CHAPTER 4


The Punjab politics from 1943 to 1945 entered into a crucial and critical phase. The Muslim League was demanding the division of Punjab as well as creation of a Muslim state. The Congress on the other hand was in favour of United India. The Sikh leaders were alarmed by the rising prestige of League during the War. Sikandar became increasing isolated with in the League Council and Working Committee. Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact was dying its own death. The Unionist Party crumbled to pieces and in consequence the Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact also met with the same fate. Instead of being a solution of the province contributed to its undoing. Jinnah gained complete ascendancy over Punjabi Muslims crushing all opposition till there was hardly left to resist him. One of the main causes of failure of Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact, was opposition of Muslim League and as well as of Sikhs. Ironically enough the Pact was designed to bring the Sikh and Muslim communities together was indirectly responsible for this lamentable political arrangement which was bound to drive them apart, for it
was Baldev Singh's association with Khizr as a colleague in the Punjab Ministry that enabled a new coalition to be formed. An alliance between the two was a boon to the province as long as Khizr stood at the head of Unionist Party which commanded the allegiance of most of the Muslims but it could only be a curse when he had become a renegade at the head of a rump. Thus in the end Pact proved a snare. This Pact brought little dividends to the Sikhs except a ridiculous sum of Rs. 20,000.

The demand of Muslim League for an independent separate state for Muslims upset the Sikhs leadership most, as the Punjab, which was the home of the Sikhs and where most of their religious places were located, was the heart land of Pakistan. Consequently the demand for Pakistan posed a serious danger for their religious, social, economic and political interests since its creation would leave them at the mercy of Muslims i.e. whose rule they had suffered persecution in the past. Though endangered yet could not put up a strong and united resistance to the Pakistan movement because of their mutual differences. Though most of the Sikh leaders were opposed to the partition of country yet could not develop a systematic policy and effective strategy to counteract.

With every passing day, after the adoption of the Pakistan Resolution, the Muslim League moved one step closer to the goal of a separate homeland for Muslims. For example, 23 March 1943 was celebrated in Punjab as ‘Pakistan Day’ and a ‘Muslim League Week’ was organized from 12 April 1943 to 18th April 1943. Essentially political efforts of the League concentrated on strengthening the organizational structure, enrolling members, opening branches, collecting funds.\textsuperscript{403}

**AZAD PUNJAB SCHEME**

The death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in Dec. 1942 and relatively weak position of the new premier, Khizr Hayat Khan \textit{viz-a-viz} Jinnah had dimmed the prospects of any gain\textsuperscript{404} alarmed the Sikhs further. Master Tara Singh constrained to admit in 1943 that Baldev Singh’s ministry alone could not protect Sikh interests. He became vocal when the Akalis who had participated in the Individual Satyagraha were all out of prison and they did not share Baldev Singh’s opinion.\textsuperscript{405} Master Tara Singh was being vehemently criticized by the Majhail group (a group formed of liberated Akalis who were imprisoned during Individual Satyagraha Movement) and he pleaded for Azad Punjab as the ‘only Proposal’ that could protect

\textsuperscript{403} *The Indian Year Books*, 1942-45, p. 859.
\textsuperscript{404} Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242.
\textsuperscript{405} Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 35.
the Sikhs from the domination of a single community.\textsuperscript{406} The failure of Cripps Mission, Sikandar- Baldev Singh Pact and Congress party's conceding the principle involved in the demand for Pakistan\textsuperscript{407} perturbed the Akali leaders. The Azad Punjab Scheme was presented as an alternative by Master Tara Singh, Sir Joginder Singh, S.B. Ujjal Singh, and Sardar Baldev Singh. The name was given to a province envisaged in the memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps and Azad Punjab was mentioned in a resolution of the All India Akali Conference at Dahela Kalan on July 24, 1942.\textsuperscript{408}

\textbf{HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AZAD PUNJAB SCHEME}

On its conception the Azad Punjab scheme was not a new as similar proposal had in the early 1930's were presented before the Round Table Conference in London. The Sikh community was alarmed at the claim made by Dr. Mohammad Iqbal in All India Muslim League's, Allahabad Session of 1930 for a consolidated North Western state consisting of the Punjab including North-West Frontier, Baluchistan and Sind, for acceptance of this demand would lead to the division of Sikh population.\textsuperscript{409} Thus a memorandum was prepared by the Sikhs and submitted to the

First Round Table Conference, November 12, 1930. The two Sikh delegates Sampuran Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh played an important role in placing the Sikh demands. Both the Sikh leaders became the voice of Sikh community and they stated that in case of the Muslims refused to accept anything but a reserved majority on the basis of separate electorate they (the Sikhs) would, then, press for a territorial rearrangement of the province which would consolidate the Sikh population. They demanded therefore the divisions (exclusively Lyallpur and Montgomery districts) which were overwhelming Muslim and were racially akin to the North West Frontier, Province should be taken away from the Punjab. This arrangement, if accepts would leave a Punjab of about sixteen millions people in which no single community would have an absolute majority and each community would be obliged to conciliate to others.  

