CONCLUSION

It is always difficult to evaluate a historical personality in terms of political contribution. If politics is continuation of war by other means, confrontation and opposition are inherent in it. A political personality always has opponents and supporters both. Those who get the icing on the cake always praise their benefactor, but those who have to suffer criticize that Personality's policy and ideology.

There is no denying that landlords, industrialists and moneyed people were attracted to Akali Dal not because of their conviction, but because it opened up avenues for them to get a foot hold in the political field. They came and went out as and when it suited them. S.Baldev Singh, S. Hukam Singh, S.Ujjal singh, S. Swaran Singh and S. Rarewala are only few of the leaders who ultimately joined the Congress and got high positions. This continuous exit and enter drama had earned a bad name for Akalis and people developed a feeling that Akali Dal was a mere ladder for getting high positions.

Contrary to such practice, the Sant tried to stabilize the Akali politics. The creation of Punjabi Suba gave Akalis the confidence that they could also effectively influence the political life of State. And there is no denying that it was change of nature of demand from religious to secular and linguistic basis that made creation of Punjab Suba possible. The Sant was responsible for this change without which creation of Punjabi Suba was sure to be more delayed or it might have been a dream to be achieved yet. Moreover, the Sant’s emphasis on Hindu Sikh unity which later on developed into Akali Jan Sangh alliance was instrumental in putting Akalis on saddle of power.

In the words of the Sant, Sikhism was 'Indian Socialism' and achievement of this was the political aim set before the Sant. His belief that religion and politics could not be separated from each other suited Sikh aspirations. There is no doubt, he was conservative in
some matters e.g. he opposed tooth and nail, the revision of Hindu code. But what could one expect from a statesman who had a rural background and was a Jat Sikh. The Sant had an apprehension that if more right were given to women as far as inheritance of property was concerned, it was sure to create social and family tensions in rural and uneducated society. The Sant represented the Sikh peasantry, who had got means and influence in the congenial environment created by green revolution. The Sant’s rise coincided with rise of Jat peasants who achieved prosperity due to good effects of green revolution. Before this, urban middle class, who had the privilege and environment to get education usually dominated Sikh politics. The long domination of Master Tara Singh over Sikh politics is a pointer to the fact. It was the Sant who brought Sikh peasants from villages to offices of ministries.

The Sant, no doubt was a first class patriot. He knew that Sikh religion had roots in nationalism. In fact, Gurus were themselves greatest patriots who suffered themselves than anybody else and inspired their followers to fight autocratic foreign regimes. The Sant’s capability as runner of mass movements was excellent. It was the Sant who ran Sikh agitations, set aims before Sikh Sangat and fulfilled the dream of Punjabi Suba.

The Sant’s down to earth approach impressed everyone. He had a profound Knowledge of Gurbani. His speeches were simple, in the language of masses. The Sant usually quoted from Gurbani which made him more popular. He remained a bachelor throughout his life. He had none on whom he could bestow his transparency in monetary affairs. Since the day he joined active politics, he took it as his duty, to avoid all familial ties which could hinder his transparent dealing. He had no political heritage, yet he reached at top of Akali leadership. This is possible only if a leader has virtues which make him popular in masses.
The Sant's achievements and legacy are immense. It was he, who ran mass movements for the achievement of Punjabi Suba. His emphasis on Hindu- Sikh unity resulted in Akali–Jan Sangh alliance which is in vogue even today. History is not a chapter of accidents or chance coincidences. If one assumes that Punjabi Suba was achieved because government in order to kill the demand, appointed Hukam Singh, a Sikh whose loyalty to Congress was well known, one cannot forget the question that what made the government appoint a Parliamentary committee on whose decisions the fate of Punjabi Suba depended. It was the Sant, who risked his life many times for achieving Punjabi Suba.

