CHAPTER VII

THE RADHA SOAMI MOVEMENT AND OTHER SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The Radha Soami Movement came into contact with many other contemporary Hindu and Sikh socio-religious movements in the Punjab. Prominent among the latter were - the Arya Samaj, the Nandhari and the Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vichari Sahba established by the orthodox minded Sikhs. How did these socio-religious movements work in the Punjab? What were the reactions of the people of different communities towards them? What were their activities and attitudes vis-a-vis the Radha Soami Movement? An attempt is made to discuss these and other cognate issues in this chapter.

THE RADHA SOAMI AND THE ARYA SAMAJ MOVEMENTS

Both the Radha Soami and the Arya Samaj were contemporary movements. Both were the products of the second half of the nineteenth century and both took birth out of the Punjab. Later on, both came into this province at short intervals. Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati at Bombay on April 10, 1875. In the Punjab its first centre was established at Lahore in 1877.1 The Radha Soami Movement

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having been established at Agra in 1861, entered the Punjab about three decades after with its first Centre at Beas in 1891.² Both the movements aimed at reforming the socio-religious conditions of the people and both were critical of the prevailing malpractices in religion; both denounced idol worship and ancestor worship. Yet there is a basic difference between the two: the Arya Samajists declare the infallibility of the Vedas and strictly believe in Vedic rituals such as singing hymns and performing Hawans.³ However, the Radha Soamis do not believe in the infallibility of the Vedas.⁴

Regarding Guru, the Arya Samajists are of the opinion that the true and perfect teacher or Guru is he who can teach the science of the Vedas and their commentaries. Moreover, the term Guru applies to all those through whom mind is weaned away from falsehood and it includes father, mother and preceptor.⁵ But the Radha Soamis feel that a Vedantist (a follower of Vedant system of philosophy) is not a true and perfect Guru because the Vedas deal with the three Gunas (attributes of matter) - Sat, Raj and Tam - whose function is to create, support and destroy this world. The Vedas do not

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2. Jagat Singh, The Science of the Soul, (Delhi, 1977), P. 246; Radha Soami Satsang Beas., The Sarbachan, Prose (Delhi, 1974), P. 5; Manuscript No. 3, P. 178.
5. Saraswati, Dayanand, Satyarth Parkash, Hindi, (Delhi, Samvat 2026), P. 594.
say anything about the Great Lord who imparts light and energy to Brahman. According to them, those who seek true salvation should not depend upon the methods prescribed in the Veda. True salvation can be attained only when one goes beyond the limits of three Gunas. Thus, a true and perfect Guru is he who is himself joined to Shabd and who connects us with it and then takes us safe to our eternal home.

There is no doubt that the Arya Samaj movement is strictly non-idolatrous in its worship, but it retains some of the characteristics of Hinduism such as belief in Karma (action) and transmigration of soul, which the founder thought were taught in the Vedas. Salvation is thought of as emancipation from rebirth. The Radha Soamis also have similar views regarding Karma theory and transmigration of soul, Swarga (heaven) as well as Narka (hell), but they strictly believe that without devotion to a perfect true Guru and the practice of

6. Sarbghan Prasa, Para No. 234, P. 149; Kapoor, Daryai Lal., Call To the Great Master, (Delhi, 1972), P. 109.

Not only the Radha Soamis have such opinion regarding the Vedas, but Lord Krishna is also of the same opinion. He says to Arjun, "Tre guna vishya Veda nistre gun bhav Arjuna". The Veda deal with the subject of three Gunas only (three qualities). If you (Arjun) wish to seek reality, rise above these. (Shrimad Bhagavad Geeta, Adhaya-2, Shlok-45).

Surat shabd Yoga, salvation cannot be attained. On this point, S. Sawan Singh of Beas remarked:

"One cannot attain salvation by external rites, leading life of outward piety and by performing religious deeds like undertaking pilgrimages, keeping fasts, bathing in sacred pools or rivers, engaging in Yoga practices or other similar acts. No one can be really happy by enjoying sensual pleasures. True happiness or bliss, and salvation are attainable only by the company of Saints and the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga."

Thus both differ on the method of achieving salvation.

The Arya Samajists fostered the feeling of Hindu nationalism and kindled the fire of political consciousness in the country. To re-convert non-Hindus, it started Shuddhi and Sanghathan. The Arya Samajists also started


The Shuddhi campaign spread from the plains northward into the foothills, the Aryas began Shuddhi among the Doms of the Kashmir, Punjab and U.P. Hill tracts. Ram Bhaj Outla with a party of some Aryas, struggled to purify the Doms. (Kenneth W. Jones, op. cit., pp. 304, 305).
D.A.V. educational institutions to commemorate Soami Dayanand Saraswati. But, the Radha Soami movement remained non-political. Its followers attempted a spiritual synthesis by proclaiming that one could become a Radha Soami and yet remain a Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and Christian. They did not start educational institutions and kept themselves busy in developing the Beas Centre.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ARYA SAMAJISTS AND THE RADHA SOAMIS

To begin with, the relations between the Arya Samajists and the Radha Soamis were cordial. It is said that Swami Dayanand Saraswati had a close link with Seth Shiv Dayal Singh, the founder of the Radha Soami Movement at Agra. The Radha Soamis even claim that Swami Dayanand Saraswati was initiated into their Faith by Seth Shiv Dayal Singh in 1872. However, relations between the two movements deteriorated after the death of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in October 1883. The main cause for this deterioration was the writings of Seth Shiv Dayal Singh. His two books: *Sarbachan* poetry and *Sarbachan* prose were published in 1884. In these writings he criticised the Vedas and the Puranas.