Muslims did not accept this proposal.

A counter proposal for the reorganization of the Punjab boundaries was made by Sir L.W. Geoffrey Corbett. The scheme aimed at having a communal proportion in the Punjab 43.3.1 for Muslims, 42.3.1 for Hindus and 14.4.1 for Sikhs. In the Punjab who would not ask for any weightage and would only ask for it in North West Frontier Province and Sind if the Muslims received in other

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410 The Indian Round Table Conference, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, n. 29, pp. 555-6.
provinces. Corbett's formula aimed at separation of Ambala division from the Punjab to make it more Muslim in character by taking away the Hindu majority districts. This scheme was totally unacceptable to Sikhs and Hindus of the province as it relegated the non-Muslims to an ineffective minority of Muslims in the Hindu majority province where the Muslim enjoyed heavy weightage, S. Ujjal Singh argued that he did not see any reason why the Sikhs should not be given the same weightage which the Muslims had in Bihar and Orissa. In those provinces they formed 11 percent and 14 percent of the population but enjoyed 25 percent and 30 percent of representation in the Provincial Legislature which meant a weightage of nearly 130 percent and 110 percent respectively. The Anglo-Indian minorities with population of 0-2 percent in the Punjab got as much as 4,000 percent weightage in the Punjab legislature and the European got a weighted representation varying from 3000 to 9000 percent.411 This was an attempt to transform the minority into a ‘privileged class’.412 The ‘ideal province’ was to be created after separating eastern Punjab and two Canal Colonies from the Muslim-majority Western Punjab.413

MASTER TARA SINGH'S CALL ‘AZAD PUNJAB’

411 The Indian Round Table Conference, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, n. 29, p. 1368.
412 The Indian Round Table Conference, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, pp. 1403-06.
413 Indu Banga, Five Centuries Punjab, p. 242.
On June 7th, 1943 the Akali Dal passed Azad Punjab resolution, thus putting a stamp of approval on Muslim League's demand for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{414} Its population was to be so balanced about 40% Muslims, 40% Hindu and 20% Sikhs that the Punjabi would be free from the domination of any single community neither the Sikhs or Hindus nor Muslims. Master Tara Singh emphasized that scheme was conceived to protect the Sikhs from the communal domination of the Muslims. Further explaining he stated that the Hindu and Muslims minorities could always looked upon the provinces where their co religionists were in a majority for security and protection of their rights but Sikhs did not enjoy similar position for they did not have majority anywhere. He therefore insisted upon this form of protection until a better and more practicable form of protection was proposed.\textsuperscript{415}

The Punjab thus reconstituted was to have 'joint electorate with no reservation of seats'. The Hindus and Sikh minorities in the Muslim majority province in the North West were to get 25% and 15% weightage respectively.\textsuperscript{416} The river Chenab was later proposed to be dividing line between the two provinces "after taking into consideration the population, property, land revenue and

\textsuperscript{414} S.L. Malhotra, \textit{Gandhi, Partition and Punjab}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{415} \textit{The Tribune}, 23 July, 1943, article by Master Tara Singh, Azad Punjab Scheme,.
\textsuperscript{416} \textit{The Tribune}, March 15, 1943 and September 8, 1943.
historical traditions of each of three communities. In case of India being partitioned, Azad Punjab was to be turned into a buffer state between India and Pakistan. Unfortunately at that time even the communist movement went astray and came forward with the slogan of Sikh Homeland in India.

The proposed Azad Punjab scheme was not a brainchild of Master Tara Singh. As already been discussed it was prepared by the leaders, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh. The Akali Dal tried to use it for lessening the influence of Jinnah and his motive. The Akali Dal in the meanwhile published a short pamphlet explaining the Azad Punjab Scheme in detail. The author of this pamphlet, Bhagat Singh Tangh did so in a brochure entitled Azad Punjab Ke Mutalaq, pothohari Nukta Nigha. (Pothohari viewpoint concerning Azad Punjab). The broacher was published by Dyal Singh (Assistant Secretary Akali Dal). The author of this pamphlets said that the primary purpose in demand of Azad Punjab was ‘to break’ the Muslim majority in the Punjab and to create a province where the Sikhs should hold the ‘balance of Power’... he noted that the Sikh population had been increasing quite rapidly; so shortly the Sikh population might reach as high as

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417 The Tribune, June 6, 1941.
which would be even more beneficial for the Sikh community.  