The only charge on the Sant Fateh Singh is that he broke his fasts before the motives of these fasts were achieved. All the episodes related to fasts have been explained earlier. One can easily see through that the Sant had no fault in these sordid chapters of Akali politics. His greatest weakness was that he believed everyone. He obeyed every time the dictates of working committee. It was not only the Sant who made decisions regarding these fasts. Moreover, no one can suspect that a leader of stature like the Sant could start fasts only as propaganda means. He had in his mind, novel examples of Mahatma Gandhi before Independence and of Dr. Ramullu in post-independence era. He was honest to his purpose.

He represented simple village folk of Punjab. His rise coincided with green revolution which had brought prosperity in Jat homes. If rebellions of belly are worse, a content and well nourished public, on the other hand, yearns for more share of political power. The Sant spent his whole life in mounding public opinion in rural areas and made people realize the urgency and need of the demand of Punjabi Suba.

For the first time, common Sikhs saw a leader, who belonged to them. In his press conferences too, he gave replies like 'I don't know',
"I will his simplicity and honesty to purpose. Gurbani was his only guide and he applied Sikh tradition to every situation. His political thought was based on the Sikh tradition of piety, service and sacrifice.

Clarity of mind was his greatest asset. He never fumbled, never went astray and was never irrelevant since the day he took up the cause of Punjabi Suba. The Sant’s first endeavour was to remove all the contradictions in the Punjabi Suba demand. During his talks with Mr. Nehru and Mr. Shastri, he showed logic unknown to common men, subtlety not found in most of the people, knowledge beyond the capacity of many.

The Sant’s throughout his career made attempts to bring unity in Akali ranks but people like Lachman Singh Gill spoiled all his plans. He even tried to compensate Jan Sangh but refused to yield when it started demanding unjust concessions in lieu of support in the legislature. He made whirlwind tours of Punjab, usually slept in his jeep with a blanket wrapped around himself. His schedule was so hectic and he labored so hard for the cause that he usually slept for three or four hours hardly.

The Sant always struggled cheerfully and courageously. It was again, a single man’s fight against the entire might of the Punjab government backed by the centre. The Sant tried to stabilize the Akalis politics throughout his life, but he succeeded only to a certain extent. He failed to precipitate the fluid Akali politics.

Akali politics, like the political situation of Punjab has been baffling and fluid. The Sant succeeded only to some extent because he lacked shrewdness and crookedness which is necessary in politics. He insisted not on torturing the enemies with violence but on showing that his demands were just. His shift from religion as basis of Punjabi Suba demand to language as basis paid. His methods can more be compared to Mr. Gandhi than to Bismarck.

Politics is the art of preventing people from taking part in the
affairs concerned with them. During such a juncture, a personality emerges and opens the flood gates for the commoners into the political arena. The Sant was such a crusader who brought common peasants in the offices of ministries. The Sant during his social services had minutely watched the inequality and injustice meted out to Punjabis. The continuous denial of Punjabi Suba demand was such a leverage which the Sant used to bring the common peasants into mainstream politics. Before his entry into politics, educated and urban Sikhs made career in politics. The common Sikh peasant used to throng in religious political and festival congregations as mere listeners who listened to urban and educated Sikh leaders. Right from the national movement against Britishers these people served as a cadre in the political parties.

The Sant was not born with a silver spoon. Being the son of a common farmer he started his life at the lowest ladder. With his purity, religious bent of mind and simplicity, he himself built a huge mass following by dint of hard work as a social servant.

It would be a great injustice to pay heed to such allegations like he was planned by communists, history illuminates reality. A perusal of his actions clearly brings but that he was a self made personality whom the course of events brought into helm of political affairs from his favourite field i.e., social service. The greatest tragedy of modern period is not the strident clamor of bad people, but the dangerous silence of good people. The continuous denial of just demands of Punjabis had reached a dangerous level. It was the Sant who give a logical twist to the Punjabi demands so as to make them palatable.

