Chapter-VI
PARTAP SINGH KAIRON AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

After independence, the responsibility of newly independent country was on the shoulders of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. He played an important role in making of Indian constitution as he was the chairperson of three chief committees of constitution. Nehru’s idea of federalism changed with the time. Before the freedom of country, he wanted strong states too, however following independence he favoured the idea of strong centre. Nehru himself agreed various times that independent India will be a federal with unitary control. As a Prime Minister of the country, the responsibility of healthy relations between centre and state was upon Jawaharlal Nehru. From Nehru’s letters to Chief Minister of states it became clear that he advised them from time to time for the betterment of country. He even established various committees to form healthy relations between centre and states. This was the reason that centre-state association run smoothly under Jawaharlal Nehru and it was after Nehru’s death that above said smoothly relations faced many hurdles. The other reason of these smoothly relations were that Congress Party was the only single party at those time at both centre and state levels.

It is believed that the Prime Minister, by virtue of his being the effective head of his party, has been given the power to either appoint or remove the Chief Minister of any state. There is only one limitation though; the Prime Minister and the concerned Chief Minister must belong to the same political party. However, since the Prime Minister is the head of the party to which the Chief Minister belongs, they end up sharing a closer relationship. It is thus evident that in case the Chief Minister of state belongs to the opposition party, the Prime Minister can manipulate to remove him from his position. But Nehru had views that for the working of democracy there must be fullest consultation between both centre and state. According to Nehru, “neither the Prime Minister nor the Chief Minister can function by himself or can be any other than a first amongst equals, each of who has to share joint responsibility.”

As discussed in last chapter, Partap Singh Kairon who shared his time with Jawaharlal Nehru, always favoured and fought for the sake of unity and secularism in

320 Nehru to Sachar, 10th January, 1956, Selected Woks of Nehru (hereafter SWN ), Vol. 31, Second series, p. 281.
India. He was following Nehru’s idea of secularism and economic development which are essential for the development of any nation. So, the chapter deals with the relationship between the most famous Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru and the former Chief Minister of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon. The previous chapter discusses how Kairon was dealt with various problems, which he faced during making of modern Punjab. He adopted Nehru’s idea of secularism and worked hard to achieve this idea. While dealing with various agitations in Punjab, Kairon got full support of Nehru. The association between Nehru and Kairon is an epic example of human cooperation. Their names are inseparable in the record of India’s struggle for freedom. It was a general belief that Nehru had a soft corner for Kairon and throughout Kairon’s tenure as Chief Minister, Nehru helped him overcome various allegations of corruption charges levied on him. So, the present chapter attempts to draw a picture of the kind of relationship both the leaders shared with each other. Was Nehru using Kairon against the Sikhs? Was Kairon taking undue advantage of Nehru’s position for his own sake? Was Nehru saving Kairon from various allegations? How much Kairon was successful to implement Nehru’s idea of secularism in Punjab or merely try to please him for the sake of Chief Minister’s chair of Punjab?

Jawaharlal Nehru and Punjab

First and foremost, it is imperative to find out the kind of views Nehru held regarding Punjab. He first visited Punjab following the tragedy at the Jallianwala Bagh (1919). What Nehru saw on site completely shook him. The second time he was at Punjab was in Amritsar in December 1919, the same time the Indian National Congress held its annual session. He noticed, how the incident (Jallianwala Bagh) had inspired millions of Indians to seek freedom and that the tragedy had scarred the face of history for eternity. Although, Nehru always opposed to the demand of the Punjabi Suba by the Akali Dal, but he visited Jatio when the Akalis started morchas for the liberation of the Gurdwaras from corrupt Mahants in 1921-1925. Consequently, Nehru faced imprisonment with the Akalis in the Nabha Jail. Both the land and people of Punjab inspired Nehru so much that he demanded complete independence in the 1929 Lahore session of Congress. This was just the beginning and then Nehru visited Punjab from time to time. In the 1937 elections, Nehru once again visited Punjab on several occasions.

occasions. Moreover, he was well aware of the importance of Punjab in the context of the integrity of India as a whole. The policy of power transfer from the British to the Indian and Pakistani dominions was to be announced on June 3, 1947. Meanwhile, the Akalis were in a state of confusion over their merger with India or Pakistan. It was exactly when Nehru convinced the Akalis to accept the Mountbatten plan.\(^\text{322}\) At that time, Nehru succeeded in convincing them to align themselves with India. However, post-partition, the demand of Punjabi Suba arose and that remained a cause of tension for Nehru.

