CHAPTER – 4
SANT AS THE PRESIDENT OF AKALI DAL

While Master Tara Singh failed to utilize the resources of the cash rich peasants, his tactics and personal outlook was too a hindrance in making the demand accepted. As stated above, his speeches, declarations and press briefs can be more or less compared to harangues than the clamoring of the leader of a minority struggling to preserve its ethos and script. The new leadership represented by the Sant appreciated the technique of the opposition and the Sant began to clear the position regarding the nature of Punjabi Suba demand. The Sant from the very day he took over the reins of the movement, referred to the secular aspect of the demand. He reiterated in his speeches that he would not mind however large the Punjabi Suba was made, provided that it was based on linguistic considerations and Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was made the state language.¹

It was the Sant who shifted the basis of demand form religion to language basis thus paving the way for the acceptance of the demand. He made the demand more logical in the democratic and secular sense of the term. His concept of Punjabi Suba was more acceptable and less annoying even to the opposition. The Sant represented the simple village folk of Punjab. His rise in politics coincided with green revolution which had brought prosperity in Jat homes. The Sant fully realized that while rebellions of the belly are worst, a content and nourished public on the other hand yearns for more political participation. The Sant spent his whole time and energy in molding the opinion of the rural people which were hitherto living unnoticed and isolated from active politics. It was the Sant who made this large chunk of Punjabi speaking population realize the urgency and need of

¹ The Tribune, October 30, 1960.
the formation of a Punjabi speaking state. For the first time, the rural Sikh peasants saw a leader who belonged to them. He was not a demagogue in the real context of the term but impressed his followers with his simplicity and honesty to the purpose.

The Sant removed all the contradictions in the Punjabi Suba demand which were thought to be inherent both by the propagators and opponents of the demand. Before the Sant, the Punjabi Suba demand was treated as a symbol of Sikh demands and aspiration by the Akali stalwarts. Due to this, a majority of the Punjabi Hindus had disowned the demand.

The Sant’s disposition and stand point on Punjabi Suba was different from that of Master Tara Singh. The Sant presented before masses a new model of the Punjabi Suba demand. Instead of religion, he laid emphasis on language. Perhaps, he had noticed the weaknesses of Master Tara Singh’s demand which was labeled by central authorities as secessionist. The Sant followed a secular approach and presented it as an issue related to the whole Punjabis. Unlike the Master, he laid emphasis on the Hindu-Sikh unity and due to this he was praised by the progressive forces in the country.

The Sant’s stand was so logical that even Master Tara Singh accepted once that the Sant’s stand was more logical because it was based on language.² This popularity and stand of the Sant was bound to enrage his erstwhile benefactor Master Tara Singh who tried to control him by adopting his traditional method of dealing with dissidents i.e., isolating the Sant by expelling a number of the Sant’s leading supporters. But he gravely underestimated this time as the Sant’s popularity was based on a large class support of rural peasants than a handful of close aides. It was the broader outlook of the Sant which saved him from sliding into oblivion like some earlier Akali leaders who opposed Master Tara Singh. Such leaders had either

joined Congress or had left politics. The Sant with his large mass base was bound to take over the Akali Dal and reshape it.

The main cause of the rift between the Master faction and the Sant faction was the difference over the concept and nature of the Punjabi Suba demand. The Sant himself explained that he had felt from the very beginning that Master Tara Singh was guided more by the percentages and effectiveness of the Sikhs in such an area, but he considered that the question was purely linguistic and must be treated as such. He reiterated that he had all along expressed his conviction that there could 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. 3

Since the rift between the Master and the Sant Faction was based on differences in nature of demand and tactics of struggle, both the factions tried focused on the Sikhs rather than to any other ascriptive entity.

As already told, the change in the nature of Punjabi Suba demand came due to class nature of the conflict visible in the stands of the Akali factions. While Master Tara Singh’s faction relied more on the Sikh percentages and opposed socialistic policies of Congressmen, the Sant faction claimed to be basically more progressive. The Master faction reflected the viewpoint of big industrialists and businessman. On the other hand, the Sant faction relied more on the nationalization of banks, insurance companies and corporations. But its leaders never felt any need for land reforms with the sole intention of letting the rural rich farmers stick to the Sant faction. These economic aspects of the nature of Punjabi Suba demand are not out of context as they are the basic issues which acted as the driving force(s) in moulding the shape of the demand.

Coming back to nature and tactics of Punjabi Suba struggle, the Sant followed for good, Dr. Ramallulu of Andhra fame. The Sant rose during an era which saw the rise of linguistic demands in full swing. Dr. Ramallulu had sacrificed his life for the formation of Andhra Pradesh. After his sacrifice, the government had to accede to the demand of a new state in order to ward off the fear of protests after his death. In fact, the Sant had begun to appreciate the technique of fasting. The example of Mahatma Gandhi who usually resorted to fasts during Indian national movement stood tall before the Sant.

There is no denying that the Sant too had to undergo many ordeals during the struggle for achievement of Punjabi Suba. The masses had 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. Moreover, Punjabis are known for their volatile temperament which is good for the leadership until it can show some hope 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 pressurized the government more than ever.

Strife, criticism and opposition are inherent in politics. The day the Sant formed his separate Akali Dal at Mushkiana Sahib, the Punjabi Suba demand started undergoing the process of being acceded. The Sant strongly condemned any religious reference to the need of a Punjabi Suba apart from a linguistic one. To quote the Sant himself, "Punjabi Suba will be made only on the basis of Punjabi language". In this Suba all the Punjabis will get justice love and sympathy. The formation of Punjabi Suba will increase the prestige of Punjabis".4

The Sant brought home the point that Punjabi Suba was a

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constitutional demand of the Punjabis. The Sant declared that he had separated away from Master Tara Singh because he had maligned the Sikhs and Punjabis fighting for Punjabi Suba by linking their endeavours to utter communal motives while in reality they did not profess so.5

As far as the close link between Sikh religion and politics was concerned, the Sant candidly admitted that the Sikhism was a way of life which naturally included politics. To those who questioned his secularism, he asked, "Why do you take oath in name of religion in the courts, the parliaments and the trials?" He told them that he can too label them as communalists who unnecessarily bring religion into legislatures and courtrooms.6

In his speeches and declarations, he quoted examples from history which justified the Sikh enthusiasm about the achievement of Punjabi Suba. He reminded that in past too, the Sikhs had been in the vanguard of the resistance which opposed the repressive policies of the monarchs.7

The Sant, while bore the brunt of majority opposition, he also had to bear the blame that he was a stooge of the Hindu communalists who wanted to sabotage the Sikh interests. The Sant was candid enough to accept that he considered the cooperation of the Hindus as vital as that of the Sikhs. He declared that he happily accepted the blame that he was supported by the Hindus because as far as the Punjabi Suba was concerned, both the Hindus and the Sikhs were equal in his eyes.

The Sant successfully balanced two aspects of his personality and activities i.e., his commitment to the demand of Punjabi Suba and his allegiance to the nation. In the past, all those who raised the

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6 Kaumi Dard, September 13, 1972.
7 Sant Fateh Singh, Dhukven Uttar (edited) by Sant Chanan Singh Bhai Bagga Singh, Gurdwara Budhajorh, Ganganagar, 1971, p.56.
demand of a separate state were labeled as separatists and traitors to the national cause. While the opposition could be blamed for unnecessarily raising hue and cry over a logical demand of Punjabis, the Punjabi Suba enthusiasts were also guilty as their outlook was purely religious if that is the apt word for describing their mindset. But the Sant professed no such shibboleths.

The Sant requested his followers to not add religious colour to the demand of the Punjabi Suba. During his whirlwind tours of the rural regions of the state he emphasized on bringing home to the masses, the secular nature of the demand. Even 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.8

The Sant quoted scriptures and events from Sikh history to corroborate his view that the Sikhs were most patriotic of all communities of India as far as the sacrifice for upholding the integrity of India nation was concerned. He used to cite the life and works of Sikh warriors including Guru Gobind Singh who sacrificed everything for the national cause rising above the narrow boundaries of religion, sect or caste.9

He appreciated the technique of the opposition so much that he used the same weapon which was used by the opposition to oppose the demand, for example he used the Sikh scriptures to show that the Hindu-Sikh ties were too strong to be broken by false accusations against Sikhs. During all the national emergencies necessitated by the war or the natural calamities, he immediately suspended the movement thus proving that the nation was above all the demands or interests.

