Conclusion

What has emerged as the most significant feature in all our discussion is that the advent of the newspapers in Punjabi was an invaluable contribution made by the 'Singh Sabha Movement'--a renaissance movement among the Sikhs. That is why journalism born under its influence has been termed as the Sikh journalism. Barring one or two almost all the editors, working in this field, were Sikhs. It will, however, be pertinent to point out here that these non-Sikh editors were associated with those papers which always worked for the propagation of the Sikh faith. Dhani Ram Chatrik, who served as the editor of the 'Khalsa Samachar' for some time, stands in the front-rank of such editors. The nomenclatures of the Punjabi papers also indicate that they aimed at the propagation of the Sikh faith. The spotlighting of the select holy verses, from the Sikh Scripture, at the top of the front pages of these papers, also reflects the basic aim of the Sikh press. Another important point to be laid stress on is that it is only the Sikhs who adopted Punjabi language, and single-handedly struggled for the promotion of the Gurmukhi script. There is no denying the fact that the goal before all the Punjabi papers, published out between 1876 and 1947, was the propagation of the Sikhism. After 1910, some such newspapers in Punjabi did come out as were markedly influenced by politics and had absolutely nothing to do with the preaching of the Sikh tenets. But the number of such papers
was quite negligible. 'Therefore, there is every reason to acknowledge the Punjabi journalism till 1947 as the Sikh journalism. To call it in question by viewing it only from a communal perspective, would simply amount to be unjust to it.

When the polemic nature of the reform movements among the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs came in forefront, the relationship between the Punjabi papers and the Sikhs become even more intimate. The 'Arya Samaj' and the 'Singh Sabha' opposed each other as representatives of the two different communities of the Punjab. In the sphere of journalism, the Hindi papers of the 'Arya Samaj' and the Punjabi papers of the 'Singh Sabha' took up positions against each other. As a result of it, the Hindus got further alienated from Punjabi. In inverse proportion, the Sikhs got nearer to Punjabi. In the field of journalism, all the papers in Punjabi owe their birth to the efforts of the Sikhs. That is why we call the Punjabi journalism as the Sikh journalism.

During the first few years after its inception, the Sikh journalism concentrated on religious sphere alone. It was silent on the political front. Political dissent was inconceivable as all the movements going on at that time were reformative in nature. Inspite of it, the Sikh press did protest against the interference by the British Government, in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. Such a protest could well be taken as symbolic of the inherent political dissent, rather than an explicit or open political opposition. Besides,
a group had arisen within the Sikh journalism which eyed the policy of the British Government. The 'Chief Khalsa Diwan' constituted one group. In the sphere of journalism, it was called the Amritsary Party. The 'Khalsa Samachar' was its chief spokesman. Another group which was not pleased with this loyalty of the Diwan towards the British called itself the Panthic Party, and was popularly known as the Lahore Party. The 'Khalsa Akhbar' of Lahore was representative of its opinion. Whenever a new paper was born in the field of Sikh journalism, people termed it as supporter of one or the other party. Undoubtedly, it was a hard fact. Even the papers which declared themselves neutral in the beginning, come out their true colours sooner or later. In this way, the differences of these two groups at ideological level, resulted in differences within the Sikh journalism. Such a situation was, no doubt, detrimental to the interests of the Sikhs. However, both the groups did make a useful contribution for introducing social reforms and preaching the Sikh faith.

After the advent of the British rule in Punjab, the Sikh suffered a set-back both in the religious and political fields. Result of Negligible work of preaching Sikh tenets, caused the influence of the English society and the effects of Hinduism on sacred shrines of the Sikhs. Many Sikhs (who were not very well familiar with Sikh principles), fell victims to observe such practices which caused religious degeneration among them. In the years of its infancy, the Sikh press published articles to underline how the Sikh code (i.e. maryada)
was being violated in the gurdwaras. This way they tried to build up a sort of movement for reforms in the Gurdwaras. The Sikh press strongly denounced the ill-effects of the Hinduism on the Sikh religion. The Hinduism and newly-established 'Arya Samaj' could not digest this denunciation. So, the papers sponsored by the 'Arya Samaj' made several mis-statements, as a reaction to it. The result was that a polemic started between the Sikh papers and the papers sponsored by the 'Arya Samaj'. This wordy-war sometimes touched the low nadir. In this way, the Sikh papers had to wage ideological fights on two fronts—one within the Sikh journalism and the other against the outside forces. Both these fights proved equally fatal, because the establishment of high standards of writing was what we needed to preach and propagate, a higher ideology. It called for the use of attractive idiom so that the writing might spell a charm on the reader's mind and thus leave its permanent impact on him. However, the prevalent unhealthy wordy-war made it impossible either to keep the higher standards of ideology or to maintain suavity of expression. This happened with Sikh journalism on several occasions. The Sikh journalism was not ignorant of it. That is why, it occasionally made appeals for the Panthic Unity.

