Chapter - 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND : FORMATION OF THE PUNJABI SUBA

The concept of the Sikh State gathered strength as the Muslim demand for Pakistan grew. In 1940, Lahore Resolution, Jinnah proposed the Two-Nation Theory. The demand for the Sikh State was also very similar to that and was proposed on similar grounds. In the critical years before the Transfer of Power by the British, the Sikh leaders allowed themselves to be guided by the leaders of the Indian National Congress, instead of boldly demanding a Sovereign Sikh State.

As the Partition of India drew nearer, the Sikh leaders found themselves on the horns of dilemma, not knowing whether to throw their lot with India or with Pakistan. M.A. Jinnah approached the Sikhs and promised them that if they opted for Pakistan, then he would guarantee them protection of life, property, freedom to practice their religion and the privileges they had enjoyed under British Rule.¹

The leaders of the Indian National Congress on the other hand also assured the Sikhs that they should look upon India as their home. In March 1931, Mahatma Gandhi while addressing the Sikhs at Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Delhi said, ‘Sikh friends have no reason to fear

¹ Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People, Chapter XXVIII, ‘Jinnah met the Maharajah of Patiala and his Prime Minister, H.S.Malik, I.C.S., in the house of Malik’s elder brother, Sir. T.S.Malik in New Delhi.
that the Congress party will betray them. For the moment it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover the Sikhs are a great people. They know how to safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms if it should come to that.  

Jawahar Lal Nehru, speaking at the Congress Committee meeting at Calcutta in July 1946, went a step further in reassuring the Sikhs, “The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the north wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom.”  

With all the reassurances, Sikh leaders decided to pledge their support with the Hindus and went with India. The Partition of India created a new situation. Sikh agricultural migration from West Pakistan was halted about the Ghaggar river, as a result of which in some tehsils of the Eastern Punjab and in the Princely States, the Sikhs came to form a majority of the population.  

The scramble for land and urban property left by Muslim evacuees created ill-will between the Sikh agricultural population from West Punjab and Hindu refugees as well as the Hindus of Eastern and Southern Punjab districts (Haryana) who had taken possession of the lands left by Muslims. Sikh agriculturist class, Sikh trading classes of the west Punjab were severely hit by the administrative delays in

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2 Young India, 16 March, 1931.  
3 The Statesman, 7 July, 1946.  
4 Census of India, 1951.
granting loans and of the prevalent hatred among their own brethren. They began asking, “The Muslims got Pakistan, the Hindus got Hindustan; but what did we Sikhs get out of it?” They began to doubt their decision of having thrown in their support with India.

On 15 July 1948, Sardar Patel referred to the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) as ‘a Sikh Homeland’ when he inaugurated the new State. The former Chief of Patiala, Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, was made the Governor (Rajpramukh) for life, and the former chief of Kapurthala was made the Deputy Governor (Up-Rajpramukh) for life. A government was installed in August 1948, with a Sikh aristocrat, Gian Singh Rarewala as the Chief Minister. All that was required was to attach the Sikh majority districts of East Punjab to PEPSU and declare it as the Sikh State.

The process of the linguistic reorganization of States in India was far more prolonged and divisive ………..and raised more fundamental questions of Centre-State relations.5 The Indian National Congress had committed itself to the principle of linguistic reorganization of the provinces before Independence. But after Independence, its attitude to the subject underwent a change, especially with regard to Punjab and the Sikhs. The Constituent Assembly appointed a commission under Justice Dar to report on the

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feasibility of redrawing the State boundaries but excluded Punjab from its terms of reference.

The Commission pronounced against any change and despite the limitation prescribed opined as follows: “The formation of linguistic provinces is sure to give rise to a demand for the separation of linguistic groups elsewhere. Claims have already been made by the Sikhs, Jats and others and these demands will in course of time be intensified and become live issues if once the formation of linguistic provinces is decided upon.”

Another Committee called the J.V.P. Committee, consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramaya was set up by the Constituent Assembly to review the Dar Commission’s findings. The Committee endorsed the Dar Commission’s recommendations and reported that, “We are clearly of the opinion that no question of rectification of the boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment whatever the merits of such a proposal might be.” This report was adopted by the Congress Working Committee in April 1949. This decision of the Congress Working Committee was considered to be clear discrimination against the Punjabi speaking population, particularly the Sikhs.

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6 Dar Commission, Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, Government Of India Press, Delhi, 1948, p. 120.
In March 1953, the democratically elected United Front Ministry under Gian Singh Rarewala in PEPSU was usurped to make way for the Congress ministry led by Raghubir Singh and then Brish Bhan. The Akalis felt disillusioned and in the late 1950's began asking for the merger of PEPSU with Punjabi speaking areas of Punjab to form a consolidated state based upon language.

