APPENDIX

To get a clearer picture of the nature of factionalism in the state we have held informal talk with leaders of both the parties and prominent academicians. The interviews were not structured but were conversational which taken together will give us a balanced picture. So in addition to our findings these interviews are verbatim responses and are affixed.

Interview with S. Harcharan Singh Brar, former Chief Minister of Punjab, at his residence, House No-19, Sector-4, Chandigarh on October 14, 2004.

The former Chief Minister and a senior Congress leader of Punjab, Mr. Brar says that in the beginning the Indian National Congress was confined to the cities, to the urban areas. It was S. Pratap Singh Kairon who took the party to the people in the villages. Prior to Kairon the Arya Samajists had control over the Indian National Congress. The Jat Sikhs who were disgusted with the uneducated leadership of the Shiromani Akali Dal got inclined towards the Indian National Congress. He contends that in the 1950's and 1960's there was a rural-urban divide but no longer now as education has spread to the villages. Talking about the geographical, he talks of the Malwa-Majha divide and says it doesn’t exist now. Factionalism is all about gaining power. In fact, educated people indulge in more leg-pulling because of jealousies rampant. Mr. Brar feels that factionalism is not a question of being negative or positive, it is purely positive. Every man wants to be at the top, thus, inclination towards a particular group.

He says every man wants his importance so manipulation of power takes place. About the interference from the Congress High Command he says it all depends on the leadership at the regional level. So is the case with Punjab. If a leader keeps running to the Congress High Command for directions there is bound to be interference which is not good for healthy, regional politics. He says “I know more about Punjab politics than somebody from Madras. I know the pulse of the
people, their demands, their aspirations for I have been born and brought up here”. If
the leadership keeps looking towards the Congress High Command they are at fault
not the Congress High Command who have to see the well-being of the party when
in-fighting among the leaders is taking its toll on the party’s performance. The party
is not dependent on the Congress High Command for funds as it can garner enough
from the region itself.

Talking about his role as the Chief Minister, he says, “I personally never
believed in factions or factionalism so I didn’t encourage any. I never indulged in
petty politics of factionalism. So I resigned from the post of the Chief Minister of
Punjab. A Congress party worker from my school days I have served the party
whenever called to do so.” Telling about the caste-divide in Punjab he does not attach
much significance to it these days, especially in the Indian National Congress. He
says the differences between Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh, for example, were
personal, both happened to belong to different castes so the issue of caste was
noticeable. Egos were involved more than caste. Giani Zail Singh felt that the Jat
Sikh would never consider him a leader because of his caste even if he had reached
the highest office of the land. The feeling of casteism is there but not amounting to
factionalism. Factions arise because of personal ambitions.

Mr. Gopal Singh, Personal Assistant to former Chief Minister, Harcharan
Singh Brar for the past 19 years and also a party worker says factionalism is nothing
but pursuit of power. He says, “A majority of our leaders lack far-sightedness. They
think only of their own interests and that is why the state of affairs is so bad.
The leaders kept harping on a Punjabi-speaking area and washed their hands off
Chandigarh. Because of their this demand they could not think of retaining a hill
district so that electricity could be produced. The result is that we are paying Rs. 4to
5 per unit while the electricity in Himachal Pradesh is about 40 paise per unit. And
with the creation of a new state the problem of water-shortage and division of waters
came along. So, it is not issues or ideologies, which make or break alliances but
vested interests which leads to loose, floating alliances. In the process issues come up
and are dealt with according to how they will affect the leader's interests. Everything revolves around power and how to acquire it."

Bhag Singh, an ex-Member Legislative Assembly, residing in Roopnagar says, "Factionalism is a natural phenomenon in any party, so it is with the Indian National Congress. factions are based on personalities. There is no division between the rural and the urban areas but the Indian National Congress does give priority to the rural areas as the real India resides in the villages. Factionalism is based on competition between different groups formed on different needs so there is no discrimination between the literate and the illiterate. The Schedule Castes support the Indian National Congress as the party framed policies for the betterment of these people."

Mrs. Sarbarinder Kaur, daughter of late Chief Minister of Punjab. Partap Singh Kairon, in her interview at her residence on Pakhowal road, Ludhiana says, "During my father's time factionalism was as not as rampant as it is these days. With people like Lala Jagat Narain and Prabodh Chandra there were petty jealousies which is human nature. My father was a man of principles, he had a vision for he was a statesman. For him politics was the progress of Punjab and not power politics. He didn't believe in differences between Jat and non Jat Sikh. He had the support of his people and did not believe in personal vendetta. Regarding the Punjabi Suba he said the people who are asking for the Suba and the people who will give it will both repent in the long run. He gave impetus to educated people. He made his own decisions and did not believe in running to Delhi for every small pretext and that is why Pt. Nehru respected him. They admired each other. The Arya Samajists were hostile to him but he had overwhelming support of the people. Factionalism is the result of personal animosities and ego."

S. Mohinder Singh Gill, former President of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and a senior Congress leader says that Giani Zail Singh and S. Darbara Singh became Chief Ministers of Punjab because of their closeness to Mrs. Indira
Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi. He says, “Had I not parted ways with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, I would have been made the Chief Minister of Punjab that time i.e. in 1980. There was a personality clash between Giani Zail Singh and Darbara Singh. So much so that they were in the same village at the same time when Darbara Singh was told that Giani was also there, the former refused to meet the latter. S. Buta Singh was made the Home Minister by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi because of the 1984 riots”.

