CHAPTER-II

ORIGINS OF TERRORISM

The sense of a new separate religious identity was sharpened in Punjab during the 20th century. This was partly due to the reformist movement and their irresponsible literature, and partly due to the British policies which were carefully formulated to divide various groups by using religion and caste differences.

The process of communalisation was accelerated when the commercialisation of agriculture and the new system of revenue collection was introduced, in which land became private property. It provided an opportunity to traditional Punjabi Hindu money-lenders to corner the limited benefits. The commercial classes among the Hindus got favourable leverage from this system and they started buying land in the rural areas.

The British introduced the land Alienation Act. Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh spear-headed a movement against the British in the first decade of the 20th century. The British Government accepted the demands of the peasant proprietors and isolated the urban Hindu money-lenders.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the emergence of reformist movements vitiated the harmonious group relations. The steady growth in the number of
educated Punjabis searching for employment and the tendency of Government servants to discriminate in favour of their own co-religionists aggravated the problem.

British writers projected Sikhs as having a separate identity. Constitutional developments such as the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and the Act of 1935, incorporating principles of separate electorates and communal reservations, intensified the communal problem.

The arrival of the Cripps Mission in March 1942, added another dimension to communal politics. Until now the Akali Dal did not put forward, or even conceive, the idea of Sikhs having separate State. But in response to the Cripps Mission it advocated an "Azad Punjab". This demand was raised to counter the claims of the protagonists of Pakistan.

In June 1943, Master Tara Singh declared that the boundaries of "Azad Punjab" should be fixed after taking into consideration the population, property, land revenue and historical tradition of each of the communities.1

In 1943 the Akali Dal condemned the "Mahasha" Press of Punjab, i.e., newspapers published by leading Arya Samajists, and a frontal attack was also launched against the Hindus in general and the Arya Samajists in particular.

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1943, p.1298.
by some of the Akali leaders. However, at a meeting (August 2, 1944) in Amritsar a resolution demanding a Sikh independent sovereign State was rejected as an impossible demand. Sardar Ujjal Singh and Giani Kartar Singh said explicitly that the "Azad Punjab" scheme was only a counter blast to Pakistan.

Demands increased in quantity and intensity from the mid-sixties onwards to such a level that it led to a crisis. The period coincided with the coming to an end of the generation of national leaders which represented a continuity with the traditions of the national movement for independence. A study indicates that in Punjab, Ministers chosen from among those who participated in the freedom movement declined from 82.3 per cent in 1947-51 to 7 per cent in 1976-80. The exit of Partap Singh Kairon as the Chief Minister of Punjab and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's death gave a booster to communal politics.

During the pre-1966 period in Punjab, the Plan outlays were directed to the creation of infrastructural facilities and new employment opportunities. Agriculture remained the mainstay of Punjab's economy. Landless

2. Ibid.

labourers and small and middle peasants, as also big landowners, benefited from the investment in infrastructures, e.g., canals, tubewells, power projects and roads. In terms of sectoral contribution in the pre-1966 period, agriculture contributed to the State Domestic product 54.01 per cent in 1960-61 and 50.81 per cent in 1965-66. The continued preponderance of the agricultural sector was enabled by the extension of the cropped area during this period. The cropped area had also increased as a result of various land legislations executed, such as abolition of intermediaries, protection of tenants, redistribution of land through imposition of ceilings and consolidation of holdings. The small and middle peasants were benefited by such legislation.

The Ministers from the agricultural sector were merely 29.04 per cent between 1946 and 1966, but their number rose to 51.4 per cent from 1967 to 1980. It is evident that while the landless labourers and small and middle peasants were mobilised in electoral politics, they counted for little in political decision making. In comparison, 57.6 per cent of the Ministers from 1947 to 1966 came from the legal profession and business and trading occupations. Between 1967-80 the Ministers from the aforementioned category dropped to 34 per cent.