The Sant, in fact, diverted Punjabis from following violent paths to get their share. The Sant's shift from religion to language as the basis of Punjabi aspirations and demands saved the day for the country without him, the emphasis on religion as the basis of Punjabi demands was sure to take a bigoted form sooner or later.
The Sant's greatest critics would not falter to highlight some events in which he acted moderately or appeared to be yielding. But they fail to highlight the outcome that would have followed if the political obstinacy had been the favourite path of the Sant. It was easy for the Sant to become a political extremist for he had all the necessary resources. He enjoyed a huge mass bare; people thronged to hear his speeches and most importantly he had religion at his back.

But the Sant’s political sagacity and wisdom was much above such tactics. He followed non-violent methods for achievement of goals. The Sant's methods were new to the Sikh politics but there is no denying that it was the Sant who was able to materialize the dream of a Punjabi state within the Indian Union.

The Sant inspite of his stature in Sikh politics, never occupied a government office. He never longed for political pasts or cabinet berths. It is rare to find such a historical personality who had no interest in post of offices. The Sant in fact was above material gains and embodied the true meaning of word "Sant". Morality and religious purity remained the first priority for the Sant. He continued to practice spread the message of the ten Gurus despite his occupations as a politician. He was not a politician in garb of the Sant but the Sant in garb of a politician.

The Sant's mass following was noted by Akali Stalwarts. During his stay in Ferozepur jail alongwith Akali leaders humility and desire to do service was noted by likes of S. Harcharan Singh Hudara. In jail, he used to do petty jobs for his Akali brethren despite his stature as the Sant. The Sant never accumulated a rupee by using his political influence and left no huge sums to his near and dear ones. The Sant's close aid S.Jasvir Singh Sabar is still working in Sikh missionary college at Amritsar.

The preached the message of the ten Gurus far and wide. He brought many into the field of Sikhism. He was called "Punjabi
Gandhi" by editor of "Blitz" magazine Mr. Karanzia for resemblance of his political methods to that of Gandhi. He continued to baptize people till his end.

The Sant was a pioneer in sowing the seeds of Hindu-Sikh unity. He was a visionary who wanted to take this unity to new level of political partnership. The Sant’s legacy as a harbinger of Hindu-Sikh unity to immense. It was the Sant who first made the dream of Punjabi Suba a reality. Alongwith the realization of such a dream, the Sant continued to reinforce the political unity of Hindus and Sikhs. The Hindus and the Sikhs collectively as Punjabis got a state of their own where they could govern themselves and frame laws for betterment of Punjabi culture.

It was the Sant who removed the popular misconceptions about the Punjabi language. He removed the apprehension that Punjabi was a communal language related solely with the Sikhs. His speeches, articles (e.g., Punjabi Bol Firkoo Kiven ?) and didactic literature removed the doubt in the minds of national mainstream intelligence that to demand a region on basis Punjabi language does not mean demanding a state on the basis of religion. Apart from committing the mistake of placing the religion as the basis of demand for Punjabi Suba, the earlier Sikh leaders did not do much to solve the above problem.

The reasons behind the split in Akali Dal have been explored at the cost of the reputation of the Sant as if he back stabbed the Master. As already told the Master’s approach towards the basic issues was not objective. He had toed the religious line at the cost of the demand of Punjabi Suba. It seemed imminent that for the proper redressed of the Sikh grievances, change of guard was must. The hardliners had been dominating the Sikh politics which added to the consternation among the central leaders. Every cry for Sikh homeland made the central leaders cry wolf. That is why; the Sant chose to form
his own Dal.

The fasts unto death form an important part of the Sant's political contribution although the major criticism of the Sant's contribution and works springs out of this facet of the Sant's life. As explained earlier, the Sant was made a scapegoat for all the reverses. He broke fasts either on the assurances of central leaders or during the national emergencies. The fasts unto death are undertaken to protest non-violently or to prove that the protesting person is the one who has suffered. The vows are made not in the literal sense of the terms. They are taken to protest and bring the authorities to an agreement.