Time and again Nehru praised Punjab for its achievements. On January 16, 1959 in Ambala, Nehru acknowledged the contribution of Punjab for providing food to Kashmir, Delhi and Himachal and everyone had always appreciated its help, he added. Therefore, he found no reason to deprive Punjab from food when it needed the most. He felt confident that the ready help from the centre would ensure that there would no further difficulty in respect of food in the Punjab.\(^\text{323}\) According to Nehru, Punjab was a stout, energetic and progressive state, which was moving ahead at a fair pace under the supervision of Kairon. The importance of Punjab also lay in the fact that it was a border state. Nehru, in a letter to his Chief Ministers, wrote about the Punjabi speaking province as, “In the case of other demands for a linguistic province, any kind of agitation at this stage seems to me, completely inappropriate, since we are appointing a commission to go into the larger question all over India. In Punjab, of course, there are special considerations because it shares borders with Pakistan.”\(^\text{324}\) Thus, it was evident that Nehru paid special consideration towards Punjab, since, it was a border state and at that time there was danger of external threats. Any further division of Punjab could create trouble for the administrative control. According to a few people, Nehru did not allow the realization of the Punjabi Suba, because he knew the Sikhs would come to power. But in a press conference Nehru stated that Punjab was already a Punjabi state. That’s why he rejected the demand of Punjabi Suba. On December 31, 1960, Nehru issued a personal appeal to Sant Fateh Singh to give up his fast. In one of his most important statement, he said that the agitation lead by the Akalis for the Punjabi Suba was misguided. According to him, Punjab already had a dominant language: Punjabi and the vast majority of the people did speak the same. He further said that Punjab was

\(^{322}\) Ibid.

\(^{323}\) SWN, Vol. 46, p. 19.

one of the smaller states of India but had made great progress since partition. All this had been achieved by the hard work of the people. Nehru believed that if Punjab was further cut up, its economic progress would come to a grinding halt. He already considered Punjab to be a Punjabi Suba and Punjabi its main language (Mullik, 1972, p. 448). Nehru laid stress on cooperating of Punjab’s people with each other whether Sikhs or Hindus, for the prosperity of Punjab. Nehru had views that neither the Sikhs not the Hindus can prosper if there is conflict.\footnote{Nehru to Kairon, 24\textsuperscript{th} November, 1955, SWN, Vol. 31, pp. 155-156.}

\textbf{When Nehru praised Kairon}

The bond between the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Punjab was based on mutual reliance, faith and trust. After partition, Congress adopted the ideology of socialism and integration under the supervision of Prime Minister Nehru. And Kairon, as a loyal soldier of Congress, was working on the implementation of this ideology.

The first question comes in mind is that where did Nehru and Kairon meet each other or how Nehru noticed the great abilities of Partap Singh. The historians give different views on this question. According to Gurbhagat Singh, “Nehru brought Sardar Kairon and Sardar Anoop Singh back from America and made them realize that these young, enthusiastic and intelligent minds should contribute towards the freedom of country and its progress (Kairon, Lok Nayak Partap Singh Kairon, 2009, p. 130).” But this doesn’t seem closer to reality. It was Nehru who chose Kairon as the Chief Minister against the background of the Akali agitations in the state, because Nehru had a close brush with Kairon’s strength. In 1937’s elections campaign at Sarhali constituency, Nehru came to know about Partap Singh Kairon who was fighting elections as an Akali nominee. Meanwhile, Nehru was in favour of Baba Gurdit Singh, a great Ghadari leader. Baba Gurdit was standing against Kairon in this election in which the former represented the Congress. At that time, Nehru was a spectator to the debate table where the actual abilities of Kairon came to light. People who were present there, realized that Kairon was a good orator.\footnote{Gurinder Kairon in an interview, Chandigarh, 19\textsuperscript{th} May 2013.} Hence Kairon won this election. In 1937, when the Akalis joined the Congress Party, Kairon became its member too. That is when Nehru noticed Kairon’s qualities. After the war, Nehru appointed him as a member of the working committee of the All India Congress Committee; this gave Kairon a place of the highest
councils of the Congress Party. He held this position until 1959, even after he became the Chief Minister of Punjab (Nayyar, 1966, p. 154).