4. Janak Dulari, Ibid.
The Government of India in December, 1953, appointed the States Re-organisation Commission. In 1954 the Akalis launched agitation for the Punjabi Suba. Processions were taken out by Akalis at Ludhiana (on the eve of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday) and at Amritsar (the Hola Mohalla procession) in December 1954, and March 1955, respectively. The continued and persistent agitations and protests worsened the situation. The morchas launched acquired communal colouring. Though the Akali leaders emphasised language as the basis for a division of the state; at the popular plane they tended to mix religion with language.

To counter the demand for a Punjabi Suba raised by the Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh, an agitation for Hindi was launched by the Arya Samaj. They advocated a "Maha Punjab" irrespective of language. Communal overtones in this were explicitly visible, though there was not much tension between the two communal groups at that time.

In May 1957, the "Save Hindi" agitation was launched. The regional formula which had delimited Punjab into two regions, i.e., Hindi-speaking and Punjabi-speaking regions, provided an impetus to the Hindi agitation. In regard to the use of language in the two regions, the formula provided:-

(i) The official language of each region will, at
the district level and below, be the respective regional language.

(ii) The State will be bi-lingual recognising both Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script) and Hindi (in Devnagri script) as the official languages of the State.

(iii) The Punjab Government will establish two separate departments for developing Punjabi and Hindi languages.

(iv) The general safeguards proposed for linguistic minorities will be applicable to the Punjab like other states.

(v) In accordance with and in furtherance of its policy to promote the growth of all regional languages, the Central Government will encourage the development of Punjabi language.

Most of the leaders of the Hindi agitation were of the view that there was an attempt to establish a Sikh theocratic State. The pro-Hindi movement was the political response to the danger of a "Sikh State".

The Akali leaders in the Congress functioned as an exclusive group in 1948 under Giani Kartar Singh. The contemporary Chief Minister of Punjab, Shri Gopi Chand Bhargava, became increasingly dependent on this group. Even Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, intervened in the S.G.P.C. elections. He entered into league with Gian Singh Rarewala
and Giani Kartar Singh to oust Master Tara Singh in the Presidential elections of the S.G.P.C. He managed to defeat Master Tara Singh on November 16, 1958.


The 1962 general election was projected by the Congress as a referendum on the Punjabi Suba issue. This challenge was accepted by the Akali Dal. Akalis won only 19 out of 154 seats and lost even in the Punjabi-speaking areas. Master Tara Singh was held responsible for this defeat. He was also accused of sacrilege for he had broken his fast unto death.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, both Hindu and Sikh communalists communalised the issue of the Punjabi language. The more orthodox and fundamentalists among the Hindus and the Sikhs perceived a threat to religion from modernising forces and utilised communal ideology and politics to neutralise the effect of such forces.

During the sixties, a section of the Akali Dal began to fight its opponents within the party by making an appeal to caste and increasingly looking for support from the Jat Sikhs, especially the big and middle farmers, who were the major beneficiaries of the Green Revolution. By the early 1970s, this section had become dominant.
The highest percentage of the votes secured by the Akali Dal was almost 31.43 in 1977. In other words, it has only once secured almost 50 per cent of the votes among Sikhs. More often, its vote has hovered between 30 to 45 per cent of the votes among Sikhs. Similarly, the Jan Sangh vote in the Punjab-Haryana-Kangra belt could reach only the figure of 9.5 per cent in 1962 and in linguistically reorganised Punjab 9.85 per cent in 1967, which represents almost 25 per cent of the votes among Hindus. This percentage declined to 4.97 of the total votes in 1972.

In a desperate effort to get a share in political power and finding that it was impossible to do so on the basis of their own communal vote alone, the Hindu and Sikh Communalists decided to share power once in 1967 and then again in 1969 when Akali Jan Sangh coalitions were formed. Both communal groups found that their communal political base was discontented with the mutual communal adjustments. While these communal coalitions contained the demands of the extremist sections in the short run, they strengthened the penetration and spread of communal ideology.

The secular parties, such as the Congress, have made their own contribution to the spread of communalism in Punjab. They have taken an opportunistic stand towards communalism and have even used elements of communal ideology - often in a disguised manner - for electoral and political
purposes. They have appeased the communalists and tried to accommodate them.