Bir Devinder Singh, presently the Deputy speaker of the Punjab Legislative Assembly and a Congress Member of Legislative Assembly from Kharar, in an interview at his residence in Chandigarh, says, “In the Indian National Congress before 1962 the leadership comprised of taller leaders who had a global vision. One of them was Pt. Nehru who did not involve himself in state politics. Leaders like him allowed the provincial leadership to grow and didn’t want the state leaders to run to the Centre for every task. With Mrs. Gandhi the scenario changed. She started pruning the provincial leadership and did not want them to grow beyond a certain point. She discouraged the taller leaders and encouraged the dwarf leaders which led to factionalism. Thus, she encouraged the threat perception among the different leaders. So you had people like Comrade Ram Kishan and Gurmukh Singh Musafir became Chief Ministers of the state. They were rootless leaders and were Non-Jats. Because of this policy the Indian National Congress lost the 1967 elections as the taller leaders like Gian Singh Rarewala, S. Darbara Singh and Major Harinder Singh were ignored. The Congress knows that it cannot come to power without the Jat leadership. The Jats are dominant in the rural sector. But there are leaders like Darbara Singh who were acceptable to all the Sikhs. Giani Zial Singh tried to push the Jat Sikhs further back with the result that the Jats tilted to the Akalis. After Gianiji the rift between the Jat and the non-Jats grew and only became wider. Mrs. Gandhi made two factions in every Suba for she wanted to keep the balance of power in her own hands. They divided the Sikhs for all times to come. Factions arise because the expectations of the elites are many. It is only 15% of the Jats who are politically active and you will find them to be the beneficiaries of all the schemes of the government irrespective of which party is in power. They are the ones who do not
remain with a party for more than two years. Once their all expectations are not realized they switch sides and encourage the other leader. The Indian National Congress knows that it cannot come to power without the Jat Sikhs as the latter are dominant in the rural sector. The main cause of factionalism is the Jat psyche which is egoistic In fact, the Jat psyche can be seen in the song, ‘Mirza’. The Jats are a pampered lot, they cannot accept leadership of anyone than besides themselves. In the Akali party again the Jats are a dominant lot. Factionalism arises because of pursuit of power. This was the clash between Tohra and Badal. The former nursed an ambition of becoming the Chief Minister of Punjab but the latter manipulated to keep him away, that is why Tohra was the longest serving nominated member of the Rajya Sabha. Tohra used to create circumstances for the other leader that the latter used to try to negotiate. The relationship between the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is that the latter’s infra-structure is used by the former. The Shiromani Akali Dal uses religion to get Raj, it exploits the devotion of the people to acquire power. The Shiromani Akali Dal gets a readymade audience which believes in the Panth. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is an accepted platform which the people readily identify with. The Indian National Congress can never get that audience. Gurudwara is a medium of the Shiromani Akali Dal to gain power. They do not have to put in efforts to get an audience. Now the era of the Sant is over. The rift between the Jat and the non-Jats was created to gain power by certain elements. All factionalism is the result of pursuit of power, wealth and opportunities. The Indian National Congress benefits from the factionalism of the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Indian National Congress factions are at times created by the Centre. The Centre inspires the dissidents and have no respect for the state leaders. They treat the party as accompany. On the other hand there is a mad race between the Members of Legislative Assembly to become leaders of prominence. It is easy to become a Member of Legislative Assembly but very difficult to emerge as a leader, so they have to cultivate and mobilize their supporters. The Centre does not value leaders for they count heads. It is through leaders that the stature of the party grows and not vice-versa.”
In an interview at his official residence in Chandigarh, S. Surjit Singh Barnala, present Governor of Tamil Nadu and a senior Akali Dal leader says, “Factionalism is basically because of pursuit of power. In every party there is internal power struggle. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandak Committee does not interfere in the affairs of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Master Tara Singh’s time saw the divide between the Jat and the non-Jats. He was an accepted leader of the Sikhs but some people to attain political mileage created this divide which dwindled after his death. The Master did not accentuate this divide. During Gianiji’s time again this divide was prominent which has its repercussions till today. The Shiromani Akali Dal is the political arm of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. The Shiromani Akali Dal cannot use a single penny of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee as there is an audit. The Shiromani Akali Dal has gained prominence because of the elections of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. The latter is a Sikh Parliament in which elections are democratically held so the elections are fought with the help of the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Shiromani Akali Dal is a political body while the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is a religious body in which Universal Adult Franchise was the first to be implemented in the world. There is not much ideology involved in factionalism. My aim was to keep the Sikhs together so I tried to carry forward the legacy of Sant Longowal. But the leaders are not clear about what they desire as they all are after power and aim to be in the limelight. Even on the Sikh Homeland demand they are not clear. They raise it only to gain some political benefits. The clash between Tohra and Badal was a personal one which was encouraged by their supporters. Later on they reached a tacit understanding.”