16. See above, p. 49.
and Christianity. As a result of Soami Ji's criticism, the followers of the other socio-religious movements came into conflict with the Radha Soami.

The Arya Samajists in the Punjab started opposing the Gurus of the Agra centres. In 1911, when Shri Kamta Prasad Sinha alias Sarkar Sahib of Ghazipur toured the Punjab, he met with a hostile reception at the hands of the Arya Samajists. At Amritsar, the Arya Samajists broke glass panes of doors and windows of the building in which he was staying. Later, when he reached Lahore, he found printed posters pasted on the walls all over the city. In the posters a challenge of discussing spiritual matters was thrown to the Radha Soami Guru on behalf of the leaders of the Lahore Arya Samaj. On this Sarkar Sahib accepted the challenge on the condition that an impartial judge might be appointed to give decision. The proposal was not accepted by the opponents. His Satsang was interrupted by howlings and shriekings. At this moment, some Satsangis ran towards the people making noise but Sarkar Sahib stopped his followers.

After some time, his successor Sahib Ji Maharaj, founder of Dayal Bagh Agra, paid a visit to the Punjab on November, 23,

19. Sarbachan Poetry, Bachan - 26, Ang No. 4, 5, 6, 7, PP. 220-221. Also see Radha Soami Satsang Beas, Bainti Te Prarthna Day Shabad, Punjabi, (Julundur, 1981), PP. 28-29.
21. Dayal Bagh Souvenir, PP. 139, 140.
1931 and he sojourned at Lahore for a week. During his stay, on November 24, on the invitation of the secretary of the Vachhowali Arya Samaj, he delivered a speech in the annual conference of the Arya Samaj on the topic "Whether religion is a stumbling block in the progress of the nation?" Similarly, on November 27, on the invitation of Sanatan Dharm Sabha, Lahore, he delivered a lecture on the subject "What benefit can be had from devotion to the Lord?" Though at that time no unpleasant incident occurred but after his departure to Agra, the Radha Soami Movement in the Punjab became a target of sharp criticism by the other socio-religious movements, and within a short period criticism appeared in the press. The newspapers of the Punjab started denouncing the activities of the Radha Soamis and excited others to oppose this new Movement. Rishi, a newspaper printed from Lahore made an appeal to the followers of Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, to unite together to destroy the Radha Soami Faith. Similarly, the newspaper Parkash advised the followers of Sanatan Dharm Sabha to start a Jehad (religious war) against the Radha

23. Ibid., PP. 186, 187.
24. Ibid., P. 190.
25. Ibid., P. 201.
Soami Faith. Another newspaper Akali condemned the principles of the Radha Soami Faith and the activities of Dayal Bagh Agra. Thus, the propaganda against the Radha Soami Movement remained active in the Punjab.

The Bess Centre had also become the subject of criticism by both the orthodox Sikhs and the Arya Samajists. In November 1933, Sahib Ji Maharaj of Agra paid a visit to the Bess Centre. He along with S. Savan Singh visited Amritsar. Both the leaders of the Radha Soami Faith were given hostile reception by the Arya Samajists and the orthodox Sikhs jointly. Their satsangs were disturbed, slogans were raised against them and even the followers were threatened with dire consequences if they went to attend their Guru's discourses.

In the nineteen thirties, the opponents of the Radha Soamis were not only criticising the principles of the Movement but also started abusing the leaders of the Faith. On seeing that the Radha Soamis were being criticised in the

28. Riyast, Urdu, January 15, 1934, (Delhi)
Punjab, Anand Sarup (Sahib Ji Maharaj) of Agra, in order to silence the criticism, wrote a book in Urdu entitled *Yatharth Parkash Mukamal* in 1934. This book, to some extent, silenced the critics of the Faith.

On the other hand, S. Sawan Singh remained busy throughout his life in spreading the teachings of the Radha Soami Faith, opposition of the orthodox Sikhs notwithstanding. He also held long religious discussions with the Arya Samajists. In 1931, Rai Bahadur Munna Lal, District and Session Judge Lahore visited Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas accompanied by a party consisting of Rai Roshan Lal, a leading lawyer of High Court Lahore and at one time the President of the Punjab Pratinidhi Sabha of the Arya Samaj, Baba Harnam Singh and Mr. Dingra, a barrister. They stayed there for some days and discussed the teachings of the Radha Soamis, the Sikhs and the Arya Samajists with the Great Master. The latter satisfied them in these discussions.

