Chapter III

FACTIONALISM IN THE
INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)

Factionalism Before 1947

The Indian Renaissance took many forms and asserted itself in many ways. If it was Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj on one hand, it also reflected itself in the messages of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciple Swami Vivekananda. ‘All these moments were really so many threads in the strand of Indian Nationalism and the Nation’s duty was to evolve a synthesis so as to be able to dispel prejudice and superstition, to remove and purify the old faith and Vedantic idealism and reconcile it with the Nationalism of the new age. The INC was destined to fulfil this great mission’. The first President of the INC, W.C. Banerjee of Bengal, stressed the representative and constitutional character of the gathering. He detailed the INC’s objects as:

‘(a) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country’s cause in [all] parts of the Empire.  
(b) The eradication of direct friendly intercourse of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudice amongst all lovers of our country and the fuller development of consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon’s ever memorable region.’

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3 Ibid.
The authoritative record, after this has been carefully elicited by the fullest discussion, of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the [political and] social questions of the day.  

The determination of the lines upon and methods by which during the next twelve months, it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests.

Refuting the charge that the Congress was ‘a nest of conspirators and disloyalists’ the INC had political objectives of its own. Grateful to the British government for doing much for India the first congregation of the Natives believed that much had yet to be done. They wanted to widen the base of the government by giving the Indians their legitimate share of governance. Meeting ‘at 12 on December 28, 1885, in the Hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, the first INC met to chisel the destiny of a nation which comprised of men and women of different castes, religions, attitudes and regions. It started with a modest goal of redressing grievances but gradually evolved ‘into the one accredited organ of the Nation that proudly put forth its demands’. Opening its doors to people of all hues and shades, the Congress ‘focussed the thoughts and activities of the National to a single point’. The Congress, in Mahatma Gandhi’s words in his speech at the second Round Table Congress, ‘attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, National in every sense of the term’.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p. 18.
8 Ibid., p. 19.
9 Ibid., p. 22.
10 Ibid., p. 21.
This motley group of 100 people met to chart India’s future. In the first session, ‘the election of W.C. Banerjee as the President of the Congress was widely appreciated in Bengal and assuaged any soreness people in that province might have felt because of the manner in which the Congress was convened and that inadequate representation at it’.\(^{11}\) One of the weaknesses of the INC from its birth was the failure to win the whole hearted support of the Muslims.\(^{12}\)

The Congress party lived by giving various incentives like offering fares to the Muslim delegates, choosing a Muslim to preside over the third annual meeting, deciding not to adopt any resolution which was objected to by any community etc. A few Muslims joined but the majority of the community remained aloof because of the efforts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who wanted the Muslims to take up English education and progress. A leading light of Muslim Renaissance he was suspicious of the Congress’s aims. He wrote, ‘I am convinced that where the majority vote is the decisive factor in a political system, it is essential for the electors to be united by tree of race, religion, manners, customs, culture and historical traditions. In the presence of these factors representative government is practicable and useful, in their absence, it would only injure the well-being and tranquility of the land’.\(^{13}\) His firm anti-Congress view lingered on doubts among the Muslim community which got absorbed during the freedom struggle but asserted in 1947 with the partition of the country.

Even before the INC had taken a definite form signs of conflict and discord were visible. Shri Surendranath Banerjee convened a National Conference of the Indian Association at Calcutta ‘almost at the same time when the Conference of the Indian National Union, the precursor of the INC, was scheduled to meet and discuss almost the

\(^{11}\) Mehrotra, op. cit., n. 2, p. 17.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 890.
same issues on the agenda’. The Congress’s journey from 1885 to 1905 ‘was one even much based on a firm faith in constitutional agitation and in the unfailing regard for justice attributed to the Englishmen’.15

The INC had since its birth great hope in the sense of justice of the British people. But public opinion had begun to change since the 1890s. ‘A ‘new patriotism’ had grown up as opposed to the ‘old’, ‘loyal patriotism’ of the founders of the Congress’.16 In 1893-4, Aurobindo Ghose attacked Congress party in a series of articles published in the Indu Prakash of Bombay, titled ‘New Lamps for the Old’. He criticised the methods of the older generation and charged the Congress party of not representing the mass of the population but representing only a limited class. This was the rise of radical nationalism which was accentuated by the failure of the older Congress party leaders to gain any substantial concessions from the British. Wanting the Congress to become a mass organisation, the ‘radicals’ who were later known as ‘Extremists’ clearly asked for the freedom of the country. Denouncing the INC controlled by the new middle class by an oligarchy, they ‘accused its leaders of a lack of patriotism and of being interested mainly in the loaves and fishes of office’.17 These rebels, led by Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh, called themselves the ‘New Party’, and ‘Nationalists’ to distinguish themselves from the old loyalist Congressmen. Tilak, since 1896 had been urging the INC to show more courage. He was stopped when in 1899 he wanted to move a resolution condemning the regime of Lord Sandhurst which he claimed had ruined the people. The President R.C. Dutt threatened to resign from the post if Tilak continued.

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15 Sitarammaya, op. cit., n. 1, p. 61.
16 Mehrotra, op. cit., n. 2, p. 121.
17 Ibid., p. 122.
The Moderates regarded British rule ‘as a beneficial necessity’. The Extremists, the radicals believed that any foreign rule was a curse. They thought that loyalty to the British government was incompatible with patriotism. The methods of the Moderates i.e. that of petition and prayer were finally discredited in the first decade of the twentieth century by various incidents. The partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905 and supported by Morley, the new Secretary of State for India gave an impetus to the claims of the Extremists that new effective methods of agitation had to be adopted. The Moderates believed that India’s prosperity was directly linked with the British rule. The Extremists gave priority to political freedom. In the words of Aurobindo Ghose, ‘Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation, to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement for the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility’. The Moderates believed in borrowing from the West in the name of institutions, education etc., on the other hand, the Extremists wanted to build up a national character and retain the distinctiveness of India. The Moderates wanted the INC to continue as an elitist organisation while the Extremists wanted the organisation to be a movement of the masses. The growth of the Extremists made the Moderates uneasy as the British government threatened to cancel all the reforms which they planned to introduce in India. Morley told the Moderates to part ways with the Extremists if they wanted the rewards of their hard work over the past two decades. The British wanted the Moderates to repudiate the Extremists. The Moderates, on the other hand, did not want to weaken the INC by having a split. To avoid this, they persuaded Dadabhai Naoroji to come from England and preside over the Congress party’s session in Calcutta in 1906. This was done to counteract the election of Tilak as President of the INC. The election of Tilak as President would have been a clear signal to the Britishers that the Congress was now in the hands of the Radicals. While the extremists did not think of anything but absolute Swaraj, Naoroji proclaimed the Congress ideal to be ‘self-government or Swaraj like that

18 Ibid., p. 123.
19 Ibid.
of United Kingdom or the Colonies'.

Gokhale, in a speech at Allahabad on February 4th 1907, frankly admitted his belief that his country could grow in full stature within the British Empire. He believed that there was place for a self-respecting India within the British Empire. Meanwhile, the attack of the radicals on the Moderates became more vehement day by day. The Moderates finally decided to force the Extremists out of the Congress Party. The first step in this regard was to shift the venue of the annual session from Nagpur which was flooded by Tilak’s supporters to Surat, ‘which was Pherozeshah Mehta’s pocket borough’. Then they managed to get, Ras Behari Ghose, a Moderate, elected as the President of the INC. The Moderates wanted every delegate to the Congress session to subscribe ‘with the objective of the Congress as “the attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by self-governing members of the British Commonwealth” through “strictly constitutional means”’.

The Extremists, at this 23rd session of the Congress party differed from the Moderates in their way of thinking as well as their method. They had thought of attaining absolute ‘Swaraj’ outside the British Empire. Then the Extremists, according to the Calcutta Convention in 1906 which had given approval to the boycott of British goods wanted boycott from everything that was remotely connected with the British administration. The Moderates did not want to accept the way of thinking nor the radical methods of the Extremists thus instead of handing over the Congress to them, they decided to pressurize the Extremists out of the organisation. The second day of the session i.e. December 27, 1907, ended sine die because of the protests by the Extremists regarding the appointment of the President. The older Moderate leaders met the same afternoon and decided to call a National Convention, the next day, i.e. December 28 of only those ‘delegates who subscribed to the ideas of self-government for India on the colonial model and the attainment by strictly constitutional means’. The Congress met in Convention the next day and clearly spoke

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20 Ibid. p. 127.
21 Ibid., p. 128.
23 Mehrotra, op. cit., n. 2, p. 129.
of its ‘two fundamental articles of our creed’\textsuperscript{24} i.e. to formulate a Constitution for the Congress and to lay down the lines on which the political agitation should be carried out. The Nationalists desired, the INC which was led by the Moderates, to adopt the four resolutions regarding self-government, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education in the Surat session the same way as they had done in the Calcutta session in 1906. The Moderates claimed that the change of words was unintentional without attempting to change the meaning while the Extremists felt that the change was deliberate and it was a compromise to show the Congress party’s continuing loyalty to their British masters. The Moderates had been disappointed with the British bureaucracy but had its faith in the democratic sense which prevailed in United Kingdom. They felt that the Extremists were threatening the thought and beliefs of the older generation and thus, endangering the progress of the nation. Thus, they wanted to disown the recalcitrant Extremists. The Nationalists on the other hand ‘decided to weaken the organisation instead of being driven out of it’.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, the Surat split. Besides factors like British repression, political inactivity in many parts, the national movement had been weakened because of the split in the Congress and disagreement over the methods and goals of the Moderates and the Extremists. The Congress was still under the control of the Moderates but it had not succeeded in becoming a people’s organisation. The people, at large, were disgusted with the inactivity of the Congress which the Extremists had highlighted. Efforts to unite the Extremists and the Moderates failed in 1914 and 1915. Tilak was released in 1914 and he started his three-fold programme i.e. (i) the Congress compromise, (ii) the reorganisation of the Nationalist party, and (iii) accelerating the demand for Home Rule. Tilak wanted the sphere to be broadened regarding the election of the Congress delegates. Some Articles clearly stated that the right of election to certain organisations “provided that no such political association or public body shall be recognized unless the said Association or Body, by a resolution of general meeting of its members, expressed its acceptance of the principle embodied in Article I of the Constitution and makes the acceptance of the

\textsuperscript{24} Zaidi, op. cit., n.14, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{25} Mehrotra, op. cit., n. 2 , p. 129.
same condition precedent to new membership”.26 The Article talked of self-government through strictly constitutional means. Mrs. Annie Besant tried to reconcile the two wings but her attempts were frustrated by the Moderates who feared the domination of the Congress by the Extremists once they entered the organisation. Gokhale supported Tilak in the amendment of the article initially, but later withdrew support as he did not want the old struggle to be renewed with the help of the obstructionist methods of the Extremists. Tilak proposed he had not talked of reviewing such steps. Gokhale apologised but the damage had been done. Reconstruction was postponed. Tilak and Mrs. Besant then started to organise the Home Rule League to intensify the demand for internal self-government and to bring pressure on the Moderates to re-admit the Extremists into the fold.

Mrs. Besant started her movement with the programmes of Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education and Home Rule. The death of Gokhale on February 19, 1915 ended the clash between the two titans – Gokhale and Tilak. Gandhi’s estimate of the two leaders correctly sums up the magnetic personality of both the sons of India. “Tilak appeared to him like the Himalayas – great and lofty – but un-approachable, while Gokhale appeared like the Holy Ganges in which he could confidently take a plunge. Tilak and Gokhale were both Maharashtrians; they were both Brahmins; they both belonged to the same Chitpavan sect. They were both patriots of the first order. Both had made heavy sacrifice in life. But their temperaments were widely different from each other. Gokhale was a ‘Moderate’ and ‘Tilak’ was an ‘Extremist’ if we may use the language in vogue at the time. Gokhale’s plan was to improve the existing constitution; Tilak’s was to reconstruct it. Gokhale had necessarily to work with the bureaucracy; Tilak had necessarily to fight it. Gokhale stood for co-operation wherever possible and opposition wherever necessary; Tilak inclined towards a policy of obstruction. Gokhale’s prime concern was with the administration and its improvement; Tilak’s supreme consideration was the Nation and its upbuilding. Gokhale’s ideals were love and sacrifice, Tilak’s was service and suffering. Gokhale’s methods sought to win the

26 Sitarammaya, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 120-121.
foreigner, Tilak was to replace him. Gokhale’s depended upon others’ help. Tilak stressed upon self-help. Gokhale looked to the classes and the intelligentsia, Tilak to the masses and the millions. Gokhale’s arena was the Council Chamber; Tilak’s forum was the village mandap. Gokhale’s medium of expression was English; Tilak’s was Marathi. Gokhale’s objective was self-government for which the people had to fit themselves by answering the texts prescribed by the English; Tilak’s objective was Swaraj which is the birth right of every Indian and which he shall have without let or hindrance from the foreigner. Gokhale was on a level with his age, Tilak was in advance of his times.”