On the one hand, the Sikh journalism started a movement against the violation of Sikh code in the Sikh sacred shrines, and on the other, it made multi-pronged attempts for the propagation of Sikh precepts. The sole aim of preaching the Sikh tenets was to enlighten its ignorant followers, so that
the Sikhism might regain its pristine glory, especially at a juncture when the Sikhs were accepting proselytization in a very large number and thus sending a shock-wave in the Panth. Naturally the efforts were made to stop this unhealthy trend. All efforts made by Sikh journalism in this regard deserve kudos. The press published articles, stories, etc., on Sikhism. Exposition of sacred hymns, the publication of news and reviews about religious functions, etc., were a part of this series of efforts. The establishment of the 'Khalsa Tract Society' was another useful step taken in this direction. The subjects of tract series, brought out by this tract society, were mainly Sikh exegesis and the Sikh history.

The most important work done by the Sikh journalism with regard to the propagation of Sikh precepts was the taking up of a certain Sikh cause and seeking its fulfilment. The Sikh press got wind of the planned conspiracy by the British government to weaken the Sikhs by usurping the control of their shrines. To undo this, it propagated that the management of the Sikh shrines be entrusted fully to the community. Gradually, these efforts took the shape of the 'Gurdwara Reform Movement', and a chain of morchas against the government got underway. During these morchas also, the role of the Sikh press was quite significant. On the one hand, the Sikh papers published reports of the excessive oppression by the government; on the other, it encouraged the Sikhs to continue with their fight with renewed vigour and zeal. Among the religious affairs of the Sikhs are included, the affairs
of the wall of Gurdwara Rikabganj; the issue of Kirpan, the reforms in gurdwaras, and the Gurdwara Act. Among the agitations launched by the Sikhs are those of the keys, the Guru Ka Bagh, the Jaitu Moment etc.

After 1920, due to religious affairs of the Sikhs, the Sikh journalism adopted a militant posture. This brought a significant change in the Sikh press. That is why the Sikh journalism, born in this age, started pre-eminently adopted the politics as its field. The credit for this goes to the 'Akali' paper. Its existence proved to be a significant milestone in the field of Sikh journalism. Many new papers came into being under the impact of the militant idiom of the 'Akali'. However, none of them could touch the heights of the 'Akali'.

Like the preaching of religion, social reform was also included among the first priorities of the Sikh journalism. The propagation of the Sikh percepts implicitly stood for the establishment of a social order where ethnic, social and political equality would prevail. Such a set-up is certainly free from the concepts of caste and class distinctions. That is why the question of social reform went on to be addressed along with the propagation of faith (Sikhism). The press published analytical articles seeking reforms in the social condition of women and the removal of caste system as well as the wasteful and unwanted ceremonies connected with marriage. The press did a lot for female education and for
the betterment of womanhood. Since they formed half of our society, it was, therefore, necessary to pay special attention to the improvement of their lot, so as to make social development in general meaningful. Some papers such as the 'Punjabi Bhain,' the 'Istri Sudhar,' the 'Istri Samachar,' etc., were born specifically for the purpose of uplifting the women's status. It was mainly because of such efforts by the Sikh Press that several schools for girls were opened in the Punjab, within a few years.