Twice, once in 1948 and then again in 1956, the Akalis were persuaded to dissolve the Akali Dal and merge with the Congress, with the Akali stalwarts joining the Congress. But the strategy failed. While those Akalis who joined the Congress seldom came out of it, very soon others, more extreme communalists emerged and re-formed the Akali Dal. The politics of appeasement and accommodation was followed by Giani Zail Singh.

Sardar Darbara Singh, the Congress (I) Chief Minister from 1980 to 1983 and a non-Akali from the beginning of his political career, made a serious effort to reverse this Congress policy and tried to confront both Hindu and Sikh communalism. He finally paid the price for trying to remain secular in a communal political atmosphere.

The Bhindranwale phenomenon:

The situation in the Punjab actually began to heat up while the Akali government under Parkash Singh Badal was in power (June 1977-February 1980). It began with a confrontation between the Nirankaris and followers of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. He had been named head of the Dam Damai Taksal. The Congress and the Akalis tried to exploit him by feeding his vanity. In due course, he became a formidable force and began to call the shots.
Jarnail Singh was the youngest of the seven sons of a peasant farmer, Joginder Singh, a man of very modest means. He was born in 1947 in the village of Rode (Moga district). The family was poor. Jarnail Singh was able to study only up to the primary class when, in 1965 he was handed over to Sant Gurbachan Singh Khalsa, who ran a religious centre in the village of Bhindran (hence Bhindranwale), known as the Dam Dami Taksaal. A year after joining the taksaal, Jarnail was married to Pritam Kaur. They had two sons.

Jarnail Singh made up for his brief schooling by an extensive study of the Sikh religious scriptures. He had an excellent memory and was soon able to quote texts when preaching sermons. On 3rd August 1977, Jarnail Singh was elected head of the Dam Dami Taksaal. With the succession came the prefix Sant (saint) and the suffix Bhindranwale, to give him the full title by which he was later known, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Within a short period of becoming head of the taksaal, Jarnail Singh came to be recognized as the most effective instrument for the renaissance of Sikh fundamentalism. He toured villages exhorting Sikh youth: not to clip their beards, abstain from smoking, drinking and taking drugs. Wherever, he went, he baptised young men and women. An integral part of his preaching was that all Sikhs should be shastradhari (weapon-bearers). Besides the
kirpan (sword), he enjoined his followers to carry modern fire-arms like rifles and pistols. He himself always carried a revolver in a holster with a belt charged with bullets.

The first to try and exploit his potential as a political force during the Janata regime was Giani Zail Singh, who as leader of the Congress in the Punjab thought that with Bhindranwale's support he might be able to oust the Akalis.

In November 1973, the SGPC passed a formal resolution declaring Nirankaris as renegades. On the Baisakhi of 1978, a procession of Sikhs including a large number of Bhindranwale's followers on their way to a Nirankari assemblage was fired upon. Thirteen were killed, including one Fauja Singh whose widow, Amarjit Kaur, later became one of the leaders of the extremists. The Nirankaris charged with murder were subsequently acquitted on the ground that they had acted in self-defence. Thereafter, there was no let up in violence against them and their sympathisers. The head of the sect, Baba Gurbachan Singh, was killed in Delhi on 24th April, 1980.

In 1981 things began to hot up. In February Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met the Akali leaders in Delhi and rejected their demands as unacceptable. Akalis began mounting their offensive. The following summer there was a wave of bomb attacks, arson and killings. Extremists of the
Dal Khalsa desecrated several Hindu temples by throwing heads of cows in them. In September, they hijacked an Indian Airlines plane. There was an orgy of senseless killings. One victim was Lala Jagat Narain, owner of the most widely read chain of Hindi papers in the Punjab, who was murdered on 9th September.

In August 1982 the Akalis declared a holy war (Dharm Yudh) against the government and appointed Sant Harchand Singh Longowal as the dictator to fill Punjab’s jails. By October, almost 30,000 Akalis were behind bars. Later, they stormed the Parliament. Four policemen were slain.

There was a succession of agitations: nahar roko, rail roko, rasta roko, kam roko and the slaying of innocent Nirankaris and Hindus.