It’s a well known fact that Kairon was a very hard working party member and during Nehru’s Lahore visit, Kairon along with the other party members gave their hundred per cent for the success of Nehru’s tour. Nehru, quite moved and impressed with the arrangements, thanked Kairon for all the hard work put behind organising a large number of engagements, meetings and interviews with a variety of people, within a short and fixed period of time.\textsuperscript{327}

Nehru is often said to have remarked in private: “I Love this man”. Kairon, on his end was strongly loyal to Nehru. They were in direct contact, with nobody acting as a mediator between them (Pettigrew, 1978, p. 102). At times Nehru gave extra importance to Kairon, which shows that they were really close. For instance, Nehru, through a letter, informed Partap Singh Kairon that he wanted to include him in the new Congress Working Committee. But he asked Kairon to keep this news confidential till he (Nehru) issued any formal statement.\textsuperscript{328}

Another major evidence is Nehru’s letter to Bhim Sen Sachar in which he emphasised on the leadership skills of Sardar Partap Singh Kairon. Nehru wanted to pull out Punjab from the clutches of internal strife, groupism, nepotism and corruption at all levels to ensure rapid progress. He stated:

For this and our success in elections we need good Congress workers and the leadership of Kairon. Today, for Punjab, I rely more particularly on Partap Singh Kairon and you (Sachar). It is of utmost importance that there is a hundred per cent co-operation between the two of you and others...I attached the greatest importance to the cooperation of the public as a whole too. In this matter, naturally, the Congress needs to play the necessary part. And Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, who has played such an important part in these elections and before, will naturally be one of our strongest pillars to bring this about.\textsuperscript{329}

So, it can be deduced that Nehru considered Kairon as a source of strength for the Congress’s power in election. Consequently, Kairon proved himself indispensable in

\textsuperscript{327} Nehru to Kairon, 1\textsuperscript{st} September, 1945, SWN, Vol. 14, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{328} Nehru to Kairon, 13\textsuperscript{th} September, 1951, SWN, Vol. 16, part II, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{329} Nehru to Sachar, 26\textsuperscript{th} February, 1952, Bhim Sen Sachar’s Papers, PB-24.
the 1952 elections, in which Congress won with the majority. Although Nehru was the Prime Minister of India, he always discussed various problems of Punjab with Kairon. This belief is clarified from his letter to Sachar, in which he wrote about his conversation with Partap Singh Kairon. They chiefly talked about the Sikh situation in Punjab. When he came to Chandigarh, Nehru wanted to discuss this matter with Sachar.330 To talk about the different situations in Punjab, it can be seen from his letter that Kairon was Nehru’s first preference. From time to time, Nehru showed his faith on Kairon more than on anyone else in Punjab. According to Nehru, the reason for this was not only that Kairon was the Chief Minister of state, but his great capacity of good work.331

The relations between Nehru and Kairon were concrete. No matter how his colleagues accused Kairon over corruption charges, Nehru never lost faith in him. On the contrary, Nehru addressed a public meeting in Amritsar and described these charges as frivolous. Nehru further stated that, “I am not prepared to listen anything against the Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr. Partap Singh Kairon, whom I know better than anybody else. Kairon has been my colleague and co-worker and I know that he is a man of integrity and a messiah of the masses. He is a simple and selfless man and has been a front line soldier in the independence movement.”332 Nehru openly supported Kairon against any accusations. For example, he sternly reprimanded Parbodh Chandra for his attempts to weaken Partap Singh Kairon’s position. It was clear that Nehru would not encourage or tolerate any moves against Partap Singh.333 It was the result of Kairon’s firm policy against communalism in Punjab that compelled Nehru to state, “It would be difficult to find a bolder person in the country than the Chief Minister of Punjab.”334 Nehru evidently admired Kairon for his leadership skills. When a charge sheet was submitted against Partap Singh Kairon by rival group of Kairon under the head Probodh Chandra, Nehru in a note on charges against Partap Singh Kairon described Kairon’s personality as man of personal integrity and a man who was free from communal bias. Nehru believed that somewhat in the nature of like a vendetta was carried on against Partap Singh Kairon.335 Nehru praised Kairon by saying that:

332 TOI, 11th February, 1957.
333 Nehru to C.P.N. Singh, 8th February, 1958, SWN, Vol. 41, p. 520.
334 Ibid.
335 Charges against Partap Singh Kairon, SWN, Vol. 42, p. 437.
He is a man of people, simple in his life and devoting his great energy to the work for which he was responsible. His very virtues to some extent became his defects. His constant tours, more especially in rural areas, led to a lesser degree of time and interest being given to the normal work of administration, and his anxiety to deal with the problems on the spot and with speed led sometime to his bypassing normal administration procedures.\textsuperscript{336}

Nehru also accused Probodh Chandra and his group that the persons who brought charges against Partap Singh were not clean hands.\textsuperscript{337}

It was indeed interesting to see Nehru personally positioned to aid Partap Singh in order for him to win the confidence motion on June 5, 1958 (Sarhadi, 1970, p. 306). The defeat of the no-confidence motion became settled fact and Nehru gave a clean chit to Partap Singh in a press conference held on the June 4. He out rightly dismissed the charges of corruption terming them “foolish, frivolous and absurd” (Sarhadi, 1970, p. 307). Nehru knew that in term of patriotism, initiative and public spirit, there was none who could measure up to Partap Singh Kairon. On Kairon’s birthday, Nehru extended his warm wishes. In his greeting from Pahalgam, Kashmir, he described Kairon’s character as:

Under his guiding care Punjab has made great progress. This is certainly due to the qualities of the Punjabi people who are hard working and who have progressively fitted themselves into the industrial and mechanical age. But Kairon has guided and encouraged them and thus has helped in their progress. In some ways, Punjab is a symbol of progress for other states in India. Because of its dynamism, it has sometimes fallen into wrong courses but Sardar Partap Singh has helped Punjab to bounce back on to the right path (Singh M., 1963, p. 11).

In the eyes of Nehru, fearlessness and close contact with the people of Punjab were the chief qualities of Kairon’s character. Nehru said that the reason behind the popularity of Kairon was that he had grown out of the common masses of Punjab, and

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{337} Nehru to Tara Singh, 26\textsuperscript{th} May, 1958, SWN, vol. 42, p. 444.
thus, in every situation he was with them; hence, his popularity amongst them. Nehru appreciated Kairon because of his freedom of communal bias.

Closeness from Kairon’s side towards Nehru

If Nehru had a soft corner for Kairon, the latter too was working according to the ideology of Congress and praised Nehru’s policies for the nation. Kairon always admired Nehru through his words. When Kairon wrote an article on Jallianwala Bhag, he openly praised the policies of Nehru, which he adopted for India’s freedom. Kairon wrote as:

There is only one way to fight communalism and counter-revolution and that is to carry on our struggle for socialism, for national reconstruction, and to develop those subjective forces without which socialism and freedom become empty words. The struggle ahead is not easy, but strange as it may seem, the prophetic words which Jawaharlal Nehru uttered in the course of his presidential address at the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress, are still ringing in my ears—‘none of us can predict, when and what we can achieve. We cannot command success. But success often comes to those who dare and act: it seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of the consequences. We play for high stakes, and if we seek to achieve great things, it can only be through great dangers.’

For Nehru’s 72nd birthday, Partap Singh Kairon gave a very unique gift to him, which was a solemn pledge to promote national integration of the country. The Chief Minister revealed in a press statement that entries in the Punjab Government records, related to ones religion, would be totally omitted with effect from January 1, 1962. No denominational descriptions, such as, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Muslim etc. would be permitted in the government records, including the application forms for the Punjab Public Service Commission, the State Services Selection Board and the gradation lists. The Chief Minister also appealed to the people to take a solemn vow to uphold and follow the ideals their Prime Minister represented and worked for. At the time of the Chinese aggression, Punjab, under the supervision of Kairon, gifted Nehru 130,000 grams of gold on his birthday for the defence fund. Kairon also decided to donate

338 Kairon article on Jallianwala Bhag, Jallianwala Bhag Souvenir, p. 46.
blankets worth ten lakhs and jerseys worth one lakh to the soldiers.\textsuperscript{340} Thus, the purpose behind Kairon’s gifts was not for receiving any credit or appreciation but for the integration and safety of the nation.