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Kapoor, Daryai Lal recorded the whole discussion of Munna Lal's party with the Great Master and published it under the name of *Call of the Great Master*. Its first five chapters deal with the whole discussion.
The Great Master used to spend his summer at Dalhousie. During his stay there, the intellectuals of different faiths came to have discussions with him. Pandit Thakur Dutt Sharma, Raizada Haoraj, a barrister from Jullundur and the member of viceroy's Legislative Council, Mr. Virbhan, Deputy Director of Industries, Punjab, met the Master. They asked him several questions regarding the Radha Soami Faith, the Vedas, the Bible, the Quran, and the Adi Granth. The discussion remained in progress for many days and the Master satisfied them. Being impressed by his illuminating talks, some of them became his followers. Thus the Great Master without giving provocation to the Arya Samajists and with love was able to make the Radha Soami Faith a respectable Movement in the Punjab.

THE RADHA SOAMI'S, THE ORTHODOX SIKHS AND THE SHIROMANI
RADHA SOAMI MAH UTCHARNI SADHA

The attitude of the orthodox Sikhs towards the Radha Soami Faith was hostile from the beginning. They hated to listen the name of the 'Radha Soami' and to see its followers. During the period of Baba Jaimal Singh (1891-1903), whenever the audience came to know that the speaker belonged to the Radha Soami Faith, they left his meeting. With the passage

35. Ibid., P. 135.
of time, this hatred further increased due to the following causes:

First, as related earlier, the ideological beliefs, rituals and the ceremonies of the Radha Soamis of the Agra Centres such as taking Charan Amrit and Mukh Amrit of their Gurus, the worship of Kharouns of Soami Ji Maharaj and his Samadh, performing Arti of their Guru, etc. were disliked by the orthodox Sikhs of the Punjab. The latter mocked at them and passed derogatory remarks against the Radha Soamis.

Secondly, the Sikhs were of the opinion that the founder of the Faith, Seth Shiv Dayal Singh had written derogatory remarks against the Sikhs and the Adi Granth in his book Sarbachan. At one place he observed:

"The present followers of Guru Nanak are no better. They kept the Granth Sahib wrapped in cloth, like a bundle, prostrate themselves before it in adoration, and perform the Arti ceremony (lamp waving ceremony) before it. They have been doing so for a long time, but never did the Granth say, 'Peace be upon you and Name within your heart'."

37. See above, PP 249-251.

Bhai, Sewa Singh collected all the articles concerning the Radha Soamis from his Weekly Khalsa Samachar (1931-1933), published them in a tract of 128 pages under the title Radha Soami Mat Parbodh in Punjabi. Moreover, Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, Municipal Commissioner Tarn Taran, distributed one hundred copies of this tract free to the people in order to excite the religious feelings of the Sikhs against the Radha Soamis. (Radha Soami Mat Parbodh, PP. 1, 127, 128).

39. Sarbachan Prase, Para No. 27, P. 79.
Such statements of Seth Shiv Dayal Singh very much annoyed the orthodox Sikhs and thus they in return started criticising the Radha Soamis.

The third factor responsible for antagonising the orthodox Sikhs was that S. Sawan Singh had compiled a volume of 692 pages entitled, *Shabad Di Mahima Dey Shabad* selecting 848 *Shabads* as well as 14 biographies of different Saints and *Bhagats* from the *Adi Granth*. In 1909, he got it published in *Punjabi* under his name. Criticising this volume, the Sikhs opined,

"S. Sawan Singh is misinterpreting the Holy *Granth Sahib* and he is trying to spoil and corrupt the Sikh community; his cardinal object of compiling this volume is to convert the Sikhs to the Radha Soami Faith. He is not less than Mirza of Qadian." 41

Fourthly, ideologically, the Sikhs differed from the Radha Soamis. The former believe that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, had enjoined upon them to look upon the *Adi Granth* as their only Guru in future.42 Accordingly, the Sikhs hold the book in great reverence and bow before it as the Sanatanist Hindus bow before their idols and similarly when bowing they throw

Besides, till recently, the Adi Granth was worshipped with bells and candles like idols in Hindu temples and full Arti was performed. But, the Radha Soamis did not believe in this theory. They strictly believe in the living Guru or contemporary Guru. As stated earlier, they feel that in God-realization, the practice of Surat Shabd Yoga is required. It is a highly technical process which cannot be attained merely by the perusal or recitation of the scriptures. It can only be learnt by personal contact with a living Guru. That is why, the Radha Soamis, do not regard the Adi Granth or their own scripture Sarbachan as Guru. Thus, on account of this ideological difference, the orthodox Sikhs opposed the Radha Soamis.

Finally, in the early 1930's, lot of construction work was going on in the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas and it was developing very fast. It had become permanent head office of the Radha Soami Movement in the Punjab. Its head, S. Sawan Singh was spreading the principles of the said Movement with great zeal.

44. Narang, Gokul Chand., op. cit., P. 170.
45. See above, pp. 142-147. Also see, Rasala Sari Duniya, Monthly, Punjabi, May 1948, (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas), P. 184.
The people of various communities were becoming his followers in large number. On seeing phenomenal progress of this movement, some enthusiastic orthodox Sikhs of this area felt the need of founding some organisation to curb the activities of the Radha Soamis in the Punjab.

**FOUNDING OF THE SHIROMANI RADHA SOAMI MAT VICHARNI SABHA**

On January 15, 1931 the Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha was founded by Giani Harcharn Singh Labana of village Nangal Labana, District Kapurthala. He was helped by Sant Prem Singh, the president of Makhan Shahi Committee of...