Mrs. Annie Besant announced that if the Congress failed to announce a scheme of self-government by September 1, 1916 she would be forced to launch her Home Rule Movement. Getting no response from the Congress, Mrs. Besant launched her All-India Home Rule League on September 3, 1916. Prior to her pledge, Tilak organised an Indian Home Rule League in April 1916 ‘to attain Home Rule or self-government for India within the British Empire by constitutional means’, and ‘to educate and organize public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same’. Retaining their separate identities, the two Leagues propagated their programme intensively. The Lucknow Congress in December 1916 saw the re-entry of the Extremists in the Congress. The Home Rulers as the members of the Home Rule Leagues were called demanded self-government while retaining the sovereignty of the Emperor. Emphasising that their demand neither meant anarchy, nor sedition, Tilak said, ‘It is an undisputed fact that we should serve our own good under the rule of the English people themselves, under the supervision of the English nation, with the help of the English nation, through the English nation, through their sympathy, through their anxious care and through their high sentiments which they possessed’. Desiring a change in the bureaucracy, by appointing Indians in their place, Tilak wanted a beginning to the Home Rule Movement. The Leagues appealed not only to the classes but also to the people. The Home-member

29 Ibid., p. 133.
of the government of India wrote on January 17, 1917: ‘The position is one of great difficulty. The moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classes who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant’. Mrs. Besant’s movement was at its height in 1917. She was elected the President of the Congress in 1917 held at Calcutta. She ushered in a new era by being an active President and taking her responsibilities seriously throughout the year. In this session too the Congress was divided between the Moderates like Surendra Nath Banerjee and the Home Rulers and the Nationalists for whom Calcutta was a vantage point. This group included leaders like I. B. Sen and Jintendralal Banerjee. The announcements on August 20, 1917 by Montague in the House of Commons promising to increase the association of Indians in all the branches of administration and to gradually develop self-governing institutions was a remarkable achievement by the Moderates. But it came with a cost. And it was that the Moderates would oppose the goals and methods of the Extremists and gradually distance themselves from the latter. The Montague-Chelmsford Report published in July 1918 talked of an experiment in introducing democracy in India. The Extremists criticised the report while the Moderates applauded the report. The Congress was virtually split by this time. The Congress met in Bombay in a special session August 1918. The Moderates found themselves in minority and decided to hold a separate conference in the same year. They met in November 1918 and thanked the British government for the reform proposals. But they also warned the government that delaying tactics would only make them lose the Indian support which they, then, commanded. The Congress which met in December 1918 at Delhi with M. M. Malaviya as its President urged the government to grant full responsible government to the provinces. The leading Moderates did not attend the session despite requests by Malaviya. It was clear that the Moderates would never return to the Congress. Moreover, events like inflation, epidemic, scarcity, poverty, mucking uneasiness about Turkey, the Khilafat movement, the Rowlatt Act, the slow response of Westminster and the Jallianawala Bagh massacre threw Moderates in poor light. These events proved that the Moderates’ method of functioning was ineffective.

30 Ibid., p.134.
Over the keys of the Toshakhana (Treasury) Baba Kharak Singh won a decisive victory. When Baba Kharak Singh was released, he asked for the release of all the Congress workers connected with the Keys’ affair. The keys were delivered to Baba Kharak Singh. With prominent leaders in jail it was because of leaders like Baba Kharak Singh that the non-cooperation movement did not lapse in Punjab. It was because of his efforts that there was a liaison between the Akali Dal and the Central Sikh League on one hand and the Congress on the other. He convinced the Akalis that to have reforms in the Sikh shrines, the Sikhs would have to be involved in the non-cooperation movement for that would compel the Punjab government to stop helping the Mahants.

Baba Kharak Singh was a nationalist who initially believed in the ideals of INC. He cooperated with the INC over its various programmes. One of the pioneers of the Gurudwara Reform Movement he was the first President of old Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee. He became the President of Punjab Provincial Congress in 1922 and headed the non-co-operation movement in Punjab. Though the government in Punjab tried to win him over by agreeing on the Gurudwara issue, he did not betray the Congress. He moved from one place to another and told the people as to how the British and their bureaucracy were trying to weaken them in the name of religion. Because of him many Sikhs joined the Congress party. He strengthened the bond between the Sikhs and the Congress party. His support to the Congress was proved over the issue of a ban on wearing black turban and Gandhi caps when he was a prisoner in Dera Gazi Khan Jail. Baba Kharak Singh defied the ban. The bureaucracy tried to create differences between the Sikhs and the Congress by allowing Baba Kharak Singh to wear the black turban but refusing to lift the ban on the Gandhi cap. Baba Kharak Singh protested against this policy of divide and rule by refusing to wear any clothes except his short breeches. His was a consistent support to the Congress, but the Nehru Report drove him away from the INC for he felt that the interests of the Sikhs were not looked after. Because of this he kept away from the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Master Tara Singh participated in several Congress activities. Mahatma Gandhi's talks with the former convinced him at the Lahore session that the Congress would look
after the interests of the Sikhs. He played an important role in the Civil Disobedience Movement and encouraged Sikhs to participate in the struggle. Because of his sympathetic attitude towards the Congress he was included in the National Flag Committee which recommended a new translation of the colours of the Flag. He, along with Baba Kharak Singh, opposed the Nehru Report.

As a member of All India Congress Committee and Congress Working Committee, Mangal Singh favoured the acceptance of the Nehru report and was imprisoned for two years for his role in the non-cooperation movement. He organised the Jaitu Morcha on Gandhi’s techniques. ‘He publicly endorsed Gandhi’s view that true Gurudwara reform was possible only when India was free and, therefore, the Sikh interest lay in concentrating on the struggle for freedom’.\(^{31}\) His views over the Nehru Report led to differences of opinion with a section of the Sikh leadership. He had great regards for Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent technique but not for the latter’s programme of Khaddar (khadi). He wrote to Gandhi after a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in which this issue was discussed that he could not follow him in this regard.

Sardul Singh admired Gandhi for his non-violent and non-cooperation techniques. He felt that this technique would deliver India its freedom but he did not adhere to absolute non-violence. When Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement he found fault with Gandhi. He wrote to Gandhi, ‘Civil Revolutionaries cannot succeed without attaching utmost importance to non-violence. But we should not be very squeamish about it. Stray aberrations must not upset us very much’.\(^ {32}\) He opposed the Swarajists and wanted them to prepare for the Civil Disobedience Movement. He did not believe in the Khadi programme. Over the flag issue he ‘realised the danger of giving communal connotation to the colours in the Congress Flag quite early’.\(^ {33}\) He felt that besides the colour, the Charkha (the wheel) represented only a temporary phase of the Indian

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 184.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 186.
The arrest of Gandhi after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement on March 13, 1922 left the Congress floundering. Answers on many questions were to be agreed upon, whether the country was ready for Civil Disobedience, whether the Congress was to enter the Council and paralyse the administration from within. A Committee, comprising of Pt. Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai J. Patel, Dr. Ansari, S. Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar, Jamnalal Bajaj and C. Rajagopalachari, toured the country to get answers to these questions. Their report clearly stated that the country was not ready for mass civil disobedience but a limited form of it could continue on individual level. The report further stated that elections to the legislative council should be contested and if the contestants returned in a majority they should obstruct the work of the legislatures, by not attending. If returned in minority they should oppose all the measures of the government. So, there was a tussle between those who advocated Council entry and those who didn’t. In the All India Congress Committee session which met at Calcutta from November 20 to November 24, 1922, it decided that the country was not prepared for mass civil disobedience. About the Council entry decision was to be taken at Gaya Session of the Congress.

At the Gaya session, there was a tremendous battle of arguments between the Pro-changers and No-changers, the cleavage between the two in the meanwhile having become more pronounced. The Pro-changers who wanted Council Entry were led by intellectual giants like, Pt. Motilal Nehru, Deshbandhu C. R. Das and S. Srinivasa Iyengar. They believed in ‘fighting the bureaucracy from within the legislatures and weakening them’. But the No-changers won in this session by passing a resolution.

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34 Ibid.
35 Zaidi, op. cit., n.14, p. 72.
36 Ibid, p. 73.
which showed loyalty to Gandhi by not agreeing to the Council entry. Adherence to the policy reflected Gandhi’s popularity as the undisputed leader of India though he was behind the bars.

No: to be defeated, C. R. Das meanwhile drew up a constitution of the New Party- The Swaraj Party. Das had two previous documents in his pocket when he delivered the Presidential address at the Gaya Congress – ‘one was the Presidential Address and other his resignation from the Presidentship, together with the constitution of the Swaraj Party’. The party was launched the same year (1922). The Delhi session marked a triumph of the pro-changers regarding Council entry. The resolution while appealing to continuance of constructive programme said, “Such Congressmen as have no religious or conscientious objective against entering the legislature are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections. And the Congress, therefore, suspends all propaganda against entering the councils”. At the general session at Cocanada in 1923, the previous resolutions on Council entry were confirmed, though non-cooperation was reaffirmed as the confirmed policy of the Congress. After Gandhi’s release in 1924, Pt. Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das apprised him of the programme of the Swaraj Party. They wanted his support and wanted the Swaraj Party not work merely as an autonomous wing of the Congress but to make their programme the entire responsibility of the organisation. Gandhi blessed them to continue Swaraj Party as a separate entity and if they realised that their efforts regarding Council entry were fruitless to return to the fold by coming out of the Councils. In the elections, the Swarajists were returned with an overwhelming majority. They proved their word by exposing the autocratic and despotic rule of the British in India. In the Central Assembly, they demanded a responsible self-government, an immediate change in the constitutional machinery and release of political prisoners. The differences in views of Gandhi, Nehru and Das disappeared when Gandhi saw the Swarajists’ victory and the

37 Sitarammaya, op. cit., n. 1, p. 252.
38 Zaidi, op. cit., n. 14, p. 75.
39 Ibid., p. 77.
indifference of his followers regarding his constructive programme. Gandhi gave his blessing to the tactics of the Swarajists. He said, 'I would strive for Swaraj within the Empire but would not hesitate to sever all connection, if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault'.

In 1924, with Gandhi's release the no-changers hoped to get Congress back on Civil Disobedience. The Swarajists, the pro-changers wanted to consolidate their position. The Swarajists in the All India Congress Committee session which met in Bombay on November 21 and 22, 1924 declared that the Non-cooperation would have to be suspended as a national programme. The Belgaum Congress in 1924 with Gandhi as its President saw the revolt against Gandhism. Gandhi supported the entry to the Councils and kept the balance between the pro-changers and the no-changers. The year 1925 saw the work of the Swarajists in the Councils with their obstructionist tactics. 'Deshbandhu Das's programme of weakening the councils from within was thus a complete success'.

At the Faridpur session, Das diluted his demand by saying that 'Provided some real responsibility is transformed to the people, there is no reason why we should not cooperate with the government'. Gandhi said at the same time that he could see no change of heart for reconciliation. At Patna in the All India Congress Committee meeting on September 21, 1925 all control was handed over to the Swaraj Party.

Deshbandhu Das left for his heavenly abode on June 16 1925. After Das's death Gandhi tried to put the Swarajists at ease. The Swarajists condemned Gandhi's principles on one hand but desired his leadership. When the All India Congress Committee met at Patna on September 21925, the Swaraj Party had become the Congress itself. The conflict 'a partition of the Congress between the apostles of the Council and those of Khaddar'. Soon after Das's death, schisms rose between the Swarajists over the

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40 Sitarammaya, op. cit., n. 1, p. 278.
41 Zaidi, op. cit., n.14, p. 80.
42 Zaidi, op. cit., n.14, p. 81.
control over the aspirations of the different sections of its members. They included people like Moonji Kelkar who resigned from the Swaraj Party Executive Council as well as the Legislative Council over the propaganda of Responsive Cooperation. The Responsivsts carved a new party, 'Indian National Party', to 'accelerate the existence of Swaraj of the Dominion type, by all peaceful and legitimate means (excluding Mass Disobedience and non-payment of Taxes) with liberty to resort inside the legislature to Responsive Co-operation'. They, the responsivsts, wanted to work on the reforms while the Swarajsts, led by Motilal Nehru wanted a continuance of the Faridpur resolutions. A reconciliation between the two factions was tried but the relations grew strained. Pt. Motilal Nehru walked out of the Assembly with all the members of his party as the government had ignored Das's ideas of co-operation. Lala Lajpat Rai thought that the walk out was against the progress of the Hindus. Due to clash of ideas between Lalaji and Pt. Motilal Nehru, the former resigned from the Congress Party in the Assembly. In the November General elections in 1926 in Madras, the Congress came out with flying colours. The results justified the policy of the Swaraj Party in the Legislatures.

In United Provinces, the Swaraj Party was routed and Pt. Motilal Nehru blamed the Nationalists for the defeat. The All Parties Conference in 1928, which met in Lucknow in August, declared in favour of Dominion self-government. Others who wanted complete independence declared so and formed an Independence League. Subhash Chandra had his own League of People from Bengal, when they converged for the All India Congress Committee session in Calcutta in December 1928.

At the Lucknow session on September 28, 1929 the representatives were by and large disgusted with the Council members and the party-workers wanted them to resign. The Lahore Congress, which met in 1929 declared complete independence as its goal. Differences which were internal in Bengal became public between Subhash Babu and Pt. Moti Lal Nehru. Mr. S. Iyenger and S. Chandra Bose wanted elections for the Working

44 Ibid. p. 300.
Committee. When this was not adhered to they walked out and formed the Congress Democratic Party at Lahore.