The Akalis remained adamant and insisted that the Prime Minister first accept their demands or they would carry on their agitation to disturb the Asian Games in Delhi held in the year 1982. The government over-reacted by asking the police of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi to prevent such demonstrations. Every Sikh travelling by rail or road to Delhi was stopped, searched and interrogated. The Sikhs were humiliated, particularly while travelling through Haryana.

Bhindranwale usually referred to the Hindus in pejorative terminology as topian waley (cap-wearers),
dhotian waley monay (clean-shaven) or mahaashaas (word used for Arya Samajists). Nirankaris were invariably referred to as narakdharis — seekers of hell. Governmental authority was described as Hindu Samraj da Danda—the stick of Hindu imperialism. Indira Gandhi was sometimes referred to as Bibi Indra, Indra Bhain but mostly as Panditani or Panditaan di kuri — daughter of Brahmins. Darbara (without Singh) was always spoken of as Zakaria — the Mughal governor of the Punjab who tried to exterminate the Sikhs.

For both Zail Singh and Darbara, Bhindranwale quoted:

"Dharam Jaavey taan jaavey, Meri kursi kithey na jaavey" — If my faith goes, I don’t care, so long as I don’t lose my chair.

Bhindranwale not only preached hatred, he also preached violence. The one theme that ran through all his speeches was the need for Sikhs to be shastradhari. Did the sixth guru, Hargobind, ask Emperor Jehangir for arms licences? Did Guru Gobind Singh ask Emperor Aurangzeb for them?, he asked. He named police officers who were involved in kilings, described them as drinkers of Sikh blood and exhorted his audience to punish them by finishing off their families. For the Nirankaris, he lumped them with desecrators of the Granth Sahib who deserved to be sent to hell. The Nirankari Guru was warned that he may meet the same fate as his father.
Bhindranwale promised his audience the establishment of Khalsa Raj. He compared the present times with the worst days of Mughal tyranny. If a handful of Sikhs could then triumph over the Mughals, it should not be difficult for the Sikhs to oust the government of today. He exhorted villagers to arm themselves and be ready for action when the time for action came. He fabricated facts to suit himself, and no one dared to question him.

In July 1979, the Janata Party broke up at the Centre and Charan Singh took over as Prime Minister, with the active support of Mrs Indira Gandhi’s Congress (I) Party, which was then in the Opposition. A month later, they too parted company, and the Parliament was dissolved for new general elections to be held six months later. The outcome of the parliamentary elections (1980) went overwhelmingly in favour of Mrs Indira Gandhi’s Congress (I) party. With the Akalis badly rejected in these elections, this resulted in panic among the Akalis, as they feared that the Punjab legislature would be dissolved and fresh elections held, for which they were not prepared.

They tried seriously to walk into the Congress camp and sent word to Mrs Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi, however, refused the offer and dissolved the Assembly. In the fresh elections, her party won a victory and a Congress Ministry came into being, early in 1980, with S. Darbara Singh, as
Chief Minister. Baba Gurbachan Singh, was killed on 24 April 1980, by a Sikh, close to Sant Bhindranwale.

The suspicion was strong that Bhindranwale had a hand in the murder of Lala Jagat Narain.

When the Punjab Chief Minister sent the police at Chowk Mehta to arrest him, he sent word that he would offer himself for arrest, voluntarily, on Sept. 20, after he had addressed a religious congregation. The police, fearing violence, had no choice but to agree.

Sant Harchand Singh of Village Longowal (in Sangrur district), a Sikh preacher, once an Akali MLA, was now the President of the Akali Dal. He influenced the Sikh masses, as no one else at that point of time could. The Akalis of every faction stood by him, though they quarrelled often enough among themselves, and some of them, like G.S.Tohra, conspired against his authority. Tohra often-times played the Bhindranwale card against him.

Mrs Gandhi sent various emissaries to the Akalis saying , she was not averse to agreeing to almost all of their religious demands. As for Chandigarh Mrs Gandhi stood by her award of 1970. Take Chandigarh and in compensation, hand over Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana. On May 24, a "Nehar Roko" (Stop the canal) agitation was launched, under the leadership of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal.