Due to this, he had to face the atrocious libels which his Sikh

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8 Address to the People in Conference at Dhunga Kalan (Hoshiarpur) October 25, 1962 in Dhukhven Uttar, p.68.
9 Sant Fateh Singh addressed at Ganganagar Conference on October 25, 1962 in Kaumi Dard.
opponents fabricated to defame him. He was called a 'communist' and 'an agent of the Congress' planted within the Sikh leadership to sabotage the Punjabi Suba demand. It was his love for the nation which inspired him to stop for the time being the agitations and his fasts unto death, at the time of a national crisis. Although, such gestures caused short term damage to his reputation as a Sikh rights crusader but on the other hand elevated his stature as a national political figure much above the contemporary Sikh leaders.

During Chinese invasion of 1962, his role was exemplary. He appealed to the Punjabis to remain united within the nation in such turbulent times. He collected funds and appealed people to exercise moderation in the use of basic commodities as this could help the nation. During Chinese aggression, he suspended the entire programme related to the Punjabi Suba movement and started only when the danger of Chinese onslaught was averted.

The newspaper "Kaumi Dard" almost daily included the Sant’s address to the soldiers fighting at the war front. In his messages to the army he quoted examples from Sikh scriptures and history emphasizing on the tradition of sacrifice among the people of nation for upholding the territorial integrity of the nation. While he suspended the movement, he also reiterated that issue of Punjabi Suba was a domestic problem and the issue would soon be revived when the Indo-China hostilities subsided. Apart from collecting monetary contributions for the war fund, he completed 101 Akhand paths for the betterment of the Indian nation at various Gurdwaras of Punjab.

Last but not the least; it was the Sant who moulded both the shape of this demand and public opinion in favour of its acceptance. He felt the pulse of his time and harmonized the demand with it.

10 Sant Fateh Singh, "Desh di Rakhio Lai dat Jao" in Fabven Uttar, Sant Chanan Singh Bhai Bagga Singh, Gurdwara Budhjorh, Ganganagar, p.73.
11 Kaumi Dard, December 5, 1962.
While he painted it in tri-coloured shades, he never left the gist of the aspirations of his people. The demand, which was a sort of phobia to those who believed in status quo and feared its ramifications, became digestible to the same people with the efforts of the Sant. Before the Sant’s arrival on the scene, the demand was struck in political quagmire of percentages. But the Sant was wise enough to rise above the narrow considerations of percentages and sectarian bias. The same lobby which opposed tooth and An indepth perusal of the Sant’s activities during the Punjabi Suba struggle make it crystal clear that he was the first Sikh conman who replanned the decades old Sikh strategies which were the real cause of denial of the Punjabi Suba demand and maligned the reputation of the people of the region as separatists. He was fully responsible for ushering a new era of trust between the Punjabis and the Central Government. His insistence on various confidence building measures especially that of postponement of movements at the time of a national crisis led to the image building of Punjabis.

The research aims at not merely eulogizing the works of the Sant. His contribution is too immense to be wiped off the scene. Every right move or step that led to the acceptance of the demand was taken by the Sant. Although, the demand for Punjabi Suba was in full swing before the Sant fully took the reins of the movement, it was nowhere near its culmination. It was the Sant who brought the demand to its logical end by reshaping it to fit it into the national superstructure. It was the Sant’s acumen and political expertise which appreciated the technique of fasting to achieve the goal. Although he had to leave such fast unto death without fulfilling his vow, yet the contribution of these tactics and the pressure which these fasts built on the authorities cannot be neglected.

The Sant’s efforts led to evolution of a synthesis (demand on basis of language) out of struggle between thesis (demand based on
communal basis) and antithesis (its opposition). All the process that necessitated the change of basis form from communal to linguistic was necessitated by the Sant. He put all this work and reputation at stake several times for the sake of achievement of Punjabi Suba. His opponents accused him of stabbing Master Tara Singh in back. But the accusation is utterly baseless. Master Tara Singh’s approach towards the demand was highly biased because of his communal perspective. Under his aegis, the demand of Punjabi Suba flourished as far as mass base was concerned. No doubt, he was a pioneer to discover this panacea (Punjabi Suba) for all the sufferings of the Sikhs but he planned and visualized only for Sikhs. This was highly detrimental to the probability of the demand being accepted by the Congress stalwarts at centre. His approach and way of dealing with the issue gave the authorities an excuse for their denial and they followed dilatory tactics. During the time the Sant worked under the Master’s leadership, he had recognized the lacunae in Master Tara Singh’s approach. This was the biggest factor in creating rift between the Sant and the Master. The radical change that the Sant brought in the Punjabi Suba demand and the tactics of agitation proved that the Sant’s separation from the Master Akali Dal was not mere clash of ego or lust for power. In fact, the Sant’s realization of the weaknesses of Master Tara Singh’s stand had goaded him to part ways with the Master.

In a nutshell, the Punjabi Suba was a symbol of Sikh aspirations and longing for sovereignty in its initial stages. But the central authorities’ attitude forced the new leadership represented by the Sant to find new avenues for the fulfillment of the demand. As far as the role of language is concerned, there is a systematic relationship between the grammatical categories of the language a person speaks
and the way he sees the world and behaves in it.\textsuperscript{12}

Before tracing the growth of Akali Dal under the Sant’s leadership from the day the Sant founded his separate Akali Dal at Gurdwara Mushkiana Sahib, it would be worth the space to analyze the organization constitutional and institutional strategies of the Dal. So far as the organization of the Akali Dal is concerned, it is hierarchical and pyramidal in nature. At the base of this superstructure are the Akali Jathas at village and towns led by respective Jathedars. There is no strict rule about the number of members which a Jatha comprises but it should have a minimum of ten members. Each Jatha has a Jathedar, two deputy Jathedars, two general secretaries, a secretary and a treasurer. Further up the hierarchy are circle jathedars, zila jathedars, and Suba (provincial) committee of the Dal. The headquarters of the highest rung of the party as well as the lower rungs are situated in the Gurdwaras. The head office of the Dal is at Sri Harmander Sahib which is called “the Mecca of the Sikhs” while the venue of lower rung meetings is at the mofussil Gurdwaras. This is due not only to the Akali doctrine of inseparability of the religion and politics but also because normally places of worship become privileged sanctuaries against the police force which the authorities use whenever the Dal launches an agitation.

As far as constitutional strategy is concerned, it involves use of methods that are within the framework of the existing constitutionally granted rights. In the past, the Dal held mass rallies and long disciplined marches to show the public support behind its demands. The Dal also participated in parliamentary activities its use the legislature and parliament as a forum and also to gain a share in the political power. The Dal also used the infiltration strategy by merging

with the Congress party in order to work for achievement of objectives of the Dal.

The formation of a separate Akali Dal was not enough for the Sant as far as tussle with the Master was concerned. He had to dislodge the Master from his favorite arena, i.e., the Gurdwaras if he was to fully project himself as the undisputed leader of the Sikh community. The formation of a separate Dal was interpreted as a move on the part of the Jat Sikhs in the rural areas of Punjab to overthrow the leadership of Master Tara Singh, allegedly representing non-Jat Sikhs of the urban areas.

Sant Fateh Singh faced the challenge of Master Tara group very boldly and lost no time in intensifying his efforts for the realisation of a Punjabi suba. The foremost necessity before the Sant was to control the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee which had been under the virtual control of the Master. Besides having vast resources, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee is the supreme body of the Sikh community. It is unique among the religious institutions of the world as its elections are held quinquennially and its members are elected by all the adult Sikhs who enroll themselves as voters. The membership of this committee have been used as a springboard by many to rise and shine in the political affairs of Punjab. Infact, the political group controlling the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had always been recognized, to be the party steering Sikh politics.

The Mullanpur convention held by the Sant group led to the formation of two blocs within Akali Dal who started making preparation for a final showdown. On August 18, 1962, Lachman Singh Gill declared that they would be holding a separate meeting of the general body of the Dal in Guru Ram Das Sarai under presidentialship of Sant Fateh Singh. This declaration provoked S. Kirpal

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Singh Chakksherevala, the then president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to announce that he would not allow this group to hold a separate meeting. He sought the help of police superintendent to stop this. The police arrested the Sant alongwith others. The police entered Guru Ram Das Sarai which created resentment among the public against Master Tara Singh.

