numerical in scope, precisely because they are based on recognition of similarity or identity, rather than on the firmer base of a concrete system of economic or social interrelations. Modern politics belonged to the cities and the rich, and were either irrelevant or hostile to the politics and the defence of the old ways against the new implying the rout of traditionalism.

133 Troeltsch, E.: Medieval Christianity, in Roland Robertson (ed.): Sociology of Religion, Penguin, London, pp.115-126, p.120-21
134 ibid., p.121
135 ibid., p.124
137 ibid., p.150. "Thus it is evident that in the 1870s the Russian politics, to the grief of Narodniki, were still quite inaccessible both to them for more receptive to new ideas and methods. Economic changes, urbanization, migration and so on are obviously very largely responsible for such changes".
The spread of Namdhari, would have been impossible in the mid-nineteenth century Punjab without the antecedent millenarian excitement promising material heaven on earth after the imminent millennium. New sects were organized expressions of new ideologies projected as social visions. Although, these visions could not transcend the millenarian paradigm still, the eloquence, the power, of the simple rural folks who took part in these discussions is staggering.\textsuperscript{138}

Modern nationalist agitation captured the peasants rather late than social agitation had gripped the Punjabi elite during late nineteenth century. Almost mirroring the Russian case where 1905 revolution ushered in onset of modern political agitation thus outgrowing the Narodnik efforts, the “Pagri Sambhal Jatta” agitation pitchforked Punjab peasant onto modern institutional arena. Sardar Ajit Singh crafted a secular idiom for this purpose during his leading role in 1907-1908. There were many in succeeding movements who claim to be inspired by his oratory. Referring to Sikh lore and its history of struggle, he projected gurus as patriots eschewing any communitarian closure to their legacy. His effort was anti-thetical to ongoing discursive thrust of Singh sabha. Sardar Ajit Singh, to my mind, remains the architect of a sikhi that went on to become a bridge between kuka articulation on one hand and the Ghadarites on the other.

\textsuperscript{138} ibid., p.362