After Nehru’s death, Kairon paid tribute to him by saying that Nehru was a great personality, under whose guidance India, after independence, had lifted its head with dignity. If it weren’t for the efforts of Nehru, India would have not got any cooperation from Russia, Canada or America. When India started marching towards development, Nehru left us alone.

**What Nehru did where Kairon went wrong?**

Nehru shared a very close relationship with Kairon. But this never prevented him from suggesting and having opposite views with Kairon. At times, differences sprouted up on various matters as listed below.

Nehru incessantly advised Kairon to watch over the state matters with utmost care. Whenever Kairon went wrong, Nehru was always there to advice him. Nehru, in a letter addressed to Kairon, advises him to foster friendly relations with Udam Singh Nagoke. He added that Kairon, in order to win the S.G.P.C elections, needed to first win Nagoke’s confidence. This would have an important effect on the then upcoming general elections. Nehru wrote, “It would be a good thing if you went and saw Udam Singh Nagoke before he leaves Delhi, and try to produce a sense of confidence in him.”\textsuperscript{341}

As discussed in the previous chapters, factional politics was a headache for the Congress High Command and even the interference of High Command brought no solution to this gigantic problem. In this concern, Nehru advised Kairon to pay attention to the internal rifts of the Punjab Congress, which slowly came out publically. Consequently, many Congressmen attacked one another openly. Nehru suggested that discipline needed to be maintained in the Punjab Congress Party.\textsuperscript{342} Nehru had to go rigid on Kairon whenever he got busy playing factional politics with his rivals. In this regard, he wrote a letter to Partap Singh Kairon, “It seems to me that the Punjab Government or rather the ministers have hardly any time left to attend their normal

\textsuperscript{340} Times of India, 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1962.
\textsuperscript{341} Nehru to Kairon, 29\textsuperscript{th} October, 1951, SWN, Vol. 16, part II, pp. 223-224.
\textsuperscript{342} Nehru to Kairon, SWN, Vol. 41, p. 528.
work because they are too busy playing politics… I shall wait to see if even the Prime Minister’s intervention bears any result or not.”

Nehru, in another letter, criticised Kairon’s wrong policies towards no land revenue i.e. exempting people who owned five acres or less of land from land revenue. He said, “If applied all over India, it would mean that there would be practically no land revenue in some states.” Nehru considered it a very unwise move on Kairon’s part, which would have a detrimental effect on the entire development programme.

Thus, Nehru always warned Kairon wherever he went wrong. On one instance, Nehru openly wrote to Kairon, on behalf of a report, regarding the working of the community development programme. The letter said that the progress in Punjab was not being maintained. The chief reason for this, as given in the report, was that the development commissioners were transferred with a greater frequency than expected. Thus, no one was allowed to get the grip of the subject. Whenever, Kairon did something wrong, Nehru reprimanded him in a diplomatic way. He reminded him of his previous good work. As mentioned in the above said letter, he patted Kairon’s back for Punjab’s progress and attributed it to the vitality of the people there. Once, when a deputation of peasants from Gurgaon levelled charges against Kairon that a certain normal alignment of the road had been altered as dictated by a landlord who was said to be one of Kairon’s minister’s friend. Nehru, in this regard, asked Kairon to help the poor peasant because the interest of the poor was far more important than that of the landlords. He wrote, “I shall be grateful if you will kindly look into this matter, especially to see if it is in fact true that under the new alignment the landlord’s area gets saved while that of the poor peasants gets affected.”