46. Beas Initiation Record, Register No. 1, Volume No. 1 to Volume No. 4, Urdu, from December 9, 1894 to February 2, 1931.

Whereas the number of the followers in 1903 was 2,345, it rose to 33,954 in 1930. Khushwant Singh is not right when he remarks that, "It is impossible to verify the number as the Radha Soamis do not form a distinct and separate sect and are not therefore listed in the census" (A History of the Sikhs, Volume II, P. 127). The present writer feels that Khushwant Singh, neither visited the Beas head office of the Radha Soamis in the Punjab, nor studied the Census Reports before making such statement. As the correct number of the Radha Soamis is available in the Beas Initiation Record, as well as in the Census Reports. The Census Report, 1911 bears the number of the Radha Soamis 4,293 and subsequently the Census Report, 1931 bears the number 5,386. (Census Report, 1911, XIV, P. 141; Census Report, 1931, XVII, P. 301).
Bunga Labana at Baba Bakala, District Amritsar. The head office of the Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha was set up in Bunga Labana, at Baba Bakala, situated three miles away from Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas. The Executive Committee of this Sabha was formed after a well attended meeting and the following were elected its office-bearers:

1. Jamadar Khushal Singh of Baba Bakala, President.

Based upon my personal interview with Giani Harcharn Singh Labana, founder and General Secretary of Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha, Baba Bakala, District, Amritsar, (hereafter referred to as Personal interview with General Secretary).

I had an interview with the help of Giani Partap Singh, Ex. Jathedar of Shri Akal Takhat, Amritsar, with Giani Harcharn Singh Labana, founder and General Secretary of Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha of Baba Bakala, on December 31, 1978. At that time, Giani Harcharn Singh had been admitted to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital at Amritsar and was operated upon by Dr. Sethi and he was lying in bed No. 25 in Dr. Karam Singh Ward on the fourth storey. We made some enquiries regarding the said Sabha. Albeit, he responded cheerfully yet feeling the difficulties of the present writer, he postponed the talk and asked to meet him on the following day. In the meanwhile, he arranged his personal diaries and old papers with the help of his son, Sardar Sampuran Singh, M.B.E.S. student of Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Amritsar. On January 1, 1979, the present writer got written permission from the Doctor incharge of Surgical Ward to seek the interview with Giani Ji. The talk lasted for two days. He gave some important information regarding the said Sabha from his personal records. The writer noted the whole interview in Urdu because Giani Ji could read and write well this language. Ultimately on my request, he read the whole matter and signed it gladly. After that, the present writer met Bibi Lajo (Lajwanti) at her residence, 78-A, Laurance Road, Amritsar. She is a widow and she spent the best part of her life (from 1916 to April 15, 1948) in serving her Guru S. Sawan Singh at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas. The whole information given by Giani Harcharn Singh Labana was discussed with her. She also took it correct and also gave me some important information regarding research. Lastly she signed it gladly.
2. Babu Basant Singh of village Chhapyuali, Vice-President.
3. Giani Harcharn Singh Labana of village Nangal Labana, General Secretary.
4. Major Lachman Singh, Additional Secretary.

OBJECTS OF THE SHIROMANI RADHA SOAMI MAT VICHARNI SABHA*

The aims of the Sabha were: (i) to strengthen the opposition to the Radha Soami Faith with the help of the natives of the surrounding villages such as Baba Bakala, Baraich, Buddha-Thoh, Balsarai, Beas, (ii) to spread Sikhism among the people of the surrounding villages, (iii) to criticise and condemn the activities of the Radha Soamis, (iv) to erect a Gurudwara opposite to the Dera of Radha Soamis at Beas. According to Giani Harcharn Singh Labana, General Secretary of the Sabha, the Radha Soamis of Beas were misinterpreting the Adi Granth and were spoiling and corrupting the common people. They announced with the beating of drums in the surrounding villages that without any distinction of caste, creed, sex and social status, any one could become the member of the Sabha. He or she had to pay only five paise per month for its membership. Due to very nominal membership fee, about five hundred persons became its members within a short time.

48. Personal interview with General Secretary.
49. The Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha is cited hereafter as Vicharni Sabha.
50. Ibid.
ACTIVITIES OF THE VICHARNI SABHA

FOUNDING OF GURDWARA NAWAKCARH BEAS

To start with, some members of the Vicharni Sabha used to carry the Adi Granth with great pomp and show from Baba Bakala to Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas. They performed their programmes in open fields opposite the Dera under the guidance of Giani Harcharn Singh Labana. He gathered the natives of the adjoining villages and school children to celebrate the monthly programmes. On the other side, S. Sawan Singh conducted monthly Satsangs and addressed a large gathering of his disciples who had come from far and near. In order to disturb the discourses of the Great Master, the Vicharni Sabha used to start its programmes with the commencement of the Radha Soami Satsang. The members of the Vicharni Sabha not only criticised the Radha Soamis but also distracted the Satsangis by reciting loudly poems, songs and hymns from the Granth Sahib. Often they arranged games like Kabaddi, tug-of-war and wrestling in order to divert the attention of the followers of the Radha Soami Movement. This continued for one year.