In absence of clear strategy to oppose League's move for Pakistan, a few Sikh leaders started negotiations with the League leaders for some political gains. To strengthen his position Jinnah offered Akali leadership to live peacefully in Pakistan. Akalis were even offered same concessions by League leaders in return for strengthening the League against the Unionist ministry. Ajit Singh Sarhadi in his book, Punjabi Suba, has made the point that some of the Akali leaders at one stage considered supporting the demand for Pakistan with a guaranteed status for the Sikh. Thus he writes- it was a sad state of affairs, that Master Tara Singh did not at first agree to meet Jinnah.

The Congress agents in Sikh ranks were needed to had a meeting with Jinnah and Master Tara Singh accompanied by Harnam Singh, later Advocate General and a judge of Punjab High Court, had a meeting with Jinnah. The interview was brief in which Jinnah was reported to have said that he recognize the Sikhs to be a sub national group and would concede all that was reasonable. He further stated that Sikhs must put in writing the position and

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421 *The Tribune*, Nov. 23, 1942.
place they wanted to have in future constitutional set up of Pakistan. Master Tara Singh said that the offer should come from Jinnah for the Sikhs to consider and then alone the Sikhs would decide whether or not to support to the Leagues demand.

Rejecting Jinnah's offer to live peacefully in Pakistan could not solve the problem of Akali leader Master Tara Singh. At the same time was ready to join hands with Hindu Maha Sabha leaders in opposing demand of Pakistan.422

Efforts had been made by the Sikh leadership, particularly Giani Kartar Singh, who was being then considered the 'brain trust of the Sikhs', to evoke a response from Muslim League circles about the Sikh position in the constitution set up of their thinking but all such efforts were failed.423 Ajit Singh further writes "Azad Punjab Murdabad (Death to Azad Punjab), Master Tara Singh Murdabad, were the slogan and shouts of a motley crowd of Hindus, with a sprinkling of the Sikhs, strutting the streets of Campbellpur (a border town in the north of the Punjab), which I heard I went there on 10th May 1942 to meet Master Tara Singh, President of SGPC and also of Shiromani Akali Dal. I was then the president of Khalsa Diwan, a representative organisation of the Sikhs living in the tiny province of NWFP.

422 Home Department Political, 18.7.1943.
423 Ajit Singh Sarhadi, Punjabi Saba, the Story of Struggle, Delhi 1970, p. 88.
However this movement could not gather strength because of its inherent weakness. It did not have the support of all Sikhs. Strong reactions from various quarters particularly from Congressite and Communist Sikhs with held the movement. The protagonists of the Akhand Hindustan and the Hindu leaders of the Punjab dubbed it communal, anti Hindu, anti national, reactionary and opportunist.424

**SANT SINGH AND BABA KHARAK SINGH’S REACTION**

The Akali scheme to divide Punjab by common consent seemed to have taken into account the possibility of the British conceding Jinnah's demand425 but it did not appeal all sections of Sikhs even.

The Working Committee of Central Akali Dal Baba Kharak Singh, called upon the Sikhs to throw the Azad Punjab Scheme and all partition schemes into the waste paper basket because they were 'anti national', 'impracticable' and 'detrimental to the interest of the Panth'.426 Being nationalist Baba Kharak Singh criticized the demand for Azad Punjab and asked the Sikh community to support the Congress. He felt there was no distinction between Pakistan and Azad Punjab that both the schemes involved the *vivisection of*

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424 Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242
426 *The Tribune*, 14 June, 1942.
India’ and ‘destruction of Indian unity and integrity’.\textsuperscript{427} The committee resolved to initiate a campaign against the partition of India and to hold Akhand Hindustan Conferences at different places.\textsuperscript{428} He also charged the Jinnah and Master Tara Singh were ‘sailing in the same boat’, ‘agents of British imperialism’ and the Azad Punjab would be ‘suicidal for the Country, the Panth and the Punjab’.\textsuperscript{429}

The scheme left Sikhs of Western Punjab entirely at the mercy of Muslims. It alarmed the Sikhs of Rawalpindi division, which was situated on the other side of Chenab.\textsuperscript{430} A nationalist Sikh leader, Sant Singh, MLA, further charged Master Tara Singh with ‘playing into the hands of Lord Amery the Secretary of State for India. The Scheme was alleged as ‘Amery’s brain work’.\textsuperscript{431} To oppose Azad Punjab move he revised the Central Sikh League as a political organisation for developing and maintaining nationalism among Sikhs and organising them to liberate the country from foreign rule. He named the general body of the revised Central Sikh League as the Khalsa Durbar and particularly excluded it from its