In an interview with Simranjeet Singh Mann, an Ex Member Parliament and President Shiromani Akali Dal on October 20, 2004, at his village Quilla S. Harnam Singh, District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, he talks of his factionalism. His factionalism is confined to ideology. He says, “My party’s differences with the other Sikh party’s is purely based on ideology. It is not based on promoting relatives. Mr. Badal has surrendered and given up on the basic Akali declaration which is reflected in the Moga declaration. He has dropped the words, ‘Sikh’, ‘Panth’, and the ‘Anandpur
Resolution’ from his party’s programme. The Akali Dal was formed in 1920 to protect the social and political interests of the Sikhs. Badal has aligned himself with the bitterest enemies of the Sikhs— the Bhartiya Janata Party, though we are marginalized yet we maintain our ideology— that of a separate Sikh state. This state will fulfill the aspirations of the Sikh people. Geo-politically it will be an important state as it will be a buffer state between two warring civilizations—India and Pakistan. It was Guru Gobind Singh who propagated the idea of a Nation-state and it was Banda Bahadur who formed it in the early 18th century on the principles propagated by the 10th Guru. So if the French Revolution founded the Nation-state in 1789, the Sikhs had done it by 1710. They struck their own coins, abolished feudalism and distributed land to the cultivators. The second attempt in making the Nation-state was made by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809 which lasted till 1849. The Akalis made feeble attempts to take back the power which had been taken away by the British Treaty. The Akalis were illiterate people who were lost in the control of the Gurudwaras. The Muslim and the Hindu leadership were enlightened, thus could walk away with benefits. The Akalis confused their movement with the National Movement, thus, relegating the interests of the Sikhs at the background. The 20th century is the age of Democracy where numbers are important. The Sikhs didn’t realize this thus fell from the fire to the frying pan. They gave up British Sovereignty for Hindu Sovereignty. Jinnah realized that the Hindus were in no mood to share power with the minorities so they didn’t want a United India as the number of Muslims would interfere with their plan of monopolizing power. The Hindus have never let foreigners maintain their identity so the Muslims were a challenge, thus they threw them out into Pakistan and Bangladesh as they had done with Buddhism and Shankarcharya. So our party is very serious about a Sikh State and after Ranjit Singh this was tried to be establish by Sant Bhindranwale. Our party has gone beyond the traditional Akali thought, it has gone to international level. The other Akali Dal’s have no morality, no principles, no ideology, no idealism and no perspective. They are out for naked power. It is a misnomer that the Jat Sikhs are divided. A majority are with me because they know my faction stands for ideology. The traditional Akalis have sold the Sikh character to foeticide, female infanticide and molestation of women. My faction doesn’t make deals out of power as Tohra used to and Badal
does. They have lost the ethos of the religion that is why four major Gurdwaras, i.e., Goindwal Sahib, Khadoor Sahib, Bir Baba Buddha and Tarn Taran are showing a loss. Where is all the money going? Jatism is ripe in the present Shiromani Akali Dal. It believes in casteism, the very ill against which our Gurus were. We encourage the Dalits to participate in the Gurudwara management. Our force comprises of young people from the peasantry and down trodden people from all walks of life. Our Akali Dal is the only parallel Akali Dal which has managed to survive and we have managed to do so because of our ideology. We have managed to survive even without the patronage of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. It is because of the support we get from the Sikh Diaspora. The Hindus are systematically erasing the minorities with the help of the power of the State. The Shiromani Akali Dal has sold itself in the hands of the enemies thus, my party cannot operate with it. I believe in the democracy of the Sikhs. I believe in the Sikh ideology and my party is against the ritualism and ceremonies which have cropped up which are not included in the Sikh tenets”.

Interview with Capt. Kanwaljeet Singh, former finance minister of Punjab and senior Akali leader on October 16, 2004 at his residence, Sector-9, Chandigarh.

Capt. Kanwaljeet Singh replying to a question whether there is factionalism in the Shiromani Akali Dal and to what extent says “Certainly, there is factionalism in the Shiromani Akali Dal. Initially there was a struggle for power between Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh which led to some overtones. These events and the Green Revolution changed the social and political scene in Punjab. They pushed the Jat Sikhs to a decision making level for the first time. With the accession of the Sant the leadership of the Akali politics slipped from the hands of the Urban Sikhs into the hands of the rural Jat Sikhs. So as a political party it began to reflect the basic Jat character- aggressiveness, ego, factionalism and tribal instinct. These traits overshadowed politics so issues took a backseat. This continued during the period of Sant Fateh Singh, Tur, Jagdev Singh Talwandi right up to Sant Longowal. Till 1977 the offices of the leader of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the Shiromani Akali Dal and that of the legislature worked in harmony. In 1977 two
dominant leaders emerged – Tohra as the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee leader and Badal as the leader of the Legislature. The President of the Shiromani Akali Dal became a peace maker between the two. Tohra represented the old Jathedar lobby as well as Panthic oriented politics which professed that religion is supreme. Badal, on the other hand, represented pure power politics. This uneasiness continued till the arrest of Sant Longowal in 1984. When he came out of the jail, especially after Operation Bluestar, he and his policies were endorsed by the Sikh Sangat. Till 1985 he overshadowed both Badal and Tohra. After his assassination Badal and Tohra emerged as the senior leaders. They could not reconcile with the fact that Bamala became the Party President and then the Chief Minister of the State. Bamala proved to be a weak Chief Minister and succumbed to the pressure of the Centre and of Rajiv Gandhi who was not eager about the Punjab Accord signed with Longowal. On January 26, 1986 all was set to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab when Rajiv Gandhi backed out at 4 a.m. Barnala did not resign and that was the beginning of the end. With this the game went out of the moderate’s hands and into the hands of the militant leaders. The Indian National Congress encouraged the militant leaders at this time, thus, encouraging factionalism. With militancy the moderate leaders as well as their moderate policies were marginalized. Simranjeet Singh Mann emerged as the leader from 1989 to 1992 as sentiments were against the traditional leadership. But because of his inexperience and because he didn’t enjoy a power base in his constituency he could not consolidate his gains. So there was a revival of the traditional leadership with Badal and Tohra coming together and Bamala with his group on the other.