51. Personal interview with General Secretary.
Seeing the success of the Vicharni Sabha at Beas, Jawahar Singh, the president of Darbar Sahib Committee Amritsar suggested to give financial help to it. In April, 1932, a plot of land measuring nine kanals opposite Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas was purchased from Santa Singh Jat of village Baraich, District Amritsar, for rupees one thousand. This place was to become the centre of activity of the Vicharni Sabha. The sale deed of this plot was registered by Santa Singh in favour of Vicharni Sabha through Jamadar Khushal Singh and Giani Harcharn Singh Labana.

On Sunday, May 29, 1932 a huge congregation assembled at the newly established centre. Among those present included prominent Akali leaders and orthodox Sikhs. After doing Ardas (prayer), Sant Bhagwan Singh of village Malla, District Gurdaspur, laid the foundation stone of 'Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas.' In June 1932, a room of this Gurdwara was completed and the Adi Granth was installed in it. Bhai Gurjit Singh of village Nurpo Labana, District Kapurthala, was appointed the first Granthi (in charge of the Sikh scripture) of this

53. Personal interview with General Secretary.
54. Ibid. Also see my article on 'Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha', Proceedings of Punjab History Conference, Thirteenth Session, March 1974, (Punjabi University, Patiala), p. 276.
55. Personal interview with General Secretary.
56. Ibid.
Gurduara. He was paid ten rupees per month on behalf of the Vicharni Sabha. The Granthi recited Aso-Oi-Uar early in the morning and Sodar-Reh-Ras in the evening.

On the occasion of monthly Satsangs, the Vicharni Sabha, with a view to disturb the meetings of the Radha Soamis, started arranging Diwans (sikh religious assembly) in its Gurduara. These Diwans were often attended by the Ragi Jathas (parties of musicians), Akali Jathas of different districts of the Punjab, and other preachers of different organisations of the Sikhs. On different occasions the leaders of the Akali party such as Master Tara Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh Nagokey and the preachers of ‘Sarb Hind Sikh Mission’ delivered fiery speeches against the Radha Soamis.

In January 1932, the Vicharni Sabha started presenting silver medals to those scholars who delivered speeches against the Radha Soamis at Gurduara Nanakgarh, Amritsar. These medals were

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57. Personal interview with General Secretary.
58. Master Tara Singh and Jathedar Udham Singh Nagokey were active leaders of the Akali Party. (For details, see Giani Partap Singh., Akali Lather Dey Mahan Neta, Punjabi, (Amritsar, 1967), pp. 137-145.
59. Personal interview with General Secretary; Personal interview with Bibi Lajo of Amritsar; Prem Pancharak, Weekly, Urdu, August 3, 1931, (Dayal Bagh Agra), P. 6.
made of pure silver. On its obverse were inscribed such words as "Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Vicharni Sabha Baba Bakala presented to ...". The learned preachers of the Sikhs tried their best to win the medal on monthly programmes held at the said Gurudwara Beas. They used to prepare their speeches after a thorough study of the publications of the Radha Soami Faith. In their speeches, comparison of the Radha Soamis and the Sikhs was made with the object of condemning the living Guru and to support the Gurbani or the writings of the Adi Granth. Most outstanding speaker was awarded the medal referred to above. In January 1932 Giani Partap Singh the present Editor of Gian Amrit periodical, was considered the best orator and writer and he was awarded the medal on behalf of the Vicharni Sabha at Beas. This practice continued till 1944, but later on, it was stopped because the Vicharni Sabha had no funds.

The Vicharni Sabha not only opposed the Radha Soami Movement by arranging DiwanS and speeches but its General

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60. personal record and private papers of Giani, Partap Singh (Ex. Jathedar of Shree Akal Takhat Amritsar), the present Editor of Gian Amrit, periodical, Punjabi, Amritsar. Basta No. 1, File No. 3, Private papers regarding Radha Soamis. (hereafter referred to as Basta No. 1, File No. 3, Private papers.

The height of this medal was 2.3 inches and breadth 1.5 inches, its weight two tolas.

My thanks are due to Giani, Partap Singh who allowed me to make use of his personal record including private papers regarding the Radha Soami Movement.

61. Basta No. 1, File No. 3 Private Papers.

62. Ibid.

For a facsimile of the medal awarded to Giani Partap Singh, see Document - 3, facing page 271.

63. Ibid.
Secretary also got published several tracts in Punjabi and distributed them free of cost in monthly congregations at Beas. Some of the important tracts were: Viskhian Sant Baisakha Singh; Banta Singh Di Had Biti; Radha Soami Mat Nirnya; Radha Soami Mat Vapun; Radha Soami Prashnawali and Radha Soami Mat Parbodh. Most of them were also published in such newspapers of the Punjab, as The Khalsa Sararchar of Amritsar.

The Vicharni Sabha did not confine itself to Beas but with the help of other Sikh organisations carried on propaganda against the Radha Soamis almost in every important town of the Punjab. Whenever, S. Sawan Singh visited such places as Abbottabad, Montgomery, Kohmari, Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi and Sayyad Kasran, to deliver discourses, the members of Vicharni Sabha, Chief Khalsa Diwan and other Akali Jathas strongly opposed him. Sometimes, the Guru had to stop his

64. Personal interview with General Secretary.
Giani Harcharn Singh Labana, General Secretary of Icharni Sabha was a stanch opponent of S. Sawan Singh. His complaint was that he was badly beaten in 1933 by the Radha Soamis at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas. He wanted to take revenge on S. Sawan Singh. He instigated one of S. Sawan Singh’s disciples, Naitar Singh, to file a suit against the Guru in the Judicial Court at Amritsar. In the suit he said that the Guru had promised to make him see God within his physical body at the time of initiation. Naitar Singh alleged that at the behest of the Guru, he resigned from service and had to suffer a loss of eight thousands of rupees. But, the Guru had not fulfilled his promise. Therefore, either the loss of a huge amount should be recovered from the Guru or he should show God to Naitar Singh.