Meanwhile, after the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia many radical nationalists who were disillusioned with the non-operation movement got attracted to communism. Singaravelu, the leader of the communist group of Madras was the first to declare at Bodh Gaya session of the Congress in 1922 that he was a communist. Some prominent INC members, left-minded intellectuals and members of the British Labour Party encouraged the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). The first conference of All India Trade Union Congress was held on October 30, 1920 in Bombay. Lala Lajpat Rai, in his Presidential address, said that the Indian protestant was joining “hands and brains” not only to protect its own interests but also to forge a link in the chain of international brotherhood.\(^45\) Tilak compared Bolshevik principles with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded at Tashkent on October 7, 1920 to coordinate the activities of the various Communist groups which had emerged in India. The communist movement was given an impetus because of the disillusionment of some nationalists with the Non-cooperation Movement of 1921. The militants had appealed to the masses and thus rallied them but the militants had ‘appealed exclusively to their nationalists and religious feelings because most of these extremists were petty bourgeois or bourgeoisie intellectual who showed little interest in developing the class consciousness of the protestants. And their militancy was practically devoid of a social and economic programme’.\(^46\) A Manifesto signed by M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherji, on behalf of the Communist Party of India, criticized the efforts of Gandhi on lighter causes like Khilafat. The Manifesto was addressed to the 36\(^{th}\) INC held at Ahmedabad. They wanted efforts which would give “land to the peasants and bread to the workers”.\(^47\) Gandhi was criticised because he tried to put on leash the anti-imperialist mood of the masses through Non-cooperation. On the other

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., pp. 12-13.
hand, the Communists led by Dange believed that the nation could be liberated only by
the labourers and the peasants and for this the education, organisation and uprising of the
peasantry was essential. There was inherent differences regarding the methods by which
the Marxists wanted to end the two evils – fast developing capitalism and foreign rule.
The Communists thus struggled not only against the imperialists but also against the
native vested interests. The suspension of non-cooperation movement was regarded, ‘as a
direct betrayal of the forces which were at Gandhi’s command”, the betrayal was
inevitable because Gandhi sought to overthrow imperialism, without crushing Indian
landlordism and capitalism, a historical impossibility, because the three were bound
together.48 Leaders like M. N. Roy and EMS Namboodripad, who had at Gandhi’s call
joined the anti-imperialist movement, were dismayed at the suspension. M. N. Roy did
not help the Socialist Labour Party of Dange but praised Dange’s ‘Socialist’, a
communist publication. He even asked Dange to organise a conference of all the
communists and form a party. Roy advocated an “Action Programme, the goal of which
was abolition of landlordism, complete independence, distribution of land to the
peasantry and nationalisation of big industries. He got his programme circulated in the
Gaya Session of 1922 but it was not accepted. The Convention did not want M. N. Roy
to form a new party. Though the Communist Party of India was formed in 1920, it
adopted in August 18, 1959 at the Kanpur Communist Conference as the date of its
foundation. It was decided so in 1920 that it had no link with the national liberation
movement and had neither a constitution nor a programme. Till 1925 the Communist
movement in India was weak and scattered. In 1923, efforts were made to organise a
centralised party but the conference at Lucknow could not take place because most of the
leaders had been arrested in connection with the Kanpur conspiracy case. Besides, being
ideologically mature, the British government with its propaganda against the Communists
drew a wedge between the communists and the militant left-wingers of the INC. The
government appealed to the middle class that the success of Marxism would only lead to

48 Tesec, A. Ezekiel, Swaraj or Surrender (Bombay, n.d.), quoted by Tilak Raj Sareen, 
Russian Revolution and India (1922-1929), New Delhi, Sterling, 1978, p.20 quoted by 
Talwar, ibid., p. 15.
its annihilation for it was a fight to finish the bourgeoisie as a class. In the Kanpur session, itself on December 26, 1925, which was held alongside the session of the Congress, there was a split between Satya Bhakta Mohani, Singaravelu and Muzaffer Ahmed and others in which Satya Bhakta walked out. The Communist Party of India succeeded in orienting the Congress towards radicalisation. The people were disillusioned with the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi. The Madras Congress in 1927 demanded complete independence for India which was vehemently opposed by Gandhi. Besides others, Jawaharlal Nehru was an ardent supporter of Soviet Union because ‘communism for whatever its faults, it was at least not hypocritical and not imperialistic’.\textsuperscript{49} In the INC session held in Calcutta in December 1928, Gandhi wanted the resolution that Dominion status should be accepted for India if the British Parliament gave a positive nod to the Nehru Constitution entirely within a year. Others like Bose and Nehru wanted complete independence. Though their resolution was defeated by 973 to 1353 votes, yet it showed the influence of the left-wing. In October-November 1928, the radicals in the Congress like Iyengar, Nehru and Bose had formed the Independence of India League. The dual objects of the League were to achieve complete independence for India and also to reconstruct the society on the basis of social and economic equality. The INC at its annual session in 1928 declared that the struggle of the Indian people for freedom was a part of the general world struggle against imperialism and its manifestations.\textsuperscript{50} In 1929, the INC passed a resolution for ‘complete independence’ at its Lahore session. In the Meerut conspiracy case which the government started out of the 31 prisoners, 8 were members of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi was shocked with Nehru’s ideas concerning complete independence at the Madras Congress in December 1927. Gandhi thought that ‘such resolutions as the one for national independence made the Congress a “laughing stock of critics” and were “ill-conceived”.


\textsuperscript{50} Talwar, op. cit. n. 45, p. 45.
The Congressmen had “almost sunk to the level of school-boys’ debating society”. Later Gandhi won Nehru over and supported his candidature as the President of the Lahore Session in 1929. The Lahore session of the Congress saw the expulsion of all the left-wing elements, including Iyanger and Bose from the Congress Working Committee. Though the Communists worked with the INC on some national movements yet the right-wing leadership of the Congress was dominating and distrusted the communists. The Communists and the left-Congressmen joined on the trade union front. Even in the trade union movement there was distrust between the communist leaders and the INC. The latter remained at the helm of affairs without doing any effective work at the grass root level. Efforts, at this level, were done by the communist workers. The Communists resented this behaviour of the Congress members. The differences were also because the Communists did not want to compromise on the national movement and they wanted the money collected to be used for the activities of the trade union to improve the conditions of the proletariat. The Congress, on the other hand, wanted the funds to go to the general fund. Gandhi disliked the trade union movement and the Swarajists only provided lip service to the movement. It was the communists only who extended support to the workers. They emphasised more on economic rather than political demands.

The year 1930 saw the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Movement, as decided by All India Congress Committee in the Ahmedabad session which met on March 21, 1930, called the Nation to start Civil Disobedience only when Gandhi violated the salt law himself. Gandhi began his march on March 12, 1930 and it lasted for 24 days. In the Round Table Conference on November 12, 1930 the peace negotiations failed though Sapru and Jayakar tried. Gandhi stated that a constitutional scheme would be acceptable to him only if it allowed India to secede from the Empire and another if a clause gave India the right to deal with his eleven points which included release of prisoners, restoration of properties, repeal of Ordinance etc. The Nehrus wanted consensus on all the vital matters and did not agree to Gandhi’s constitutional scheme ‘for it did not fit in with the position and pledges of the Congress or the realities.'
of the day.\textsuperscript{52} The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 failed to take in the interests of the peasants into account. The abrupt suspension of the Civil Disobedience in 1932 and then its resumption in 1932 and again suspension in 1934 filled the peasants with shock against the Congress.

In the Karachi session of 1931 the Congressmen differed from the point on the Bhagat Singh resolution. While the Congress admired the bravery of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Raj Guru, it dissociated itself from and disapproved of political violence in any shape of form.\textsuperscript{53} Gandhi started his self-purificatory fast of 21 days on May 8, 1933 with the object of increasing the number of workers in the Harijan movement to fulfill their work with a pure and true spirit of service. Gandhi was released the same day and he announced the suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement for 6 weeks. Vithalbhai J. Patel and Subash Chandra Bose issued a statement from Vienna calling the suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement as a confusion of Gandhi's failure as a political leader. They called for the Congress undergoing a change in favour of more radical methods. If this could not be done then a new organisation would have to be formed within the Congress which would comprise of elements which were more radical in nature and in its methods. The Individual Satyagraha was launched. Meanwhile, some Congressmen met at Delhi on March 31, 1933 under the Presidentship of Dr. Ansari. They wanted a new line of action thus, denied to enter the Legislatures and to oppose the government thus enabling those Congressmen to action who were not offering Individual Satyagraha. These men wanted to participate in the forthcoming elections to the Legislative Assembly. They had a dual aim (i) to get all the repressive laws repealed and (ii) to get the national demand passed on the lines decided by Gandhi at the Round Table Conference. Mahatma Gandhi gave his blessings to those leaders though he was against participation. These Congressmen wanted to revive the Swarajist Party. In the Conference convened at Ranchi on May 2 and 3, 1934 a revised constitution of the Swaraj Party was adopted which clearly stated that in all the broad policies, the Swaraj

\textsuperscript{52} Sitarammaya, op. cit., n. 1, p. 422.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 456.
Party would be guided by the INC but in matters of internal administration and party finance the Swaraj Party would be independent. In the Patna session on May 18 and 19, 1934, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution concerning the Swaraj Party which appointed Pt. M. M. Malaviya and Dr. Ansari to form a board to run and control elections of members of the Legislature on behalf of the Congress. In the Patna session, the Civil Disobedience Movement was given up and the programme to enter the Councils was geared up. The same month of May 1934 saw the birth of Socialist Party. Holding the first meeting at Patna under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev on May 17, 1934, it made itself clear on the question of Council entry and the textile strike. The Bombay session of October 28, 1934 saw Gandhi retire from the Congress. After the conclusion of the session, the nation got busy in the elections. The Congress nationalists under Pt. Malaviya and Mr. Aney supported Congress on all matters except the communal question. Socialism caught the imagination of the people, especially the youth. The Congress Socialist Party which was formed within the INC was gradually overshadowed by the Communist Party.

In the Lucknow Session of the Congress in April 1937, the Liberal thought within the Congress proposed that the Congress should accept office. So the dual programme of preparing the election manifesto as well as shaping the Agrarian programme were left to the All India Congress Committee. The two issues were linked as the latter would be fulfilled if the INC came into office.

Meanwhile, the idea of adopting radical ideologies was spreading fast. Socialism seemed to be the answer for economic nationalism, seemed to arouse the people at large. Indian socialism concentrated on masses rather than the classes. Indian socialists have believed in the State and have not preached its withering away. They have, thus, not propagated violent methods and have given a new dimension to socialism by keeping it within the parliamentary framework. The Swadeshi movement gave further impetus to the socialistic ideas. The First World War resulted in the growth of a small organised class of labour. This had led to the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1928. Moreover, since 1920 representatives of the Labour Party came to attend the
annual session of the INC. The Brussels Conference of 1927 inspired Jawaharlal Nehru to the extent that he introduced Congress to socialism. A number of trade unions, student and youth organisations grew all over the country. But Gandhi’s ideas like undeveloped factory – stage civilization in India, faith in religious rituals, were obstacles in the growth of socialism. Liberals like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade, R.C. Dutt and G.K. Gokhale stressed the need to improve the indigenous industries and economic development to meet the growing economic aspirations of the new social ideas mostly composed of the professional middle classes. 54 Dadabhai spoke of exploitation of a nation by a nation and talked of ‘the moral drain’ that the British government was inflicting on the Indian people. Ranade opposed state capitalism and founded the Indian social conference devoted to the socio-economic problems in India. He wanted a social system based on social justice and equity. R.C. Dutt exposed the land policy of the government which led to antagonism between the landlords and the peasants. Gokhale openly asserted that the government had created an economic mess and spoke against the rising salt prices in the country. 1922-32 was an important decade in the growth of socialism and many leaders connected with the INC led the way. Lala Lajpat Rai presided over the First session of the All India Trade Union Congress and critically analysed the evils of the capitalist system and wanted India to have independent labour organisations. The election of Nehru as the president of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1928 initiated the tilt towards Marxian communism. His return in 1927 from Brussels Congress led to the growth of the radical socialist ideology in the Congress as well in the Indian Trade Union Movement. He did not like the moderates for he thought that they did not think in terms of economic, except in terms of the new upper class which they partly represented and which wanted room for expansion. 55

Subash Chandra Bose supported Nehru in forming the Indian League for Independence. After Nehru’s resignation from the All India Trade Union Congress in

54 Akhilendra Prasad Rai, Socialist Thought in Modern India, Meerakshi, Meerut, 1974, p. 20.
55 Ibid., p. 66.
1929 Bose himself became the President. A left-winger and a radical he wanted a synthesis between communism and fascism. Discarding Gandhism he preferred communism as the former didn’t talk of social reconstruction as the latter did. Narendra Deva joined the extremist group led by Tilak, Pal and Ghose rather than the moderates like Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Surendranath Bannerji. Having a deep insight into the Marxian theories he knew the importance of economic factors in making the social structure. In 1939, presiding over the All-India Kisan Sabha at Gaya, he urged the peasants to organise themselves independently of the Congress. He stressed on ‘social revolution’, ‘economic struggle’ and thought that any revolutionary change could be brought about only when the economic struggle is linked with the national movement for independence. He maintained that the Congress Socialist Party was a party which aimed for economic emancipation as well as democratic freedom i.e. social democracy. Disagreeing with Gandhi’s techniques of Satyagraha, he thought independence would not be attained through those methods. Jayaprakash Narayan (J. P.) on his return to India in 1929 was asked by Jawaharlal Nehru to organise the Labour Research Department of the INC. He did not join the Communist Party because of its anti-nationalist stand. At the first gathering of the Congress Socialist Party, J.P. was elected as the Organising Secretary of the new party, i.e. Congress Socialist Party. He exhorted every Congressman to adopt socialism. Criticising the non-violent method of Gandhi and INC he ‘urged the people to develop a mass movement – comprising the working classes and the peasants against the government’.56 In 1934, he became the General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party at Bombay and in 1936 at Faizpur he was elected the Chairman. When Gandhi announced Individual Satyagraha, J.P. opposed Mahatma Gandhi. J. P. believed in class struggle and insurrectionary methods to achieve both national as well as socialist aims.

