Chapter IV

FACTIONALISM IN THE SHIROMANI AKALI DAL

Factionalism Before 1947

Punjab, situated in northwest India, is an important state. Strategically, it is bound on the west by Pakistan and on the northeast by China, a Communist giant. Besides these two countries, it has Jammu and Kashmir and a part of Himachal Pradesh on north, Uttar Pradesh on its east, and Rajasthan to the south. Known as the gateway of India, it is a prized state. The Punjab, which we see today, is the result of partition of India into two countries in the name of religion – India and Pakistan. Often referred to as, the shield, spear and sword-hand India, initially it was referred to as East Punjab, now it is known as Punjab.

In post 1947 Punjab, the society was divided into two religious communities. The Hindus comprised of 63.7 percent of the populations while the Sikhs comprised of 33 percent. The Hindus were divided between the sects of the Araya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharam, the former being the reformist and the latter being the orthodox; the Sikhs used the term ‘Khalsa’ to show their solidarity as a religious community. Besides this trend, there was also a basic conflict in the rural areas between the high-caste landowners who belonged to the tiller class and the Scheduled castes combined with the backward classes. In the rural areas amongst the Sikh community, the Jats were predominant.

A social and educational body of the Sikhs, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was founded in 1902. It enjoyed the patronage of the British to such an extent that it called upon the Sikhs to stay loyal to the government. It even supported the ruthless measures which the

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British took against the Ghadar Party members in 1915. Confining itself to conferences, adopting resolutions, it made appeals to the good sense of the British rulers. It even encouraged Duleep Singh, the exiled son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to remain loyal to the Britishers. Dominating the Sikh arena from 1890-1914, the Chief Khalsa Diwan lost prestige among the Sikh masses. The Sikhs wanted a political organisation that would protect their economic and political interests. The Central Sikh League was formed on December 27, 1919. Slowly, its leadership passed into the hands of the nationalist Sikhs. In its second session in 1920, Baba Kharak Singh, who was a nationalist leader, was elected the President. The League passed a resolution that the British had shown complete disregard for the interests of the Sikh community. Sewa Singh and Bhai Jodh Singh, who were pro-British Sikh leaders, tried to speak against the resolution of Non-cooperation, but were ignored and insulted. Soon, the League was overshadowed by the Akali Da that had emerged as a religious-political organisation. The Sikh landed aristocracy inherently nurtured different interests from the Hindus who were a communal class. Moreover, the Arya Samaj had started the purification of non-Hindus and their induction into Hinduism. ‘This fear of assimilation into Hinduism imparted strength to the revivalist-fundamentalist tendencies in the form of founding of Singh Sabha and Chief Khalsa Diwan’.

The Sikhs trace their origin to Guru Nanak and his teachings and down the line to the Nine Gurus who succeeded Guru Nanak. The Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, created the ‘Khalsa’ to oppose the tyrannical and oppressive rule of the Mughal rulers. Later the Sikhs got divided into twelve Misls, which were under different chiefs. The Misls had their respective territory over which they had full sovereignty. They fought with each other and also made alliances to protect their territory. Maharaja Ranjit Singh succeeded in uniting these Misls under him by subjugating them. After his death, intrigues and disunity led to the British invading Punjab and subsequently annexing it on March 18, 1849. Ranjit Singh did not discriminate amongst his populace. ‘However, the British, who pursued the policy of ‘divide and rule’, did create differences between the three communities (Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs) by playing one community against the

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other. But the people of Punjab dissolved their religious differences, in their struggle for
the freedom of India.3 ‘The character of some of the Sikh priests was no better than that
of the Abbots and monks whom Henry VIII had to turn out from the medieval
monasteries. The life in Sikh temples was often of as scandalous a type as that of the
English monasteries before the Reformation. The priests drank and gambled like
publicans; they robbed and bullied the pilgrims like highwaymen and dishonoured
women and children like rogues of the worst type’.4

The Sikhs have been divided amongst themselves on the basis of caste. The
Gurus, especially the First Guru being a Khatri, that section of the Sikhs, who were once
at the helm of affairs, were gradually overshadowed by the Jats – the rural peasantry who
had martial tendencies. Gradually the Jats came to comprise the innermost decision-
making by the time of the Tenth Guru – Guru Gobind Singh. ‘For their virtue of courage
and sincerity they were starkly different from the Khatris. Their preponderance in the
Panth, especially in its higher positions provided conditions under which the Sikh
community adopted militant and democratic values. On account of his increasing
military reliance on them the Tenth Guru considered it prudent to democratize power in
the Panth.’5 The Adi Granth was thus bestowed the Guruship and the authority to take
decisions was vested in the Gurupanth which was again based on the Panchayat of the
Jats.

The Gurudwaras, their role and their control have been a part of the Sikh political
culture. ‘A gurudwara is more than just a place of worship. It is also a school, a meeting
place and a rest house’.6 The SAD and the SGPC have always claimed to safeguard the
interests of the Sikhs and the Gurudwaras. Prior to the SAD and SGPC, the Udasis were
revered and had a free hand in the management of the Gurudwaras. Revered by the
people, their decline started when they developed vested interests in the Gurudwaras

pp. 51-52.
6 Partap Singh Giani, “Gurdwara Sudhar”, *The Akali Lahar*, Amritsar, Singh Bros., 1951,
p. 24.
during the British rule when the latter constructed canals and improved the agricultural facilities. Transferring Gurudwara land to their name in connivance with the British officials, they, then, gave scant regard to the ‘Sangat’. The Mahants demanded money from the devotees and even married to have their heirs who would succeed to all the wealth and lands of the Gurudwaras.

The Singh Sabha was formed to secure the future of the community, to defend its traditions and customs and to represent the cause of the Sikhs to the British. The first session was attended overwhelmingly and the first participants were Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Bhai Amar Singh, Giani Hazara Singh, and Kamar Bikrama Singh etc. But within five years of its formation, the Sabha was exhausted. ‘A collective of leading Sikh chieftains, landed gentry and their dependents, it was prone to intense factionalism and frequent contests for supreme leadership’.7

It was the Sikh intellectuals in the 1880’s who started the ‘Tat Khalsa’ (the staunch sikh) once again. Meaning, ‘Pure Sikhs’, these Sikhs initiated steps to make Gurudwaras a symbol par excellence for the Sikhs. They stopped idol worship and seasonal faires in the Gurdwaras and they insisted that the management of the Sikh shrines would only be in the hands of Sikhs. They stopped anything, which went against the Sikh doctrine. The aim was not to let Sikhism be absorbed in the sea of Hinduism and also to have a control over the Sikh shrines and the resources. In 1886, Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, founder of the Amritsar Singh Sabha exhorted the Sikhs to favour Duleep Singh, the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to restore Punjab to him again. But with the death of Thakur Singh, the Tat Khalsa leadership of the Lahore Singh Sabha broke ties with the Amritsar Singh Sabha. Thirty Singh Sabha’s representatives did the same and joined the Khalsa Diwan, which was formed under the Lahore Singh Sabha.

Encouraging idol worship by the Mahants was the last straw as it was against the basic tenets of Sikhism. It was then that the Gurudwara Reform Movement was initiated which is also known as the Akali Movement as the volunteers who participated in the

movement were called ‘the Akalis’ (immortal). Prior to this movement, the Singh Sabha
was founded in 1873, at Amritsar to stop the conversion of Sikhs into Christianity and
also to stop the gradual absorption of the Sikh community into Hinduism, which had seen
an upheaval because of the efforts of Arya Samaj.

The Singh Sabha was encouraged by the landed gentry and the urban educated
people. The Singh Sabhas amalgamated in 1899 under the Chief Khalsa Dewan. ‘It
strove to pursue its own group interests in the name of general interests of the Sikhs and
sought to achieve its goals by performing loyalty to the British government’. Thus, the
economically weaker groups of the Sikh community were neglected. The objectives of
the Diwan were to revive the classical tradition and restore the glory of Sikhism, to
encourage various historical publications regarding the Sikh Gurus, to encourage the use
of Gurumukhi script and to start various educational institutions to eliminate illiteracy
among the Sikh masses. But the positive impact was that the Singh Sabha Movement
gave a separate identity to the Sikh community for it could not look after the political
interests and inspirations of the Sikhs. Thus, on the eve of Gurudwara Reform Movement
the elitist sections of the Sikh community, comprising mainly the landed interests were
performing the functions of integration, social mobilisation and political representation
for their community, through its communal organisations’.

The last week of December 1919 saw the inauguration of a new party known as
the Central Sikh League ‘The immediate and long-term objectives of the new party were
put forth in the first issue of its organ - The Akali, to rebuild the demolished wall of the
Rakabganj Gurudwara, to bring the Khalsa College at Amritsar, under the control of the
representatives of the Sikh community, to liberate Gurudwaras from the control of the
mahants, and to inspire the Sikhs to participate in the struggle for the country’s
freedom’. The first two aims were fulfilled quickly and to meet the third goal the
Central Sikh League called a meeting of Sikhs in November 1920. The Congregation of
more than 10,000 Sikhs elected a 175-member body to liberate and then look after the

8 Gobinder Singh, op. cit., n. 5, p. 59.
9 Ibid, p.60.
management of the Gurudwaras. This was the birth of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC), a body that took on itself the onus to liberate all the Gurudwaras. The SGPC was assisted by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), which was formed on December 14, 1920. 'Akali Dal has since then functioned as a full-fledged religion based political party. The task of the SAD was to coordinate the activities of the local volunteers (Akali Jathas) so that there would not be a gap or lull in the movement that would liberate the Gurudwaras from the Mahants. The formation of the SAD gave a unique political dimension to the happenings in Punjab. The formation of the Akali Dal marked the transfer of political leadership from the landed aristocracy to the Sikh middle classes'. The Gurudwara Reform Movement led to the birth of SGPC – 'a permanent institutional base for religious and political activities of Sikhs' which is also known as an elected religious parliament of Sikhs and its political arm, the SAD'.

The body (SGPC) affixes the seal of approval upon the religious -political nature of Sikh polity i.e. the inseparability of religion and politics. Though factions existed in the pre-independence era, the factions never deviated from the 'mainstream national politics'. The INC could not make inroads into Punjab because of the pro-British Unionist Party led by Sir Chotu Ram. Thus, it supported the Akali Dal and its Gurudwara Reform Movement. During the course of Gurudwara Reforms Movement the Akalis also began to collaborate with the INC and supported its Non-cooperation movement. The INC's efforts to include the Sikhs has even led to the setting up of the Central Sikh League (CSL) on December 8, 1919 which supported the Congress-led national movement. "In fact, the Central Sikh League and the INC were so close that many Sikhs

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12 Gopal Singh, Politics of Sikh Homeland, (1940-90), Delhi, Ajanta, 1994, p. 47.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid., n. 144.
were simultaneously the members of both”. Some Sikhs were members of all the three Central Sikh League, INC and Akali Dal. For example, Sardual Singh Caveeshar was Secretary of all the three; Baba Kharak Singh was president of Central Sikh League, the Akali Dal and the provincial committee of the INC. The Central Sikh League was marginally interested in the affairs of the Sikhs while the Akali Dal was. The passage of Gurudwara Bill divided the Dal leadership into two groups. The group led by Mehtab Singh and Baba Harkrishan Singh supported the Bill while it was opposed by Master Tara Singh, Master Shyam Singh, S. Gopal Singh Qaumi and S. Bhag Singh. The latter group won the SGPC election on this note and supported the INC’s programme of boycotting the Simon Commission along with the Central Sikh League.

“Since its very inception, the Akali Dal has been faction-ridden. During the movement (1920-25) itself, there were quite a few factions, at times working at cross-purposes”. At that time the Akalis were divided into the ‘extremists’ and the moderates. K.L. Tuteja asserts that the leadership was divided into three factions. The first group comprised of stalwarts who were from the landed aristocracy like Sunder Singh Majithia and Bhai Jodh Singh etc. These people did not want to agitate against the government. Described by the British government as ‘moderates’ the leadership of the Akali movement slipped from their hands when the movement became anti-government. The extremists meant leaders like Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Baba Kharak Singh, Master Tara Singh etc., who were nationalists who participated in the freedom movement of the country and were ready to fight for the cause of the Panth. Many of them associated with the INC. The third faction, which Tuteja says, comprised of those people who were mainly concerned with reforms in the Gurdwaras. Hailing from the urban educated class, leaders like Prof. Teja Singh, Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh etc. refused to participate in the Non-cooperation movement call given by Mahatma Gandhi as they believed that the government would help them solve their Gurudwara problem. Indifference from the government’s side forced them to rethink their strategy. They

17 Ibid., p. 140.
joined the ‘extremists’ in the movement of Non-cooperation. Gopal Singh refuses to accept Tuteja’s classification of the third faction. Gopal Singh talks about “a real third faction which emerged during the Akali movement and which can be safely termed as militants”.²⁰ Often called ‘Babbar Akalis’ the members comprised of ex-Ghadarites, Akali reformers, youth and armymen who were demobilised. They came into prominence when the Gurudwara Reform Movement was progressing gradually and peacefully. The massacre of Akalis at Panja Sahib, Tarn Taran and at Nankana Sahib are examples. Angry at the Imperialist power’s methods of suppression, the Babbar Akalis were unhappy with the INC and particularly Mahatma Gandhi’s idea of passive resistance. On the other hand, the Mahants were getting support from the British. The Akalis with their peaceful methods did not go well with the thinking of Babbar Akalis. They parted company with the Akalis and initiated a militant movement. Creating terror among the British officials, their supporters and the Mahants the Babbar Akalis were denounced as ‘misguided patriots’ by Mahatma Gandhi. Even the SGPC issued ‘hukamnamas’ (communiqués, edicts) to the Sikh community to disassociate themselves from the misguided youth. Consequently, the British set out to eliminate the Babbar Akalis and by June 1924 the British government had achieved its goal by killing all the leading militants. The formation of SGPC led to more repercussions as it gave a political dimension to Sikhism and created a permanent rift between the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Reform Movement led the Sikhs to stop the idol-worship, which was being encouraged by the Mahants in the holy shrines. It took about five years for the Sikhs to liberate their Gurudwaras after many sacrifices with the volunteers paying for their lives in the Nankana Sahib Tragedy, at the Morchas of Guru Ka Bagh and at Jaito. The control went from the hands of the Sahajdhari Sikhs into the hands of the Keshdhari Sikhs. The first signs of disunity among the Akalis was seen after Mahatma Gandhi discouraged the mixture of the religious issue with a political one i.e. the forcible abdication of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha in favour of his minor son in 1923. Ripudaman Singh sympathised with the Sikh reformers so the SGPC decided to take up his case and they condemned the government interference in a meeting held at Jaito in the State of Nabha. The organisers of the meeting were arrested. Morchas were sent one after the other and

²⁰ Gopal Singh, op. cit., n. 8, p.49.
Jawharlal Nehru, who came to pay respects, was also arrested. Malcolm Hailey, the Punjab Governor decided to split the Akali leadership. An Act on November 1, 1925 recognized the SGPC as the legal authority to manage the Gurudwaras. The British wanted an undertaking by the Akalis not to participate in agitations. The SAD felt this could not be acceptable to any self-respecting Sikh. Mehtab Singh and Giani Sher Singh who had been arrested in the Ripudaman case agreed and were released with twenty other leaders. Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh refused to come out of the jail. This created differences in the Akali party. When the SGPC met, leaders like Jaswant Singh Jhabal, Mangal Singh etc. walked out because some leaders were still in jail. They formed an Akali Party electing Bhag Singh Canadian as the President in a preliminary meeting on Feb 1, 1926. The SGPC elected Mehtab Singh as its President after the walk out. Soon, arbitrations were held and “after this both the factions joined hands to work jointly for the welfare of the Panth. The Akali Dal, became a new force to reckon with”.