On October 24, 1932, S. Sawan Singh accompanied by his renowned disciples visited Rawalpindi in the West Pakistan. In the evening, when the Great Master (S. Sawan Singh) started his discourse, a number of Akalis armed with swords and spears reached there and sat in the congregation. After a few minutes, they started making noise. Ultimately, they were able to stop the Satsang. After that they started abusing the congregation including the orator. Whatever they could speak against the Radha Soamis, they did. The situation grew so tense that the opponents drew their swords to attack the audience and the speaker. But meanwhile, the police appeared on the scene and it restored order. The Great Master was then able to complete his discourse (Julian P. Johnson, With a Great Master in India, (Delhi, 1975), p. 84).

67. Sher-i-Punjab, Urdu, January 23, 1934, (Lahore); Nasat, Urdu, January 15, 1934, (Delhi); Personal interview with General Secretary; Chadha, Harish Chander, Fneath-Put, Punjabi, (Chandigarh, 1973), pp. 83-89.

68. Personal interview with General Secretary.

69. The Daily Partap, Urdu, June 14, 1934, (Lahore), P. 11.
In this case S. Sawan Singh appeared before the judge and made the following statement.

"Undoubtedly, God is within him and the process to reach and see Him had been explained to the claimant. But according to my instructions, he did not labour hard honestly, therefore, he could not meet Him (God)."

Ultimately, on June 12, 1934, the suit was dismissed and S. Sawan Singh was acquitted of the charge.

After that, the General Secretary of the Vicharni Sabha paid his attention to the completion of the construction work of the Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas. On November 22, 1936, he made a request for four hundred rupees to the Executive Committee of the Local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Baba Bakala.

The latter, in its meeting held on November 25, 1936, sanctioned rupees 125.00 only to the Vicharni Sabha as advance and its demand of four hundred rupees was kept pending. The proceedings of this meeting were transmitted to the head office of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, for its final approval.

The General Secretary of the Vicharni Sabha again approached the Local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Baba Bakala, for monetary aid for the completion of the building.

70. Chaddha, Harish Chander, op. cit., P. 87.
71. The Daily Partap, Urdu, June 14, 1934, (Lahore), P. 11.
72. Unpublished Record of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, (Punjabi), File No. 6-A-42, Year 1926-32, resolution number 102, dated 25.11.1936. (hereafter referred to as File No. 6-A-42 and resolution number along with its date).
73. Ibid.
But, during the year 1937 to 1942, he received a meagre amount. With this money it was not possible to construct the building. In 1945, he also made an attempt to hand over the possession of the Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas to the Local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Baba Bakala. The latter, after accepting the proposal, referred this matter to its central body (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) at Amritsar, for its final approval. In 1951, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, wanted to know the terms from the Local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Baba Bakala, about taking over the possession of Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas, from the Vicharni Sabha. However, in 1945, a Government Primary School started functioning in the building of Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas. When this fact came to be known to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, it advised

74. In 1937, 1939, 1940 and 1942 he got rupees 200.00, 100.00, 50.00 and 25.00 respectively. For details, see File No. 6-A-42, year 1926-38, Resolution No. 123, dated 17.8.1937; File No. 6-A-42, year 1938-39, Resolution No. 90, dated 11.1.1939; File No. 6-A-42, year 1940-41, Resolution No. 70, dated 17.9.1940; File No. 6-A-42, year 1938-43, Resolution No. 845, dated 27.2.1942.


its subordinate body Baba Bakala against taking over the possession of the Gurduara Nanakgarh, Beas. 78

The Vicharni Sabha tried to suppress the Radha Soami Movement. It opposed the Radha Soamis for one decade with great enthusiasm. However, the Sabha could not gain much ground and failed to achieve its objects due to the following reasons:

There is no doubt, in the beginning, the people gave it good response but with the passage of time, on seeing its strictness and opposing nature, they hated it. People thought that the Vicharni Sabha except criticising the Radha Soamis did nothing for their welfare. Neither it provided board and lodging facilities to the visitors nor it improved the condition of the Gurduara. 79 While on the other hand, in the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas, the Radha Soamis provided all the afore-mentioned facilities to the visitors irrespective of the fact whether they were the followers of the Master or not.