After this a "Rasta Roko" (Stop Traffic) agitation
was launched, followed by "Rail Roko" (Stop the trains) agitation. On August 4, 1984, the Morcha "dictator", Longowal, announced a "Dharm Yudh" (or Holy war) against the Government. Thousands of Akalis courted arrest. The jails were overflowing with the prisoners, with the result that some of them had to be "jailed in the open". The "Morcha" was by and large peaceful. Twice, the Indian Airlines planes were hijacked on Aug. 4 and Aug. 20, 1982. In both attempts, the hijackers were not allowed to land at Lahore and had to fly back to Amritsar. In the first case, the lone hijacker was arrested and, in the other case, killed by the police. The atmosphere became very surcharged. At a railway crossing (Sept.11), a bus carrying Akali prisoners collided with a train and 34 of them were crushed to death. The Akalis charged the Government with their deliberate murder, and feelings of the masses were roused to a high pitch. The Akalis dead were termed "martyrs" and a Gurudwara called "Takkar Sahib" (The Collision Sahib Gurudwara) was constructed in their memory on the spot where they fell.

At the time Sant Longowal launched the "Dharm-Yudh" (Holy war), Bhindranwale was conducting his own morcha against the arrest of Bhai Amrik Singh, President of the All India Sikh Students' Federation and son of his predecessor. He, however, came to Amritsar and joined the Akali morcha staying at the Golden Temple Rest House (Sarai Guru Ram Das). Soon after, the Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, was
attacked with hand grenades, though he escaped unhurt, but 18 others, including the Education Minister, received injuries. The bomb blasts and explosions now increased in frequency, notably at Amritsar, Jullunder, Ludhiana and various other towns, where the Hindus were in a majority.

All the killer-gangs like Dal Khalsa, Bhindranwale Tigers, the Dashmesh Regiment, the A.I. Sikh Students' Federation, Khalistan Commando Force and the National Council of Khalistan - all were wedded to the Slogan of Khalistan. They owed allegiance to Bhidranwale, except for Babbar Khalsa and the Akali Youth Federation, which protected Sant Longowal. The National Council of Khalistan was based in Great Britain with Jagjit Singh Chauhan as its self-proclaimed President.

The speeches made by Bhindranwale and his interviews to the press revealed his mind clearly. "A Sikh without arms is naked, a lamb led to slaughter. Buy motorcycles, guns and reply the traitors in the same coin". 5

"The Sikhs are a separate nation. They must have a special status in the Union, like Jammu & Kashmir". 6

"I ask them - the British Sikhs - to join the fight for our independence as a separate nation". 7, Bhindranwale said.

6. The Week, (March 27 to April 2, 1984).
In a recorded speech, he told a select gathering in the Golden Temple complex, "It comes to 35, not even 100. Divide 55 crores, then each Sikh gets only 35 Hindus (to kill), and not even 36th. How do you say you are weak?".

Sant Harchand Singh had become scared of Bhindranwale so much that the two did not meet for six months and enlisted the support of the Babbar Khalsa to protect him.

Bhindranwale occupied the Akal Takht on December 15, 1983. The Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Giani Kirpal Singh, protested but he was overruled by Tohra. Fights had started between the Babbar Khalsa and Bhindranwale's men at the Sarai, and this, added Tohra, had left no choice for Bhindranwale but to seek sanctuary at the Akal Takht.

Such was the terror of Bhidranwale that no one even in the police or the Judiciary dared cross his path. Any act of injustice by these agencies, if reported to Bhindranwale, got redressed within 24 hours, after he telephoned or sent word through a special messenger to do the job, as he dictated.

The "Kar Seva" (Community works) or "Langar" (Community Kitchen) trucks, which brought provisions for the Temple smuggled sophisticated arms from within the country as well as Pakistan into the Temple complex, including light machine-guns, sten guns, mortars, rifles, revolvers and pistols, anti-tank weapons, mines, explosives and a grenade-
manufacturing plant. Every killer-gang was flush with funds and those who did the "job" were handsomely rewarded. Several rapes were ascribed to them, and also that they settled their long-standing private and family feuds in the process.