Some people believed that Nehru favoured Kairon when corruption allegations were made against the latter. But this cannot be true because Nehru himself was strictly against corruption. His ideas against corruption were clear from his speech at Chandigarh where Nehru stated that the evil of corruption and nepotism must be eradicated, otherwise the government would have to revise the service rules and in such a contingency some innocent and honest officials might end up suffering. The officials would have to conduct themselves in such a manner that the masses, which were the

343 Nehru to Kairon, 2nd January, 1955, SWN, Vol. 27, p. 469.
345 Nehru to Kairon, 29th July, 1958, SWN, Vol. 43, p. 335.
ultimate rulers, should have no reason to complain. Nehru struck a note of stern warning that if ministers and legislators did not present a good account of their honesty and integrity, it was natural for the public to be roused against them.²⁴⁶ Although, Nehru shared nice vibes with Kairon, still the Congress Party was his first preference. Thus, when some of the members of the Congress Party tried to align with other parties, he wrote a letter to Kairon in which he instructed him to actively ask any such members in private about their moves. He must explain such members that this was not a proper code of conduct and went against the guidelines of the party.²⁴⁷

Their friendly relation never came between the party and nation’s interest. Once when Gian Singh Rarewala and Partap Singh Kairon were busy in their factional politics, both issued press statements against each other. Following this, Nehru wrote a letter to Kairon.²⁴⁸ He openly said that calling for a police inquiry was not the right manner to treat a fellow cabinet member. He rather suggested Kairon to have a word with Rarewala on this matter.

Nehru, Kairon and the communal demands

Post-partition, when Punjab started marching towards development, the next problem that arose was the demand of Punjabi Suba by the Akali Dal as discussed in the previous chapter. Following suit, the Hindus of Punjab also started demanding the Hindi Suba. Nehru knew well that these demands were a big threat as Punjab was a border state. If this problem persisted then there might be a risk that Pakistan would try and help Sikhs to form Khalistan. It is believed that in this regard, Nehru needed a strong man and Kairon was the one with an ability to control this hazardous demand. It is significantly important to note that both Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Partap Singh Kairon were firmly against the formation of the Punjabi Suba or vivisecting Punjab in any way. Both of them repeatedly proclaimed at every stage and on all occasions that come what may, Punjab would not be partitioned any further. They kept their word as long as they lived and Punjab remained intact, undivided (Lal, Disintegration of Punjab, 1984, p. 111). According to Nehru, “India was on the eve of great development and there was a vast field for persons of enterprise and ability. For Sikhs or any group to seek special status in a province, meant really depriving themselves of the great field of India which was on the eve of advance and developing

²⁴⁸ Nehru to Kairon, 27th June, 1959, SWN, Vol. 49, p. 313.
and expanding economy.”\textsuperscript{349} Nehru was impressed with Kairon, as being a reliable and strong Sikh ally in the Congress Party to counterbalance the Akali pressure on the government. As a result, he nominated him as Chief Minister of Punjab in place of Sachar, in 1956, when the latter failed miserably against the communalism in Punjab.

In a letter addressed to Kairon, Nehru wrote, “There has been much talk of linguistic provinces and the like recently. Any attempt at provincial redistribution in the near future is likely to raise a storm in many parts of India. Hence I think that we should be rather cautious about this matter. I do not mind the matter being discussed quietly, and public opinion being gradually brought round. But any aggressive attempts and too much shouting may end up inflicting us.”\textsuperscript{350} Nehru always advised Kairon on actions that would have better outcomes. On the issue of two official languages in Punjab, he wrote a letter to Kairon, “The only question that arises is: in the administrative matters, how should the records be maintained? It would be wasteful to maintain them in both the languages and scripts. Therefore, in the Punjabi regions the records up to a certain level should be in Gurmukhi and in the Hindi regions they should be in Hindi. Apart from the maintenance of the records, both Hindi and Gurmukhi should be equally used.”\textsuperscript{351}

When the language issue was on full swing, on Kairon’s order, prominent workers of the Akali Dal and Hindu Mahasabha were arrested at several places in Punjab under the Preventive Detention Act. Simultaneously, public meetings and processions were banned in twelve districts for a period that stretched over two months. Nehru was quite happy with Kairon’s strategy and described it in his letter to the Chief Ministers, appreciating Kairon’s policies. It read: “Recently, the East Punjab Government took strong steps to prevent the extension of this agitation to their province. These steps have had good results and have been generally approved by the public there.”\textsuperscript{352} All this shows that Nehru was pretty much satisfied with Kairon’s policy on various communal demands.