“The national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru ignored the religious character of the moment and extended full support to it. This tactic was probably meant to enhance the influence of the Congress in the Punjab countryside”. The question here was Sikh identity, which the INC was supporting. The incident of Komagata Maru in 1914 in which a shipload of Indians, primarily Sikhs, attempting to migrate to Canada, were turned back and fired upon in Calcutta was seen as a discrimination against the Sikhs. The newly formed Ghadr or Revolutionary party highlighted this incident.

This reflected the political designs of the SGPC. This Act led to the SGPC being one step ahead of the Chief Khalsa Diwan in voicing the opinion and demands of the Sikh masses. So, “the SGPC is a body corporate created by statutory provisions of the Sikh Gurudwara Act of 1925”. The membership is obtained through elections, which are held periodically based and contested on party lines. Thus, there is a close interaction

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23 Gobinder Singh, op. cit., n. 5, p. 79.
between this institution and the political system. The large funds at its disposal are used to help political parties and thus have a control over the political system. This usage of funds has led to charges of embezzlement against the SGPC from time to time. ‘The Akali Party ... is trying to do its utmost to get hold of the Gurudwara and to use the Gurudwara funds. The only achievement that this party has to its credit is corruption and embezzlement of Gurudwara funds for the party purposes... The correctness of the fact that I am submitting can be amply borne out by the recommendations of the Akali Party itself’.  

The SAD has evolved as a para-military political organisation in the course of the Gurudwara Reform Movement. Besides acting as a pressure group it also channelised the demands of the Sikh community. The emergence of two opposing groups among the Akalis followed the enactment of the Sikh Gurudwaras Act in 1925. The Akalis have been divided among themselves, “the Panth emerged from the struggle victorious, but divided against itself”. The SAD associated itself with the Congress till 1939 when differences arose between the two premier bodies.

One of the earliest conflicts between the different factions for the SGPC’s control could be seen in the first elections of the SGPC held on June 18, 1926. There were two factions of the SAD i.e. “the Akali Party and the Sardar Bahadur Party, and a group of pro-government Sikhs called Hailey’s Sudhar Committee”. The last one was a party floated by Malcolm Hailey, the then Governor of Punjab to acquire the government’s control over the SGPC. All the pro-government elements like the Honorary Magistrates; Nambardars etc. were members of this party. The Sardar Bahadur Party, a group of moderate, affluent Sikhs desired to remove the Mahants from the control of the Gurudwaras. Once the purpose was achieved they faded into oblivion. Moreover, after the Sikh Gurudwara Act, 1925, the Government had offered to release the jailed leaders of the Akalis provided they would give written or verbal assurance that while accepting

26 Gobinder Singh, op. cit., n. 5, p. 111.
the Act they would not restore to agitation. The Akali Party, on the other hand, was nationalist in approach and because of its close links with the Central Sikh League and the INC wanted ‘Swaraj’. Thus, their active participation in the SGPC. The Sardar Bahadur Party was led by Mehtab Singh and Sher Singh while Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh led the Akali party which represented the non-agriculturist urban interests.

Post 1925 factions have continued to exist till date in the SAD in some form or the other. Till independence, ‘there were several occasions and many issues over which different types of factions emerged in the Akali Dal. These issues were broadly and basically three – Akali attitude towards Muslim League’s demand for Pakistan in 1940, Akali attitude towards the British government and Akali attitude towards the Congress’. 27

The Nehru Report of 1929 created factions among the SAD members. As K.C. Gulati asserts that the first faction was led by Baba Kharak Singh of the Central Akali Dal who did not want to associate with the INC. Baba Kharak Singh told the Sikhs to throw the Nehru report in the waste paper basket because it had a positive attitude to Dominion status. The second faction was led by Giani Sher Singh who demanded thirty per cent representation for the Sikhs in Punjab and the third faction was represented by Baba Gurdit Singh and Mangal Singh who wanted to extend unconditional support and co-operation with the INC. To solve this problem of factions, Master Tara Singh organised a committee of fourteen people who would bring about a solution to the factional conflict. In the session of the Central Sikh League, no unanimous resolution could be adopted about the Lahore Congress session. Baba Kharak Singh was fuming at the Congress for ignoring the Sikhs. He gave permission to Master Tara Singh to attend the next Congress session in the personal capacity and not as a representative of the Panth. Baba Kharak Singh was joined by Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh and Amar Singh. In this process, Master Tara Singh became the undisputed leader of the Sikhs, especially of the urban Sikhs. Soon, Baba Kharak Singh’s importance started declining because of his association with Bhupinder Singh, Maharaja of Patiala. Isher Singh Mujhal and Udham Singh Nagoke, whom Master Tara Singh managed to outmaneuver, challenged Master Tara Singh. Baba Kharak Singh, Master Tara Singh and Gyani Sher Singh

27 Gopal Singh, op. cit., n. 8, p.51.
criticised the Nehru report as it overlooked the Sikh interests. But Mangal Singh representing the Sikhs signed the report and was criticised by Master Tara Singh.28

Because of the Nehru Report, the Central Sikh League decided to boycott the INC’s session, which was to be held at Lahore. Moti Lal Nehru, Ansari and Mahatma Gandhi assured Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh that the Congress Working Committee had adopted the goal of ‘complete independence’ as proposed by Baba Kharak Singh instead of Dominion status. The Sikhs cooperated. But Baba Kharak Singh refused to associate with the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 till the Sikh colour was included in the national flag. However, the SAD and the Central Sikh League joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Akali Dal kept away from the First Round Table Conference held on November 12, 1930. S. Ujjal Singh and S. Sampuran Singh who attended the Conference were not the authorised representatives of the Akali Dal.

The Communal Award announced by Ramsay MacDonald retained separate electorates and stressed on reservations. The Sikhs did not want it to be implemented so in September 1932, they formed a ‘Khalsa Darbar’ to oppose the Communal Award. The Akali Dal was critical of the Award because it gave the Sikhs only 19 per cent representation as against 30 per cent to the Hindus and 51 per cent to the Muslims. The Akali Dal opposed the Award. A Council of 17 members was formed to oppose it. ‘But it failed to launch an effective agitation because of factionalism in the Dal’.29 Differences arose between Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh and the former left the Dal and joined the INC. Gyani Gumukh Singh Musafir, S. Mangal Singh, S. Sardul Singh, Master Sunder Singh Lyallpur, S.G.S. Qaumi, all left the Dal because they did not support the Dal’s agitation against the Communal Award. The organisation of Central Akali Party weakened the Dal’s agitation against the Communal Award. But in 1933, Baba Kharak Singh and his followers parted ways from it. The Central Sikh League was merged with the Darbar. Near the elections of 1938, the Darbar was further divided into the SAD and the Congressite Sikhs. The Central Sikh League gradually faded in the

process. The Akali leaders’ anti-imperialist attitude gained for them the sympathy of national leaders. ‘It is important to note that the mixture of religion and politics by the Akali Dal was legitimized during this movement’. Another party, the Khalsa National Party was established by Sir Sunder Singh Majithia and Joginder Singh during the elections of 1937. It comprised of anti-Akali and pro-British elements. In 1937, S\[132\]under Singh Majithia, of the Khalsa Nationalist Party, which was a dissident pro-government faction, collaborated with the Unionist Party, which was headed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. The Khalsa Nationals included people like Majithia, Ujjal Singh, Dasaundha Singh and Joginder Singh. Opposing them were Akalis like Giani Kartar Singh, Kairon, Baldev Singh and Kapur Singh. He was criticised by the SAD and called an ‘enemy’ and a ‘traitor’. The death of S\[132\]under Singh Majithia saw the end of this party. Even in the mid-thirties factional conflict continued. “Afterwards, however, it became more politically oriented”. Differences arose among the Akalis over the 1937 Assembly elections. Master Tara Singh’s group did not permit the Sikh aspirants to contest the elections on the INC ticket. After a compromise ‘the Akalis agreed to contest 15 out of “the 25 seats allotted to them and left 10 seats for the Sikh Congressmen”. With the SAD asking the Sikhs to join the INC in 1937 the Congress-Akali Party was formed by the Pro-Congress Akalis like Giani Kartar Singh, Partap Singh Kairon, and Gurmukh Singh Musafir.

In the 1939 Gurudwara elections the SAD of Master Tara Singh was supported by the INC. ‘The Unionist Party gave support to the Central Akali Dal led by Baba Kharak Singh and S\[132\]under Singh Majithia’s Khalsa National Party. The interest in the Gurudwara elections had been enhanced because of the Gurudwara resources.

In 1940, the Akali Dal came close to the British government. Master Tara Singh resigned from the INC and came closer to the Unionist Party. Udham Singh Nagoke’s

31 Nayar, op. cit., n.19, p. 84.
32 Gobinder Singh, op. cit., n. 5, p. 113.
33 Dalip Singh, op. cit., n. 3, p. 224.
faction wanted to support the INC thus, it differed from Master Tara Singh. When Nagoke became the President of the SGPC, Master Tara Singh resigned.

In 1942 when the Quit India movement was launched the Akali Dal was split into two factions – one was headed by Giani Kartar Singh. It was all for active cooperation with the British government, the other faction was led by Udham Singh Nagoke. This faction wanted to extend support to the nationalist movement and the nationalist party – the Congress Party. Master Tara Singh did not participate in the Quit India Movement. Later, the SAD joined hands with the Muslim League and one of the Akali Dal members, Ajit Singh Sarhadi, even became a minister in the League’s ministry in the North West Frontier Province.

Though the Cripps Mission had failed, yet their proposals were the first official acceptance of the British government of the idea of Pakistan. The Sikhs felt it was a death blow to them. In June 1943, under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh, the SAD gave the ‘Azad Punjab’ scheme, which would comprise of Ambala, Jullundur, and Lahore Divisions and out of the Multan Division Lyallpur district, some portion of Montgomery and Multan District.

When the Second World War broke out, a faction led by Giani Kartar Singh hoped that the Akalis should support the British in their war efforts. The faction led by Udham Singh Nagoke wanted the Akalis to join in the freedom movement of the country with the INC. They initially heeded the advice of Master Tara Singh, the Dal President, who did not support the INC’s programme of total non-co-operation. He accepted INC’s idea of complete independence of an undivided India but encouraged the Sikhs to get recruited in the Army. This created differences between the pro-Congress elements and the pro-Master elements in the SAD. The pro-Congress faction was the Nagoke faction which replaced Master Tara Singh in 1944. The Nagoke faction, which comprised of leaders like Kairon, Darshan Singh Pheruman and Musafir, participated in the Quit India Movement and went to jail. The Sikander-Baldev Pact signed on June 15, 1942 saw the faction of Giani Kartar Singh join the Unionist Government in Punjab. Master Tara Singh assured the Congress that the Akalis would continue to fight against the Unionist
Infighting among the Akalis again started when the Muslim League demanded Pakistan in 1940. Master Tara Singh gave the ‘Azad Punjab’ scheme. Master Tara Singh elaborated on the scheme in June 1943.

‘In this connection, the Shiromani Akali Dal hereby declared that in the Azad Punjab the boundaries shall be fixed after taking into consideration the population, property, land revenue and historical traditions of each of the communities... if the new demarcations are affected on the above-mentioned principles then the Azad Punjab shall comprise of Ambala, Jullundur, Lahore Divisions and out of the Multan Division Lyallpur District, some portion of Montgomery and Multan Districts. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall make its demand of these demarcations and shall fight for the same’.  