No doubt, the Sant broke his fasts in the literal sense of the term. But why he did so is a question that required some probing. As already explored, the reasons behind the breaking of fasts were substantial. The Sant was a patriot first. The Sant knew that apart from being a Sikh leader, he was part of a nation which is Kaleidoscope of races and linguistic groups. The Sant was not a separatist of a power hungry politician who wanted absolute sovereignty for his Sikh brethren. The Sant wanted a proper place and respect for Sikhs who had golden past but he wanted to do so within the Indian republic. He broke his fasts during such a crisis when his death might have spilled the blood of innumerable Sikh youth. The Sant wanted the authorities to redress the Sikh grievances instead of cajoling them into submission. The Sant's political opponents accused him of breaking his fasts without fulfilling the vows in the literal sense of the term. But while evaluating the Sant, one must not forget that the pressure built by those fasts was substantial in making the government yield to Sikh demands.

The Sant's transparency in financial matters was proverbial in those days. Even his critics never accused him of taking financial favours or misusing his good offices for his personal betterment. The
Sant enjoyed the status of a king maker for a long time, but he was content with his status as undisputed leader of his community. Nowhere in the annals, we find him craving for posts or offices. The Sant entered the political arena at the behest of Akali Stalwarts and when he saw the Sikh energy being channelized into wrong directions, he tried to set things right when the Sikh masses expressed confidence in him, the same Sikh leaders accused him of playing political gimmicks.

The Sant was and remained a social servant and a religious preacher till his end. He continued to do service at Gurdwaras. Although, he was formally uneducated, he led his best to open schools and colleges alongwith Gurdwaras religious and education institutes at Talwandi Sabo are a testimony to above fact. As already objectively narrated, the Sant was above the narrow concepts of nepotism and favouring family members. He remained a bachelor, and he did not favour relatives or offering them political or financial gains.

Instead of emphasizing on the communal and susceptible issues, the Sant wanted to improve the lot of his Sikh brethren. The Batala resolution which was the brainchild of the Sant clearly manifests his thought process. The Sant's efforts to bring political unity in Punjab both horizontally and vertically are worthy of the space. After the demise of Master Tara Singh, the splinter groups of Akalis too joined the Sant Dal. The merger agreement made by the Sant defined the aim of the United Akali Dal as to establish the Sikh sovereignty within the framework of Indian Constitution. The Sant had the political sagacity to bring all the warring functions under one banner.

Apart from bringing the Akalis under one banner, the Sant was able to bring two parties with altogether different ideologies i.e., Akali Dal and Jan Sangh on the same platform. The Sant performed his job commendably as the patron of Akali Dal as well as a coalition
manager. Although the coalition governments formed with his efforts did not complete their terms but it was the Sant who showed the Akali–Jan Sangh political alliance was possible. With profound knowledge of history and scriptures, the Sant remained star campaigner of the Akali Dal and its coalition parties. It was the Sant who made the Hindus and the Sikh leaders share the same dais during election campaign.

There is no doubt that these coalition governments were detrimental to the Sant’s career. Moreover, the merger of the Akali Dals gave the Sikh opponents of the Sant a revered platform to belittle him with their tactics and political gimmicks. Apart from this every coalition government during those turbulent times assumed office not with a spirit to forgive and forget but to punish the foes and reward the enemies.

It was a strange irony that the same persons who were founders of the Havan Kunds on the roof of Holy Akal Takht later formed an alliance to demolish these kinds and to punish the Sant for this act. This single episode illustrates what happened to the Sant during his last years. The Sant, however, sacrificed everything whenever the need of hour came when it came to the question of inclusion of Chandigarh in Punjab, the Sant was able to take with him all non-Congress legislators with him. He even demanded resignation from entire council of minister while putting into jeopardy the entire coalition.