Ram Manohar Lohia criticized the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi. One of the founding fathers of Congress Socialist Party, he opposed military recruitment and opposed contribution to the war loans. Opposed to Gandhi’s non-violence Lohia

56 File No. 36/3/34 Poll. Government of India, Home Department, p. 11.
justified insurrectionary violence. The Congress Socialist Party was formed by those young men who felt the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 and 1932 was a failure along with the failure of the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931 and the two successive Round Table Conferences. Though the Congress Socialist Party was organised as a radical group within the Congress, they did not accept parliamentary methods. Disgusted with the soft and compromising methods of the Congress the Congress Socialist Party believed in radical methods of struggle like underground activities, sabotage, arms and insurrection.

In the Faizpur session of December 1936, there was a clash of ideas between Jawaharlal Nehru and Patel. The former talked of India gradually becoming a democratic state, the goal of which would be to have great changes in the political and economic structures. Such a change would ‘lead to socialism. For that seems to me the only the remedy for India’s economic ills’. And the latter believed that capitalism could be purged of all its hideousness by weaning away those who are exploiting the masses mercilessly away from this idea.

In 1937, internal dissensions forced the Congress to rethink its strategy. Nehru, as Congress President had differed from Gandhi, by forcing the Congress Ministries to resign and confronting Gandhi regarding the Congress support to Britain in the war. With Patel and Rajagopalachari at his side, Nehru differed with Gandhi regarding non-violence and sympathies with Britain. Gandhi and his lieutenants parted because of ideological differences.

The Congressmen were in the beginning divided among themselves regarding the question of acceptance of office. The group supported by Gandhiji favoured acceptance while the other group led by Jawaharlal Nehru opposed. In March 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru agreed and the group searched for a leader. They found the leader in Subhash Chander Bose. A radical, he differed in his views from Mahatma Gandhi. The latter coerced him into accepting office of the President of the INC. Bose presided over the

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session of the Congress at Haripure (Gujarat) on February 19, 1938. He stressed on resisting the unwanted federal scheme because of its undemocratic and anti-national features. It was clear from the beginning that there were differences between him and Mahatma Gandhi. Bose's open propaganda after the Munich Congress in September, 1938 calling the Indian people for a national struggle finally raised a wall between him and the Gandhian wing of the Congress. The election of Bose as the President of INC in 1938 made the Socialists at ease regarding Gandhi's leadership. 'Though no Socialist joined the new Working Committee of the Congress, the Congress Socialist Party felt that its interests were adequately protected by the presence of Subash Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru on the Committee'.

The breach between Mahatma Gandhi's followers and Bose led to the former supporting Pattabhi Siitaramayya for the post of President of INC in the next Congress session in 1939. Bose was re-elected and he exhorted the INC to ask for independence within six months. The speech of Bose was not well-received and Mahatma Gandhi's supporters placed their loyalty and trust to Mahatma Gandhi. Bose resigned from the post to set up a new Party – The Forward Bloc. 'The negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and writer (Bose) revealed that on the one side, the Gandhians would not follow the lead of the writer and that on the other, the writer would not agree to be a puppet President. There was consequently, no other alternative, but to resign the Presidentship.' The Forward Bloc had a large number of radical militants and young members of the Congress. Immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War, Bose and his political faction demanded that the British constitute a provisional government of Indians as a pre-condition for India joining the war.60

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Gandhi on the defeat of Pattabhi uttered that it was his own defeat. This led to the delegates reemphasizing their support to Gandhi. Bose’s new party in September 1939 gained strength with the support of the Youth League who were not satisfied with the Congress’s “lack of a militant programme”.

The War in 1940 offered new faces to the Indian national movement. Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh did not agree with the INC’s boycott of Britain. The nationalists had been repeating since 1936 that they would not support Britain as their support in the First World War had fetched them the cruel Rowlatt Act and the innocent massacre in Jallianwala Bagh. The Congress was divided on the issue of supporting the Imperial power. Gandhi and his band of followers were sympathetic to Britain and offered moral support. The Left forces did not want India to participate in the war as it was, according to them, an “imperialist war”. They wanted to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement. Jawaharlal Nehru and the majority of the Congressmen had their sympathies with Britain but promised support only if India was promised full independence. This resolution of Jawaharlal Nehru evoked mixed response. The radicals and the Left groups reacted strongly for they felt that in case of a negative reply by Britain a clear call for mass movement had not been given by the Working Committee. Gandhi disliked the idea of supporting Britain in War as it would go against his tenets of non-violence. Difference arose between him and other members of the Working Committee as the former felt that building up an armed strength of India would go against non-violence. The latter thought that this idea was unrealistic. ‘Gandhi lamented that he was out of tune with the Congress – that perhaps someone else should assume the reins of leadership’. The people were ready for Civil disobedience but Gandhi’s statement on November 4, 1939 dampened the spirit of many people. Gandhi felt that the people were not ready for civil disobedience as the Muslim League felt that the Congress was an enemy of the Muslims. The launching of the Movement would lead to riots

61 Visalakshi Menon, op. cit., n. 58, p. 141.
62 Gandhi’s letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, October 26, 1939, CWMG, Voi. 70, p. 297, quoted in Visalkshi Menon, ibid., p. 261.
between the two communities. In Ramgarh, the INC session was addressed by Gandhi after a gap of four years. Gandhi could see factionalism and indiscipline within the Congressmen; so he tried to discipline the Congress members by asking them to become Satyagrahis. The Congress Committees would be converted into Satyagraha Committees and only those members who believed in Satyagraha would be members of such committees; the others could tender their resignation. The members were confused at such steps.

The worsening situation of Britain in war led to panic in India. The people forgot Gandhi’s message of non-violence and armed themselves for self-defence. The resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee at Wardha on June 21, 1940 declared its inability to go along with Gandhi and his non-violent methods. Thus it relieved Gandhi of the responsibility of leading the Congress. At an emergency meeting in Delhi, the same year, in July a resolution framed by C. Rajagopalachari was adopted which called ‘for an unequivocal declaration of India’s independence and the immediate creation of such a provisional National Government as would “command the confidence of all the elected members in the Central Legislature”.’ This further created internal differences among the Congressmen. The resolution stated only if this happened, Congress would be able to effectively organise the defence of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru, Narendra Dev and Patwardhar voted against the resolution while Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Pattabhi Sitaramnya voted in favour of the resolution. Jaya Prakash Narain felt that Rajaji had betrayed them and suggested Nehru to leave the Congress and set up his own association. The Congress leadership was torn by serious internal differences. When the All India Congress Committee met at Poona on July 28, 1940, the resolution was again debated and passed. Leaders like Nehru, Prasad, Kriplani remained neutral along with 40 members. After the Poona meeting except four members of the Working Committee, all the members tendered their resignations for they felt India should not take part in the war. Their terms were accepted and the resolution was forgotten. Rajaji’s suggestion of accommodation in June-July 1940 had not given the desired results but only given rise to multi-polar

63 Visalakashi Menon, op. cit., n. 58, p. 281.
differences among the leaders. When Gandhi called off the second phase of Individual Satyagraha in June 1941, Rajaji, Nehru and Azad rose in revolt against him but Patel remained with his Guru. Gandhi did not want to lose him the second time. In the All India Congress Committee meeting in April-May, Gandhi had trained Patel to make the Congress accept the policy of non-violent non-cooperation. Patel defeated Nehru on a resolution which was drafted by Gandhi and moved by Rajendra Prasad. He rebutted Nehru on the Cripps proposal and Rajaji in regard to Jinnah.

In 1942, the news of the War was discouraging. The leaders were thinking on the action which they were expected to take in the case of Japanese invading India. Nehru wanted India to effectively look after its defence and make the war a concern of the masses. He wanted to fight on the side of the nation which safeguarded democracy. Azad wanted the INC to organise people to resist the Japanese and did not have much faith in non-violence. Gandhi thought in terms of non-violence, non-cooperation and trusting the British sense of justice and could not think of India’s supporting the Japanese. Rajaji wanted the acceptance of the Muslim League demand which talked of Pakistan ‘and the revival of provincial popular governments which had ceased to function since October – November 1939’.  He did not agree with Gandhi’s method of non-violence and wanted to establish a common united front to resist the British. He wanted to reform the Congress Ministry in Madras. Rajaji was against the ‘Quit India’ demand and said that it would be a crime for the British to leave India ‘without simultaneous replacement by another government. It ‘must involve the dissolution of the state and society itself’. He also asked the Congress to accept the idea of Pakistan on which he was defeated. On the defeat of the proposal, he resigned from the Congress Working Committee and continued on his agitation. In July on the advice of S. Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhi asked Rajaji to resign from the primary membership of the Congress. He did so on July 15, 1942. Jagat Narain Lal’s proposal was passed which said that the Congress would not let

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64 Tara Chand, op. cit., n. 59, Volume Four, p. 368.
65 Penderal Moon, Divest and Quit, London, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 27.
66 Ibid.
or encourage any part of India to secede. The leaders were divided over India’s role in the war. The Congress Working Committee which met at Allahabad on April 27, 1942 was conspicuous of Gandhi’s absence who advocated negotiating with the Japanese. The Congress leaders did not want to become passive partners of the Axis powers for unlike Gandhi they did not believe that Japan was the lesser of the two evils. This was inconsistent with the policy which the Congress had been following since the past two years.

The Sikhs were divided among themselves regarding their status quo. But till 1942-3, the Akalis hoped that the idea of Pakistan would not materialize. Pakistan would mean leaving two million of their brethren along with important shrines in Pakistan. Due to the efforts of Mr. Short, a British officer, a pact, Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact, was worked upon for a Muslim-Sikh accord. This led to a part between the Unionists and the Akalis. The latter became a Minister in the Punjab Cabinet. The success of this pact was seen when the Akalis rebelled against Gandhi’s programme in August 1942. A majority of the Akalis did not take part in his programme and abstained from any activity which would embarrass the Punjab Government. Sikander’s death led to the termination of the pact.

The Sikhs asked the British government to hand over powers to a single authority i.e. the Congress and if this was not to happen, they demanded their own separate state. The British, if it wanted to carry out negotiations with the Sikh community, would have to do this with Master Tara Singh, S. Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh. For them the importance of Master Tara Singh lay in his being “the Sikh leader with greatest personal following”, of Baldev Singh because of his “wealth and standing as a member of the Governor General’s Council” and to them Giani Kartar Singh was “a typical party boss”.67

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The elections and the result of 1937 had permanently created a rift between the Congress and the Muslim League. The demand for Pakistan was on the rise. Gandhiji’s arrest in the Quit India Movement and his self-purificatory fast from February 10, 1943 to March 3, 1943 evoked worldwide interest to set him and the other leaders free. The government promised to release them only when ‘the Congress repudiated its resolution of Quit India, withdrew the Civil disobedience movement and promised to cooperate in the war effect’.68 Gandhiji was released on May 5, 1944 and it marked the end of Gandhian era. The Indian nationalists wanted a revision of the Gandhian methods of non-violent non-cooperation. What followed till 1947 was spontaneous revolution by different groups with the INC designing independence first and then solution of communal rift while the Muslim League wanted a clear cut policy of the Congress first and then independence. While Bose waged his own battle, Gandhi’s talks with Jinnah continued who was in no mood to reconcile with the INC fearing the latter’s dominance. Gandhi’s talks with Jinnah did not find favour with Patel. He wrote to Gandhi showing his dissent and his going away from Gandhi. ‘Patel seemed to have considered the Gandhi-Jinnah Bombay talks as the ‘Munich of India’ in so far as Gandhi’s spirit of conciliation was interpreted as a gross weakness of the Congress as a Party’.69

The year 1945 even saw differences between Patel and Maulana Kalam Azad. In the 1937 elections, Patel had full powers as the Chairman of the Parliamentary Board. In 1945, Azad kept these powers with him. They both differed first on the issue of Congress support to non-party organisations. Patel believed that the Congress would be finished if they let independent organisations have their own Election boards. Patel was approached by Master Tara Singh on the Akali growing discontent and Azad asked them to be referred to him. Patel didn’t believe in appeal to Azad by different organisations after the Central Board’s decision. This would have led to indiscipline. In 1946, Ministry in Sind had to be formed after the Assembly elections. Patel went to Karachi to defeat Jinnah by not letting him form a League Ministry while Azad dreamt of an Congress-League

68 Tara Chand, op. cit., n. 59, p. 391.
coalition. Had Patel got his way, the idea of Pakistan would have been nipped in the bud. Azad did not let Patel have his way and saw to it that it ended up with a coalition. Even in Punjab, the Patel-Azad differences took its toll. Punjab was the key province of the idea of Pakistan. Azad was opposed to Gopi Chand Bhargava’s election as the leader of the legislative party even though the latter enjoyed Khizar’s confidence. The biggest strategic mistake of Congress and Azad was the latter’s support to the election of Bhim Sen Sacher who had hardly any support. Patel was dismayed at the disunity which showed in the Congress ranks of which the Unionists and the Akalis were taking advantage of. Patel had calculated a win with Bhargava as his trump card which would have thrown Punjab in the Congress’s lap but Sachar’s weak leadership led to the deteriorating of ties between Khizr and the local Congress leaders. Baldev Singh wrote in a letter to Patel, ‘If some collaboration with Malik Sahib (Khizar) is still contemplated, only to keep the Muslim League out, it is most essential now not to encourage anti-Gopichand party men… Malik Sahib has made it plain that, if the Congress do not want his collaboration, he should not be made to accept men on whom he cannot rely. He is quite prepared to have the collaboration of Dr. Gopichand and of such Congressmen on whom Malik Sahib and Gopichand can agree.’