The Quit India call of Gandhi in 1942 had further divided the Akali Dal. Nagoke, Musafir, Pheruman etc. joined the Movement while the group led by Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh did not participate. Differences arose on the question of Azad Punjab. While the nationalist Sikhs and the Central Akali Party opposed the demand, others supported the demand. Master Tara Singh resigned from the Dal in protest because of the activities of Baba Kharak Singh who denounced the scheme of Pakistan and Azad Punjab as it would lead to the vivisection of India. He asked the Sikh community to extend support to the INC. On the other hand, very few Akali leaders took part in the Quit India Movement of 1942. For them, the Second World War meant supporting the British for India’s freedom. Baldev Singh formed his new party in the Assembly in March 1942 called the United Punjab Sikh Party, comprising of a few Akali and independent legislators. He also joined the Ministry of Sikander Hayat Khan.

**Factionalism during 1947-1966**

In post-1947 politics, it is the Akali Dal which has become a force to reckon with. ‘In Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal dominated the scene right since 1920 and it launched

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a series of morchas (agitations) to free the Gurudwara (Sikh shrines) from the clutches of corrupt practices of Mahants (priests). The Indian National Congress made some significant headway here but it leaned on these Akali movements to gain a foothold in the State. It drew its strength and sustenance from the Akali movement. It participated in their agitations with a view to win their support in its struggle for national liberation. Thus, a considerable number of leaders in the Congress are those from SAD.

India got her independence on August 15, 1947. On July 15, 1948, Patel referred to the Patiala and East Punjab states Union (PEPSU) as ‘a Sikh Homeland’ when he inaugurated the new state. It was formed by merging the states of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot Kapurthala, Jind, Kalsia, Malerkotla, and Nalagarh. Gian Singh Rarewala headed the caretaker government. The Akalis were divided among themselves after the fall of Gian Singh’s ministry when they contested for elections. In the Akali Dal, the left wing group known as Raman group disagreed with the leadership of Master Tara Singh who were heading the Akali Dal. The bickering of these two factions became quite intense that the 1954 elections were fought by them in PEPSU on separate tickets. This split the Akali vote and the INC came to power in the state and Raghubir Singh became the Chief Minister. After his death in January 1956, Brish Bhan took over the reins of the government. Many stalwarts of the Akali Dal joined the INC in 1956. Master Tara Singh’s leadership was under threat as factions were prominent within the Akali Dal. ‘Akali politics started becoming caste and class oriented as the Jat peasantry became political and realised its overwhelming majority. The Majhail group, which had emerged with Udham Singh Nagoke and had leaders like Isher Singh Majhail, Mohan Singh Nagoke, Teji Singh Akarpur etc. exploited this situation and made efforts to dislodge Master Tara Singh. Described by these people as a ‘Bhapa’, a non-Jat representing the urban Sikhs they used the resources of the SGPC to dislodge the Master from the leadership of the Dal. In a desperate move, Master Tara Sigh merged Akali Dal with the INC in 1956 and thus, weakened the hold of Nagoke. After the merger of the

38 Gopal Singh, op. cit., n. 11, p.53.
Akali Dal with the Congress, the Akali Dal worked as a faction within the INC and kept forming and toppling ministries till 1951. When the INC did not adopt a satisfactory and reciprocal attitude towards giving constitutional safeguards to the Sikhs, Master Tara Singh asked the 23 Akali legislators who were in the INC to leave the INC. But only one legislator resigned. The faction led by Giani Kartar Singh and Nagoke remained within the folds of the INC despite Tara Singh’s mandate.

In 1956, Gian Singh Rarewala who had joined the Congress and a former Chief Minister of PEPSU urged the SAD to leave the political realm and see to the Sikh affairs in the social, cultural, religious and educational fields. He desired that the SAD should join in reconstructing the country. His aim was to join the INC. Gian Singh was condemned by Master Tara Singh and Hukam Singh who branded him as a traitor. Rarewala issued a statement contesting the SAD claim that it represented all the sections of the Sikh community. He added that its agitations when all its demands had been met would only lead to disaster for the community. Rarewala was expelled from the SAD along with four of his followers. Though the SAD desired to join the INC, they did not express it openly for it would have reduced their bargaining power with the INC. Rarewala had spoiled their chances and with his large following in that area (PEPSU) had deprived the SAD of its majority. Gradually, the SAD joined the INC by amending its constitution. At first the INC did not accept their demand of the SAD members retaining the membership of both the SAD and Congress, as the SAD members believed that religion and politics were inseparable. Finally, in 1956, they advised their followers to join the INC and said it would confine itself to betterment of the community in the religious, social, educational, cultural and economic spheres. It was in the process of weakening his opponents that Master Tara Singh raised the demand of Punjabi Suba. He brought to the forefront, Sant Fateh Singh, a Sikh saint who could woo over the Jat Sikh peasantry and gradually emerge as their leader while Master Tara Singh had the support of the urban Sikhs. Gradually, Sant Fateh Singh made his own political base within the Akali Dal and even threatened Master Tara Singh’s position. In 1962, Master Tara Singh tried to weaken the Sant’s position by expelling the latter’s supporters from the executive committee. Sant Fateh Singh set up his own SAD calling Master Tara Singh’s faction as ‘bogus’ The Sant was able to monopolise the Akali Dal and his faction became the real
one as he being a rural Jat-Sikh got support from the rural Jat Sikh peasantry. The result of this split had far-reaching consequences which can even be felt in the politics of the state even today. ‘First, the Fanth came to be divided on a caste basis. Sant Fateh Singh became the leader of the Akali Dal dominated by the ruralites and the Jat-Sikhs while Master Tara Singh retained the leadership of the urban Sikhs, mainly Bhappas. Secondly, the educated Sikh leadership made way for the Jathedars to play an equally effective role’. Sant Fateh Singh further tightened his hold on Akali politics by defeating the group led by Master Tara Singh in the 1965 SGPC elections. ‘Therefore, the politics of factionalism in SAD in post-1966 period is the politics of factionalism among Sikh Jats’ as the urban Sikhs were slowly edged out from the SGPC and the Akali Dal.

Shanti Swaroop contends that caste variable effects the Indian political behaviour and effects Indian politics most. He argues that ‘the Akali leadership during the fifties did not succeed in getting the whole-hearted support of the Sikhs in the countryside. Voicing, as it did, the aspirations of the nascent Sikh bourgeoisie, it failed to make a powerful impact on the Sikh masses. The reason perhaps, was that there was a real hiatus between the leadership and the support structure. While the leadership was in the hands of the Khatri and the bhapas (for whose interest it basically worked), its principal support structure was the jats in the countryside (to whom it appealed on communal and religious basis). He further asserts that the Congress under Kairon tried to win over many Jat Sikhs and this trend could be reversed when the leadership passed into the hands of Sant Fateh Singh. Nehru and Kairon could resist the demand of a Sikh Suba only till they had the support of the rural Sikhs. But as the influence of the bhapas and khatris decreased in the Akali Dal and the influence of the Jat Sikhs increased, the demand for a Sikh state could not be avoided. In fact, the Akalis lost control of the SGPC in 1958 and could recapture it only in 1960 when the ‘Sadh Sangat board’

40 Gopal Singh, op. cit., n. 11, p. 54.
42 Ibid.
sponsored by the Congress was defeated. The factionalism among the Master and the Sant brought about far-reaching changes. It ended the hegemony of the urban higher caste leadership which had continued practically since the party’s birth.

**Factionalism after 1966**

In the 1967 Assembly elections, though the Master’s group lost badly they maintained their separate identity but joined coalition ministry. Meanwhile, Harcharan Singh Hudiara and Hazara Singh were expelled in May 1967 as they had helped the INC topple the coalition ministry. Thus, leaving the Akali Dal, Hudiara Group formed a new party.

In 1967, Justice Gurnam Singh formed a coalition government as the leader of the United Front which comprised of the Akalis, the Jana Sangh and the Communists. The Congress had 48 seats and could have formed the government with the support of four or five independents. So, they wanted to topple the Ministry. They found their card in S. Lachhan Singh Gill who aspired to be the Chief Minister. Lachhan Singh Gill had been the right hand man of Master Tara Singh but then the INC connived with him. Sant Fateh Singh tried to iron out their differences but to no avail. Sardar Lachhan Singh Gill formed a new party, ‘the Punjab Janta Party’ with 16 Members of Legislative Assembly who parted with the United Front. It promised to bring, a clean public life and administration and to root out corruption, to give security of life and prosperity to the people, to strengthen communal harmony and to concentrate on the growth and development of the state. The new ministry of S. Lachhan Singh Gill was sworn in on November 25, 1967.

He included 13 members in his Ministry. But gradually he found it difficult to depend on them without extending patronage to them in one form or the other. He extended his Ministry within a week. The SAD led by Sant Fateh Singh was

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annoyed with Lacchman Singh Gill for leaving the party as well as toppling the United Front government. The Sant group decided to expel Lacchman Singh Gill from the party while the Working Committee led by Master Tara Singh decided to fully cooperate with Lacchman Singh Gill. L.S. Gill and Master’s group, both were desirous of eliminating Sant’s influence in the SGPC which was the caretaker of the vast resources in the Gurudwaras. The amazing fact is that the Master’s group which was demanding a Sikh Homeland was supporting Lacchman Singh Gill whose main supporter was the INC which was resisting the demand of the Sikh Homeland. All that Lacchman Singh Gill and the Congress wanted was the wiping out of the factions led by Sant Fateh Singh and Sant Channan Singh. Lacchman Singh Gill knew that the INC could pull out support anytime, thus, the only way he could consolidate his position was by smashing Sant Fateh Singh and winning the Master group. For this he took the help of the Akali Dal of Hudiara. Embezzlement charges were levelled against the Sant. Finally, after nine months of Lacchman Singh Gill’s leading a government the INC withdrew support. President’s rule was imposed under Art. 356 and the State Assembly was dissolved on August 21, 1968. President’s rule continued till the mid-term elections which were held on February 11, 1969. The SAD emerged as the largest party with 43 seats including 6 of the Master group. The credit for the victory went to Sant Fateh Singh and Justice Gurnam Singh.

Sant Fateh Singh had ensured the Akali candidates’ loyalty by administering oaths to them at the Akal Tahkt. Justice Gurnam Singh was invited to form the government by the then Governor, D. C. Pavate. As soon as he came to power, Justice Gurnam Singh ordered inquiry into the allegations in the memorandum of the United Front against Lacchman Singh Gill. When S. Lacchman Singh Gill arrived to attend the Budget Session, he was arrested for misusing his powers regarding transferring procurement work from the Co-operative Marketing-cum-Processing Society to the Grain Syndicate at Jagraon. This was in retaliation for S. Lacchman Singh Gill trying to arrest Sant Channan Singh when the former was in power as the Chief Minister. Soon differences arose in the Akali Dal between the Master group with S. Atma Singh and S. Kapur Singh who wanted a Sikh homeland while Gurnam Singh had a secular attitude. S. Kapur Singh often attacked the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh. Confrontations between
the two groups were on religious and language usage and practices. Gurnam Singh was initially from the Master group which had sponsored the Homeland demand but now political exigencies had linked him with the Sant group.

S. Kapur Singh alongwith the INC planned to make Sant Fateh Singh answer to the public as to why he broke his December 1966 fast unto death which was to be followed by self-immolation on December 27, 1966 if demand for a Punjabi Suba was not fulfilled. The demands had been rejected by the Prime Minister but the Sant had not completed his vow. In the past, Master Tara Singh had taken a vow on August 15, 1961 and when the objective had not been met the Panth had asked him to clean utensils in public. The Master’s career had then finished. The opponents of the Sant too planned his political end. For the Akali extremists and the Congress members the Sant proved too powerful though the two sides had nothing in common, they both joined hands. Pheruman’s death further tarnished the image of Justice Gurnam Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. But the latter retained his hold over Akali politics.

Pettigrew’s study of Jat Sikhs explains the causes of factionalism among the community in great detail. She says the two typical features which lead to factionalism in the Akali Dal are uncompromising loyalty to one’s group and enmity to the rival group. If the leader of a faction does not extend patronage, unqualified support, favours etc. to his followers they would take no time to shift their loyalty elsewhere.46 Famous for pulling one another’s leg a leader does not need to invent enemies. The followers who have been kept out of power would become his enemy to confront a ‘third enemy’ of the Panth.

‘The Master era in the Akali politics was closing and the Sant age was about to dawn. The main differences between Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh was one of approach. The Master was given to harsh words and indecisive acts. The Sant was the very embodiment of sweet reasonableness, soft, sweet words and self-immolatory acts.47

47 Gulati, op. cit., n. 26, p. 171.
The elections in 1969 made the two Akali Dais merge on October 7, 1968. But despite the façade of unity, criticisms and dissension's were there in the Akali Dal. Sant Fateh Singh had become a dominating figure in the Akali Dal so after the death of Darshin Singh Pheruman, Dr. Jagjit Singh formed a new Akali Dal, called the Darshan Singh Pheruman – Akali Dal to pose a challenge to Sant Fateh Singh. Meanwhile, differences arose between Gurnam Singh, the Chief Minister and Sant Fateh Singh. Gurnam Singh had saved the Sant’s life by accepting the decision of letting-go the rich cotton growing area of Fazilka to get Chandigarh and the grant of Rs. 10 crores to Haryana to build a new capital. Though there were widespread agitations in Punjab and Haryana yet Gurnam Singh went ahead with the Union government’s decision. After this Gurnam Singh started acting without the advise of the Sant. He felt that the Akali Dal needed him more and he became friendlier with the leaders of the Master factions. Sant Fateh Singh wanted to retain the Upper House (The Legislative Council) but on the Chief Minister’s recommendation it was abolished. ‘….the Sant had to eat humble pie’. The senior Vice-President of Akali Dal and Chairman of SAD’s central parliamentary board, Giani Bhupinder Singh was member of the Master faction. There were three vacancies in the Rajya Sabha. Sant Fateh Singh was asked by the working committee of the Akali Dal to nominate any two candidates. The Sant selected Jathedar Santokh Singh and Sardar Gurcharan Singh. One candidate was put up by the Congress. The Master faction showed its annoyance on the Sant’s decision by nominating Bhupinder Singh as the third candidate. Bhupinder Singh was suspended from primary membership by the Akali Dal. Gurnam Singh declared that he was not supporting Bhupinder Singh and had excellent relations with the Sant. But the polling results on March 25, reflected something else. Gurnam Singh had supported Bhupinder Singh, but Giani Bhupinder Singh won defeating the Sant’s candidate – Jathedar Santokh Singh. It was a big blow to Sant’s image; rumours were rife about a split in the SAD. The Sant took his revenge the same day. When the Appropriation Bill was to be moved in the House, Gurnam Singh’s own Finance Minister, Balwant Singh refused to rise. Gurnam Singh himself moved the Bill that was defeated. He had to resign from the government. The Akali Dal expelled him from the party for working against the interests of the party. It is argued that

Pavate, op. cit., n.45, p. 129.
Gurnam Singh was defeated because he dared to go against the two Sants who were in control of the reins of both the Akali Dal and the SGPC. ‘Thus, Gurnam Singh was dislodged form the throne as a result of ‘palace revolution’.49 The clash of Gurnam Singh was with Sant Chanan Singh who controlled the legislative and organisational wing. Generally, governments are toppled by the opposition, but here a Chief Minister had been toppled by his own Party’.50 The Ministry fell on March 25, 1970. After he was expelled from the Party, Gurnam Singh formed his own party – Gurnam Singh-Akali Dal. Giani Bhupinder Singh, a Rajya Sabha member elected in the biennial elections held on March 25, 1970 set about to revive the Master Tara Singh – Akali Dal.