An important development which occurred in the post-independence era was the fact that language was gradually identified with the religion. The Sant tried his best to stop this since the heydays of Punjabi Suba movement but his deep insight along could not make enough effect as all the political players wanted to cash the language cheque with the help of religious sentiments of the people. The linguistic question was less susceptible as compared to the religion. That is why the politicians wanted to comingle language with religion.
thus making the confusion more confounded. The ignorant masses could be easily swayed by a cocktail of language and religion than the former alone. The Sant successfully requested his followers to make people aware of the above confusion. His supporters like S. Tara Singh Layalpuri, Jathedar Shiv Singh Jhavan, and Giani Lal Singh relied on projecting the secular nature of demand in their speeches.

The Sant had to suffer atrocious libels like he was a stooge of Hindu conservatives. The Sant candidly accepted the blame that he was supported by the Hindu community. He used to take it as a compliment which he said raised his stature as a propagator of Hindu Sikh unity. The Sant with his deep insight had seen that the Punjabi suba demand and other issues problems related to Punjabis had been reduced to a microcosm that represented the conflict between two types of leadership with different political mindsets– the nationalist leadership and parochial leadership that had aspirations based on religious and regional loyalties much narrower than the former. The above argument even today seems so incomplete to such an extent that it seriously distorts what it purports to describe.

The Sant represented agriculturist class in Akali Dal. The rise of this class was result of a new economic order which emerged due to high yielding varieties of wheat brought in Punjab during the Green Revolution era which coincided with Punjabi Suba movement. Akali Dal's elite prior to the Sant failed to link the noveau rich agriculturist classes with its policies and programs. Even the rise of the Sant in politics can be more or less contributed to these farmers who wanted to change the composition and leadership of the Akali Dal in the new politico-economic situation of the province. As far as the Master was concerned, he failed to cash the manpower and resources of rich peasants. Moreover, his tactics and outlook was too a hindrance for the aspiration of the young Turks. The Master's speech and press releases can be more or less compared to the clamouring of a leader of
a religious minority struggling to presence its ethos and script. The Master led the Sikhs for almost forty years. Many a time, he had struggled with his back on the wall and emerged victorious at the end. The Sikh unity had foundered many times but the Master remained at the top of affairs as he kept Panthic entity and unity at the forefront. It would have been a viable option if the Master had entrusted the steering of community to the collective leadership of some of his prominent supporters and a team of his lieutenants which he should have prepared in his exceptionally long career.

As already told, the Sant represented the village folk of Punjab. His manners, rustic simplicity made him the beloved leader of these innumerable rural masses. The Sant’s political activities coincided with Green Revolution which had brought prosperity in Jat homes. The rebellions of the belly are worst; a content and malnourished public on the other hand yearns for more political participation. The Sant’s attention remained towards rural folk who were hitherto living unnoticed and isolated from active politics. The Sant made this rural population realize the urgency and need of the formation of Punjabi speaking state. The Sant was certainly not a rabble rouser or a demigod but impressed his followers with his simplicity and honesty to the purpose.

Before the Sant a majority of Hindus with mild outlook had discovered the demand because it was viewed as a symbol of only Sikh aspirations. But his emphasis on language instead of religion and on Hindu-Sikh unity turned the tables. The progressive forces in the whole country too welcomed the Sant with open arms. These differences in the standpoint of the Master and the Sant irked the Master. But this broader outlook saved the Sant from sliding into oblivion like some earlier Akali leaders who opposed the Master. The Akali leaders who opposed the Master in the past had either joined Congress or left Akali politics for good. But the Sant with his large
mass base was bound to take over the Dal and reshape it.

Unlike the Master the Sant had nothing to do with percentage of the Hindus or Sikhs in Punjabi Suba. The Sant had all along expressed his conviction that there would be no Punjabi Suba at the cost of the Hindu-Sikh unity. He opined that Punjabi Suba without non-Sikhs would be of little benefit even to the Sikhs. While the Master faction opposed the socialist policies of the central Congress government, the Sant projected himself as a more progressive leader while supporting nationalization of banks, insurance companies and corporations. But the Sant remained silent on the issue of land reforms due to fear of losing the support of big farmers who had much influence in their villages.