Mrs Gandhi kept the doors of negotiations open. Many meetings--both secret and open--were held with the Akali leadership, in 1981-82, but more in 1983 and particularly in April-May, 1984. Most of the religious demands were unilaterally accepted by her, going personally to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, in New Delhi in Feb. 1983 and making an announcement.

Punjab is the richest State in India with highest per capita income. The Punjab economy recorded a very high rate of growth during the sixties. Increased incomes in agriculture led to a demand for investment and consumption and many small scale industries came up as a consequence. Transport, road network and markets were also developed as deliberate policy measures.

But green revolution reached its plateau by mid-seventies and was showing downward trends, thus adding to the frustration of even rich farmers, resulting from their rising expectations of mid sixties and early seventies. The green revolution has had its impact on rural socio-economic scene. It resulted in uneven development not only in
different regions of the State but also for the population of Punjab as a whole. This unevenness resulted in the growing pauperization of marginal and poor peasants, thus adding to the army of the landless who have no employment avenues in urban areas because there is insufficient industrial development. The number of the landless doubled and those of the marginal peasants increased three times in ten years.

In caste terms, pitched against the Jat capitalist farmers are the scheduled castes, particularly the scheduled caste Sikhs (known as Mazhabs in Punjab), who constitute 24 per cent of total population and other low caste artisans like Lohar Sikhs (blacksmiths), Carpenter Sikhs (Ramgarhias), Rai Sikhs, Labana Sikhs, Cheema Sikhs, etc.

Even the rich farmers and medium peasants were undergoing a phase of intense frustration. Caught in the nexus of capitalist market economy, they found the terms of trade turned against them. Not only the prices of all inputs shot up, but there were also shortages in supply. The shortage of electricity affected adversely the availability of water. On the other hand, when they produced a bumper crop, there were no buyers as it happened in the case of potatoes in 1979. Worst of all, the heavy unseasonal rains in the period March-May caused tremendous damage to the wheat crop in 1982 and 1983 and despite the support price announced by the government, the peasantry
could not get its due and felt more frustrated. Besides other factors, the year long Akali agitation was also linked with this frustration of rich farmers and middle pesantry.

The frustration led to the agitation in August, 1982 called "Dharm Yudh" (holy war) and "Morcha" which during two years (1982-84) passed through many phases. During this agitation, the Akali Dal recruited an army of one lakh self-sacrificing Sikhs, mostly the youth. The members of this squad were ready to "do" anything or "die" at the instruction of the Akali Dal Chief. The services of some of retired military personnel were also procured to train these volunteers.

There was bitter infighting between different factions within the Akali Dal, particularly the factions led by Badal, Tohra, Talwandi, Barnala and Sukhjinder. Badal faction is more well-knit than others. There are moderates, there are extremists, there are communalists and there are also progressives within the Akali Dal. This, to a great extent, explains Akalis' contradictory political stands at different times.

The richest landlord lobby from the richest region (Malwa) controls the Akali Dal and SGPC. Actually, the Badal faction, more than any one else in the Akali Dal,
articulates the economic aspirations of rich farmers. However, Badal was side-tracked and was marginalised.

Extremism and fundamentalism grew and prospered under the shadow of Akali agitation. The agitation provided the terrorists a favourable atmosphere to carry out their activities and Akalis also needed the support of these elements to strengthen their agitation. That is why the fundamentalist Sant Bhindranwale was also involved in this agitation. Akalis made Bhindranwale an active partner in their morcha since August, 1982. Though the then Akali Dal Chief Sant Longowal condemned "senseless killings" in Punjab, yet Akali Dal's attitude towards extremist and terrorist acts was lukewarm. They did not unequivocally denounce the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane in September 1981 (Bhindranwale praised this heroic act of Sikh fighters). They disassociated themselves with Khalistani activities but Balbir Singh Sandhu, the Secretary General of so-called Republic of Khalistan stayed at Nanak-Niwas in Golden Temple.