The Akali Dal legislature elected Parkash Singh Badal as their leader who staked his own claim to form the government. According to ‘The Tribune’ the factional conflicts among Akali leaders were based on power struggle rather than on any ideological differences'.51 Gurnam Singh in the meanwhile tried to form the Ministry with the help of the Congress but was unable to do so. ‘A. S. Narang, S. Bhatnager and P. S. Verma are of the view that the dissatisfied dominant Akali faction alongwith the support of the Jana Sangh and Communist Party of India (Marxist), finally outvoted the Gurnam Singh ministry on March 25, 1970 and elected in its place a new government headed by Parkash Singh Badal’.52

Parkash Singh Badal was with the Sant faction but Gurcharan Singh Tohra was in favour of Surjit Singh Barnala so he proposed the latter’s name. But Badal was elected the leader of the Akali Legislative Party on March 25, 1970. He was administered the oath of office on March 27, 1970. Badal announced an eleven-point programme for the welfare and upliftment of the people of the state. The Ministry was expanded on April 15, and then on June 5, 1970 to please all those people who had shown their loyalty to

49 Ibid, p. 132.
50 The Hindu, June 19, 1971.
Sant Fateh Singh. By June 9, 1970, the Ministry had been expanded in total four times and out of 56 party Members of Legislative Assembly, 29 had ministerial posts. Soon the Jana Sangh withdrew its support and Justice Gurnam Singh introduced a no-confidence motion against the Badal government. The Government survived because of an understanding of the Congress with the Akali Dal (Sant). Justice Gurnam Singh was let down by the Congress again. Gian Singh Rarewala had left the Congress around the 1969 mid-term poll and was hoping to lead the Akalis in the government formation. So, he was busy organising his own faction. But he was defeated in his own constituency. Pheruman’s fast provided him the opportunity to quit the Akali Dal.

After Sant Fateh Singh’s heart attack in September 1970, Badal brought Rarewala back to Akali Dal. Tohra was against Rarewala, their animosity dating from PEPSU politics days so he called for Panthic unity and persuaded Gurnam Singh to return to the Akali Dal. He was appointed Chairman of the Akali Dal Parliamentary board. In the Lok Sabha elections in March 1971 the Congress tried to have adjustment of seats with the SAD. The rivals of Badal decided to field his brother, S. Gurdas Singh Badal as the candidate in Fazilka Assembly Constituency. The Congress’s candidate S. Iqbal Singh was a friend of Prakash Singh Badal. The rivals of Badal insisted that the Akali Dal would contest seriously. If Badal would oppose this move, it would be used against him to show his sympathies to the Congress. The Akali Dal rejected the INC’s offer of an electoral alliance. In the results, the Congress got an overwhelming majority over the Akali Dal. Only the Chief Minister’s brother emerged victorious. The factions in the SAD had taken their toll as the Congress secured a majority support in 77 State legislative constituencies. After the rout in the elections infighting in the party intensified. Allegations flew against each other each side blaming the other for inaction and corrupt practice. ‘Political parties in Punjab are not known for their loyalty to principle even during their heyday. When disaster overtakes them infighting gains momentum among them’. Some legislators were conspiring to challenge the leadership of Badal. When the general secretary of the Akali Dal issued notices against 2 Members of Legislative Assembly who had criticised the government and the party,

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minority. The Badal-Tohra group pressurised for a change of leader of the Panthic Assembly Party so the Sant appointed Badal as the leader of the Assembly Party. Sant Fateh Singh’s death on October 30, 1972 and subsequently, Sant Chanan Singh’s death on November 23, 1972 paved the way for new factionalism in Akali politics.

The alliance of the Akalis with the Jana Sangh led to shrinkage of its support base among the Sikhs. Moreover, the green revolution had resulted in new problems. The affluence generated by the revolution made the youth follow the Sikh tenets less. The Akali Dal came under fire from the Sikh clergy. The upper section of the peasantry was disenchanted and discontented as it felt that the gains from the green revolution had not been equally distributed. As Prof. Sharma states, ‘While the gains of rich peasants are maximum, the poor peasants have gained only little in gross terms and have in fact, lost in real terms’. Disparities have widened between the rich, middle and poor peasants on account of the uneven gains of the Green Revolution. Further, gains depended as to where the villages were situated and when the innovative technologies were adopted. The early adopters, who were near the vicinity of cities and towns gained more than those rich peasants, who were situated in the remote villages, as the techniques reached them late and they adopted them afterwards. This led to the peasants asking their leaders to protect their economic interests. This led to the passage of Anandpur Sahib Resolution by the Akali Dal in 1973 adopted at Ludhiana in 1978 which talked of greater autonomy for the state. It also asked for redrawing the boundaries of Punjab to transfer to Punjab those Punjabi-speaking areas which had been left out and were in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh or Rajasthan. It raised the controversial demand of making territorial arrangements in such a way that the Sikhs are pre-dominant in the state. ‘The growth of trade and industrialization has given birth to a new class of Hindu and Sikh urban bourgeois and the green revolution has created a class of Jat-Sikh rural bourgeois’.

The disparities in Green Revolution have showed differences among Jat Sikhs themselves. If on one hand the clash is between Jat Sikhs and the Central government, on

56 Gopal Singh, op. cit., n. 2.
Gumam Singh, Chairman of the Akali Parliamentary Board questioned it. Badal had to please them by offering ministerial posts. The general secretary, Dr. Jagjit Singh demanded more autonomy for Punjab. The Chief Minister made efforts to clarify that these thoughts did not represent the thinking of the Akali Dal but were his individual views.

But Justice Gumam Singh and the Tohra factions failed in this attempt. The Akali Dal was ridden with factions. The Sant-Badal faction did not support Justice Gumam Singh’s nominees and vice-versa. With a poor electoral verdict, the Akali Dal tried to approach Jana Sangh for rapprochement but again the groups led by Justice Gumam Singh and Tohra stopped it. An understanding grew between Justice Gurnam Singh and the Congress and they refused any kind of support to Badal government with the result that Badal submitted his resignation and the Governor imposed President’s rule on June 13, 1971. Despite Badal’s efforts to have a coalition with the Congress in the interest of the people of the Punjab he had to tender his resignation. The ruling Akali Dal was divided even on this issue. While Badal was ready to work with the Congress, Sant Fateh Singh ruled out any co-operation with the Congress.

After the Indo-Pak war in 1971, Punjab Assembly elections were held on March 11, 1972. The INC emerged victorious with Giani Zail Singh as the Chief Minister. Gurnam Singh’s Akali Dal disillusioned the people because of its alliance with the INC against the Akali Dal (Sant). Meanwhile, Sant Fateh Singh’s position became challengeable after the poor performance of SAD in the 1972 March Assembly elections. Badal sided with Tohra in weakening the Sant’s position as the Sant had appointed Jaswinder Singh as the leader of the Akali Assembly Party. The Sant resigned from the Presidencieship of the SAD on March 25, 1972. He appointed Mohan Singh Tur as the acting President and Badal as the senior Vice-President of SAD. But in the Panthic convention held in Amritsar on September 17, 1972 elections were held for the organizational wing of the Party. The general body of Akali Dal elected Mohan Singh Tur as its President whose name had been proposed by the Sant and seconded by Tohra. The Sant was elected to the post of Chief Patron of the Party and his guidance and leadership was sought in all the tasks of the party. The Working Committee of the SAD was constituted in such a way that the Badal-Tohra supporters were reduced to a
the other, it is between the Jat Sikhs themselves. The Akali Dal leaders since mid-1960’s have come from the richer districts of the Malwa region while the majority of the militants have come from Majha, i.e. the Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts. Thus, if Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was from the Malwa region, the Damdami Taksal and his supporters were from the Majha region, an area where the gains of green revolution have not been many. ‘On the measure of average farm income the farmers of Gurdaspur and Amritsar drop far down, ranking eighth and ninth out of twelve respectively, while the six districts of the Malwa occupy the top six positions’.57

It led to the rejuvenation of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) which was formed in 1943 but was passive till it got the support of Bhindranwale and Bhai Amrik Singh. The AISSF has always demanded more political power for the Sikhs. ‘Thus, it is clear that the AISSF has always been on the militant end of the Akali spectrum’.58 Harminder Singh Sandhu, Amrik Singh’s secretary-general claimed in an interview that the Sikh youth had turned away from Sikhism because of the Akali leadership being passive. Sarbjit Singh Jammu blamed Badal, Tohra, Longowal, Barnala and even Mann of betraying the Sikh nation. The AISSF stands midway between the Akali Dal and the secessionists, ‘it disassociated itself from the demand for an independent Khalistan and yet it refused to condemn that demand outright’.59 AISSF’s revival placed a lot of pressure on the Akali Dal because being a party of the youth the leaders are well educated and are located in the Majha region.

Badal, Jagdev Singh Talwandi and Tohra were the contestants for the leadership of the SAD. The imposing of emergency by the President on June 25, 1975 made the opposition parties decide to launch a struggle. Akali Dal’s Working Committee met at Amritsar on July 5, 1975. There was a deadlock between the Badal and Tohra factions, the former wanted to participate in the agitation against Emergency while the latter felt that the Emergency was not only against the minorities. Finally, on July 7, 1975 all

58 Ibid., p. 982.
opted to launch ‘Save Democracy’ Morcha. Tohra led the first morcha on July 9, 1975. Tur was persuaded by Badal, Tohra and Talwandi to resign from his post. He did so on the condition that the Majha region would be adequately represented. Talwandi was appointed the Acting President of the SAD on April 23 1977. The Akali Dal got an overwhelming majority in the elections to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Badal became the Chief Minister. He assumed office on June 20 , 1977. The SAD formed a coalition with the Janata Party but the latter was troubled by the attitude of the extremist wing of the SAD. The Akali- Nirankari clash of 1978 created a rift between the two coalition parties. The extremist group wanted the Chief Minister to curb the activities of the Nirankaris. While the organisational wing, led by Jagdev Singh Talwandi wanted to end the partnership with the Janata Party, the ministerial wing wanted to continue the coalition. Badal disagreed with the viewpoint of Talwandi and Tohra that their permission should be sought regarding the affairs of state. ‘Again the conflict between ecclesiastical organisational axis led by Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Jagdev Singh Talwandi and the ministerial group led by Parkash Singh Badal arose over the issue of relationship between religion and politics’.60

Other factors increased the factional fight between the two wings. Mahant Sewa Das had undertaken a fast- unto-death demanding the transfer of Chandigarh and three Canal headworks to the Punjab. The Nihangs supported their cause and so did Tohra and Talwandi and demanded Badal to take up the issue with the Central government. Badal’s visit to a Hindu shrine, Vaishno Devi was taken up as an example of idol-worship which is forbidden by the Sikh tenets. At the Centre, Chaudhry Charan Singh was challenging the leadership of Morarji Desai for the post of Prime Minister. Badal wanted to support Desai but Akali Dal wanted to remain neutral. Surjit S. Barnala and Dhanna Singh Gulshan, the two Akali ministers, resigned to show the SAD’s neutral position. The Charan Singh-Raj Narain faction wooed the Talwandi-Tohra faction with the result that the faction extended support to Charan Singh. Badal’s advice of supporting Desai went unheeded as the Talwandi-Tohra faction wanted to undermine his prestige. Charan Singh

60 Kuldeep Kaur, op. cit., n. 51, p.64.
failed to win the vote of confidence which only intensified the struggle between the two Akali factions.