Patel knew that a compromise of the Congress with the Akalis was essential and Unionists were essential to defeat Jinnah in Punjab and for the Congress’s own well-being. The differences between Patel and Azad led to Congress failure in Bengal, Punjab and Sind. If Gandhi had asked Azad to step down from the Presidential chair, Patel would have got the desired results in India’s favor and Pakistan would have never seen the light of the day. Gandhi made Patel withdraw his name in favour of Nehru for the election of the Congress President after Azad because J. P., the Socialists, Azad and the Nationalist Muslims were all anti-Patel. The repercussions of this disunity were many. In the League there was only one leader while the Congress was infested with many. Sitaramayya has written, ‘While the Muslim League spokesman was one single individual leader … the Congress had more than one leader … a non-official leader in

70 Ibid., p. 236.
Gandhi; an official leader in Maulana, a defacto leader in Jawaharlal and a dynamic leader in the Sardar. This four pronged leadership and diplomacy not only stood in glaring contrast with the unity of command in the League, but also seemed to widen the range of possibilities for the Viceroy to excuse his appeals and exhortations on different temperaments, in different ways and to different purposes.71

The election results in 1945 were completely different than those in 1937. This time the Unionist Party was routed in Punjab and left the way for Muslim League. The election of Labour Party in Britain made it clear that British wanted to leave India and go. But on whom would they thrust this responsibility? The Cabinet Mission in 1946 tried to give the answers. But the Sikh population feared domination by the Muslims, especially after the rout of the Unionist party, in the elections. The Cabinet Mission proved to be a failure because of the last minute intervention of Gandhi. The Cabinet Mission interviewed Sikh leaders to ask them their wishes. Master Tara Singh was for a united India and a coalition government of all communities. He was against the partition of the country. In case of partition he wanted a separate independent state with the right to either attach with Hindustan or Pakistan. Harnam Singh pleaded for more strength for the Sikhs in the Constituent Assembly. Giani Kartar Singh felt that the Sikhs would be insecure in both a united as well as a divided India. He wanted that the Muslims should be given 57 per cent of the Punjab territory and the Sikhs should get a dominant portion in the remainder. Baldev Singh stood for a ‘united India with safeguards for minorities in the form of weighted communal proportions in the Legislatures’.72 Finally, the Prime Minister of Britain, Mr. Atlee announced their intention of leaving India not later than July 1948. This meant partition. The Mountbatten Plan was accepted by all the parties and India a country of two nations – as asserted by the Muslim League – divided into two – India and Pakistan.

In all the efforts to win independence and to have a Muslim state by both the INC and the Muslim League respectively, Punjab was the hub of activities with the Hindu Muslim and Sikh population, each equal to the other in some respect. None’s wishes and interests could be ignored. The Sikhs opted for the division of India and Pakistan and partition of Punjab. The Muslim League did little to put the Sikhs at ease. To add fuel to fire, Khizar and the Unionist party suffered a crushing defeat in the elections of 1946 and the Muslim League emerged as the strongest party. But they could not form a Ministry because they lacked absolute majority. Their uncompromising attitude did not let them get support from anywhere. Meanwhile, Sardar Baldev Singh asked Khizar to head coalition ministry with the support of Akalis, Congress Hindus and his own nine Muslim followers. He did so and the Muslim League’s fears were further strengthened that in an independent India, the Congress would always be able to win over a section of the Muslims and suppress the wishes of their community. Baldev Singh signed a pact with Khizar and this led to an ill-starred coalition. Thus in the end the pact proved a snare. Jinnah and Muslim League did not take any steps to placate the Sikhs. They considered the Sikhs ‘a bloody nuisance…. Jinnah was well advised to steer clear of the bastards so far as he would’.74

During the Simla Conference on July 14, 1945, no conclusive results were reached but Master Tara Singh said, ‘he could accept Pakistan only if Muslims agreed to a separate Sikh state’. After the March 1946 riots, Giani Kartar Singh’s demand for separate Sikh state which had been rejected in 1944 as an impossible one, became a practical one for the survival of the Sikhs. The SAD formalised it on March 22, 1946.

The Sikh leaders initially did not take part in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. After the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan which talked of division of

73 Moon, op. cit., n. 55, p. 73.
74 Ibid., p.87.

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India into two Dominions, the Sikhs interests in the divided Punjab were taken into consideration. The community would be cut into two therefore Baldev Singh wrote to Mountbatten requesting that strict instructions should be given to the Boundary Commission to ensure that as large a percentage of the Sikh population as possible was included in the Eastern Punjab.76

**Factionalism during 1947-1966.**

As one can observe, ‘the Congress organisation was plagued with internal factions almost from its very beginning. Throughout its long life, it was never free from groupism and dissentions’.77 After independence, differences again came to the fore. This time the tussle was between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel and the latter was identified with the rightist tendencies. Nehru and Patel began drifting apart in December 1947 on two issues – ‘first on the issue of Nehru’s bypassing the States Ministry under Patel by giving direct to Sheikh Abdullah a loan of Rs. 20 lakhs, followed by the taking away Kashmir from his charge and soon afterwards following Patel’s January 6th Lucknow speech in which he was critical of the Indian Muslims’ attitude towards the Indian Union’.78 While Nehru was an autocrat while functioning, Patel was a democrat who believed in organisation and consensus while maintaining a steel grasp whenever the question of the unity of the Country came to the fore.

Even in PEPSU (It was the result of the Union of States formed by the states in East Punjab-Patiala, Kapurthala Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Malekotla and States of Nalagarh and Kalsia on May 5 1948), factions reigned supreme. The Congress was aghast at the formation of a first non-Congress Ministry in any State. When all efforts to dislodge the Ministry headed by Rarewala failed exodus from the Congress to the Ministry started.

76 Kapur, ibid., p. 123.
Shri Nihal Singh Takshak, Harnam Singh, S. Bhupinder S. Mann resigned and joined the United Front. When the Congress felt it was losing ground, it declared a Presidential Ordinance under Art. 356 on March 16, 1953 and dissolved the PEPSU Legislative Assembly. After a year’s spell, in the interim poll of March 1954 the Congress returned with a majority and S. Raghbir Singh became the Chief Minister. After his death Brish Bhan became the Chief Minister. PEPSU was merged with Punjab on November 1, 1956.

The Punjab Congress even before partition was involved in factional fighting between Satya Pal and Gopi Chand Bhargava groups. The former group was now led by Bhim Sen Sachar. After independence, these groups continued the fight to control the reins of power. The factional fights results in the Akali Dal being accommodated by one of the factions. Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava became the first Chief Minister as the Congress Party came to command an absolute majority in the State Legislative Assembly. Gopi Chand Bhargava took over office with the blessings of Sardar Patel who was the Deputy Prime Minister of India. The other factional group was led by Bhim Sen Sachar which had the backing of Jawaharlal Nehru. Instead of sharing power with the Sachar faction, Bhargava took two representatives from the Akali faction. This worsened the relations between the Bhargava and Sachar factions. The Akali Dal was divided between Giani Kartar Singh and S. Udham Singh Nagoke. Bhargava had to resign as the Chief Minister because the Akali Dal which was first supporting it, led by Giani Kartar Singh, shifted its loyalty to the Sachar group. The latter took office on April 6, 1949. He was given instructions by the Patel dominated Congress High Command to constitute a ‘composite’ Cabinet which he did because he included Bhargava as the Finance Minister. As soon as Sachar took office he launched a campaign against corruption. The Bhargava faction presented a charge sheet against Sachar to the Congress High Command which told the Chief Minister to seek a vote of confidence before October 18, 1949. Nehru was on a visit abroad during these developments. Sachar submitted his resignation on October 18, 1949 and Bhargava, with Sardar Patel’ support again assumed office. With Bhargava back in saddle, the Sachar – Partap Singh Kairon faction
again pressed their demand to expand the Cabinet. Bhargava directed all these demands to S. Patel, who warned Kairon of bad consequences if they destabilised the Ministry. It was with Giani Kartar Singh’s help that Bhargava became the Chief Minister and isolated Kairon. The mutual differences between the two groups were further intensified when Chief Minister Bhargava accommodated two of Akali Dal representatives in his Cabinet than any of the Sachar group. Patel’s death in December 1950 paved clear way for Nehru who established his control both in the legislative and organisational wings of the Congress Party. With Patel’s death Bhargava lost the support of the Pradesh Congress Committee and on March 30, 1951 Bhargava was charged by the Sachar-Kairon faction for working under the dictates of the Akali group. Pratap Singh Kairon who had not been included in the Cabinet of Bhargava had got himself elected the President of the Pradesh Committee. Thirty Congress Member of Legislative Assembly’s asked permission from the Congress High Command to move a vote of no-confidence against Bhargava, the Chief Minister. The Congress High Command directed Bhargava to reorganise his Ministry by sending in ten names from which six were to be elected by the Congress High Command. The six names announced excluded the names of Akali Dal representatives ‘on whom Bhargava was heavily dependent’. Bhargava resigned under protest on June 16, 1951. Though the Congress High Command tried to put an end to the infighting yet the leaders at the Centre had their protégés in the state whom they supported in times of crisis. This infighting led to the change of three Chief Ministers in the state in a short span of from 1947 to 1951. Though Bhargava, with the help of Akali Dal, survived the vote of no-confidence moved by the Sachar – Kairon combination, yet when he refused to accept the compromise formula of the Congress High Command, Nehru asked him to stop passing orders as the Chief Minister of the State. His resignation led to President’s rule being clamped on the state from June 20, 1951 to April 16, 1952 because the Sachar – Karion faction was in a minority and was unable to form a Ministry. The President’s rule had been used a political weapon which had led to denying the majority group the right to carry on the administration of the state. Bhargava

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complained that ‘he had become the first victim of the attempt by the High Command, after the death of Sardar Patel, to oust such people as were considered to have been loyal to Sardar Patel’.  

The tension over the language problem and the Punjabi Suba was creating problems for both the communities, the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Congress began to mobilize the Hindus against the Punjabi Suba. As a reaction to the demand for the Punjabi Suba the Hindus of the State quoted Hindi as their mother-tongue in the census of 1951. The Sikhs felt that the Hindus of Punjab were disowning their mother tongue which was the language spoken largely in Hindu households. It was amidst this tension that the General elections of 1952 were held. The Akali Dal made the demand of Punjabi Suba its main issue in the elections. The Congress won with a majority. There was an environment of mutual distrust among the two communities. The Hindus argued that the demand of the Sikhs for a Punjabi Suba was basically an attempt to establish Sikh hegemony and also a Sikh theocracy in Punjab. The Hindus for the first time in the post-independence India had got majority in the province and any change would lead to losing it. The Sikhs, on the other hand, aspired for political power in Punjab and felt that this was possible only in a Punjabi Suba.

On April 4, 1952, Bhim Sen Sachar assumed office of Chief Minister by popular vote. Nehru at this point encouraged Sachar, though the Kairon Jagat Narain group was in majority. In these elections too, the Congress was divided into factions. Though Kairon Jagat Narain faction had a dominant majority yet Sachar was appointed the Chief Minister. He included both Kairon and Jagat Narain in his Cabinet. In July 1953, the Sri Ram group revolted against the leadership of Bhim Sen Sachar. Two senior ministers – Sri Ram Sharma and Lala Jagat Narain fell out with each other. Lala Jagat Narain had the support of Kairon and Sachar joined them. Sri Ram Sharma accused Sachar of sending a baseless CID report to the Prime Minister against him and Lala Jagat Narain of misusing the funds of his Newspaper, ‘Hind Samachar’. Even at this point, Kairon had

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80 Ibid., p.15.
the support of 50 out of 96 Congress legislators yet because of Nehru and Maulana Azad, Sachar was elected as the Chief Minister. There was again a rift in the Congress Legislative Party. Sachar survived this crisis with the help of Congress High Command and dropped the dissident leader Shri Ram Sharma from his Cabinet who went to form the Gandhi Janata Party which rejoined the present party in 1956.

In the meantime, Kairon as a minister in the Sachar Ministry developed good rapport with Jawaharlal Nehru. Kairon faction gradually obtained full control of both the organisational and legislative wings of the Party. Sachar was inducted as the Chief Minister as a protégé of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. As Pt. Mohan Lal says, ‘The final election is, thus, made by the Congress High Command at Delhi and the Legislators whether at the Union or in the states are their approved nominees .... The truth of the matter is that these legislators have to run time and again to the same High Command for tickets in every election, and do not, therefore, have the guts to defy its super-impositions. And yet their political ego feels immensely hurt. A grievance takes root and gradually starts sprouting. Groupism is generated and leads in course of time to an ultimate revolt’.81 Thus, there was a revolt brewing up among the ranks and this finally manifested itself in 1953 with the exit of Sharma. In 1954, while Kairon was consolidating his position, the supporters of Sharma levelled serious allegations against Lala Jagat Narain. Sachar looked into the charges himself and reported Lalaji’s innocence. Lalaji became a firm supporter of Sachar for it was rumoured that Kairon had encouraged those allegations. Sachar and Lalaji got together to plan Kairon’s fall.