As discussed previously, Kairon was the man who helped Nehru in relieving the tension of the Punjabi Suba movement. Nehru depended on Kairon for decision making

\textsuperscript{349} Nehru to Kairon, 24\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1955, SWN, Vol. 31, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{350} Nehru to Kairon, 21\textsuperscript{st} July, 1952, SWN, Vol. 19, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{351} Nehru to Kairon, 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 1956, SWN, Vol. 33, pp. 270-271.
\textsuperscript{352} Jawaharlal Nehru’s letters to Chief Ministers, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 1953, 1947-1964, Vol. 3, 1952-1954, p. 244.
on this demand of the Punjabi Suba. Nehru’s letter to N.V. Gadgil, the Governor of Punjab at that time, makes this point clearer. He wrote as:

Whatever I agreed to with Tara Singh, I did after consulting Partap Singh Kairon. In fact, that day, I telephoned Singh thrice. Naturally, I could not express the exact wording of the statement issued, but I got his agreement upon the crux of it. I am answering a question in parliament about the statement, and I am saying that, in accordance with constitutional procedure and propriety, I only acted after consulting the Chief Minister.353

Nehru was contended with Kairon’s working style. When the demand of the Punjabi Suba was on full wage, Nehru visited Punjab. The Home Ministry warned him not to visit Punjab because there was a fear of hostile demonstration against him. But with the efforts of Kairon, Nehru was welcomed by a huge gathering in Punjab. Kairon on his part was quite confident and assured the Prime Minister and the Home Minister that no trouble would take place in Punjab and not even an ounce of violence would erupt even if Sant Fateh Singh undertook the fast and died as a result of it. On the other hand, Nehru himself knew very well of Kairon’s promise and said “I knew that Partap Singh could do it and I turned and went to board the plane (Mullik, 1972, p. 446).”

Before visiting Punjab, Nehru was of the view that Punjab had proven to be a very difficult State to tackle; no ministry had been able to function there satisfactorily; the President’s rule had been imposed twice in the state since independence; and it was only Partap Singh Kairon who could run this state properly. He had done marvellously well, and of all the states, Punjab had registered the most remarkable progress (Mullik, 1972, p. 446). The Prime Minister held these views because he had an able Chief Minister in Punjab- a man of steel, quite unflinching, who was unnerved even when everything seemed to go against him. Nehru felt that Kairon was important for Punjab, so in practical politics, Nehru brought Kairon to crush communalism in Punjab.

Betterment Levy Agitation was one of the most powerful agitations led by the Communists during the tenure of Partap Singh Kairon as Chief Minister of state. He rowed the boat to secure shores. Nehru personally praised Kairon for his success against the Betterment Levy agitation and congratulated Kairon on his policy in regard to the

Nehru, further agreed with Kairon that all the Congressmen should adopt a more positive attitude and approach towards the people and explain to them their Party policies. Nehru, in a press conference, stated that Chief Minister Partap Singh Kairon would not resign during the course of the inquiry and justification was given by Nehru in the following statement, “Any change in the leadership of Punjab might hamper the progress that it is currently making. This shall only end up encouraging fissiparous and communal activities.” In Nehru’s opinion, the government and the state of Punjab was at the top-notch position in India.

Nehru stood firm against the Akalis but the Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon was more firm. He came down hard on the Akali agitation, putting thousands of protesters behind bars. Educated in America, Kairon was a man of drive and ambition, characteristics, which were somewhat lacking in the other Chief Ministers of his times. In a letter to Jayaprakash Narayan, Nehru wrote that, “Kairon’s strength in Punjab was that he represented the majority of the rural people. Those who criticized him were usually city people, whether Sikh or Hindu. During the time of Master Tara Singh’s fasting, it was extraordinary to see as to how the rural areas were not affected at all. They were busy with the Panchayati elections and other activities.” As Punjab was a border state and communalism was raising its head through agitations, which needed a great leader, Partap Singh Kairon was the only one who could tackle the problem very systematically and efficiently and thus Nehru backed and favoured Kairon in every move in this regard.

As discussed in the previous chapters, Punjab, during the tenure of Chief Minister Kairon, became a forerunner state of the Indian Union with the highest per capita income of its time. Unquestionably, the man behind this success was Partap Singh Kairon who had the full support of the centre, particularly that of Nehru.