For every action of Akalis, there was a communal Hindu reaction. In reaction to Longowal and Akali Dal's recruitment of an army of one lakh self-sacrificing Sikhs, the Hindu communal bodies - Hindu Sangathan and Hindu Suraksha Samiti recruited their own volunteers.
Senseless killings of innocent people by the extremists also led to killings by the police. For example, some twenty Akali volunteers were killed in the "rasta-roko andolan" and more or less, a similar number of Bhindranwale's supporters lost their lives at the time of his arrest at Mehta Chowk. There were deaths in fake police encounters or in police custody itself.

Modernisation and its impact on the Sikh youth alarmed the Sikh fundamentalists and extremists. They feared that Sikh religion will become a branch of Hinduism in the near future. The Sikh fundamentalists whipped up this fear in the minds of common Sikh masses. To maintain the purity of Sikh religion, the fundamentalists made an all out effort, including the use of violence. This, they think is the only way of saving Sikhism from its being absorbed in Hinduism. This explains the appeal and popularity of late Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his crusade against the Nirankaris.

Some of Sikh settlers abroad indulge in secessionist activities. The headquarters of the so-called Khalistan President, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the publication of map, currency, stamps, passports of Khalistan, all printed from a foreign country (Canada), the propagation of "Sikhs are a nation" theory by Ganga Singh Dhillon (a Washington based businessman), and his plea for observer's
status for Sikhs at the UN on PLO pattern, the piping of money, material and weapons into Punjab through the clandestine sources, running away of extremists to foreign countries after killing innocent people show the strength of the impact of the foreign Sikhs on Terrorism in Punjab.

The press has also contributed in aggravating the situation. The urban Sikhs own the Punjabi press, for example, the daily Akali Patrika, Ajit and other news magazines like Sant Sipahi. They tried to mobilize the Sikh masses by giving highly inflammatory and communal news coverage. They call the Hindu press as that of "Lalas" or "Mahashayyas" with all derision. On the other hand, the urban Hindus own the Hindi press. The Hind Samachar group of newspapers (Punjab Kesari, Hind Samachar, Jag Bani, etc.) owned by late Lala Jagat Narain and the Veer Pratap of Virendra, both Arya Samajist leaders, do not lag behind the Sikh communalists and give extremely communal news coverage. Lala Jagat Narain was murdered, allegedly by Sikh extremists for his crusade against the Dal-Khalsa, Khalistan and Bhindranwale's anti-Nirankari campaign. Ramesh Chander, the son of Lala Jagat Narain was also murdered. An attempt was made to assassinate Virendra, editor of the Veer Pratap through a parcel bomb in which two ordinary employees of the press lost their lives.
Master Tara Singh used to say that a Sikh can either be a "ruler" or "rebel". So as and when Akalis have been out of power, they have always launched "morchas" or "Dharm Yudh". The Panth is always in danger when Akalis are out of power.

The number of landless farm wage-workers and of the poor peasants increased two-threefold in the last twenty years. The organised manufacturing sector and the high income part of the tertiary sector failed to promote increasing employment because of its capital intensive nature and low growth rate. The disproportional growth of the various sectors of the State economy induced a heavy influx of male labour force into agriculture. Instead of reducing unemployment, Green Revolution had the effect of increasing urban unemployment.

Since long, Punjab has been a land of outmigration to army, to other regions of India and outside to distant countries in the West and the East. The phenomenon of outmigration has stagnated, if not declined.

The industrial sector of the State is not producing vital requirements of its agricultural sector. It has failed to meet the demand for tractors and chemical fertilisers for the farm sector. There is only one tractor factory in the State, the Punjab Tractors Limited, producing
Swaraj tractors, which began its production in 1974. Even now, most of the tractors being used in Punjab (1,10,000 in 1980-81) come from outside the State. Similarly, in spite of the tremendous increase in the consumption of the chemical fertilisers (from 5,000 to 8,12,000 nutrients tonnes of NPK from 1960-61 to 1981-82) for a major part, Punjab has to depend on outside supply.

