



The **Makers** *of* **Modern** **Punjab**

What They had to Say

Compiled by:
Dr. Kirpal Singh



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Books by Dr. Kirpal Singh

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- *Perspectives on Sikh Gurus*
- *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab - 1947*
- *Partition of Punjab - 1947*
- *Maharaja Ala Singh of Patiala and His Times*
- *Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*
(with collaboration of Prof. M.L. Ahluwalia)
- *A Catalogue of Persian and Sanskrit Manuscripts*
- *A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts*
- *Bhai Vasti Ram and Bhai Ram Singh*
- *Atlas of the Travels of Guru Nanak*
- *History and Culture of Punjab (Edited)*
- *Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times*
- *The Adi Granth as a Source of History*

Punjabi :

- ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਨਿਕਲਣ ਦੀ ਗਾਥਾ
- ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦਾ ਬਟਵਾਰਾ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੇਤਾ
- ਭਾਰਤ ਦੀ ਆਜ਼ਾਦੀ ਦਾ ਆਗਮਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਥਿਤੀ
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- ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀਆਂ (1947 ਦੇ ਸ਼ਹੀਦ)
- ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦਾ ਬਟਵਾਰਾ 1947
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(ਅਗਵਾ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ)
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- ਜਨਮਸਾਖੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ, ਮਿਹਰਬਾਨ (ਸੰਪਾਦਿਤ)
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- ਗੋਲਡਨ ਜੁਬਲੀ ਬੁਕ, ਸਿੱਖ ਐਜੂਕੇਸ਼ਨਲ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ
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- ਬਾਬਾ ਬੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੌਰੰਗਾਬਾਦੀ
- ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਦੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪੱਖ

Persian :

- ਚਾਰ ਬਾਗ਼-ਏ-ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਗਣੇਸ਼ਦਾਸ ਵਡੇਹਰਾ (ਸੰਪਾਦਿਤ)

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Compiled by
Dr Kirpal Singh
Prithipal Singh Kapur

Edited by
Late Dr Kharak Singh



Singh Brothers
Amritsar

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Preface

Oral history is a significant methodology for recording contemporary history. In certain respects, it has proved better than the documents wherein some of the details are always missing. Usually all types of in-depth information can be gleaned during the interview with the informant. Hence, Oral History is a more comprehensive source for construction of history.

The year C.E. 1947 is a landmark in the history of Southeast Asia as India and Pakistan (including the present Bangladesh) became sovereign countries. After independence, it was realized that the British Government had not properly preserved records of freedom struggle as these were kept in a section marked as *Thaggi* and Dacoity in the National Archives, previously known as Imperial Record Office, New Delhi. Determined efforts were set afoot to collect material regarding freedom struggle. In the wake of this exercise, it was also decided to collect statements of those who were associated with the movement.

There has been a Sikh History Research Department in existence at Khalsa College, Amritsar since C.E. 1930. It is perhaps one of the oldest history research centres in our region. I was selected to head this Department in 1950. The tragedies of partition were still fresh in the minds of the people. Therefore, I got one research assistant appointed to record the statements of refugees from the West Pakistan. These statements were compiled in the form of a book, which was, published by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar under the title *Shahīdīān*.

In C.E. 1956, we appointed a youngman who had just come out of the college after postgraduation, as a Research

Assistant to record the statements of eminent freedom fighters and important political personages. He was Prithipal Singh Kapur who subsequently rose to be Director, Punjab State University Text Book Board and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar. He found the assignment exciting and enthusiastically collected a number of statements in English and Punjabi within a short period. In those days, tape recorders were still to get popular in India. One had to record a statement by writing. Four of the statements recorded by him are included in this volume.

In 1973, Punjabi University, Patiala where I was then working as a Reader in the Department of History, decided to set up an Oral History Cell in the Punjab Historical Studies Department. The Syndicate of the Punjabi University, Patiala appointed me as Project Officer for this Cell. One Research Assistant was appointed to assist me. Subsequently in 1981, I became the Professor and Head, Punjab Historical Studies Department where Oral History Cell had been located. During my tenure, staff of the Oral History Cell was increased and I got myself enrolled as a member of the Oral History Association, USA, which enabled me to have access to literature relating to the Oral History methodology. We decided to take the following steps to systematize the recording of statements:

1. As a first step, we identified notable persons who had taken part in important political and social reform movements.
2. A detailed bio-data of such persons was obtained.
3. A questionnaire was prepared for tape-recording the statements.
4. Conversion of tape-recorded statements into script.
5. Approval of script by the person interviewed.

In India, it is not easy to collect the data of Oral History on the lines specified above. But still our systematic method of interviewing the important personalities with certain well thought-out questions proved to be more rewarding.

The partition of Punjab in C.E. 1947 was followed by uprooting of more than ten million people, forced cross mass migration between the East and West Punjabs accompanied by massacre of about half a million persons and abduction of about fifty thousand women and children. How and why this happened, has been selected to be the main subject of Part II of this book.

In 1964, I was deputed by the Punjab Government to collect the historical material relating to partition of the Punjab from England. This opportunity was utilized for recording the statements of important British personalities who were present in India during the time of the trauma of partition of Punjab or were involved in the happenings in one way or the other. The interviews with these personalities were fixed with the help of Shri Kewal Singh, ICS, the then Deputy High Commissioner for India in U.K. who took keen interest in this Project. The main theme of these interviews was why there had been so much bloodshed during and after the partition of Punjab. The explanations varied from person to person. But all opinions remain significant for the researchers and students of history. All these statements were compiled in the form of a book entitled *Select Documents on Partition of the Punjab*.

Professor Prithipal Singh Kapur, the co-compiler had been very closely associated with this project since its very inception. Needless to mention that he contributed handsomely in finalizing this compilation.

It will be in fitness of things to acknowledge with thanks the facilities extended to me by the authorities of Khalsa College, Amritsar and the Punjabi University, Patiala for taking the initiative to record oral evidence of the notables of the period. Thanks are due to all those who were interviewed for their co-operation and courtesies extended. I am grateful to Late Dr Kharak Singh, Editor of *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, a Journal of Institute of Sikh Studies,

Chandigarh, who took keen interest in the publication of this work and even volunteered to edit it.

Thanks are also due to Professor Malwinderjit Singh, formerly of Guru Nanak Dev Engineering College, Ludhiana, who provided some documents relating to Parmanand of Jhansi to facilitate cross-checking of some facts. A mention is necessary about the keen interest evinced by our learned publisher, S. Gursagar Singh in the publication of this work.

Kirpal Singh

1288, Sector 15-B
Chandigarh

Editor's Note

Oral evidence has always remained the basic evidence on which earlier the chronicler and later day historian relied. Interestingly *Janam Sākhī*s are the end product of oral history preserved in the minds of the followers of Guru Nanak so far as Sikh history is concerned. This evidence gradually began to be looked upon as devotees' imagery when it came to the period of the successors of Guru Nanak. But it got transformed into a powerful tradition that became the kernel of all the classical works like *Nanak Parkāsh*, *Sūraj Parkāsh* (Santokh Singh), *Baṁsāwalīnāmā Dasān Pātshāhīān Kā* (Kesar Singh), *Mahimā Parkāsh* (Sarup Das), *Pañth Parkāsh* (Gian Singh and Rattan Singh Bhangoo) and Bhai Vir Singh's *Guru Nanak Chamtkār* and *Kalghīdhar Chamtkār*. All this continues to provide invaluable material to prepare a narrative of history of the Sikhs. But when 'historians' craft' was in its formative stage and had yet to decipher its parameters, this very oral historical evidence degenerated into what we often describe as legend.

But, with the emergence of historiography in our times, greater emphasis began to be laid on critical examination of sources, wherein oral historical evidence got a back seat. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when focus shifted to the primary source-material, oral history re-emerged as relevant evidence. In the modern times, tape-recording (both audio as well as video) has given added importance to the oral evidence. The media devices, being extensively used have facilitated the re-emergence of oral history as a significant primary source.

In the Sikh history, recording of oral evidence started with Giani Gian Singh and Karam Singh Historian who

recorded the statements of such elders who had lived during the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and had been witness to important events of the time, particularly the Anglo-Sikh Wars. Thereafter, Dr Kirpal Singh carried the oral history tradition forward as head of the Department of Sikh History Research at Khalsa College, Amritsar. He chartered a plan for recording of oral evidence of the victims of partition of the Punjab in 1947, the political personages, freedom fighters, bureaucrats, intellectuals, the army generals who appeared on the scene during the twentieth century. The evidence, thus, collected related to three fateful periods of Sikh history – the Gurdwaras Reform Movement (well-known in history as Akali Movement), the freedom struggle in Punjab 1925-47 and the transfer of power. The partition of Punjab that came as a climax, witnessed the biggest ever carnage and largest migration of population ever known to history. Dr Kirpal Singh was instrumental in recording the statements of a large number of Britishers who influenced the turn of events during this period in various capacities, and compiled them in his monumental work on 'Select Documents on the Partition of Punjab'. He also got recorded the statements of victims of partition who had to face extraordinary hardships. His is indeed a pioneering work on contemporary history. He continued the recording of oral evidence for posterity when he was called upon to organize an oral history cell at the Punjabi University, Patiala.

The present volume contains detailed interviews with prominent leaders, intellectuals and officials of the period that lay bare their approach towards the fateful events of the period. Four of these interviews were recorded by Professor Prithipal Singh Kapur while he worked as Research Assistant at Khalsa College, Amritsar during the early period of his illustrious career. Now he is an authority on Sikh studies in his own right. There is little doubt that all the interviews included in this volume constitute an important and reliable

primary source of history of the Punjab for the period to which they relate, yielding a mine of information including many an interesting revelation.

I am sure the contribution of Dr Kirpal Singh in this area, shall be gratefully remembered by the scholars for all times to come.

Institute of Sikh Studies
Chandigarh

Late Dr Kharak Singh

October 24, 2007

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Oral History has been defined as "Primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words – generally by means of planned tape-recorded interviews of persons deemed to harbour hitherto available information worth preserving...it is more than a tool and less than a discipline."¹ It got established in C.E. 1948 as a modern technique for historical documentation when the Columbia University historian Allan Nevins began recording the memoirs of persons significant in American life.² Nevins noticed that under the impact of science and technology the people were more used to frequent travel and the use of telephone, which had become the common mode of communication and that the people in general were abandoning the habit of diary-keeping or letter-writing. In the process, the future historians were being deprived of information of two most important sources. Nevins was convinced that this loss could be minimized if skilled interviewers with tape recorders collected the reminiscences of knowledgeable persons. Viewed from this perspective, Oral History was conceived as an effective tool 'to utilize technology to counter the inroads of technology'.

According to Jan Vansina, the author of *Oral Tradition – A Study of Historical Methodology*, Oral History is the study of Oral tradition that occupies a special place in the various kinds of historical sources. It is in fact a national tradition,

1. Rock Feller, *Illustrated Encyclopaedia*, Vol. III, New York, May 1977.

2. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past - Oral History*, Oxford University Press, p. 54.

which had remained embedded in the minds of the people – peasants, towns folk, men, women and even children. One can divide oral traditions into the following categories: narratives, legends, anecdotes, proverbs, historical plays, etc., etc. In the pre-literate ages, people had strong power of memory and handed down their traditions in a form made suitable for oral transmission by the use of rhyme, or other formulae for linkage of the material together. Validity of tradition can be emphasized by holding that tradition has always held a kernel of truth within it. On the whole, oral tradition has always been treated an important source of information.

In the recent years, particularly in the study of history of African societies, the ethno-historian and anthropologists with historical interest have demonstrated convincingly how oral tradition can be recorded, arranged, checked and utilized for historical purposes. Very often, there are specialists whose major concern has been to memorize and transmit these traditions. Similar conditions existed in ancient India when the verses of the *Rig Veda* had been preserved by memory from generation to generation till they got the written form. In the Rajput states in medieval India, there used to be bards who recited the important events of the dynastic history of the rulers.

Oral evidence has certain advantages over the written documents. In contrast to any historical document, oral evidence comes from living sources. If it seems misleading, it is possible to look for more informants and also correct the interviewer who may have misunderstood it. Oral History is a two-way process. It can lead to discovery independent of a document. However, one individual testimony cannot carry the full weight of history but it can bring insight into the process and point towards an account of past experience.

The term Oral History is of recent origin. But it does not mean that it has no roots in the past. In fact, Oral History

is as old as history itself. Oral tradition was predominant in the pre-literate societies before the dawn of the civilization. At that stage, all kinds of knowledge was transmitted orally. Some writers are of the view that "Oral History really goes back as far as Adam and Eve. When Eve ate the apple and told Adam about it that was the beginning of oral reminiscence."³

Like so many scriptures, *New Testament* came into being as an unwritten tradition. Those who conceived Gospels passed their information down by word of mouth for at least thirty years before original texts were written. It is apparent that the legend of the life of Christ came from more than one person. In all these cases, Oral History remained the active agent as it represented the use of spoken testimony as a source of history.

Likewise, the life stories of Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.), the founder of Sikhism, remained current among the faithful for more than sixty years before being committed to writing. These had become a part of the Sikh memory. The first impulse which brought about the stories of Guru Nanak was based on the elements of reverence, wonder and amazement. When Bhai Gurdas wrote about the founder of Sikhism during the 17th century, he had before him such oral testimonies, legends and traditions current among the Sikhs and these were his primary sources of information. Later on, the tradition of Guru Nanak assumed the form of various *Janamsākhīs* through which the tradition got the written form. Different attending circumstances brought variations in these written traditions of Guru Nanak.⁴

Many of the early versions of Sikh history were based on oral evidence. Some of them carry credibility. The authors assert at many places in the narrative that their work is based

3. Charles T. Morrissey, *Why Call it Oral History*, The Oral History Review, USA, 1980, p. 29.

4. For details, see Kirpal Singh, *Janamsakhi Tradition : An Analytical Study*, 2004, pp. 13-14.

on what the elders and the wise narrated to them. The author of *Prāchīn Pañth Parkāsh*, clearly states:

Now I narrate the account of the Sikhs in the way our ancestors have told. I have also heard it from the elderly and knowledgeable persons.⁵

At another place, Rattan Singh writes about martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh: ਰਤਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੁਨ ਸਾਖੀ ਲਿਖੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਕਹੀ ਸੀ ਪਿਖੀ. Rattan Singh wrote this account of the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh after hearing it from his father who had seen it.

Diwan Amar Nath, the author of *Zafarnāmah Ranjit Singh* writes in the preface of his book: "The events given by the writer were verified from the elderly contemporary people."⁶

John Malcolm significantly wrote, "In every research into general history of mankind, it is of utmost essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself and knowledge obtained from such sources has a value independent of its historical utility. It aids the promotion of social intercourse and leads to the establishment of friendship between the nations."⁷ In this way, it is the oral tradition that brings to the forefront what different classes have to say about themselves.

The concept of Oral History is based on the social concept of history. The oral testimonies are unwritten sources couched in a form suitable for oral transmission from generation to generation. However, the technique for

5. ਅਬ ਮੈਂ ਲਿਖੋਂ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਕੀ ਸਾਖੀ, ਜਿਹੁ ਬਿਧ ਬਡਨ ਅਸਾਡਨ ਆਖੀ।

ਅਰ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਤੇ ਭੀ ਸੁਨੀ ਹੁਤੇ, ਯ ਬਿਰਧ ਸਿਖ ਬਹੁਤ ਸੁਨੀ।

Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prāchīn Pañth Parkāsh*, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, p. 213.

6. *Zafarnāmah Ranjit Singh*, Amarnath, edited by Sita Ram Kohli, Punjab University, Lahore 1928, Preface. This has since been translated into Punjabi and published by Punjabi University, Patiala, 1983. It was edited by me (Kirpal Singh).

7. *Religion of the Sikhs*; Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Sushil Gupta Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1958, p. 85.

collecting oral tradition as a source material for historiography is of recent origin. Earlier, the focus of chroniclers remained on the political upheavals, conquerors and the empires. The conditions of people as a whole did not attract their attention. Oral history has brought varied experiences of the common people within the orbit of history. By introducing new evidence, the focus of enquiry got shifted to open new areas of enquiry. Oral History has in fact facilitated a process of transformation in the subject of history and herein lies the wholesome importance of oral evidence/history. Viewed from this perspective, the following pages shall remain the first-ever systematic attempt made in the realm of history of Punjab to preserve the oral evidence and examine its credibility.

CHAPTER 2

Master Tara Singh (1885 - 1967)

Master Tara Singh was a giant among the political leaders of the twentieth century Punjab. He was the first Secretary of the SGPC. After the passage of the Gurdwara Act of 1925, he was elected as Vice-President of the SGPC but he acted as President of the SGPC as Baba Kharak Singh, the President elect was still in jail. He was born on June 24, 1885 C.E. at village Harial (Rawalpindi District, now in Pakistan). His original name was Nanak Chand. He got his present name after being baptized as a Sikh by Sant Attar Singh a famous Sikh divine. He was educated at Khalsa College, Amritsar, where he shined as a brilliant student and as an outstanding sportsman. It is said that Master Tara Singh was selected for medical school after his high school and he could have been a medico but he opted for a career as a teacher. In 1908, he joined as headmaster of Khalsa High School, Lyallpur (now Faisalabad, Pakistan) which was started at his suggestion and initiative. His real interest lay in Sikh affairs. He started a weekly paper *Sachā Dhaṇḍorā* in 1909. In 1915, when the Ghadrites came to Punjab to inform the people about the plight of Punjabis in Canada and usher in a revolution to free the country, he helped them by organizing public meetings at Lyallpur, Rawalpindi and Gujar Khan. Instinctively, Master Tara Singh was a rebel and he took a plunge by joining the Akali movement for liberation of Sikh shrines from the *mahants*, after the Nankana tragedy. Thereafter, he remained a front-ranker in the Akali hierarchy. He always stood for Congress-Akali collaboration during this grim fight. He welcomed the Congress initiative to establish an *Akālī Sahāyak Bureau* at Amritsar and himself ventured to launch a daily newspaper *Akālī* with the help of Master Sunder Singh, earlier one of his colleagues at Lyallpur. He also gave full support to Mangal Singh for starting the English daily, *Hindustan Times*.

He supported the Congress non-cooperation, boycott of the Simon Commission and identified himself with the Civil Disobedience movement. But he denounced the Nehru report prepared by Moti Lal Nehru Committee because it denied a fair deal to the Sikh community. He also disagreed with the Congress on the question of supporting the recruitment drive during the Second World War. He was all for freedom of the country but he understood the importance of recruitment in the armed forces vis-à-vis the economic lot of his community and its political ramifications in the days to come. He opposed demand for Pakistan or partition of India along communal lines; tooth and nail. It was due to his efforts that the Congress came round to support the partition of the Punjab. He attended the Simla Conference (1946) called by Lord Wavell, as sole Sikh representative where he vociferously opposed the demand for Pakistan. During this period, Master Tara Singh emerged as the only Non-Muslim leader who doggedly opposed Pakistan and saved the present Punjab for India. His primary concern has been preservation of the distinct Sikh identity and to ensure a respectable place for the Sikh community in the emerging political system of India.

After 1947, his efforts bore fruit to integrate the Sikh states with the rest of Punjab that subsequently led to formation of the present Punjab state. He died on November 22, 1967. Master Tara Singh was incorruptible and a patriot to the core is a fact that even his worst enemies conceded.

Prelude to the statement of Master Tara Singh

It was in the second half of the year 1956, when I joined as Research Assistant in the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar. There, I was assigned the work of recording the statements of eminent Sikh leaders who had played significant role in the Sikh renaissance, Gurdwara Reform Movement of early twentieth century or had taken active part in the freedom struggle of the Country. A list of such persons was prepared in the department with the guidance of Dr Kirpal Singh. It was decided that I should start work with the scanning of the records of the SGPC and the Chief Khalsa Diwan. When I visited these offices, I found that old records in both these historic organizations were kept in most casual manner. The SGPC had a separate record room and a Record

Keeper but they were more concerned about the records after the SGPC got statutory status with the passage of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925. The historic records for the period 1920-25, which related to the grim struggle waged by the Sikhs for the Gurdwara Reform had been packed in bundles and kept separately awaiting disposal. When I approached the semi-literate record keeper for consultation of these precious records, he told me that Executive Committee of the SGPC had taken a decision to destroy these records by burning them in the presence of the members of the Executive Committee. Since I had earlier worked in the National Archives and handled such records, I got concerned and reported the matter to Dr Kirpal Singh who advised me to immediately contact the veteran Akali leader, Master Tara Singh who was then (if my memory does not fail me) the President of the SGPC and lived in Ranjit Pura, near Khalsa College, Amritsar. Within a few days, I managed to see Master Tara Singh and mentioned to him that a very irrational decision had been taken about destruction of old records of the SGPC. His reply was that the records pertained only to the income and expenditure accounts and there was nothing in them that could be related to the historical events of the time. However, I argued with him to make him conscious that he himself had been the Secretary of the SGPC and had remained in correspondence with the government officials and leaders of national political parties. It was this argument that cut ice with him and he gave me permission to unfold these bundles to consult the records so as to examine if any of these papers could be of historical value and needed preservation. Thus, I first laid my hand on SGPC records and let the Chief Khalsa Diwan records wait for a month or so. As I delved deep into these records, I found some of the original papers of historical importance. To mention only a few, Late Lala Lajpat Rai's letter to Master Tara Singh seeking the help of Akali workers to organize Mandal Congress Committees at *mofuossil* towns like Nakodar¹ etc., the original of the greetings telegram sent by Mahatma Gandhi to Baba Kharak Singh on the success of Key's *Morchā* (now an oft quoted document), the original drafts and copies of the communiqués issued by the SGPC during the *Jaito Morchā* (these are believed to have been drafted

1. By then, the Akali workers had become famous for their anti-British zeal and non-violent crusade against the imperialist government.

daily by Professor Teja Singh), which were sent to the Akali Jathās by hand.² During this period, I paid numerous visits to the house of Master Tara Singh and told him about my success in having discovered historical papers relating to the Akali Movement. However, I was astonished to find that Master Tara Singh was least enthusiastic about preservation of historical records or about getting his own statement recorded. Here, I will like to mention his cryptic remarks in this respect:

Prithipal Singh Kapur: Master Ji, you have been the most important of the Sikh leaders of first half of 20th century, will you like to share with me some of your historic achievements or a few anecdotes regarding the critical situations that you had to face?

Master Tara Singh: I do not believe that truth is recorded by any of the historians. Some of the history books are even inspired writings. It is useless to get such statements recorded.

Prithipal Singh Kapur: Still there are some people like you who believe in telling the truth.

Master Tara Singh: How do you know that I shall reveal before you my failings also? I have written an account of the political events with which I have been connected in 'My Reminiscences' (*Merī Yād*) and that is enough.

Despite this, I continued visiting Master Tara Singh and my perseverance bore fruit when he agreed to give me an interview that was expected to have some references, which were not included in *Merī Yād*.

Statement of Master Tara Singh

The first question that I asked Master Tara Singh was as to how he was attracted towards Sikhism. His reply was that he was born in a family, wherein all the members were

2. Since numerous copies of these communiqués were found packed in the bundles (both in Punjabi and English), I sent their copies both to Khalsa College, Amritsar and the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar. It will be interesting to relate that in the early sixties of the last century, I received letters from the SGPC accusing me of having stolen some records of the SGPC. They wanted them back for preservation in Sikh Reference Library. I sent these letters to S. Bishan Singh Samundari, the then Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar explaining to him the whole position. He wrote me back to forget about the unsavory episode.

Jinnah, contact was established with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru (both were then under detention). Master Tara Singh was also taken into confidence regarding these parleys. Jinnah put forth a demand that all the areas with 65% Muslim population or more should form the proposed state of Pakistan. To Master Tara Singh, this proposal appeared to favour the Sikhs. He told me that he gave positive response to the proposal on behalf of the Sikhs. Gokal Chand Narang was being consulted on behalf of the Punjabi Hindus. He did not react openly about the proposal but suggested that some other Hindu leader should also be associated with these parleys. At this, Goswami Ganesh Dutt was called to Delhi. He came to Delhi along with Kundan Lal Lamba. The Swami did not possess any political sagacity. Therefore, when the proposal was put before him he raised a hue and cry declaring that Hindus were not prepared to give any territory of the Punjab province to Pakistan. In this way, nothing came out of this initiative of Mr C. Rajgopalachari.

Master Tara Singh on his own; as he put it, was disappointed because this failed initiative convinced him that the Sikhs will have to wage a grim struggle for their very existence in the days to come. Consequently, the Sikhs opposed the Cabinet Mission proposals tooth and nail, which only earned them the recognition as a national minority. Despite this development, all the three parties, the Congress, Muslim League and the British Government did not come forth with specifics to accommodate the Sikhs.

Master Tara Singh voluntarily narrated some events perhaps with a motive to clear the mist that had gathered around them with the lapse of time. These events pertained to the political situation as it obtained after the 1946 elections. Muslim League had emerged in this election as the single largest party and the Unionist party got a severe beating. Despite this, Khizar Hayat was able to form a coalition government with the help of the Akalis and the

Congress. This had a sharp reaction among the Muslim masses of the Punjab. The Muslims perceived that they had been sidelined in consequence of an unholy alliance, which they thought had the tacit support of the British. Such a developing situation frightened the British bureaucracy in Punjab. They thought of affecting a rapprochement between the Sikhs and Muslims and to sideline the Congress to the benefit of the Muslim League. Master Tara Singh said, "in their view this could lead to prolongation of British Raj in India." The negotiations with the Sikh leadership were started on the initiative of the Home Secretary, Mr McDonald. A tempting argument put forth before the Sikh leaders (particularly Master Tara Singh) was that an alliance with the Muslims will give an opportunity to the Sikhs to become effective in the polity of the entire country. Master Tara Singh explained, "I took it as a deception. I was not prepared to talk till the Muslim League got prepared to leave aside their demand for Pakistan." After this, Giani Kartar Singh and Baldev Singh were approached. But nothing came out of these overtures. Some British Officers addressed letters to Baldev Singh so as to win him over to their point of view. Baldev Singh showed these letters to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. After the breakdown of these talks, Muslim League started agitation. Thereupon, as disclosed by Master Tara Singh specifically, Khizar Hayat decided to disallow the publication of all news regarding this agitation. He further revealed that he himself issued a statement regarding this agitation, which was not allowed to appear in the press. He said, "This convinced me that decision regarding the press black-out had been taken at the level of British officers." When the agitation spread, Khizar invited Bhim Sen Sachar and Gopi Chand Bhargava the Congress leaders, to seek their help. They refused to oblige and advised him to resign and approach Muslim League for support. Consequently, Khizar Hayat Khan resigned. The immediate effect of this development was demoralizing on

the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab. A joint meeting of the Congress and Panthic legislature parties was held in the Assembly Hall at Lahore. "To push the members of the legislature and leaders out of a state of despondency," Master Tara Singh said, "I suggested that a decision should be taken to oppose the installation of Muslim League Government in Punjab." The proposal was instantly accepted and all came out of the meeting raising slogans '*Pakistan Murdābād*'. Outside the Assembly Hall building, a crowd of about four to five thousand Muslims had gathered to know about the decision taken in the meeting, which did not turn out to their liking. At this, they started raising retaliatory slogans '*Pakistan Zindābād*'. Instantly Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din and some other Muslim League leaders appeared on the scene and persuaded the crowd to move away. Thus, the tension was diffused. We stayed back for some time more. This happened on March 2, 1947. Same night, a meeting was held at Kapurthala House, Lahore wherein it was decided to appoint me as dictator of the agitation to be launched by the Hindus and Sikhs against the installation of Muslim League Government," Master Tara Singh concluded.