Gobinder Singh says that members of the Sikh clergy started a crisis- ‘extreme fundamentalism’ when they felt that they had been unassociated with the SGPC.61 They could not make inroads into the institution. They started presenting radical interpretations of Sikhism before the masses. Their aim was to touch the lower strata of the Sikh peasantry and those who had been hard hit by the economic pressures. He says, ‘The Sikh fundamentalism, though a child of the unfolding contradictions of the capitalist path of development, has been reared by exploitative class forces in the liberal environment of the bourgeois democracy. It was initially fostered by monopoly bourgeois ruling class in the initial stages as a prospective tool of non-issue politics in the state against the unification of peasant force under the Akali Dal and then was adopted by the agricultural bourgeois itself for effective mobilization of the Sikh masses during its active class struggle against the former. But when it outgrew the contentment of both and acquired independent existence for itself, it was decried by both.62

Besides these factions, the Congress (I) encouraged the formation of the Dal Khalsa and the rise of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. This was done to split the SAD and to create an alternative centre of power. Talwandi and Tohra submitted a petition on September 26, 1979 before the Akal Takht against Badal alleging that he had harmed the cause of the Sikh Panth. Sadhu Singh Bhaura summoned Badal and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Badal appeared before the Akal Takht on October 1, 1979. The Jathedar called a meeting of Tohra, Talwandi, Longowal and Badal on October 4, 1979. Due to Tohra and Talwandi’s absence the meeting could not take place but it took place on October 5, 1979. The verdict was given on October 6, 1979 and Talwandi and Tohra withdrew their resignations. But dispute arose over the jurisdiction between the seven-member committee and the President of Akali Dal. The Jathedar issued a statement on November 2, 1979 stating that the seven-member committee would be responsible to decide about seat adjustment, alliances etc. Talwandi refused to accept this or any

62 Ibid., p. 132.
decision of the committee. The committee members were Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Longowal, Sukhjinder Singh and Prem Singh Lalpura. The supporters of Talwandi argued that Longowal did not have any authority to function as the Chairman of the committee as all the members were equal in status. Talwandi was ordered to clear the utensils in the langar for seven days and to attend the meeting of the seven-member committee.

The ecclesiastical authority i.e. the SGPC and the organisational authority both maintain a constant pressure on the ministerial wing and the example of the Talwandi-Tohra combine's pressure on Badal's ministerial wing is a prominent one. Besides, not agreeing to support the Janata government in 1979 the Tohra-Talwandi combine resigned from their respective presidential positions to pressurise Badal to do the same. When Badal failed to oblige the Sikh priests sent for him and he had to 'acknowledge the super ordination of the ecclesiastical authority'. On the question of screening of the Akali delegates to the presidential elections for the Akali Dal held on October 10 1979, the Badal group had been accusing Talwandi of interfering with the list. When they proposed the names of three eminent members of the Sikh community who would do their job fairly, Talwandi-Tohra group got three head priests also included on whom they would exert pressure as Tohra was the President of the SGPC. 'The ecclesiastical organisational axis at times conspired to publicise or sectarianize even a complete issue to exert popular pressure on the Badal government.' For example, the visit of Badal to Vaishno Devi, a Hindu shrine in June 1978 was taken up and he was condemned as idol-worship is banned in the Sikh religion. Badal resented the interference of the Akal Takht in the affairs of the State while Talwandi and Tohra felt that since they were the chiefs of the party and the SGPC, they possessed a legitimate authority to control the affairs of the party'.

Jiwan Singh Umranangal campaigned for a Janta Party candidate. He was ordered to present 'Karah Prasad' worth Rs. 11 and donate Rs. 51 in the service of Darbar Sahib.

64 Ibid., p. 56.
65 S Bhatnagar and P. S. Verma, “Coalition Governments (1967-80) in Political Dynamics in Punjab, op. cit. n. 52, p. 188.
He too had disobeyed the verdict of Takht. The factional fights led to the defeat of the SAD in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. This led to Longowal's resignation as the senior Vice-President of the SGPC. He urged for holding the elections for the Akali Dal's Presidentship but owing to factionalism this was not possible. Again a seven-member committee was formed to manage the affairs of the SAD as the Executive committee of the SAD had been dissolved. Factional fights continued till the Ministry was dismissed.

Elections were held in May 1980 and the Congress came to power. On August 9, 1980 Badal, Sarhadi, Longowal and Atma Singh expelled Talwandi from the party for six years. The Talwandi group too expelled Badal, Ravi Inder Singh, Prakash Singh Majithia on the same day for their anti-party activities. The crisis was further intensified when the faction led by Tohra separated itself from the Talwandi group. Thus, there was a split in the organisational wing also. Tohra and Sukhjinder Singh supported Longowal as the candidate for the Presidentship of the SAD. Longowal's faction convened the World Sikh Convention on August 19, 1980 and formalised the split. Tohra, the Chief of SGPC supported Longowal and the Badal group elected Longowal as the President of the Party on August 20, 1980. The Talwandi group was reduced to a minority, with only four members of the Legislative Assembly. 'Jagdev Singh Talwandi described this split as a fight between the 'haves' and the have-notes'.

After the defeat in the elections of 1980, Longowal said that the SAD failed, "not because the voters were against us, but because several Akali leaders actively canvassed support for the Congress (I) candidates in Bhatinda, Faridkot and Tarn Taran. Many others did not extent support to the candidates put up by the other parties either in alliance or in adjustment with us".

After the August 19, 1980 split of the Akali Dal into Akali Dal (Longowal) and Akali Dal (Talwandi), Tohra was re-elected as the President of the SGPC on November 19, 1980. He defeated Nirlep Kaur of Akali Dal (T) and thus the dominance of the Akali Dal (Sant group) was assured. ‘The second magic split in a period of eighteen years (third since the inception of the Party in 1920) is to be understood not in terms of any

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67 Ibid., p. 230.
ideological differences but as a clash of personalities. Besides these two groups there were many dissatisfied leaders who formed their own small groups. They failed to be effective. Jathedar Santokh Singh of Delhi tried to revive the Master Tara Singh's group but because of its Congress stand had a very small following, which was confined to the urban areas of Punjab.

Both the Akali Dal – Longowal’s and Talwandi’s agitated for more autonomy to Punjab. By passing resolutions and holding Morchas they supported the demand on religious and political grounds. The Talwandi group faced a set back when Bhagwant Singh Danewalia who was its advisor left to form his own party, ‘Federal Shiromani Akali Dal’. He declared that the leadership of new party would continue to work for the confederation of Akali factions in order to attain social and economic objectives of greater autonomy for Punjab.

The internal conflict between Longowal, Tohra and Talwandi groups was one of the reasons why the Akali Dal could not negotiate strongly with the Central government. Moreover, this intra-Akali conflict was further complicated when the militant section, entered the political picture which believed in violence. The latter were in minority but the moderates failed to disassociate themselves from the militants again because of conflict among themselves. Even the Akali movement from 1981 to 1984 suffered because of confusion of goals among the leaders if the Akali Dal. The central government again took advantage of this confusion.

The rise of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is attributed to the connivance of Sanjay Gandhi who wanted the break-up of the Punjab coalition. In this venture, he was helped by Giani Zail Singh who had been the Chief Minister of the state from 1972 to 1977. Punjab was dominated by Badal, Longowal and Tohra, was each in his own way a force to reckon with Sanjay wanted to play one against the other but Zail Singh told him that weakening one would only lead to the other two emerging stronger. So, they looked for a new Sant and found him in Bhindranwale. They needed a cause of bring him forward. The Nirankaris, a heretical sect of Sikhs were given permission to hold a

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68 The Tribune, January 14, 1980.
69 Ibid, June 22, 1981.
convention in Amritsar. The Sikh congregation was angry but Umranangal tried to pacify them as the Nirankaris had close connection with the Hindu traders who were supporters of Jana Sangh which was a coalition partner of the SAD. Bhindrawale shouted that they would not let the Nirankari convention take place. He marched with Fauja Singh, an agricultural inspector, leading a procession shouting slogans against the Nirankaris. The police made no attempt to stop them. At the spot, Fauja Singh cut off the head of Baba Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari Guru. The Guru’s bodyguards shot dead Fauja Singh. A battle broke out in which 12 Sikhs and three Nirankaris were killed. The INC projected Bhindranwale as a hero. A new party, the Dal Khalsa was formed on April 13, 1978, a week before the attack on the Nirankaris. ‘The inaugural meeting was held in the Aroma Hotel, Chandigarh, and, according to the staff of the hotel, the bill of 600 rupees was paid by Zail Singh’. Zail Singh was actively involved in giving prominence to the activities of the Dal Khalsa.

Jagjit Singh Chauhan who raised the demand for Khalistan in United Kingdom in 1977 came to India accepting Badal as his leader but the Akalis rejected him. The Congress took him under its umbrella and Zail Singh and Sanjay Gandhi formed a trinity with Chauhan. Chauhan even tried to get Congress-I tickets for his two supporters in Hoshiarpur district but the Congress could not accommodate them as some of the old partymen would desert the party. Chauhan was not arrested even when he hoisted the flag of Khalistan at Anandpur Sahib in March 1980.

In 1979 elections were held for the SGPC. But Bhindranwale could not emerge victorious as his candidates won only four out of the 14 seats. The majority yet remained with the SAD. Zail Singh used Bhindranwale to curtail the powers of his rival, Darbara Singh who had been appointed the Chief Minister of Punjab by Mrs. Gandhi. When Bhindranwale was arrested on September 20, 1981 for the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, the proprietor of a chain of newspapers, Zail Singh got him released, as he was the Home

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126 Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar, Mrs. Gandhi’s Last Battle*, New Delhi, Rupa and Co, 1985, p. 60.
Minister. His arrest had led to a spate of violence in Punjab. His release made him a hero who had challenged and defeated the Indian government.71

Bhindranwale fell out with his patron, Zail Singh, because during his arrest the police had burnt all his sermons which his secretary used to note down. Zail Singh tried to pacify Bhindranwale but by that time the SAD had decided to adopt him seeing his increasing following. The Akalis, on the other hand, tried to retrospect as to what went wrong and why the Sikhs not voted for them? ‘They believed that their ‘secular’ image during the coalition with Janata had damaged their equation with the Sikhs, who thought that ‘their own’ government did little for them. They came to the conclusion that to get a better image, they must woo the Sikhs, they must rely on the traditional stand of combining religion with politics’.72 They could not have any other better card than Bhindranwale himself. Longowal even decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement from October 17, 1981 if Bhindranwale was not released unconditionally.

On the eve of 1980 elections to the Parliament the SAD was driven with factionalism and indecisiveness. The group led by Badal, the Chief Minister wanted the President of the SAD, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, to be replaced. Talwandi was the leader of the rival group. Badal wanted to have the support of the 23 members of the Janata Party in the Assembly and wanted to have an alliance with it in 1980. On the other hand, Talwandi wanted the SAD to make all the adjustments as it was the supreme body. By this statement, Talwandi asserted the supremacy of the organisational wing. The two rival parties involved Akal Takht and its Hukamnamas (edicts) to resolve these internal difficulties. ‘The Talwandi group by aligning with the left and democratic front composed of the Lok Dal Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India and CFD was out to “defendatise” the party.’73

Meanwhile, the Jathedar of Akal Takht made efforts to unite the various factions of SAD i.e., Akali Dal (Master), Akali Dal (Longowal) and Akali Dal (Talwandi) and

71 Tully and Jacob, op. cit., n. 70, p. 71.
the Federal Shiromani Akali Dal. 'Jathedar Santokh Singh of Akali Dal (Master) agreed for Panthic unity on the condition that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale be made its leader'.

Longowal and Tohra, the former President of Akali Dal and the latter, President of SGPC started a Dharam Yudh (religious war). Gurnam Singh Tur, leader of Akali Dal (Talwandi) too joined them. Bhindranwale too united with them. As Talwandi declared. 'there is complete unity in the Panth now'.

Longowal had negotiated with Mrs. Gandhi but she had backed out over and over again. Thus, his hands were not strengthened vis-à-vis Bhindranwale. As Harkishan Singh Surjeet told to Mark Tully, 'Three times in six months an agreement was reached and three times the Prime Minister backed out. Each time the interests of the Hindus of Haryana weighed more heavily with her than a settlement with the Sikhs'.

Tohra wanted to use the Dharam Morcha (religious agitation) to weaken Badal and be the leader of the political wing of the SAD and thus field his candidature for the Chief-Ministership. Bhindranwale was highly critical of Longowal's non-violent tactics. Longowal criticized the killing of unarmed, innocent people. The supporters were openly divided between pro-Longowal and pro-Bhindranwale factions. Tohra tried to unite them but to no avail. 'For Longowal non-violence was a matter of faith; for Bhindranwale it was mere rhetoric and had outlived its use'.

Thus, we can categorise the factions of Akali Dal into four according to Gurharpal Singh:

1. The moderates included Akali Dal (Badal), Akali Dal (Longowal), Akali Dal (Kabul) and Akali Dal (Panthic) who supported the Rajiv-Longowal Accord of July 24, 1985 and were committed to parliamentarism and the Anandpur Sahib resolution (Amritsar) which talked of transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, settlement

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74 Ajit, October 4, 1981.
76 Tully and Jacob, op. cit., n. 70, p. 91.
77 Nayar and Singh, op. cit., n. 73, p. 74.
of the Ravi-Beas water dispute with Haryana and Rajasthan, prosecution of 1984 anti-Sikh rioters, rehabilitation of 1984 Sikh army deserters, release of political detainees, enactment of an all-India Gurdwara Act and the Centre’s power to be restricted to defense, currency, communications and foreign affairs.

2. Akali Dal (Mann) and Akali Dal (Baba) were the radicals who displaced the moderates in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections who accept the Anandpur Sahib Resolution but stress the Sikh’s right to self-determination.

3. The democratic militants were the AISSF (Manjit), Damdami Taksal, Panthic Committee (Manochahal), Khalistan Commando Force, Bhindranwale Tiger Force and theDashmesh Regiment who talk of parliamentarism alongwith an armed struggle for a separate state of Khalistan.

4. The armed militants who have pursued the armed struggle for Khalistan and condemn the use of parliamentarism as a tactic. They include Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh), Khalistan Liberation Force, Babbar Khalsa International and Akali Dal (Babbar).