The 'Ghadar movement' launched by the Punjabis in the far-away countries of America and Canada gave birth to the first political paper in Punjabi. Inspite of the fact 90% of the activists of this movement were the Sikhs of the Punjab, this movement is not known as the Sikh movement, nor has anybody called the journalism, born under its influence, as the Sikh journalism. It is, no doubt, a fact that this movement did nothing for the propagation of the Sikh faith. But the spirit working behind this movement was definitely that religious spirit which had always been a source of inspiration to the Sikhs to fight against tyranny and oppression. The ideal which guided the journalism of the 'Ghadar Movement' was deeply influenced by the religious and political direction provided by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. That is why we have termed this as the Sikh journalism. In fact, the Akali and the Babbar Akali movements determined their field of activity under the influence of the 'Ghadar Movement'.
The Sikh press in Punjab entered the political arena only after 1920. Due to anti-government movement current throughout the country and the new political situation in the Punjab, a very significant transformation had then taken place in the Sikh journalism of Punjab when the 'Akali' was born under the influence of the Akali Movement. The tragedy of Baj-Baj, the matter of the wall of Gurdwara Rikabganj, the Rowlatt Act after World War I, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, division of Bengal, peasant agitation etc., were among the major events which left a deep impact on the Sikhs, as on the members of other communities. All this brought the Sikhs in the forefront of the freedom movement. Simultaneously, the Sikhs had also been fighting for their communal rights. When the Sikh people realized that they were being made the victim of the mutual tussle going on between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Sikh Press did not lag behind in raising its voice for securing the rights of the Sikhs, while struggling for the freedom of the mother land. The rigid communal posture of the Muslims, and the undue surrender to it by the Congress, led the Sikhs to lean towards the path of communalism as it happened with the Hindus in general. In this way, the Sikh Press was sometimes obliged to adopt communal posture, of course, very much against its will. The Nehru Report weaned the Sikhs away from the Congress. In the political field, the Sikh press started discussing several new possibilities as a result of which the Sikhs felt that
their political future was uncertain. At that time, the Sikhs developed a fear that after the British left India, the Sikhs will have to suffer the subjugation of the Muslims. It was because their dominance in Panjab became almost certain after they had been granted more and more privileges. At this stage the demand of the Sikhs for their due rights can neither be called communal nor a hindrance in the way to the independence of the nation. However, their demands were ignored on the plea that these demands smacked of communalism. Consequently, the Sikhs started asking for 'Khalistan' while the Muslims were demanding for 'Pakistan'. This demand was, however, put in such a subdued tone that it failed to build itself in a mass movement. The major reason why this demand was made in such a feeble voice, was the Sikhs by and large were against secessionism.

The Sikhs also suffered huge losses in the political field, due to groupism among them. Three different political groups had emerged in the course of time. One of them adopted pro-British Government stance. The other two were anti-government; but they differed on the question of lending cooperation to the Congress. Baba Kharak Singh had completely boycotted the Congress after the Nehru report. But Master Tara Singh felt that complete alienation from the Congress was not a right step. So, he continued to invite the attention of the Congress to the Sikh demands. Naturally the Sikh papers supported the policies of the groups that
sponsored them, thus the Sikh journalism was also split into three groups. The Chief Khalsa Diwan represented the pro-government section of the Sikhs. That is why the 'Khalsa Samachar' never published any item that went against the government. The 'Akali' and 'Akali Te Pradesi' belonged to the Master Tara Singh group. The 'Moji' was the spokesman of Baba Kharak Singh group. In this way, every paper was aligned to one group or the other. Sometimes fierce wordy-duel took place between the 'Moji' and the 'Akali'. They often stooped too low, in their expression of anguish against each other.

During the 1936-37 election, the standard of these papers reached its nadir. The internal warfare among these papers was further intensified. Some Sikh papers deplored this unhealthy trend in the Sikh Journalism.

The Sikh journalism, during Akali Movement, had definitely come of age and at that time it enjoyed an unenviable position in the political field. But here this is also true that if the Sikh felt cheated in the post-independence era, it is the Sikh press which should largely be held responsible for it. It was the ever growing bickering among the Sikh papers that landed the community in such a predicament. It was also because of this internal fighting that during the third and fourth decades of this century, the Sikh press could not make substantial contribution even in the field of religious work.

It can thus be concluded that the ideals and the objects which the Sikh journalism had set forth in the past were gradually lost in the sandy desert of unfounded mutual bickerings and cheap politics.