In Punjab, the issue of language was communalized in the 19th Century, but it became acute in the 20th century. In October 1949, to solve the language tangle, ‘Sachar Formula’ was proposed by Chief Minister Bhim Sen Sachar with the help of Giani Kartar Singh. The ‘Sachar Formula’ proposed the creation of a zone in which Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was to be the medium of instruction up to the matriculation and in that zone Hindi in Devnagri script was to be taught in the last year of primary school. The districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Ropar and Kharar tehsils of the Ambala district and some portions of Hissar district lying north of Ghaggar constituted the Punjabi zone and South of Ghaggar and other districts of Punjab formed the Hindi zone where the position of Punjabi and Hindi were reversed. Even this was not acceptable to Arya Samajists supported by Jan Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha. Some leaders of the Arya Samaj waited upon the Chief Minister before the Formula was adopted and under their pressure, a change was made, giving option to every parent to declare or in other

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words, to choose the mother tongue for their ward. The mother tongue is the language of the territory in which the child is born and not a matter of choice for anyone. This irrational concession to communalism resulted in an unfortunate communal division. It was in these circumstances, that Master Tara Singh, for the first time, stated on the 10 October 1949 that, “The Sikhs have a culture different from the Hindus inasmuch as he counted the culture of the Sikhs to be Gurmukhi culture and as the language of the Sikhs was different, as the Hindus professed it to be, so too their traditions and histories were different, their heroes were different, their social order was different then there was no reason why they should not claim the right of self-determination for themselves.”

All Sikh students in government schools opted for Punjabi from the very beginning and Hindus, opted for Hindi.

In May 1950, the Akali Dal working committee passed a resolution in favour of a State on the basis of Punjabi language, which was endorsed by the Panthic convention. In response to this, the Arya Samajists and their sympathizers, under communal influence, returned Hindi as their mother tongue in the language column of the Census of 1951, to weaken the claim of Akali Dal. Riots broke out on this question and the Union Government decided that the language column in the census form be left blank. Tension continued until

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representatives of the Akalis and the Chief Khalsa Diwan were called to Delhi by Prime Minister Nehru for discussions.

The first step in the direction of the linguistic reorganization of provinces occurred in the aftermath of a major movement in the Andhra region of the old Madras Province. Towards the end of 1952, Potti Sriramulu died on fast for the creation of Andhra Pradesh; four days later the Prime Minister announced the separation of Andhra from Madras as a Telegu-speaking State.

In December 1953, the Government of India announced the formation of States Reorganization Commission, which kindled hopes in Punjab. The Akalis presented their case, strictly on the basis of language using the Census figures of pre-1947 period. The Jan Sanghites and Arya Samajists presented their case for 'Maha-Punjab' with the merger of PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and ever few districts of Uttar Pradesh, with the Punjab on economic, administrative, cultural, educational and patriotic arguments. In the report submitted by the States Reorganization Commission on 30 September 1955, the criterion of a state based upon a language was set aside and recommended the merger of Himachal Pradesh, PEPSU and Punjab to form a new state on other grounds.\textsuperscript{10} Thus, the Commission confused the language issue with the issue of scripts, on which ‘sentiment was arrayed against sentiment.’\textsuperscript{11} The Commission rejected the case for a


Punjabi speaking State on the ground that a “minimum measure of agreement for making a change” in the existing set-up did not exist.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, it played in the hands of Hindus of the Punjabi speaking zone.

The States Reorganization Commission’s Report was published in October 1955 and was rejected by the Akalis. Master Tara Singh denounced the report as a ‘decree of Sikh annihilation’.\textsuperscript{13} He was justified when he said that if there had been no Sikhs, Punjabi would have been given a State of its own like the other major languages recognised by the Indian Constitution; the refusal to concede a linguistic State of Punjab was therefore tantamount to discrimination against the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh called a convention of all parties and organisations of the Sikhs for the 16 October 1955 at Amritsar. It was underlined at the convention that the most democratic demand of the Sikhs have not been met and the Commission instead of giving Sikhs relief has obliterated PEPSU, which according to Patel was the ‘Homeland’ of the Sikhs.

As resolved at the convention, Master Tara Singh led a deputation comprising himself as President of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Bhai Jodh Singh as representative of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Gian Singh Rarewala, Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh to meet Prime Minister, Nehru on 24 October 1955. The meeting was also attended by Maulana Azad and Pandit G.B. Pant. The meeting did not


\textsuperscript{13} The Spokesman, 19 October, 1955.
achieve desired results. The matter however approached climax when All India Congress Session was organised at Amritsar at the end of December 1955. The Shiromani Akali Dal also decided to hold their conference in Amritsar at the same time and so did the ‘Maha Punjab’ protagonists of Arya Samaj. The Akali procession was the most historic and the most impressive. Principal Teja Singh compared the Akali procession with that of Xerves and Alexander’s. Brecher writes that the Akali procession impressed Nehru, “Nehru was sympathetic to Sikh fears but was reported by friends to be under strong pressure from communal minded Hindu Congressmen who were not prepared to place the Punjabi Hindus in an inferior political position.”