In the end, I particularly asked him, "there is a general belief among the people that you tore the Muslim League flag." He replied, "This was a rumour set afloat by the Muslims who had strong resentment against my tough stand on their demand for Pakistan."

[Recorded by Prithipal Singh Kapur]

CHAPTER 3

Baba Kharak Singh (1868 - 1963)

The emergence of Kharak Singh as a front-rank leader of the Sikh renaissance in the early twentieth century remains a phenomenon. Born on June 6, 1868 at Sialkot (now in Pakistan) in a family that belonged to the elite Sikh class propelled by the British, he found himself uneasy in the life-style and pretensions of the people among whom he grew up. His father, Hari Singh was a wealthy government contractor and a prosperous industrialist. After passing his intermediate examination from Murray College, Sialkot, he joined Government College, Lahore to obtain his graduation degree from the Punjab University, Lahore among the first batch of students in 1889. Thereafter he went to Allahabad University for a law course but he had to leave it midway due to the sudden death of his father and elder brother and return to Sialkot to manage the family business. However, he possessed such qualities that groomed him into a charismatic leader. Kharak Singh initially attracted the pro-British Sikh elite who had organized themselves into Chief Khalsa Diwan. They invited Kharak Singh to become the Chairman of Reception Committee for the Sikh Educational Conference held at Sialkot in 1912 in which capacity he demonstrated his zeal to serve the Sikh community with dedication. For the next three years, Kharak Singh remained associated with the Chief Khalsa Diwan but he felt ill at ease with the policy of servility pursued by the Diwan towards the British Government. He gave ample indication of his feelings in this regard, when he was asked to preside over the 8th Session of Sikh Educational Conference held at Tarn Taran. As a humble Sikh, he refused to be driven in a carriage (*buggy*) pulled by six horses to the venue of the conference. Instead, he preferred to walk through streets of the holy city along with the *sangat*. He also refused to move a resolution from the Chair wishing the victory of the British in World War I.

Only a year later in 1916 Lucknow Pact was concluded between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, which recognized the Muslim claim for a separate electorate with a weightage of seats in excess of their population in the provinces where the Muslims were in minority. Surprisingly there was no mention of the Sikhs in the Pact. The Sikhs felt ignored and let down by the Congress. This became clear from the presidential address delivered by Gajjan Singh, the first President of the Central Sikh League, a political organization floated by the Sikhs in March 1919 at Lahore. He exhorted the Sikhs to become politically conscious so as to secure their rightful position in future political set-up of India. Kharak Singh did not take time to realize that the arena for his sphere of activity had been laid out. Following the gruesome massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, such was the alacrity of events that Kharak Singh found himself catapulted to the position of President of the Central Sikh League. After this, there was no looking back. His first major decision as President of the Central Sikh League came when he gave a call to the Sikhs to participate in the Indian national politics and join the movement for the freedom of India. Simultaneously, his concern for the Sikh identity and ensuring a dignified place for the Sikhs in the future political set-up of India remained unabated.

When the urgency for reform in the Sikh shrines came into much sharper focus, Kharak Singh stood in the vanguard of the movement and was elected President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee constituted in 1921. He successfully led the agitation against the seizure of the keys of *Toshākhānā* of *Srī Harimandar Sāhib* (Golden Temple) by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. His insistence to receive back the keys from a government official in a Sikh congregation at the Akal Takht gave such a legitimacy and prestige to the Gurdwara Reforms Movement and to Kharak Singh himself that Mahatma Gandhi telegraphically congratulated him saying "the first battle for India's freedom won, congratulations." Between 1922-25, Kharak Singh had to be in and out of the British Government prisons many a time and face such humiliations as removal of turban while in jail. He resisted such unbecoming actions of the government by resorting to *Satyāgrah* discarding all his clothes except the drawers (*Kachhehrā*). The Gurdwara Reform Movement culminated with the passage of Sikh

Gurdwaras Act of 1925. After the first election held under this legislation, Kharak Singh had the honour of being elected as the first President of this body in absentia. This was the zenith of the colourful career of Kharak Singh. In 1928-29, Moti Lal Nehru Report, which outlined the future political set-up of India, came as a disappointment to the Sikhs, like the Lucknow Pact. The presence of Mangal Singh as a Sikh representative in the Committee did not make any difference. Kharak Singh vehemently opposed this report till the Congress party agreed to shelve it and gave an assurance to the Sikhs in this regard. Consequently, the Lahore Session of the Congress (December 1929) adopted a resolution assuring "the Sikhs, the Muslims and other minorities that no solution of the communal question in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned." Mahatma Gandhi later on conceded that the above resolution was drafted for the sake of the Sikhs but was rationalized "to placate all the communities." Kharak Singh was not satisfied, more because of the fact that the Sikh leadership by then had started indulging in the game of one upmanship. Kharak Singh demanded complete independence (*Pūrāṇ Swarājya*) as goal of the Congress and inclusion of the Sikh colour in the National Flag. Pandit Nehru agreed to the first demand and a resolution to this effect was adopted by the Congress. About the second demand, it was explained by Pandit Nehru on a visit to Kharak Singh's residence at Lahore that colours included in the National Flag were not indicative of communal representation. Still the Baba remained diffident to lend co-operation to the Congress in their Civil Disobedience Movement. During this crisis Master Tara Singh emerged as the most shrewd and powerful leader of the Sikhs. He declared, "We cannot boycott the Congress permanently." Soon after he replaced Baba Kharak Singh as President of the Central Sikh League and this signalled the decline of the influence of Kharak Singh in the Sikh affairs; although the Congress leadership as a whole continued to respect and admire him for "his strong secular and nationalistic sentiments."

On his own, Baba Kharak Singh participated in demonstrations against the Simon Commission in 1928. Six years later (March 1934) he set up a party and called it Central Akali Dal. Baba Kharak Singh himself became the President of this party. He

condemned the Communal Award and the Act of 1935 strongly. He decried the Act of 1935 as a document, which 'offered nothing except semi-slavery to Indians under the name of provincial autonomy.' But his party fought elections held under this very Act in 1936-37 and supported the Khalsa National Party led by Sunder Singh Majithia. Was it not a paradox that the same Baba Kharak Singh who parted company with the pro-British Sikh Chiefs two decades earlier, joined them again in a bid to remain relevant in Sikh politics? Kharak Singh was a bitter critic of the partition of India. He held *Akhand Hindustan Conferences* at Lahore, Chakwal (Rawalpindi) and Gujranwala to oppose partition. However in 1946 elections he supported the Congress. After 1947, he stayed in Delhi in virtual retirement and died there on October 6, 1963 at the ripe age of 95 years.

Statement of Baba Kharak Singh

'I was born in June 1868 A.D. at Sialkot. My father's name was S. Hari Singh. I was educated in Murray Mission College, Sialkot, and graduated from the Government College, Lahore in 1889 A.D.

The earliest thing of note that I remember in my life was my invitation to some depressed classes Sikhs at the death anniversary of my father. At the time of the distribution of *Karāh Parsād*, some so-called high caste Sikhs objected to the entry of so-called Mazhabi Sikhs. But I, with a firm mind, told them that I had got no distinction for the depressed classes in my mind.

My entry into public life can be traced from my being elected as the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the 5th All India Sikh Educational Conference, Sialkot in 1912 and in 1915 I was elected as President of the Sikh Educational Conference, Tam Taran. My heart was greatly moved after the incident of Jallianwala Bagh in 1919, and I along with some other Sikhs began to have nationalistic ideas. I made my first public and political speech on the stage of Central Sikh League, which held its session in 1920 concurrently with the Congress session. There I strongly

condemned the attitude of the British Government in Jallianwala Bagh firing. In 1920, S. Amar Singh Jhabal led a *jathā* of 100 Sikhs to Sialkot to take possession of *Bābedī-Ber* Gurdwara. He had some consultations with me and eventually invited me to join politics. Thus I was elected President of the Lahore session of Central Sikh League wherein it was decided that the Sikhs should join the non-co-operation movement sponsored by Gandhi. Soon after in February 1921, the Nankana Sahib tragedy took place. After a long discussion, all the Sikh leaders decided to found a managing body of the Sikh Gurdwaras. Thus the SGPC came into being and I was elected its first President.¹ Meanwhile, the Government was feeling perturbed over this popular movement and was trying to do its best to hold their own control over the Gurdwaras through the *Mahants*. In their anxiety to do so, the Government issued an order in November 1921 wherein it was stated that the keys of the *Toshākhānā* of Golden Temple should remain with the Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar. The SGPC protested against this order and decided to launch a campaign against this. Soon after, a ban on meetings was enforced by the D.C. Amritsar, and when S. Santokh Singh Vidyarthi along with S. Jaswant Singh and S. Dan Singh and Pandit Dina Nath tried to organize a meeting at Ajnala, the latter three were arrested. Thereupon in a meeting of the SGPC, I personally decided to defy the ban at Ajnala. S. Teja Singh Samundari, S.B. Mehtab Singh and many others followed me. I along with my colleagues was arrested at Ajnala and thus the famous *Morchā* for keys was launched. Thousands of the Sikhs marched into jails daily till the Government had to yield. In January 1922, this *Morchā* came to an end, and the keys of the *Toshākhānā* were delivered to me at Akal Takht in the presence of about two lakhs of Sikhs.

1. The first SGPC included the Government nominees also. S. Sunder Singh Majithia who was then an executive counsellor also; became the President then.

After the arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1922, I was elected President of the Punjab Provincial Congress. As a President of the Congress, I toured the whole of the province and many Sikhs became the active members of this party. Soon after the agitation regarding the wearing of *kirpān* started. The Government wanted that *kirpān* should also come under the purview of Arms Act. The wholesale agitation, started on behalf of the Sikhs, compelled the Government to yield. But the Government did not exempt the sale and manufacture of *kirpān* from the Arms Act. I started *kirpān* factories several times, which were sealed by the Government. The Government wished me to take license but I refused several times. At last, the Government exempted the sale and manufacture of *kirpān* also from the Arms Act.

Soon after, the Government started a country-wide programme of repression. In this connection I was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment in Dera Ghazi Khan jail. The jail authorities banned the black turban and Gandhi cap for all the prisoners. I along with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan decided to resist this order. My turban was forcibly taken off and we all decided to take off our clothes as a protest against the attitude of the jail authorities. The Sikhs outside also organized demonstrations against this unjust attitude of the Government. I was tried in the jail for indiscipline. The Government soon yielded and lifted the ban on black turban. Later on, on my insistence and my refusal to wear clothes to Sir John Maynard the then Home Member Punjab Government, the ban on Gandhi cap was also removed, and I was released in 1927. In 1928, I organized the Sikhs to demonstrate against the Simon Commission. In 1929, the Nehru Report of the Congress was given out which accepted the dominion Status. Moreover, it did not grant full safety to the Sikhs in the future set-up of India. Therefore, I decided to oppose this report tooth and nail. In this connection, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya came to see me in the Gujranwala session

of Central Sikh League² and thus court some support for the Nehru Report from among the Sikhs.

But we refused to hear him and continued our opposition to the Nehru Report. Despite several efforts of the Congress, this opposition could not be cowed down. When All India Congress decided to hold its session at Lahore, we held an All India Sikh Conference, which proved the extent to which we had gone in opposing the Nehru Report. So, Dr Ansari, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and others met me to know the Sikh point of view. I told them plainly that I wanted declaration of complete Independence as goal and fair treatment to the minorities particularly the Sikhs, in the future set-up of India. On the basis of this interview, the famous resolution of the Congress regarding minorities was passed.³

To Mr Jinnah's proposal of dividing India, I gave a tough resistance. I organized meetings against the idea of Pakistan. I remember, one such meeting (conference) proposed to be held at Gujranwala in 1944 was banned. After that I gradually retired from active public life.'

[Recorded by Prithipal Singh Kapur]

2. Central Sikh League was organized in 1919. It was dominated by the Sikh elite and supported by the educated Sikhs from the middle strata of Sikh society. Its first President was Sardar Gajan Singh. Baba Kharak Singh was elected as its second President in 1920.
3. In its Lahore session held in 1929 Indian National Congress passed the following resolution assuring the Sikhs and Muslims and other minorities that "no solution of communal question in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."

CHAPTER 4

Malik Hardit Singh (1894 - 1985)

Born on November 23, 1894 to Malik Mohan Singh and Lajwanti of Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan), Malik Hardit Singh was one of the outstanding Sikh bureaucrats and diplomats who closely watched and even influenced the events that concerned the Sikhs during the twentieth century. He was educated in United Kingdom. He attended Balliol College, Oxford to receive his B.A. Honours degree in Modern History in 1915. He was among the very few Sikh youngmen with full fidelity to their faith who received education in England with full grown untrimmed hair, beard and a turban. He had the distinction of having captained the cricket teams both in the school and the college. During the First World War, Hardit Singh joined the French Red Cross as an ambulance driver only to be admitted to Royal Air Force as a fighter pilot after some time. After the war, he sat for I.C.S. examination at which he came through with flying colours. His first posting was Assistant Commissioner, Sheikhpura (now in Pakistan). For a couple of years, he saw postings at various district headquarters of Punjab as Deputy Commissioner. Thereafter, he was drafted as Deputy Trade Commissioner, London from where he was transferred to Hamberg (Germany). After a stint with the commerce department of Government of India, Malik was posted as Trade Commissioner in London from where he was shifted to USA where he remained stationed for five years. On his return to India in 1944, he went on deputation to serve Patiala state as Prime Minister during the fateful period of transfer of power. After independence, he was appointed as India's first High Commissioner to Canada. During his short stay in Canada, he succeeded in having full citizenship rights for Indian settlers most of whom were Sikhs. Thereafter, he remained India's ambassador to France where he continued till his retirement in 1957. He spent his retired life

in Delhi and died on October 31, 1985. Throughout his life, he remained a devout Sikh imbiling the high moral spiritual values of Sikh faith as enjoined by the Sikh Gurus.

Malik Hardit Singh was one of the few Sikh bureaucrats who had closely watched some of the happenings of Gurdwara Reform Movement. He was the one who could tell the governor that his sympathies were with the reformers. The governor gave him full support and this is narrated in the statement. About the Sikh leaders, he likes to be cryptic but still meaningful. He describes Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia as a "yes-man of the government, a hero of great Sardars." He describes Master Tara Singh, "a dedicated patriot and an honest man but was not politically too sharp." Malik had closely watched the birth of SGPC. He says the Babbar Akali Movement was the outcome of repression of the Akalis by the government. He further says that Governor Hailey was the first governor who got convinced that Gurdwaras must be handed over to the Sikhs and this paved the way for enactment of Gurdwara Act. Malik Hardit Singh had also foreseen that the Gurdwara Administration will get politicized under the SGPC. He spoke to Master Tara Singh regarding this and suggested to him that only such people should be elected to Gurdwara Committees and the SGPC 'as gave a pledge that they had no political ambitions'. Master Tara Singh did not muster courage to take such a step, instead he invited Malik Hardit Singh to join Akali Dal to guide the Sikhs.

Malik Hardit Singh also remained associated with parleys between the Sikhs and the Muslim League supremo Mr M.A. Jinnah. He clearly states that Mr Jinnah only made high sounding promises but wanted the Sikhs to support the demand for Pakistan without conceding any substantive thing. At this, Malik asked the Sikhs not to accept Pakistan at any cost. The role of Malik Hardit Singh in integration of Indian States was crucial. He was on the Negotiating Committee on behalf of the Chamber of Princes (Nawab of Bhopal was then the Chancellor). He allayed the fears of the princes that they would be exiled from their states.

All in all the statement of Malik Hardit Singh throws light on the contemporary happenings and helps us understand the events better in a proper prospective.

Statement of Sardar Hardit Singh Malik

Q. *Kindly throw some light on your active role in Patiala state, and its politics. What were your main achievements there?*

Ans. When I came back from America in 1943, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy asked me if I would go to Patiala, as the Maharaja of Patiala had asked for my services as Prime Minister there. I told Lord Wavell that I would hesitate, because I had no experience of the States and that I might find it difficult for me to be fit for this service. He said that I could talk to the Maharaja. So I talked to the Maharaja. There was a very kindly meeting, and in that meeting I explained my difficulty to work in the State which, I thought, was a leading Sikh State. I told the Maharaja that he was one of the leading princes of the Sikh States. I would serve the state but I would come only on one condition — that he would treat me not as his Prime Minister, but almost as an elder brother, because I had more experience. "In case you are prepared to give me your full confidence, and protect me from any kind of intrigue, then I am prepared to come." It was the beginning of year 1944 and I joined the service, after having a satisfying reply from the Maharaja.

My job was somehow to eradicate some of the things, which I considered wrong, and to improve the general administration and its general standard. One of the first things that happened was that the Maharaja called me after a private lunch, and said very proudly, "One thing you would find is that my people all eat well, and dress well." "I noticed it," I said, "I wonder how they do it." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I know the salaries paid to your people. They are very poorly paid. How can they pull on?" He said, "Do you mean they are corrupt?" I said, "Yes, of course, they are corrupt."

I said, "Give me the authority, I will look into their grievances. I will discuss with the Finance Minister, and together we would sit down and see how much money can be spared for improving their conditions with the salaries." So I sat down with Sardar Ajmer Singh, Finance Minister, and we worked out the position of salaries of all the state employees beginning with the lowest upto the highest. We did it within a month, and submitted a report that satisfied all the employees. All the anomalies were removed.

Then the Maharaja asked me, "I came to know that you want industries in the state." I said, "Yes, I am very keen and want to establish industries in it." He said, "On one condition you can do that." I said, "What is your condition?" He said that no labour laws would apply to any of these industries. I said, "I know." Then he said, "Malik Sahib, there is no future of Indian industry except on a very low wage." I replied, "I had studied in America for six years. And I was convinced that if you raise their salaries they will live better, and spend more, demand might go up for all other things." Another thing was that one day I was sitting in the court room and a *Jamādār* came and said, "Sardar Sahib, ਏਕ ਵੱਡੀ ਭਾਰੀ ਸਰਦਾਰਨੀ ਹੈ, ਵੇਹ ਆਪਕੋ ਮਿਲਨਾ ਚਾਹਤੀ ਹੈ." I said, "Let her come in." She came inside. She wanted to tell her story. A young man of thirty years was with her.

She told me that the young man came from a big family in the State and that he had been married in a very rich family of army Generals. It was a happy marriage, but when his wife went home to her parents, they considered it a good opportunity to exploit the situation. So they filed a false suit against their son-in-law that he had disowned her. He was sentenced from the lower court for imprisonment. The case went upto the High Court. High Court accepted his appeal and he was released. But, after his release from the High Court,

by the orders of the Maharaja, he was made a prisoner in his own village, and all his property was confiscated.

It was an injustice for that fellow. I went to the Maharaja after some time and said, "It was not good that a man acquitted from the High Court should be imprisoned again. It was really injustice." He said, "Malik ji you know the General whose daughter was involved in the case was faithful to me and my State." But I said, "You could choose another way but why this young man had been punished. This was wrong. The case has been decided by the High Court and the person was released." Maharaja said, "What can I do now." I said, "This is a simple thing. Cancel your order. Give orders to release this man, and to hand over his property to him." He said, "I can't do it. You are the Prime Minister. Take this case in your hands, and you issue the order on my behalf." So I did and cancelled the order of the Maharaja. Such things used to happen there.

A very important thing was the question of integration of the Indian States. I was at Patiala. It was 1946-47. This question was to be discussed. I was on the committee that was set up by the Chancellor of Princes which was against any kind of understanding. He wanted the States to be kept separate to negotiate with the Congress on the future of Indian States. Nawab of Bhopal, the then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, formed a committee of Patiala, Bikaner, Jamnagar and Gwalior, five or six Princes and others to start the negotiation with the Congress. Congress committee consisted of Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Panikkar, and Maharaja Patiala. There was a general meeting, and after that, many meetings were held. After much discussion, agreement was reached on almost everything. Then young Gwalior Prince, who was rather inexperienced, raised some objections. These were very minor objections. The meeting was

again fixed with Pandit Nehru. This time when we met, Panikkar raised this question rather hesitatingly that Princes were thinking if it was possible for them to live in their States. Panikkar said to me, "Why are you laughing?" I said, "I am not laughing but I do think that you are taking it seriously that you can make it possible for the Princes to live in their States." He said, "All right."

Q. What are your impressions about Col. Raghbir Singh and Gian Singh Rarewala?

Ans. Col. Raghbir Singh was there, and later on he became the Chief Minister. Gian Singh Rarewala was a judge at that time. Brish Bhan was in the *Parjā Maṇḍal* and later became the Chief Minister of PEPSU.

Q. What are your impressions of Late Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. You were quite intimate with him.

Ans. I knew the Maharaja personally. But I never met him many times in public. He had a good personality. I tell you a story about the great personality of Maharaja, which is worth hearing. The Deputy Commissioner Charles Berry was a very good man. I became a great friend of him. It was the year 1922. Charles Berry told me that he used to be the incharge of Kaithal Sub-Division. Maharaja Patiala, in order to move from one part of his State into another part, had to pass through Kaithal Sub-Division. So Charles Berry was with him guiding through the Kaithal territory and escorted the Maharaja to enter the Patiala State again. He moved with the Maharaja and remained with him. Bhupinder Singh's personality was such that he told Berry, "You can ride with me, but you have to sit behind me not with me." And Berry told me that he knew he was thinking that Berry was the Chief Representative of the King and that he was only a Maharaja, so that he had the right to ride with him. Naturally it was a good story illustrating the personality of Maharaja.

Q. *You must be knowing Sardar Harchand Singh Jeji. Kindly tell me what was the real issue between him and Maharaja of Patiala.*

Ans. The story was that the Maharaja confiscated all his property. Although later, his daughter was married to his son. The thing that I found after enquiries was that S. Harchand Singh Jeji disobeyed certain orders of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. He was punished by the Maharaja and he left Patiala.

Another interesting incident I tell you. Maharaja had an English man Henry Hardinge retired as Inspector General of Police from Punjab. I was the Prime Minister and incharge of Home Department. I and Henry Hardinge were working in the Home Department and one day the police behaved in a village very rudely. The villagers were beaten by them. So the villagers came to me and complained about the rude behaviour. I got the report and it was true. So I discussed with the Maharaja that something must be done. Action should be taken against the police. Maharaja agreed. I proposed that Inspector General Police and the Dewan should go to the village. They should apologize on behalf of the administration and pay compensation to all those who had been beaten. The Sub-Inspector Police was dismissed as also the constables concerned in this matter. Henry Hardinge also agreed with my proposal. He felt that the police should not behave like this. They should do justice to the public. In this way, the prestige of the administration would go up and it would be easier to maintain law and order.

Q. *Kindly throw some light on the Parjā Maṇḍal Movement.*

Ans. The main thing was the communist influence. And the reason for that was the tenants. They had the occupancy rights. An occupancy tenant was much more than a tenant at will. The tenants at will could be turned out any time. The landlords were there. The police,

Tehsildār, Thānedār and Magistrates were invariably under the influence of the landlords.

So in all villages, the communists were very strong, and an agitation against landlords started. And my problem was to deal with the affected areas gradually. They held conferences, which were declared unlawful. Some of the sensible Sardars were able to understand the problem. They realized that time was changing. They were willing to have a settlement with the tenants. I went to the Maharaja and discussed the problem with him, and told him that the agitation could not be crushed by violent methods. He said to me, "You are encouraging the communists." But I said, "The movement is in full swing. It cannot be blocked. Some solution should be found urgently, otherwise, the *Jagirdārs* would have to suffer. There should be talks in a peaceful manner! The problem is serious. Injustice is being done to the poor people. I am in favour of settling the problem peacefully. I am sure that the problem can be solved."

But the Sardars were a problem everywhere. They were reactionary. They had been treating their tenants as they liked in the villages. Law was not for them. Abducting the poor girls was common. Poor people had no voice. Injustice to the poor people, was rampant.

I started having meetings with the village people and *lambardārs*. But the Sardars went to the Maharaja and complained that Malik Sahib's relations with the poor people would do harm to the State. They incited the Maharaja against me. But I was on the right side.

Q. *Kindly throw some light on Maharaja Yadvindra Singh¹ as a man, as a statesman and as an administrator.*

1. Yadvindra Singh, Maharaja of Patiala – 1913-1974 was the last hereditary ruler of erstwhile princely State of Patiala, the biggest Sikh State in the Cis-Sutlej region, founded by Baba Ala Singh during the 18th century.

Ans. As you all know that Maharaja Yadvindra Singh was a very magnetic personality. He was a good speaker and was very intelligent. I think he had the making of great leader of the Sikh community. He had all the qualities. He wanted a good organization of the Sikhs. He was well-wisher of the Sikh State. He was ambitious, and wanted all-round development of the people. He liked his kingdom. He was a sympathizer of all sections of the people.

Q. Having such qualities, why was he not accepted as a leader?

Ans. In spite of all these qualities, he had a lack of confidence in himself. This was his weakness. Another weakness was that he wanted to do certain things, took the initiative hoping that the people would appreciate what he was doing. But actually that did not happen.

Q. Kindly throw some light on Maharaja Yadvindra Singh's administration also.

Ans. As I remember the Maharaja told me one day in Jaipur. "I realized that I could not run the administration myself. So I employed a 1st class Prime Minister like you." This was for his administration, for the first two years, the Maharaja acted sincerely. He knew that I was running the administration well, as so many Sardars told him about me. Some, however, instigated him against me. In the end, I gave him some advice and told him that there were some Sardars also who were very loyal to the Maharaja.

Q. Kindly throw some light on the negotiations which were arranged by Lord Mountbatten² on one side, and Jinnah³, and Liaqat Ali⁴, and Akali Leaders on the other side.

2. Lord Mountbatten (1900-1979) was the last Viceroy of India and first Governor-General of Independent India.

3. Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was founder of Pakistan. Previously he was President of All India Muslim League.

4. Liaqat Ali Khan (1895-1951) was the first Prime Minister of Pakistan. Previously he was General Secretary of All India Muslim League.

Ans. The part that Jinnah played in Punjab was important. Jinnah urged the Sikhs to accept Pakistan. At that time, Pakistan had not been conceded. His approach to Sikhs, "You speak to me and I shall give you a very leading status in my State, Pakistan!"

So he suggested meeting with Maharaja Patiala. Maharaja wanted him to come to Patiala. I had a suggestion that best thing was that we should have a meeting at Delhi, but not in Jinnah's house. I said, "You can have a meeting in my brother's house. He had served as a P.W.D. Minister at Patiala." So finally, the meeting was held in my brother's house. Mr Jinnah alone from Muslim side and Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and the Maharaja himself, on our side. It was late in the year 1946. That meeting was very interesting. I was the spokesman on behalf of the Sikhs. Jinnah started saying "he was very anxious to get the support from the Sikhs for his demand." Then I asked, "What is your idea if the Sikhs remain in Pakistan? What will be their position?" Then he interrupted, "I will tell you Mr Malik I would do for the Sikhs that Jahlurpashah did for the minorities in the Egypt. I would consider the whole thing for you in black and white. As Jahlurpashah took the paper in his hand, signed it for the minorities and signed without reading. I will do for you as he did. I would agree to whatever be your demand." What could be the answer when a man was offering everything to you.

I said, "What would be the position of the Sikhs in the parliament, in the cabinet and in the administration, God forbid, supposing you passed away before the terms were settled or implemented. Where shall we stand, if your people would not carry out your word?" These were his words: "My friend, my word in Pakistan would be like a word of God. No one would go back on it." Meeting broke up after this. But I urged my

people to think over it. I said to the Sikh leaders, "I do not want anyone of you to accept Pakistan in any way." I got the headlines in the paper in the front page of the *Statesman*. "The Sikhs will, under no circumstance, accept Pakistan. The Sikhs refused Mr Jinnah's idea." There were other meetings also. I do not think that Lord Mountbatten had played any role in this matter actually. This was my impression. Nothing substantial was achieved in such meetings. And I did not attend other meetings. Mr Liaqat Ali was not present in the meeting. Only Jinnah was there.