\textsuperscript{428} H. N. Mitra, (ed.), \textit{The Indian Annual Register}, p. 99.  
\textsuperscript{429} H. N. Mitra, (ed.), \textit{The Indian Annual Register}, p. 300.  
\textsuperscript{430} \textit{The Tribune}, Feb.15, 1943.  
\textsuperscript{431} K. C. Gulati, \textit{The Akalis Past and Present}, p.98.
membership the office bearers of the Shiromani Akali Dal.\textsuperscript{432} On 16th August 1943, in a conference at Panja Sahib, Sant Singh said if Hindus and Sikhs were united, 54 percent that the Muslims contribute of total population of existing Punjab could not exploit them.\textsuperscript{433}

Again in September 1943, he condemned Azad Punjab Scheme in an article entitled 'Azad Punjab Nahin Chahida (Azad Punjab is not needed).\textsuperscript{434} Gopal Singh the Secretary of Central Sikh League of India said that the League would aim at separating politics from the religious work of control and management of Gurudwaras. He insinuated that Master Tara Singh and Akali followers had entered into an alliance with imperialism, the Unionist ministry, the Muslim League and the Pakistanis and were thus instrumental in keeping the country in bondage.\textsuperscript{435} Central Sikh League of India emphasized on revival of nationalism among the Sikh masses, promotion of harmony and friendly relations with the Sikh states and their subjects with a view to impart a Sikh character to these statues through love and cooperation and

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\textsuperscript{433} H. N. Mitra, (ed.), Indian Annual Register, Vol. II, 1943, p. 300. \\
\textsuperscript{434} The Punj Daraya, Sept. 1943. \\
\textsuperscript{435} The Tribune, July13, 1943.
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creation of a machinery to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs in central and provincial services.436

MASTER TARA SINGH VS SANT SINGH

The Tribune became a media of attack and counter attack. When this entire political scenario was going on how Master Tara Singh could be silent. He reminded Sant Singh that Azad Punjab Scheme was nothing new and had been first propounded at Sant Singh's residence itself. That was as far back as 1931 when a number of Sikh leaders of all shades of opinion had assembled to draw up Sikh demands to be presented to Mahatma Gandhi soon after Gandhi had signed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.437 He also reminded Sant Singh that a resolution supporting the scheme had been passed unanimously at the annual session of the Central Sikh League of India held at Amritsar in 1931, thirteen years earlier.438 The Scheme, he added was presented to the Secretary of State at the Second Round Table Conference by Ujjal Singh and Sant Singh. A memorial sent by the Chief Khalsa Diwan in support of the demands was included in the scheme.439 Thus it was a flashback of the period through the contemporary media. In another article in

436 The Tribune, July 14, 1943.
437 The Tribune, June 16, 1943.
the Tribune, Master Tara Singh denied that scheme was the outcome of the demand for Pakistan made by the All India Muslim League, though he asserted, *all that had happened recently was that the arguments in favour of Pakistan accepted the Cripps had "reinforced the reasons justifying the Sikh demands for Azad Punjab."* He further wrote, *"If some people are allowed to go out of India, why should those who wish to remain in India be forced to go out of 10%"*

Unlike the Muslim demand for Pakistan, the Sikh demand for Azad Punjab was not separatist in nature. Perhaps the Sikhs could not demand a Sikh State as they did not form a majority in any considerable area. The press war was at height as Master Tara Singh's arguments were answered point wise in there by Sant Singh. He refused Master Tara Singh's assertion that Azad Punjab was referred to by the Sikh leaders in the seventeen demands at the residence of Sant Singh and then submitted to Gandhi Ji on 30th March, 1931 and that since then no Sikh opposed these seventeen points. The main emphasis in these demands was not on changing the boundaries of the existing Punjab but on the point that no community in Punjab should dominate over others which

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in the language of those days meant that the Sikhs be given much representation in the Legislatures (i.e. in the Punjab Legislative Council) that the Muslim majority did not exceed the joint Hindu Sikh members. He asserted that the word 'Azad Punjab' was nowhere mentioned in seventeen demands and emphatically started that it was wrong to insist as Tara Singh had said, that seventeen demands agreed upon by the Sikhs leaders at his residence in 1931, were never opposed. "It was also wrong to say that the Azad Punjab Scheme proposed by the Sikh delegation to the Cripps in 1942 went unopposed. According to him they actually had rather caused disunity in the Sikh world. Sant Singh was blaming Master Tara Singh and the trio leaders for the internal Sikh politics. He went on to state, "I have four main objections against the scheme proposed by Tara Singh and his supporters:

1. The proponents of the scheme were not clear about the boundary of the 'State' that they were asking for and for that reason did not reckon with the opposition it would evoke. Moreover if it accepted it was not expected to get these areas it irrigated not only by the Chenab and Ravi but also by Yamuna. He was of the view "Did not Master

443 The Panj Darya, Sept. 1943.
444 The Panj Darya, Sept. 1943.
Tara Singh know that proposals were afoot to add Ambala Division to Delhi? If that happened the Azad Punjab would fall like a sack without contents. In that case, he felt sure the condition of the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab and the areas outside it would become worse”.