The AISSF of the SAD became active saboteurs. Many people from the Longowal camp started visiting Bhindranwale. The latter hated Badal and Longowal for advocating Hindu-Sikh unity. The merger of Akali Dal (Longowal), Akali Dal (Talwandi) and the militant faction of Bhindranwale in 1982 had run into trouble. Tohra was re-elected the President of SGPC on November 30, 1982 for the 11th consecutive term. He was trying to maintain good relations both with Longowal and Bhindranwale. When Bhindranwale wanted to move to Akal Takht, Longowal resisted and so did the head-priest, Kirpal Singh. But Tohra persuaded them to let Bhindranwale move. December 14, 1983 saw Bhindranwale move to the Akal Takht. The AISSF called a convention in which Longowal was not invited and Bhindranwale criticised the former for betraying the cause of the Sikhs. The differences were clear between Sant Longowal and Talwandi. Finally, pro-Bhindranwale members declared Bhindranwale as their leader on April 27, 1984.\footnote{\textit{The Tribune}, April 28, 1984.} They claimed that Longowal’s supporters had called Bhindranwale
and his followers ‘traitors’ and ‘agents of the Congress’ but the Sant had taken no action against them. Sant Longowal decided to launch a non-co-operation movement on June 3, 1984 but that day the central government ordered the enemy to flush out militants from the Golden Temple complex. Bhindranwale, Shabeg Singh and Amrik Singh were killed and other leaders of all the factions of SAD were arrested.

The Akali Jatha alongwith its President, Harbhajan Singh Sandhu, who was close to Longowal was dissolved by the five High Priests on November 7, 1984 and Surjan Singh Thekedar was appointed as the convener of the new ad-hoc committee. The factional fight had become severe. Tohra was elected the President of the SGPC for the 13th term despite the opposition from Akali Dal (Talwandi) which had fielded Atma Singh. ‘Moreover, Dial Singh, Secretary of Akali Dal (Talwandi) claimed that Atma Singh was also supported by the Badal faction of Akali Dal (Longowal).’

Baba Joginder Singh, father of Bhindranwale, acquired prominence as leaders like Longowal, Tohra etc. asked him to bring all the factions together for Panthic unity. He became a leader of Akali Dal (J) and he played an important role for two years. He appointed a nine member adhoc committee and also announced the merger of All Akali factions on May 1, 1985 at Amritsar. The very next day, Longowal condemned and subsequently denounced the committee and announced its dissolution. He revived his own Akali Dal (L). Longowal had Tohra’s support. Badal, Barnala, Tohra, Balwant Singh and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa rallied behind Longowal and told him to go ahead with any agreement with the Central government. The ‘Punjab Accord’ was signed by Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minster of India and Longowal, President of SAD. Longowal was helped by Surjit Singh Barnala and Balwant Singh. The Accord led to a split in the Akali Dal with Barnala and Balwant Singh on one side and Badal and Tohra on the other. Longowal’s death led to this factionalism coming into the open. Kuldip Nayar says that, ‘the process of negotiations with the government that resulted in accord has split them into two groups; Badal and Tohra on one side and Balwant Singh and Barnala on the

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80 Kuldip Kaur, op. cit., n. 51, p. 87.
other’. Tohra and Badal had a popular base and their relationship is too of convenience as Tohra wanted to continue as the SGPC chief so as to command the Gurdwaras and their funds. ‘...the distance between him (Tohra) and Balwant Singh and Barnala is not easily bridgeable because at one time both of them had sided with Badal against Tohra. Even the combination of Badal and Tohra is one of convenience; in their thinking and outlook they stand poles apart’. So, at this time there were three factions, one led by Badal and Tohra accord, led by Barnala and Balwant Singh and the third known as ‘United Akali Party’ led by Baba Joginder Singh.

There has been a competition to control the SGPC amongst Sikhs who owe their allegiance to the other parties. The Akali Dal, thus, got the element of competition besides being divided into those who represented the Sikh peasantry and those representing the commercial classes. ‘At present times the Akali Dal is perhaps faced with the greatest crisis of all time with the emergence of a new and powerful faction within the Akali also drawing support from the common peasant base (Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and Baba Joginder Singh factions)’. Hamish Telford argues that Bhindranwale was ‘a rational actor with the own goals. His first concern was to rejuvenate Sikhism and establish himself as a leader of the Sikh panth (spiritual way)’. Many believe that he was a creation of Giani Zail Singh as a foil to the Akali government. Bhindranwale, Telford says, tried ‘to overcome the hegemony of the Akali Dal, he exploited first the Congress (I) and then the Akali Dal itself’.

During Operation Blue Star, President of the AISSF, Bhai Amrik Singh was killed and its General Secretary, H. S. Sandhu surrendered to the Indian Army. Bhai Manjit Singh, brother of Amrik Singh was rounded up by the Army and the Senior Vice-President, Bhai Atinder Pal Singh escaped to Pakistan. The AISSF supporters started

82 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
regrouping in 1984. They connived with the supporters of Sant Bhindranwale. In March 1985 the AISSF formed an adhoc committee with Harinder Singh Kahlon as the convener. Atinder Pal Singh was trying to revive AISSF in Pakistan. Gurjit Singh was also trying to revive AISSF in Pakistan and factional rivalry existed among the two groups. ‘The difference between the two factions stemmed basically not from any deep ideological or conceptual variations but from their attempts to strengthen their respective position and emerge as the dominant militant group in Pakistan’.86 The faction led by Gurjit Singh was rustic, illiterate but deeply religious while the one led by Atinder Pal Singh was urban and educated. Gurjit Singh was married to the niece of Sant Bhindranwale who harped on the cause of ‘Khalistan’. For the President of the AISSF Gurjit Singh’s faction got the name of Bhai ManjifSingh elected because of the sacrifice of his brother, Amrik Singh. Atinder Pal Singh lost the battle of leadership. In a meeting held in India from July 5 to July 8 1985, Manjit Singh was elected as the President and Harminder S. Sandhu as the General Secretary of the AISSF. Both were in jail. Harinder Singh Kahlon was named the convener. The AISSF condemned the Punjab Accord and the announcement of the Assembly elections in Punjab. The AISSF decided to honour the assassin of Indira Gandhi, Beant Singh. H. S. Kahlon, the convener asked Baba Joginder Singh of the Akali Dal (J) to extend financial help in organising the function. The latter provided only Rs. 10,000 and help was given by Baba Thakur Singh, Acting Head of the Damadami Taksal. Differences between Kahlon and Joginder Singh grew when Bhindranwale’s wife and two sons were invited for the convention. After this convention of October 31, Kahlon openly levelled charges against Baba Joginder Singh for misappropriating funds. One of the supporters of Baba’s camp, Satwinder Singh was asked by Kahlon to leave Akali Dal (J) and join them. Satwinder Singh with a delegation met Bhai Manjit Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu who were lodged in the Jodhpur Jail and apprised them of the growing differences. When Manjit Singh and Sandhu criticised H.S. Kahlona’s way of functioning Kahlon declared on February 26, 1986 that the AISSF had no links with Baba Joginder Singh. Kahlon was eager to get close to Damadami Taksal. Amarjit S. Chawla who was in Jodhpur jail was shifted to Amritsar Jail to appear in the B. Sc. examinations. Members of the AISSF met him and listed their grievances

against Kahlon. On the basis of his report, Manjit Singh relieved Kahlon of his duties. Kahlon criticized Manjit Singh and raised his own faction. Thus on April 22, 1986 there was the AISSF faction of Manjit and Kahlon.

The Babbar Khalsa was financed from abroad. Having 8 – 10 dreaded members it consisted of Amrik Singh, Subhan Singh, Surinder Singh and Manmohan Singh. Besides the Babbar Khalsa, Sukhdev Singh Sakhira formed his own group. He pressurised Bhai Mokham Singh of Damdami Taksal to have an agreement with the SGPC on the issue of ‘Kar Seva’ (voluntary religious service). He met Baba Thakur Singh, acting Head of Damdami Taksal to reach a compromise between the Taksal and the SGPC/Akali Dal (L). The AISSF (Kahlon faction) and the Damdami Taksal blessed Manbir Singh Chaheru of Village Chhaheru to form the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF). Tarsem Singh Kohar, a polytechnic student who was sentenced to life imprisonment and later released, formed the Khalsa Liberation Army (KLA). Jarnail Singh – Baba gang masterminded the assassination of Longowal in 1985.

Longowal could have brought round Badal and Tohra to accept the Punjab accord as they wielded a lot of influence among the Akali cadre. They had opposed the accord in late July in the party’s conclave. With Longowal’s assassination they have re-established links with the “United” Akali Party led by Baba Joginder Singh that vehemently opposed the accord. Badal and Tohra were annoyed with Longowal that he had failed to take them into confidence during talks with the Centre while Balwant Singh, a former Finance Minister of Punjab and Barnala, a former Union Agriculture Minister were. Longowal’s death has split them with Badal and Tohra on one side and Balwant Singh and Barnala on the other. Tohra supported Badal to continue being the President of the SGPC so that he would have control of the Gurudwaras and its funds. Moreover, Balwant Singh and Barnala had sided once with Badal against Tohra. ‘Even the combination of Badal and Tohra is one of convenience in their thinking and outlook they stand poles apart’.

After Operation Blue Star, the Akali leaders became silent and the militants took centre stage. The Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi announced elections to the Punjab Assembly on September 22, 1985. The Akali Dal (Longowal) decided to contest all the

Kuldip Nayar, op. cit., n. 82.
state Assembly as well as Lok Sabha seats in a meeting held on August 19, 1985. Tohra and Badal did not attend the meeting but were persuaded by Longowal to unite in the name of Panthic unity. They did but the next day Longowal was assassinated. A succession squabble followed with the supporters of Barnala declaring him to be Longowal’s political heir while the other group wanted Sardar Ajit Singh from Ropar to be the heir. The central government here played a prominent role by getting elected Barnala as the President of the Akali Dal (Longowal) and Ajit Singh as head of the party’s Parliamentary Board.88

Barnala became the Chief Minister on September 29, 1985 and he included some supporters of Tohra in his Cabinet and ignored the Badal faction. This issue led to a split in the SAD. Satya M. Rai feels that Badal refused to co-operate and the differences were over the non-implementation of the Punjab Accord.89 The Damdami Taksal organised a Sarbat Khalsa on January 26, 1986. Even the Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Giani Kirpal Singh, was replaced by Bhai Jasbir Singh. The trinity of Badal, Barnala and Tohra did not attend this meeting. They organised their own Sarbat Khalsa in which Tohra resigned as the President of the SGPC. Barnala accepted his resignation and appointed Kabul Singh, his close associate as the acting President. This led to further factionalism between the Akali leaders.

Sikh struggle for the creation of Khalistan was announced on April 29, 1986. Consequently, the Punjab Police entered the Golden Temple complex on April 30,1986 under ‘Operation Search’ and cleared the complex of all militants. This led to criticism against Barnala. Badal, Tohra and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa resigned and announced their separate party under the leadership of Badal. These 27 Akali leaders ‘applied to the Speaker (Ravi Inder Singh) of the Assembly to recognise them as a separate group. Next day, the Speaker issued a notification of recognising the new group’.90 Bhartiya Janta Party and the Congress (I) supported Barnala but Tohra and Badal had popular support. According to Sharma the exclusion of the Badal faction from the Akali Ministry and the

90 The Tribune May 9, 1986.
ouster of Tohra from the Presidency of SGPC were the root cause of the dissension. The ruling SAD split on the question, finally, of police entry during ‘Operation Search’ into the Golden Temple in April 1986.91

Tohra defeated Kabul Singh for the post of Presidentship on November 20, 1986. Tohra had Akali Dal (Baba) and Akali Dal (Talwandi)’s support. The SGPC relieved Giani Kirpal Singh, Jathedar of Akal Takht and Giani Sahib Singh, Head Granthi of Darbar Sahib from their posts. The SGPC appointed Darshan Singh Ragi as Jathedar of Akal Takht and Giani Puran Singh as Head Granthi of Darbar Sahib. Soon the other three priests, supporters of Barnala, were removed and it appointed its own supporters. These Five Sikh Priests issued an appeal to all the Akali factions to dissolve their differences and come together to form a new United Akali Dal. The appeal was also to Barnala who explained his position and duties towards the Indian Constitution. Barnala was ex-communicated and declared a ‘Tankhaiya’. Jathedar Rachpal Singh, leader of Akali Dal (Master) met the same fate for he too hadn’t submitted his resignation. Darshan Singh, the Jathedar of Akal Takht, formed a new Akali Dal, uniting all the factions except Akali Dal (Longowal). The merged factions consisted of Akali Dal (Badal), Akali Dal (Talwandi), Akali Dal (Baba), AISSF and Damdami Taksal. Simranjit Singh Mann was made the President of Unified Akali Dal. Their aim was to get the Centre to accept the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Subsequently, Prem Singh Chandumajra who was a Cabinet Minister in Barnala ministry dissolved the youth wing and Inderjit Singh Bagi dissolved the Akali Dal (Longowal), Barnala’s ministry was reduced to a minority for he believed that the various factions had come together against his government on the plank of Panthic unity. Some political thinkers argue that Barnala did not cooperate with the idea of Akali unity because of instructions of Rajiv Gandhi. ‘Moreover, the ego problem of Sikh ministers and Panthic leaders was also responsible for their non-involvement in the Panthic unity’.92 All the factions of Akali Dal i.e. Akali Dal (Badal), Akali Dal (Talwandi), Akali Dal (Baba), Damdami Taksal and AISSF united and set up the United

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Akali Dal on February 5, 1987. Bamala who led the Akali Dal (Longowal) did not join the United Akali Dal as he said the United Akali Dal was in favour of Khalistan that was ‘harmful to the interest of the Sikhs’.\textsuperscript{93} Bamala’s Ministry was dissolved on May 11, 1987 and President rule was imposed in Punjab.