He further says, “after the militancy in 1995 the Jathedar of the Akal Takht called for a reconciliation between the different Akali leaders. Except Badal all leaders, i.e. Tohra, Barnala, Capt. Amrinder Singh, Simranjeet Singh, Talwandi joined and formed the Akali Dal (Amritsar). The Amritsar Declaration was announced which promised to create a separate Sikh state. So for the first time in many years there was an issue in place of the bullet. The choice was between unity and separation, the people wanted to give peace a chance. Badal utilized this chance and emerged as the leader. In 1996 Badal and Tohra came together and the Shiromani Akali Dal came into being”. Then there was a clash between the two over...
succession as Badal was diagnosed of suspected cancer and Badal wanted his son, Sukhbir S Badal to succeed him. Thus, there was a split in 1999.” Regarding Caste based factionalism in the Shiromani Akali Dal, Capt. Kanwaljeet Singh says, “By and large the Jat Sikhs are dominant in the Shiromani Akali Dal because the following comprises of the Jat Sikhs. But others can also come up”. About the geographical factor in factionalism he says, “The Malwa is the largest area in Punjab so the following here is also large, thus, there are more chances of a leader consolidating his position from this area. A leader from this area has an advantage over the others because of sheer numbers involved.” About education making an impact on the party leaders Capt. Kanwaljeet reveals an amazing development, “As of now and from the last five to ten years a healthy transformation is taking place, i.e., educated youth are joining the party. So the Old Guard comprising of jathedars is feeling threatened and sidelined. And this trend will fructify. Prior to 1966 the party represented and protected Sikh interests and now it is purely a political body seeking power”. About the role of the Schedule Castes he says, “The Shiromani Akali Dal has a marginal support from the Schedule castes as there is a feeling of discrimination against them in the villages by the Jat Sikhs. The Jat Sikhs own the means of production and the labour comprises of the Schedule castes. The internal conflict is there.” Regarding the rural-urban divide he says, “the Shiromani Akali Dal is a party of the rural masses so the urban voter does feel alienated from the party. Now the Sikh voter does not find the Indian National Congress untouchable as was after Operation Bluestar. The feelings of the Sikhs regarding the Indian National Congress is again turning towards pre-1984. Then, the Shiromani Akali Dal’s alliance with the BJP and especially the RSS factor has led to some Sikhs joining the Indian National Congress. After 1984 the Party could not consolidate the Sikh community thus, the reversal.” About the nexus between the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee he replies, “the Shiromani Akali Dal is a party of the Sikhs and thus it hasn’t been able to break away from the Panthic mould. The survival of the Shiromani Akali Dal is dependent on carrying the Panthic sentiments. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is the guardian of the Panthic sentiments so the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee provides that platform. On the other hand the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee
requires the Shiromani Akali Dal to carry the message to the people. So Shiromani Akali Dal does not get funds from the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee but there is a dependency on each other for patronage and platform. The position of the President of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is awesome, he is the President of the Sikhs of the world. The control of any one person on the three posts that of the President of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the president of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the leader of the Legislature wing is not healthy for the community. This manipulation of power is personal. Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal’s tasks are different. The former aims to propagate the Sikh religion and see to the management of all the historic Gurdwaras in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh while the latter is a political body which aims to capture political power.”

Former Education Minister in Akali Government, Tota Singh, in an interview at his residence in Sector-18, Chandigarh, says that factionalism is prevalent among senior leaders for the post of Party Presidentship or for the post of Chief Ministership. He has been serving and participating in the Akali politics since 1957. Working upwards from the grassroots. According to him, the clash between the SGPC President and the Chief Ministership has been a phenomenon since the 1980s. He refutes the allegations that the SAD uses the funds of the Gurdwaras for its political purposes. He says, “Every penny spent is audited by the government. By government, I mean the Central as well as the Punjab government. So where can you have misappropriation of funds? Yes, SAD cannot disassociate itself from the Gurudwaras because our 6th Guru had given the idea of Miri and Piri, of religion and politics together. So, how can we give up the Gurudwaras or let the Congress have control over them? The SAD took birth because of the Gurudwara movement, so the Gurudwaras are our base for we are there to protect the interests of the Sikhs who are a minority in this country. If we hold a congregation of 1000 Sikhs in the Gurudwara each Sikh offers Rs. 50 which leads to accumulation of Rs. 50,000 and all the participants have food in the ‘langar’ which hardly costs Rs. 1000. So how are we using the Gurudwara funds?” He further states, “It is the INC which encourages
factionalism in the SAD. They are constantly on the lookout for a weak point in the SAD and then exploit it to weaken one of the strong regional parties in the country”.