2. As per Azad Punjab Scheme, the important Sikh Shrines like Nankana Sahib and Panja Sahib would fall outside the Azad Punjab. To him that would be very "painful".

3. Sikhs being "nearer to Hindu and than Muslims". It would be to their benefit to remain in the mainstream of 'Nationalism'.

4. The Azad Punjab Scheme compelled the Sikhs to concede and recognize Pakistan which they could not afford to do. In asking for Azad Punjab, he insisted, are conceding Pakistan only because something falls to our lot.445

At times Master Tara Singh tried to clarify two schemes by saying it away from anti national; intended to be an alternative to the division of the country.446 Ujjal Singh, who was one of architects of the building Azad Punjab wished that "a happier name had been selected for this demand, which was intended to be province with in the Union of India. He said that the Akalis only

445 The Panj Darya, Sept. 1943.
446 The Tribune, March 15, 1943.
wanted the separation of original Punjab from the western districts annexed to it by Maharaja Ranjit Singh just as Sind was separated from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar.\textsuperscript{447}

In the anti Pakistan conference held at Damdama Sahib Giani Kartar Singh already in March 1943, uttered, "We want neither "Hindu Raj" nor even the 'Sikh Raj'. What we advocate is joint rule of all parties and communities generating safeguards and religious freedom to all the inhabitants of the country."\textsuperscript{448}

All India Muslim League Working Committee was to remove any possible inconsistency with the All India League Constitution, but the Premier of the Punjab refused to oblige.\textsuperscript{449} Jinnah however was anxious to avoid a serious split among the Punjab Muslims and decided to find a settlement of Punjab Assembly Muslim affair favourable to the All India Muslim League. He also declared that he would either visit Punjab himself late in that year or send the special committee appointed by him to examine the constitution of the League Party in the Punjab Assembly.\textsuperscript{450} The special committee wrote to Khizr in late 1943 that it desired to hold discussions with

\textsuperscript{447} H.N. Mitra (ed.), The Indian Annual Register, 1943, VI pp. 288-99.
\textsuperscript{448} The Tribune, March 15, 1943.
\textsuperscript{449} Home Political File No. 18/11/43 (I), Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the Second half of November, 1943.
\textsuperscript{450} Home Political, File No. 18/11/43 (I), Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the Second half of November, 1943.
Muslim M.L.As. Khizar refused with a reply that this was beyond the object and limit of the committee.

Since, 1944, Jinnah, who felt disgusted and disappointed at the attitude of the Punjab Premier, had started feeling a strong need for bringing the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab under the League's control. To achieve the desired aim in February 1944, Jinnah deputed two further committees to visit Lahore; the real intention of which was to ascertain the chances of forming a Muslim League Ministry. Finally, in March 1944, Jinnah himself arrived in Lahore to conduct negotiations with Khizar Hayat Khan but the differences remained unresolved. At the end of April, both leaders issued statements signifying that the negotiations had broken down.

The main clause on which the talks broken down was the Muslim League's more oppressive and adamant stand that Khizar should make a commitment to Jinnah on the following three points:

i) that every member of the Muslim League Party in Punjab should declare that he owes his allegiance solely to that

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Muslim League Party in the Assembly and not to the Unionist Party or any other political party;

ii) that the present label of the coalition should be dropped, namely, the 'Unionist Party'; and

iii) that the name of the proposed coalition party should be the Muslim League Coalition Party.\(^{454}\)

Moreover, Jinnah accused Khizar of making many verbal promises, but putting down nothing in writing, and bluntly refusing to his letters.\(^{455}\)

However, Khizar Hayat Khan in his statement explained the reasons for his inability to accept Mr. Jinnah's proposals.

**HINDU ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR REACTION TO AZAD PUNJAB**

Hindus particularly in Punjab were suffering from the fear of being dominated by the Muslims. They thought that there is need of safeguards to protect their culture and rights as Muslims were demanding in the Hindu majority provinces. Although an advanced community, both educationally and economically, enjoying a position of advantage over the majority community, they always demanded that they should be treated at par with other minorities.