Feeling the need of the hour, the Sant sent a requisition asking the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to call the general meeting of the house before 6\textsuperscript{th} of September. The general meeting of the house was summoned for 2\textsuperscript{nd} September, 1962 but before the meeting, government arrested four members who were supporters of Master Tara Singh group. The Sant decided on a no-confidence motion in Master Tara Singh's nominee. However, S.Kirpal Singh Chaksherevala, the president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, in a statement to press said that the requisition suffered from legal infirmities and as such could be disregarded. As it was natural, Chief Minister S. Partap Singh Kairon too started opposing Master Tara Singh which was beneficial for the Sant group. The government interference increased to such an extent that a deputation of some Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee members who were loyal to Master Tara Singh even met the Governor on 18\textsuperscript{th} September, 1962 complaining of interference of the Government machinery in internal affairs.\textsuperscript{15}

Apart from the Kairon government, the Sant group was lucky because odds were in its favour. Especially the Hindu press was more vocal in favour of the Sant because he was known for his secular views and speeches. The Sant was able to take full advantage of the situation to channelize and consolidate the forces that were arrayed against Master Tara Singh. Before the pre-scheduled meeting of 2\textsuperscript{nd}

\textsuperscript{14} The Tribune, 17 August, 1962.
\textsuperscript{15} The Tribune, 19 September, 1962.
September, 1962, the government arrested four members who were supporters of Master Tara Singh Group. As a result, no-confidence motion against President of the Master group was carried by 76 to 72 votes when six members owing allegiance to Congress also supported the Sant group's no-confidence motion. Consequently, Sant Chanan Singh, a protégé of the Sant was made President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The Master group endeavoured ceaselessly against the Sant but in the summer of 1963, its last attempt to oust the supporters of the Sant from Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee failed. The editorial of the Indian Express on 10 July, 1963 called this last effort of the Master as "Masterji's Waterloo". The Sant had got the clear mandate of the Sikh sangat. Superficially it seemed a mere change of guard at the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee office, but it had great ramifications which can be felt by studying the later course of events.

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was now in hands of the Sant. Thanks to the simmering discontent against the Master, governmental support and the much vocal Hindu pressmen who vied with each other in praising the Sant and criticizing the Master, while hoping at the same time that the rise of the Sant would give Punjabi Suba issue a decent burial. The rift between the Dals coincided with another phenomenon which was in vogue since 1950s. The split of Akali Dal in 1962 facilitated the concentration of power in the hands of those speaking in the name of the rural Jat peasantry in the organization. The data below clearly indicates the decreasing share of non-Jat members in the government machinery (cabinet)

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18 In 1950, when Master Tara Singh was president of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the non-Jat peasants controlled 53.6 percent of the key positions in this institution.
The rise of the Sant, a Jat peasant was in harmony with the above phenomenon. The climax of the above phenomenon occurred when the Sant founded a separate Akali Dal in 1962 pitted against the old Akali Dal which stood discredited by the failure of its leadership to deliver. The new Dal had not only an outer look to boast and inspire but also a new programme for the principal demand of the Sikhs i.e., Punjabi Suba. It was more vastly represented by the village folks as compared to the Master’s Dal. It was cleverer by far in that it was able to drive a wedge between the Hindu opponents of a Punjab speaking state by the simple strategy of demanding not merely a Punjabi Suba but also the state of Haryana too in one and same breath. This clever stratagem isolated Punjabi speaking Hindus from Haryanvis. Before the Sant could plan anything further in the direction of achievement of Punjabi Suba, tension on Indo-China border increased. As always the Akalis vied with each other in showing their patriotism. It would be worth the space to highlight the Sikh magnanimity towards their motherland whenever it came under the dark shadow of foreign invasion. The Sikhs were, to show that their country come before their demand. They vied with each other in supporting the same central government which had been dillydallying in recognizing their much espoused cause.

Due to the social welfare activities done in Ganganagar district

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19 Harnik Deol, Religion and Nationalism in India, Routledge, London, 2000
by the Sant during his earlier years at Budhajorh, it was the only non-Punjabi district to exceed the Punjab districts in contributing in National Defence Fund. A contribution in gold was Ganganagar which was home to Sikh refugees.\textsuperscript{20} The Sant even constituted a Defence Council to mobilize the Sikh community for defence efforts. On 7\textsuperscript{th} February, the Sant presented a cheque of 50,000 rupees on behalf of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to Mr. Nehru as a contribution to National Defence Fund.\textsuperscript{21} Sikhs, the backbone of the Indian Army fought bravely and were special target of Chinese atrocities perpetrated in gruesome manner during the hostilities. In the words of B.N. Malik, then Director of Intelligence Bureau, "Many of them (Sikhs) were tied and then dragged and their brains were battered".\textsuperscript{22} The Sant through his speeches, press briefings and tours tried to boost morale of the Sikh fighting at the front and their families. The Sant daily showered praise for the valiant Sikh soldiers and their families in his speeches and press briefings.\textsuperscript{23}

In the words of Edmund Burke, the famous English statesman, a faction is "a mean and interested struggle for place and emoluments" within a parent political organization.\textsuperscript{24} But in the Akali vignette, both the groups shed their mutual rivalries whenever a national emergency came. Like the "Wet" and "Dry" groups in the Mrs. Thatcher's conservative party of England, they continued to work in contributing and consolidating of national frontiers. Both the Akali groups elected Maharaja Yadvindra Singh as the Maha Jathedar of the Sikhs in directing and coordinating the Punjabi efforts during the national crisis. The meeting held on 24 December, 1962 at Moti Bagh

\textsuperscript{21} The Tribune, 8 February, 1962.
\textsuperscript{22} B.N. Malik, \textit{My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal}, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1971, p.413.
\textsuperscript{23} Kaumi Dard, 21 February, 1962.
\textsuperscript{24} Edmund Burke, \textit{The Works of Edmund Burke-I}, George Bell and Sons, London, 1900, p.376.
Palace was attended by both the Sant and the Master. A picture of the hour shows both of them sitting nearby while discussing the ways in contributing for the nation.  

Speaking at a conference on 16 February, 1963, the Sant said, "Our immediate objective is to drive out the Chinese. The movement for Punjabi Suba has been slowed down as it is a domestic problem. This demand will not be pressed during emergency; we will again take up the issue after the Chinese are driven out."  

Nowhere in the vast expanse of the sources related to the contemporary period, we find even a slight inclinations of the Punjabis taking advantage of the situation at the borders. The whole Akali rank and file stood beside the country in collecting and contributing towards the war expenses. Punjab contributed 2 crores to the National Defence Fund apart from contributing a present of gold, double the weight of Mr. Nehru. But more communautaire sections like Jan Sangh toed the same old line. The working committee of Punjab and Himachal Jan Sangh suggested the abolition of state legislature and substituting it by a unitary form of government at center in its meeting held at Chandigarh on March 11, 1963.  

However, it would not be objective to blame the whole Jan Sangh party for following a communal agenda on its own. The events of past and a brief perusal of the contemporary sources show that even some of the Sikh stalwarts, knew that RSS leaders feared the much anticipated Sikh domination in the Sikh state which they alleged, as being demanded under garb of a Punjabi speaking area. In November 1960, Rashtrya Swayam Sewak Sangh Chief M.S. Gowalkar advised Hindus of Punjab to accept Punjabi as their mother  

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28 *Gian Singh Rarewala Papers*, File no. 38, National Achieves of India, New Delhi.
tongue. The Punjab Jan Sangh publically repudiated him. 29 As already
told the Sant during such a national emergency made whirlwind
tours, gave speeches and issued press statements inspiring "jawans"
fighting at the front and their families. The Sant’s speeches and
statements issued especially in the newspaper "Kaumi Dard" are full
of inspiration and hope, while the whole country was aghast with
reverses suffered by the Indian army at the hands of Chinese; the
Sant continued to give hope to his countrymen. He showed examples
of Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phoola
Singh to the soldiers fighting at front. 30

The Sant inspired the Sikh soldiers fighting at the front to
continue their struggle while reciting Gurbani and to fight in the name
of Guru Gobind Singh as this fight was thrust upon them as it had
been th8rust upon their Holy Father. 31

Apart from motivating the Sikh soldiers, the Sant clearly stated
in his speeches that the country was first and above everything else.
He dubbed the Punjabi Suba issue as a domestic problem. When
some sections raised doubts about the Punjabi Suba demand having
withered away under the new leadership of the Sant, the Sant clearly
stated in the press that the struggle for Punjabi suba would be ensued
as soon as the national emergency is gone. 32

The Sikh Sangat under the influence of the Sant started
"Akhand Path" at many places for "Chardi Kalan" of the Indian Army,
viz., 101 Akhand paths at Gurdwara Bulla Majra where the Sant
himself read the Holy Scriptures for the betterment of Indian Army. 33