Q. What is your impression about Master Tara Singh? You must have been meeting each other.

Ans. After returning from America I came to Patiala as a state Commissioner. I often had meetings with Master Tara Singh. I discussed with him so many problems. Land revenue problem was there. I talked to him. Then came the language problem. I had dialogue with Master Tara Singh. So it was approved by the Sikhs as well as from the Government side. That I knew Nehru⁵ and Master Tara Singh both, was on the headlines in the papers. You can see the papers. So I went to Pandit Nehru and met the Akali Dal leaders including Sant Fateh Singh.

Pandit Nehru, as usual, talked about Master Tara Singh. He said, "He is good man but he is a fool. He is creating unnecessary trouble." I said, "He may be what you say but Master Tara Singh was a human being; he would die, you would die, and I would die but this problem that you are facing today would not die. This will have to be solved."

He said, "What do you mean? What can I do?" I said, "This is very simple. Punjabi is the mother tongue of Punjabis. Bengali is the mother tongue of Bengalis. Why

5. Pandit Nehru was very influential leader of Indian National Congress and became the first Prime Minister of Independent India.

are you hesitating to declare Punjabi as the language of the Punjab?" He said, "All right. ਹਮ ਕਰੇਂਗੇ." But he never did it. He came out with a statement to the effect that "Punjabi will be one of the main languages of the Punjab." This was actually due to my meeting with Pandit Nehru, and then later, as we know, Master Tara Singh finally agreed and gave up his fast. The Government agreed to set up a committee to go into all the matters, which were serious. If Master Tara Singh had died, it would have created Sikh-Hindu trouble throughout the Punjab. Sikhs were living all over India. This was a very strong point. There would have been trouble everywhere in India and it could be very serious.

So he finally agreed. A committee was appointed to look into all the problems. I went to Amritsar along with Maharaja of Patiala. We met Master Tara Singh and there was a meeting of the working committee of Akali Dal. Sant Fateh Singh was also there. ਇਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਕਹਿਣ ਲੱਗੇ ਕਿ ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੋ ਕਹੇ ਉਹ ਠੀਕ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕੁਝ ਲੋਕ ਕਹਿਣ ਲੱਗੇ ਕਿ ਜੋ ਸੰਤ ਫਤਿਹ ਸਿੰਘ ਕਹਿਣ ਠੀਕ ਹੈ। I said, "You have the responsibility and whatever you decide will prevail. It would be a setback, if you do not decide. You must save him. If Master Tara Singh died, you would be responsible." There was attack from some Akalis. They said, "He wants to die." Master Tara Singh took juice from the Maharaja who said to Master Tara Singh, "You are a great man. I do not want you to die."

Q. What was your attitude towards Puñjābī Sūbā?

Ans. I think, it was mishap. Punjab was a great state and should have been preserved as one state. What have we got? Haryana, Himachal and Punjab. What is this Punjab? But Master Tara Singh wanted that the Sikhs should have real political power in Punjab. He thought that Sikhs could have power in a Sikh majority area only. But again there came the Congress and Akali

Party. I think this solution was a complete failure for the Punjab.

Q. Who was the Prime Minister of Patiala State before you?

Ans. Mr Vaina was the Prime Minister before I joined. Mr Liaqat, Sikander Hayat's brother, was also Prime Minister before me.

Q. What are your experiences of the World War-I? Perhaps you were one of the first Indian participants in Royal Air Force.

Ans. In 1914, the World War broke out, and there were my friends who were disabled and could not join the armed forces. I did want all the time to join it, and I felt that it was something unique and that every young man should have this experience. My difficulty was that this was not a war of freedom. But I thought that Indians should have fought with zeal, even if India was not free. However, prompted by sense of adventure, I decided to get into the war. Now in those days, the British Army did not like the Indian students for recruitment, because they were suspected of being nationalist. They were not trusted. They said to me, when I applied, "You have been placed where the Indian wounded soldiers are." The recruiting officer was to arrange for me a Red Cross driver of Ambulance in the French Army. I was very keen on flying for which there was great need also. There was a French flying man called Knight Flying. I was seized of the idea of flying as something quite romantic. I knew that the French would be willing to take me in the French Flying Corps. I consulted my tutor with whom I was in touch all the time. He knew personally the British General who was commanding the Royal Flying Corps. His name was General Henderson. The tutor spoke to him, "Here is a young Indian who wants to fly. He is a British subject, and wants to take the flying course. Are the fighting French prepared to take him?" The General said, "I quite agree.

In case they agree, he should come to see me immediately." I arranged for leave and went to see the General." He replied, "You get your release from the French course and we shall give you a Commission in the Royal French Corps." So this is how I got into the Flying Corps. I was the first Indian to actually fly in the Royal Corps. I had joined the Air Force after getting my degree. Later, after me, three more Indians joined this Corps. One of them was from Bombay and the other boy from Calcutta. Both were killed and the third was also captured, and I was the only one left.

Q. Could you throw some light on the communal problems of Punjab, from 1920 to 1930, and how did you come into the ICS?

Ans. I came under the Reconstruction Scheme, a Special Scheme prepared to recruit people to serve in 1927. No examination was held. My idea was to go to Oxford to sit for ICS examination but the war interfered.

I served as a Deputy Commissioner in Sheikhpura, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Rohtak and Sialkot. Earlier I worked as Assistant Commissioner under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner at Sheikhpura who demanded strict discipline. *Jathās* were marching all over the district under the command of the *Jathedārs* in strict military formations. While I was there, something occurred which could have finished my career in the ICS. A *mahant* was murdered in Nankana Sahib. The government at that time, and particularly the police, was very keen to finish the Akalis. The man called Thompkon, the Inspector of police was deadly against the Akalis. He wanted to arrest all the Akali leaders in a conspiracy case on the basis of this murder. This was very important, and the Akalis were to be accused. I said to the Muslim magistrate Hassan Ali personally to investigate and let me know who was responsible for this murder. He investigated and gave

me a report that there was something connected with the Akalis. It was, therefore, taken up as a murder case.

In the meantime, Thompkon had persuaded Chief Secretary Sir Henry Craik to permit him to arrest all the Akali leaders. The chief man, general manager, Sardar Buta Singh had gone to see Chief Secretary, and was waiting to see him. The police came and arrested him. He was brought to Sheikhpura in connection with the conspiracy in this murder. He was handcuffed and was produced in the court. I knew Buta Singh. When the police asked me his remand for fourteen days, I said, "Where is the evidence on which you arrested this man? Who ordered his arrest? I am the District Magistrate. It is for me to arrest this man." Thompkon said. "The Punjab Government has ordered for his arrest." I said, "Can you show me any evidence." He said, "No". I said, "I will do justice. Murder has been done and you have arrested another man." The Governor was a very nice man. I told him when I went to Lahore, "You have sent me to Sheikhpura. I being a Sikh, my sympathies are with the Sikhs who want Gurdwara reforms, and I might take action which you might not like. So please send me to some other place. Do not leave me at Shiekhupura." He said, "No, I have full confidence in you, and you will never be asked to do anything which you don't like." I went to the Chief Secretary and said, "You are punishing the man who worked always under me. If you want to punish any one, punish the magistrate." He said, "I will cancel the orders of arrest." But the position then was that if the Government had punished me for this I would have resigned and worked as a labourer breaking stones on the roadside. My conscience did not allow me to do wrong."

I was considered generally as being anti-Muslim, and I told S. Sundar Singh Majithia then in the Executive Council, that it was an unfair accusation. I was trying

to do justice in my own way wherever I went, to Gujarat or Gujranwala. There in Gujrat question arose about a *jhatkā* shop in Mandi Bahauddin. There I felt that Sikhs have the right to open *jhatkā* shops. The Muslims were in majority. They could create any type of trouble for me. My Superintendent of Police was a very kind man. He rose to power and later became a Pathan police officer. So I explained to Salik Ali Khan the situation in Mandi Bahauddin and told him, that I wanted peace and at the same time I was not going to deny anybody's right. I instructed him to go to Mandi Bahauddin and talk to the Muslims and explain to them and try to settle the matter peacefully, and not with force.

And then communal trouble arose in Rohtak District in a village twenty miles from Rohtak. Position was that cattle herds wandered all over the Punjab eating the crops of the villagers. The villagers got very angry and killed a few of them. The people lodged a complaint. I sent a Sub-Inspector police and two Jat leaders, Chaudhary Lal Chand and Chaudhary Chhotu Ram. This was in year 1929, and very fortunately, I also went straight to the Jat leaders group who were coming. The first man, the ring leader said, "Why have you attacked us." I said if you will interfere I shall take a very severe action against you. The rumours went in the village: ਡਿਪਟੀ ਕਮਿਸ਼ਨਰ ਆ ਗਿਆ, ਡਿਪਟੀ ਕਮਿਸ਼ਨਰ ਆ ਗਿਆ! The police had to catch the people and then later the identification had to be done. So I sent magistrate to carry out the identification. Three or four persons were identified. They had killed the cows.

Chaudhary Ranjeet Mohammad who was a leading barrister those days, brought a complaint to me, when I was at Gujranwala. He said, "Malik Sahib, what is this that you have done? Nobody had been arrested. The Muslims are being harassed. Nothing is being done." I told him the whole story. I said, "Chaudhary Sahib, I

am convinced that I took the right step at the right moment and this was my duty. By this action I saved 200 hundred Muslim lives, and I would see that everything is done rightly."

When I was in Sialkot, there happened an interesting event. It was the year 1930. During that period the nationalist movement was going on, and Malcolm Hailey was the Governor. He was a very strong man. He called the meeting of all the Deputy Commissioners of Punjab to discuss the action to be taken in case of processions by the Congress party. The instructions were that the agitation must be crushed. I said to the Governor, "Sir, kindly leave it to us. We shall discuss, and take whatever action is suitable under the conditions." He said, "All right, I agree."

I called a meeting of all my officials and instructed them not to do anything that could incite any one to violence. I warned them, "If you misbehave, I will take strong action against you. Report to me. I will suggest action." Thus, the procession ended peacefully.

I was at Gujranwala in 1926. There was no particular incident except a minor one. My S.P. was a very nice man. He was a Muslim, and we had no communal trouble. There was one interesting incident in Hoshiarpur. One of the magistrates, Fazal-i-Hussain was a very powerful man. He had amassed a huge property and nobody had dared touch him. It so happened that his powers were expiring and his powers as first class magistrate had to be renewed by me. I had to make my own recommendations to Punjab Government I met Sir Henry Craik and said that I would not recommend extension of powers to this man, since it could give us a lot of trouble. He said, "Are you very sure of this man? Have you clear picture about this man? Do you know who this person is?" I said, "I know. Do you want to buck up the storm? He is cruel for his

own people taking the land and the property from them. How do you want to support this man? You are supporting Fazal-i-Hussain."

I said, "I would recommend that his powers should not be renewed." Fazal-i-Hussain called me *paccā* Anti-Muslim. He complained to the Muslim League also.

Q. What are your impressions about Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, specially his Gurdwara politics and his political attitude?

Ans. I think he was one of those people who liked to work with the Government. I do not think he had any independent views. He was considered a yes-man. He was an old hero of the great Sardars, and was a man of character. He did a lot for the Sikh Community from time to time. I met him. But as for Akalis, he was against them.

Q. Could you give some impressions about Master Tara Singh? What type of man was he? What was your attitude towards him?

Ans. When I came back from America, I got involved in Patiala administration. Master Tara Singh was good enough to tell me that, if I joined him, he would make me president of the Akali Dal. He advised me to take full part in the struggle that he was carrying on. He wanted me to give up the service and join the Akali Dal. I was at that time working as Prime Minister of Patiala State.

I said, "Master ji, I am not made for politics; I am in service and I would be happy here." Anyway, two or three years afterwards I noticed that there was a lot of trouble among the Akalis and they were throwing mud on one another. Master ji was a dedicated patriot and was an honest man. But he was not politically too sharp. One of the things, for instance, which I suggested to him was that, in the interest of the community, it was very important that only such people should be

elected to Gurdwara Committees as gave a pledge that they had no political ambitions. They would not use their strength in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee or the Akali Dal to get administration and that way he would get good people to come into the committees to deal properly with Gurdwara scandals. He said, "I entirely agree with you." I asked, "If you agree with me why did not you make a move to bring about that law that candidate for elections to the Gurdwara Committee of SGPC and Akali Dal should not be eligible for any political office. You are the unquestioned leader of the Sikh Community. If you make a proposal of this kind it will have its effect." He said, "I cannot do that. You can do it. I would support you." So I said, "Master ji, I am not in politics, I am a serviceman, you are the leader, you are the responsible personality." He did not have the courage to tell his people that he was going to do that.

Q. What did you know about Sant Fateh Singh? Would you say something about him?

Ans. I only got to know him in connection with the fast of Master Tara Singh. Subsequently, he was arrested. All the Akalis were put in jail. I met him only a couple of times. I would not like to make any comment. I never got any appointment, with Fateh Singh. I did not know much about him.

Q. What are your views about Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Sardar Patel? How did you come across them?

Ans. You see I attended several national conferences as a delegate. I attended a national conference in 1948. I went as a leading man to the UNO in 1951. I was elected President of International Civil Aviation Conference in Montreal in 1947. In these prominent positions, I was always conscious of my responsibility as representative of my country. Therefore, I wanted to leave no room for any complaint that the dignity of my

country had been compromised. People accused Pandit Nehru, calling him anti-Sikh. I was appointed Governor of Bombay. But the Chief Minister did not want to take a serviceman. Pandit ji told me that this was the position and said, "I cannot insist." I said, "If the Chief Minister does not want, then I would not go." I told him that actually Governorship did not interest me because most of the things were there and real power rested with the Chief Minister." But I said that there were two Governorships that I like. One was my own province, viz., Punjab. As a Governor, there was a lot of responsibility and I would like to take it as a challenge. So, I said, "If you could offer me, I would accept that otherwise I was not interested." He said, "I can help to appoint you as Governor of Rajasthan." I turned down. I said, "I do not like this." Some people continued to accuse Pandit Nehru of being anti-Sikh. That was, however, far from a reality.

I told Pandit ji that I could live peacefully in America or England, and that I could play a useful role there. Those people knew me very well. And most of them were very fine people and they could play an important role in the development of our country. At the same time, my dealings with the senior officers of India would be more useful on both sides. And that was why Pandit Nehru was interested to take up this work. He said, "You have declined the post of the Governor," and added, "I shall make you a Governor as you retire." I said, "I could do ten years service for the development of the country. I thought this was the best I could do." Then he said, "I would consult my cabinet colleagues and let you know." I assured him that I would serve as he would like me to do."

Q. Could you throw some light on Nabha-Patiala relations?

Ans. All that I can say is that there was lack of contact. They hardly met each other, and in fact, there were things

I found disappointing. Nabha, and Patiala Maharajas, for considerations of prestige, never met. Socially, there were no attempts to come close to each other and to discuss important matters of mutual interest. Nothing was done in this direction.

Q. What was the cause of these conflicts?

Ans. I think personal likes and dislikes and human jealousy. Every Maharaja considered himself bigger than the other. I think there was no administrative cause. The problems were there, and they did not try to solve them calmly and peacefully.

Q. You know when you were actively involved in Punjab affairs as a Deputy Commissioner, the Gurdwara Reform Movement was at its' climax, the Nankana Tragedy, the Guru Kā Bāgh and the Jaito Morchās were the major events of this period. What were your reactions? Could you throw some light on these issues?

Ans. I first came across this movement in Sheikhpura, and I was very much impressed with the quality of the leadership at that time and the dedicated spirit of these movements. That was the first stage of the Akali movement. At that time, spirits were high among the leaders, and there was no corruption, but in the later stage there came downfall.

But the sacrifices the Sikhs made during the Nankana Tragedy, Panja Sahib, and Guru Ka Bagh were purely the outcome of a spirit of dedication among the Sikhs at that time. During the first week of my appointment in Sheikhpura, a procession of the Akalis came marching to the *Dak Banglow*. I was asked if I could talk to them. S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar was also among them. He told me that they wanted to take possession of Sheikhpura Gurdwara. "The *Mahant* is a wicked man and we want to get hold of him. We will blacken his face, put him on the donkey and parade him in the city."

Charles Berry, the Deputy Commissioner did not know what to do. He was there but he was a very tactful man. He asked S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar to sit down and talk calmly, so that the problem could be solved. "You are a Singh and want always peace. If you will go forcibly into the Gurdwara it will be against the law. And we will stop you there, because I will have to take action. But if you can talk with the *Mahant*, he can come here." The Akalis said, "All right if you want to settle the issue, then bring the *Mahant* here." Berry sent for the *Mahant* and negotiations took place there. And in the end the *Mahant* said, "I agree to hand over the keys of the Gurdwara to Akalis." There was a *dīwān*. Kartar Singh came out and announced the decision. He had expected the shouts of *Sat Srī Akāl* from the Akalis in acceptance. But they did not agree, and shouted, "ਸਾਨੂੰ ਮਨਜ਼ੂਰ ਨਹੀਂ." [They said they wanted the *Mahant* on the donkey with a blackened face. And there I saw the personality of S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar. Sardar Kartar Singh said, "Why you shout like this." He said, "ਤੁਸੀਂ ਬੜੇ ਬੇਵਕੂਫ਼ ਹੋ," you do not understand the situation. We spent hours to solve the problem. We wanted Gurdwara and we should be thankful that the problem has been solved." Charles Berry was the Deputy Commissioner and B.T. was Superintendent of Police at that time.

Guru Kā Bāgh Morchā was also there. A classical example of non-violence was created there. Mahatma Gandhi was very much impressed. Charles Berry, Deputy Commissioner went to Amritsar to see this specially. B. T. who was police Superintendent there, was called Great *Harāmzādā*. He enjoyed all this. Berry, when he came back, said that it was sickening to see such injustice to the Sikhs. He told B.T. to be ashamed. He saw the village Jats being beaten. Five police men stood around one man. His hands were folded and he was beaten mercilessly by the police men. Sikhs were beaten until they fell on the ground, and they never rose to tell anything. About *Jaito Mrochā*, I only

heard. But you see the point was that the repression eventually succeeded in producing the Babbar Akali Movement. And the Babbar Akali Movement finally convinced the Government.

Malcolm Hailey was the first Governor who was convinced that the Gurdwaras must be handed over to the Sikhs. Hailey was the man who could understand the Sikhs. All these movements had their effect, and in the end, the Sikhs succeeded in this cause.

[Recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh]

CHAPTER 5

Khizar Hyat Khan¹

It is an irony of fate that some of the most staunch supporters of secularism amongst the Muslims were left in Pakistan. Sir Khizar was one of them. Son of Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana, he was the last Prime Minister of Punjab (1946-47). He was the leader of the Unionist Party, which had its cardinal principle to uplift the rural people irrespective of religion, caste and creed. Its founder Sir Fazal-i-Hussain had rightly prophesied long before partition of the Punjab, that any communal approach to the Punjab politics would disintegrate the Unionist Party, and would lead to the splitting of the province. He was successful in resisting the influence of Mr Jinnah, the President of Muslim League so long as he lived. Sir Khizar's predecessor, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan was also against Pakistan as he boldly said in the Punjab Assembly, "We do not ask for that freedom where there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means, I will have nothing to do with it. I have said so before, and I repeat it once again here on the floor of this House." Sir Khizar, however, proved stronger, because he refused to form Muslim League Coalition Ministry and resisted the influence of the Muslim League. After the elections in 1945-46 when the Unionist Party lost many seats, Sir Khizar formed Coalition Ministry with the help of the Akalis and the Congress. This was irritating to the Muslim League who launched a vigorous agitation against the government. As soon as Sir Khizar Hyat Khan resigned in March 1947, the whole province was engulfed by a wave of communal riots.

In 1964 while in England, I had been interviewing all important persons who had worked in the Punjab during the fateful year of 1947. By that time, I had interviewed Lord Attlee, Lord Ismay, Alan Campbel Johnson, Major Short and a number of other

1. Sir Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana (1900-1976) was son of Umar Hyat Khan Tiwana. He was the last Unionist Prime Minister of Punjab (1946-47).

British dignitaries. Sir Evan Jenkins, the Ex-governor of the Punjab informed me that Sir Khizar was also in London staying in a Hotel. Soon I was able to contact him and decided to record his statement. I found him hospitable and frank in his talk. My major enquiry had been whether the holocaust of Punjab in 1947 could be avoided and what were the causes that led to mass cross migration?

Statement of Sir Khizar Hyat Khan

Q. What was the cause of bloodshed in 1947? What was the fault in the 3rd June Plan?

Ans. The planning was not correct. The communal approach especially of administration was wrong.

"Why they were sorting out Hindu and Sikh Officers for the East Punjab and Muslim Officers for the West Punjab? They should have known what they were doing."

Sir Khizar uttered these words with a glow in his eyes. I could judge his stirring emotions.

Q. Perhaps there was no alternative, because the Hindu and Sikh Officers did not want to serve in Pakistan. The Sikhs did not want to live in Pakistan.

Ans. That too was wrong. What harm Pakistan could do to such an organized community as the Sikhs? You have not seen *Guru Kā Bāgh Morchā*. I have seen it. No government could do any harm to the Sikhs. They ruined themselves by leaving Pakistan. Creating Pakistan on communal basis was wrong which led the people to think on the communal lines.

Sir Khizar said definitely it was not correct and stated, Jinnah's² leadership was wrong. He could rule over Punjab only in the name of Islam. Mr Jinnah's policy had a disastrous effect.

2. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was progenitor of Pakistan and its first Governor General.

Q. How did you reconcile yourself to the circumstances in Pakistan, Sir?

Ans. I have never been reconciled to Pakistan.

Q. How could posterity know your views?

Ans. "According to the laws enforced in Pakistan, nobody could speak or write against Pakistan, I have been keeping a diary³ the contents of which will be known to you when I shall not be there in this world. This is the only thing that I can do under the circumstances."

Sir Khizar was a man of convictions and he did not change with the change of circumstances like most of the politicians of his time. He will be known in history as leader of staunch secular outlook. With his passing away we have lost the last stalwart of the Unionist Party, a statesman who believed in secularism and followed the policy of secularism in the teeth of opposition from his own co-religionists.

[Recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh]

3. I enquired about the diary of Sir Khizar from Professor Ian Talbot, his biographer. (*Khizar Tiwana* [Oxford]). He wrote to me, "it was no good." It has not been mentioned even in the Select Bibliography of this book.

CHAPTER 6

Principal Bawa Harkrishan Singh¹ (1892 - 1978)

Bawa Harkrishan Singh was the direct descendant of Manak Chand, one of the prominent Sikhs of Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru (1552-1574 A.D.) whose name finds mention in the list of the important Sikhs mentioned by Bhai Gurdas, the nephew of the Guru, in his 11th Vār.² According to Bhai Kahan Singh, Manak Chand, a Khatri by caste, belonged to the village of Vairowal near Goindwal in the modern district of Tarn Taran, and had been married to the niece of the third Guru. M.A. Macauliffe has stated, "When Guru Nanak visited *Thatha* (a village in Tarn Taran district), Hari Chand, who was childless took him an offering of milk in the hope of obtaining the object of his desire. The Guru being pleased, said, "A gem (*mānak*) shall be strung on thy necklace." Within a year a son was born to him. He was called Manak Chand, in remembrance of the word used by the Guru and the fulfilment of his prophecy."³

Manak Chand grew to be a man of religious temperament. He did a conspicuous service in excavating the *Baoli* at Goindwal. The Sikhs after digging very deep found that a large stone hindered the progress of the work and prevented the water from being struck at the bottom of the *Baoli*. When the Guru came to know about this, he enquired if there was any Sikh courageous enough to drive a peg into the base with the object of removing the obstruction. The Guru at the same time said that the operation involved great risk. The man offering to drive the peg must be able to stem the current, which would issue from the aperture formed by the peg, otherwise he might be drowned. At that critical juncture Manak Chand first drove the

1. Tape-recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh on May 12-14, 1976 at the residence of his son at Lucknow (U.P.).
2. *Pūro Mānak Chand hai...* Vārāñ by Gurdas, 11th Vār, *Paūrī* 17.
3. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. II (Reprint Delhi, 1963), p. 95.

peg into the base, and when he extracted the peg there issued a gushing stream of water which overflowed the *Baoli*. Manak Chand while performing the operation was upturned and sank to the bottom. His widowed mother and his young wife finding that Manak Chand was drowned began to weep and cry. The Guru assured them that Manak Chand had not died. His body was brought out of the *Baoli* and to the surprise of the onlookers, he came to life.⁴

The Guru then addressed Manak Chand, "Thou art my living - *Jiwar*-son. Thy sons shall be called sons of *Jiwar*. Go home, and wealth and supernatural power shall come at thy bidding."⁵ The Guru appointed him incharge of one of the twenty-two bishoprics created by him for the spread of Sikhism. Mai Dass, "a Vaishnavite *Jogī*, was specially entrusted to him for spiritual guidance."⁶ Mai Dass belonged to village Naroli (District Lahore) and when he first visited Goindwal he could not see the Guru because he refused to take food from the common kitchen due to his Vaishnavite inhibitions. Ultimately, he agreed to the Guru's condition of first taking meals in the common kitchen (*langar*). He then met the Guru and was instructed to follow the instructions of Manak Chand.⁷

The descendants of Manak Chand followed the traditions of their family and continued to act as missionaries in the days of the subsequent *gurus*. They took *pāhul* after the creation of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh. During the British rule, Sunder Singh, a lineal descendant of Manak Chand, served the British army in Peshawar as *Risāldār*. His son, Bawa Daswandha Singh, became a popular school teacher in whose memory one of the roads in Civil Lines, Amritsar, was named as 'Bawa Daswandha Singh Road'. He had a number of sons. One of his sons, who took leading part in the Gurdwara Reform Movement as well as in the struggle for the *Puñjābī Sūbā*, was Bawa Harkrishan Singh.

Bawa Harkrishan Singh was born on 26th July, 1892, at Dera Ismail Khan. He did his M.A. in English from Forman Christian College, Lahore in 1912, and in the same year he joined Khalsa

4. Sarup Dass Bhalla, *Mahimā Parkāsh*, Language Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1971, pp. 171-72.

5. Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

6. Sarup Dass Bhalla, *op.cit.*, *Sākhī* No. 10, pp. 163-69.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

College, Amritsar, as a lecturer. In 1927 he was appointed Principal of the Guru Nanak Khalsa College Gujranwala (now in Pakistan), where he served for two decades. After 1947 he was appointed Principal of the Sikh National College, Qadian (District Gurdaspur), from where he retired. He had two sons, Gurkirpal Singh and Jasbir Singh. His third son died young. Bawa Harkrishan Singh died on August 18, 1978, in the Military Hospital, New Delhi.

Bawa Harkrishan Singh played a leading role in the Gurdwara Reform Movement. In the case, which was moved in the court of District Magistrate Amritsar in October 1923 by Victor William Smith, Superintendent C.I.D., and J.M. Dunnet, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, Bawa Harkrishan Singh was declared Accused No. 4, the first three being Mehtab Singh, Teja Singh Samundari and Bhag Singh 'Vakil' of Gurdaspur. According to CID report, Bawa Harkrishan Singh was a member of working committee of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee which was declared unlawful. Professor Harbans Singh of Khalsa College, Amritsar, gave the following witness in Akali Prisoners Case: "I was present when the police arrested Bawa Harkrishan Singh, Accused No. 4, and searched his quarters. Bawa Harkrishan Singh was also present at the search. The list was prepared of the documents found and taken into possession by the police and it bears my signatures, I also signed each document taken by police."⁸ Bawa Harkrishan Singh was the chief negotiator, which led to the enactment of Gurdwara Act. His anxiety to maintain distinction between the religious and the political concerns is discernable in the statement.