After much protests and deliberations ‘Regional Formula’ was evolved by the efforts of Hukam Singh, Akalis and Congressmen. According to the ‘Regional Formula’, only PEPSU was to be merged with the Punjab and no other areas of Himachal Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh were to be included. As a result, the State was demarcated into two parts, Punjabi region and Hindi region. “The new State will be bi-lingual, recognising both Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script) and Hindi (in Devanagri script) as the official languages of the State.” Thus, Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was to be the official language of the Punjabi zone and vice versa. On the political side, a Regional Committee was to be formed for each zone with power to legislate on

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14 important subjects. This gave a considerable amount of legislative autonomy. On the basis of the understanding reached between the Akalis and Congress leaders upon the 'Regional Formula', the new Punjab State came into being on 1 November 1956.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, the Government at Centre has moved in a deceptive manner and Akali leaders were hoodwinked into believing that the merger of PEPSU into the Punjab was a step towards the establishment of the Punjabi Suba. The Akalis joined the Congress Party en masse. It dawned upon them later on that under the ‘Regional Formula’, the merger of PEPSU into the Punjab has created a situation where the Hindus would form a permanent majority of 65 percent against the Sikhs 35 percent, thus diluting the Sikh majority in the PEPSU, which had become the nucleus of Sikh homeland.

Apart from this, the chief supporters of Master Tara Singh in his demand for Punjabi Suba, namely Giani Kartar Singh, Gian Singh Rarewala, had passed on to the Congress. The suspicion about the nature of the deal with the Centre was confirmed over ‘Regional Formula’s acceptance, when 9 days after the acceptance of the Regional Formula by the General Body of the Akali Dal, the Prime Minister, Nehru proposed the name of Hukam Singh as Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, which proposal was seconded by the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. There was a general impression

\textsuperscript{16} Ajit Singh Sarhadi,\textit{Punjabi Suba}, pp.270-271
that he had been rewarded for whittling down the demand for Punjabi Suba.\textsuperscript{17}

Moreover the application of the Regional Formula depended upon the Chief Minister, Partap Singh Kairon. The Congress was fortunate in finding in Partap Singh Kairon a Chief Minister of the Punjab, who was at that time passionately opposed to the Akalis and the Punjabi Suba demand.

Following The State Reorganization Act of 1956, the boundaries of the Southern States were reorganized in closer conformity with traditional linguistic regions. The bifurcation of Bombay province into the present States of Gujarat and Maharashtra was done in 1960. The issue of the cosmopolitan city of Bombay, whether it should go to Maharashtra or Gujarat was also settled with Bombay being part of Maharashtra and by not declaring it as common Capital or a Union Territory.

In 1956 Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections, the Congress won 120 seats in a House of 164.\textsuperscript{18} There were 58 Sikh legislators in the Congress Party and about 50 of them represented the Punjabi Region. Partap Singh Kairon was elected as a leader of the Congress Assembly Party on 3 April 1957 and formed the Congress ministry, taking two erstwhile Akalis, Gian Singh Rarewala and Giani Kartar Singh in his Cabinet. However, the problem for Kairon during his tenure as Chief

\textsuperscript{17} Ajit Singh Sarhadi, \textit{Punjabi Suba}, pp.272-273.
Minister didn’t come from the Akali Dal but came from another quarter.¹⁹

During the tenure of Partap Singh Kairon as Chief Minister, the Arya Samajists, who had earlier refused to implement the ‘Sachar Formula’ in their schools, opposed the Regional Formula. They started a ‘save hindi’ movement, under the Hindi Raksha Samiti, in opposition to Punjabi. Under pressure, Chief Minister Partap Singh Kairon conceded some concessions to Hindi, thus the Regional Formula was not implemented in letter and spirit as conceived by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and as agreed by Akalis. The Akalis had accepted the Regional Formula but as it was not properly implemented with the result that the agitation for Punjabi Suba started again.

Partap Singh Kairon made a successful move to dislodge Master Tara Singh from the Presidentship of the S.G.P.C. with the help of Giani Kartar Singh on 16 November 1958, when Master Tara Singh lost the presidentship by 77 votes to 74 votes. On 19 January 1960, Master Tara Singh overcame the combined strength of the Congress, Communists and other anti-Suba elements in the S.G.P.C. elections by capturing 132 out of 139 seats, thus proving that the majority of Sikhs supported the Punjabi Suba.

On 24 January 1960, 132 members of the S.G.P.C. elected on the Akali Dal ticket, headed by Master Tara Singh, took the pledge at

the Akal Takht to sacrifice their all (*Tan, Man, Dhan*), at the behest of the Shiromani Akali Dal for the achievement of Punjabi Suba.20

When the meetings of Master Tara Singh with Jawahar Lal Nehru in January 1961 and of Sant Fateh Singh with Nehru in February and May 1961 failed to produce any conclusive results, Master Tara Singh started his fast on 15 August 1961 and gave up his fast on the 1 October 1961 on promise of Hardit Singh Malik, an emissary of Prime Minister that settlement would be made with the Akalis, which carried nothing concrete and was only done looking at the impending election. For this act of Master Tara Singh, he was not forgiven by the Sikh Panth.