\(^{454}\) H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1944, p. 218.  
In an atmosphere when the minority was treated as a privileged class, its thinking was moulded in a particular channel. The minority consciousness had becoming so predominant among the non-Muslims in Punjab particularly Sikhs, that when an agreement was reached among Sir Joginder Singh, Sir Gokul Chand Narang, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Mr. Ahmed Yaar Daultana on the joint electoral basis (subject to the approval of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain who gave his approval provided the Muslims could secure seats in proportion to their population). It was not accepted by the Sikhs. They were enjoying the 6% weightage in the province and they were not prepared to go for it. The Hindu Mahasabha was nervous. The atmosphere was heavy with resentment. The communalism was at its height, while the Sikh leaders underlined the common socio-cultural ties, the Hindus leaders like Raja Narendra Nath and Gokhul Chand Narang were talking about their inherent Oneness of the principles of Sikh and Hindu religion. They called the Sikhs as the "protectors" and the "Sword arm" of the Hindus. In 1945 the Akali Dal passed a resolution condemning the Hindu press of the Punjab, while one Akali member" declared a tirade against the Hindus in general and Arya

Samajists in particular".457 In the middle of July 1943, Master Tara Singh entered into an agreement with the All India Muslim League in return for the Hindu Mahasabha not objecting to his demand for Azad Punjab.458 Why Master Tara Singh made an agreement with Hindu Mahasabha? Two possibilities are visible:-

(i) To retain his political supremacy in Punjab particularly among the Akali Sikhs which was lost due to Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact.

(ii) To check Jinnah’s moves who had started talks with the Akali in July 1943 in North West Frontier Province with a view to dislodge the Congress ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib there. He had prevailed upon Ajit Singh, an Akali believed to be an Akali of Master Tara Singh’s hue, to join the Muslim League ministry there on May 1943.

The Akali by now were weary of criticism and disturbed by all round criticism. It is estimated that in the year 1943 about fifty conferences were held by Shiromani Akali Dal either directly under its name or through sponsorship in support of the Azad Punjab

458. The Tribune, July 17 and 18, 1943.
Scheme.\textsuperscript{459} But strong opposition from the leaders like Baba Kharak Singh and Sant Singh continued. The anti Azad Punjab conferences were organized at different places in the Rawalpindi division with these Congressite leaders. The Akali Dal bitterly criticized all those who opposed the Azad Punjab scheme.\textsuperscript{460}

The Nationalist Sikhs started opposing the demand for the Sikh State. Master Tara Singh resigned from the presidentship of Akali Dal on 4\textsuperscript{th} March 1944. His resignation was against Panthic activities of Baba Kharak Singh and Jhabbal brothers of Central Akali Dal who were all out opposing the Sikh State. In 1944, the demand for Azad Punjab was converted into one for an independent Sikh State as the Sikh fears had been aroused by the Rajagopalchari Formula.\textsuperscript{461} The Formula was a product of political apprehension raised by Quit India Movement as most of the top important leaders of the Congress party had been thrown into jail.

Meanwhile, the Muslim League had become a mass movement among the Muslims as a result of its adoption of demand for Pakistan. It now became a political force to reopen

\textsuperscript{461} K. C. Gulati, \textit{The Akalis Past and Present}, p. 100.
Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh had joined hands with the Unionists in showing enthusiastic support for war efforts. Some form of compromise on the basis of the demand for Pakistan seemed necessary.

The Formula intended to have support of Muslim League in Congress’s demand for independence for India at the end of World War II and the Congress for its part, would agree to the establishment of a commission to demarcate contiguous Muslim majority districts – not Muslim majority provinces which formed the basis of the demand for Pakistan- in north west and north east India as a solution of the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan. The Formula had Mahatma Gandhi’s tacit blessing. After obtaining Gandhi’s approval of this Formula, he entered into discussion and correspondence with Jinnah, was finally rejected the formula since it gave him only “a shadow and a husk and maimed and mutilated Pakistan. However the Formula caused deep distress among the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab province, which would be divided into two parts, one consisting of Muslim majority districts and the other of Hindu majority districts, but

each with considerable minorities. It caused deep distress among the Sikhs as it completely ignored their interests. It drew a line across Punjab, splitting the community into two almost equal halves, one to remain in India and the other to become a part of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{468} At no time were Sikh tempers were more vocally expressed than now. It was the signal for the outburst of indignation.