But Sachar’s fall came abruptly. The demand for Punjabi Suba was on the rise and Sachar imposed prohibitory orders on meetings and Morchas. The Akalis protested against this order and the SAD decided to challenge this order. The supporters of SAD poured into Amritsar and then the government decided to raid the buildings in the neighbourhood of Shri Darbar Sahib. The raid occurred on July 4, 1955. Tension mounted in the city and the SAD aroused the sentiments of their masters. Sachar

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withdrew the ban on July 12, 1955. His party took this act as a betrayal for he had surrendered without taking the party into confidence. Opinion started building against him and Congressmen from the state went to the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru time and again, to make him aware of the State politics and their disenchantment with Sachar. The Prime Minister snubbed them and discouraged them on protesting against their Chief Minister. But when Sachar decided to drop Kairon from his Cabinet and sought the permission of the High Command, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad rejected his demand and asked him to resign. Sachar resigned in January 23, 1956. The differences between Kairon and Sachar had gone from bad to worse at this juncture. The exit of Sachar paved the way for Sardar Partap Singh Kairon who assumed office on January 23, 1956. Kairon took office at a time when the state was besotted with too many problems. Morchas and agitations were the order of the day and the refugee problem had not been fully solved.

The Regional formula announced in 1956 divided Punjab on linguistic basis because it wanted to safeguard the interests of the two language groups. The plan was accepted by SAD after a lot of deliberations. The Formula was not accepted by the people of the present Haryana because they felt that it did not fulfill the aspirations of their aspirations. The Hindi agitation demanded a separate Hindi-speaking area. There was vehement opposition from the Maha Punjab Samiti and Jana Sangh. The former was a newly created party to counteract the Punjabi Suba movement. On the other hand, a few Akalis left the Aka Dal and joined the Congress where a new faction emerged. The Jana Sangh condemned the Punjab Congress as pro-Sikh and anti-Hindu. The Hindi-Punjabi issue divided people within the parties too. The Punjab Congress was no exception. The first group emphasised that Punjabi should not be imposed on unwilling people while the second group headed by Giani Kartar Singh stressed that adopting any other alternative than the Regional Formula would lead to agitation from the rival parties. Fourteen prominent members of the Congress Legislative Party resigned from the Congress Party membership over this issue. This group consisted of Suraj Bhan, Vaid Ram, Shrimati Sita Devi, Sher Singh and Jagat Narain, the last being one time general secretary of the
Punjab Pradesh Congress and Minister in the Punjab Cabinet. The Congress Members of Legislative Assembly representing the Haryana region too supported the Hindi agitation. ‘This disruption did incalculable harm not only to the Congress prestige in the state but also further complicated the Punjab issue’. Giani Kartar Singh’s entry into the Congress after Independence made him move away from the Panthic stand and i.e became a nationalist Sikh. He was influenced by Sardar Patel and Baldev Singh and therefore urged the Sikhs to give up the demand for communal elections and reservation of seats and thus give complete support to the Congress. In the deliberations of the Minority sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly he opposed the demand of special safeguards for the Sikhs. When the Akali – Congress unity broke down in post 1956 Giani Kartar Singh even denounced the demand of Punjabi Suba and in the process dethroned Master Tara Singh from the Presidentship of the SGPC. He realised his mistake and supported the demand of Punjabi Suba in 1965. In the 1957 general elections S. Hukam Singh and Giani Kartar Singh rejoined the Congress and on their recommendation many more from the Akali Party were accommodated.

Kairon saw to it that his faction had control over the organisational as well as the legislative wings of the Party, thus crushing all opposition against him. He had Nehru’s blessings. Kairon dismissed S. Gian Singh Rarewala on the excuse of the sale of a tube-well belonging to him to the Irrigation Department on June 22, 1959. General Mohan Singh, Member of Parliament had a faction in the area so he helped in the ouster Rarewala. Owing to his close access to Kairon, Gen. Mohan Singh helped him. The next victim was Rao Birender Singh who had close relations with Ch. Devi Lal. The latter was opposed to Kairon. When Kairon asked Birendra Singh to tender his resignation because of some inconsistencies regarding his land tenancy, the latter refused and Kairon dismissed him. Kairon also faced factionalism in his Party during his tenure with various

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83 J.S. Brar, “Political Perspective of Giani Kartar Singh” in Giani Kartar Singh, A commemorative Volume, ibid., p. 265.
factions presenting chargesheet against him. The first instance was in 1958 when the Bhargava - Prabodh Chandra faction accused Kairon of malpractice. In this year Shri Prabodh Chandra who was the Chief Parliamentary Secretary on 'Sachar Ministry spearheaded the tirade against Kairon by presenting a chargesheet to the Congress President against Kairon. The Congress President, U.N. Dhebar inquired into Kairon’s conduct and warned the latter of consolidating and managing the affairs of the party. Kairon could not pay heed for he was misled by people close to him. After the verdict of the Parliamentary board, the Congress Legislative Party was summoned and a secret ballot was conducted. Kairon survived this crisis with the help of Nehru. Before the actual voting, Nehru in a press conference dismissed charges against Kairon. In 1959, the dissidents against presented a fresh chargesheet against Kairon. Preparations were made to meet at Ludhiana but the dissidents were discouraged in October 1959 by Mrs. Gandhi who had become the Congress President in place of U.N. Dhebar. On April 8, 1959, dissidents led by Giani Zail Singh and Musafir submitted a chargesheet against Kairon to the Congress High Command. By September 1959, it was clear that the Congress High Command would not take any action against Kairon. His control over the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and Congress Legislative Party along with the protective hand of Nehru saved him. In November 1959, the dissidents included Mool Chand Jain Prem Singh, Prabodh Chander. Abdul Ghani, Balwant Rai Tyal and Com. Ram Chandra met at Patiala and while blaming Kairon for corruption kept themselves away from the organisational elections. Prabodh Chandra, Musafir and other dissidents again met at Bawal and then at Amritsar and demanded the dismissal of the Kairon ministry. The Congress High Command was entirely unconcerned with these activities. In the process of selecting candidates for the Congress tickets for the 1962 general elections, C'audhry Dev Lal, Rao Birinder Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, as members of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Election Commission were against Kairon and had the support of the important people in the Congress High Command i.e. Shri Reddy and U.N. Dhebar. They combined to give vent to their common grievance against Kairon. Mr. Dhebar who had once been against Devi Lal and had him removed from the
Presidentship of Punjab Pradesh Congress committee now rued as to why Kairon had parted company with Devi Lal. The announcement of the election list led to a fall out between Darbara Singh, the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and Kairon. While Darbara Singh felt that Kairon wanted to finish him politically, Kairon felt threatened that the former was building his own support group.

Nehru supported Kairon and the latter came out unscathed. Again, on April 8, 1959, 122 dissident Congressmen led by Giani Zail Singh and Gurmukh Singh Musafir submitted a charge to the Congress High Command. Day by day the number of Kairon’s political opponents grew inside the Congress. In 1962, Kairon led the Congress to elections and won with a successful majority. But charges of corrupt practices during elections bruised Kairon’s reputation. He formed the Ministry with 31 members because he had succumbed to pressure. Kairon reduced his Ministry during the Chinese war when Emergency was declared on January 1, 1963. He dropped stalwarts like Brish Bhan and Giani Kartar Singh. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri wanted Kairon to retain Com. Ram Kishan, but his advice went unheeded. Ram Kishan was later rewarded by Lal Bahadur Shastri, by making him the Chief Minister of Punjab when the latter became the Prime Minister.

Kairon faced the devil of factionalism to the maximum. ‘Too much of factionalism dominates merit and independence are casualties. Such a situation cannot last long. The political parties, nay, the nation shall have to ponder seriously over it and put only deserving persons on important public jobs’.84

In the 1962 elections, Kairon was given instructions by the Central High Command and Neelam Sanjiva Reddy to let Giani Zail Singh contest for an Assembly seat. Kairon wanted to confine Giani Zail Singh to the upper house of Parliament. It was only with the help of the Congress High Command that Giani Zail Singh could contest from the Faridkot constituency. After the elections many central leaders who did not like Kairon widened the rift between Kairon and Darbara Singh. In 1963, Kairon made

84 Mohan Lal, op. cit., n. 81, p. 41.
Darbara Singh resign as the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress as he could not retain ministership as well as the presidency. Kairon got his candidate – Pt. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma elected as President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress. In the 1963 Congress elections, Kairon got the withdrawals of Darbara Singh etc. and got his nominees on various Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee offices. Darbara Singh’s two close associates and members of Congress Legislative Party, Chaudhry Darshan Singh and Trilochan S. Riasti left the Congress and went to the opposition. Darbara Singh got them back and his differences with Kairon were eliminated but on a superficial level. The Chinese war led to a cut in the size of the Cabinet. Kairon bade goodbye to all the State and Deputy Ministers and even full Ministers – Darbara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Shri Brish Bhan and Comrade Ram Kishan. Kairon retained Darbara Singh despite State Congress leaders like Giani Zail Singh, Gen. Mohan Singh and Shri Hans Raj Sharma wanting him to drop him. Kairon dropped all except Darbara Singh.

Kairon’s acute rival – Prabodh Chandra was accommodated by Kairon by installing him as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in 1962. Even in that office he continued to oppose Kairon and in fact, worked against the government by encouraging the opposition. He had to resign after a decision by the Congress High Command and became a member of the House where he continued his open and vehement opposition to Kairon. In 1963, rumours were afloat that Kairon would be relieved of Chief Ministership and would be involved in organisational work. 108 Congress legislators and 148 members of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee met Mr. Nehru and urged him not to relieve Kairon as a non-Jat replacement would be exploited by the Akalis. In the same year on July 13, Devi Lal, Master Tara Singh met the President of India, Dr. Radha Krishnan and presented a chargesheet against Kairon. It was signed by Lala Jagat Narain, Yagya Dutt Sharma besides others. The President observed that all those politicians were disgruntled elements. Nehru held same views. On Nehru’s death, Kairon supported Morarji Desai in the tug of war between Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The latter never forgave Kairon for that. The Dass Commission submitted its report and Kairon had to resign on June 14, 1964. The people whom he had helped to
come to power moved away from him. In March 1953, he had got Devi Lal elected as the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee as against Prabodh Chandra and later Devi Lal led the Dass Commission inquiry against him and presented a memorandum to the President of India on July 13, 1963 charging Kairon with abuse of power. Kairon believed that Pt. Nehru would come to his rescue but unfortunately the latter died on May 27, 1964. S. Gurbachan S. Bajwa moved a motion against Kairon fearing the law and order in the state to be at stake. An ex-Minister he spoke against Kairon because he had not been accommodated in the Cabinet in 1957. He had the support of Prabodh Chandra, another dissident who had not been made a Cabinet Minister. ‘The Dass Commission on 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1963, under the Enquiry Act of 1952, which held Kairon guilty on two counts,\textsuperscript{85} using his position for personal gains and abuse of authority’ led to Kairon’s resignation as the Chief Minister of the State on June 14, 1964. Kairon initiated the name of Giani Zial Singh to stop Darbara Singh. The Congress High Command got inklings that Kairon’s hold over the party had to be loosened so they adopted a new strategy. Kairon was then persuaded to send the name of S. Swaran Singh for the Chief Ministership of Punjab. If this name was not acceptable to the Congress High Command, Gopi Chand Bhargava or S. Kapoor Singh would be accepted as compromise candidates. If these names would not be accepted then G. Zail Singh would be the choice. After the Dass Commission report, Kairon submitted his resignation and Gopi Chand Bhargava became the caretaker Chief Minister. Congress was divided into two groups – one the Kairon group and the other anti-group which supported the candidature of S. Darbara Singh, the later group consisted of Brish Bhan, Ram Kishan, Prabodh Chandra and Narain Singh. The Kairon group consisted of S. Ajmer Singh and Bhagvat Dayal Sharma. Finally, instead of an open contest, Kairon decided to accept the decision of the Congress High Command. In a meeting on June 30, 1964, Ram Kishan was unanimously elected the leader. The name was proposed by S. Darbara Singh and seconded by Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava. Ram Kishan was Shastri’s man and suited Swaran Singh because the latter felt that with a non-aggressive Chief

\textsuperscript{85} Dalip Singh, op. cit., n. 79, p. 18.

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Minister like Ram Kishen he could rule Punjab by proxy. The other faction had, meanwhile, approached the Congress President – Shri U.N. Dhebar to stop Kairon from fielding his candidate who told Kairon not to do so. Kairon’s supporters met Pt. Nehru and Dhebar and convinced them that Kairon was right in fielding Darbara Singh. In the election, Darbara Singh won against Brish Bhan who was supported by Kairon’s rivals – Bhargava, Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Giani Zail Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Co. Ram Kishan. U.N. Dhebar never forgot this incident and Kairon had to pay for this after Nehru’s death for the latter had supported him. ‘Politicians are even otherwise slippery and unscrupulous, with exceptions which only prove the rule’. Sardar Darbara Singh fell out with Kairon because Kairon’s rivals and leaders from the Centre wanted Kairon’s downfall. He formed his own ginger group. Even after an argument between Kairon and Darbara Singh, the latter refused to co-operate because of personal unfulfilled ambitions. Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Rarewala, Chaudhry Hardwari Lal left the Congress in 1963 to form a new party called ‘Praja Tantar Party’. Others like Virendra and K.L. Sharma, circulated a charge-sheet against Kairon. All these members were expelled from the party on December 29, 1963 by the decision of the Disciplinary Action Committee of the Punjab Pradesh Congress. After Kairon’s resignation, all were not only admitted to the Party on September 21, 1964 but were duly rewarded. This shows the connivance of the Central party leaders in the working of the affairs of the state. Kairon’s resignation and later his assassination on February 6, 1965 led to the end of one of the dynamic leaders of Punjab.