It is interesting to observe that the demonstrators against the Radha Soamis often took food from the free langar of the Dera and were surprised at the affectionate behaviour of the

78. File No. 6-A-42, year 1949-52, Resolution No. 1095, dated 18.3.1951; Personal Interview with General Secretary.
79. Personal Interview with Bibi Lajo of Amritsar.
Sewadars (votarists) and the Great Master. 80

Secondly, S. Sawan Singh used to explain the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and the Radha Soamis in his discourses fearlessly. Sometimes, even the opponents were amazed at his Satsangs. For instance, once, Master Tara Singh along with his some Akali comrades attended S. Sawan Singh's Satsang at Kalu-Ki-Bar. They observed it very minutely and in the end they remarked:

"We are really surprised, how the people of hilly area are taking interest in the Bani of the Adi Granth. They listened to you peacefully with great love and devotion sitting just like statues." 81

On the other hand, the propaganda done by the Vicharni Sabha against the Radha Soamis—calling them the man worshippers, believers in ghosts, eaters of remaining victuals, etc.—was quite false. This reduced the credibility of the Vicharni Sabha among the people. Due to these reasons, some of its active members left the Sabha and joined the Radha Soami Movement. 82

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80. Kapoor, Daryai Lal., Dharti Par Swarg, P. 113.

In the 1930’s there was neither a hotel nor a restaurant to take food and the Vicharni Sabha could not arrange food for the visitors. The latter had to go to the langar of the Radha Soami for food.


82. Charan Singh., The Master Answers, (Delhi, 1966), pp. 453-54. Also see Rasala Satl Duniya, Monthly, Punjabi, November 1947, (Dera Baba Jatmal Singh, Beas), P. 79.
Finally, another factor responsible for the failure of the Vicharni Sabha was the scarcity of funds. From its very start, it was an independent organisation of some enthusiastic persons. And so it had to run its programmes on its own. Its General Secretary tried his utmost to meet the expenses by selling printed tracts, collecting donation from the villagers and making appeals to the Local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Baba Bakala, but could not be successful in his mission. On the other hand, the financial condition of the Radha Soami Movement was very strong because some of the disciples of the Great Master were wealthy and they donated large amounts. Thus, due to the scarcity of funds the Vicharni Sabha could not check the growth of the Radha Soami Movement in the Punjab.

We may sum up that the Vicharni Sabha was founded by some orthodox Sikhs in the early 1930's to oppose the Radha Soami Movement in and around Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas. It tried its best to strengthen the opposition in the region. It started to construct the Gurdwara Nanakgarh, Beas in 1932 opposite the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas, with its main

83. Personal Interview with General Secretary.

84. Kapoor, Daryai Lal., Firdause Baren Buree-Zameen, Urdu, (Delhi, 1960), P. 86.

Raja Ram, gold merchant of Rawalpindi presented one golden Karandi (trowel) and one Table (big plate) of silver to his beloved Guru in 1934 at the time of founding the Satsang Ghar No. 3.
object of opposing the Radha Soami Movement. For full one
decade the opposition remained virulent but the Sabha could not
pull on for a longer time due to financial difficulties.
Ultimately, it had to stop propaganda against the Radha Soamis
in 1945. Even the Gurdwara which the Sabha had established
could not function at Beas. It was converted into a school.

THE RADHA SOAMI AND THE NANDHARI MOVEMENTS

There are many differences among the followers of both
the movements. The Namdhariis strictly believe in Guru Gobind
Singh's Granth only. Guru Gobind Singh is the real Guru. The
converts are allowed to read Gobind Singh's Granth only and
no other book.85 They believe in Nirm or baptism in the
manner of Guru Gobind Singh.87 They strictly observe five
Ks - Kes (unshorn hair), Kanga (comb for the hair), Kachha
(shorts), Kara (iron bangle) and Kirpan (sword).88 They
also keep a woollen rosary, put on white dress and have a white
turban tied in a straight manner or Sidha Pan and by putting on
such appearance, they are easily distinguishable from the rest
of the Sikhs.89 Mechanical recitation of the Granth Sahib, use
of musical instruments, veneration of some places at village

     This refers to the Sikh Scripture, the Holy Granth,
     which was given its final shape by Guru Gobind Singh.
86. Ibid., P. 23.
87. Ibid., P. 22.
88. Ibid., P. 20; Loehlin, C.H., The Sikhs and Their Scriptures,
     (Lucknow, 1964), P. 70.
89. Bajwa, Fauja Singh., op. cit., P. 22.
Bhaini Sahib, Wami, Hawans, burning of Ghew lamps, Ardas (prayer) before departure, etc. are strictly observed by the Namdhariis.90 Besides observing these rituals, it may be mentioned that the Kukas have always taken interest in the politics and support the Indian National Congress.91

On the other hand, the Radha Soamis do not believe in any particular holy book. They show equal respect to the Adi Granth of the Sikhs, the Sarbachan of Soami Ji Maharaj, the Bible of the Christians and holy books of other religions.92 They also quote in their satsangs from the writings of the past saints irrespective of distinction of their caste and creed. Neither they believe in having any mark of distinction such as five 'Ks', dress nor they have any veneration place just like that of the Kukas, nor they perform Hawans, Ardas, etc. They avoid external rituals and ceremonies, because all these are not helpful in God-realization. The Radha Soamis have no


91. Nahar Singh, A short account of the Kukas or Namdhariis, (Delhi, n.d.), pp. 17,18; Mirikhiak, Half yearly, Punjabi, March 1978, (Ludhiana), P. 42.

temple with a particular book for worship but only a raised platform as well as a big hall where the Guru sits to deliver a discourse. They do not perform any type of kirtan (hymn singing) with the help of musical instruments because they believe that music diverts people's minds from the meaning of the hymns to the simple enjoyment of sound. They believe in listening to the discourse of their Guru and meditate in silence. Although, the Radha Soami Gurus of Beas as well as many of their Sikh adherants remain kesadhari (one who has hair on his head) yet they neither believe in pahul (baptism) nor in the militant traditions of the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. The Kesadharis and Sahajdharis (one who cuts hair) are treated alike among the Radha Soamis. Moreover, they do not believe in casteism and take no interest in politics.