Meanwhile, the government became apprehensive of the Sant’s
efforts and banned the conferences, rallies under the Article 144. It
was strange that the government should hinder the efforts of such a

29 The Times of India, 9 November, 1960.
30 Kaumi Dard, 4 November, 1962.
31 Kaumi Dard, 7 November, 1962.
32 Kaumi Dard, 12 November, 1962.
33 Kaumi Dard, 7 December, 1962.
man who was working tirelessly for arousing public and youth to take part in defending their own country. The Sant showed his resentment in the press but nowhere broke the law during such a national emergency. He vehemently criticized the actions of a Magistrate at Ambala who forcibly removed the kirpans of baptized Sikhs.34

Apart from the governmental machinery, the Master group left no stone unturned in floating rumours about the Sant. A particular rumour was floated in Sikh Sangat that the Sant was going to appoint the Maharaja of Patiala, the Maha Jathedar of the Sikhs. The Sant vehemently denied this allegation at conferences and press briefings.35 The Sant throughout his political innings, tried his best to build his image. He knew that character was foremost in the eyes of the Sikh Sangat because he was himself watching the decline of the Master who was temperamental and was now disliked by the Sangat for his hot headedness and monopolistic political practices. The Sant in many of his speeches, press briefings and counter allegations against the splinter Akali groups; called himself dust lying at the feet of Sikh Sangat. He always declared that he was grateful to Sikh Sangat for the love and respect showed to him. The hotheadedness which was typical of the Master was missing in the Sant.36

Before proceeding with the analysis of the transition that occurred from the Master’s monopolistic control to the Sant’s leadership it would be worth the space to compare the Akali tactics to the "national rulers" of opposition and agitation that had been formed during the national struggle. For the national elite, particularly Mr. Nehru, communalism meant the mixture of religion and politics and secularism meant the separation of religion and politics. After independence, the Indian state under Nehru's directions used its means of propaganda to propagate the ideas of secularism and to

34 Kaumi Dard, 23 December, 1962.
35 Kaumi Dard, 26 December, 1962.
36 Kaumi Dard, 6 December, 1962.
criticize this "communalism". The advocates of this argument would say, "Pakistan must not be repeated". The Indian state would tolerate no avert connections between religion and politics.

These rules of the national game were particularly chafing for the Sikhs, who repeated the words "Raj Karega Khalsa". The Sikhs had further reasons for the consternation in their ranks. It seemed to them that the equal treatment for all religions was a hypocritical eyewash especially when some not headed Hindu communal groups confident of their numerical majority were setting off a "wave of communalism" against Sikhs in "official and public life".\footnote{A.S.Sarhadi, \textit{Punjabi Saba}, p.158.} There groups declared that Sikhism was an offshoot of Hinduism and must be absorbed by it.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p.160.}

As far as Punjab is concerned, the imbroglio here has its roots in the close connection between religion and language. Quite astonishingly, the people in Punjab may speak one language in their daily affairs, use another for writing and official purposes and have their religious scriptures in a third. That is why the majority of the western scholars have failed to comprehend the linguistic complexities which many Indian children take for granted. "By the age of ten" writes a scholar who was born in 1911, "I was learning English and Persian, my curriculum was in Urdu and I spoke Punjabi at home and outside".\footnote{Parkash Tandon, \textit{Punjabi Century: 1957-1947}, New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, 1961, p.55.}

Upto the beginning of nineteenth century, the Muslims, the Hindus, and the Sikhs all spoke Punjabi in daily life, but only Sikhs wrote it. The Arabic script of Persian was the language of official business and most of the written communication. The Sikhs, however, wrote in Punjabi, using the Gurmukhi script of their sacred book, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. After the British annexation of Punjab in 1849, people of various religions began to write Punjabi in this Arabic
script which had become familiar through schools and offices. Quite astonishingly there were abundant cases of wives of scholars who could not communicate with their husbands when they were away from each other as they could only write in Hindi and their husbands only in Urdu or English. Moreover, the devoted Sikhs read Guru Granth Sahib which was written in Gurmukhi script and understood it with the help of Punjabi language.

In this sense, the Sikhs comprised of the majority of the people who had an emotional attachment to the written Punjabi language. Quite astonishingly, although, virtually everyone in Punjab in 1947 spoke Punjabi, only few chose to write it. Even if, they did so, they used the Arabic script already familiar to them for having learning Urdu at the school. Only the Sikhs wrote Punjabi in Gurmukhi script. As a matter of fact, to disparage and devalue Punjabi was to ridicule Sikhs and undermine their religion. Examples of such denigration were easy to find. For instance, the Punjab University Senate in June 1949, rejected a proposal to introduce Punjabi as a language of instruction. An essential part of the national caveat "Thou shall not mix religion and politics" and the complexity of Punjab's linguistic problems forced the Sikhs to identify more and more closely with the Punjabi language in the 1940s and 1950s.

Meanwhile the militant Hindu organizations responded to such demands by organizing a campaign to induce all Hindus in Punjab to register Hindi and not Punjabi as their mother tongue during the Census of 1951. As already narrated, the demand for a Punjabi Suba came to be known as the demand for a Sikh majority state. "The shift of Punjabi speaking Hindus" Paul Brass writes, "was more dramatic than any linguistic choice previously made in Punjabi" because it was

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40 Ibid, p.67.
an overt and deliberate political act. The national ethical fabric that
developed after the partition made religion an illegitimate basis for
political demands. Even a hardliner like Master Tara Singh felt the
need to slightly mould his line of expression and often spoke
ambiguously about a state in which Punjabi would be able to develop
and flower.

Coming back to the narrative, the cleavage between both the
Akali Dals had reached a point of no return. The efforts made by
Justice Gurnam Singh in uniting the Dals went in vain. Gian
Bhupinder Singh, once a Granthi gradually climbed to the chair of the
President of the Master Dal. He assumed office after the resignation of
Achar Singh who resigned because he was reported to have taken
stand for the Panthic unity. The sympathizers of the Sikh Panth
tried their best to unite both the Dals but the Sant criticized and
blamed Master Tara Singh for sabotaging the efforts of unification of
both the Dals.

The immediate beneficiary of the rift was the Congress party
who was victorious in the Patti by-election due to the fielding of
separate candidates by both the Dals. The ground beneath the Master
was clearly slipping away as his nominee polled only 2745 votes as
compared to 22442 votes by the Sant's nominee.

The appointment and decisions of Dass commission resulted in
the departure of Mr. Kairon from the political scene of Punjab.
Although it would not be out of context to probe into the causes of the
appointment of such a commission of enquiry, but its effects are too
effectual to be ignored. Mr. Kairon was in the vanguard of the
Congress Party in Punjab. He had been opposing all Sikh demands for
the last eight years with an iron hand whatsoever the consequences. It

42 P.R. Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India, Cambridge University Press, 1974,
   pp.27-47.
was Mr. Kairon who himself alone encountered the Sikh opposition and agitations against the denial of Sikh demand. The foremost of which was a Punjabi Suba. He was held responsible for the innumerable Sikh sacrifices. The cause of his motivation can't be clearly assessed but superficially he was a sort of "Nehru Secularist". Due to his overzealous secularist mindset, he spared no efforts in eliminating the Sikh desire for a separate entity on the basis of their religious ideology. Mr. Kairon's exit left a sort of vacuum in the Punjab politics which no Congressmen could fill. While the Master group was trying to strive for supremacy, the Sant continued to meet the central leaders for bringing home to them the point of the futility of opposing the demand of Punjabi Suba. He continued to unfold his mind before the national press in which he assured that Punjab would remain the part and parcel of the Indian republic.

The restart of the efforts of the Sant for achievement of Punjabi Suba can be traced to Sant Akali Dal conference on 20 September 1964 near Faridkot where he criticized Ramkishan (Mr. Kairon's successor) administration which gave a spurt to the visibly dead Punjabi Suba movement. The upcoming Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee elections were sure to further spoil the efforts of unification of both the Dals and situation had become tense. Therefore, the Sant with the help of some well meaning persons held a Panthic conference at Patiala on 19 November, 1964 under the presidency of Sant Gurmukh Singh to avoid the internecine warfare that was imminent in the forth coming Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee elections. Gian Singh Rarewala was appointed as a convener of the committee with Sant Gurmukh Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh, Teja Singh and Ajit Singh Sarhadi.45

At this junction too, the modest approach of the Sant was met by the Master group with indifference and rancor. In the words of A.S.