The writer of these lines approached Bawa Harkrishan Singh to tape-record his statement. He was at first hesitant to give any statement considering that it was not very important. But his son persuaded him to accede to the request.

Statement of Bawa Harkrishan Singh⁹

About the 12th October, 1920, we, the professors of the Khalsa College (Amritsar), got news from the city that a

8. Akali Prisoners' Case, February 4, 1924, p. 2098.

9. The extracts from this statement were first serialized in the *Ajit*, English

number of so-called *achhūts* or untouchable Sikhs wanted to hold a meeting in the Jallianwala Bagh and nobody was helping them. We, accompanied by several students, went to the city, approached the friendly Sikhs in the city and we made arrangement for holding the religious meeting, and then for proceeding in a procession to the Darbar Sahib, with *Karāh Parsād*. There was at that time no plan whatsoever to start any reform movement. When we reached Harimandar Sāhib, I, on behalf of the processionists, requested that the *granthīs* and *pujārīs* should treat us like other worshippers, recite the holy word from the Holy Book and offer prayer and accept the *Karāh Parsād*. But they refused. My friends then asked me that I should offer the prayers instead of the *pujārīs* and *granthīs*. I was there to do it. Suddenly three sturdy Sikhs appeared in the Harimandar Sāhib. They were Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar, Sardar Teja Singh Chuharkana and Sardar Teja Singh Bhuchchar. They had been provisionally released from the prison. They announced that they had been undergoing life sentence and that they had reached Amritsar just to have the *darshan* of the Guru's Temple. We then insisted on asking the *pujārīs* and *granthīs* to do what they always did for the worshippers, but they refused. Then Kartar Singh Jhabbar threatened them with these words: "ਅਸੀਂ ਉਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਕਰ ਲਵਾਂਗੇ."

The *granthīs* were frightened, recited the *Ardās* and read the *Shabad* from the Holy Book; it was, "ਨਿਗੁਣਿਆ ਨੋ ਆਪੇ ਬਖਸਿ ਲਏ ਭਾਈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਾਇ ॥ (p. 638) (Even those who have no merit are given blessings by the Lord)." This was something apt and applicable to the condition of our so-called *Achhut* friends whom we had accompanied there. *Karāh Parsād* was distributed there.

From Darbar Sahib we went to the Akal Takht and there

- weekly; started by Ajit Publications, Jalandhar during the eighties of the last century. Subsequently, important portions of this statement were also carried by the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, Chandigarh (April – June 2001). Here we are giving the full text of statement.

the whole of our company stood and the *pujārīs* sat. We humbly requested them to accept our *Karāh Parsād* and recite prayer and to read out the holy words as in the Harimandar Sāhib. They refused. Then Sardar Teja Singh Chuharkana shouted, “ਜੇ ਪਸ਼ੂ ਦੁਧ ਨਾ ਦੇਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਨਿਆਣਾ ਵੀ ਪਾ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਾਂ.” The *pujārīs* felt frightened and said, “Please give us time to consult each other.” So, they went inside the Akal Takht from the open high terrace where they were sitting and where the holy volume of *Guru Granth Sāhib* was placed. We waited for about 15-20 minutes but they did not come back. Three or four people went up the marble stairs to the upper terrace to talk to them and found that all of them had run away from the back door. So we were obliged to recite the prayer, to read the holy word of *Guru Granth Sāhib* and to distribute *Karāh Parsād*. The wonder is that when the word was recited from the holy book, it was the same as inside the Golden Temple. It looked as if the Lord was speaking in the Harimandar Sāhib and on the Akal Takht and had given the assurance of His forgiveness and blessing to those ‘who were without merit’. This happening placed a problem before us. If we went away from the Akal Takht temple, then it would remain unattended, and there were very precious weapons of the Guru Sahib. It was not desirable to have left it unattended. What should we do? Our friends of the city, who were in the habit of visiting the temple always twice a day at least, knew the place and practices very intimately. They suggested that a few people should be left on guard there at the Akal Takht and that they should inform the Manager of Sri Darbar Sahib. The Darbar Sahib was then under Government control. The Manager was appointed by the Government and he took orders from the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. The Sikhs as a community had nothing to do with it. The same thing was true of the greatest Sikh educational institution, Khalsa College, Amritsar, which was also under a committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. The Khalsa College

and its management took orders from him. The Manager was a good man and a highly respected man of Amritsar and belonged to an aristocratic family. His name was Sardar Bahadur Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, Honorary Magistrate. We went to him and related the problem to him. And we asked him to ask the *pujārīs* to come back and resume their duty at the Akal Takht. It was not called as Akal Takht at the time; it was called 'Akal Bunga'. He assured us that he would talk to them. And we were to come back in the evening to the city because we were anxious that the situation at Akal Takht should be properly controlled and we told him that we would see him again in the evening.

I want to make it clear that we had absolutely no idea of taking possession of the Darbar Sahib or any portion of it. There was no plan for what was later on called the Gurdwara Reform Movement. God had enforced His Will slowly but dramatically.

We came back that evening and went to the Manager. He informed us that he had talked to the *pujārīs*. They were absolutely indifferent. They said, "we do not want to come back. We are not getting any benefit there. According to the old established practice we have been getting a very petty allowance since the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh." It was ridiculous if I tell that the *pujārīs* were getting one paisa a day and some two paisa a day. Perhaps it dated from a time when the value of paisa was considerable. Now what should we do? We were left with no other alternative but to make arrangements with the help of devoted Sikh friends of the city. A batch of volunteers of men and women should take turns at the Akal Takht till we were able to see the light. No development took place. Sardar Teja Singh Bhuchchar and several of his friends had established a religious body called Central Majha Diwan,¹⁰ and they had been doing

10. According to *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, (P.U.P.) Central Majha Khalsa Diwan was founded in 1904 and subsequently merged with Chief Khalsa Diwan. It was revived in 1918. Its aim was to spread socio-religious reforms

religious service and preaching work for a fairly long time. He said that he would send volunteers from there, because the city people who were doing service for the last two or three days were soft people. Moreover, those people had their own business and as such, they could not spare much time, nor take much trouble, nor take any risk. So Teja Singh arranged men and women volunteers from the Central Majha Diwan. Thus, we came to have our own volunteers. Our efforts continued to find some solution so that we might withdraw our volunteers. But we could not succeed. We had no intention to found a religious empire. Now these *pujārīs* were ousted and they ousted themselves. Some mischief makers wanted to embarrass us. They went to Nihang Singhs in Burj Baba Phoola Singh Akali, out-side the Ghee Mandi Gate. This was the centre of the Nihang Singhs who were called Akali Singhs. Many of them took *bhang* daily here, and among them, there were, of course, some good Sikh devotees of a gentle nature, but that was a rare thing. The mischief-makers instigated them by saying, "Look here, this Akal Bunga belongs to the Akalis". So one day a huge crowd of them came up and wanted our volunteers to vacate the place. The volunteers did not yield and the Nihangs went away of their own accord. It occurred to us that since they called themselves Akalis and claimed the Akal Bunga or Akal Takht on the ground of their being Akalis, we should also have the appearance of Akalis. Accordingly, we asked our men and women volunteers to plunge their clothes in blue colour and wear blue dress like the *Nihangs* and call themselves Akalis.¹¹ I want to emphasize that this was the beginning of the Akali Movement. The word Akalis and the blue Akali dress were only a boyish prank to silence the

➤ among the Sikhs. Its prominent leaders were Teja Singh Bhuchchar, Amar Singh Jhabal and Sarmukh Singh Jhabal. It took active interest in Gurdwara Reform Movement.

11. The use of black turban and black scarf (by Sikh women) started after Nankana Sahib killings on February 21, 1921, as a mark of mourning.

Nihang Singhs. "You call yourself Akalis; we are also Akalis. We wear blue dress. You say Akal Takht belongs to you. It belongs to us as we are also Akalis." The word Akali and the Akali insignia the blue dress, weighed at that time. This gave the movement a name and gave the party a name. This gave the party a distinctive blue colour dress, which later on diminished only to the blue turban, and the *khaddar* dress. Now without any intention we were being dragged into deeper and deeper waters. We were being compelled into taking up position, which we did not wish to take up. Simply there was no honourable way of retreat. We could not hand over the Akal Bunga to those men of Akali Phoola Singh. We could not throw it to vagabonds of the city. What should we do? The mischief against us deepened so that one day these Nihangs gathered in strength from various places outside Amritsar. When they came in a big crowd, they forced their way into the Akal Takht, pushing our men out and took possession of the Akal Takht. There was some fighting too. Some people of both sides were hurt. Now our difficulty was that we could not go for the police. We had various sympathizers and admirers and they advised us to send for Baba Kehar Singh of Patti, a big stalwart, a devoted Sikh. He could make friends with the police. He could also make friends with the revolutionaries. And somehow he made his way everywhere. We knew it and it was known all over the district that Baba Kehar Singh was a great sympathizer of our group. We sent a word to Baba Kehar Singh. He came up at night and he talked to the Nihangs out of their stand. They yielded to him. He flattered them. He suggested to them that they were the masters and we were humble servants of the Nihangs. The Nihangs ought to take service from us. And, somehow, where we could not succeed, Baba Kehar Singh Patti succeeded and those people came down and went away shouting. We got back possession of Akal Bunga in a non-violent manner, without any further quarrel or fighting. Now it seemed that we had

got into a position from which we could not be shaken off lightly. What to do? And how to do it? We, the three Sikh professors of Khalsa College, were the brain of the group, which was working at Amritsar at that time. It was not properly organized. There were no funds, nothing whatsoever. So we decided to call the representatives of the whole Sikh community at Amritsar and we fixed 15th of November as the date. Our idea was that representatives of the Sikhs should gather there. Then we would find some solution. Even at that time we had no idea of taking possession of Darbar Sahib and then taking possession of other temples. But events moved in a manner that a course was set for us; we could not retreat. We gave out in papers and hand bills the news that a *Panthic* meeting of the Sikh representatives would be held at Amritsar at the Akal Takht on the 15th of November. There was flutter in the courts of Punjab Government. It seemed that they must be ready with some position after a few days. The Punjab Government announced the formation of a committee of twenty-five respectable Sikhs. Sundar Singh Majithia was the President of this Committee. Sardar Harbans Singh of Attari, belonging to that famous heroic family of Sardar Sham Singh Attari, was Vice-President. The manager, S.B. Sundar Singh Ramgarhia, was appointed as the Secretary. The idea of government seemed to be that they wished to avoid conflict with the reformist Sikhs and shift the burden to the shoulders of a committee of Sikhs, who would be still under the thumb of the government.

In view of the forthcoming 15th November meeting, we, the professors of the Khalsa College and some of the visitors from outside, formulated our own line of action. It was very well-thought-out and carried the idea of restrained approach. We decided not to have any conflict with the government committee of 25 members but to contain it by nominating 26 members of our own, so that there would be fifty-one members. We knew that some of the members of the

government committee would not attend the function. The President in chair, Sardar Sundar Singh, himself was executive member of the Punjab Government at that time. While we lost sympathy of some members of the government committee but renewed sympathies of others for us, so that on the whole we were able to get a strong majority without coming into conflict with the government. The Vice-President Sardar Harbans Singh Attariwala was great admirer of our brave doings. In that meeting of 15th November, we succeeded in counteracting the move of the government to control the Gurdwaras. It was decided in that meeting that "we should elect Sikh representatives for the Gurdwara Reform Movement after some months." We were beginning to find our feet and we felt that government was retreating. We ourselves took another precaution. We did not at all interfere in the management and administration of Manager or *Sarbrāh* Sardar Bahadur Sundar Singh so that there might not be any complaint against us, that there might not be any deterioration in the administration of Darbar Sahib and that we should impress the government and all other people with our reasonableness and moderation. For several months, this position went on till the Government made up its mind to have a clash with us. They relieved the manager and took all the keys of the treasury (*Toshākhānā*), the jewellery and other things from him. The idea of the Government seemed to be that regular possession of treasury and jewellery of Darbar Sahib should not pass into our hands. And we were in no hurry to act upon our decision of the 15th November meeting. Sikhs in different places felt stunned.

After Darbar Sahib, the next important temple of the Sikhs was Nankana Sahib, birth-place of Guru Nanak Devji. There was reason for attending to it immediately. The *Mahant* of Nankana Sahib was a criminal type of man and the temple had two hundred squares (*Murabbās*) of land or more. So irresponsible Akalis began to talk, especially in

district of Sheikhpura (the district of Nankana Sahib), of displacing the *Mahant*. This provoked him. He was in league with the police and others who were hostile to the Gurdwara Reform Movement. He, therefore, made preparations to beat any effort by the Akalis to take over his Gurdwara. I must say that something which helped the criminal intentions of the *Mahant* was the rashness, the foolishness, the impatience and the inexperience of our Akali friends. There was no need of forcing an open violent clash on the *Mahant*. We could wait till our movement gathered volume and take advantage of our favourable position to bring about a change in the administration of the Gurdwara. But fate willed otherwise. I want to be honest. These words of mine, I do not know where they will reach. Long before now; I and many other thoughtful Sikhs had been feeling that we were also very much to be blamed for the tragedy that happened at Nankana Sahib. I think that it will be good for our community to know it. It was an unnecessary massacre and tragedy. All this could have been avoided, if we were cautious. But there was a race among the Akali *Jathedārs* of Sheikhpura District to pocket the prize. And I must now for the first time (because it has not been by our sentiments to say these things) say that I blame Sardar Lachhman Singh Shahid. I blame Kartar Singh Jhabbar for this tragedy. There was only one upright man without fear and without any self-interest and that was Sardar Dalip Singh. When he heard that the Akalis had broken into the temple and the *Mahant* had opened fire on them on 21st of February, he hastened from his village. He knew the *Mahant*; he had been often meeting him. And he pleaded with the *Mahant* (*Mahant* lived in a house near the Gurdwara) to spare the men even at that late stage. But he won't listen, his men won't listen; instead they caught Sardar Dalip Singh and threw him into *Āvī* (furnace). When we reached next morning, we first saw the place where Sardar Dalip Singh had been burnt alive. And part of his hair and his iron bangle and other things were lying about. He was purest martyr of this tragedy.

Q. *How did you go there?*

Ans. When this thing was happening in Nankana Sahib, nobody at Nankana Sahib dared to send a message fearing that if the *Mahant* learned about it, he would get them killed. But Sardar Karam Singh, Station Master of Nankana Sahib railway station, was bursting with sorrow. He sent about a hundred messages all over the country, including Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. I was at my house in Khalsa College when towards the evening Sardar Harbans Singh Attari and three or four other friends drove up in a car. They told the happening at Nankana Sahib and decided to leave at once for Nankana Sahib. And we were motoring all night. We lost our way in the district of Sheikhupura. And around 2 or 3 A.M., we reached Nankana Sahib. The day we went there, we met the Deputy Commissioner of Sheikhupura, Mr Curry, an Englishman. Curry was very sympathetic to us. He felt so shocked that after a short time he resigned and went away. The Commissioner at that time was Mr C.M. King. He used to be the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. He was very tough and arrogant. He was, as I heard, a Ceylonese Christian, rather dark coloured. He was a terrible man. Mr King reached Nankana Sahib in the evening in a special train, and sent for us there on the railway line. Mr King and several of his officers were there. Sardar Harbans Singh Attariwala and Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar reached there. Kartar Singh had not reached the place as originally planned. He was to join Sardar Lachhman Singh on the bridge of a canal, and from there they were to proceed to Nankana Sahib to take possession of the temple. Sardar Lachhman Singh reached there and did not consider it necessary to wait. Mr King, his officers and police and other officers of the Punjab Government, felt very much embarrassed and it seemed that Mr King had orders to ease the situation

immediately because he said to us, "Well, the rest will be seen later on, what do you want me to do now?" Sardar Harbans Singh Attariwala, our Vice-President, I think very wisely, said to him, "We want you to hand over the keys of the Gurdwara to Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar and his *Jathā*." And he did so. In this way, after the massacre of Sardar Lachhman Singh and Sardar Dalip Singh and others, the Government handed over the Gurdwara to the Akalis. As we all know, there are so many sentimental stories about the bravery of these *shahīds*, the most remarkable among them was Sardar Dalip Singh, who died in an attempt to save others. Similarly there were stories that hundreds had been killed but that was wrong. Later on we formed a strong committee of representative men of the district and leading men of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, who went from village to village and did their best to trace out how many had been killed, and who had been killed. They could not go beyond the number of seventy.¹²

Next day we held a *Dīwān*, a religious meeting. So many other people had come up. It was quite safe at that time. The effect of the Nankana Sahib tragedy was that the Punjab Government felt embarrassed. The Akalis undoubtedly had a sort of victorious feeling which had no justification. We should learn a lesson from the tragedies. But the Akalis behaved as very arrogant, proud and indisciplined people.

We had taken over their committee at Darbar Sahib and contained it. Perhaps the government decided to put up a stiff attitude for some time. As I have already stated, they took over the keys of *Toshākhānā* at Golden Temple from the manager so that we could not take them from him. Now this created a furor. So far the

12. Subsequently Nankana Sahib Gurdwara Committee got compiled a volume entitled *Shahīdī Jīwan* by Gurbaksh Singh Shamsheer on the martyrs of Nankana Sahib which gave the details.

Manager had been managing and nobody had interfered in his working, Why had the Government taken the keys? It was not clear. So an agitation began and the Government foolishly banned speeches. This gave the opposition party a very easy method of having a sort of conflict with the Government. They had to do nothing except to deliver speeches and this is called *Chābīān dā Morchā*. This was nothing but breaking the ban imposed by the Government on speeches or criticizing the action of the Government. The Sikhs in large number went to jails. It got out of control of the Government. They did not know what to do? They sent a word to us, "We want to give you back the keys. You come and lodge a complaint in the Court of a Session Judge." We rightly refused. What should the Government do? They put a police case *suo moto*, that is, putting in a case against them. And they got a decree from the Session Judge that keys be returned to the Akali Committee. They sent us a word. We refused to go to take the keys, because we wanted the prisoners to be released first and the Government had to do it. The Akali Movement got a fillip from the *Chābīān dā Morchā*. And daily reports were coming in from various places in the Punjab that Akali *Jathās* had gone to such and such gurdwara and occupied it. We felt embarrassed. We did not wish this thing to happen. This would increase indiscipline. How would we control it? How could we know whether these people who took possession of a gurdwara were our men or they were the Government agents creating trouble for us. We tried our best to control these forcible possessions and at the same time decided elections to the first elected committee, of course, not usually elected committee but unofficially to manage Gurdwara Reform Movement and the gurdwaras, which were in our control. That committee was called the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Q. When and how was Akali Dal founded?

Ans. I have already told you that we checkmated the Nihangs. We asked our volunteers at the Akal Takht to call themselves Akalis and to dye their clothes in blue colour, thus giving new organization not only its name of Akalis but also giving it its uniform, blue turban for men and blue *scarf* for women and thus was laid the foundation of that body of Sikh volunteers called Akali Dal to carry out tasks at the behests of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The supreme body, like the civil authority, was Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, to control the gurdwaras which were in our possession and to pursue the policies of that body. Akali Dal on the other hand was an organization of volunteers to carry out those policies at the behest of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Thus, there was sown, even at this early stage, the seed of future trouble, as it does happen in great political movements when the wing of volunteers making sacrifices considers itself as more important as a real source of strength and wants to dominate the civil organization. Therein lies a great danger* for all revolutionary movements. And it proved dangerous for us too. I am purposely pressing this point at this stage because slowly and gradually the Shiromani Akali Dal was on the one hand a real source of strength for the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, on the other it was often a great headache, for the leaders in the Akali Dal organization considered themselves as the real leaders of the *Panth*. The civil authority of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was considered a body of the moderate and weak, dependent on the Akali Dal. This was nothing new, but it became an important feature of our organization. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had not only to solve the great problems to meet the government on various

grounds but also to carry on the administration of gurdwaras. It had also very often to contend with an internal revolt. It is true that the leaders in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee very often did lack control on the situation. It took a lot of time, gave a good deal of trouble and meant so much worry and alarm. Every organization is influenced by the temper of its members. Therefore, the temper of the leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal was a problem to contend with. I knew those leaders closely because they were my old students. And I knew them from their very younger days but I had to say that while other leaders or workers of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee tried their best, I also as their old teacher and guide of all those young men tried to control them but they cared little for me. So my knowledge of their past did not help us. Later on; when bigger problems and more difficult complications came in our way, then this feature of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee — became a serious thing for us. I later on will explain the critical situation when the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee took up the Nabha affair in its hands. Here I make a digression and want to record that when the keys of Golden Temple were given over to us then it was a problem for us. How to fill in that gap of the old officials, manager and *Sarbrāh*. So we had a small committee of well to do, influential, honest and experienced devotees, rather elderly Sikhs, to help us in the administration of the Golden Temple particularly of its treasury, jewellery, its accounts and such other things. I was made, what we called at that time, the Manager of the Golden Temple.

Q. Which year Sir?

Ans. This was in the beginning of 1922, or the end of 1921. My reputation, my reasonableness, it was considered, would be an asset, and that there would be full

cooperation between me and that committee. It did come out. They did the real things. But I was put to trouble often. I have been telling just now the headache caused to us by Shiromani Akali Dal people. Our Akalis, our army as you might call them, were mostly the citizens of Amritsar. They were a peculiar lot having many good qualities, making great financial sacrifices, putting in a lot of service on all occasions in the Golden Temple. But at the same time, they were jealous of each other and looking for friction always. They used to run night and day to me in the Khalsa College, Amritsar, with petty complaints. They won't let me do my work in the classes. They did not let me rest and did not let me sleep. And they bothered my life and my peace of mind. I confide to you that they made me a wreck in health, digestion, sleep, and I wanted to run away. And I did find an occasion to run away in June 1922 along with certain other friends. We went away for three or four months, not only away from Amritsar but outside India, North-Western Tibet, and wandered in the wilderness of the interior Himalayas forgetting everything. This stage gave me a new lease of mental and physical health and I came back in much better health, but determined, never to have anything to do with the administration of Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple), and never to rub shoulders with the city people (I am putting it half humorously and half seriously), who bothered me all the time. By the way, this gives you a side glimpse of the problems of Gurdwara Management, especially of that revolutionary stage when we had no legal status. We could not ask the police or the courts for help because we had raised the standard of revolt against the Government. So, as related by me just now, I was away from Amritsar, from India, from about the middle of June to the middle of September 1922. I was not a witness to that great event

in the history of our Gurdwara Movement that was called the *morchā* of *Guru Kā Bāgh*. I returned to India on the 7th of September 1922. In my absence the *morchā* began, and all the beatings took place. The beatings were stopped and our *Jathās* were arrested. Then the arrests were stopped and the Government managed to get out of this morass with the help of Sir Ganga Ram by eliminating the *Mahant*. I do not want to go into those details. When I returned, the position was this. There was no *morchā* at *Guru ka Bagh*. But about five thousands Akalis were in jail. And the tension with the Government was the same, only with this difference that our spirits were heightened by our latest victory although victory proved barren for us. I say barren because the solution to the gurdwara problem was nowhere in sight. And the position was also barren for the Government as it was not relieved of the great headache of the Akali movement. They did not succeed crushing us and silencing us. They could not pacify us. So both parties were caught in a stalemate. Of course – these civil officers – the British civilian officers – I hold them in more respect – they applied their mind very closely to the problems. They were men of nobility; men of intellectual courage.

Q. *Could you name them?*

Ans. J.M. Dunnett was the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, who later on became the Reforms Commissioner of the Government of India and he played an important role at Delhi regarding the reforms. Emerson was the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore. Sir John Maynard was the Executive Counsellor of Punjab Government and a man of principle, very stiff but very fair. On retirement, he went back to England, joined the Labour Party and became member of Parliament.

Q. *Could you give some account of the meeting which you had with John Maynard?*

Ans. In the winter of 1921, I think it was the month of December, they were arresting our men and dumping them in Borstol Jail of Lahore. Reports came to us daily of our men who were dying of cold in the jail. They were given rotten bread and one or two blankets only. We felt very worried about it and we complained to Mr Harkishan Lal, who was a minister. We had Diarchy in Punjab at that time. The government had two executive counsellors – Sir John Maynard and Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia, and there were two elected ministers, Lala Harkishan Lal and Mr Fazal-i-Hussain. Lala Harkishan Lal was very popular with the people. He was a financier. So we approached him. He said, “I will arrange a meeting between you and Sir John Maynard. You come to my house tomorrow.” Three or four of us, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Teja Singh Samundari, Sardar Bhag Singh and myself — I don’t exactly remember if there was an other friend or two — went in to his drawing room and complained to Sir John Maynard about the poor treatment given to our people. We had taken two or three of those rotten blankets with us. I went out and brought the dirty rags into the room and said, “Look here, Sir John, this is what they are given to cover themselves during cold December nights.” It pinched him; he could not defend himself. He lost temper, “Then do you mean to say that we are deliberately killing them?” I said, “I don’t know that. But this is what has happened, this is what is happening, whether you are doing it deliberately or not, our men are dying with these rotten covers full of lice.” He lost his temper and said, “I do not want to talk to you.” I got up and said, “I don’t want talk to you, too.” Then a thing became a sort of tiff between the two of us. The lovely Lala Harkrishan Lal, cool like a cucumber, got up and said, “Sir John, please sit down, Sir John, Oh Bawaji ; Bawaji; ਬਾਵਾ ਜੀ ਬੈਠੋ, ਬੰਦਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ

ਜੱਲ ਕਰੋ।” And he pacified both sides. Then Sir John said, “I will have the matter examined and we will give them proper care, we arrest them but we do not want to kill them!” Similarly, on one or two other occasions, there had been differences between him and me.

In the summer of 1923, I am now making a digression; the Sikhs were crying that they had no representative in the Senate of the Punjab University. There was no Sikh fellow. We could not get any Sikh elected. It was all packed with a strong Hindu majority, even the Mohammedans were helpless. Sir John Maynard was the Vice-Chancellor of the University. He made up his mind to have one or two Sikh fellows. He wrote to our Principal, Mr G.A. Wathen; God bless his memory. He was the noble saviour of the cause of the Sikh education and the cause of Sikh political strength. Sir John Maynard wrote to our Principal asking him to suggest some name. Principal Wathen called me to the office, “Bawaji, here is a letter from Sir John Maynard. He wants me to recommend a suitable name for nomination as a member of the Senate of Punjab University but he has laid down one condition, viz., the man you suggest must not be one who is taking active part in this quasi-political movement of the gurdwaras of the Sikhs. Do you know, Bawaji, what I am going to reply to him? I am going to reply: I can suggest only one name and that is Bawa Harkrishan Singh. But I will warn that Bawa Harkrishan Singh is most active in that quasi-political movement.” I said, “Please, do not do it. Why do you waste your ink?” “You know, I am not going to suggest any other name.” He sent his reply and wonder of wonders happened in a few days: Sir John Maynard nominated me as a fellow of the Senate of Punjab University. And look here please, according to rules a member of the Senate who did not attend three or four of five consecutive meetings, his name was

struck off. I was arrested on 13th of October 1923 and when I came out after nearly 2 years, I found that my name had not been struck off from the Senate of the Punjab University under special instructions of Sir John Maynard. Now what do you say, if I or others like me remember him with respect, no wonder!