In the elections of 1962, the Congress won 90 seats of 154 and Kairon became Chief Minister for the second term.21 Akalis won 19 seats and got 12.6 percent of the total votes polled.22 About 72 percent of the Sikh voters supported the Akali candidates thus showing the alienation from Congress. The defeat of the Akalis in 1962 elections sharpened the divisions in the ranks of Akali Dal. In July 1962, it was resolved by the Sikhs to take up the cause of the Punjabi province entirely under the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh.

On 18 January 1965, Sant Fateh Singh group won 90 seats and Master Tara Singh's group got 45 seats in the SGPC elections, thus giving leadership and supremacy to Sant Fateh. After this defeat,

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Master Tara Singh for the first time openly espoused the demand for an autonomous state for the Sikhs ‘….a space in the sun of free India, wherein they can breathe the air of freedom…….’ It was partly because of the continuous backtracking of the Congress and mainly to redeem his credibility among the Sikh masses.

Sant Fateh Singh also resolved that the postponement of their legitimate demand for a Punjabi province by the Centre was clearly discriminatory and he met the new Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri on 7-8 August 1965 in this regard. On 16 August 1965, Sant Fateh Singh declared that he would go on fast on 10 September for the cause of Punjabi province but had to postpone it because of Indo-Pak war in September 1965. After the conclusion of the war, the Union Home Minister appointed a Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba under Mr. Hukam Singh, Speaker, Lok Sabha to examine all the issues pertaining to Punjab.

The Prime Minister of India, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri died at Tashkent on 11 January 1966, where he had gone to sign the Tashkent Agreement with Pakistan. With the untimely demise of Shri Shastri, Indira Gandhi was elevated to the position of Prime Minister on 20 January 1966.

On 19 February 1966, The Punjab Government and Congress leaders met the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Congress president Mr. K. Kamaraj. The Punjab Chief Minister Mr. Ram Kishan

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met Mrs. Indira Gandhi to discuss about the issue of Punjabi Suba. Mr. Rizk Ram, Punjab Irrigation Minister met Mr. K. Kamaraj and impressed upon him the need for economic development of Haryana. Giani Zail Singh, former Punjab minister accompanied by Ranbir Singh, Minister and Mr. Sultan Singh MLA both from Haryana, met Mrs. Indira Gandhi and suggested a compromise proposal.

On 22 February 1966, the Cabinet sub-committee on Punjabi Suba was reconstituted with Mr. G.L. Nanda, Mr. Y.B. Chavan and Mr. Jagjiwan Ram as members. The earlier sub-committee which consisted of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mr. Chavan and Mr. Mahavir Tyagi had remained in suspended animation after Mrs. Gandhi’s elevation as the Prime Minister and Mr. Tyagi’s resignation from the Cabinet. The Home Minister, Mr. G.L. Nanda was a common member of both the Cabinet sub-committee on Punjabi Suba and Congress High Command’s sub-committee. The other members of the Congress High Command’s sub-committee were the Congress president Mr. K. Kamaraj and Mr. U.N. Dhebar.24 It was also resolved that the Parliamentary Committee will submit its conclusions to the Cabinet sub-committee and not to the Parliament. The Cabinet sub-committee will submit its findings to the full Cabinet which will then make up its mind on the thorny issue of the Suba.

On 27 February 1966, Sant Fateh Singh turned down Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s request to send his representatives or to


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appoint a negotiating committee for discussions with the Union Government and the Congress sub-committee to find out some solution to the Punjabi Suba issue. The Sant was of the view that by sending representative for negotiations, settlement of the Punjabi Suba issue would be prolonged as the Union Government had already taken over 6 months to decide the issue. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal were of the opinion that the stage for fresh negotiations had passed and that the Sant and his colleagues had made the Akali Dal’s position clear during their meetings with the late Prime Minister, Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri on 7-8 August 1965. The inordinate delay resulted in the hardening of the postures.

On 9 March 1966, the Congress Working Committee conceded the Suba demand and requested the Government to constitute a State with Punjabi as state language out of existing state of Punjab after a three hours long deliberations. The text of the resolution was, “Out of the existing State of Punjab, a State with Punjabi as State language should be formed. The Government is requested to take necessary steps for the purpose.”

The majority of the members of the Congress Working Committee supported the move for the creation of the new State. The only dissenting note was recorded by Mr. Morarji Desai. Morarji Desai decried the demand as communal. He was supported by Biju Patnaik, erstwhile Chief Minister of Orissa and Dr. Ram Subhag

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Singh, a minister of the Central Cabinet. Those who participated in the discussions included Mr. U.N. Dhebar, Mr. Krishna Menon, Mr. Sadiq Ali, Mr. Swaran Singh, Punjab Chief Minister, Ram Kishan and Home Minister Darbara Singh, Rajasthan Chief Minister Mohan Lal Sukhadia and Mr. Jagjiwan Ram. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Mr. K. Kamaraj, Defence Minister Mr. Y.B. Chavan and Transport Minister N. Sanjiva Reddy also participated in the discussion. The Working Committee had left it to the Government to adopt methods for implementation of its resolution.