The police atrocities were condemned by the both the United Akali Dal and the Akali Dal (Longowal) yet they did not unite. Within the United Akali Dal differences arose between the Badal faction and the supporters of Akali Dal (Baba) each demanding a larger share in the election of the district jathedars. While the former claimed that they had more representation in the Assembly the latter faction claimed that it had made more sacrifices for the cause of the Panth. Elections to the SGPC were held separately by United Akali Dal and Akali Dal (Longowal). The former faction held elections on October 16, 1987 and elected Tohra as its President and its own 11 member executive committee. Akali Dal (Longowal) held its own elections and elected Harcharan Singh Hudiara as the President of its own 11-member executive committee. 

Factional fight grew within the United Akali Dal when Ranjit Singh, the General Secretary of United Akali Dal, of Badal faction challenged the appointment of the acting President Ujjagar Singh Sekhwan. Meanwhile, Capt. Amrinder Singh who was the leader of the legislative wing of the United Akali Dal decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement from January 26, 1988 onwards. Badal announced his own ‘five-point formula’. All these announcements were aimed at meeting the various grievances of the Sikh community. Jasbir Singh Rode was made the Jathedar of Akal Takht who appealed to the various Akali factions for Panthic unity on March 7, 1988. The leaders of United Akali Dal courted arrest on May 20, 1988. Then the SGPC appointed Harcharan Singh Delhi as the Jathedar of Akal Takht after the removal of Bhai Jasbir Singh Rode. The fresh appointments led to differences between the Badal and Baba factions. The Baba faction expelled Manjit Singh Calcutta, the General Secretary for six years from the party on July 26, 1988. Again, Bhai Jasbir Singh was made the Jathedar of Akal Takht. Simranjit Singh Mann, who was the President of United Akali Dal and still in the Bhagalpur Jail dissolved the 13-member council. The Badal faction refused to accept this

\textsuperscript{93} India Today, March 15, 1987, p. 25.
decision of Mann and asked clarification from Professor Darshan Singh who had appointed Mann as the President. Darshan Singh was appointed as the Jathedar of Akal Takht on August 13, 1988.

The United Akali Dal finally split on August 25, 1988 with the Badal (faction) electing Talwandi as President in place of Mann. Baba’s faction showed its faith in the leadership of Mann. 24 members of the Akali Dal (Longowal) joined the Akali Dal (Talwandi) and extended support to Tohra, President of SGPC. Barnala resigned from the Presidentship of Akali Dal (Longowal) on December 5, 1988 on the question of Panthic unity. He was given authority to negotiate with Talwandi and other Akali factions. A leader of Akali Dal (Longowal), Balwant Singh criticised Barnala over his anti-Panthic activities. Tota Singh was made the acting President of Akali Dal (Longowal). This faction called Balwant Singh a traitor.

Akali Dal (Longowal), Akali Dal (Mann) and Akali Dal (Talwandi) merged under the banner of SAD on March 12, 1989 and elected Jagdev Singh Talwandi as its President. Mann was made a patron. Capt. Amrinder Singh was behind this unity and the Baba’s faction alleged that the Capt. was working under the dictates of the centre. Problems arose when Barnala and Tota Singh said that Akali Dal (Longowal) would continue to exist as before. Jagdev Singh Talwandi removed Manjit Singh Calcutta from the Secretarystate of SGPC because of their personal differences that led to Tohra’s resignation. Barnala was re-elected President of Akali Dal (Longowal) on July 17, 1989.

Elections to the Lok Sabha on November 26, 1989 saw all the three factions contest independently. Talwandi faced rebellion from his supporters – Sukhjinder Singh and Surchar Singh Thekedar on the issue of distribution of tickets and alongwith these leaders Basant Singh Khalsa, Hire Singh Sabria and Gurdip Singh Bhaini were expelled from the party and they accepted the leadership of Badal on November 15, 1989. The Badal and Barnala factions fared badly in the elections. Akali Dal (Mann) supported by AISSF and the Damdami Taksal won 9 out of 13 Parliamentary seats. The independents too extended their support to the Mann group. Consequently, the Mann


\[^95\] Ibid., December 2, 1989.
group was recognised as the real representative of the Sikhs. Simranjit S. Mann was released by the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi as goodwill gesture. Mann resigned from Lok Sabha for he was not allowed to carry his sword inside the Parliament House. All the factions decided to hold a convention for safeguarding the rights of the Sikhs on November 25, 1990 at Anandpur Sahib. The government took precautions by arresting the leaders on the way to Anandpur Sahib. This made the Akali factions stand on the same platform on December 26, 1990 at Fatehgarh Sahib. Tohra conducted the proceedings and Mann presided in which it was declared that any dialogue would have to include the militants. Later the militants threatened that any dialogue without the militants would lead to destruction. All the three factions, Akali Dal (B), Akali Dal (Mann) and Akali Dal (Longowal) accepted Mann as President of SAD on January 12, 1991. ‘The three Dals were dissolved in this meeting’. Some political analysts contend that a non-Congress government at the centre i.e. the Chandra Shekhar government led to the unity of various Akali factions. This unity, unfortunately, lasted only for two months i.e. till March 2, 1991.

Mann, the President of SAD tried to reorganise the district and circle units of Akali Party. All the factions condemned this action as an arbitrary one. Elections to the Lok Sabha as well as the Assembly were announced on June 22, 1991. Mann decided to contest the elections to secure independence for the Sikhs. Badal, Tohra and Barnala were not allowed to address the congregation so they stayed away. Badal separated from Mann on April 23, 1991. The charge was that Mann had not provided effective leadership. On April 24, 1991 the Longowal faction parted ways with Mann for they felt that there was no clear-cut political goal of the party. On the other hand, the Badal faction received a severe jolt when a faction led by Capt. Amrinder Singh, floated his own Akali Dal (Panthic) on April 28, 1991. The Captain alleged that Badal had failed to take the workers of the party in confidence when he joined and then split with Mann’s group. Mann faced a crisis on May 3, 1991 when Harcharan Singh Rode revolted and

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97 Ibid., April 14, 1991.
encouraged Baba Joginder Singh to take control of the party and thus the Akali Dal (Baba) was formed on June 30, 1991. The Rode faction expelled Mann from the party and relieved him from the Presidentship of the Party. Baba Joginder Singh was elected the President of Akali Dal (Baba).\textsuperscript{99}

The Election Commission postponed the elections from June 22, 1991 to September 25, 1991. The Akali factions came together for a meeting on August 11, 1991 at Gurudwara Kesgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib) and decided to boycott the elections in February 1992. Mann faced an exit when in the SGPC elections held on November 13, 1991, Tohra was elected the President with the support of Akali Dal (Badal). Mann’s group supported Harchand Singh Delhi and the group could not find representation in the 11-member working committee.

On December 20, 1991, the Akali Dal (Longowal) and Akali Dal (Panthic) merged to contest the February 1992 elections together. Their party was to be known as Shiromani Akali Dal.\textsuperscript{100} However, the AISSF, Akali Dal (Badal), Akali Dal (Mann), Akali Dal (Baba) and Akali Dal (Babbar) decided to boycott the elections for they felt that till a permanent solution to Punjab problem was found, elections were meaningless. Kabul Singh, member of Akali Dal (Longowal) revolted against his party’s decision to contest the election and formed his own Akali Dal (Kabul), Sukhjinder Singh, the senior Vice-President of Akali Dal (Badal) revolted against his party’s decision and he decided to contest the elections. He formed his own party, Akali Dal (Sukhjinder) on January 25, 1992. A senior Akali leader, Jiwan Singh Umranangal formed the Shiromani Jagat Akali Dal (S.J.A.D.) on January 21, 1992 with Baba Ajit Singh Nihang, the chief of the Taruna Nihang Dal. Their aim was to contest elections.\textsuperscript{101} The Akali Dal (Pheruman) decided not to contest elections. The Party President, Mahant Sewa Das Singh, announced that the party was not contesting the elections because the Central government had failed to fulfill the demands of the Sikhs and the Punjab state, especially the transfer of Chandigarh into Punjab for which their leader, Pheruman, had sacrificed his life. The Party was against

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid, July 1, 1991.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid, December 2, 1991.
\textsuperscript{101} The Hindustan Times, January 22, 1992.
the supporters of Khalistan to getting into the Vidhan Sabha. S. Jagdev Singh Talwandi formed his own party, Akali Dal – T and decided to boycott the elections and follow the policies of the militants. The All India Sikh Conference (Babbar’s) General Secretary Gurcharan Singh Babbar appealed to all the Akalis to contest the elections. He said that the Badal and Mann factions of the Akali Dal should not approach the Akal Takht for issuing an appeal to the people of Punjab to boycott the February 19, elections. It would result in a serious rift among the Sikh community, he said.102

In the elections the Congress (I) secured majority and Sardar Beant Singh was made the Chief Minister in February 1992. After the elections all the factions Akali Dal (T), Akali Dal (S) and Akali Dal (Panthic) urged Tohra to become the leader of SAD and unite all the Akali factions. But Mann was not ready to give up the Presidentship of the Dal and Tohra did not want to clash with Badal. Meanwhile, Akali Dal (B), Akali Dal (M), Akali Dal (Baba) and Damdami Taksal emphasised the need for Panthic unity. The common demands were scrapping of all black laws, withdrawing the Army from Punjab and the need to fight anti-Sikh repressive policies. Then AISSF floated a new party Akali Dal (Manjit) on August 25, 1992 with Bhai Manjit Singh as the President for three years. Government repressions again made the different factions talk of unity. Leaders of all the factions attended baba Joginder Singh’s death on November 18, 1993. They talked of Panthic Unity but could not agree on a common candidate for the bye-election of Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat. The result of this factionalism led to the winning of the INC’s nominee and Badal’s candidate came second. Capt. Amrinder Singh of the Panthic Akali Dal talked of uniting the factions of Talwandi, Barnala and his own. Tohra was the consensus candidate in the elections of the executive committee of the SGPC on October 31, 1993 Tohra was again elected the President. Again, talks of unity started and Mann even agreed to give up the Presidentship of Akali Dal. All the leaders sought the intervention of the Akal Takht to bring unity among the Akali factions. Badal requested the acting Jathedar of Akal Takht Prof. Manjit Singh, not to interfere in the political affairs. This provocation of Badal led to a split in his party on April 19, 1994 for the supporters of Tohra walked out. Sukhjinder Singh, Tohra’s close confidant who said

that ‘Badal had defied the supreme religious-cum-temporal seat of the Sikhs’, led the
group that walked out. After winning the bye-elections in Ajnala and Gidderbaha
Badal in June 1995 Badal said it was not only a verdict against the Congress but also an
eye-opener to his Akali friends who had propagated against him and his party. By the
Akali friends he meant the six Akali factions which had been brought together by the
acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Mr. Manjit Singh. Known as the Akali Dal (Amritsar)
Badal had refused to join the group and was castigated by for challenging the authority of
the Aka Takht. The Akali Dal (Amritsar) had been formed at the behest of Tohra who
criticized Badal. Talwandi called Badal a traitor who was only interested in capturing
power. Badal stood firm and refused to join the Akali Dal (Amritsar). Badal then resigned
from the Presidentship of the Party. All the leaders except Badal consented for unity and
the leaders were directed to perform “seva” in the Golden Temple for five days. After
doing seva for five days – Amrinder Singh, Mann, Manjit Singh, Jagdev S. Talwandi and
Barnala performed Bhog. Tohra, his supporters in the Akali Dal (Badal), Basant Singh
Khalsa, Surjan Singh Thekedar and Sukhjinder Singh participated. The six Akali factions
merged into SAD on May 1, 1994 at Akal Takht and announced the Amritsar Declaration
which was controversial as it demanded greater autonomy and was anti-Centre. The
Declaration involved emotive panthic issues. Badal rejected it and emphasized on
consolidating all Punjabis and not only all Sikhs. Badal termed the Declaration as anti-
national. Tohra was elected the President of the Akali Dal (Amritsar). Analysts like
Kuldip Nayar and Dang contend that this was a clever move by Tohra to become the
Chief Minister and keep Badal away from power. But Badal with his moderate stand had
not only given a serious jolt to the Congress but had won the support of parties like
Bhartiya Janata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Bhartiya Kisan Union, Communist Party of
India and Communist Party of India (Marxist). Badal’s party soon became popular and
gradually the other Akali groups started joining his party. A majority of the members of
the Akali Dal (Longowal) under the leadership of Capt. Kanwaljeet Singh joined the
Akali Dal (Badal) on June 18, 1994. Gradually, leaders like Talwandi, Tohra, Barnala etc.
joined 3adal. Finally, the acting Jathedar of Akal Takht managed to get all the leaders of
Akali Dal (Badal) and Akali Dal (Amritsar) together in January 1995.

103 Kuldip Nayar, op. cit., n. 82, p. 134.
In the SGPC elections in 1996 the contending parties were Akali Dal (Badal) which was dominating the SGPC, SAD (Panthic), SAD (Amritsar) led by Simranjit Singh Mann, Bahujan Samaj Party led by Sohan Singh Phalianwala, Akali Dal rebels like Kuldip Singh Wadala, Sukhjinder Singh, Senior Vice-President of Akali Dal (Badal) and a former President of SGPC, Prem Singh Lalpura, a close associate of Tohra and General Secretary of SGPC – Darshan Singh Jesapur, Mohan Singh Bhatia, Tarlochan Singh Tur, Baba Sarbjit Singh Bedi of Sikh Sidhant Parcharak and Baba Thakur Singh of Damdami Taksal. All the contending parties formed a united front against SAD (Badal). The group was joined by Jagmeet Singh Brar who had given a tough fight to Sukhjinder Singh Badal in 1996 in the parliamentary elections. Their main line of argument was the growing corruption in the Gurudwaras. The alliance “would single out Badal labelling him the chief ‘villain’ of the piece”. But Akali Dal (B) came under fire mainly because of its alliance with the Bhartiya Janta Party and then softening its demand on state autonomy. In the ultimate analysis, it (the SGPC elections) boiled down to a conflict between the two combinations of political parties – “Panthic and Bahujan Samaj Party alliance supported by Congress Party, United Front and Chandra Shekhar’s Samajwadi Janata Party and Akali Dal (B) supported by Bhartiya Janta Party”. Badal declared Tohra as the Presidential candidate of the SGPC and they both hoped on first gaining political power and then tackling the religious issues. They argued that SGPC elections would pave way for the Akali government. The role of Congress was assessed and the harm it did to Punjab. Badal faction was returned with a thumping majority which saw it getting 158 seats out of 170 and the Front was routed by getting only 7 seats. After four months in the Assembly elections, Akali Dal (B) was again with a big lead.