Nehru was aware that Punjab, post-partition, had been deprived of its premier institutions of learning and research. He was also convinced that given a chance, the hard-working and enterprising Punjabis could rapidly rebuild Punjab. Though Nehru and Kairon laid the base on which Punjab prospered further. As discussed in the previous chapter, during his tenure, Kairon gave the highest priority to the upliftment of

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355 Rajya Sabha Debates, Vol. 44, 149-158.
356 Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan, 10th October, 1961, Brahmanand Papers, NMML, pp. 169.
357 The Tribune, 15th November, 2013.
the poor, backward and scheduled classes, banishing unemployment, making agriculture more viable while increasing the yields and building canals and irrigation networks, increasing literacy, women education, improving healthcare and providing adequate power, thus industrializing the state while encouraging small scale and cottage industries to prosper, especially in the villages. Kairon made primary and middle school education free and compulsory. He was responsible for erecting much of the state's basic infrastructure in terms of irrigation, electrification and roads. Punjab was the first state in the Indian Union to have all its villages electrified. All these contributions by Kairon have played a key role in the socio-economic transformation of Punjab.

Thus it’s crystal clear that Nehru fully supported Kairon in any endeavour which was for the welfare of Punjab. In Punjab, Congress Party was successful in mobilizing the political support under the leadership of Kairon. By this way, Congress was able to maintain and preserve political and social integrity while balancing constitutional order. No doubt there was serious challenge posed by communal parties. But Congress Party in Punjab under the guidance of Kairon won the trust and support of people there. While doing this, Congress Party adopted the path of secular nationalism, economic progress as well as accommodating communal demands and leadership. All this happen with the farsightedness of Kairon.

Conclusion

Kairon found himself in perfect harmony with the Prime Minister’s way of thinking and had an inborn faith in the twin ideology of secularism and socialism- the cornerstone on which the edifice of new India was being erected. Kairon’s name will be written in the history of India as the staunchest follower of Prime Minister Nehru’s ethics and ideologies; and the most faithful executor of the same. He is one of the few leaders who fully absorbed the spirit and dynamism of the Nehru Era. The Chief Minister of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon, had a very close relationship with the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru. This was chiefly because Kairon needed a mentor like Nehru in dealing with different matters of the state (Pettigrew, 1978, p. 97).

Nehru remarked that Partap Singh Kairon was a very remarkable man, a man who had worked as a common labourer and a mechanic in North America and passed his degree course with sheer grit and hard work. Consequently, he had risen up to the high position. Thus, people were unnecessarily jealous of his success and time and again tried to run him down. There was no one else who could control Punjab better.
than Kairon (Mullik, 1972, p. 454). This was the reason that Nehru had a deep faith in Kairon and his abilities. Both the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister i.e. Nehru and Kairon worked in tandem for the sake of the unity of India, one on the central level and the other on the state level. When agitation over languages was in full swing in Punjab, both the leaders brought it to a halt by cooperating with each other. In fact the Punjabi Suba came back into picture only after the demise of both the leaders. Some people allegedly believed that the reason behind Nehru’s closeness with Partap Singh Kairon was purely political as Nehru needed stability in Punjab and Kairon was the man who fulfilled his dreams. Moreover, his policies were very successful against the Punjabi Suba.

But if one dives deeper, he can find that nationalism was their outstanding contribution to the cause of Indian independence. In addition, a deep involvement in designing comprehensive models of social reconstruction and economic development to be taken up immediately after the grant of independence was one of their merits. Both shared the same dream of a classless and casteless society. Nehru and Kairon’s concern for the social and economic content of freedom led them to plan and execute bi-lateral programmes of structural change, institution-building, including remoulding of values and attitudes. Full credit goes to them for envisioning a development perspective that still has a contemporary relevance enough to cope up with a lot of current discussions on models and strategies of economic development. Both Nehru and Kairon vehemently opposed communalism in any form. They believed that religion should not be included in politics and vice-versa. They were always determined to eliminate communalism from independent India. For this they worked hard to achieve the goal of a secular state and the dream of national integration. Both were seasoned freedom fighters and after independence started working towards the dream of a modern India. One tirelessly worked towards this goal at the national level and other at the state level so that India could successfully fight against any external threats on its face. They fought to root out the deadly disease of communalism, which engulfed the entire Indian sub-continent. They, in fact, struggled hard to bring out secularism in India. Their desire was to bring build a solid foundation of unity and harmony among the people of India.