After Karion, S. Darbara Singh tried to consolidate his position. S. Swaran Singh was given the charge to tackle the Punjab problem and he was against Darbara Singh thus he sidelined the latter. This spoiled the latter’s chances to become the Chief Minister of the State. Ram Kishan was made the Chief Minister on July 6, 1964 and later he tendered his resignation on the advice of the Congress High Command to enable the bifurcation of the state on linguistic basis. President’s rule was imposed in Punjab on July 5, 1966. His was an uneventful term as he had no support group of his own. ‘After
Kairon’s resignation and then his death in 1965, the Punjab Congress split into a number of factions and lacked the will or the leadership to oppose the Punjabi Suba demand’. Factionalism within the Congress increased to such extreme ends that various ascriptive political groups came into the limelight. Giani Kartar Singh, Rarewala etc., many Akali Congressmen wanted a compromise with the Akali Dal. In late 1965 some Sikh Congress Members of Legislative Assembly requested the Union Government to accept the demand of Punjabi Suba. When the Parliamentary Committee asked Punjab Pradesh Congress to submit a memorandum in regards to Punjabi Suba, various voices raised varied demands. ‘Though the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee submitted a memorandum supporting an undivided bilingual Punjab with Himachal Pradesh merged into it, it was clear from the proceedings of the meeting of the state Congress Legislative Party’s executive committee that the real reason why the party was opposing the Suba demand was that it feared that if the demand was accepted it might lose the position and influence in the state’. So weak was the position of the faction-ridden Congress that the Central leadership was forced to look elsewhere to maintain its position. Indira Gandhi’s decision on Punjabi Suba after meeting of the Congress Working Committee with the Chief Ministers and other influential leaders, displeased many Congressmen.

Soon differences arose between Ram Kishan and Home Minister, Darbara Singh, the latter not ready to play a second fiddle to somebody who was imposed on the State by the Congress High Command. Darbara Singh was made Irrigation and Power Minister which was the Number six position in the Cabinet, so he was dissatisfied. Thus, Ramkishen’s large-sized ministry of 20 members could not appease the different members of the party. It was alleged that Darbara Singh had got Kairon murdered. It was reported that Sucha Singh, one of the accused in the murder had visited Darbara Singh a few days before the incident. Ram Kishan did not get co-operation from the Punjab

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88 Ibid., p. 170.
Pradesh Congress Committee led by Pt. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma who was at loggerheads with the Chief Minister.

The Karionites were sidelined and the attitude of the Ministerialist group was abrupt and callous towards the Darbara Singh group, therefore the Dardara Singh group started consolidating themselves. The conflict between the two intensified and the two looked at the Karionites for support. Darbara Singh had teamed up with Prabodh Chandra to oust Ram Kishan. The Congress High Command meanwhile had realised its mistake of imposing a weak Chief Minister. In the very first session in 1964 the Congress Party emerged in a weak light because of infighting. Prabodh Chandra openly criticised and refused to cooperate with the Chief Minister. The Kaironites esteem grew and Lala Jagat Narain – an opposition Member of Parliament and Virendra founder of the Praja Tantar Party feared the comeback of the Karionites. So they managed a truce between Ram Kishan, Darbara Singh and Prabodh Chandra. This interference by two non-Congressmen in the affairs of the party came under a lot of criticism and further tarnished the image of the Ministry. By end of March 1965, the differences between Ram Kishan and S. Darbara Singh deteriorated from bad to worse. While the supporters of the former said that the latter was involved in the murder of Kairon and the latter’s supporters started a signature campaign against the former. The signature campaign was rebuked by the Congress President, Kamraj. It was a victory for Ram Kishan who depended on the Congress High Command for every decision. He had the full support of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister of India and Kamraj. His main clash was with the Kaironites who were in control of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and who blamed him for embezzlement of Rs. 3 lakh collected for party funds. Slowly the Congress High Command started rethinking of giving support to Ram Kishen. The Chief Minister’s own actions led to people like Dr. Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Brish Bhan etc. being disillusioned with him. After a year’s existence, Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, Union Home Minister was sent by Prime Minister Shastri to see the demonstration of strength of both the parties. Nanda failed to suppress the opponents of the Chief Minister. Initially, Ram Kishan was against Purjabi Suba but he fell in line with Swaran Singh who wanted Punjabi Suba The
government finally decided to bifurcate the state and the process started in April 1966. The Shah Commission was appointed on April 23, 1966 to recommend the bifurcation. The members of the Commission were Justice J.C. Shah, S. Dutt and M.M. Philip. Com Ram Kishen was made to resign on June 22, 1966 and the Punjab Assembly was suspended. The Kaironites came closer to S. Darbara Singh and S. Swaran Singh tried to form a rival group to oppose S. Darbara Singh.

Factionalism after 1966

In 1966 the reorganized Punjab had a bifurcated 87 members Legislative Assembly in which two seats were lying vacant, Sarhali in Amritsar district and Bhagaparana in Ferozepur district. The Congress formed a majority with 57 members.

The Congress High Command decided that elections to the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee would be held before the election of the leaders of Legislative Party. First Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir was promoted as the candidate to be supported by the Prime Minister for the post of the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. The other group (Darbara Singh – Mohan Lal) put forward the name of Pt. Mohan Lal for President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress. The Congress was once again divided and with the help of Swaran Singh, Musafir won. For the election of the leader of the Congress Legislative Party, Maj. Harinder Singh, Giani Zail Singh, Gurbachan Singh Talib, Prabodh Chandra, Brish Bhan all joined the Musafir camp. Musafir was elected as the leader of the Congress Legislative Party and became the Chief Minister of Punjab on November 1, 1966. The decision to install him as the Chief Minister was taken by the Congress High Command i.e. by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Party President, K. Kamraj. The Congress High Command got Pt. Mohan Lal and Darbara Singh included in Musafir’s cabinet. Musafir continued to lead his group rather than his party and factionalism flourished. Darbara Singh was disgusted with the affairs in Punjab and when Musafir was chosen over him he thought that he had no future in the state. It was under these conditions that the Congress party went to the
polls in February 1967. Sant Fateh Singh’s fast and Musafir’s false commitment to the Sant had placed him in an awkward situation with the Centre leadership who did not encourage him to have a decisive role in the party in the long run. Because of this infighting, Congress lost its absolute majority in the general elections of 1967. The Congress High Command did not encourage Musafir as the Chief Ministerial candidate, thus a new candidate had to be found. Musafir sponsored the name of Brish Bhan and Prem Singh Prem. On the other hand Giani Zail Singh opposed both the names and favoured either the Maharaja of Patiala or Gian S. Rarewala. The Congress High Command did not say ‘yes’ to the Maharaja, therefore Giani Zail Singh accepted the candidature of Rarewala. Darbara Singh was opposed to Rarewala. S. Swaran Singh supported Brish Bhan and then went along with Giani Zail Singh to support Rarewala. At this, Darbara Singh joined Musafir to oppose Giani Zail Singh and S. Swaran Singh. Darbara Singh–Musafir group put up Brish Bhan while Rarewala was put up by Zail Singh-Swaran Singh group. Later Darbara Singh withdrew his support to Brish Bhan and thus, Rarewala became unanimously the leader of the Congress Legislative Party in 1967. Giani Kartar Singh fought the 1967 elections on the Congress ticket, but lost. Later, he joined the Akali Dal at the instance of Sant Fateh Singh and Justice Gurnam Singh became the first Akali Chief Minister of the State. The Congress party emerged as the largest party with 48 seats and needed only five more members to support it to form the Ministry. Musafir lost the elections by 10,000 votes. The party was divided and leaderless. The factionalism led to the unity of all the opposition parties who came together under the name of United Front. The Congress remained out of power for the first time after independence. The in-fighting had taken its toll on the performance of the Party. The Congress High Command on account of the various acts of omission and commission must share its responsibility. The political pigmies of the Punjab Congress, who placed their self interest, over a higher pedestal, than that of the organisation or the
state, played havoc. When the United Front Ministry fell, the Congress gave support to Lachhman Singh Gill for nine months. While the majority in the Congress wanted Lachhman Singh Gill as the Chief Minister, Musafer and Rani Mohinder Kaur. M.P. from Patiala were influencing the Congress High Command to sponsor the name of Shri Brish Bhan for Chief Ministership. Lachhman Singh Gill wanted to be the Chief Minister at any cost but he was not on good terms with the Jana Sangh. Thus, while in Akali Dal Sant Fateh Singh did not encourage him. He had, in the past, organized the extremists elements in the Akali Dal on communal lines. When Gurnam Singh was made the Chief Minister of Punjab leading the United Front Ministry, Lachhman Singh Gill had taken offence. He was not happy with his subservient position in the government. The Congress supported Lachhman Singh Gill and he defected with 16 SAD members on November 22, 1967 and floated the Janata Party. Rarewala told the Governor that the Congress would support Lachhman Singh Gill. Thus, Lachhman Singh Gill became the Chief Minister on November 25, 1967 and fulfilled his long standing ambition. The Congress had a tactical understanding with Lachhman Singh Gill that his Ministry would include all those defectors of the Congress who had earlier deserted it to join the United Front ministry. The Congress was divided into two factions on the issue of supporting Lachhman Singh Gill. While Rarewala favoured withdrawal of Congress support, the group led by Prabodh Chander stood for continuing support. Rarewala left no stone unturned to oust the Gill Ministry from submitting memorandums to the Congress President to arranging defections from the other parties to secure an absolute majority in the Legislature so that he could form his own Ministry. The Congress High Command preferred to wait and did not accept his suggestions. On the other hand, Lachhman Singh Gill went against the basic Congress policies. He raised the ceiling of land holdings from 30 to 40 acres and denationalized the road transport by issuing fresh transport permits to private company.

90 Mohan Lal, op. cit., n. 81, p. 340.
91 Ibid.
He liberalized the excise policy which was against the prohibition policy of the Congress. Thus, Lachhman Singh Gill’s erratic behaviour and his not being under the influence of the Congress led the Congress to withdraw its support on August 23, 1968. President’s rule was imposed on the same day which lasted till February 17, 1969. The Congress split in 1959 at the national level, with a majority of the Congressmen supporting Indira Gandhi and her Congress (R). In Punjab, Giani Zail Singh headed the Punjab Pradesh Congress and did not see eye to eye with S. Rarewala, leader of the Congress Legislative Party. The latter did not want to continue giving support to Gill and wanted to form the government by including defectors from SAD. Giani Zail Singh was in favour of continuing support to the Ministry till further orders of the Congress High Command. Rarewala had no faith in Giani Zail Singh so he wanted an ad hoc committee to be set up regarding selection of candidates for the mid-term election. Rarewala’s suggestion regarding his candidates were rejected and he left the Congress and joined the Akali Dal. After Rarewala’s exit Gianiji consolidated his position and developed an excellent rapport with Mrs. Indira Gandhi. During Badal’s stay in office as the Chief Minister from March 27, 1970 to June 14, 1971 there was a coalition ministry of the Akali Dal and the Jana Sangh. On June 30, 1970 the Jana Sangh withdrew the support. The Badal government was reduced to a minority and they thought of negotiating with other smaller parties like the Communist Party of India(M) and Swatantra etc. Such support would add to its 49 members. The Congress had 28 members and it stood a better chance to win over the smaller parties. The Vidhan Sabha had been adjourned indefinitely on March 30, 1970 and was to meet in September. The Congress leadership thought of having an alliance with the Akali Party. A section led by Swaran Singh wanted to support the Ministry while the group led by S. Darbara Singh and Major Harinder Singh was against any accommodation with the Akali Dal. According to them any alliance with a communal party like the Akali Party would mean sacrificing the secular ideology of the Congress. They wanted to chalk out some minimum programmes with the Akali Dal before having any coalition. This group led by Darbara Singh recollected the bitter experience they had in the past with Gill. They wanted the Akali Party to prove their...
secular character in profession and in practice. S Swaran Singh wanted the Akali Dal to fall in line with the economic programme of the Congress. Major Harinder even met the Governor, D.C. Pavate to immediately ask for the resignation of the Ministry or to convene a special session of the Legislative Assembly so that the ruling party could prove its majority. Giani Zail Singh had helped in winning the Congress support for Badal for which the latter supported him when the former fought the bye-election from Anandpur Sahib. Zail Singh was the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. Meanwhile Gurnam Singh announced that he would unite with the Sant Akali Dal for the sake of Panthic Unity. This led Badal to stop looking at the Congress for support.