Babbar Akalis

Q. You were talking about Guru Kā Bāgh affair?

Ans. I was talking about *Guru kā Bāgh*. Now the *morchā* was over. But leave aside the bigger problems of the Gurdwaras, even the *Guru Kā Bāgh Morchā* problem had not been solved because there were five thousand Sikhs in jails at that time and the Government did not know what to do with them. While it was a help to us for propaganda purposes but at the same time it was a cause of worry for us. Because our men seemed lying rotting in the jail, purposelessly now. Nature was pressing both sides — the Akalis and the Government — to find a solution not only to the basic problem but also to the immediate problem. One evening Mr Dunnett, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, drove into the Khalsa College. Mr Wathen, the Principal, was not there. Another senior Englishman, (Acting Principal) Harvey, was there. He went to his house, and asked him to put him in touch with those two or three professors of the college who were doing a lot in the movement. Mr Harvey sent a word. I and my colleagues — Professor Niranjana Singh and Professor Teja Singh — came up. Mr Dunnett was so soft but I would not melt in his mouth, "Look here you and I am faced with a serious problem, you know the Babbar Akalis." I should not take time to explain that this was a group of Akalis who were in open violent revolt against the British. They had killed policemen. They had killed one or two British officers and all that. Babbar Akalis and we were

poles apart. We were followers of nonviolence. We had a very restricted aim and that was the reform and possession of gurdwaras. They wanted to turn out the British from India. They preached violence. They carried out bloodshed. Our role was constructive. So, he said, "Look here, they are danger to you, they are danger to us. Gentlemen, now is the time to make the issues clear. If you come out with fairly strong denunciation, in your own interest, of the Babbar Akalis, it will help the Government to find a way for releasing your five thousand prisoners." We were not so soft as to be taken in, and I said to him, "Mr Dunnnett, they are misguided, no doubt, they are poles apart from us. But certainly they are our brethren, we cannot disown our brethren." "Then what are you prepared to do?" "We are prepared to put in clear terms, the great difference between their goal and methods and our goal and methods and ask them to come round to the right path, and ask the people to give up supporting them." Mr Dunnnett said, "I think something like that would do." "We cannot give a draft to you without consulting our colleagues and our seniors in the city." "When will you be ready?" "Sometime late in the evening." Then we went to the city and found all our seniors were away. Then we put our heads together and we made a sort of a draft on the lines that I explained, just now. And as the night fell, Mr Dunnnett rolled in, "Yes gentlemen! Where have you reached?" We said, "We have prepared a draft which, we think, our seniors, who are not here at the moment, will surely approve." "Let me see." We read it out to him. "All this will do, this will do. Give me a copy." The next day the Government released the prisoners (Five thousand Akalis) and made that announcement of ours, a plea for showing regard for the non-violent movement and non-violent methods.

Nabha Affair

Q. What was the Nabha affair? Please enlighten us on that issue.

Ans. Just at this time, in the summer of 1923, came a bombshell for the Sikh community. It was the forcible abdication of the Maharaja of Nabha, brought up by the political department of the Government of India. The Maharaja of Nabha was popular not only among the Sikhs, but even in the rest of India, as a nationalist leader. However, we later on found, to our bitter cost, that this basis of his popularity did not mean much. But at that time it produced a clamour in the Sikh mind and people were agitated. When it cooled down a little, the leaders had to think what should they do? I am now entering upon an important stage in the history of our movement. This question of the abdication of the Maharaja of Nabha had to be considered in this setting that I relate:

1. There was due sympathy for him and the Akalis felt that they being the virile portion of the community should do something for him.
2. The leaders in Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee felt that if they did not do something substantial in the Nabha question, the Shiromani Akali Dal, our volunteers' organization, would certainly take it up.

Q. Who was the leader of Shiromani Akali Dal?

Ans. Sardar Sarmukh Singh Jhabal was the leader of the movement — a very obstinate man, political in his outlook and anti-British. At the same time he considered not only my esteemed friend, Sardar Mehtab Singh, our President, as moderate but he also considered Master Tara Singh, who was the firebrand in the Akali popular parlance, to be moderate. Master Tara Singh felt that if he did not take up the Nabha question, Akali Dal and

Sarmukh Singh Jhabal certainly would take it up, if for nothing else, to make the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee feel small. Master Tara Singh argued if Sarmukh Singh took it up, then the leadership of the Sikhs would go into the hands of Sarmukh Singh and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee would be tied to the tail of Shiromani Akali Dal. Akali Dal would set the pace and the policy and issue directions, which Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee would have to follow. That was not a healthy thing for the Gurdwara Movement or for that matter a healthy thing for Sikh Community as a whole in its comprehensive interests. Master Tara Singh's analysis was absolutely correct. Then there was another aspect. Our lawyer leader and President Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh, a man who was a declared moderate, a man of sacrifice, very hardworking, very patient, of course with all the weaknesses of lawyers. He was Advocate-General of the Punjab Government when he resigned and joined our movement. So at heart he was not in favour of the Nabha question being taken up by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. He thought it was a bed of thorns but he also said that we had reached a stage where we must do something to force the hands of the Government to give us the gurdwara law. He used to say, "ਉਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੌਤ ਦਿਆਂਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਜ਼ਹਿਮਤ ਲੈਣਗੇ." (If we give them death then to save themselves they will undertake suffering). Now you see what does it amount to? Not directly but indirectly he was also lending support to this proposal of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee taking up the Nabha question. He was often saying in our close circles, "You must create some political notions to force the hands of the government to give the necessary Gurdwara Act." Then there were people like me rather idealists for taking risks but not quite clearly understanding what

the risks were. So that the position became this that in the SGPC Master Tara Singh and I were the two strong advocates for taking up the Nabha question. Later on, some people gave us praise; others cursed us for dragging the community (*Panth*) into this political mire. Looking back I say 'the question is not whether we were justified or not in taking up that question. The question is, could we help it? If we hesitate would it be of advantage? If we hesitated take up that question, could it not be a greater danger to the community?' Therefore, those who judge us or will judge us in future should bear this in mind. We were caught in a dilemma, and we did our best and when we put our hand to the plough, we did not take it back till we took it to the other side of the river. So it was decided that before we take a formal decision we should arm ourselves with proper proof that the Maharaja of Nabha's abdication was forced. We sent a trusted emissary to the Maharaja at Dehradun who obtained from him a written and signed declaration that he had been forced to abdicate and the so-called voluntary abdication had never been in existence. I was explaining the position as it obtained within the circles of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee over the assumption of the matter of the Maharaja of Nabha. Now it should be clearly understood that so many issues were involved. We wanted to help the Maharaja of Nabha. We also wanted to press the government through this political question to come round and make a settlement with us of the religious question of the gurdwaras. We also wanted to save our movement and save our organization from disruption, which was sure if the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee had not taken up this matter in hand. We passed the resolution and the die was cast. The government felt that the Akalis understood that the government would not budge an

inch to any pressure of ours over the Nabha question. But we hoped that after all this conflict, perhaps, a situation would emerge which would help the gurdwara cause, though we could not see very clearly because there were opposite opinions.

Preparation for a Prolonged Struggle

The news came. We had our friends and sympathizers everywhere within the government, its offices and administration, in the police and in the jails. And we got information from Simla that the Government was preparing a sort of ominous multi-direction policy. We got the information that they would declare the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal unlawful bodies and would clap all of us with one stroke behind the bars. We also got news that the government did not want to go further. They did not want trouble in the army. They wanted to save their face before the world by providing that their religious work of the administration of the gurdwaras would not be interfered with by the government, if we wanted, could go on as it was. So we also made preparation. We got together a small compact body of four or five trusted workers who would carry on the administration of gurdwaras in our absence and at the same time carry out our instructions from within the jail. About the movement, we also made arrangements to have money in safe hands for our purposes. We withdrew a good deal of money from the banks and put that money with trusted friends to be used by our men outside and made other preparations for a prolonged struggle. Down came the heavy hands of the government on the night of 12th October of 1923. All over the Punjab, all the leading members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal were arrested. We, three professors of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, were arrested about one O' Clock at night. The

police came over and brought our Principal with them. They first came to my house and then to Principal Niranjan Singh's and Professor Teja Singh's. Our Principal Wathen was there when we were taken to the judicial lock up. And when the day dawned, the world knew that all the Akalis were behind the bars. Their two bodies were declared unlawful; and all other activities struck. And for a moment it seemed, perhaps, this crushing blow would give us the finale. But no, we were used to it for several years. We knew how to take hard blows and give hard blows. And within a day or two our machinery outside found its feet and everything seemed to be going on in the Temple just as before with the difference that everybody felt that preparations for a bitter prolonged desperate struggle were being made by the Akalis. We tried every stupendous method; for instance, the first *Jathā* of 500 (five hundred) was sent to Jaito (Nabha) to resume the so-called reported interrupted *Akhand Pāṭh* at Jaito. And they were given instructions. We were behind the jail bars and our men outside gave them instruction on our behalf that they should not yield to arrest but push on even when fired on. We were all sorry that these instructions were given. When they reached Jaito, they were given several warnings but according to the orders issued to them, they did not stop. They won't yield to arrest. The police fired. It is very difficult to say how many died, and how many got wounded. But it was very bitter pill to swallow. It gave us rude shock. It was on the 21st February, the anniversary of Nankana Sahib Tragedy day. We got news in the Amritsar jail and we felt awful and puzzled and at once, in spite of different views, all of us there (all the leaders were there in Amritsar jail), whether Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee or of the Shiromani Akali Dal, wanted that this should not continue. So we managed to send a secret message outside to our city friends who were gathering there to decide the programme of the next *jathā* of 500 (five hundred). They were also puzzled. Our instructions from behind the jail

came to their rescue. In our name they changed the policy and issued instructions that the next *jathā* would go and then yield to arrest. And thus thirteen *jathās* of 500 (five hundred) were sent one after the other to Nabha state.

Q. Who were the leaders in Amritsar when you were in jail?

Ans. When we were in jail Sardar Arjan Singh, nephew of Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh, and Sardar Mangal Singh Gill of Ludhiana, my old student, were there. Sardar Mangal Singh was in jail about six months or a year before we took up the Nabha question. Therefore, when we were all arrested, he completed his term. The Government released him. They could not arrest him because he was in jail when the Nabha question was started by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. So he was available. We gave him instructions not to do anything at all to get arrested. Master Daulat Singh of Amritsar was there who later on worked in Insurance Company and another gentleman Sardar Gopal Singh Mukhtiar, agent of Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh, a poor man of comparatively lower level, but very hardworking and very useful. These four, God bless them, evolved strength and wisdom to carry on the work outside, not only the work, but carry on the movement on our behalf according to our messages. Our messages were frequent. We were nominally in jail. It looked as if the war office of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has been transferred to jail. Jailers, policemen and others helped us. I and other Professor friends carried on our voluminous writings and drafting and all those things were sent out. Replies were received. To go back to the middle of October, when we were arrested, we were still in the judicial lock up at Amritsar. The government after a few days found itself in great difficulty, for it could not carry on cases against us. There was no

material. We had locked all the office files of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in a secret place. That barrier was broken by them. They frightened one of the clerks who had been arrested. The police succeeded in frightening the poor fellow and he divulged the place where the records were. They made a raid at night and got all the records. And thus they were able to begin preparation for a long drawn out prosecution.

Prosecution in Lahore

After several months at Amritsar, from October to the middle of the March we were taken to the special jail in the Lahore fort where we were placed in an old barrack of British troops. The court's special magistrate was appointed whose name was Mr P.J. Anderson. He was an Indian Christian, very patient, a very good man, very kindly. We respected him. I remember him upto this time. The prosecution was led by that remarkable Englishman lawyer, Mr Bevan Petman. One would love to be prosecuted by him.

Q. How and why, Sir, were you so much impressed by him?

Ans. Mr Petman was large-hearted man and he used to say, "We are prosecutors, not persecutors." He was a friend of our leader, Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh. And they twitted each other in the court across the benches. And would you believe it? Several times later on when a solution of the gurdwara problem was on the anvil and both the Government and the Akalis, were in a way cooperating to hammer out something which would resolve that dispute, this Englishman came to our help when sometimes a difficulty arose and disagreement could not be resolved. Both sides were adamant and then that leader of the negatives, Master Tara Singh, who refused to take part in hammering out the legislation and yet would propose solution of the

difficulty that arose. It was a funny thing. He was boycotting all our activities and yet helping us. For instance, I tell you, when the draft of the new Gurdwara Bill was being discussed, dispute arose over the name of the new body. The Government insisted that it should be called as Central Gurdwara Board. We insisted that our beloved name Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee would not be allowed to be wiped off. They would not yield. We would not yield. What should be done? For about two or three weeks there was a stalemate and then my lovely friend Master Tara Singh got an inspiration. He said, "Well, there is a way out, (although he was boycotting our work). The way out was: let it be provided in the Bill that the first Central Gurdwara Board when elected would have the authority and right to have any name for itself as it liked." Now this was acceptable to us. It should be acceptable to the Government. Petman came to our rescue, "Well it is very good suggestion. I will take it to the Hon'ble Governor." He went to the Governor, who said, "All right yes, yes. Done." When later on the constituencies were being framed for the new body, a problem arose. There is a gurdwara in district of Amritsar at Goindwal in memory of the third Guru, Guru Amar Das Sahib, who was the ancestor of the Bhallas. The committee of the Bhallas had been from the very beginning very friendly to our revolutionary movement, helping us. So when this occasion of the constituency came, they pleaded with us, "Do not take away this gurdwara. Find some way of having a committee of Bhallas." How could we do it? We could not find any solution. However, we were bursting with the desire to help them. Then the boycotting Master Tara Singh came to our rescue. He said, "There is a solution. The constituency should be restricted to the town of Goindwal. The town of Goindwal is all

populated by Bhalla Bawas. In this four out of five members would be Bhallas." Thus, Master Tara Singh provided a solution to a difficulty, which was baffling us.

Gurdwara Legislation

Q. Kindly throw some light on the Gurdwara Legislation?

Ans. After we had been moved to Lahore Special Jail, it dawned upon the both sides, the Government and the Akalis, that perhaps the Nabha question would remain a stalemate. The Government would not yield, the Akalis might fail to do anything for the Maharaja. But they would not in so many formal terms give up the Nabha question and the Government had no desire to compel the Akalis to formally renounce the Nabha question. Both sides realized that the time was ripe for a serious effort to hammer out legislation for the gurdwaras. And this programme was taken up by that remarkable Englishman, able, strong and farsighted, Sir Malcolm Hailey, all praise to him. He was appointed Governor of Punjab, and his first act after a few days was to appoint a committee of the two leading Deputy Commissioners of Amritsar and Lahore, Mr J.M. Dunnet and Mr H.W. Emerson. He asked them to tour the whole of the Punjab and find out what the problem was of the gurdwaras and what was called for? And how to do it? They were very able men. They worked hard. They produced a remarkable report for the consideration of the Governor. Sir Malcolm Hailey gave his own stamp to the draft report and then he appointed a comprehensive committee of officials like Mr Dunnett and Mr Emerson and of the Sikh MLCs. There was no Legislative Assembly at that time. Punjab had a Legislative Council and the leading Sikh MLCs, Sardar Jodh Singh, Sardar Narain Singh Advocate of Gujranwala, Sardar Tara Singh of Moga and so many

others were its members. The Governor provided full facilities for the committee of Sikh Members of Legislative Council to come to the jail and hold discussions with us. Here I must stop and explain what the position inside the jail was. There were three groups. The major central group was that of Master Tara Singh. This group was faced on the one side with intellectual and constructive leaders of a group of Sardar Mehtab Singh and also included Professors like myself and Professor Teja Singh and others.

Q. Was Principal Niranjana Singh with you?

Ans. ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਉਹ ਜਿਹੜੇ charges ਫ਼ੇਮ ਹੋਏ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਉਸ ਬਿਆਨ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਨਾਭੇ ਦੇ ਮੋਰਚੇ ਦੇ ਬਰਖ਼ਲਾਫ਼ ਹਾਂ। ਅਸੀਂ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਸਾਂ ਉਹ ਇਹ ਬਿਆਨ ਨਾ ਦੇਵੇ, ਪਰ ਉਹ ਇੰਤਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਤਿਆਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਉਸ ਨੇ ਝੱਟ ਬਿਆਨ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਛੱਡ ਦਿੱਤਾ।

And on the other side Master Tara Singh was faced with the group of Akali Dal leaders like Sarmukh Singh Jhabal, Sohan Singh Josh, who later on became a leading communists, and people like Sardar Gopal Singh Qaumi and others.

The pace was set by Master Tara Singh, Sarmukh Singh and his Akali Dal. Master Tara Singh, therefore, could not act independently. Not only that, he had temperamental peculiarities, but perhaps if he had not been pressed by them, he might have acted differently. But unfortunately, he took up the position, "No, we are not going to take part in any discussion from inside the jail." Look here, do you mean to say that the Government should first release the prisoners, then hold discussions and find disagreement and have the trouble of locking them up again? What is this? Is there any parallel of this in political history? Those revolutionaries who had fought for freedom never said, "you release us first and then we will talk and discuss a settlement. Gandhiji never did so. Everything had to be done from inside the jail. But Master ji won't listen.

Our group, and without any vanity I would say, our group was in this matter principally influenced by my firm, strong and unyielding stand, viz., "If nobody else goes, I will go and discuss the matter with the Members of Legislative Council. I will take part in hammering out the new Gurdwara Bill. I would do anything to find a solution both for the benefit of the Sikh community and the Government." I do not mean to say that my group refused. I only want to give you a sort of a perspective that in certain matters, I took up the firm and unyielding stand, and that it had a tonic effect on our group. Well, we held many long discussions, and thus was evolved the Gurdwara Act which was passed in summer of 1925. It was a great thing. It was a great measure. It was a moment so great. It was a result of the talent and genius of Sir Malcolm Hailey. All the Members of Legislative Council came into jail and congratulated us.

Partial Release of Prisoners

When that Bill was passed and then they appealed to us that we should pass our resolution then we would follow the Act. But Sarmukh Singh Jhabal and Master Tara Singh group were out for trouble and I am sorry to state that perhaps one of their motives was not to permit a solution of the situation to be carried out so that they might succeed in destroying Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh and his Central group. Both of them seemed to agree to destroy (I say that I was not partisan I was a freelance) S. Mehtab Singh. Then Sarmukh Singh would destroy Master Tara Singh. So we made up our mind. Openly we took up this position; Sir Malcolm Hailey only made one demand. He said a written undertaking should be given that we would follow only one new Act in the matters relating to the Gurdwaras. And he was justified because we had created so much trouble for so many years to the whole of the Punjab. As Master Tara

Singh and the other group refused to do it, we wanted to wait to evolve some sort of solution, so that a split might not happen in our ranks. I am proud that I and one or two leading members of our group succeeded in holding back our men seven months in jail. We evolved many formulae to get a sort of unanimous approval, but these two other groups would not agree to anything. Then two of our members, military officers, *Risāldārs*, quietly took leave for two days, and went to the office of the Governor, Sir Malcolm Hailey, and said to him, "We want to give written undertaking that they would follow the Act." They signed and he said, "Well it is done. I do not want a written undertaking now." It is done, as if he also wanted to stand by his word and fulfil the technicality. When this word reached the jail, our men became furious. Look here, we had been rotting here for seven months. They used strong language. Now we would not stay any longer. The written undertaking was not wanted. We could not offer it now after seven months. I requested my friends to wait for two or three days. Let me go out and try to find out some solution or, some formula, applying to all at once. I went out, I had in mind to meet our friend Petman, our prosecutor. I said to him, "Mr Petman, now the written undertaking is gone. We should find some formula equally acceptable to the government and to us." He said, "What do you propose, Bawaji." I said to him, "Any one of us may get up and make a statement — a simple statement; for instance, I stand up and I say to the magistrate, Sir, I want to make a statement. I have taken an active part in formulation of the new Gurdwara Act, I consider it satisfactory in matters relating to the gurdwaras. I intend to follow this Act which I have helped in formulating." He said, "This is alright. Let me meet the Governor." He went to the Governor who said, "This is all right, Petman. Whosoever makes a statement, you withdraw the case against him the next day." Then there was a new thing; most of us wavered. So my seniors in our group

began to waver. You may do or may not do, I am going to do it. So I stood up. I should not have been the first to stand up. But I stood up in the court. I said, "Sir I want to make a statement." It was well known that I was the leader of the group, which worked day and night for hammering out this Act. "I consider it, Sir, satisfactory, and in future the matters relating to the gurdwaras I will abide by this Act." Thus I sat down. Then our men one after the other stood up. "Sir, my statement is the same as that of Bawa Harkrishan Singh." About 20 to 30 persons made that statement, then our friend Bevan Petman stood, and addressed the court, "Sir, I have instructions to withdraw cases against them." We were released. Master Tara Singh and the other group of Sarmukh Singh Jhabal were retained in the Lahore fort for some days and then they were removed to the Borstal jail where the case lingered on, Litigation and prosecution lingered on for many months till the flower of our movement, Sardar Teja Singh Samundari, died in Borstal jail of heart stroke. The case was adjourned and adjourned till under the new Act, new elections were held and of course the majority of seats were won by Master Tara Singh and Sarmukh Singh party. As they were in jail and our group was out, they appeared to be martyrs as compared to our group. After release, I retired from the field. I went back to my Tennyson and Shakespeare, to the hockey matches, to the sun of literature with no idea of being mixed up with politics. Needless to say, I was no more a member of any partisan group. But then after the election they were still in jail and they had been condemning our statement. They called it undertaking and called it weakness. The same very position was created for them. Government won't release them, although elected. The newly elected Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee passed a resolution declaring that it would follow the Act and then they were released. It will take a huge sitting to explain the beauties and greatness of new Gurdwara Act. It was the handiwork of the genius of Sir Malcolm Hailey who

for ever finished the basis of conflict between any Indian Government and the Sikh religion.

Gurdwara Act

Q. Kindly throw some light on the merits of Gurdwara Act.

Ans. Now I will try to explain the situation as it obtained in the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925. Sir Malcolm Hailey became the Governor of the Punjab. He was a very able man, farsighted, clear sighted, strong and decisive — man who commanded respect equally both from friend and foe. He was the Home Member of the Government of India and was appointed Governor of the Punjab about the end of 1924. He took up the Gurdwara Legislation realizing that the ground was clear now. For the purpose of the Nabha question the Government would never yield on that matter to any pressure. The Akalis on the other hand also realized that they would not formally renounce this question. It was not necessary for the Government to get it renounced by us. So silence was the best thing about it. As I related earlier, Sir Malcolm Hailey had appointed some very capable civilian officers, Mr Dunnet, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar and Mr Emerson, the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore to tour the whole Punjab and meet Sikhs of all shades of opinions about Gurdwara Legislation. The report submitted by them was discussed by Sir Malcolm Hailey and his admirers, and the ground was cleared for his decision. Of course, for many weeks, there were many discussions between his representatives and senior officers and the Sikh Members of Legislative Council. There was no Legislative Assembly at that time, it was Legislative Council in the Punjab. The upshot was that Sir Malcolm was clear in his mind what the working of the new Act should be. I do not hesitate to say that

Sir Malcolm gave us far more than what we demanded or what we ever dreamed of demanding. He gave us solutions for future problems of any type that might arise. Why did he do it? From his point of view, he did it in the interests of the British Government. He did it in the interests of the British Army, which had a strong core of brave Sikh soldiers whose religious sentiments the British Government were always respected. But it does not make any difference that he did it in the interests of his Government. It served us more than it served the Government.

It did a thing unique. The list or schedule of all historical Sikh Gurdwaras worth the name was drawn. It included about two hundred and fifty gurdwaras. These gurdwaras in the schedule were given by the Act to the Sikh community by a stroke of legislative action. Now this was something unique. In history, property had changed hands only either through a violent but successful revolution or through decree of the Supreme Court. In our case it was neither. It was instead a legislative measure, which was something unique. As a parallel measure, Sir Malcolm also discussed and reposed a schedule of the opposite type, that is, of places of worship, which were never to be claimed by the Sikhs as historical Sikh gurdwaras. They were put out of the pale of legislative action with our consent. There were the *Derās* or *Akhārās* of the *Udāsīs*, principally where the Sikh scripture was installed. They were practically Sikh gurdwaras but had never been claimed by the Sikhs as such. And the *Udāsīs* by way of a separate schism of Hindu-cum-Sikh beliefs had been managing them. This schedule was a great help to put down opposition to the new Act among the Hindus and *Udāsīs*. Then another important step was that all the property was to be in the name of gurdwara and was to go to the new gurdwara management. If the

mahant or anybody else claimed the property, he had to go to the court. And for that purpose a Gurdwara Tribunal was established, which would deal with the dispute of property. To eliminate opposition, Sir Malcolm also decided that the *pujārīs*, or incumbents as they were called, of the gurdwaras, if they wanted, could remain on their places under the new management, if not, then they could demand compensation. And we had to compensate them. For this also, any difference or dispute between us and the *pujārīs* would go to the Gurdwara Tribunal. Now in regard to the Sikh historical gurdwaras and those which were not covered by this term, the ground was clear. But Sir Malcolm did not stop there. There could be trouble in the future over Sikh places of public worship, not historical Sikh gurdwaras, but Sikh places of public worship, which were so many, *dharamsālās*, Gurdwaras, *Singh Sabhās*, etc. Unless something was done for that purpose in this Act, there would be seed for future trouble and a clash between the Sikhs and the British government. So he laid down the clauses to determine the Sikh places of public worship. If public worshippers, who came and met in that Gurdwara, could claim that the place be declared a place of Sikh public worship. And if anybody wanted to contend it, he could contend and could go to the Gurdwara Tribunal. So that in such cases in future there would be no trouble between the Sikhs and the Government. Thus all possible occasions of conflict were resolved by this great statesman. I do not want to enter into smaller matters, which were provided for in the Act. But this line of skeleton analysis would show the keenness of Sir Malcolm to have complete solution and eliminate as far as humanly possible recurring of religious conflict between the Sikhs and the British Government. I want to mention one thing. When he became the Governor he was a very clever politician.

He tried a novel method. He did not start any new repression, nothing whatsoever. But while making speeches of a peculiar tenor and tone – he created an impression of a terrible firmness which, I will not hesitate to say, frightened everybody. It seemed that Sir Malcolm would devour us. And yet nothing happened. He only wanted that the urgent work of hammering out the gurdwara legislation should be indirectly helped by this feeling of his strength of determination. He only frowned and barked but did not bite, though it was not clear at that time. Later on people of understanding like me admired it. He was the type, which built up that great British Empire. He was the type which, when the Empire crumbled and disintegrated, out of its ruins they built up another Commonwealth of friendship almost as that as the old British Empire, almost as influential though in a different manner. To this day members of the Commonwealth of the British belong to a new type of family all over the world, richer, bolder and capable of solving problems and influencing the international politics. Little wonder that some of us should to this day remember those great Englishmen who were our friends. Mr Wathen, our Principal, Sir Malcolm Hailey, Sir John Maynard, Mr J.M. Dunnett and Mr H.W. Emerson. I fondly imagine that many of those Britishers, civilian and army men, must be around their hearths in England, remembering the great qualities of all Indians and among them of small but powerful community, the Sikhs of the Punjab.

Q. Bawaji! Kindly enlighten us on the emergence of Puñjābī Sūbā, since you have been very closely associated with the struggle.