The Sant was conservative in some respects too like he opposed some clauses of Hindu Code Bill. The Sant was not in favour of giving land share to daughter. This right, he feared would upset the whole social fabric and familial ties as the lure of land was the greatest cause of disputes in villages.

The Sant’s era was full of linguistic parties I the whole country. The Sant can be compared to Dr. Ramallulu of Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Ramallulu’s sacrifice and consequent formation of Andhra Pradesh inspired other linguistic groups to raise their respective demands. The Sant too had begun to appreciate the technique of fasting. The example of Mahatma Gandhi stood tall before him. The masses responded to the Sant’s call more than expected. But mass agitations have a weakness in the form of the limited power of the popular endurance unlike the leadership leading them. Moreover, the Punjabis are known their volatile temperament which is good for the leadership until it can show some home to them. They cannot digest failure or an eventual hopelessness. At every such juncture, the Sant came out with his novel scheme of fasts which revitalized the public and pressurized the government.
As far as the close link between Sikh religion and politics was concerned, the Sant used to admit candidly that Sikhism was a way of life which naturally included politics. To those who questioned his secularism he asked, "Why do you take oath in the name of your respective religions in courtrooms, parliaments and trials? In order to justify the demands of the Sikhs, he quoted from the history, such events when the Sikhs opposed the mighty monarchs who wanted to impose a uniform code on the whole nation.

The Sant was humble and kept a low profile throughout his life. The seeds of self-abnegation were sown during his very childhood. It was this humility and low profile which later attracted attention of S.Harcharan Singh Hudiara at Ferozepur jail during anti-slogan Morcha of 1955. During Jap-Tap samagam at Anandpur Sahib, his humble inspired the Master.

Conflicts are inevitable in human society. Their emergence at any level in any period is quite common. There have been many methods adopted by human beings from time to time during the struggles. Gandhian methods emerge out as the most unique methods adopted for a struggle. The Sant adopted the fast for struggling against the unjust denial of Sikh demands.

The Sant with all the above virtues soon rose to the upper rung of the Dal, thanks to the long years of social service and the role of economic factor which was emphatic in making the change of guard possible. In Indian politics religious differences are used to mask real economic and political issues. Moreover, Indian politics fails to differentiate between communal ideology or the ideology of religious identity and religion as a belief system. This trend is sometimes broken usually by a combination of the economic and other immediate factor. Till early sixties, the Master was able to contain Sikh fundamentalist, separatists and moderators. But the incremental conformist group along with a maneuvered forced cooperation of
fundamentalists countered him by sheer political maneuvers. The Sant was epitome of this section who along with countering extremists, also contained Sikh fundamentalist by his charisma as a religious leader and a ardent social worker.

The etymological meaning of the word, the Sant is the one who has found the truth. The Sant have been part of rural Punjab life. In the past, they used to relieve the monotony of the village by carrying news and reading the sacred texts in a polished entertaining way. A British army officer in the 1920s noted that virtue in the 1920s noted that virtually every Sikh village welcomed Sant and encouraged them to stay. The Sants' potential was even recognized by the British.

Apart from the above, the Sant himself was imbied with qualities that made people trust him and regard him with great respect.

Although, no fast unto death ended in death except that of Pheruman's, but the fasts undertaken by the Sant made a great impact on the government and the role of his fasts unto death cannot be understated.

He added a new technique to the fasts i.e., self immolation, as it was done by Buddhists monks in Vietnam and by Tamils in Sri Lanka. Although he is criticized for building Havan Kunds above the Holy Akal Takht but this single action cannot wipe all the imprints left by the Sant on the sands of time.