When the Akali Dal faced defeat in the Adampur Assembly bye-election. Tohra made a suggestion to Badal that the latter should hand over the Presidency of the Party to

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104 Afit, August 291996.
105 Panjabi Tribune, September 19, 1996.
106 Ibid.
Badal suggested the name of Gurdev Singh Badal which had Tohra’s consent. As it is the local leaders and members of the Akali Dal were dissatisfied with the organisational set-up as the party was losing control with the masses. ‘But violent reaction to Tohra’s statement and virulent propaganda against him which he referred to as Toofan-i-Badtamizi (a storm of uncouthness), showed that Badal had found the much sought after scapegoat’. Meeting of District Jathedars was called and then an offensive was launched ‘against Tohra who had a sixty years standing in Akali Dal and record breaking twenty five years presidency of SGPC behind his back….’. A split was imminent in the party because Badal wanted to break the parallel power centre of Tohra. Even Gurdev Singh Badal condemned Tohra and eulogized Badal and his contribution to the progress of the state. Tohra was targeted and criticised for conniving with the Congress, for the defeat at Adampur, working against Panthic Unity, promoting divisive tendencies, misusing the SGPC and having no concern for the propagation of Sikh Dharma. He was blamed for going back on his statement from the Akal Takht and Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib in 1991 in which he had declared that he would not accept the Presidency of SGPC. But later he became the President as well accepted the membership of Rajya Sabha. Out of 15 members, 10 executive members in the SGPC asked for Tohra’s resignation. He was condemned by Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Chairman, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, Dhindsa, Bhunder, Tota Singh etc. But when Badal tried to bring SGPC under the Akali Dal, there was vehement opposition. Some historians stated that SGPC had nurtured the Akali Dal. ‘It was created as a force to fight for SGPC, argued Jaswant Singh Kanwal. In the Badal-Tohra controversy, even the Akal Takht being involved was resented. The Jathedar of Akal Takht had been appointed by Badal so, he, being the highest temporal authority would be a drawback to Tohra. But the Jathedar, Bhai Ranjit Singh issued a Hukamnama to the warring factions to conciliate. The Badal group appointed an acting Jathedar which

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110 It id., p. 5.
was condemned by Tohra as it was setting up a wrong precedent ‘for future non-Akali
governments by interfering in the religious affairs of the Sikhs, capturing Akal Takht by
misusing government machinery and denigrating Sikh institutions’. He attacked the
SGPC members who had done this all to protect an editor of a Punjab daily who was
called to Akal Takht for publishing blasphemous remarks against the Sikh Gurus. Tohra
called the editor a traitor, a ‘Dhian Singh Dogra’. The 10 SGPC members accused Tohra
and vice-versa. Allegations flew in the air as both the sides accused the other of misusing
their respective powers. Tohra’s group continued to regard Bhai Ranjit Singh as the
Jathedar of Akal Takht and the latter held the masses in sway by leading the procession at
Holi Mohalla at Anandpur Sahib on March 2, 1999 where the Badal group was absent.
Tohra’s group ignored Prof. Manjit Singh, Jathedar of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib and
Bhai Kewal Singh, Jathedar Takht Sri Damdama Sahib. Elated, Tohra, called Bhai Puran
Singh, acting Jathedar of Akal Takht as ‘Circuit House’ acting Jathedar. Even on April
14, 1999, the masses turned out for the march to Anandpur Sahib with Bhai Ranjit Singh
which was a support to the Sikh traditions. Badal blamed Tohra for instigating terrorism
in the state and blamed him for the widespread factionalism in the Akali Dal. March
2,1999 saw Tohra’s group set up a separate stage at the Hola Mohalla celebrations at
Anandpur Sahib. He came under Gurdev Singh Badal’s, Capt. Kanwaljit Singh’s, Sewa
Singh Sekhwan, all ministers and Rajya Sabha members, Balwinder Singh Bhunder and
Sikhdev Singh Dhindsa’s ire for they supported Badal. Sukhbir Singh Badal’s statement,
‘it is not going to be halfway battle. It is a fight to the finish which means Tohra’s
expulsion from the party and the SGPC’ showed the mood of Badal’s supporters and
the SGPC members. But Badal too came under attack. In 1994, Badal hadn’t joined the
unity more initiated by Bhai Manjit Singh arguing that religion should not interfere in
politics. Now, Badal, by appointing a Jathedar was doing exactly the same. Moreover,
he was accused of doing nothing to fulfil the issues of the Sikhs which he had raised at
the 1996 Moga Akali Conference which was celebrating the 75th anniversary of Akali
Dal. In the conference he had talked about the rights of the minorities, blatant human

113 Hindustan Times, March 5, 1999.
rights violations, arrest of Sikh youth under TADA, internal autonomy to the state, and the Delhi riots in November 1984. Tohra’s group charged Badal of being anti-Sikh as his alliance partner had done noting to please the Sikhs. Tohra supported the People’s Commission set up by Justice Kuldip Singh while Badal condemned it as did Bhartiya Janta Party. Tohra condemned the attack on Guru Ram Das Academy at Dehradun and Bhartiya Janta Party’s role in it. Pages of the Holy Book had been torn and the Gurdwara flag had been thrown out. On the question of Art. 356 to be imposed on Bihar, Badal supported the Bhartiya Janta Party and issued a whip to the Party MP’s to support the Bhartiya Janta Party. The chief Whip Prem Singh Chandumajra ‘condemned Badal for changing the stand on Art. 356’. Badal’s loyalists argued that the Jathedar and Akal Takht are two separate things. While Tohra supporters say that there are synonymous. Tohra claimed that his Sarb Hind Akali Dal would struggle for the restoration of the glory of the Akal Takht and its Jathedar. ‘Tohra’s Dal was the outcome of the split perpetrated by Badal by throwing Tohra out of the party. Ironically, the political differences caused the split, but split has thrown up big ideological issues, enhancing the salience of ecclesiastical dimension’. Badal had stopped believing in consent and dialogue and believed in majority and representative character. So, if he was called a moderate and a democrat because of majority element he was called a dictator too.

The SAD was finally merged on April 14, 1995 with the merger of seven Akali factions. Badal was installed as the President of SAD. The façade of unity continued till the Aka’is, would come to power in 1997. Badal’s victory in the Delhi Gurdwara elections and the victory of Manpreet Singh Badal in the Gidderbaha bye-elections made the people feel that the Akali Dal (Badal) was the dominant one. In the subsequent elections, i.e. the eleventh Lok Sabha, elections in Punjab, in the SGPC elections, Badal’s group won. In the February 7, 1997 Assembly elections, the Akali Dal (B) won and formed the government. Badal became the Chief Minister of Punjab. In the 12th Lok Sabha elections, Akali Dal (B) won all the 13 seats and became a coalition partner with

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115 The Hindustan Times, March 5, 1999.
118 S. S. Narang, op. cit. n. 110, p. 27.
the Bhartiya Janta Party. Barnala and Sukhbir Singh Badal were included in the Vajpayee’s Cabinet. In the bye-election of Tarn-Tarn and Sham Chaurasi, Akali Dal (B)’s candidates came out victorious on June 3, 1998. Badal and Tohra emerged as the popular leaders and the other factions were nearly eliminated.

Thus, some trends are seen in the leadership pattern in the Akali Dal. As Sharma argues that the leadership of the Dal has shifted from the Doaba and Majha regions of the state to the Malwa region. Then, the second feature is that the share of the rural Sikh Jats has steadily increased since the decline of the urban based Bhappa Sikhs in the 1960’s. This trend which began with Sant Fateh Singh has slowly become more pronounced. The third feature is that the SGPC has become more important and the group which controls the SGPC, controls the Akali Party. Further Sharma says that ‘a distinct radical and extremist group has emerged in the party and it has begun to pose a serious challenge to the deeply entrenched moderate leadership of the party.’ Harish K. Puri argues that, ‘whenever the crisis emerged in the Akali Dal between the so called extremist group and so-called legislative group, it is the Congress Party that has some role direct or indirect in this factionalism.’ Gobinder Singh says that within the Akali Dal, the different strata of peasantry stand separately with different faction of ‘hawks’, moderates and doves. He says, ‘the way all sections of peasantry and a large portion of the rural working class responded to the Akali Dal call for Dharam Yudh Morcha shows not only a powerful influence of religious ideology on the mobilization of the agrarian classes but powers that antagonism between agriculture and industry has unified all sections of the peasantry – landed and landless against the dominance of the monopoly bourgeois.’ Singh asserts that the rich farmers lobby has its highest concentration in the Akali Dal and it has to compete not only with the rival political parties but also with the refractory forces within its organisation to expand its support base so as to carry on its struggle against the ruling

120 ibid.
classes at the centre. He says that in order to win over the less privileged sections it resorts to invoking religious tenets and ideology. The material resources as well as the spiritual once are used to mobilise the Sikh masses. Gopal Singh argues that the urban Sikh have become bitter because political power in Punjab is controlled by the rural Jat-Sikhs and they were displaced from control of Akali Dal and SGPC in the early 1960’s by the Jat Sikhs.123 ‘They, therefore, adopt extremist postures and encourage revivalist – fundamentalists – extremist communal groups to dislocate Hindus from centres of trade and incustry in Punjab. These internal contradiction in Sikh politics have further aggravated communal tempers -----.124 SGPC is inextricably linked with Punjab politics. It is a political system for the wide ranging Sikh affairs. ‘Internally, the dynamics of the system have revolved around the relations between the contending political parties and groups.’ It is argued that whenever any group is out of power it takes up an extremist stand and rakes up ethnic issues. Moreover, Mark Juergensmeyer’s study shows that poor sections are developing “their own distinct, cultures of deprivation” as the Akali Dal has usually identified itself with the landlord Jat Sikhs.126 So, we may see a new pattern of factionalism with leaders representing them asserting their demands to safeguard their identity. Thus, the tussle between the organisational and the ministerial wings is not a new development. The Gurnam Singh Ministry and the Badal government had fallen as a result of this tussle. The line dividing religions and politics is blurred so the SGPC has to have a say in the political affairs of the state. ‘The Gurudwara-based Jathedars must have a role to play.’127 C.P. Bhambri argues that every movement has its internal dynamics and if accommodation is not arrived at a particular time, the rank and file enact pressure on the leaders which the latter find hard to resist for the former see no results coming out of the negotiations. In this instance, the delaying

124 I did.
tactics of the Government of India created problems for the Akali Dal leadership. If demands of the Akali Dal were not met in reasonable time, the ‘factional rivalries and competition among the Akali Dal leadership would complicate the situation.’

The Akali Dal (Badal) group split on the eve of the 1999 Parliamentary elections because Tohra, the President of SGPC revolted against the leadership of Badal with the help of the Akal Takht Jathedar. On May 30, 1999, Tohra formed the Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal (SHSAD). ‘It formed an electoral alliance with Akali Dal (Mann), Akali Dal (Panthic), Akali Dal (Democratic).’ The Akali factions fought the elections separately in 1999 and 2002 and failed dismally. Akali Dal (Badal)’s ascent can be calculated because of his control on the SGPC as well the Akal Takht. Gradually, the Akali Dal factions started talking of Panthic unity in 1999 after the stand off between Badal and Tohra. ‘Tohra was made the President of SGPC on July 27, last year (2003) replacing Kirpal Singh Badungar, a close associate of Badal. Tohra remained the President of SGPC for over 25 years. Based on past experience, there is nothing unusual as being out of power Akalis have always come together in the name of Panthic unity.’

But while in power they refused to pursue the politico-economic issues vigorously and get entangled in the ethno-religious issues. This is the tragedy of the Akali Dal which gets split into factions spoiling its chances of consolidating its position. ‘Further factionalism and decline await Akali Dal, Ashutosh Kumar warns, if it continues to be a party of the Jat Sikhs and Khatris and refuses to understand the aspirations of the lower castes because in the rest of country the latter’s demands are being articulated vociferously.’

In Punjab, politics makes strange partners. For e.g., for the 1997 Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections there was an alliance of Bahujan Samaj Party-SAD (A), SAD (Panthic), SAD (Wadale) and SAD (Sukhjinder). While the Bahujan Samaj Party is not concerned

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128 Ibid.
130 Ibid., p. 1520.
131 Ibid.
with issues of Chandigarh being included in Punjab etc. the others, Mann, Rode, Wadala and Sukhjinder Singh are the ones who vouch for Khalistan. In the 1997 elections, Badal gave tickets to his loyalists (72/93) for he wanted to remain the head of Akali Dal and Akali-Bhartiya Janta Party Government. He supported 23 Tohra's loyalists. Capt. Amrinder Singh and his 33 party leaders revolted against the leadership alleging dictatorial attitude of Badal and Tohra. ‘Thus he (Badal) banked upon the old guards loyal to him and sidelined ambitious partymen like Captain Amrinder Singh who was denied the party ticket.’ The Akali Dal (Amritsar) decided to contest for 52 seats. The main aim of the Bahujan Samaj Party and Akali Dal (A) was not to allow Akali Dal (B) – Bhartiya Janta Party combine and the Congress to form a government.

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