Ans. I would now relate what passed in the Punjab shortly before the partition of India and immediately after the partition and later on about the *Puñjābī Sūbā*. In the undivided Punjab it was not generally known, not even

to many Sikhs, that with exception of the Subdivision of Tehsil of Zira,¹³ in Ferozpur District, there was no area where the Sikhs were in a majority. Now in a democratic set up how could there be an area of a Sikh state under these circumstances. This was not realized, not even by our leaders – not even by my respected friend Master Tara Singh — because they fumbled and floundered. They wanted political power, they wanted an honourable position in the country after the partition which seemed to be coming. But they did not know how to get this done and what could the Hindu Congressmen and the British Government do? Perhaps there is only one man who clearly understood the issue and that was my respectable friend Giani Kartar Singh, my old student, a man of talent and a man of great sacrifice and a thorough politician in and out. Whatever politicians are, politicians are politicians; they are not saints. I am not here condoning the mistakes and weaknesses of my friend Giani Kartar Singh, who is no more. But I only put it as a fact. Who did not know what the common run of politician in India was, has been, and is? He understood it because he worked intelligently from the beginning. Master Tara Singh was not sure of his ground and, therefore, to the people it appeared that he was changing his grounds, it seemed that he was confused. What could he do? So after the partition, there was great disappointment in store for the Sikhs. People blamed the leaders, the leaders blamed the Congress and everybody blamed everybody else. There was no need of this sort of mutual blaming because nothing could be done. We have been un-intelligently following a dream of political power for the Sikhs with

13. It is erroneous, Zira Tehsil of Ferozepur district had 65.2% Muslim population. It was only Tarn Taran Tehsil (then Amritsar district) in British Punjab where the Sikhs were in majority. See, *Partition of Punjab*, Dr Kirpal Singh, 1991.

no basis to stand upon. However, Providence, Kind Providence, was watching over the welfare of this small community of the Sikhs just as it was over the biggest groups. The partition of the Punjab produced a terrible and depressing situation by scattering the refugees so widely and prominently all over the country and all over the Punjab and neighbouring states, weeping, writhing and starving and what not. But behind all this lay great blessings, not the least for the Sikhs. But it was only the hand of nature, which implanted the Sikh farmers here and there and everywhere. But, although not evident at that time, but as I said according to some well-thought-out scheme, which later on turned out to our advantage, our population got settled in such a manner that in any future democratic set up in the elections, the Sikh electorate would be able to exert a disproportionate influence on the elections. This is what happened and this is what will happen. We will explain it a little later. Then immediately after the partition, our friends and sympathizers in the Punjab Legislature and at the Centre were at pains to find something to satisfy the natural desire of the Sikhs. There was no heroic measure. There was no miracle that could be performed by anybody. It was a long, tedious, hard, prosaic procedure. For instance, immediately after the partition there was a struggle in the Punjab, in the Legislature, in the University and other spheres between the Hindus with Hindi and the Sikhs with Punjabi. Then it was felt that some sort of agreement should be hammered out. It should begin in education first. The Hindus very quickly saw the necessity of learning Hindi. Therefore, in the University rules, Hindi and Punjabi in Gurmukhi characters were made compulsory for all students appearing in Matric examination. They must pass in both languages. This was a good thing. Then it must be realized that

something should be done at the basis of the foundation of the school. And out of that rubbing of minds came what was at that time called Sachar Formula. That is, it was agreed that even if a certain number of students in a school wanted to learn Hindi wherever the school may be, provision must be made for them. Similarly, for the same percentage of students who wanted to learn Punjabi, provision must be made for them. This Sachar Formula was the handiwork of my friend Giani Kartar Singh. We did not understand it. I think most of the leaders did not understand it. He understood it. He laid a sure foundation of what was later to follow as the *Puñjābī Sūbā*. He was a man of clarity of vision. People abused him. People accused him of changing his stand, of being unreliable and fickle and what not. But he was consistent and persevering in the thing, that is, he served the cause that he held dear. He did not enrich himself. He did not show any patronization to his relatives and others. He remained a poor man, a man in the street. I have seen him starving. Of Course, he was changing sides. I am not justifying that at all. Perhaps he had got into the habit of it. And he flouted public opinion and took pleasure in flouting the public opinion. The political pony won't move fast. The Central Government won't move and the Punjab government which I am sorry I have to say it, certain gentlemen even the Sikhs took pleasure in opposing and harming Sikh interests. So the Sikhs, the Akalis, got tired of this and started a strong agitation for *Puñjābī Sūbā*. Independence had come to India and look at our rulers in the Punjab, they won't even let us shout that we wanted this and that. In Punjab, Government under my friend Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, my old student, banned the shouting of *Puñjābī Sūbā* slogan. Look at it. This was going in for trouble. In the 20th century, in independent India just think of it, what the proud

Sikhs felt in their hearts. "Are we, the citizens of India having any right?" Is it possible to live an honourable life in this country? It became a furious storm. All the Sikh leaders were arrested and poor I was summoned. Whenever there was trouble and better men had gone to jail, poor I would be summoned to act as a stopgap. I considered it an honour. I have been proud of it that in time of peril, my friends thought of me. And I was a free lance as a non-party man. I served the cause to the best of my ability and understanding. I was made once more the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. I took a strong line. I issued a circular that no employee of the vast Gurdwara administration would take part in this agitation. I wanted to keep the gurdwaras apart. I wanted to give a proof of our honesty that we did not want to exploit the gurdwaras for political purposes. I ordered that no employee would take any part in this, nor would I. Although everything was happening in the Golden Temple, just before the great offices of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Teja Singh Samundari Hall, thousands went to the jail. The Punjab government seemed to have gone mad. They even went to the extent of firing tear gas shells into the Golden Temple on the 5th July, 1955. I was the President of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee at that time. I was summoned to a nearby place where all the big officers, the Deputy Commissioner Chhibbar and the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Ashwani Kumar, Sardar Naurang Singh Bains and others were present. They wanted to impress me to stop this. This was on the morning of 5th July. "How can I do it? You destroy it and what will happen. You may surround the temple. You may not let people go in and let people come out. But what will happen? It will take the form of barring entry into the Temple and we in our thousands coming

from the countryside in the Punjab demanding to go into our own Temple and worship and sit and move just as we like. How will that help you? I think they did not like it. So firing took place in the evening. But an hour or so after the firing at the exact hour at the place where the *jathā* of fifty or sixty used to come out to shout *Puñjābī Sūbā Zindābād*, the folding doors of the *Parikarmā* circumlocutory of Darbar Sahib on the side of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee office were thrown open and marched out fifty stalwarts heroically shouting *Puñjābī Sūbā Zindābād*, offering to be arrested. "Where are your tear gas shells? How have they held?" The next day my esteemed friend Sardar Hukam Singh was arrested. I was also arrested in the evening from the office. We were both there. And he true to his salt, shouted *Puñjābī Sūbā Zindābād*. But I was the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, who had stopped all the employees from taking part in the agitation. I twitted my friend Sardar Hukam Singh, "I would not shout *Puñjābī Sūbā Zindābād*. I am the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee." I should mention here to be fair. The mess that was created was not the creation of my honoured friend Mr Bhim Sen Sachar, who was the Chief Minister at that time. The mess was created by my friend Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, who later became the Chief Minister. And I think any effort to bring a bad name to Mr Bhim Sen Sachar failed and the Sikhs understood that their grievances were not so much against Mr Bhim Sen Sachar as against other gentlemen. Well, in due course releases began. I was the first person to be released and then followed all those thousands. The Central Government and great leaders whose duty it was, and they knew how to do it, to pick up the wrecks of a situation and from something out of it in the form of

a settlement. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Mr Gobind Balabh Pant, agreed to meet representatives of the Sikhs in order to consider the situation. To prepare this ground, our friend Sardar Hukam Singh, (later Deputy Speaker of the Parliament) did a lot to bring the two sides together.

Regional Formula

We formed a strong delegation of Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Sardar Hukam Singh, to carry on the discussions with those great leaders — Panditji, Maulana Sahib and Sri Gobind Balabh Pant. Well, the long and short is that in many meetings and discussions there emerged what was called Regional Formula. That is, the Punjab was divided into two regions. It was recognized that two languages were prevalent in the Punjab, Punjabi and Hindi. During these meetings of the Regional Formula it was made clear, bluntly clear, that Punjabi meant Punjabi in Gurmukhi character. That was an important step and important decision. Long live the Gurmukhi Characters, just as we say long live the Punjabi Language. Punjabi language gave the Sikhs an honourable place in India. In the Gurmukhi characters, one desire that the Sikhs of the future will not forget it, what the Punjabi language has done for them and what Gurmukhi characters did for them. The Regional Formula, therefore, briefly meant that Punjab was divided into two regions, the Hindi speaking region and Punjabi speaking region, and under the Assembly of the whole of the Punjab, there would be two sub-legislatures, one for the Hindi and the other for the Punjabi. It was hoped that measures concerning the one region would first go to that sub-legislature and then to the joint Assembly. And thus effort would be made to work together and to work out some sort of arrangement to avoid friction and to avoid further division of the Punjab. But it was not to be. Even the restricted use to benefit of the Regional Formula was not to

be availed of. I am saying that one cannot blame the central leaders for it. The seed was in the Punjab and I am sorry, very sorry to have to say, that it is Sardar Partap Singh Kairon who prevented the Regional Formula from being given an honest trial. Whatever was in his mind, God knows, but his hatred for the Akalis was patent. So the problem remained where it was. What to do? Before going further, I want to give some information about the Regional Formula. When the Regional Formula was being elaborated, that is, the boundaries of the Hindi Region and the Punjabi Region were being demarcated by the representatives of Central Government and the Akalis, a strange thing happened. The Hindus of the Punjabi speaking area wanted as far as possible to get out of that area, to get out of what I would roughly call the rule of the Sikhs, get out of the rule of the Punjabi language in Gurmukhi characters. Kangra, it is a well-known thing, is Pahari or Punjabi speaking; Pahari is a dialect of Punjabi. But Kangra people particularly all Hindus, said, "No, our language is Hindi." At that time the population of Kangra, eight or nine lakhs Hindus, pulled themselves out of the Punjabi speaking region without any compulsion on our side. Then what was the result. The result was the percentage of Hindu population in the Punjabi speaking area was reduced. These Hindus, who ran away to Kangra, did not realize that they were raising the percentage of the Sikhs. I seem to be thinking in the communal manner. But I am not communal. Those people were communal. Let it be. We wish them all joy. In fact the Sikhs understood the game and stood on the cross-road saying that let anybody who wants to pull out of our area do that. We don't mind; we won't object, we won't obstruct. I think under the inspiration of Giani Kartat Singh our group was more practical and shrewd and businesslike, and the result was that the Punjabi speaking area had a strong majority of Punjabi speaking people or Sikhs. Even the Hindus who remained in the Punjabi Region were genuine Punjabi speaking people and were glad to

remain with us. So thanks to Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, the Sikhs were not allowed to rest because through this man the Benevolent Providence was working towards the creation of a *Puñjābī Sūbā*, to give an honoured political place to the Sikhs in this dear great country of ours, where we are proud of rubbing shoulders with our elder brothers of Hindu community, with our brethren of Muslim and Christian Communities and will all build up a great country. The *Puñjābī Sūbā* became a burning question. But now those old methods were useless. So please understand me correctly. I am not in any way pronouncing on the philosophy of immolation - burning oneself alive. I am neither way. Ordinarily I am against it. Every Sikh is against it. It is not a normal procedure, it is not a healthy procedure. But then you cannot say when sometimes in history strange situations come to the fore. There had been a change in the leaders in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Master Tara Singh was ousted from power. Sant Chanan Singh became the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. After much deliberations and discussions, Sant Fateh Singh, who became the Chief of majority Akali group announced that he would burn himself alive on such a date, if *Puñjābī Sūbā* was not formed. Frankly, there was a great sensation, very great sensation and I bear witness that no reasonable person considered that the Sant was bluffing. Everybody said that he would end by doing so. The dear great leader of India, Dr Radha Krishnan, the great philosopher, the great writer, the speaker and the great statesman intervened. I don't mind taking the responsibility of saying that he intervened. He pressed the Government of India, to do something. I don't know what the story went round. He even said that consciously he felt so much about it that if they did not move he would make a statement. Our great leaders of the central government lost no time and the meeting of the Working Committee of Congress was held and a brief resolution of two lines was passed. I think I remember the

words correctly; it was that a *Puñjābī Sūbā* be carved out of the present undivided Punjab..... Let us not demand that all Sikhs should be in one political boat. Are all Hindus in one political boat? Why should you? Let every Sikh follow his political bent of mind and belief or all of us should agree, combine, cooperate in serving the cause of the welfare of our state and our country intelligently, usefully, and it is quite possible. I am a humble teacher. I am not a politician. I have been teaching Shakespeare and Tennyson all my life. I will say one thing, "Look here I have got a right to say it. I like to say this:

"Please in political matters use political acumen if you want success; happiness and prosperity. *Sat Sri Akāl.*"

[Recorded by Dr. Kirpal Singh]

BAWA HARKRISHAN SINGH – A TRIBUTE

By

S. HUKAM SINGH, M.P.

With the death of Bawa Harkrishan Singh in the Army Hospital in Delhi Cantt on the 18th of August 1978, we have lost a noble soul, one of the finest specimens of humanity. Graceful in appearance, dignified in his gait, inspiring in his talk, gentle in his demeanour and virtuous in his living, he combined all that could be emulated with pride and admiration.

He had very distinguished record as a student and could have been easily absorbed in Government service, but he preferred serving the cause of education in Sikh institutions. No sooner did he pass his M.A. in English from Khalsa College, Amritsar¹⁴ than was he taken on the staff

14. Bawa Harkrishan Singh passed his M.A. in English from Forman Christian College, Lahore in 1912 and same year he joined Khalsa College, Amritsar as a lecturer. Hukam Singh former Speaker of Lok Sabha and a governor, happened to be one of his students at Khalsa College, Amritsar.

of the same College. Subsequently, he founded¹⁵ the Khalsa College at Gujranwala, and after partition, Bawaji was requested to start a College at Qadian, which he established so successfully.

In later years, he had chances of serving under Committees headed by his own pupils. There too Bawa Harkrishan Singh gave due respect and unstinted loyalty to the management, sometimes to the embarrassment of his old students.

Out of a total service of about half a century, not less than forty years, he taught English poetry. His knowledge of oriental languages and his memory of Persian and Urdu verses, was so extensive that he could recite and bring to its focus the real meanings of English poems by offering similar ideas and thoughts in oriental verses. The pupils felt exhilarated and the import was embedded in their minds.

Bawa Harkrishan Singh was a genius and his activities could not be contained within the lists of education. He never shirked to jump into the arena, if he felt some wrong was being done to the community. He had iron in his veins, though he looked so weak. Challenges provoked and brought out the latent courage and dogged determination in him.

Unhappy at the deplorable maladministration of the Gurdwaras by the *Mahants* and the un-Sikh-like practices indulged therein, Bawa Harkrishan along with a few students and professors led a *jathā* of untouchables, carrying *Karāh Parsād*, to Darbar Sahib in 1919. The *Pujārīs* refused to accept the *Karāh Parsād*. Bawaji offered the prayers. Subsequently, the *Jathā* proceeded in procession to Akal Takht Sahib. *Pujārīs* fled leaving the Takht unattended. The

15. Guru Nanak Khalsa College at Gujranwala was established in 1917. Mr M.U. Moore, an Irishman took over as first Principal of the College. Before Bawa Harkrishan Singh joined the college as Principal in 1927, Sant Teja Singh (popular as Double M.A.) and Bhai Jodh Singh (later Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University) headed the college in its earlier days.

jathā occupied the Takht and left some volunteers, robed in Nihang attires with blue turbans. This was the beginning of the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the initiation of the blue afterwards changed black turban adopted by the Akalis. Bawa Harkrishan Singh was the pioneer. The first batch of Akalis arrested for offences under Sections 121, 124, 153 IPC for mutiny, sedition and creating hatred among communities included Bawa Harkrishan Singh as one of the prominent accused. They lasted for more than 4 years.¹⁶

From inside the jail, Bawa Harkrishan Singh, Professor Teja Singh and Sardar Bhag Singh prepared statements and sent out propaganda material, so beautifully drafted, and so meticulously reasoned out that the Government machinery could not compete and admitted defeat.

When ultimately, after three abortive attempts to draft a Bill acceptable to the Sikhs, the Gurdwara Act 1925 was passed, differences arose among the leadership on the question whether to agree to be released on signing willingness to work the Gurdwara Act. Master Tara Singh led one group who believed giving this undertaking was a humiliation and they would not do that. The other group composed of Sardar Mehtab Singh and professors and lawyers felt that if they did not go out and work it, the Act might be taken off the Statute Book, the agitation had already ended, and then there would be no achievement of all the sacrifices made resulting in frustration. From amongst the leaders everyone feared the reaction of the masses, though convinced of the advisability of seeking release in the interest of community. It was Bawa Harkrishan Singh who, on the strength of his convictions, took the lead and the others followed.

In 1955, Bawa Harkrishan Singh was nominated as President of SGPC by Master Tara Singh when the latter defied the ban on shouting slogans of *Puñjābī Sūbā Zindābād*

16. Bawa Harkrishan Singh was arrested on October 13, 1923 and Gurdwara Act was passed in 1925. He was released soon after.

on May 10 and was arrested. On July 4, the Government made a clean sweep of all inmates of Guru Ram Dass Serai, offices of Darbar Sahib Committee and of Akali Dal. The *Mañjī Sāhib* was occupied by police. When the troops were brought in and they took their positions in front of SGPC, Bawa Harkrishan Singh was stirred to action. He roared and challenged the troops to fire. He demonstrated what an iron interior had he harboured in a soft and gentle exterior.

Earlier in 1919 when General Dyer was presented with a *Siropā* by Darbar Sahib and was honoured and awarded by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Principal of the Khalsa College convened a meeting of professors to get their consent to arrange a reception in honour of General Dyer. The professors met first privately and were unanimous that such a proposal was preposterous. But there was none to come forward and say so to the Principal G.A. Wathen. Bawa Harkrishan Singh, though relatively junior to others, volunteered to be the spokesman. When the teachers met the Principal and the latter made known his wishes, Bawaji stood up and said, "Mr Principal ! Do you want us to honour a murderer?" The Principal adjourned the meeting and left.

Bawa Harkrishan Singh was a deeply religious man. He actually lived what he believed in. His life is a shining example of a God-fearing man. He combined knowledge and wisdom. One could feel the rays of virtue emanating from him and influencing one who sat by him. A saint among human beings has passed away.

We deeply mourn this loss.

[Spokesman, New Delhi, 28th August, 1978]

CHAPTER 7

Principal Niranjan Singh (1892 - 1979)

Pincipal Niranjan Singh was born in 1892 at village Haryal district Rawalpindi in the house of Bakshi Gopi Chand, a village Patwari. He came in contact with Sardar Harcharn Singh Rais of Lyallpur through Master Tara Singh, his elder brother. He worked as a lecturer in F.C. College Lahore in 1917. In 1918, he joined Khalsa College Amritsar. He was founder Principal of Sikh National College Lahore; started in 1937 and served there till 1947. This college came into being as manifestation of Sikh intellectual dissent that surfaced in the wake of rise of freedom struggle in India.

He was elected as member of the SGPC Amritsar in 1921 when it was first organized by the Sikhs themselves and had been a member of its Executive Committee when it did not have statutory sanction. He took active part in the Gurdwara Reform Movement 1921-1925. The statement reveals strong and independent views of Niranjan Singh on many a vexed issue and that he never relented from his stand.

After partition of the Punjab in 1947, he settled at Delhi and retired as Principal, Dayal Singh College, New Delhi. He died in March 1979.

Statement of Principal Niranjan Singh

From the very outset, I was temperamentally against foreign domination. I could not hear any type of excess against any person. During my student life, I was accepted as one of the student leaders, as I was always out for serving my fellows. I joined Khalsa College, Amritsar on 15th April 1918 as a Lecturer in Chemistry, and remained there for over 19 years.

After I joined there, I was very much impressed by Bawa Harkrishan Singh and Dr Chatterjee. Although Bawaji was not the seniormost but he was practically the leader of the whole fraternity of the college. The students – all of them followed me and came to me for guidance as I was always regarded the leader of the opposition.

On 9th or 10th of April 1919, Martial Law was clamped in the entire province of Punjab. It had a great effect on my mind. On 13th April, the Vaisakhi day, when there was great tension in the city, and the English were feeling insecure, I saw a Major coming towards Khalsa College, shooting on both sides ruthlessly. People began to run when they saw him. He went towards Headmaster's quarter and asked about the residence of the Principal. Eventually, he found out the bungalow of the Principal where Mr Wathen was. In spite of the tough resistance of Mr Wathen, he was forced to go to the fort. As the National Bank had already been looted, there was a great danger to life in the city, therefore, Bawaji along with some other members of the staff came to my house and advised that I and S. Shivcharan Singh should go inside the premises of the college and lie there in the quarters. Thus, we went inside the premises of the college on the evening of 13th April 1919. On the same night, we came to know that there was a severe firing in the Jallianwala Bagh and two of our students – (one of them, Deva Singh Gill, of Ludhiana) were wounded. In the night when we heard this tragic news, I, Bawaji and some others went to see our students. There were many students of the Khalsa College in the Jallianwala Bagh meeting, and they were greatly terrified even after the incident. As a result of this terror, about three-fourth of our students ran away to their villages via Ram Tirath Road, Amritsar.

When the conditions became somewhat settled, Mr Wathen, the Principal returned to the college and sent for two European and two or three senior Sikh Professors (including Bawaji) to his bungalow. He asked them to

present an address to General Dyer who was responsible for firing in Jallianwala Bagh. Mr Wathen tried to convince these professors that it was General Dyer who had saved India at that critical juncture. After this, Bawaji came to Dr Chatterjee and me. There the whole of the Indian Staff gathered, and Chatterjee narrated the gist of the talk which Mr Wathen had with the senior members of the staff. I, at the very outset, refused to agree to the proposal of the Principal. S. Deva Singh, the senior most out of us, started the discussion and Bawaji made a marvellous speech at the moment. The most memorable line out of that I remember even now – “Mr Wathen, Iron has entered into our hearts and you expect us to present him (General Dyer) an address.” With full presence of mind Bawaji made Wathen speechless. When the whole of this affair was made known to the students, the character of our college got changed.

In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi came to Amritsar to preach his mission of non-co-operation in the Khalsa College. We all met him at the quarter of Dr Chatterjee. The families of the staff members also went to hear him. Gandhi ji wanted us to leave the service and also that the students should leave their studies. On his proposal, we discussed this issue at length with Gandhi ji but he could not convince us that this method of non-cooperation could have any effect on the English. In spite of this, some of our students left the college but after some time, they also came back. When Mr Wathen saw all this, and also the popularity of Mr Gandhi, he invited Gandhi ji next day to his own bungalow, and had some discussion with him. This visit of Mahatma Gandhi to the Khalsa College had its effect and the Professors declined to accept any offer of Government service. Bawa Harkrishan Singh was actually offered a Government job but he refused.

In October 1920, one Sunday morning, Bawaji and Professor Teja Singh came to me and proposed that we should try to offer *Parsād* at Harimandar Sāhib, Amritsar along with those depressed classes Sikhs who had been

recently baptized by the Khalsa *Barādarī*. I agreed with them and all of us went to Harimandar Sāhib. When we entered the Darbar, the *Pujārī* and S. Gurbachan Singh *Granthī* refused to accept *Karāh Parsād* and recite *Ardās*. At that time Bawaji was in a conciliatory mood. He said to the *Pujārī*, "If you do not offer *Ardās* we will do that and distribute *Karāh Parsād*." At this, juncture suddenly, Teja Singh Bhuchcher, Kartar Singh Jhabbar and Teja Singh Chuharkana came into Darbar Sahib and joined the congregation and raised loud slogans of *Sat Srī Akāl* with the result that the whole of the atmosphere was electrified. S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar and S. Teja Singh Chuharkana made speeches on the occasion. S. Teja Singh Chuharkana, presuming that we (the three professors) wanted to remain conciliatory, repeated what Bawaji had already said. Thereupon, I got up and said, "We are *saṅgat* and the *Pujārīs* must obey us according to the tenets of our faith." After seeing my attitude, S. Teja Singh Chuharkana also became stiff. Finally, it was decided that we should take *hukam* from the *Guru Granth Sāhib*. Giani Gurbachan Singh recited the *vāk* which proved to be quite appropriate to the occasion and so clear that everybody accepted our stand. Giani Gurbachan Singh and the *Pujārīs* were silenced; they accepted *Karāh Parsād* and offered *Ardās*. In a victorious mood, we decided along with Bhai Mehtab Singh of Khalsa *Barādarī* to offer *Karāh Parsād* at the Akal Takht also. People had already collected there. At this, the *Pujārīs* were terrified, and all of them except one ran away. The only one, when he saw us coming with *Karāh Parsād* in our hands also slipped away. Seeing the Akal Takht vacant we held an assembly there and made many speeches. There it was decided that the possession of Akal Takht should be taken. S. Teja Singh Bhucher was appointed as the first *Jathedār* of Akal Takht. He continued to serve there for about a year, along with some other Sikhs of the Majha Khalsa Diwan of which he was also the *Jathedār*. Thus, the *Pujārīs* were dislodged from the Akal Takht.

At Lyallpur, my brother Master Tara Singh was the Headmaster of Khalsa High School. I used to go there very often. Master Tara Singh was a prominent figure there. Through him, I came into contact with S. Harchand Singh Rais and Master Sunder Singh. In many social meetings, we often discussed the question of starting a Khalsa college and a paper for the national propaganda. Shortly afterwards, when M.M. Malviya came to Punjab, S. Harchand Singh, S. Teja Singh Samundari and S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar met him. He (Malviya) suggested that the Sikhs should come close to the Congress and fight for the freedom of the country. He promised to give some money to start the paper. S. Harchand Singh at this said, "We can ourselves start a paper without any aid from outside." Thus the plan for starting a newspaper began to be seriously discussed. Master Sunder Singh Lyallpuri was also making strenuous efforts for the collection of funds for starting a newspaper. One day, Master Sunder Singh came to me with a poster announcing the issue of a newspaper. I could not agree to the name of the paper. I suggested that I would like the daily *Akālī* to see the light of the day on 22nd May 1920. I wanted to put the paper on a sound footing. I was the person who supplied men to work honorarily in the office of *Akālī*. During the summer vacation I deputed two of my students S. Kartar Singh (afterwards Professor and Author of *Life of Guru Nanak*) and Amar Singh Bholani to work in the office of *Akālī* at Lahore. Thus, the first Editor of this paper was Professor Kartar Singh. Sometimes we also used to contribute material to feed the paper. Gradually, this paper became very popular, and we were soon relieved of the financial worries. When the Rakab Ganj case again came to the forefront after the war, S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar asked the Sikhs to enlist for a *Shahīdī Dal* of about 100 Sikhs to settle the issue. The circulation of *Akālī* in those days was wide and S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar was its Editor. Soon 200 names for *Shahīdī Dal* appeared in the *Akālī*. The Government

fearing further deterioration, soon yielded in the Rakab Ganj case. This very *Shahīdī Dal* was converted into Akali Dal in 1920 on a suggestion of S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar. The paper continued to flourish, and in view of its increased importance, we invited S. Hira Singh 'Dard' and S. Mangal Singh (latter M.L.A., central) to join the editorial staff. The latter left the job of a *Tehsildār* to work as Editor of *The Akālī*. When the circulation of our paper went up from 800 to 1000, I thought of re-organizing the management of the paper. I called S. Harchand and S. Teja Singh Samundari to Lahore, and met them in the winter of 1920. In this task, I was greatly helped by one S. Dalip Singh a young man (who later became martyr at Nankana), S. Sadhu Singh and S. Maghar Singh. Thus after consultations, we made a committee of about 14 persons of which I became the Secretary. We asked each of them to either collect or contribute on their own Rs.1,000 each. Thus, a Press was purchased. But unfortunately our press was soon confiscated by the Government, and the paper was banned. S. Mangal Singh and S. Hira Singh were arrested. As the people patronized our paper, we soon started it again with one Partap Singh, Head Master of Kairon as Editor. We were again put to trouble when Mr King Commissioner, Lahore and Superintendent C.I.D. accused us for appropriating some money in the *Akālī*. The members of the management soon resigned and I and Master Sunder Singh were only left to control the management of the *Akālī*.