On 6 May 1944, Gandhi was released from Aga Khan Palace. He started to win over Jinnah to help in forcing the British Government to promise to leave India on the close of War, and establish a National Government at the Centre during the War on the basis of Rajaji Formula spelt out publicly after the release of Gandhiji. The two leaders saw each other several times from 9\textsuperscript{th} September to 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1944.\textsuperscript{469} Perturbed by these political developments on July 14, 1943, Santokh Singh, MLA, Harnam Singh, President All India Sikh League, Joginder Singh Mann and others issued a joint statement against the formula declaring that 'the Sikhs would fight it to bitter end'.\textsuperscript{470} The Sikhs considered the Formula an affront to them and called a special convention

\textsuperscript{468} K. C. Gulati, \textit{The Akalis Past and Present}, p. 100.
representing all sections of opinion to record their protest.\textsuperscript{471} An All Parties Sikh Conference was held at Amritsar on 1\textsuperscript{st} August 1944 under the presidency of Baldev Singh, Development minister. The Conference unanimously resolved that the basis of communal settlement outlined in Rajagopalchari Formula is manifestly unfair and detrimental to the best interests of the country and the Sikh community.\textsuperscript{472}

**C. RAJAGOPALACHARI FORMULA AND THE PUNJAB POLITICS**

To avoid any future constitutional disaster, C. Rajagopalachari came out with a 'Sporting Offer' on 29 August 1940, to persuade his colleagues in the Congress to accept a Muslim League Prime Minister with a right to nominate persons of his own choice in the national Government. His purpose was to promote an agreement with the Muslim League with a view to attain independence for the country.\textsuperscript{473}

Even at that time the Working Committee of Akali Dal considered the offer unjust, undemocratic, anti-national and detrimental to the rights of the non Muslim communities. Though the Akali Dal was not in favour of Rajagopalachari offer yet they did not attune to Khalistan. In August 1944 the Sikhs demanded the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{471} K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 100.
\bibitem{473} V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 94.
\end{thebibliography}
same rights in all provinces as had been given to the other minorities. Mohinder Singh moved an amendment seeking creation of an Independent Sikh State. It was supported by Giani Kartar Singh. Master Tara Singh set the tone for doing that by declaring that the Sikhs, who were a nation, would see that, if and when India was divided, the Sikhs should not be made slaves either of Pakistan or Hindustan.\textsuperscript{474}

Sardar Ujjal Singh intervened to suggest that Master Tara Singh should appoint a committee to evolve in consultation with all Sikh interests, a scheme for establishment of an independent Sikh State if India was to be divided between the Hindus and the Muslims.\textsuperscript{475} Giani Kartar Singh said that no appeals should now be made to the Sikhs in the name of India as there would be no such thing after the partition of country.\textsuperscript{476} The Amritsar Conference of All Party Sikhs demanded an independent Sikh State and authorised Master Tara Singh to go into the questions of taking suitable steps to have such a state. The leaders of the Akali Dal in the Conference had made no secret of the fact that they spoke of 'Independent Sikh State' for the Sikhs.

The Formula and talks also created uneasiness among most of the Sikh elite. Baldev Singh, in a presidential address at

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Gujranwala proclaimed: *Even if the Muslim League promised to build houses of Gold for Sikhs in Pakistan, they would refuse to live in it.* The Sikh Panth had proclaimed its opposition in bitter turns.\(^{477}\) He further said, "*The Sikhs would have nothing to do with Muslim League so long as it struck to the Pakistan scheme. No Sikh worth name could ever think of co-operating with party which was scheming to divide India. Muslim League leaders had several times appealed to the Sikhs to accept the principle of Pakistan and made promises that Sikhs would have a fair deal from League."

Commenting on the idea of Pakistan he said, it as ‘*adherent and obnoxious*.\(^{478}\) They would never agree to live in the Pakistan of League description. Baldev Singh said, "*The Sikhs would be ready to shed their last drop of blood to maintain unity and integrity of their homeland, if Pakistan is ever forced upon them."

Master Tara Singh wrote a letter to Gandhi on 5 August, 1944 expressing his anguish at Raja ji's scheme as it bypassed the Sikhs. Gandhi assured the Sikh leader in his reply that the interest of Sikh community would receive his equal attention while arriving at any settlement with the League.\(^{480}\) In his characteristic way, he wrote, "*we shall come to no final terms. The smallest interest will*
have the same weight as the largest. That is the requirement of my creed. It is a lapse if I do not live up to it. With this assurance I would leave you for the time being. Pray that both of us may have the strength to do what is wholly right and not to tone down the right for the sake of the expedience." 481

In a letter to Durlabh Singh, Secretary of the Central Sikh Youth League and progressive Akali Dal, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that Sikh interests and the interests of nationalists were safe in the hands of those of the Congress; my association with Raja Ji in his Formula could not affect the Sikh position in the slightest degree even if Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah had accepted the Formula. The Lahore Resolution of the Congress referred to by you stands ... I had made this clear in my letter to Master Ji.482 At the same time, the Congress Sikh leaders started assuaging the feelings of their community by telling them that the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi would not take any step inimical to the interest of the Sikhs and if they had any grievances or fears, the best course for them was to present their case to Gandhi. The release of the