What made the Central leadership accept the Punjabi Suba demand. Could it be that the Central leadership had felt that the role of Sikhs in the Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1965 was such that it necessitated and called for their satisfaction, in order to keep them aligned with India in a future struggle of the same nature? Could it be that the demand by the Hindus of the Haryana area for a separate State, and their refusal to accept Punjabi even as a second language had become more vocal and pressing?

The Congress Working Committee decision was hailed. Mr. Swaran Singh Minister for External Affairs, commented on the CWC resolution on the Punjabi Suba issue that it was a precise, very correct and a very timely decision. Mr. Lachhman Singh Gill, deputy leader of the Akali Party in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha congratulated

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26 P.C. Joshi (ed.), *Punjabi Suba- A Symposium*, p.82.
the Congress Working Committee, the Congress president Mr. K. Kamaraj and the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi for the wise decision.\(^28\) However, the Jan Sangh leaders in their resolution said that the CWC resolution recommending the formation of another state out of the existing Punjab with Punjabi as official language was a blow to the forces of unity and integration in the country. It amounted to an abject surrender to separatism\(^29\) in the border state.

After the CWC resolution, the Union Cabinet on 10 March considered the CWC's resolution recommending the formation of Punjabi speaking state out of the existing State of Punjab and favoured its early implementation. A formal announcement of the Government's decision was expected only after the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba, headed by Speaker, Mr. Hukam Singh submitted its report and to expedite the execution of CWC's recommendation, the four man Cabinet sub-committee on Punjabi Suba was expanded to include three more Union Ministers: The Finance Minister - Mr. Sachin Chaudhuri, The Planning Minister - Mr. Ashok Mehta, The Law Minister - Mr. G.S. Pathak. The original sub-committee consisted of Home Minister Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, the Defence Minister Mr. Y.B. Chavan, the Labour Minister Mr. Jagjiwan Ram and the Transport Minister Mr. Sanjiva Reddy. The expanded 7-member Cabinet sub-committee was to work on the legal steps to be

\(^{28}\) *The Tribune*, 10-11 March 1966.

\(^{29}\) P.C. Joshi (ed.), *Punjabi Suba - A Symposium*, p.86.
taken for the formation of the Punjabi Suba and workout the financial aspects of the new State.

Sant Fateh Singh expressed his thanks to Congress Working Committee, Mr. K. Kamaraj and Mrs. Indira Gandhi for conceeding to the Punjabi Suba demand of Akali Dal. He reiterated that the goodwill created by the Congress Working Committee’s decision would be maintained and he appealed to the people to maintain peace and to ignore the communal minded people who were trying to cause disruption. He assured the people that the proposed Punjabi Suba would be common to all Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims and that all of them would live together and in peace. On the other hand, the Jan Sangh, Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam and business circles were bitter over this decision of CWC. Mr. Yagya Dutt, General Secretary of the Punjab and Himachal Jan Sangh sat on a fast to oppose the creation of Punjabi Suba.

On 12 March 1966 violence spread to four major towns of Punjab namely Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Hisar where students protested against the CWC’s decision on Punjabi Suba by taking out processions in defiance of the prohibitory orders. Sant Fateh Singh reiterated that he would work for Hindu-Sikh unity and would retire from active politics, after Parliament enacted a legislation announcing the formation of a Punjabi speaking state. Sant accused the Punjab Chief Minister, Mr. Ram Kishan and the Home Minister,

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Mr. Darbara Singh for creating trouble in the state, for they were opposed to the formation of a Punjabi Suba. Sant Fateh Singh also demanded the early imposition of Governor’s Rule in Punjab in the interest of Hindu-Sikh unity.

On 14 March, Police mob clashes spread to other Punjab towns of Ambala cantonment, Abohar and Jind. Police opened fire on violent anti-Punjabi Suba demonstrators in Jalandhar and Bhiwani (Hisar district) as a result of which 4 persons were killed and 15 others injured. Master Tara Singh and 17 other Akalis were arrested at Amritsar under the Defence of India rules and sent to Rohtak Jail, as their activities were prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order in the State.\(^{31}\) Though violent, the counter-Suba agitation was of very short duration because the decision to bifurcate the old State was supported not only by the Sikhs but also by the Hindi speaking population of the Hindi zone. The only elements out of step were the Punjabi Hindus. Basically, they were cutting their own roots in Punjab, because as a Punjabi speaking people, they would become alien elements in Hindi speaking Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

On 18 March 1966, the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba headed by Hukam Singh presented its report to the Lok Sabha and recommended the reorganization of Punjab on the basis of language. The Committee made a specific recommendation that “the Punjabi Region specified in the First Schedule to the Punjab Regional

Committee’s Order of 1957 should form a unilingual Punjabi State.” And “In case there is any boundary adjustment to be made between the three States, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, a Committee of experts should be set up immediately to suggest such adjustments.” The Punjabi region, as specified in the First Schedule of the Regional Committee Order 1957, consists of the districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Bathinda, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Kapurthala and Patiala. It also included Ropar, Morinda and Chandigarh Assembly constituencies in Ambala district and Sangrur district excluding Jind and Narwana tehsils. The hill areas of Punjab which were included in the Hindi region of the State and were contiguous with Himachal Pradesh and have linguistic and cultural affinities with that territory should be merged with it. The remaining areas of the Hindi region of the present Punjab should be formed into a separate unit called Haryana state. The committee had recommended that in case there were any boundary adjustments to be made among the three states, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana a committee of experts should be set up immediately to suggest the necessary adjustments.