In 1921, a meeting of the Akali Dal was held at Akal Takht. There it was decided that Shiromani Akali Dal should be associated with Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as Ber Sahib (Sialkot) and some other Gurdwaras had already been taken, besides Harimandar Sāhib and the Akal Takht. But a definite shape was given to SGPC only after the Nankana tragedy. Lakhs of Sikhs collected at Nankana Sahib after the tragedy. Many students of Khalsa College went there on foot to witness the horrible scene.

Mr King, the then Commissioner, Lahore, constituted the local Gurdwara Committee with S. Harbans Singh Attariwala as the President.

In 1919, Gopal Singh Bhagowalia, Gurbaksh Singh Giani of Amritsar and Gajjan Singh of Ludhiana were assisted by the Government to organize the Sikh League. In 1921, they organized a session in Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore. In this session the Sikh League was captured by the 'extremists'. S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar and S. Mangal Singh became its leaders.

In 1921, after the visit of Mahatma Gandhi, I was inclined to leave service, but the other members of the staff were not ready to do so. Bawaji at this asked all the members of the staff to advise the official management to leave the Khalsa College and give the management of the Khalsa College to the Sikhs. Thus, we decided to give a notice to the management. Mr King, Commissioner, Lahore, who was the President of the management came and threatened us. He said that the Government was not a *Chhābrīwālā* and that they could only proceed constitutionally. But in spite of this, we decided to stick to our previous notice of one month. At the time of submitting resignations, some members of the staff hesitated. But I declared that I have decided and I must resign as a Sikh. Professor Joginder Singh followed my suit. Professor Rajinder Singh was influenced to resign under the pressure of his brother S. Chanchal Singh, a class-fellow of Master Tara Singh. When Bawaji came to know of this, he also resigned. Dr Chatterjee, already known as nationalist, soon joined us. The students who were with us, refused to study from the Professors who had not resigned. Thus all of us, 13 resigned. When the Government learnt of this, they yielded and constituted an interim committee with the consent of S. Harbans Singh Attari. Even at this, I was not satisfied as I wanted the Akalis to manage Khalsa College. S. Sunder Singh Majithia who had been turned out of the college management because of his assertive attitude, now again became the President of the college management.

As real brother of Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader, I would also like to tell something about his early life. He was a Hindu by birth and his previous name was Nanak Chand. Once Sant Attar Singh came to Kallar in Rawalpindi district in connection with *Amrit Parchār*. At that time Nanak Chand was studying in Mission School Rawalpindi. From there, he went to Kallar to see Sant Attar Singh without telling any member of his family. There he was administered *Pāhul*. After being baptized, Nanak Chand expressed his desire to change his name. When Sant Attar Singh heard that the word, which was first in the *hukam* of *Guru Granth Sāhib* was 'ਤੌਤ' he said to Nanak Chand, "Go, you should give salvation to the world also like yourself and shine like a star." Thus, his name, Tara Singh. My elder brother Ganga Ram complained about this conversion of Nanak Chand to his father. My father was very much annoyed at this, but he could not do anything. His wrath was calmed down by my mother saying, "It is no bad thing to be a Sikh." After his matric, Tara Singh came to Amritsar. I myself was also attracted and requested my brother and mother to send me along with Tara Singh. They allowed me to do so. When I was admitted to the Khalsa College School, I got my name entered as Niranjan Singh instead of Niranjan Dass. After my conversion, my other two brothers felt lonely and they followed us. Gradually, because of the influence of our family, the whole of our *Barādarī* got converted.

While in Khalsa College, Tara Singh and Man Singh were considered to be the leaders, and were very popular among the students. During the agitation against Mr Hailey's remarks, he was the main moving spirit. He passed his B.A. in 1907. After passing S.A.V. from Lahore training College, his zeal to spread Sikhism led him to offer his service for Rs.15/- a month and he became the founder Headmaster of Khalsa High School Lyallpur. He started branches of that school in the *ilāqā*, and became the nucleus of what was latter called the Layallpur group. He gathered around him

persons like S. Harchand Singh Rais, Bishan Singh Singhpuria, Master Sunder Singh, Jiwan Singh, Teja Singh Samundari, Sadhu Singh *Jamādār*, Babu Tript Singh and others. All accepted him as their leader. This group did a lot of work in the Akali Movement and the political emancipation movement of the Punjab. In 1909, he started a paper entitled *Sachā Dhaṇḍorā* from Lyallpur to spread renaissance among the Sikhs. Moreover, his own spirit to work on such a low pay contributed towards the spread of Sikhism. When, after passing my MSc I was appointed as Research Scholar, in this connection I often went to Lyallpur and stayed with Master Tara Singh. As a result, I also developed intimate relations with the members of this group.

After the Nankana tragedy, Master Tara Singh, offered his services free to the *Panth* for the whole of his life. As such, he was appointed the Secretary of the SGPC. The first *morchā* started by the Sikhs was known as “*ਕੁੰਜੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਮੋਰਚਾ*”. In this *morchā*, Master Tara Singh was also arrested. I can confidently say that had we (Teja Singh Professor, I and Bawa Harkrishan Singh) not helped the Akalis at that moment the movement would have collapsed. Professor Teja Singh and Bawaji were good writers and negotiators and I had got a great influence among the Sikh students and the Akalis. All three of us daily went to the office of the SGPC to work for the *Morchā*. In our work, we were helped by Giani Sher Singh and Hari Singh Jalandhari. At that time, I persuaded S. Harchand Singh to become the President of the SGPC. This raised the prestige of our movement. Mr Dunnet, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, considered him to be an extremist and the toughest of the Sikh leaders. The election of S. Harchand Singh made the Government yield. Mr Dunnet sent S. Beant Singh, *Tehsildār*, Amritsar, to see us and persuade us to agree to some terms. But we refused to see him. At this, Mr Dunnet himself came in the office of the SGPC to see us. He agreed to all the demands as he himself openly said that he feared anarchy in the

province, if this *morchā* continued. He conceded that the Keys of *Toshākhānā* would be returned to the SGPC, the prisoners released and the legislation for the Gurdwaras would be enacted. After this, Giani Sher Singh and I went to see the leaders in Mianwali and Dera Ghazi Khan Jails. Baba Kharak Singh refused to leave the jail until the British Government openly confessed its folly. We remained at Dera Ghazi Khan for two days to convince Baba Kharak Singh but at last, we returned on the assurance of S. Teja Singh Samundari who was a very reasonable man. When we returned to Amritsar, the prisoners were released, and the keys were handed over to the Sikh representatives. The work of enactment of Gurdwara Act was delayed due to the uncompromising attitude of Baba Kharak Singh.

After two or three months, the Government at once arrested all the leaders from various places as they believed, and Mr Dunnet also said that, "The Sikhs want a state within a state, how can it be done?" After all the leaders had been arrested, we (the three Professors) and Master Tara Singh being the only dynamic man in the Lyallpur group soon rose to be prominent persons in politics. The Government at this critical juncture wanted to dictate us terms with regard to the Gurdwara Bill. During this period, Mr Armstrong, Head of the Chemistry Department was transferred to Burma, and I was officiating in I.E.S. Sir Fazal-i-Hussain called me to Lahore. On the persuasion of Principal Wathen, I went to Lahore and had a six hour talk with Sir Fazal-i-Hussain on the Gurdwara Bill. After coming back from Lahore, I told my friends that Sir Fazal-i-Hussain wanted me to influence the SGPC members to accept the Gurdwara Bill as proposed by him and then he would confirm me in I.E.S. cadre. After some days again Sir Fazal-i-Hussain talked to Principal Wathen on phone and expressed his desire to see me again. This time; again he had a very long talk with me. But in spite of this, we rejected the bill outright, even after it had been carried in the Punjab Assembly and thus it remained a dead

letter. After the rejection of the bill, we were engaged in a fight and did not know how to oppose the Government. Incidentally, in August 1922, the *Mahant* of *Guru kā Bāgh* objected to the cutting of wood from the nearby jungle of the property of *Guru kā Bāgh* and he informed the police. Even at this stage, I was against launching any *morchā*. Bawaji and Professor Teja Singh were not in Amritsar as they had gone out to hill stations in the summer vacation. I also went to my in-laws in those days. Meanwhile, the *morchā* was launched and I was informed through a telegram. Immediately after this, all the leaders except S. Teja Singh Samundari were arrested and the *Akālī* was closed because Master Sunder Singh and all others were arrested. After coming to Amritsar, I soon re-started it from Amritsar, and put S. Gopal Singh Qaumi as In-charge of the newspaper. I myself was the only person who worked in the office of the SGPC for about 8 hours daily after attending to the college work too. A *jathā* of 100 was daily sent to *Guru kā Bāgh* to cut the wood. S. Thakar Singh, Retired Police Inspector, Hari Singh Jalandhari, Gurdit Singh Bahlolpuri, and Daljit Singh Barrister of Lyallpur, all offered their services free to *Panth* and joined the campaign. We used to post our letters at various places so that the Government may not be able to know our plans. The Government had entrenched some Sikhs in the Gurdwara *Guru kā Bāgh*. S. Gurbakhsh Singh of Gurdaspur district was their incharge. He used to send us daily reports on basis of which we issued bulletins. One young man used to bring these reports daily, because none could cross the bridge. He used to cross the canal by swimming, and even then brought the report quite dry.

When there was a good deal of excitement, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya came to Amritsar. He used to come to the office of the SGPC every evening. He stayed in Amritsar for about 15 days. His visit to Amritsar made our movement an All India one, because he was in those days

the top most Congressman. He sent for Mr C.F. Andrews Ex-Professor of St Stephen College, Delhi and a well-known Indian Freedom Fighter. He published two articles in various newspapers in our favour. This raised the status of the movement and our case got great publicity. The only *jathā* of the Sikhs, which I saw going to *Guru kā Bāgh* was headed by one S. Prithipal Singh of Lyallpur. His body was completely swollen and it appeared to be a dead body. He said to Beaty (The Superintendent Police Incharge), "Come on, beat me," and Beaty thus returned, "I will completely kill you." This sight was really horrible for me. S. Prithipal Singh died after two years as a result of these injuries. We had started a hospital in *Bāgh Akālīān* under S. Gulab Singh Shahpuria for providing continued medical relief to the *jathās*. This *morchā* continued for about three months, and came to an end through the efforts of Sir Ganga Ram, who got the disputed land on lease and gave it to the Sikhs. It was through Professor Ruchi Ram my teacher and trustee of the *Tribune* that the bulletins of the SGPC were published in the *Tribune*. When the autumn session of the Central Assembly was nearing its last sitting, I, Professor Ruchi Ram and Professor Teja Singh, read a statement by Sir Willian Vinscent, Home Member, Government of India in the Civil and Military Gazette. This statement was against the *Akālī Morchā*, containing a string of falsehood and many mis-statements. On the spot we decided to issue a crushing rejoinder supported by facts and figures. Through my efforts, it was got printed at night and we arranged to get it placed on every seat of the Assembly Chamber when the Central Assembly was in its last session. About this rejoinder Sir John Meynard, the then Home member of the Punjab Government, remarked to S. Chanda Singh E.A.C, "When I read that rejoinder, I thought the game was up. Before this, I thought that it was the arm of the Sikh community which was with the Akalis, but after reading this, I became convinced that the brain of the Sikh community was also behind it."

When the *morchā* of *Guru kā Bagh* was coming to an end my nervous system broke down and I could not remain active. The real leader of this *morchā* was S. Teja Singh Samundari and I played an active part behind the scene. After Bawaji, and Professor Teja Singh came to Amritsar, when the *morchā* was nearing its end, I became sleeping member of the SGPC. Even after the *morchā* the dispute over the legislation of the Gurdwara Bill continued, as the Government did not accede to our demand for the establishment of a central statutory body.

In 1923, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, a pro-nationalist, was made to abdicate by the Government of India. The Maharajas of Nabha and Patiala quarrelled over the possession of a beautiful woman. The Government openly sided with the Patiala chief as they considered Nabha chief to be dangerous for their cause. Nabha Maharaja was forcibly dethroned by the Government and sent to a place in the Andhra province. Being a pro-nationalist, Nabha Raja was in constant touch with the Akali leaders. The Akali leaders particularly Bawa Harkrishan Singh went to see the Nabha chief at Dehra Dun after his abdication. As the Government did not settle Gurdwara problem, the Akalis wished to give a tough resistance to the Government. In summer 1923, a meeting of the SGPC was held to consider this question of the abdication of the Nabha chief. I did not attend this meeting, as I was against the launching of any *morchā* at that moment of the summer vacation. A meeting of the working committee of the SGPC was held in my quarter. Bawaji tried to persuade me to subscribe to his idea of agitation for the restoration of Nabha Raja. But I did not agree. After the SGPC was declared illegal, I arranged to keep the money of the Gurdwaras at various places. But after some time I was also arrested. The second executive of SGPC was also taken into custody. After the Jaito incident a *morchā* was started on a larger scale. Bawaji and Master Tara Singh were the leaders of this *morchā*. Soon after, the *Shahīdī*

jathās also began to march towards Jaito. S. Udham Singh Nagoke was the leader of the first *Shahīdī Jathā*. Morally and financially we were helped by the Congress. When the matters went to a farther extent, Major Birdwood, the Commander-in-chief, known for his Pro-Sikh views appeared on the scene. His proposal for the enactment of a Gurdwara Bill at an early date was well received in the Government and Akali circles. Meanwhile, the Akali ranks inside the jails were disrupted and some were prepared for a compromise even on lenient terms. But Master Tara Singh and I remained firm on our positions. All of us were arrested on 13th October 1923 and charges were framed against us in February 1925, after full two and half years. After the framing of charges, S. Narain Singh Barrister, S. Nanak Singh of Delhi, the paid staff of the SGPC and I, all were released. The Gurdwara legislation was carried through and some of the leaders including Bawaji were released on their assurance to work out the Act. S. Teja Singh Samundari died of heart attack inside the jail. Nabha question had already gone into the background, because of my opposition. At last, in May 1926, all the prisoners were released unconditionally.

In 1919, after the martial law was imposed, Teja Singh Chuharkana and others, e.g., S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar tried to disrupt the Railway Lines. Teja Singh Chuharkana was attached greatly to Master Tara Singh and my mother. He was ordered to be hanged but it was later on converted to transportation for life in the Andamans. There he met the members of the famous Ghadar party. One of them, S. Harnam Singh *Tuṇḍilāt* was a poet. All of them got the political amnesty in 1921-22 when Sikh League was in session at Lahore. Soon after their release, Teja Singh Chuharkana and Kartar Singh Jhabbar delivered lectures to the Khalsa College students, which had a stirring effect. I met Bhai Piara Singh after his release and began to cooperate with him in the agitation against the sufferings of the members of the Ghadar party in the various jails. As a result,

the Sikh institutions began to pass such resolutions, and also send telegrams to the authorities for enquiry into the cause of the deterioration of the health of these prisoners. One of these prisoners, Master Udham Singh ran away from jail and came to Master Tara Singh for help, who directed him to me. I sent Master Udham Singh to my elder brother S. Ganga Singh who got him employed in the Punjab Coal Company, Golpur near Pind Dadan Khan.

Once I went to Lahore to help S. Harchand Singh in connection with his paper *The Khalsa*. S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar came to see me there. He told me that Baba Gurdit Singh of Komagatamaru was with Chaudhary Ram Bhaj Datt. He also solicited my help to conceal Baba Gurdit Singh. Firstly, I kept Baba Gurdit Singh in the office of *The Khalsa*, Grain Market, Lahore and then brought him to my own quarter in the Khalsa College, Amritsar. He remained with me for about one month. Bawa Sarup Singh, brother-in-law of Bawa Harkrishan Singh, was a C.I.D. Inspector, and was well known for catching the political offenders. When one day Baba Gurdit Singh saw Bawa Sarup Singh in the Khalsa College, he ran away without even informing me. Even after this, I continued to help Baba Gurdit Singh. I got his autobiography published from Onkar Press, Amritsar at my own cost. Master Sunder Singh, President of the Lyallpur Session of Sikh League, gave me some money, and I arranged for the education of Balwant Singh, son of Baba Gurdit Singh at Tarn Taran through Master Mehtab Singh. Baba Gurdit Singh continued to see me after he disclosed his identity at Nankana Sahib.

The story of the Congress movement in the Punjab is also closely connected with the Sikh Gurdwara Reform Movement. When the Sikhs were feeling that their Gurdwaras were mis-managed, they thought that the powers behind the *mahants* were the British, the students and the staff of the Khalsa College were particularly feeling this thing. In 1919, when Congress session was held at Amritsar after the Martial

Law, I gave a tea party to the Congress leaders on behalf of the Sikhs in which Mahatma Gandhi, M.A. Jinnah, M.M. Malviya, B.G. Tilak, B.C. Pal, C.R. Dass, Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Annie Beasant and many others were invited. After this the Sikhs became the vanguard of the freedom fighters, because they had vitality and were virile. Moreover, the members of the Ghadar party had spread all over the Punjab after their release, and the Martial Law and Jallianwala Bagh firing also had its effect. In my opinion the spirit behind the Akali and the Congress movements in the Punjab was the same, but only the sentiments of the Sikhs against the British found its way in its struggle to liberate the Gurdwaras, as the *mahants* were extremely unpopular. Even Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders recognized this spirit, and they held that this energy was going into the wrong direction, and they advised the Sikhs not to agitate for the cause of the Gurdwaras. We as the leaders of the Akali party, also realized that to stand single-handed against the foreign Government was not an easy job, and the only organization, which could help us, was the Congress party. The Congress leaders in their turn thought that in the Punjab only the Akalis could form their nursery. Thus in these circumstances there sprang up a national alliance between the Congress and the Akalis. In spite of the views of the Congress leaders, that the Sikhs were side tracking, Master Tara Singh was of the opinion that this spirit of the Sikhs for the liberation of the Gurdwaras could not be checked and thus he carried the programme of reform through. The Congress realized that basically these movements were the impulsive result of national consciousness. That is why the Congress leaders helped us (the Akalis) with money and advice whenever we launched a *morchā* against the British bureaucracy. Thus, the services of the fighters for the freedom of the Gurdwaras continued to be used for the larger movements for the freedom of India. At that time, the Akali *jathās* were well organized even upto the villages and they helped the

Congress whenever they were called upon to do so. To say that the Gurdwara Reform Movement did not have any effect on the British, is wrong. As a matter of fact the result of this movement was that the British lost their hold on the Punjab, which they regarded as their preserve. As Akalis we were rightly dubbed as congressites by S. Jodh Singh, Principal and S. Harbans Singh Attari, and this fact we acknowledged. The Akalis in those days used to exploit all their resources for the popularization of nationalistic ideas, and it will not be unfair if we style the Akali Movement as the mother of National Movement in the Punjab. In spite of some differences of opinion, Master Tara Singh remained in the forefront. He was the only bold man and had a great hold over the Punjab Congress. He was in fact the soul of all the movements started by the Congress in the Punjab. He used to lead *jathās* and remained with the Congress wholeheartedly upto 1940. When Master Tara Singh withdrew, the Quit India Movement of 1942 did not gather momentum in the Punjab and this was mainly because of the lack of support from the Akalis.

[Recorded by Prithipal Singh Kapur]

CHAPTER 8

Professor Narain Singh (1901 - 1987)

Professor Narain Singh (Born June 8, 1901) at village Bhangvan (Gujranwala district, now in Pakistan), received primary education at Gharmula School before shifting to Khalsa High School, Gujranwala from where he passed his matriculation examination. He graduated from Khalsa College, Amritsar in 1922 and joined Dayal Singh College, Lahore for post-graduation in Mathematics, which he passed in 1924. He was evidently the product of Sikh renaissance that overtook Punjab in the early part of 20th century. He matured into a devout Sikh and got attracted to the Sikh scriptural studies. Soon after he joined Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Gujranwala, he became member of core group for Gurmat studies that came into being on the initiative and inspiration from Bawa Harkrishan Singh, Principal of the college. The other members were S. Chhehbar Singh, Headmaster, Khalsa Parcharak Vidyala, Gharjakh (Gujranwala); S.B. Sunder Singh and Professor Sahib Singh. There were long weekly meetings of the group wherein concerted efforts were made at the in-depth understanding of *Gurbānī*. These sittings led to emergence of the idea of *Gurbānī Vyākaraṇ* and compilation of *Shabdārth*. Consequently, Bawa Harkrishan Singh and Professor Narain Singh were joined by Professor Teja Singh to compile the *Shabdārth*, which is currently being published by the SGPC, Amritsar in four volumes. Professor Sahib Singh, after shifting from Gujranwala to Amritsar, remained engaged with the project of *Gurbānī Vyākaraṇ* single-handed, which took quite some time to see the light of the day. Professor Narain Singh on his own, continued to work on the understanding of *Gurmat* throughout his life, which led him to explore doctrinal studies. Consequently, he came out with a few scholarly works, *Guru Nanak Re-interpreted*, *Guru Gobind Singh Retold*, *Guru Nanak's View of Life*

Amplified, Our Heritage and a Treatise on Radha Soami Dissent (in Punjabi). He served Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Gujranwala (1924-47). Thereafter, he joined as Vice-Principal, Sikh National College, Qadian (Gurdaspur) and after retirement made Amritsar his permanent home till his death in 1987.

Professor Narain Singh was closely associated with the instruction of few *Dalit* students who were sent by the venerable *Dalit* leader Dr B.R. Ambedkar to understand Sikhism and explore the possibility of mass conversion of *Dalits* to Sikhism. Besides, he was on the managing bodies of Sikh National College, Lahore and Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Bombay. He was also a member of Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Nankana Sahib (now in Pakistan). His statement throws a flood of life on many intricate contemporary controversies.

Statement of Professor Narain Singh

Q. When did you start your career?

Ans. I joined the Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Gujranwala in September 1924 immediately after passing my M.A. in Mathematics. Sant Teja Singh was then the Principal and the college was in a bad shape.

Q. What was the impact of Jallianwala Bagh when you were a student? What are your recollections about the political atmosphere in Punjab during that period?

Ans. I was then a first year student in Khalsa College, Amritsar, but I was not in the Jallianwala Bagh during the actual firing. The atmosphere was extremely stormy and the college was closed after the tragedy. Principal G.A. Wathen wrote to the parents of all students to inform them if they wanted their sons to study for the examination of the Punjab University, etc., etc. I remember most students, including myself went to villages on foot, because the trains were not running. In two days, I reached my village. Our examinations had also been postponed and I came back after two months when calm was restored.

Q. *What are your impressions about Bawa Harkrishan Singh, Principal Niranjan Singh and Master Tara Singh?*

Ans. All the three persons were the best men of the time and I had very intimate relations with each one of them. I had worked hard to bring Bawaji to run the college. I was helped in this by some people who had regards for me. I was a member of the Governing Body of the Sikh National College, Lahore and, therefore, was very close to Masterji and Principal Niranjan Singh. In fact, an effort was made to bring me to S.N. College, Lahore but Bawaji was not willing, nor perhaps I. I was a member of the Nankana Sahib Committee also and a member of the governing body of Bombay Khalsa College. There are so many things on these matters which I will not like to reveal.

Q. *What are your impressions about Sant Teja Singh?*

Ans. You are fond of inquiring about persons – Sant Teja Singh was a devotee of Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana, and was a religious-minded man. But he was not fit to head the college. There was no discipline at all, accounts were not well kept and there was no atmosphere for academic work. In fact, everything was topsy-turvy.

Q. *Why had Khalsa College Bombay been in controversy among the Sikh circles?*

Ans. I do not know if that college is still in controversy. But it was certainly in controversy then. The college was opened there on the advice of Dr Ambedkar who had given the Sikh leaders to understand that he and his community would all turn to Sikhism, en bloc, and that the Sikhs should have a cultural centre in Bombay, to begin with. He had sent as many 60 (sixty) educated men to us in Gujranwala for their coaching in Sikhism and this work was entrusted to Bawaji, Giani Hari Singh, and myself. They were from different provinces and spoke different languages – Tamil, Malyalam,

Telugu, Marathi, etc., etc. But none of them understood Hindi and some could understand only English. The coaching work was carried on for six months, by then Ambedkar had changed his mind. The Bombay Khalsa College had been started already and then there were two opinions as to whether it should be closed or not. It was in this context that I had gone to Bombay. S. Narain Singh (of Nankana Sahib), now in Sanaur (Patiala), was with me in his capacity as Manager and later Master Sujan Singh was with us as a member of the committee, nominated by the SGPC, Amritsar. Our report had said that the college could still be run as a self-supporting institution, though the original purpose of its creation could no longer be fulfilled. Principal Niranjana Singh had started the S.N. (Sikh National) College at Lahore and wanted the Bombay College to be closed so that his own college could get undivided attention. Masterji trusted me and sent S. Mubarak Singh son of Chaudhary Jai Singh of Rawalpindi to me for my opinion. Mubarak Singh was then a worker of the Akali Dal but now he is a Congressman, and is in Amritsar these days. Then a meeting was called at Amritsar, which I attended. The decision went against Principal Niranjana Singh's advice, who was for closing of the College at Bombay, where S. Kashmira Singh was the Principal then.

Q. What was the condition of refugees in the camp at Gujranwala in 1947. Were you present when Lady Mountbatten visited the Gujranwala camp?

Ans. Bawaji was virtually the spokesman of the Refugees. But when he sent his family to Amritsar and later left himself too, I was then the Incharge in his place and so many people had revolted against him. I think, during the visit of Lady Mountbatten, I was sent to Lahore along with the late S. Jit Singh Chawla to arrange evacuation of the refugees. But S. Jit Singh did

not return. I presume he was frightened, even though his family was still in Gujranwala. A few days after this visit, the holocaust of Sheikhpura¹ took place and everybody felt frightened. I returned to Gujranwala with S. Baldev Singh who was then the Indian Defence Minister on tour to Pakistan. S. Hukam Singh of Montgomery and S. Buta Singh of Sheikhpura had met me then at S. Sampuran Singh's place. S. Hukam Singh had just escaped from being murdered. S. Sampuran Singh was then the Deputy High Commissioner and I stayed at his house for 3 or 4 days. S. Swaran Singh was also there on some official business, on behalf of the Punjab Government. I also recollect that Pandit Nehru was in Pakistan then, though I did not see him. The refugees in the camp had no real danger but they were extremely frightened, all the same. Well, I was the last person to vacate the camp. It was 12th November 1947, the Diwali day.

Q. In 1947 you stayed with S. Sampuran Singh for about 3 or 4 days. What are your impressions about his working? What was the political atmosphere in those days?

Ans. I do not know how he was working as a Deputy High Commissioner but he was quite a good man. The political atmosphere, as I told you in my last answer was extremely frightening. We, in Gujranwala, were attacked by organized Muslim mobs a number of times a little earlier and we too fought to save ourselves.

Q. What were the relations between the Gujranwala camp authorities and the local administration?

Ans. The local administration was, on the whole, hostile to the refugees, though we were safe, generally speaking, because of the camp authorities.

1. On 24th August 1947, there was indiscriminate firing at Sheikhpura by the Biluch Regiment. It is estimated that nine thousand non-Muslim refugees were killed. For details, see Document No. 233, Kirpal Singh, *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab*, 2nd ed., pp. 692-93.