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45 Gian Singh Rarewala, Papers File No. 37, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Sarhadi who was member of the aforesaid committee "we (members of the committee) found that the Sant was sure of his victory in the upcoming Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee elections but he was all prepared to agree to any reasonable proposition for the Panthic unity even to the extent of having a fresh recruitment of the Akal Dal general body which would have elected a new executive and a leader. But the Master group was insistent that the original Akali Dal from which the Sant had defected must be recognized first and thereafter, the recruitment done.  

The aforesaid proposition meant that the Sant should publically humiliate himself by backing from the stand he had taken and quite naturally the Sant refused to do so. The elections were held and the results declared on 18 January, 1965. The Sant group bagged twice the seats won by the Master group i.e., ninety as compared to 45. In his press briefing the Sant attributed his victory to the service of the Gurdwaras he had undertaken in his life but nowhere mentioned the Punjabi Suba demand. This victory was not a victory of an Akali faction over other faction involving only petty politics but the victory of a more logical, moderate and secular politics over the lesser one. 

Master Tara Singh, like he always did after any political setback, went to Salogra, H.P. for a six months vacation or self imposed exile. Although, the field was open for the Sant to embark upon the journey for achievement of Punjabi Suba, but he did not further arouse the already much hyped public sentiment in favour of Punjabi Suba demand for a long time only. The Sant in his own way was continuing his efforts for the Panthic unity. In a Panthic convention held on 29 April, 1965, he spoke about the need for a Panthic unity. He even felt sorry before the Sikh Sangat saying he was sorry if someone was hurt by his speeches or his acts in the past. He

46 A.S. Sarhadi, Punjabi Suba, p.400.
requested the rival Akali faction and the press to remove bitterness prevailing on the stages and in the press statements. He strongly condoned the martyrdom of Kaka Inderjit Singh who died during the earlier phase of Punjabi Suba agitation.\textsuperscript{49}

The Master group watched the slow pace of the Punjabi Suba campaign and tried to cash it. The Master tried to remove the feeling permeating among the Sikh masses that the Sikh leadership was failing them. A conference was held at Ludhiana in the name of the distinguished Sikh general, Hari Singh Nalwa. A resolution was passed which though emanated from the small Sikh community, yet had significance for the intelligensia of the country and for the world at large. The resolution dealt with issues of militant Hinduism and the separate identity of the Sikh nation. The resolution clearly demanded self-determined political status for the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{50}

Master Tara Singh himself returned with the demand for self-determined status for the Sikhs, a favorable political environment was created for the return of Master Tara Singh from his self imposed exile on 24 July, 1965.\textsuperscript{51} He held a press conference at a five star hotel in Delhi in which he elaborated his thesis about the nature of self-determined status in the presence of Khushwant Singh who acted as an interpreter of the Master.\textsuperscript{52} Khushwant Singh’s presence in the press conference of the Master raised many eyebrows and he had to justify his support for self-determined status for the Sikhs in an article.\textsuperscript{53}

There is no doubt that the Master’s new programme and the support of Sikh hardliners gave a boost to the Master’s political leverage. But the demand of self determined political status for the Sikhs gave an excuse for the Hindu communalists to cry wolf. Apart

\textsuperscript{49} Sant Fateh Singh, ‘Panthic Ekta Pakki Karo’ in Charbi de deewe, Sant Chanan Singh Bhai Bagga Singh, Budhajorh, Ganganagar, p.82.
\textsuperscript{50} Sikh Review, XIII/14, May 1965, p.55.
\textsuperscript{51} The Tribune, 25 July, 1965.
\textsuperscript{52} Sikh Review, XIII/14, Sept 1965, p.56.
from the Hindu hardliners, the mainstream press and the leaders of national stature too became apprehensive of the hot headed Master Tara Singh and his supporters. This attitude of the national mainstream was highly beneficial for the Sant who provided a mild alternative to the national government in the form of a Punjabi Suba based on language. This acted as a pressure valve for the Sikh frustrations and a diversion from falling into the trap of extremism and violence. Lachman Singh Gill, the deputy leader of opposition in State legislature called the Master's stand as a betrayal to the country.54

But the ramifications of the Master's stand were immense. On the one hand, it shifted the support of the majority of the Hindus in favour of the Sant because he was the only viable option available while on the other hand, it rejuvenated the Sant Akali Dal which arose from the slumber as far as Punjabi Suba demand was concerned. While the Hindu press, Hindu leaders and the moderate Sikhs criticized the Master for his separatist tendencies, the Sant was tactical enough to thrust all his criticism on the central government for being responsible for such a mess which he declared was result of constant denial and dejection of Sikh and Punjabi demands.55

The Sant Akali Dal adopted a resolution saying "A number of states have already been formed on linguistic basis including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala and even Nagaland. The failure to form Punjabi Suba on the same principle is clear discrimination against the people of Punjab.56 The working committee meeting which passed the resolution was attended by the JathedarS from all the districts including several invitees and the advisor to the Sant Akali Dal. The meeting also authorized the Sant to meet the Prime Minister on the same lines. It was obvious that a serious move was intended in case of

54 The Tribune, 4 August, 1965.
the meeting with the Prime Minister failed.

The pressure of national leadership encouraged the government to at least open the dialogue with the Sant. The Hindu lobby gathered around the Sant to let down the Master. With the motive of boosting the Sant’s public image, the Prime Minister invited Sant Fateh Singh for talks on Punjabi Suba on 7 August, 1965.

A brief descriptive analysis of these talks would be worth the space. On the very first day of the talks, which started at 7:30 p.m., the Sant asserted that Sikhs wanted a Punjabi Suba because their religion was in jeopardy. In the words of the Sant, "Our religion is not safe in India". The Sant raised questions about the deliberate maltreatment to Punjabi language and stalling its growth. He objected to the dislodging of Punjabi language from offices at the district level. He listed all the incidents where Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikhs were insulted.

A close perusal of the Sant-Sashtri talks clearly brings out the strategy adopted by the Prime Minister and Gulzari Lal Nanda. Both the statesmen tried to widen the rift between the Sant and the Master. To quote Mr. Nanda, "We are not all afraid of Master Tara Singh’s threats. But we sincerely respect you. Mr. Shastri further added, “If the Master dares to create trouble we will crush him in five minutes. But we appeal to you to understand our problems”.57 But the Sant was not a simpleton and he silenced both the statesmen by saying that if Masterji can be crushed in five minutes, he could also be crushed in seven minutes. The above meeting ended on 8 August, with as much mistrust prevailing on both sides as was before the meeting. The press note prepared by Prime Minister’s secretariat and handed over as a version of the talks was altogether rejected by the

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Sant.\textsuperscript{58}

The Sant refused to accept that the talks were successful because there was nothing substantial granted and the primary demand of Punjabi Suba was not conceded.\textsuperscript{59} The working committee of the Sant Akali Dal also rejected the version (note) of the Prime Minister’s office by passing a resolution that Government of India did not trust the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular.\textsuperscript{60} Be so that is may, the Sant although rejected the note of Prime minister, but he was wise enough to see through that the demand could be accepted by the Central government if the proper pressure was built on the weak links in the Central government’s stand, one of which was the formation of many linguistic states in past. The Sant also knew that it was also essential to unplug the holes in the Akali stand.

The single greatest asset was the person of Sant Fateh Singh. He was the most impelling force behind the Punjabi Suba agitation. He himself supplied the inspiration as well as the argument. The Sant, although, religious to the core had an acute political mindset. He was a born agitator and mass mobilize; though a peaceful one. With his balanced conviction, he had to keep alive the Sikhs’ protest as well as their faith in their future. This time too, he chose with care, the issue to be contested and he chose his own moment to restart the struggle. He easily separated the essential from the inessential during his talks and hammered on his basic point i.e., Punjabi Suba during the talks.

Seeing the ripeness of the movement, the Sant declared on 16 August, 1965 that if Punjabi Suba was not formed within 25 days, he would go on fast on 10 September inside the Golden Temple and in case the demand was not conceded he would burn himself on 16\textsuperscript{th} day. In a Panthic address to the 25000 Sikhs, who listened to him in a

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p.10.
\textsuperscript{60} The Tribune, 15 August, 1965.
drop silence, he narrated how the talks badly failed and he had only

the option of fast unto death now. The announcement came as jolt to

the multitude, and in a religious fury more than 100 people offered to

sacrifice themselves on the lines as adopted by the Akali leader. The
decision of Sant Fateh Singh was enclosed by a resolution in General
body. Sant Akali Dal in a meeting held soon after.\footnote{The Tribune, 17 August, 1965.}

Such a fast had already been resorted to by the Master and the
Sant earlier too and had been broken for one reason or the other. This
raised a suspicion about any logical end of the fast this time yet the
immolation bid this time made the situation for the government and
the Sikh masses, serious.