It is the private sector which dominates the industrial structure of the Punjab economy with only a marginal role for the public sector. In 1980s, out of all the workers employed in (registered and unregistered) industries, only 5.2 per cent were employed in the public sector units in the State. Out of only the registered units, the public sector accounted for 2.5 per cent of such units and for 10.9 per cent of the workers employed. In contrast to it, in the Indian economy, the public sector accounted for 24.4 per cent of the workers employed in industry.

Till 1975, the share of Punjab in Central investment, among all the States in non-departmental undertakings, was only about one per cent. It was only at the end of March 1979, with the commissioning of fertiliser plant at Bhatinda, that in such Central investment (gross block) Punjab's share increased to 2.2 per cent of the total. Therefore, to the extent, the central investment is
an important source of industrial investment in India, the Punjab State was deprived of its due share.

The Akali Dal revolves around the concept that Sikhs constitute a separate political entity. According to this, Sikhism is not a religion like other religions. By religion others understand a relationship between the individual and God, whereas the Sikh religion concerns itself with the whole activity of man. Master Tara Singh argued that “there is not the least doubt that the Sikh religion can live only as long as the Panth exits as an organised entity.”

The traditional and religious network helped the militant leader, Sant Bhindranwale, in widening the mass base of his protest. He provided leadership to the various sections of the Sikhs - ranging from retired high ranking government and army officers to poor rootless ruralites who were generally outside the power structure of the established Akali leadership. For the ideologically-oriented urban middle classes, Bhindranwale acted as a bridge between them and the tradition-oriented rural masses, thus providing a vision of Sikh solidarity.

The Jat Sikhs, the largest social group in the State, till the late 1960s was able to combine economic well-being with status and power in the rural society. This

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group was a major partner in political power in the ruling Congress at the State level till 1960s. In the 1980 Assembly elections, the ruling Congress party lost the support of a large majority of Jat Sikhs. By the early 1980s, the major segments among the Jat Sikhs were almost alienated from the ruling Congress regime in the State. The prevailing political scenario provided a fertile ground for the launching of Terrorism.

In the words of Professor Paul Brass:

The Punjab crisis was precipitated by a religious conflict between militant orthodox and fundamentalist Sikh groups and a heterodox Sikh-Hindu sect. Sikh fundamentalist appeals were then used by both the Congress to divide the Akalis and by Akali factions in their power struggles for political dominance against each other. The broader political context of these conflicts was the continuing struggle for power between political groups in the Punjab state, which was in turn integrated into the struggle for power in the country as a whole. The latter struggle had intensified and become increasingly bitter after the imposition of the Emergency regime of Mrs Gandhi in 1975, its temporary replacement by a non-Congress coalition between 1977 and 1978, and the return of Mrs Gandhi and the Congress(I) to power in 1980. The subordination by the ruling Congress of local political considerations to national ones also involved a lessened sensitivity to local ethnic, regional, and religious sentiments and, in the case of Punjab, a willingness to exploit religious fundamentalist appeals without regard for the broader consequences.

We may conclude with Harinder Baweja who says:

The early 1980s were heady days for the militants. 'Sant' Bhindranwale was in command and he had innumerable number of 'boys' at his beck and call, all of whom considered themselves blessed if they were given any task to perform, even if it meant fetching a glass of water for the 'Sant'. The strength and morale of the militants increased with every fresh consignment of arms that was smuggled into the Golden Temple, just as the distance between Delhi and Amritsar and the Hindus and Sikhs widened with every action of the armed terrorists.

Young boys, aged 13 and 14, took pride in coming to the Temple and just catching a glimpse of Bhindranwale, who soon came to be seen as the eleventh guru of the Sikhs. Ironically, the community was not even under any self-perceived threat at the time that Bhindranwale was calling the shots. He was discovered by Zail Singh, encouraged by Sanjay Gandhi and used by Indira Gandhi in the hope that he would curtail the growing political clout of the Akalis. But he and the Centre together sowed the seeds of secessionism, of a kind that have, even today, never ceased to multiply.