32 Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Punjabi Suba, pp.431-432
33 The Tribune, 19 March 1966.
Figure - 1: The Map showing the reorganization of Punjab as recommended by the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba headed by Sh. Hukam Singh, Speaker Lok Sabha.
On 20 March in their talks with Union Home Minister, Mr. G.L. Nanda, representatives of the Punjab Jan Sangh, Ekta Samiti and Arya Samaj spelt out their demands for the reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis. They urged that a semblance of unity should be maintained between the proposed Punjab and Haryana States. This could be effectively achieved by having Chandigarh as the common capital and by having a common Governor, High Court, Public Service Commission and Irrigation and Electricity boards. They also urged to have Devnagri and Gurmukhi script be given equal status for Punjabi language. The other proposal made by them was that the 1961 census should be the basis for the divisions of Punjab. Mr. G.L. Nanda appealed to these leaders to use their influence in persuading the fasting Jan Sangh leaders, Mr. Yagya Dutt Sharma and Swami Satyanand, to end their fast, so that normalcy could be restored in Punjab.34

On 22 March, the Union Home Minister, G.L. Nanda clarified that the reorganization of Punjab would be on the lines recommended by the Parliamentary Committee. He quoted the exact relevant section from the Parliamentary Committee’s report:

a) The Punjabi Region should form a Unilingual Punjabi State

b) The Hill areas of Punjab, included in the Hindi Region which were contiguous to Himachal Pradesh and have linguistic

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34 *The Tribune*, 21 March 1966.
and cultural affinity with that territory should be merged with Himachal Pradesh; and

c) The remaining areas should be formed as a separate unit which may be called the Haryana State.35

On 17 April 1966, in the Lok Sabha, the Union Home Minister, Mr. G.L. Nanda, announced the appointment of a Commission with the following scope of reference:

“The Commission shall examine the existing boundary of the Hindi and the Punjabi region of the present State of Punjab and recommend what adjustments, if any, are necessary in that regard to secure the linguistic homogeneity of the States of Punjab and Haryana. The Commission shall also indicate the boundaries of the hill areas of the present State of Punjab which are contiguous to Himachal Pradesh, and have linguistic and cultural affinity with that territory. The Commission shall apply the linguistic principle with due regard to the census of 1961 and other relevant considerations. The Commission may also take into account such other factors as administrative convenience and facility of communications, and will ordinarily ensure that the adjustments they may recommend do not involve the breaking of existing Tehsils.”36 He further said that the Union Government hoped to give effect to the scheme of the reorganization of the present State of Punjab from 1 October, 1966. The Commission would be submitting its report by the end of May. He

35 The Tribune, 23 March 1966.
36 Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Punjabi Suba, p.436.
clarified that the enlarged Himachal Pradesh would continue to be a Union Territory.\(^{37}\)

On 23 April 1966, the Government of India announced the appointment of a three-member Boundary Commission for the demarcation of the boundaries of the new Punjabi-speaking State and Haryana. Mr. Justice J.C. Shah, Judge of the Supreme Court was to be the Chairman of the Commission. The other two members being Mr. M.M. Philip and Mr. S. Dutt. Mr. M.M. Philip was Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Mr. S. Dutt was a former Foreign Secretary, who had served as Ambassador to Moscow.\(^{38}\) It is surprising that the commission should comprise members, who had no knowledge of the area, and were not required to have an on the spot examination for the adjustment of the boundaries. The Sant Akali Dal submitted a detailed representation claiming the entire district of Ambala, all the tehsils of Karnal except Panipat, and also the tehsils of Sirsa, besides the sub-tehsils of Fatehabad and Guhla in Hissar districts as part of the Punjabi speaking State in addition to the already demarcated Punjabi Region.\(^{39}\) The claim itself falsifies the contention that the objective of the Punjabi Suba demand had been the creation of a Sikh majority area, which was projected by Baldev Raj Nayar and Khushwant Singh.


\(^{38}\) *The Tribune*, 24 April 1966.