Despite these differences, the Namdharis and the Radha Soamis have remained on friendly relations. However, they have some common features also. The Radha Soamis strictly observe vegetarianism. They abstain from all flesh foods including meat, fish, fowl, eggs and any food containing their essence. They consider all forms of alcoholic drinks, poison to the body, mind and the soul. The present Master of the Radha Soamis

94. Ibid., p. 127.
96. Ibid., pp. 13, 14; Khushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 127.
is of the opinion that spiritual progress is not possible so long as one is using these harmful substances. Similarly, the Namdharis are also vegetarians and do not use intoxicants like liquors, opium, etc.

Secondly, the followers of both the movements strictly believe in simple living. Among them begging is strictly prohibited, charity is recommended but professionalism associated with it is denounced. Both believe in performing simple marriages, simple birth and death ceremonies and are against idol worship and samadh worship. In addition, daily meditation early in the morning at 3 A.M. is followed by both.

Finally, both strictly believe in living Guru. The Kukas are of the belief that "any lifeless object cannot have the soul and mind without which it is impossible to impart knowledge and enlightenment to the digressed human beings." On the other

97. For details, see above, pp. 159-160.
hand, the Radha Soamis also strictly believe in living Guru and in serving him with body, mind and soul. In addition to these common features, another following reason is also responsible for friendly relations between the two movements.

It is said that Sardar Sher Singh, the grand-father of S. Sawan Singh, was the disciple of Satguru Ram Singh, the Head of Namdhari Movement. He used to visit village Bhaini (the head office of Namdharis) along with his grand-son on the occasion of Holla Mohalla and Baisakhi. Ram Singh loved this lad too much. Once, he prophesied and said to Sher Singh, "This lad (Sawan Singh) is a hero of your family and he would be a highly spiritual man in future!"

His prophecy proved true and S. Sawan Singh was assigned Guruqaddi of Beas Centre in 1903 here he remained Head of the Radha Soami Movement till 1948. On the other hand, S. Partap Singh remained the Head of the Namdhari Movement from 1906 to 1959.

The leaders of both the movements exchanged

104. See above, pp. 54-55.
visits with the feelings of love and devotion. For example, in 1940's, S. Partap Singh purchased about five hundred acre land for thirty lakhs of rupees in order to establish a Namdhari Colony, Sri Jiwau Nagar, for his followers, near village Otto, Tehsil Sirsa, District Hissar (Haryana). He invited S. Sawan Singh of Beas to attend the Akhand Path (reading of the whole Adi Granth continuously) ceremony. The latter accompanied by his sons, grand-son and some renowned Satsangis attended the function on February 16, 1947. The leaders of both the movements delivered a speech from the same stage and they were shown every respect by the audience.

Then, after the death of S. Sawan Singh (April 2, 1948), the Gurugaddi of Beas Centre was given to Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh on April 13, 1948. S. Partap Singh along with some of his Namdhari disciples, attended this succession ceremony. After the demise of Sardar Bahadur, the Gurugaddi was assigned to the present Maharaj Charan Singh Grewal on November 4, 1951. This succession ceremony was also attended by the same Head of the Namdhari movement.

106. Sarab Hind Namdhari Vidiya Jatha, Sri Satguru Partap Singh Ji Simeriti Calendar, Samvat 2027. (Sri Jiwau Nagar, Samvat 2027), p. 3.
107. Munshi Ram, Ruhani Diary, Part III, Urdu, (Delhi, 1966), P.2.
108. Ibid., P. 2.
109. Ibid., p. 224.
the Namdhari Head, S. Partap Singh (August 22, 1959), the Gurugaddi was given to the present Satguru Jagjit Singh on September 10, 1959. On this occasion, the present Master of the Radha Soamis of Beas Centre accompanied by his younger brother Captain Parshotam Singh Grewal attended this function. The Namdharis paid high respect to Maharaj Charan Singh and called him "Shri 108 Maharaj Charan Singh Ji Maharaj Radha Soamis Beas." Thus, the relations between the Radha Soami and the Namdharis movements remained cordial and friendly from 1903 to 1974. The Heads of both the movements maintained strong social bonds attending the above said functions of each other.

We may sum up that the Radha Soami Movement was disliked and opposed by the Arya Samajists and the orthodox minded Sikhs in the Punjab. The latter by forming Shiromani Radha Soami Mat Bacha Nikhet Sabha tried their best to check its spread. Particularly, the opposition remained virulent during the period of S. Sawan Singh (1903 - 1948). However, the attempts of the opponents failed to curb the rise and growth of the Radha Soami Movement because of its simple teachings and universal love without distinction. The relations of the Namdharis and the Radha Soamis have remained friendly from the very outset because of some common features in their principles and approach.