The ultimatum came in the wake of demand of self determined
status for the Sikhs within Indian union, which had far serious
impact on the mind of union leaders. The Central leaders began to
assess the direction in which the Sikh multitude would prefer to go
due to constant denial and rejection of a legitimate demand of a new
state.

This must have underlined the seriousness of the situation but
at that moment Home Minister G.L. Nanda said in a statement in the
Lok Sabha that government had deliberated over the possibility of
conceding to such a demand but it was not good for the well being of
both Hindi and Punjabi speaking people. He said that it was also in
the interest of the country that a prosperous and strong state like
Punjab should continue on the border.\footnote{Indian Express, 24 April, 1965.}

The demand for self-determined status no doubt made the
Central leaders apprehensive yet they continued to hide their fears,
but in their minds, they had prepared to divert the attention of the
Sikh masses from self-determined status to a Punjabi speaking state.
Our protagonist, the Sant, was candidly speaking, a handy tool in the
eyes of the government in case the exigencies compelled them to give something to the Sikhs who populated the area allegorically called the sword of the nation. Moreover, the government was all in all in deciding the nature of the demarcation, it could manipulate the percentages of Punjabi or Hindi speaking people in its favour like in 1961.

The exigencies created by some factors including the demand for self-determined status force the Central leaders to think about the option of Punjabi Suba. The Sant too through his speeches and tours, swiftly erected a strong embarkment of public opinion against the already dwindling stand of Central Authorities. Like always the Sant distributed a lot of literature in the rural areas to make the Sikh masses aware about his stand on Punjabi Suba and his sincerity to the Punjabis.

A close perusal of the sources related to this period, highlight this characteristic of the Sant’s style of working. There small pamphlets, which he distributed almost free of cost contain vital information about the demand of Punjabi Suba while at the same time blending it with similar metaphors from Sikh religious history. These articles were small and inspiring. The Sant was far ahead of his contemporaries as far as the distribution of propaganda literature was concerned. The Sant possessed a great historical consciousness about the Sikh heritage and past.

Meanwhile, the newly developed enthusiasm in the Sikh masses was dampened, as always in the case of Punjabi Suba agitation by the tense situation at the border. By July 1965, Pakistan had assembled a

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63 Sant ji da Bhashan on 16 August, 1965: Also Sri Akal Takht Sahib te Kiti Takreer in Charbi de Deewee, Sant Chanan Singh Bhai Bagga Singh, Gurdwara Budhajorh, Ganganagar, p.139.
64 Mohe Marne Ka Chao, Panthic Ekta di Lod, Sant Baba Fateh Singh da Kaum Prati Sandesh, Sangtan nu Meri Pukar Benti, Mein Gulam Han; All in Sant Fateh Singh, Charbi de Deewee, Sant Chanan Singh Bhai Bagga Singh, Gurdwara Budhajorh, Ganganagar, p.139.
massive tank force in Punjab at their side. There was large scale infiltration by Pakistanis near Chamb sector on 5 August. On 1 September, 1965, Pakistan attacked India in the Chamb sector and the Army generals, advised Government of India that if it wanted to stem the enemy offensive they should attack the enemy in Punjab as a precautionary measure against further aggression.

Meanwhile Congress M.L.A.s at Chandigarh issued a press statement that the Central Government should accept in principle, the demand for Punjabi Suba and defer its formal declaration to a later date. The government in order to take adhoc measures to please the Sikhs, appointed Ujjal Singh as the governor of Punjab also to act as a communication link between Central Government and Akali leaders. As far as S. Ujjal Singh was concerned he was known more for his pro-Sikh views than his pro-government actions.

The appointment of Ujjal Singh was seen by the Sikh masses as an indication of change in the policy of government, which for once, started to assuage the Sikh sentiments because the Punjabi Suba demand had became a Sikh demand virtually. The occasional support by certain non-Congress organizations was only a strategic move to criticize the Congress government. But thirteen years struggles by the Sikh had left no doubt the nature of the demand. The Master Dal's Ludhiana Conference demanding "a Self determined political status for the Sikhs" was the outcome of delay and the discrimination in the policies of the Government of India. The only alternative to this demand of "self determined" status seemed to be the declaration of whole of Punjab as a unilingual state. Even before the start of Indo-Pak hostilities the Master Dal, quite surprisingly declared to full support the Sant in his fast unto death.

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67 The Tribune, 2 September, 1965.
The Hindu lobby too assessed the seriousness of the situation and tried its best to sidetrack the issue by calling a convention on 5 September, 1965 which was attended by Bhagat Dyal Sharma, President of Provincial Congress Committee, Shri Yash, an Arya Samajist, Kumari Lajya wati and others. The convention criticized the Sant’s actions when "our Jawans are fighting life and death struggle in Jammu and Kashmir".698

The hostilities between both the nations escalated into an undeclared war. The day Indian forces entered Lahore sector upto Bata Shoe factory, the Home Minister appealed to the Sant in his speech in Lok Sabha to forgo the fast unto death. He promised only to hold fresh talks and promised nothing concrete or substantial.70

As far as the state government was concerned, Chief Minister Ram Kishan too opposed any future plan of bifurcation of the state and the executive of the Congress legislative party too endorsed his views.71 It appointed a committee to draw a memorandum opposing the bifurcation of the state. Among other members of this committee, Tarlochan Singh Riasti, a Sikh MLA was also included. Other Sikhs who opposed the division of the State were Gurdial Singh Dhillon, and Darbara Singh, State Home Minister.

The Union Minister’s announcement about the examination of the issue "afresh", again activated the dormant opposition against the demand. The working committee of the Arya Pratinidh Sabha in its meeting warned all concerned that it would be dangerous to disturb the present set up. An Ekta committee of all the Hindu organization was constituted to take necessary steps.

The Indian forces had an upper hand in the hostilities, thanks to the Sikh contribution to the war efforts which was immense. The Sikh peasants, smugglers (who understood the terrain better than

698 The Partap, 6 September, 1965.
70 The Indian Express, 7 October, 1965.
71 The Tribune, 7 October, 1965.
anyone), truck drivers, porters and even Granthis of the Gurdwaras contributed in their own way.\textsuperscript{72} Even the Governor of the State praised the civil population in his address to the joint session of the two houses of the state legislature.

The intervention of UN Secretary General, U. Thant and the Security Council resulted in the ceasefire. The ceasefire was formally announced on 6 September, 1965. The mood of the nation was much hyped after the victory over Pakistan. Amidst such environment, the Home Minister announced that whole question of Punjabi Suba would be examined fresh and efforts would be made to its discover a co-operative solution based on good will and a reasonable approach.\textsuperscript{73} The minister declared the formation of a Cabinet sub-committee consisting of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Y.B.Chavan and Mahabir Tyagi. This committee was to advise from time to time, the parliamentary committee to be set up with Hukam Singh, the Lok Sabha speaker as its President. The members of the parliamentary committee were to be chosen by S. Hukam Singh and the Chairman of Rayja Sabha.

As already told, during the hostilities, the Home Minister had appealed to the Sant to postpone his fast and had promised to view the demand afresh. The Sant had sent a telegram in which he rejected the Minister’s statement saying it does not meet his demands. But he agreed to sent a deputation of five Emissaries. The deputation of five members met the Home Minister on 8 September, 1965 and was given some assurances.\textsuperscript{74}

What transpired in the meeting and what assurances were given was not made public. Under these circumstances, the Sant had decided to postpone his fast on 9 September, 1965 on the advice of the working committee. The working committee resolution expressing

\textsuperscript{72} D.R. Manekar, \textit{Twenty Two Fateful days}, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1964, pp.143-147.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{The Tribune}, 29 September, 1965.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{The Tribune}, 9 September, 1965.
dissatisfaction with the government viewpoint in the light of the report
given by emissaries but directed the Sant to postpone the fast
temporarily till the end of conflict with Pakistan. President Mr.
Radhakrishnan too appreciated Sant Fateh Singh’s decision to
postpone his fast and promised that the Sant would be satisfied with
the solution of the problem in the future.75