In the 1971 Lok Sabha elections with the help of Gianiji, Darbara Singh, Prabodh Chandra and Gurdial Singh Dhillon the Congress Party won. This enabled Gianiji to consolidate his position for which the Congress High Command chose him the Chief Minister of Punjab over Darbara Singh who had a faction which was supported by Swaran Singh, Umrao Singh and Capt. Rattan Singh. When Gianiji became the Chief Minister on March 17, 1972 some senior members of the Party like Brish Bhan were left out. ‘It was well known that there was groupism in the party. A feudalist-rightist reactionary lobby in the Party could hamstring the Ministry….’ Gianiji continued in office till April 30, 1977. During his term Indira Gandhi declared Emergency and the term of the State Legislative Assembly was extended from five to six years. He became the Home Minister of India in 1980 after his election to the Lok Sabha from the Hoshiarpur Parliamentary constituency.

Giani Zail Singh got his candidate - Niranjan Singh Talib – elected as the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. They had to face opposition from three different quarters from the groups led by Mohinder S. Gill, Harcharan S. Brar and S. Swaran Singh. With Talib’s sudden demise, Giani Zail Singh’s plan suffered. Mohinder Singh Gill became the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. Again, a tussle started between the organisational wing and the ministerial wing, the

former led by Mohinder Singh Gill, the latter by Giani Zail Singh. Gianiji won Indira Gandhi’s blessings by continuously proving his loyalty and weakening the hold of Mohinder Singh Gill by involving some of the supporters of Mohinder Singh Gill in land-grabbing cases after an inquiry by Harchand Singh Committee. D. C. Pavate has observed that ‘The possibility of some ambitious Congressmen trying for a change of leader could not be ruled out altogether, but they are not likely to succeed for their good reasons’,\(^9\) because he was shrewd, he can sense trouble and nip it in the bud and Mrs. Gandhi could not tolerate any indiscipline in the party. With the defeat of the Congress in the 1977 Assembly elections, the Congress was relegated to the background. The Congress split into two in Punjab. One faction comprising of Giani Zail Singh, Darbara Singh and Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Balram Jakhar went with Mrs. Gandhi and the other constituting of Swaran Singh, Mohinder Singh Gill, Khushal Behl and S. Umrao Singh went to Congress (R) which was later known as Congress (U). With S. Darbara Singh as the party chief, the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee since 1978, the leaders were able to garner support for Mrs. Gandhi. As soon as the mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha were announced, Mohinder Singh Gill and his supporters joined the Congress (I). The winning of Congress in the Assembly elections held on May 31, 1980 led to infighting amongst the Congressmen. While the supporters of Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh worked upon the Prime Minister to get their respective candidate selected, six new aspirants rose to claim the office of the Chief Ministership. But Darbara Singh became the Chief Minister on June 7, 1980 because of his loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi. He became the Chief Minister after having missed the bus in 1964, 1966 and 1972, because of factional conflicts. The clash between Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh led to many unfortunate incidents in Punjab. There was indiscriminate killings of the Hindus which led to an ever-widening gulf between the two communities. The killing of innocent Hindu passengers near Dhilwan, Ludhiana is an apt example of political tussle between the two leaders. The Akalis stated that the killing was part of the political tussle between the two leaders. ‘Their wranglings were well-known and much

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of the trouble in Punjab could be connected with their maneuvers against each other. From the first day Zail Singh was unhappy over the installation of Darbara Singh as Chief Minister. And Darbara Singh, a Congressman from the day he entered politics, did not accept Zail Singh, once an Akali, as his leader. While Darbara Singh did not want Zail Singh to meddle in the affairs of the State, the latter did not like Darbara Singh pushing out all his supporters from the government as well as from the party organisation. Thus, it becomes evident that political ambitions and personality clashes have been the key reasons for the continued game of factionalism in the Congress Party during the period under review. It is suspected by political analysts that Gianiji had a hand in encouraging the rise of Bhindranwale. When Baba Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari Chief was murdered on April 24, 1980 at Delhi many suspected the hand of Bhindranwale. But Gianiji who was the Home Minister of India declared in the Parliament that Bhindranwale was not responsible for the killing. Similarly after the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, a Hindu leader and editor of Hind Samachar group of newspapers was shot dead near Ludhiana on September 9, 1981. Bhindranwale was given enough time to escape and was even allowed to choose his time, manner and place of arrest. He was able to reach his Headquarters, Gurudwara Gurdarshan Prakash at Chowk Mehta. He was arrested on September 20, 1981 amidst a standing ovation from thousands of his followers gathered. During the Bhog ceremony of Jathedar Santokh Singh, Bhindranwale was greeted by Gianiji and Buta Singh, both Sikh Ministers in Indira Gandhi’s Cabinet. Bhindranwale made derogatory remarks about Gianiji of which the latter took no notice. After the killing of A.S. Atwal, D.I.G. Police on April 25, 1983 when he was coming out of the Golden Temple, Darbara Singh wanted the police to enter the Golden Temple the permission did not come from the government of India. From the beginning whichever group was numerically stronger in the organisational wing, succeeded in controlling the ministerial wing. During Zail Singh’s tenure and his

95 Dalip Singh, op. cit., n. 79, p. 222.
clash with Mohinder Singh Gill, caste and religion played an important role in fuelling factionalism. Again the clash between Zail Singh and Darbara Singh was partly because of caste differences. “Mrs. Gandhi never allowed a chief minister or a governor to come so close to her. She operated a system of checks and balances on all her colleagues.”

Gianiji was elected to the office of the President of India on July 15, 1982. But the non-acceptance of each others status, among Gianiji and Darbara Singn led to an increase in factionalism in Punjab. The loss was political as well as economic. “Mrs. Gandhi had been only too happy to see Darbara Singh and Zail Singh fighting over Punjab because it prevented either of them dominating over the Congress Party in the State. She found Bhajan Lai: a convenient pawn to play when she wanted to drag out negotiations.”

Because of the infighting among the Congressmen, the Congress High Command got opportunities to interfere in the affairs of the party at the regional level. The Congress High Command’s choice counted for a candidate to be made the Chief Minister of Punjab. Sachar, Kairon, Zail Singh and Darbara Singh became the Chief Ministers because of the blessings of their benefactor at the Centre – the Prime Minister. The control of the Congress High Command had let factionalism simmer and not erupt like a volcano in Punjab. Such is the effect of elections that it is said that the defeat of Harcharan Singh Brar and Gurdial Singh Dhillon in the Assembly elections of 1980 was because of the factionalism rampant in the Congress at that time. “Mrs. Gandhi believed in dividing and ruling her opponents just as much as she believed in dividing and ruling her own party. She had always seen the tension in the Akali leadership as a factor in her favour.”

Darbara Singh resigned from the post of the Chief Minister of Punjab on October 6, 1983 and President’s rule was imposed on the state on October 10, 1983 which lasted till September 29, 1985. Unfortunately, this period was marked by some tragic incicents. The first was Operation Bluestar which was an endeavour by the government of India to flush out militants and terrorists from the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs. The Operation took place on June 3, 1984. The sentiments of

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96 Tully and Jacob, op. cit. p.220.
97 Ibid, p.221.
the Sikh community were greatly hurt. Operation Wood Rose was launched simultaneously in 37 Gurudwaras and many terrorists were taken into custody along with arms and ammunition. Then, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India and decided to solve the Punjab problem. He released the top leaders of the Sikhs like Harchand Singh Longowal, Badal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Surjit Singh Barnala in March 1985. There was anti-Congress wave in the Punjab, thus factionalism took a backseat for some time. The Centre leaders were taking direct interest in the affairs of the state which left the regional leaders with no chance to manipulate the political system. Rajiv Gandhi invited Longowal and Barnala for talks. Even Badal and Tohra were not told about the talks. These talks led to the Rajiv-Longowal Accord signed on July 24, 1985. Longowal was assassinated on August 20,1985 at Sherpur village and Barnala was elected the Acting President of the Akali Dal (Longowal). To bring normalcy to Punjab elections were held in Punjab in September 1985.

The trinity of Rajiv Gandhi, Arjun Singh and Arun Nehru decided that the people who had vested interests in Punjab would be excluded in the search of a settlement for the State. They( the vested interests ) were the President, Zail Singh, the former Chief Minister of Punjab, Darbara Singh and the Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhajan Lai. The Akali Dal (Longowal) decided to fight the 1985 elections and won 73 seats in the Vidhan Sabha. Barnala became the Chief Minister on September 29, 1985. He remained in office till May 11, 1987 when President’s rule was imposed on the State which continued till February 25,1992. During this time the politicians did not have much role to play. The Governor who took the help of bureaucrats was ruling the State. The Congress was leaderless and no one was ready to come and take over the reins of power in the strife torn state. There were no spoils of power to be shared so factionalism and vested interests took a back seat. This was the longest stint of President’s rule in the state. Elections during this time were announced to be held on May 23, and May 26, 1991 which were postponed to June 21, 1991 due to the murder of Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991. When

98 Ibid, p.221
elections were again postponed on June 21, 1991, the Governor of Punjab resigned on the same day in protest against the postponement of the elections. The elections were postponed to September 25, 1991 and then again postponed. Finally, elections were held on February 17, 1992 and the Congress came to power by winning 87 out of 117 Assembly seats and 12 out of 13 Parliamentary seats. Sardar Beant Singh was elected the Chief minister on February 25, 1992. Beant Singh was a man of the masses. He was a party worker who knew the pulse of the people. During the militancy period he was elected the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee when no Congress leader was ready to take the responsibility. He visited the houses which were affected due to militancy and consoled the people. He stood by the people and realised that they too wanted an end to the turmoil. So, he decided to take firm measures to control the militant activities. The party edifice in the state collapsed but Beant Singh stood against all odds. Thus, there was no factionalism in the party as no leader could stand upto Beant Singh. There was no other leader who could be firm and strong enough to meet the problem head-on. All the politicians rallied behind the Chief Minister whose aim was to bring normalcy in the State and help the Congress to get re-established. He brought militancy under control, rehabilitated the militants, banned meetings of the Akali leaders who protested against the alleged state repression and initiated mass contact programmes. He held polls to the local bodies after 13 years and to the Panchayats after 9 years. He challenged the militants and put an end to the rule of terror in Punjab. Tragedy struck when Beant Singh was assassinated on August 31, 1995 at the State Secretariat in Chandigarh. After him Harcharan Singh Brar was chosen as the interim Chief Minister till September 7, 1995. After the state mourning he was elected the regular Chief Minister on September 8, 1995 as the Congress High Command was in his favour. Beant Singh in his lifetime had built up a group of 60 firm loyalists to curb dissidence who tried to block Brar's appointment. The discontent of the legislators of the party had stated during the time of Beant Singh but nobody spoke openly for Beant Singh had tackled the Punjab problem well. Brar got rid of all the tainted ministers and tried to keep all his party legislators with him. But he had to succumb to the political realities and had to
accommodate politicians of all hues and shades. Though he initiated a lot of reforms his
government was not functioning well. Factional feuds were rampant and party discipline
was at its lowest. He had a complacent attitude which worried the Congress High
Command. He did not see eye to eye with Ambika Soni, the Acting President of Punjab
Pradesh Congress Committee.

The Congress put up a dismal performance in the Lok Sabha elections of 1996. Rajender
Kaur Bhattal was made the Deputy Chief Minister of the State by Pranab Mukherjee who
was a Central Cabinet Minister and incharge of the Congress party affairs of Punjab on
August 6, 1996. Brar and Bhattal were at daggers drawn against each other. They had
differences of opinion and differences over running the administration. The clash between
the two state leaders led to ever widening factional feuds. After 14 months of rule Brar stepped
down from office on November 21, 1996 and Bhattal was made the Chief Minister on
November 23, 1996. Brar blamed the differences in the party high command for his removal.
He did not appreciate the way the members of the state Congress Party pulled each other
down. Congress High Command wanted the Congress to be rejuvenated in Punjab so they
placed their hopes on Bhattal. She had earlier had a confrontation with Beant Singh for
sometime as she was an ambitious lady. Later their differences were ironed out and she became
one of the staunch supporters of Beant Singh. Brar had not made her a minister and she had,
in the past, become one with the intervention of the central leaders. Bhattal became the Chief
Minister and swore to live by the ideals of Beant Singh. Her main task was to end factionalism
in the party therefore she tried to bring all the party men together. She knew that putting up a
united front could only curb the growing popularity of the Akali-BJP combine. She worked hard
to get all the disgruntled elements together in the party. The Congress High Command
replaced Ambika Soni with Santokh Singh Randhawa as the new Punjab Pradesh Congress
Committee President. It was under Bhattal’s leadership that the Congress Party went to the
polls in February 1997. The party performed badly and Bhattal became the leader of the
opposition from March 1997. She was the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress
Committee from May 1997 to July 1998. She was replaced by Chaudhry Santokh Singh.
who was elected the leader of the Congress Party in Punjab Vidhan Sabha. This was done by Capt. Amrinder Singh, President, Punjab Pradesh Committee who called all the Punjab Congress Legislators to Delhi. All the District Congress Committee chiefs who were appointed by her were replaced by Capt. Amrinder Singh. Two factions had emerged, one led by Bhattal and the other led by Capt. Amarinder Singh. Each tried to build up a band of supporters and at the same time influence leaders at the Centre. Amidst all this Jagmeet Singh Brar a former Akali who had defected to the Congress created his own one man faction. He wanted to emerge as a leader in his own right. A rebel he has his perceptions of the political system and how the problems should be handled. He believes in handling the party affairs on his own lines which are not appreciated by the other Congress leaders in Punjab who are leaders in their own way. This infighting between the leaders has led to the performance of the party taking a back seat.