About the infighting between Badal and Tohra, S. Tota Singh says, “Tohra was very clear that there should be no interference in his district. He had nurtured it and wanted it to be his domain”. As a party worker, Tota Singh was a witness to Justice Gurnam Singh becoming the Chief Minister in 1967. He says that, “Justice Gurnam Singh was Sant Fateh Singh’s choice though even the latter knew that the party workers wanted S. Lachhman Singh Gill to be the Chief Minister as Gill had also risen from the grassroots. Gill was a people’s man, he met people, sat and had food with them and was available to them anytime. Justice Gurnam Singh never went to the jail, never sacrificed his comforts and was not a party worker. Sant Fateh Singh, on the other hand, had worked hard to get all the partners together so Gurnam Singh was the only consensus candidate. But Gurcharan Singh Nihalsinghwala was against Gill thus, the choice on Gurnam Singh. Gill’s only condition was that Nihalsinghwala should not be given a ministerial birth because the latter had scuttled his chances of being the Chief Minister by threatening to join the Congress if Gill was the Chief Minister. Gurnam Singh made Nihalsinghwala the Chief Parliamentary Secretary which led to Gill being angry. Nihalsinghwala misused the powers to an extent that the Station House Officer (SHO) of Jagraon, Bahal Singh did not listen to S. Gurnam Singh as he had the support of Nihalsinghwala. Moreover, S. Gill was the one who had brought Sant Fateh Singh into politics. Thus, small incidents kept piling up with the result that the leaders parted each other’s company and Gill rallied with the Congress and became the Chief Minister of Punjab.”

S. Tota Singh concludes that, “Before 1979-80, there was no clash between the SGPC President and the SAD President. Sant Fateh Singh and S. Channan Singh lived as brothers. After Sant Fateh Singh’s death, when I went to meet S. Channan Singh, the latter told me that he would not live for long as his elder brother, Sant Fateh Singh had expired. And it is true, after some days, Sant Channan Singh breathed his last”.

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Mahesh Inder Singh Grewal, senior Akali leader in an interview at his residence in Model Town, Ludhiana, says, “In every party there is a sense of insecurity so it is with the leaders of Shiromani Akali Dal. The Akali Dal never dreamt of capturing power till 1967. But factions have always existed in the party. The reasons have varied. If at one time it has been regionalism at other times it has been to gain supremacy within politics. At times it has been genuine when there has been differences of opinion. After 1967 when the leaders tasted power for the first time then it was for power struggle. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is a Gurudwara management body and it needed a protector, thus, the Shiromani Akali Dal is the sword of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. Factionalism became prevalent when Master Tara Singh broke his fast and Sant Fateh Singh took over the movement. Here some principle was made to show a difference of opinion. Then there was a parting of ways between the Sant and Justice Gurnam Singh. The latter had become the Chief Minister courtesy the Sant. The Chief Minister did not want to work according to the dictates of the Sant. The Sant wanted to have a direct control on the affairs of the State. This led to differences between the two. Then Gurnam Singh went for an official visit to Tamil Nadu and saw the Chief Minister, Karunanidhi, as the Chief Minister as well as the Party President. Gurnam Singh also started nurturing these ambitions but Tohra opposed this concentration of powers in one person as the Chief Minister has to act under the Indian Constitution while the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee has to act under the Panthic agenda. Then there was parting of ways between Lachman S. Gill who left the party because of his personal ambitions. After this fall out there were differences between the Sant and Gurnam Singh and S. Badal came into the limelight because of the Sant’s blessings. There was a clash of egos between the Sant and Badal with the result that the Sant brought one Jaswinder S. Brar. But soon there was a reconciliation between the Sant and Badal. So, during the Sant’s time factionalism was the result because one leader did not want any other to emerge. The link between the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal cannot be denied and it is an essential one. S. Tohra related an incident with Mrs. Gandhi when she told the former that the Akalis were misusing the Gurudwaras. He replied, ‘The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee gives a
platform to the party and no one can deny that platform to the Shiromani Akali Dal. Even if the management of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee passes into the hands of the Indian National Congress it cannot stop the Akalis from using the durries (mats), the speaker, the stage and the langar (common kitchen)”. Factionalism in the party can be because of differences among the people interests of different regions. The Majha-Malwa divide is there and it is reflected in the party. The Shiromani Akali Dal is stronger in the Malwa as the region has more Assembly seats and in a democracy numbers matter as the rule is of the majority. Regarding the cadre the Party is a rural based party and to attract the urban voter the seats are left for the urbanite leaders. Women participation is a creation of circumstances. Being a male- dominated society women are not able to play a very active role in politics. Education plays a vital role in factionalism. Formerly, the party’s command was in the hands of the semi-literate but now the youth are drawn into the party in large numbers. Some are committed to the cause of the party and the state while others are power-seekers. These reasons will lead to factionalism in the long run. The Jat-Sikhs are the leaders of the first rung but the Schedule Castes play an active role in the affairs of the party though they are of the second rung.”