Before moving further, it would be worthwhile to describe the
attitude of Schedule castes to the development of Punjabi Suba
agitation at this juncture because they formed roughly one third of the
population. The landless scheduled caste Sikhs: the only segment of
Sikh population apathetic towards Akali Dal opposed the demand on
the ground that creation of such a state would place them under the
domination of wealthy Jat Sikhs. As the new Akali leadership
including the Sant belonged to the landowning rural Sikh section of
the society, the prominent Scheduled castes leaders alleged that the
Jat Sikh domination would be more acute this time because rural
Sikh landlords would be strict in adhering to the caste system than
the urban educated Sikhs. Moreover the Akali opposition to any
tenancy legislation in the state legislature further estranged them.76
Infact, the schedule castes’ leaders tried to match the Punjabi Suba
agitation by holding protests against the demand.77 A spokesman of
scheduled castes’ federation remarked, ".... Sikh landlords would
-crush the Mazhabi Sikhs if the Suba was formed".78

The appointment of a Sikh as head of the Parliamentary
Committee raised many eyebrows and even today it is worth
analyzing. S. Hukam Singh was a staunch Congressman. As as
already stated, he was known more for his Sikh views than actions
that would please the Congress high command. He was expected to

give a report against the demand. The government wanted to kill the Punjabi Suba demand with the help of a Sikh. It wanted to murder the Sikh aspirations and desire for a Sikh region within the Indian republic with the hands of a Sikh. Hukam Singh later on expressed such views, when the parliamentary committee was holding its deliberations. According to S. Hukam Singh, Mr. Shastri, the Prime Minister of India rang up S. Hukam Singh because he wanted that S. Hukam Singh should give report against the Punjabi Suba demand. But S. Hukam Singh was bent upon creating Punjabi Suba.\(^79\)

Although, the President Mr. S. Radhakrishnan had assured the Sant during the hostilities that the outcome of the government's decision about Punjabi Suba would be much liked by him. But it seemed, the President and the Home Minister were not on good terms as became clear from the actions of the Home Minister Mr. Nanda in the next few days. His radical utterances were published in 'Times of India' and raised hue and cry among the Sikhs. It seemed that the Defence Minister not only wanted to back out on his word but also wanted to embarrass Mr. President. Mrs. Gandhi had an upper hand in the intra-party politics and she was elected leader of the party and consequently the Prime Minister on 20 January, 1966.\(^80\) She wrote a letter to Sant Fateh Singh in which she requested him to appoint a sub-committee to discuss the question of Punjabi Suba with cabinet sub-committee and find the solution. The Sant was, however, able to see through this game plan and told pressmen that again sending representatives for negotiations would delay the settlement of Punjabi Suba question.\(^81\)

Mrs. Gandhi's move was obviously to circumvent the proceedings of the parliamentary consultative committee of which majority of members were reportedly sympathetic to the demand. Mrs.

\(^80\) Indian Express, 20 January, 1966.
\(^81\) The Tribune, 28 February, 1966; Also Kaumi Dard, 28 February, 1966.
Gandhi wanted to kill two aims with a single arrow. She wanted to appease the Akalis for the time being without giving anything substantial while also silencing the opposition within the party by claiming to have given nothing to the Suba agitators.

These dilatory tactics forced the Sant to write a letter to Mrs. Gandhi in which he announced that he would wait till end of March after which his earlier plan of action i.e., fast unto death and immolation would be implemented.\textsuperscript{82} The visible change in Mrs. Gandhi’s attitude had an unhealthy impact on the radical Sikhs. The president of the Master Akali Dal declared in Jullundhar that even the formation of Punjabi Suba was not final and permanent solution for the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{83}

The parliamentary committee had invited representations from the individuals and organizations which poured in thick and swift. The reports of the proceedings of the parliamentary consultative committee; though held in camera, showed that majority of the members of the committee were in favour of a solution of the problem, the solution being the creation of Haryana. There reports and the usual accompanying rumors aroused wide spread protests ranging from that of industrialists of Ludhiana to Mr. Yagya Dutt Sharma, General Secretary of Punjab Jan Sangh announcing that he would go on fast unto death at Amritsar against the attitude of the government which had become ineffective and impotent.

But now, the situation was out of control of religious freaks and orators. Now, the matter lay in the hands of a consultative committee; an independent body free from the pressure of the executive. The uniform implementation of linguistic reorganization in whole India made the acceptance of the demand by the committee inevitable.

\textsuperscript{82} Indian Express, 29 February, 1966; Also The Tribune, 29 February, 1966.
\textsuperscript{83} Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Punjabi Suba, p.422.
Watching the flow of the ebb, Mrs. Gandhi got the resolution in favour of a new state passed from Congress Working Committee. The resolution was passed under the Presidentship of Mr. Kamraj. The resolution aimed at the creation of a unilingual Punjabi speaking state and government was to take necessary steps for that. Mr. Morarji Desai opposed the resolution while demanding that his dissenting note should not be recorded.

For the Sant, half the battle was already won because resolution was passed by the working committee of the party that had been negating the very logic underlying the Punjabi Suba. But the repercussions of this Congress decision were far wide and violent. The Hindus of Punjab started protests by going on strike for three days. Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Abohar and Bhiwani saw many incidents of arson and police firing. The Police arrested 28 persons. There have been conflicting opinions about the number of causalities in the contemporary sources but there is no denying that 200 persons were injured out of which several died in hospital. The property worth twenty lacs was destroyed. The arch rival of Punjabi Suba; Jan Sangh, in its meeting passed a resolution in which it expressed its determination to oppose the division of the Punjab. Mrs. Gandhi declared in the lower house that the ultimate decision about the creation of the Punjabi Suba would be taken by the government who would take best care of the interests of the minority i.e., Hindus in the upcoming state. The statement indicated that Mrs. Gandhi too was apprehensive of the majority of the Sikhs in the upcoming state.

While the Sant expressed gratification over the resolution of Central Working Committee, he appealed for the Hindu Sikh unity in the state. He laid emphasis on Hindu-Sikh unity in the ensuing Punjabi Suba. While the Sant was endeavoring to create a healthy

84 Indian Express, 10 March, 1966.
85 The Times of India, 16 March, 1966.
atmosphere for the bifurcation of the State, Master Tara Singh continued to toe his older line of self determined political status.

The recommendations of the consultative committee were published on 18 March, 1966. The committee rejected the notion that the 'status quo' in the matter under its discussion was the best solution. It declared that it would lead to chaos and unrest in the state. It also rejected the suggestion of a referendum saying it was neither feasible nor desirable. The committee also confessed that the regional committees had been a failure and strengthening them, as was suggested by some quarters, would do nothing. The committee clearly stated that only feasible alternative was the bifurcation of the state on linguistic lines.86

However, there were loopholes in the report which were sure to cause some future complications. The most mischievous being the fact that this committee set seal to the central Punjabi region alone being the Punjabi speaking area. It failed or deliberately overruled the facts that Kangra (Kangri, being a dialect of Punjabi), Chandigarh, a part of Kharar Tehsil, most of the region of the district of Ambala, whole Karnal district, Sirsa Tehsil and Kaithal Sub-Tehsil were considered Punjabi speaking areas. S. Hukam Singh too was aware that Hindi zone had been demarcated on communal basis despite the protests of the Punjab ministers at the time of implementation of the regional formula. Moreover, it had been specifically laid down at that time that arrangements were temporary and tentative. Thus, the report of the above committee divided Punjab which gave birth to predicament which is present even today.

Before moving further, it would not be out of context to analyze the role of Hukam Singh. There is no denying that his advocacy of the creation of Himachal and Haryana proved costly to Punjab and dismantled it from its vital organs. Inspite of adhering its Punjabi and

86 Indian Express, 20 March, 1966.
Hindu zones as the basis of demarcation, S. Hukam Singh might have suggested a committee of experts to decide which areas were Punjabi or Hindi speaking. Before joining Congress, Hukam Singh was member of working committee of Akali Dal and quite interestingly, the president of the Shiromani Akali Dal, when the resolution pertaining to demand of Punjabi Suba was passed. He also acted as a mediator whenever the Akali leaders started their fast unto death. It would not be prejudicial to overlook the fact that he was made the Deputy Speaker and later on the speaker after he was able to pursue Master Tara Singh to forgo his fast unto death. After his term as speaker was over, he was made Governer of Rajasthan. Earlier he was able to bring about the merger of Akali Dal with Congress. The reasons he had in mind were known to him only, yet one should keep the above facts in mind.

The opposition of Ekta Samiti, Jan Sangh, and the fast unto death of Yagya Dutt Sharma, gave the government an excuse to try its best to shape the new state in such a way as to reduce its geographical extent as well as the possible Sikh majority. However, the government through Home Minister declared the appointment of a commission who was to (1) examine existing boundary of Hindi and Punjabi speaking area as well as the hill areas (2) It should apply the linguistic principle with due regard to the 1961 census (3) should also keep in mind administrative convenience. This declaration and especially the 1961 census as basis, put five Tehsils in jeopardy, namely, Nalagarh, Una, Fazilka, Pathankot and Kharar.