\(^{39}\) *Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Punjabi Suba*, p.438.
The terms of reference were designed to deprive the Punjabi Suba of its legitimate rights. First, the Commission was told to take the Census figures of 1961 into consideration, which was accepted by everyone that it were unreliable because of the false returns made by a large section of Punjabi Hindus regarding their mother tongue. The declaration, instead of giving scope of enlarging the boundaries of the existing Punjabi Region, put in jeopardy the future of five tehsils namely, Nalagarh, Pathankot, Una, Kharar, and Fazilka, four of them were in the Punjabi Region and one in the Hindi Region. If the 1961 census is taken as the dominant basis for demarcating new boundaries, the Punjabi Region may lose some of its areas to the Hindi Region and some to the Himachal Pradesh, as a result of the "other considerations like geography, homogeneity and communication". By that standard, Nalagarh tehsil of Ambala District, which was in the Hindi Region, was more contiguous to the Himachal Pradesh. In the Punjabi-Region, the four tehsils of Kharar, Una, Fazilka and Pathankot had a majority of Hindi-speaking population, according to 1961 census as shown below:

Table - 1

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40 As early as 1955 the States Reorganization Commission had recorded "the repudiation by large sections of the Hindu community of the Punjabi language as their mother tongue. This led, during the last census operation to a situation in which the separate tabulation of Hindi and Punjabi speaking people had to be abandoned." After the 1951 census the Union Home Minister said in Parliament: "It is believed that the returns submitted on the question of language had been generally incorrect in large parts of Punjab, i.e. as to the mother tongue of the persons concerned, whether it is Punjabi or Hindi." By the 1961 census the Hindi campaign had become even stronger.
### Number of Punjabi and Hindi Speaking People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hindi Speaking</th>
<th>Punjabi Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kharar</td>
<td>1,83,453</td>
<td>1,45,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Una</td>
<td>2,56,963</td>
<td>1,02,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fazilka</td>
<td>2,31,689</td>
<td>1,51,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pathankot</td>
<td>2,11,119</td>
<td>83,786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, as per the terms of reference, Pathankot and Una tehsils of the Punjabi speaking Region, will have geographic contiguity with the Himachal Pradesh and not with the Hindi Region. In addition to this, there had been a demand for the merger of Pathankot and Una tehsils with Kangra on the basis of homogeneity and cultural affinity. If this happened then, the proposed Punjabi-speaking state would have no hill station at all. The only hill station in the region being Dalhousie was in the Pathankot tehsil.

Fazilka tehsil had no geographic continuity with the Hindi region as a strip of area of Muktsar tehsil bisects the Fazilka and Hisar district. Kharar tehsil, of course, was geographically contiguous with the Hindi Region and Chandigarh, the capital of the present Punjab was in this tehsil.

The plea that the 1961 Census figures pertaining to mother tongue were flawed and should not be made the basis for determining the future political set up is justified, when considered in the light of historical record and statistical data of previous Census. The table

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41 *Census of India, 1961, Report.*
below in connection with the three districts reveal that Punjabi had been the major language of the people of these areas until 1951. It is amply clear from the data that from Ambala district 59% Urdu-speaking population (in all probability Muslims) migrated to Pakistan and was substituted by population primarily Punjabi-speaking from Sargodha, Gujarat, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Lyallpur and Lahore.

Table -2

Percentage of Punjabi and Hindi speaking people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMBALA DISTRICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>66.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>38.24%</td>
<td>35.61%</td>
<td>30.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>59.80%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOSHIARPUR DISTRICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>99.41%</td>
<td>99.87%</td>
<td>99.79%</td>
<td>47.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEROZEPUR DISTRICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
<td>4.04%</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>89.66%</td>
<td>93.34%</td>
<td>90.29%</td>
<td>66.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1941 there was no census and in the 1951 census, the language column was deleted. These tables reveal that the spurt in favour of Hindi in these three districts alone is not because of

42 Census of India, 1911, Punjab and Delhi, Report.
43 Census of India, 1921, Volume XV, Punjab and Delhi, Report.
44 Census of India, 1931, Report.
45 Census of India, 1961, Report.
migration of any Hindi speaking people from adjoining States or any other factor but because of a planned campaign by a certain section of people against Punjabi in as much as that even the Punjabi speaking people who registered themselves as such upto 1951 were compelled to indicate Hindi as their mother tongue. As in these three districts, likewise this campaign also affected other districts of the State.

Historically speaking, Culture and Language are two factors which do not change overnight. Infact, it takes centuries to bring even a minor change in the fundamental characteristics of races. Then, the drastic linguistic change in the speakers of the mother tongue in the span of merely 30 years cannot be without political considerations and malafide intent. These areas which were separated on the basis of 1961 Census had inseparable cultural, linguistic, geographical and social links with the Punjabi speaking areas and therefore in the interest of prosperity and well being of these areas, they ought to be kept in Punjab.

The second important feature of the terms of reference of the Boundary Commission was to regard "tehsil" as the basic unit for the reorganization. "Tehsil" cannot be fixed as the basic unit because Tehsils had been established for the collection of revenue and their formation does not involve any linguistic principle. Therefore, it was the wrong application of the linguistic principle (which was the basis for the reorganization of Punjab), where ‘tehsil’ were accepted as the
basis for demarcation. In a tehsil itself, there were linguistic groups which can be distinguished from one another.

About the tehsil of Pathankot, Lord Birdwood was of the opinion that its possession by India rendered possible the maintenance of the Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir during 1947 and thus consolidate the defence line all the way from Uri to the Pakistan border. From the military point of view, it would be advisable to entrust the international frontier to one state rather than to two. It was on this principle that all British Viceroy, including Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne, had advocated the merger of Sindh with Punjab in order to have frontier defence under one province. The most contested area was the Kharar tehsil, as it had Chandigarh located in it.