481 The Tribune, October, 7, 1945.
Congress Sikh leaders and the activities of Nagoke and Niranjan Singh groups created a swing formula towards the Congress.\(^{483}\)

Thus at a meeting of the Sikh leaders in August 1944, called on Nagoke group, though in minority in the Akali Party favoured approaching the Congress leadership before launching any campaign against the C.R. Formula. A Sikh Congress men's conference that met in September at Amritsar declared its faith in Gandhi and they appealed him to consult the nationalist Sikh opinion before committing himself to any final settlement threatening to divide the Sikhs in two.\(^{484}\) However, the Government Intelligence reported that most of the Sikh leaders who were supporting Gandhi- Jinnah talks with the hope that it would result in the formation of a National Government were either Communist or their sympathizes.\(^{485}\)

Isher Singh Majhail, the General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal declared at the All India Akali Conference at Jandiala, Jullandhar district, in November that the Dal will continue to stand by the Congress in every struggle launched to achieve India's

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\(^{483}\) Home Political Deptt.18.8.1944 and also see The Tribune, August 21, 1944.

\(^{484}\) Home Political Dept, File No. 18.9.1944.

\(^{485}\) Home Political Dept, File No. 18.9.1944
freedom as it did in the past. The Congress leadership of the province was placed in a difficult situation. Those who had been released recently, were not in a position to take up normal political activity as the movements of some of them were still restricted.

The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks had diverse effect on the political parties and groups in the Punjab. The Akalis felt relieved because of their apprehensions that any agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah on the basis of Rajagopalachari Formula would be inimical to the Sikh interest. However they continued their agitation for creation of a separate political unit dominated by the Sikhs and a hint was even thrown by some of the Akali leaders for securing the help of the British for its realization though it was hastily denied because of the strong criticism of this move by non Akali Sikh leaders. The Sikh Communist leaders tried to pacify their community by arguing that the failure of the talks proved Gandhi’s sincerity towards the Sikhs, as it revealed that he wanted to safeguard their interests as well as of all minorities.

Interestingly, the breach in the relations of the Congress and the Akalis after the resignation of Master Tara Singh provided some

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487 Home Political Dept, File No. 18.10.1944.
488 Home Political Dept, File No 18.10.1944.
of his rivals with a suitable opportunity for reviving the Sikh Congress Party. Consequently 50 representatives of Sikh nationalists assembled in Lahore on the 5th of October 1944.

The Hindu Sabha, though heaving a sigh of relief, tried to make capital out of the failure of the talks by propagating that the Hindu agitation in the Punjab was partly responsible in making Gandhi feel that C.R. Formula was a mistake. The Muslim League circles of the Punjab though unhappy at the failure of the talks because it destroyed their hopes of gaining political powers in the province through their alliance with the Congress, were, however, satisfied that talks had raised the image of their leaders in all India politics. As a result of which they had acquired an edge over all non League Muslim Political Parties in the country. There was even a persistent rumour that the negotiations were torpedoed by the British by conveying a message to Jinnah through Firoze Khan Noon to the effect that Muslims would get 40 percent in Central Legislature. Even British bureaucracy in the Punjab watched the negotiations with concern. For, they were afraid that the success of the talks would make it difficult for Khizr to carry on his Government. Consequently, the failure of the talks gave a sense

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of relief both to the British and the Unionist circles in the provinces.

Sardar Baldev Singh being head of the Working Committee regarded the Formula as a break of faith on the part of the Congress leaders who had assured the Sikhs at the Lahore Congress in 1929 that no communal settlement would be accepted by the Congress which did not satisfy the Sikh community. Another All Parties Sikh Conference was held at Amritsar on 20th August, 1944.

As many as 741 invitations were issued. About 561 who attended included individuals and representatives of various Sikh organizations such as the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee, Singh Sabhas, Shiromani Akali Dal, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Defence of Indian League, Sikhs MLAs, Sikh Moderates, Nirmalas and Namdharis. The Central Akali Dal declined the invitation and Sikh Communists were not invited but both these absentee groups rejected the C.R. formula separately.

In a speech at this Conference, Tara Singh declared that the Sikhs were a nation and if there was going to be a discussion of the country than they should not be made slaves of Pakistan or Hindustan. It declared that no communal settlement, reached

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without the consent of the Sikhs, could be binding on them. The day 21 August 1944 finally waved Azad Punjab Scheme and a demand for establishment of an Independent Sikh State became vocal.