Kiran Jyot, an executive member of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and the grand-daughter of Master Tara Singh blames power-politics for the increased factionalism. She said in an interview with this researcher during the veteran Akali Party worker, Surjan Singh Thekedar’s bhog (prayer ceremony to pray for the departed soul), “During the time of Master Tara Singh there was no talk of Jat- S.kh and non Jat-Sikh. In fact, the issue was created by vested interests to overthrow Masterji. That time politics derived its values from religion. There was the concept of Miri- Piri, religion supreme than politics. The interest was the welfare of the Sikhs, the well-being of the community. He was not into power politics. Now regionalism within the Sikhs is also prevalent again it is created thus division between the Majha, Malwa, Doaba Sikhs. These days because of power politics you have to show your loyalty so sycophancy has grown. So you have to be with a group. Thus,
Bibi Jagir Kaur, the President of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, in an interview at her Dera at Begowal, Punjab, talks about factionalism. “Everybody in politics cannot be dedicated to a cause. In any party there can be thinking differences among the members. Each party has its own ideology, principles and issues and the Party’s President has to guard those principles. So any worker who doesn’t fall in line with the party’s plan, disciplinary action has to be taken against him which leads to factionalism. Each worker desires some or the other post, if that is not fulfilled then seeds of discontent are sown. If the aspirations are not fulfilled then you have factionalism. The main differences arise when tickets are to be distributed during elections. Now each leader thinks that he is the best man for the job so he deserves the ticket from a particular constituency. But there are three more people thinking on the same lines, so the party President has to take a decision. He thinks in the Party’s interests and gives the ticket to that candidate who, he feels, can serve the Party best. This leads to differences. The Indian National Congress has always tried to weaken the Akali Dal by dividing the Sikhs among themselves. So, the Shiromani Akali Dal has to work hard to overcome this strategy of the Indian National Congress. The Akali Dal is a party of the rural masses so it wants 100% Of the rural votes. The Indian National Congress on the other hand wants to wrest as many votes as it can, be it 10% or20%. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is the protector of the Sikh community and the Sikh religion. It is the highest Sikh Parliament and the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee stands as its guard. The Shiromani Akali Dal supports the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in its endeavour. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is the defender of Faith while the Indian National Congress is against faith. The former’s membership is opened to all and it sermonizes on the bases of religion. It talks of religion and it believes in religious advocacy. Regarding differences between leaders sometimes the workers and their own supporters create misunderstanding between the leaders as was between Tohra and Badal. But such differences are soon cleared when
the leaders believe in a cause. I am encouraging women because I feel women are more attached to a cause. They are sacrificing by nature so they do not believe in asking for a return. With women in politics I feel there will be less of factionalism in the party.”

Jagdev Singh Jassowal a senior politician who has held important posts in both the INC and SAD, in an interview at his residence, House No. 3256, Gurdev Nagar, Ludhiana, Punjab, sheds light on the nature of factionalism, “Factionalism is the pillar of politics. It is a step, a foundation of a party. You can find factionalism in any party around the world in every age. The degree can vary from one party to another but this phenomenon is prevalent anywhere where power politics is present. In the Akali politics there was no aspiration to come to power before 1966 and they never came to power. After attaining Punjabi Suba they realized that they too could get Raj. The Akalis are emotionally attached to the word, ‘Raj’, as it finds a mention in the Ardaas. So, every man got conscious of power and wanted to have a share. Thus, then onwards there was no ideology, no principles involved. In 1966 Akali politics was divided into two factions of Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. The Sant introduced the element of caste into Sikh politics and temporarily came into power but divided the Sikhs forever. This led to the might of the Sikhs being divided and mentally the Sikhs started thinking separately. The clash between the Sant and Justice Gurnam Singh was that of de-facto and de-jure sovereign. The former wanted to assert his authority which the latter did not appreciate. The Congress has always encouraged factions in the Akali Dal and at this point they supported Gurnam Singh. Political parties vie for power with each other. Once out of power they miss it as a fish without water. Thus, the various leaders compete with each other within the party. Later on Hudiara formed his own group and Lachhman Singh Gill formed the govt. with the support of the Congress. In all this personal ambition to attain power was involved. The Hudiara group gradually lost its influence and faded. Gill meted out bad treatment to Gian Singh Rarewala so the latter formed his own faction which was supported by Jagjit Singh Chauhan. With the death of the Sant and Channan Singh, ‘jatgardi’ was at peak. The second ranking leaders came forward and
Talwandi with the support of Tohra overthrew Tur and became the President himself. In the history of the Akali Dal it is a record that whoever has become the President has not been given a Farewell Party. He occupies the chair with respect but is thrown out at last because once they come to power they forget the masses and the struggle. In Akali Dal factionalism arises because the leaders forget the workers. This is the only party which does not honour its workers. In the Punjabi Suba movement I was send to the prison for three years and fined Rs. 11,000. When the Akalis came to power I had served one year in jail and the rest was let off but till date I have not got the fine which the Akalis in power could have returned to numerous people like me who had served the cause. Punjab politics is Akali politics and Akali politics is Gurudwara politics and the Gurudwara politics is Jat politics and Jat politics is ‘danda’ (stick) politics. The Akali party is a party of the rural masses, of the peasantry so they have to talk of regional aspirations. If we talk of the World War or the Iraq crisis the people will not buy the argument. So we have to promise them a school, clean drinking water, tubewells etc. So a leader has to win people by hook or crook, thus this race leads to competition and then factionalism. Politics is now a game of conviction and convenience these days because in the party factionalism is at its lowest ebb for they can see their own qualities and the faults of the others. The Party members want to weaken each other, that is why Badal couldn’t become the Chief Minister. His own men betrayed him. Every Jat wants to be an Member of Legislative Assembly and then the Chief Minister. It is Jat instinct to pull each other down. Politics is a game of scoundrels and because the elite join the services politics becomes the domain of the semi-literate and the illiterate. Even during militancy the second rung leadership came forward because the first-rung leaders had died. Every man entered the race, deserving and non-deserving and the political have-nots benefited the most. The man to benefit was Simranjeet Singh Mann because thought gave way to weapons. The political haves like Tohra and Badal were pushed to the background. Regarding the relationship between the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal the latter uses religion and its men, money, material and resources. Instead of religion having a positive effect on politics Gurudwara politics is everywhere. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee should try to implement whatever is mentioned in the daily Ardaas but if
you analyse their deeds, each is against every word of the Ardaas (the Sikh prayer). Lack of propaganda about the Sikh religion and the rigidness of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is keeping away the Sehajdari Sikhs from the affairs of the community. The Gurudwara has become a political platform which has divided the Sikhs. Unfortunately the Sikhs have not learnt a lesson and they continue to be divided despite losses. They are worried about their faction and not about the community. There are more Akali Dais at any point of time than the hair of Shivji. The reasons for factionalism are not difficult to trace. They are lack of experience, lack of education, prevalence of ego and old taboos. This infighting is in the blood. A common saying in Punjab says, ‘A Jat does not know the meaning of duty, for him debt is of no importance at all, feels a little pain but for him ego matters the most, ego is of utmost importance. They don’t think beyond their nose, for the leaders the party is a stepping stone for success, to further their own interests. The leaders want to safeguard their and their family’s interests so they try to create a dynastic lineage which leads to differences among the leaders. The workers of the party feel alienated from the party when a youngster is handed over the reins of the party just because he is related to some leader. This leads to politics of the lowest kind in which the leaders hit each other below the belt. Thus, saner elements have now chosen to sit at home and the field is left free for muscle and money power. In any Church around the world violence is not resorted to but in the Gurudwaras lathis, swords, punches and bullets are freely resorted to. A Jat with all his faults considers himself and none other a Sikh. So it is Jat politics and not Akali politics. It is a clash of personalities so they live up to their faith - ‘nit lare Khalsa’ (A true Sikh should fight everyday). The Akalis capitalize on the ‘Vote for Panth’ slogan. Over the years the horse has changed but the baraatis (the bridegroom’s party) have remained the same. Women have not been a success in politics because they cannot pull strings like men. The women stop at a limit and are not opportunists like the men. The SC’s were attracted to the Indian National Congress but have either come back to the Akali Dal or have joined the BSP. The role of the Indian National Congress is negative in the Akali Dal. They have always tried to weaken the Sikhs by encouraging the dissidents. In the Indian National Congress factionalism results because the leaders feel that the people sitting in Delhi have given them power so they are answerable to them and not to the people.
For every small thing they keep running to Delhi with the result that not much work is done. This means advantage to the Akali Dal as they are closer to the people and to the roots. In the Indian National Congress chauvinism is the root cause of trouble while in the Akali Dal it is pulling at each others’ leg which is the main cause.”

Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, a prolific writer and a professor of History who takes keen interest in Punjab affairs, in an interview at his residence in Chandigarh, author of, ‘India Commits Suicide’ says, “Factionalism is the result of personal ambitions and ideology. The latter is the main cause for everybody aspires to be the Chief Minister of the state. In fact, ideology is a pedestal to go higher in the political circles. When the party is out of power they talk of a, ‘Sikh Homeland’. No one is purely committed to ideology. When the party is in power the group which does not get the best piece of the cake raises the demand. Once the leaders come to power they forget the original demands. Bhindranwala's faction was one which really took up the grievances of the Sikhs. The real pitfall in Sikh politics arose with the emergence of the Akali Dal in 1920. The command slipped from the educated Sikhs hands into the hands of illiterate and semi-literate people. The Chief Khalsa Diwan comprised of elites in the positive sense who never confronted the British. This principle was used by Gandhi in the long run and the Akalis followed him forgetting that Gandhi could be a leader only of his community. A people, a community which does not have its elite class to lead it can never win at the negotiating table. The Akalis confronted the British and were totally alienated from the British as well their own countrymen. This led to clashes among themselves which weakened them further. The effect can be seen till today in the infighting among the Akalis. During militancy the traditional leadership was pushed aside and they waited bidding their time. In Punjab true representative leadership will never be allowed to come to power, only those who salute the Centre can stay in power. Such leaders are not responsible to the people but to their bosses in Delhi. The Centre plays a negative role in encouraging factions at the regional level. Bhindranwala was killed because he refused to toe the Centre’s line. Sant Longowal was a puppet in the hands of the Center so was released from jail.
after Operation Bluestar. The main cause of Factionalism in Shiromani Akali Dal and Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee is that religion salutes the Flag.”

Interview with S. Surender Singh Virdi, a senior Congress leader and related to a former President of India, on October 18, 2004 at his office in Sector-22, in Chandigarh.

Replying to a question regarding factionalism in Indian National Congress he says, “Factionalism in the Indian National Congress is purely personal. Egos, vested interests, pursuit for power, status are involved which leads to factionalism. Whenever there is a split or differences between the leaders at the Centre the repercussions are felt in the state. There is interference of the Congress High Command in the day to day affairs and we have the example of the relationship between S. Kairon and Pt. Nehru. Giani Zial Singh and Darbara Singh became the Chief Ministers of the state only because they had the blessing of Mrs. Gandhi. A leader at the regional level can survive only if he has the support of the leadership at the Centre. The Congress High Command has to see to it that its ardent supporter is at the helm of affairs in the state because it needs that person’s support and work for the election of the President and the Prime Minister. Factionalism is not caste-based. The clash between Gianiji and Darbara Singh was not caste-based as it is made out to be. When Gianiji became the Home Minister there were two leaders aspiring to be the party president – M. S. Gill and Darbara Singh. There was a tactic understanding between Gianiji and Darbara Singh that the former would support the latter if the latter supported Gianiji. Darbara Singh became the party president and consequently the Chief Minister. As Chief Minister he rebuffed and pushed back the supporters of Gianiji like Basant Singh, Avtaar Brar, Sant Ram Singla etc. Thus, the conflict between the two. It is basically the rich people who come into politics now as money power is needed to fight elections. So this is the real cause not caste etc. About the position of women, I believe the Punjabi society is a male dominated society and this trend has filtered into politics. Any woman who enters into politics is because she is connected to some political family.”
He says, ‘In Shiromani Akali Dal there is more caste-based factionalism. The Jat farmer lobby is dominant. The Centre tried to remove Tohra with the help of Atma Singh but couldn’t succeed because Tohra had control over the funds of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. Badal could challenge Tohra because the former is a party worker, nobody understands the Sikh masses as well as Badal. Thus, he has been able to consolidate his position. About women the picture is as dismal as in other parties, Jagir Kaur has been able to come up because of Dera politics.’