Practically, the reorganization of any state, irrespective of the principle professed, is essentially an attempt for the redistribution of power. But the element of power as the ultimate goal is rarely acknowledged, because it is concealed behind the veil of justifications and rationalizations. The linguistic principle, the cultural principle, the geographical principle, the census principle, the administrative principle, the economic principle and a host of other principles sit cheek by jowl in the terms of reference for the Boundary Commission, which the Government of India had decided to set up for Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. A dispute about the interpretation of
these principles - the Census principle in particular led to discord among various political parties of Punjab. The official announcement by Government of India in 1966 says: "The commission shall apply the linguistic principle with due regard to the Census figures of 1961 and other relevant considerations". Any rational thinking individual would ask, What is the regard that is due to the Census of 1961? What is the regard that is due to the other relevant considerations? Have all the relevant considerations been duly specified or only some of them?

There is no constitutional or legal definition of what is due even in the familiar phrase, "due process of law". It has no fixed or formal meaning and the pattern of due regard, like the due process, has to be adopted on the basis of facts and circumstances of each case. If the Commission was expected to give only due regard to the 1961 Census, it does not follow that undue regard was expected from it for other factors. Due regard is what any principle or rather all principles can ask for which is seldom expected in the unprincipled world of politics.

On 31 May 1966, the Punjab Boundary Commission submitted its report to the Government of India and completed its work in a month's time, in which more than 1500 persons appeared before the commission in person. The three-man Punjab Boundary Commission had by a majority of two to one, recommended that Chandigarh should go to the proposed Haryana State. The two members, who
favoured that Chandigarh should form part of Haryana, were the Commission’s Chairman, Mr. Justice J.C. Shah, a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court, and Mr. M.M. Phillip while third member, Mr. S. Dutt expressed the view that Chandigarh should go to the Punjabi Suba, since the Hindi-speaking population of the area is 'migrant'.

On 10 June 1966, the Union Cabinet accepted the report of the Commission. The Punjab Reorganization Bill provided for the creation of a truncated Punjab based upon Punjabi language and Chandigarh would become a Union Territory and the Centre would exercise police and other powers in that territory. The States of Punjab and Haryana, which would have their capitals there, would be what was called tenant Governments. Representatives of both State Governments were likely to be associated with the various bodies connected with the administration of Chandigarh. In response to the Union Government’s decision on the Boundary Commission’s report, the Haryana legislators threatened to submit their resignations from their seats en-masse as they were against the idea of declaring Chandigarh a union territory.

On 22 June 1966, the Chief Minister, Mr. Ram Kishan, submitted his as well as his Ministry’s resignation to the Governor, Mr. Ujjal Singh. Mr. Ram Kishan described it as the "most opportune time" to quit. The resignation of Mr. Ram Kishan ministry thus paved

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46 The Tribune, 1 June 1966.
47 The Tribune, 11 June 1966.
the way for the promulgation of President's rule in Punjab. On the same day as per communiqué issued by Rashtrapati Bhawan, Mr. Dharma Vira was appointed as Punjab Governor, who replaced Mr. Ujjal Singh. Ujjal Singh was shifted to Madras as Governor of Madras.48

On 26 June 1966, Mr. K.V.K. Sundaram, Chief Election Commissioner, announced that the fourth General Election would be conducted in February 1967. He announced that the Delimitation in Punjab would be done afresh because of the division of Punjab and the enlargement of the territory of Himachal Pradesh. Mr. Dharma Vira, after being sworn in as Governor of Punjab, recommended Central rule in Punjab to the President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan on 29 June 1966.

On 5 July 1966, Punjab was placed under President’s rule. However, there was one exception in the case of Punjab, where the State Legislature was not dissolved, however, the legislative powers were suspended. The State legislature remained in the state of suspended animation and it was proclaimed that the Central Administration would last till 2 October, 1966.49

On 3 September 1966, the Punjab Reorganization Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha which was passed in the Lok Sabha on 7 September 1966. After the Bill was passed by the both Houses of

49 The Tribune, 6 July 1966.
Parliament, the Bill received the President's assent on 18 September 1966, providing for the creation of the two States of Punjab and Haryana from 1 November 1966. There were protests in Punjab with regard to the Punjabi speaking areas by the Akalis but all protests notwithstanding, the reorganized Punjab came into being on 1 November 1966.

Thus, the Central Congress leadership had resisted the demand for the Punjabi Suba and its demarcation under the fear that once the Punjabi Suba was created, the Sikhs might be in majority in it, and giving them a ‘Homeland’ on the border, in contiguity with Pakistan would create all sorts of problems. Yet when it became a political necessity and came to actual demarcation, calculated plans were drawn up to ensure that such area should be as small as possible knowing very well that it would ultimately have Sikh majority. The only conclusion that could be drawn from the terms of reference was that an effort was made to make the Suba as small as possible, economically unviable and isolate it from its contiguity with the Jammu and Kashmir State by taking away even Pathankot tehsil.