The Sant meanwhile vowed to stay in Sri Darbar Sahib for forty days, inspite of the fulfillment of the pledge he had taken earlier. He was shocked to see that the 1961 census was taken as a basis for demarcation of Hindi and Punjabi speaking areas. In the words of the Sant, "The census of the 1961 was taken during Punjabi Suba agitation when the counter agitation by the Hindu communalists was
in full swing. The communalists had goaded the Punjabi speaking 
Hindus to register Hindi as their mother tongue. I consider the census 
taken from 1891 to 1932 as the correct solution of the problem”.  

The government might have considered this mathematically 
possible option earlier but it seemed that the government was bent on 
giving birth to a dismembered baby. The commission was to be 
preised by Justice Shah Lal and two other members namely M.M. 
Philip and Mr. Subimal Dutt. The absence of a Sikh in the commission 
too irked the Akalis.

The Master Akali Dal boycotted the proceedings of the 
commission but the Sant Dal working committee adopted a resolution 
stating the basis of 1961 census for reorganization of new state was 
not acceptable to the Sikhs. Even the ministers from the Punjabi 
region of the cabinet in their meeting, considered steps to present the 
true case before the commission by examining old records and 
documents containing the disputed area. A seventeen member sub-
committee was appointed by the Punjab Pradesh Congress. The 
executive met on the 4th of the May at Chandigarh and strongly 
oped the consideration of 1961 census as the basis for dividing the 
state. The 1961 census was declared "false and unreliable" by Mr. 
Nehru himself too.  

The Sant was able to see through the game i.e., why he strongly 
ected the 1961 census. The central authorities as well as the 
contemporary Congress high command had been opposing the 
realization of the Sikh demand of Punjabi Suba. Although the Sant 
Akali Dal and the Sant himself never uttered a word about the 
percentages of Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjabi Suba, the central 
authorities were too apprehensive of any Sikh majority area on the 
border with Rajasthan. They were certain that it should pose a threat

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87 The Sant’s address at Harmandir Sahib, Kaumi Dard, 21 April, 1966.  
to the integrity of the nation. Although the political exigencies forced the central leaders to accept the Punjabi Suba demand yet they wanted to do their best to not make Punjabi Suba, a Sikh majority area. As stated in the earlier pages, the language was closely identified with the religion in case of Punjab. There was no fault of the Punjabi Suba supporters if majority of the Sikhs spoke Punjabi. The Sikhs were perhaps punished for speaking Punjabi in large numbers.

The representatives of the Sant Akali Dal sent to the commission too falsified the claims of central authorities and nationalistic intelligensia that language was mere a sugar coating on the bitter pill of Sikh homeland within the country.

S. Hukam's personal views clearly bring home the true nature of the betrayal of the Sikhs by the central leaders. Organizations like Chief Khalsa Diwan and individual Sikhs like Sirdar Kapoor Singh too reverted the central government's emphasis on 1961 census. In their representations to the commission, the Sikh organizations and individuals tried their best to remove the 1961 census as the basis of Punjabi Suba.

Despite all the protests, boycotts and violence, the commission held sittings in camera for several days. The commission refused to accept the Sant Akali Dal's suggestion to verify on the spot, the language of the people of the disputed Tehsils. Candidly, it was not a commission of linguistic and geographical experts, it callously divided the state into two states on the basis of 1961 census. Its stoic attitude killed the aspirations of the people of Punjabi speaking areas who were joined with Haryana. A big slice of area went to Himachal State which got more than it struggled for.

At time of the publication of the report of the commission, Sant

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Fateh Singh was out of country.\(^91\) One cannot find the reasons why the Sant opted to go out on a "Vadesh Yatra" when the most important struggle of his life was ending fruitfully. It was a sort of ill timing to go on a foreign tour when the commission was declaring its report that was to divide the fate of people living on the hinges of upcoming Punjabi Suba and Haryana. Before going overseas, he held a press conference after coming out of his sojourn at Sri Darbar Sahib for 277 days since the pledge he took on 15 August, 1965. He declared, "Hindi had nothing to fear from Punjabi. We would learn Hindi alongwith Punjabi which would replace English."\(^92\)

The reaction of the Sant Akali Dal to the report was distressing and painful. Justice Gurnam Singh; speaking at a conference organized by the Sant Akali Dal said that "the communal minded Congress government has tried to damage the Punjabi Suba".

As far as Jan Sangh, the arch opponent of the Punjabi Suba demand was concerned, the state Jan Sangh expressed its grim determination to oppose it by all constitutional and peaceful means. It even appointed a five men action committee to carry on the agitation to force its reversal. However, within weeks of the formation of the Suba, the Jan Sangh leadership moved to accommodating stance. It not only accepted it but also advised Hindus to own Punjabi.\(^93\)

But the division of the central government forced the Jan Sangh to move two steps backwards in order to move one step forward. The obvious reason that compelled the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh and Jan Sangh leadership to beat a hasty retreat was the break up with the leading merchants of Jullundhar and Ludhiana who had no option but to placate the future ruling parties or a possible coalition of which the Akalis were sure to have a good share. The Jan Sangh was

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\(^{92}\) *Kaumi Dard*, 12 May, 1966.

\(^{93}\) *The Hindustan Times*, 10 March, 1966.
apprehensive of losing its most worthwhile supporters who supported it financially. So, Jan Sangh leadership inspite of the rancor in their hearts, had to participate in the festivities of the new dawn of Punjabi Suba.  

A more sensible option available was to communal and even caste consciousness. But the central government was adamant to subordinate the bani cultural reality of the language to the narrow communal consciousness.

The findings of the commission manifested the ill will of the central government who wanted to weaken the Sikh cause as much as it could by cutting separate the important regions of Punjabi Suba. Inspite of the protests the boundary commission accepted 1961 census as the basis for arriving at the solution of linguistic problem. The majority of commission by two to one declared Chandigarh and Khara sub-tehsil of Ambala district to be part of Haryana province. In his dissenting note Subimol Dutt, forwarded the inclusion of Khara and Chandigarh in Punjabi Suba on the following grounds. (1) though according to 1961 census, the Hindi speaking population in Kharar Tehsil is no doubt 52.2%, the Punjabi speaking population in the rural areas is 56.2%. (2) Under the Sachar formula of 1949, Kharar Tehsil had been placed in the Punjabi region. (3) The Hindu population in Chandigarh capital project is purely migratory having come from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan only. Therefore, Kharar Tehsil and Chandigarh cannot be considered to be Hindi speaking.

Government accepted the report of minority of the commission of regarding Kharar tehsil but declared Chandigarh as a Union Territory. Moreover, the Punjab reorganization bill introduced in Lok Sabha on 3 September, 1966, provided for common links between the parent state and Haryana such as common governor, a common High Court, common electricity board, the financial cooperation and the

housing cooperation. It also provided for central takeover of Chandigarh and Bhakra and Beas dam projects. The most tragic consequence of such decisions was that the Punjabi Suba was deprived of all the water and power sources. The Punjab reorganization bill was passed on 7 September, 1966. The clearly snacked of communalism. It was rejected by both the Akali Dals and almost all the influential Sikh intelligentsia including Sirdar Kapoor Singh who rejected it saying, "I reject the entire schemata of the Bill".96

The Sant after a brief sojourn in foreign countries returned on 5 November, 1966. A week later he expressed his regret that his negotiation with Haryana leaders had broken down and declared that he would take steps to undo the injustice that had been done to the Punjab. He called a conference of several parties including the communists, the Swatantra Party, the Republican Party, and the SSP. Wherein the representative promised to give full support in the contemplated agitation for abolition of common links and inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas and Chandigarh in Punjab. However, Jan Sangh did not join these deliberated.97

The Sant announced that he would send jathas from Gurdwara Manji Sahib to Chandigarh to press these demands. However, he agreed that he deliberately wanted to give more time to the central government to consider these demands. He declared that if the Central government adopted due dallying tactics in accepting his demands, he shall announce his next programme for the achievement of his objective very shortly. Ready a prepared speech he said that Sikhs and all the Punjabis wanted to live in the country with honour and respect. He declared to sacrifice his life for the cause of Punjabis.98

The Akali Dal working committee announced Sant Fateh Singh as the dictator and empowered him to announce a morcha or any step he thought proper for abolition of the wrong terms of reorganization bill. Thus, a new struggle began which was to be led by the Sant.