S. Gurbaksh Singh Shergill, one of the founder members of the All India Sikh Students Federation and Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar, in an interview at his residence in Sector-27, Chandigarh, deals in great length with factionalism. He says, ‘There has always been factionalism in the villages of Punjab. There are clashes based on property and on egos. Punjabi Sikh is basically egoistic. He has a feeling of being more important than the others, so you have clashes between the Jat Sikhs of Malwa with those of Majha and Doaba. This leads to factionalism. For example it is said about the Majhail leader that for him, faction is more important than religion. Factionalism is the result of ego, feeling of importance. During the time of the Tenth Guru there was no distinction between the Jat and the Non Jat Sikh. Now it is more prominent because caste is used as the basis for securing benefits, for furthering one’s interests. Though the leaders are more educated there are more factions emerging because they fight over the posts of office-bearers. When the people were less educated there was less corruption for there was no price economy. Now because of elections there is a competition for more power. Money power has come in which leads to control over resources. The link between the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal is also one which concerns money. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee provides a captive audience and finance to the Shiromani Akali Dal so there is a supremacy of politics over religion. Udham Singh Nagoke and Giani Kartar Singh clashed with each other over the management of Gurudwaras. The Centre has a negative role to play in Sikh politics. It sends money to create factions to weaken the strength of the Sikhs and the Sikhs play into their hands. The Centre is anti-Sikh, anti-Punjabi and anti Punjabi Suba. When Lachhman S. Gill was made the Chief Minister the message went out to
the regional politics that whosoever gets the support of the Centre would be rewarded. The rest of the problems are created by the Sikh leadership themselves. For example Sant Fateh Singh interfered in the affairs of the then Chief Minister, Gurnam Singh. The latter did not like it and there arose a clash between the two leaders. The Sant used to say publicly that even a dog can become a Member of Parliament because of the tag of the Akali Dal. The uneducated leaders wanted to keep the educated leaders from overshadowing it. Thus, factions flourished.”

According to Mr. N. S. Parwana, an independent journalist who has worked in the past with Hind Samachar which was started by Lala Jagat Narain and caters to the Hindu readership, ‘Giani Zail Singh was a Sikh oriented politician while Darbara Singh was a nationalist Sikh. The clash of these two giants was also on the basis of non-Jat and Jat Sikh identity. Gianiji was a non-Jat who believed in Sikh scriptures and even made inroads into the SAD’s stronghold by constructing the Guru Gobind Singh Marg which connects 91 religious places which were connected with the Gurus Shastras and formed the Dal Khalsa in Punjab to counter the SAD’s claim of representing the Sikhs. S. Darbara Singh was a staunch Congressite who believed in nationalism. He was the one who put an end to the militancy which had torn the Punjab state apart. He deflected the separatist tendencies’. We have the example of the murderer of Lala Jagat Narain. Bhindranwale, travelled from Bombay through Haryana to Punjab unhindered and unarrested. He was arrested on S. Darbara Singh’s instructions, in Punjab. Gianiji had discouraged the then Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhajan Lal from arresting Bhindranwale.’

In an interview P. P. S. Gill, Former Chief of Bureau, The Tribune, at his residence in Sector-16, Chandigarh, says,

“Regarding the Congress it has always been a divided house. The factionalism in the Congress is more dangerous for the Punjab. The politicians and leaders in the party are all opportunists and there is no common thread running through them. The factionalised is more personalized in which none cares for the
State but for one's own interests. There was little or no factionalism during Beant Singh's time because the politicians were scared and there was nothing much to share the spoils. He came at a point when the Central leadership wanted to re-establish itself in Punjab. Prior to that factionalism went into hibernation during the President's rule. The politicians had no control in their hands for the Governor ruled the roost. He governed with the help of his advisors so the bureaucracy was in full control. Politicians, in fact, became jobless. In the Akali Dal factionalism is rampant. Akalis are like Amoeba. The Congress has taken advantage of factionalism in the Akali Party. The Akalis are good at spoiling their own chances of coming to power. They do not have a centralized office, literature etc. It is not an organized party at all. They are divided into groups for their vested interests. The consequences of factionalism is that none other than Punjab suffers. Punjab will become a frozen tear in the years to come. There will be nobody to cry for it. Because of factionalism the officers, the media, the resources and the people get divided. How is it possible that in the past there was a Congress government at the Centre, in Punjab and in Haryana but the SYL problem did not get solved. Due to factionalism, Punjab is not well armed for the future. There is no Information Technology, no heavy industry, and no module for the future. This evil has polarized the people and development of Punjab. There is no political will to solve the problem because vested interests are involved. Factionalism in both the main parties in Punjab has fractured the State. The Congress has failed to learn from its past mistake. They encouraged Bhindranwale as parallel to the Akalis who proved to be a Frankenstein who terrorized them. Factionalism is leading to ruin in all fronts yet no party wants to tackle it.