Q. What are your impressions about Puñjābī Sūbā struggle?

Ans. My impression is that though the demand was made for a state to be carved out on linguistic basis but actually it was for achieving political power for the Sikhs. I attended every Akali Dal meeting during Masterji's 'Fast unto Death'. Masterji had made me a special request to attend to the Dal's deliberations. There are many things I know but I would not dilate upon. It would only create controversy.

Q. Would you give some circumstances why Master Tara Singh took the 'Fast unto Death' and how and why did he break it? Who was responsible for breaking his fast?

Ans. When the fast was undertaken I was present. I was not in favour of the fast unto death, and argued about it. It was decided that the fast would not be the final commitment and Masterji agreed. But when he appeared before the *Sangat*, he took the pledge that he would either achieve Suba or die. He was quite firm and unyielding upto 45 days of the fast. But when Malik Hardit Singh, Chaudhary Kartar Singh and the Maharaja (of Patiala) came to assure Masterji after meeting Nehru ji, that Suba would surely be created, he agreed to break the fast. Even though I was not in favour of the fast, but I was against breaking it after the pledge.

Q. How many years did you serve the Sikh National College, Qadian?

Ans. For over 11 years, it was I who had started the College on March 3, 1948, when so many people had come to me to take over. Later, because of financial problems and Bawaji's own influence, I persuaded him to take the charge of the college; and assured him that I would work under him, even though he was to be only a figure head. This went on for some years but then we quarrelled on Giani Hari Singh's affair, which we need not enter into, here.

Q. How were you inspired to write books on Sikh History and Culture?

Ans. I was drawn to produce these books on the request of S. Sant Singh, Secretary, Chief Khalsa Diwan. But I broke off with the Diwan for reasons, which I will explain, if you like, at some other time.

Q. What are your impressions about Bhagat Puran Singh of Pingalwara?

Ans. Bhagatji is a selfless man, though he has defects of his own. But why take up this topic at all?

Q. Anything else of importance you want to be tape-recorded?

Ans. I am not at all in favour of anything to be tape-recorded.

Q. What is your contribution in the 'Shabdārth' published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar?

Ans. For several years, I worked daily for 6 to 8 hours for the *Shabdārth*. This was being done, then, under the auspices of the 'Guru Sevak Sabha'. My work was sent over to the late Principal Teja Singh who was then in Khalsa College, Amritsar. He finalized my work and sent over to the Press in Lahore for print. Bawa Sarup Singh looked after the printing work. No other person had contributed to this, except Bawaji who did the work only of some portion of the *Shabdārth*.

[Recorded by Dr. Kirpal Singh]

CHAPTER 9

Sardar Gurdial Singh Dhillon (1915 - 1992)

Sardar Gurdial Singh Dhillon belonged to a historic family of District Amritsar. His ancestors were the founders of the Bhangi Misl, which occupied the largest territories in Punjab before the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and ruled over big cities like Lahore, Multan, Amritsar, Gujarat. etc.

Gurdial Singh Dhillon was born on August 6, 1915; he studied at Khalsa College, Amritsar; Government College, Lahore and Punjab University Law College, Lahore. Before independence, he joined Indian National Congress and took active interest in the *Kisān* Movement. He was jailed twice. A peculiarity of his political career was that he had neither seen the Akali movement from close quarters nor participated in it. But the Sikh concerns somehow remained close to his heart because of his heritage. After independence, he had a distinguished career as a member of Punjab Legislative Assembly and had a long tenure as a Speaker from 1954-1962. He was elected to the Parliament in 1967 and became Speaker of Indian Parliament twice and served as such from 1969-1975. He had also been a Minister of Agriculture in the Central Government from 1986-1988. He took keen interest in educational development and had been a member of Panjab University Syndicate, Chandigarh for a number of years. He used to take keen interest in the research work being done at various centres and used to interact with the scholars.

He died on March 23, 1992.

Statement of Sardar Gurdial Singh Dhillon

Q. May I know to which line of Bhangi Sardars do you belong – who was your ancestor – Chhajja Singh, Hari

Singh, Gujar Singh, Jhanda Singh, Gulab Singh, Mohar Singh or Chet Singh?

Ans. My ancestor was Sardar Chhajja Singh, the founder of the Bhangi Misl, who had taken *Pāhul* at the hands of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. One of his descendants, S. Hari Singh had also been a *Jathedār* of Akal Takht. Ganda Singh, Charat Singh, Jhanda Singh, all had been my ancestors. Sardar Gulab Singh, the last ruler of Amritsar was my great grandfather. My father's name was S. Hardit Singh who was grandson of S. Ajit Singh son of S. Gulab Singh. This account has been given in Griffin's historical work: *Chiefs and Families of Note*.

Q. *I learn that you have also served as a Commissioned Officer for some time. What was your experience as a Commissioned Officer, and why did you leave that service?*

Ans. Yes, I served in the army. I was in the University Training Corps as a student at Lahore. Therefore, I was called into the Army to serve as a Commissioned Officer in 1939. Usually, they did not allow any person to go out of the army, but my friends like S. Isher Singh Majhail, Udham Singh Nagoke, Sohan Singh Jalalusman used to write to me letters which were censored. These letters were of political nature and were anti-British which the British did not like. So, being of an anti-British disposition, I was discharged from the army in 1941-42. Shah Nawaz Khan was also there with me in the Army.

Q. *What were your experiences as a Journalist? What was the name of your paper – “Sher-i-Bhārat” or “Varatmān”? What was the policy of that paper? Have you got copies of the editorials when you had edited this paper? How long have you been an editor?*

Ans. We established National Newspapers Ltd., and started a paper to oppose the communal view-point of Master Tara Singh. There were two groups in Akali Dal – one

was Pro-Congress and other was anti-Congress. We started the Newspaper to propagate the nationalist point of view. First we started *Varatmān* in Punjabi. Its editor was Narinder Singh Soch, and I was the Chief Editor. My articles used to go under the column "ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀ ਮੰਗ" (Demand of the Times). The title of one of my articles was "ਰੱਬਨੀਤੀ, ਰਾਜਨੀਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਲੋਕਨੀਤੀ" (Divine Will, Politics and Democracy). I could write articles in Urdu also, and later on we started *Sher-i-Bhārat*.

Q. Kindly narrate the part that you have played in the freedom struggle before 1947. What was the issue when you were arrested in the Kisān Morchā?

Ans. The Unionist Government in 1946 had imposed certain restrictions on the *Kisāns* (peasants) in Amritsar district. Water rates had been increased arbitrarily. The people were worst-hit in Tehsil Ajnala. A *Kisān Morchā* was launched. I was arrested therein. I was then General Secretary of the *Kisān* Section of the District Congress. I had been also member of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee for seven long years from 1945-52. S. Swaran Singh wanted me to come out of jail, because he needed my vote in the SGPC election. But I refused. The photo which you have shown relates to that period. Once earlier also I was arrested in 1935 while garlanding Lala Lajpat Rai's Statue. Parbodh Chander and I, along with some other students (when we were studying Law), were arrested, and remained in Police lock-up for two days. Probodh Chander told the police that everything had been done by him and that others were not involved. Consequently all were released, and he alone was detained by the police.

Q. What was your attitude towards the Akali Party in 1947?

Ans. I was opposed to the Akali Party from the very beginning. My father, S. Hardit Singh, was a great friend of Dr Satya Pal.

Q. *What were your differences with S. Partap Singh Kairon?*

Ans. My father S. Hardit Singh stood against S. Partap Singh Kairon in the election of 1936. S. Hardit Singh was a candidate of Sikh Nationalist Party of which S. Sundar Singh Majithia was the leader. S. Partap Singh Kairon was an Akali candidate and Baba Gurdit Singh of Komagatamaru a Congress candidate. S. Partap Singh Kairon won this election. S. Partap Singh Kairon used to say that he had differences with my father (S. Hardit Singh), and not with him (G.S. Dhillon). Therefore, they should make friends. But I found that S. Partap Singh Kairon was opposed to me, as G.L. Nanda had proposed to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that I should be the Chief Minister of Punjab. That was known to Kairon. When I was the Speaker in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1957, he came to me and told me that I should accept the chairmanship of Punjab Public Service Commission, which I refused for obvious reasons. Again, when once I had gone to Australia, he circulated news that Dr G.S. Dhillon would be the next Vice-Chancellor of the Panjab University, Chandigarh. I enquired it from Mr N.V. Gadgil, Governor of the Punjab. He told me that the news had been circulated by an interested party who wanted to remove him from Speakership.

Q. *It is said that you were against the formation of Regional Assemblies. What was your attitude towards Regional Formula and Regional Assemblies?*

Ans. Yes, I was totally opposed to the idea of *Puñjābī Sūbā* and I thought that the adoption of Regional Formula was conceding the idea of *Puñjābī Sūbā* from the back-door. Therefore, I was opposed to the Regional Formula as well as Regional Assemblies. My stand was that boundaries of the Punjab should not be disturbed and some more territories may be added to it but not subtracted. I also appeared before the Parliamentary

Committee under the Chairmanship of S. Hukam Singh. At that time, I was Minister of Transport in the Punjab Government. There, I pleaded the case of United Punjab but by that time, the Government had made up its mind to grant *Puñjābī Sūbā*.

[Recorded by Dr. Kirpal Singh]

CHAPTER 10

Parma Nand of Jhansi¹

Introductory²

Following entry has been made in the *Ghadr Directory*, published by Punjabi University, Patiala in 1997. It was compiled in 1934 A.D:

Parma Nand Pandit (?), son of Gya Parshad, of Sukrada Kharka,³ P.S. Majhgawan, District Hamirpur, United Provinces. Joined the S.S. "Korea" at Yokohama with the Ghadr leaders, Jagat Ram (J-20), Kesar Singh (K-48), and Jowala Singh (J-19). He was at the time dressed in Japanese clothes and was provided with Indian dress by Prithi Singh (P-31) and Amar Singh Rajput (A-19). Returned to India by the S.S. "Tosha Maru". Showed himself to be a bitter enemy of the British Government and on board of the ship made most violent and effective speeches. He took a leading part in the activities of the revolutionaries, and was a go-between for the Punjab and Benares conspirators. He was arrested and sent for trial in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and was sentenced to death, the sentence being afterwards reduced to transportation for life. Is still in jail.

Similar entry had been made in the *Ghadr Directory* compiled by C.R. Cleveland, Director Criminal Intelligence in 1915 and

1. In the official record, the name recorded is "Pandit Parma Nand son of Gia Prasad of Sukrada Kharka, District Hamirpur (U.P.). It is definite that he was not a Pandit. He was described as Kayastha in the judgement vide Appendix No.6. Sukrada Kharka is near Jhansi, a well-known railway station of the area. Therefore, he was known as Parma Nand of Jhansi.
2. This introductory note has been prepared with the help of Professor Malwinderjit Singh, formerly of Guru Nanak Engineering College, Ludhiana who provided the copies of the documents quoted in this note.
3. This village is near Jhansi in modern Uttar Pradesh. Since Jhansi is more well known, Parma Nand became popular with the appendage 'of Jhansi' attached to his name.

published in Lahore in 1916 and reprinted by Gobind Sadan, New Delhi in 1996.

Sohan Singh Bhakna in his autobiography entitled *Jīwan Saṅgrām* (Punjabi) has given following account of the sufferings of Parma Nand of Jhansi in the Andaman Jail, pages 49 and 50:

Once Jailer called him and began to abuse him on the plea that work done was less. He wanted to slap him but Parma Nand struck his foot on his bulging belly. He fell on the ground. Subsequently Parma Nand was severely flogged. His food was reduced, and he was confined in a cell for six months.

This case gained such importance that the Superintendent Port Blair was sent the following telegram by the Home Department (vide file Home Political A July 1917 No. 462-489):

Telegram to Superintendent Port Blair No. 40, dated 10th January 1916 Prov. No. 465.

Extract sub paragraph of demi official letter from Lieutenant Colonel Douglas, Superintendent Port Blair No.159-C dated 14 December 1915.

'Yesterday one of the Lahore lot assaulted the Jail overseer and will have to be flogged. One of his grievances is that he was not allowed to be hanged. He did not appeal beyond the local Government and preferred death to transportation. Incidents such as these affect the entire settlement...

For information, in paragraph 4, Home Department letter No. 1759 dated 2nd June 1915, we asked the Superintendent Port Blair to report whenever flogging had been administered to any of the seditionist prisoners.'

[S.R. Hignell, Home Political A June 1915 no. 141-142 17.1.16]

Statement of Parma Nand of Jhansi⁴

My grandfather Shri Malakhan Singh was a well-known revolutionary during the rebellion of 1857. He was awarded

4. This statement of Parma Nand of Jhansi was recorded in 1956 when he was staying with Master Tara Singh, near Shahid Missionary College, Amritsar.

20 years rigorous imprisonment, and he died in jail after 6 years. Similarly, my father was also anti-British. He was in jail, when I was born. I went to Japan for the sake of my education in military science. But there I aligned myself with the revolutionary party of Canada. In Japan I was staying at Yokohama. There, I remained in constant correspondence with Lala Hardy. Hardy had organized a party at Sanfransisco, which aimed at making propaganda in the world against the British. They also aimed at revolutionizing the Indians wherever they were. Mr Hardy in this work was actively helped by Sohan Singh Bhakna, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Bhai Kesar Singh and Jagat Ram of Hoshiarpur. This party was well known as Ghadr party. When Komagatamaru owned by Gurdit Singh of Guru Nanak Navigation Company (chartered in Hong Kong), returned to Calcutta, there the above-named persons planned to go to India and organize a revolt against the British. They, therefore, started sending a number of persons to India for this purpose by various ships. The last batch of these revolutionaries started for India through the Empress of Korea (an American ship). When this ship came to Yokohama in Japan I joined the party according to the set plan. We all went to Philippines, and then to Hong Kong. I was assigned with two duties in the ship. One to start work of a preacher and the other was of a medical doctor. The ship Empress of Korea could not proceed further from Hong Kong. Therefore, we hired a Japanese ship named Toshamaru to come to India. Baba Jawala Singh, Kesar Singh and Pandit Jagat Ram were the main leaders of the party. At Hong Kong the main organizers of the ship made a sub-committee to plan all the coming events. The members of the sub-committee were Baba Jawala Singh, Baba Kesar Singh, Pandit Jagat Ram, Bhai Rur Singh. This sub-committee sent a deputation to the then President of China, Yu-an-Chi-Kai at Canton with a request to give way through China to conquer India. In return, the sub-committee planned to give

China, Hong Kong where about 6,000 Sikh soldiers had been prepared for an open revolt against the British and capture Hong Kong. But unfortunately Yu-an-Chi-Kai refused our request. At this, the party proceeded to Singapore. I had already had a chance of visiting Singapore while going away from India. At that time I had met the officers of the 7th Rajput Regiment and 25th and 26th Sikh regiments. So this time, when I came to Singapore in the Toshamaru ship, the work was easier. As already planned, the officers of the above-mentioned Regiments were invited, and I delivered a speech in their presence, which was supplemented by a Punjabi *Bairt* (couplet) by Bhai Kesar Singh. This had the desired effect, and when our ship started from Singapore, all the Indian forces there revolted and captured all fortifications of Singapore. The British Government could recapture Singapore only after one month with the help of the Japanese forces. The next halting place of our ship was Penang. There was a Sikh Regiment at Penang. On hearing the revolt of Singapore they detained our ship at Penang for about three days, and ordered that none of the occupants of the ship should be allowed to see any of the Sikh soldiers of Penang. But we managed to reach the Gurdwara of Penang – a beautiful spot – and then contact the officers of the Sikh Regiment. Amongst ourselves, we divided the areas of Penang for our preaching. One Roda Singh and I were assigned the arsenal. To my good luck, I found my friend, Inder Singh as In-charge of the arsenal of Penang. Inder Singh was a good wrestler and a student of Khalsa College, Amritsar during 1912-13. When I talked to him about our plan, he boldly said, “The keys and men of this arsenal are at your disposal to free India from the chains of slavery.” After having a heart to heart talk with Inder Singh, I came to my companions and told the whole affair to the leaders, Bhai Jawala Singh, Bhai Arur Singh and Jagat Ram. Soon after, we decided that some of us should go with revolvers to the bungalow of the Governor of Penang and force him

to give us the orders for the movement of our ship, onwards. Thus, about 25 persons out of our party forced their way into the bungalow of the Governor with the help of the two Sikh soldiers. When we reached inside, the Superintendent of Governor's office tried to resist but we were so adamant that the Governor had to grant us an interview. On the very sight of us, he began to abuse us. At this Sajjan Singh said, "ਕੀ ਬਕਦਾ ਏ ਓ ਇਹ, ਕਰ ਦਿਆਂ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ." When the Governor realized that if he did not give us the orders of the movement of our ship, his own life would be in danger, he changed the way of talk and soon agreed to give us permission to move. He even gave us the ration up to Calcutta and came to give us a see off." The reason that he gave us for the detention of our ship was that he (the Governor) wanted to save our lives — from the famous German ship Amdon that was roaming about in the Indian Ocean. But we did not fear Amdon, as according to the pre-planned affairs, the occupants of Toshamaru were scheduled to see the commander of the Amdon who had been instructed to do so by Field Marshall Barn Hardy — the famous German General. Field Marshall Barn Hardy had promised to supply us arms from Batavia (the then Dutch colony). When our ship started from Penang, the Governor of Penang informed the British Indian Government through a cable that the dangerous revolutionaries were reaching Calcutta on Toshamaru. After Penang, our ship halted at Rangoon for about two days. I could not go out of the ship as one of my friends was seriously wounded due to an accident. The other members of our party went out of the ship to the Gurdwara of Rangoon and saw some of the sepoys who were mostly Sikhs. The success achieved at this place (Rangoon) was very meager as we were being closely watched by the police. Then our ship proceeded towards Calcutta. Near Calcutta, we came to know from the Japanese Captain of our ship that the British Indian Government had arranged to arrest us. Moreover we had also come to know at Rangoon about the

fate of Komagataru. We had with us about 300 revolvers in the ship and were also equipped with other ammunition. Thus we were anxious to dispose of this and the literature of revolutionary preaching. The Japanese Captain was our sympathizer and with his consent we sealed the literature and ammunition in the tin boxes and placed them in the ice room and the water tanks of the ship. The Japanese Captain had promised that he would allow all this to be removed from the ship by our men after some day's halt at Calcutta. At Calcutta about 4000 men of Gorkha police had come. One thousand Europeans were also there. A commission of three persons (two Europeans and one brother of Maharaja of Kapurthala) was sitting on the post to interrogate the inmates of Toshamaru ship. After interrogation, the members of our party were sent to a train, which had been specially brought from Lahore. But I escaped along with some of the coolies who had boarded our ship from Rangoon. Before changing my clothes, I handed over all my belongings to Bhai Sher Singh. At the time of my escape, I had with me a revolver also. This train specially meant for the revolutionaries of Toshmaru Ship was taken to Multan. The only two non-Sikhs, Pandit Jagat Ram and Prithvi Singh escaped from the train somewhere near Delhi. This party of about 265 were kept in Multan jail and later on sentenced. But none of them appealed or made a mercy petition.

I personally feel that the only thing that actuated these Sikhs to rise against the British, were their symbols, because they saved them from having the American or English influence to a greater extent. They could easily protect themselves from being degenerated by having their symbols with which their self-respect was attached.

I reached Hong Kong in the first week of April 1913. Two Sikh travellers who were going to Brazil from Calcutta also met me. Because of them I was provided with some place in the Sikh Gurdwara at Hong Kong and I found a place of refuge there. It was on the ground floor of the Gurdwara

of Hong Kong, that about 150 Sikhs were staying. After about ten days of my stay along with the Sikhs, I came to know that these Sikhs who were previously staying in Canada, had come home to India and now again wished to go to Vancouver (Canada). I daily saw that about four to six new persons came from India and joined them. After about a month, Bhai Balwant Singh a famous *granthī* of Canada (he belonged to Khurdpur District Hoshiarpur) reached there from India. From the very sight he looked to be a saint. When I talked to him, I came to know that he had led a deputation to England and after failure; he had come to India where he met Master Tara Singh, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. This deputation was led against the Emigration Bill passed by the Government of Canada, which prohibited the entry of Indians and other Asians into Canada. Under the same bill, these Sikhs had been detained at Hong Kong. In fact, Bhai Balwant Singh was the leader of this party. With additions from India daily, the number of these Sikhs rose to 300. Bhai Balwant Singh prepared a plan to proceed further. He came to know that at Singapore a contractor named Gurdit Singh would be able to help him in his plans. At this Bhai Balwant Singh sent three or four men out of the party who came back to Hong Kong along with Gurdit Singh. Thus, Bhai Gurdit Singh and Balwant Singh joined hands to charter a ship. The whole party had with them 20 Pounds each which was initially offered to Gurdit Singh. The total amount of 600 Pounds was given to Gurdit Singh for arranging the ship. Bhai Balwant Singh was a very adventurous and resourceful man. He planned to buy a ship from Nipon Caron Caisa, a Japanese Company, the proprietors of which were known to Gurdit Singh. Thus a ship of 900 tons was taken from the above named company for 65,000 Hong Kong dollars. The promise for whole of this money was given by Bhai Balwant Singh. Bhai Balwant Singh and Gurdit Singh became my close friends there. When the entire plan got formulated, I was

asked to deliver a lecture in Gurdwara of Hong Kong, which I did. After arranging all these things, Bhai Balwant Singh started for Canada to arrange for some help to the ship for Canada. By the end of April, the ship named Komagatamaru (owned by Guru Nanak Navigation Company started by Gurdit Singh) set out for Canada. Baba Gurdit Singh wished me to accompany the whole party to Canada. Somehow I did not go along with them. This ship first went to Shanghai from Hong Kong, then to Kobe and Nagasaki and at last reached Yokohama. I had already reached Yokohama by the direct route. There I met Bhai Bhagwan Singh and I stayed with him in the Tomy Hotel. Bhai Bhagwan Singh was a brilliant speaker – and had been a *Granthi* of the Gurdwara of Hong Kong and Toronto (Canada) and was courageous too. When Komagatamaru reached Yokohama, I, Maulvi Barkatulla, Professor of Tokyo University and Bhagwan Singh received them. On the ship, all the three of us delivered speeches – and some resolutions were passed which were sent to the King Emperor. The resolutions informed the King that the British Empire had been created at the cost of the Sikhs, and now it was a test for the king either to allow these Indians to enter Canada or to desert his subjects. From here (Yokohama) too, I did not accompany the party to Canada. Thus, this ship reached Vancouver.

Upto this, whatever I have said was seen by myself. The events of Vancouver that I am going to tell are whatever I had heard from the members of the party. The police and army had been arranged to check the advance of the ship. There was a bitter fight, and at last Rainbow Cruiser, a war ship threw hot water on the Komagatamaru and thus the ship had to retreat. It is said that Kartar Singh Sarabha came from America to Canada and tried to drop some war material in the Komagatamaru, but failed in his attempt. There were some (ironsmith) Sikhs in the ship who prepared swords inside the ship which I saw with my own eyes. The Japanese Captain helped Baba Gurdit Singh a lot in all this fight.

This ship started backwards only when the Great War started. Gurdit Singh declared at Vancouver that now the Sikhs will not fight for the British Empire. The result of the return of this ship was that about 12,000 Sikhs living in Canada and America were organized, and soon after the propaganda war began. Millions of copies of *Ghadr Dī Gūñj* and *Nīm Hakīm Khatrā Jān* and *Land and Liberty* were printed in San Francisco. These booklets were circulated in the whole of the world. Bhai Balwant Singh was the main person who organized all this. He was assisted by Sohan Singh and Jawala Singh, Kesar Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha and Harnam Singh nick named as *Tuṇḍīlāt*.

Komagatamaru reached back Yokohama in August 1914 and there I met all the members of this party. After two or three days' stay at Yokohama the ship steamed off for Calcutta. I came to Calcutta after about one month of the arrival of Komagatamaru. It was decided in the first meeting of the Revolutionary Party at Kapurthala palace that an enquiry should be held about the fate of the passengers of Komagatamaru. For the purposes of enquiry, I was appointed by the party to go into the details – and to find out whether Gurdit Singh was alive or dead. Bhai Parma Nand Punjabi was treasurer of our party. He gave me about Rs. 300/- for the purposes of conducting the enquiry. I went to Baj Baj at Calcutta. I met Sham Sunder Chakarvarti in the office of the *Bengali* (a newspaper), who gave me two volunteers. With their help I came to know the details of fight at Baj Baj.

Komagatamaru was stopped at Baj Baj and a thorough search was made for about three days. On the third day there was a quarrel between Mr Holiday; Police Commissioner of Calcutta and Gurdit Singh. Mr Holiday abused Gurdit Singh. At this, the occupants of Komagatamaru opened fire. The police ran away leaving about 20 to 30 rifles. Mr Holiday was killed during the encounter by one Bishan Singh (belonging to Jhar Sahib in Amritsar district). After about

one hour, the British soldiers reached the site of Fort William. At night again there was hand to hand fight ten times. All the passengers of Komagatamaru escaped. During the course of my enquiries, I came to know that Gurdit Singh and his young son Balwant Singh remained in Calcutta for about 15 days and they were sent to Madras by the revolutionary party of Bengal. After sometime I met about 190 members of this party surrounded by police in Ludhiana. They were perhaps searched out by the police of various provinces after their escape from Baj Baj.

I escaped from Calcutta, where I had stayed there for a day or so, I came to Lahore, where I resided with Bhai Parma Nand Punjabi. Sardar Kishan Singh, father of famous Bhagat Singh, and Acharya Ram Dev were also there. On the instructions of Bhai Parma Nand Punjabi, I then stayed in the Vegetarian Hotel owned by Kishan Singh. There I learnt that Kartar Singh Sarabha and Prithvi Singh were expected in the hotel within two or three days. They also joined me after the scheduled time. So after close consultation, we decided to convene a meeting of the Ghadr party in Kapurthala, because Ram Saran Dass of Lord Hardinge Bomb case was there. The meeting was held in the temple of the Maharani of Kapurthala. There the whole of the plan of the subsequent events was chalked out. I and Kartar Singh Sarabha were asked to seek co-operation of the Revolutionary Party of Bengal. First of all Kartar Singh Sarabha was sent there, and he returned after one week without achieving much success. At this, I was deputed for this purpose. I met Sham Sunder Chakarvarti and thus I sought the co-operation of the Bengali Revolutionary Party. When I returned, I found that Sachinder Nath Sanyal had reached Lahore along with Rash Behari Bose (he had been declared to be a proclaimed offender and reward of Rs. 20,000/- was announced for his arrest). We hired a house in Dhobi Mandi, Lahore to conceal ourselves. A meeting of the party was again held in this house, where it was decided that all the Indian forces should

be persuaded not to co-operate with the British Government in the war and to ask them to co-operate for the ensuring revolution. It was arranged that in each cantonment of India, five men of the party should be sent who should preach the aim of the party among the soldiers. Copies of *Ghadr Dī Gūñj*, *Land and Liberty* and *Nīm Hakīm Khatrā Jān*, which had been brought from America were distributed among the soldiers. The best literature was distributed in the forces. The best and most zealous workers in this task were Kartar Singh Sarabha, Baba Nidhan Singh of Chugha (Ferozepore), Harnam Singh *Tundilāt*, Harnam Singh of Sialkot and Jagat Singh. Besides these persons, some students of Khalsa High School, Ludhiana also contributed a lot in the execution of this scheme. These students had been roped in by Kartar Singh Sarabha. Prominent among these students were: Khazan Singh, Pooran Singh, Santokh Singh and Sajjan Singh. All were from the 10th class. The result of all this was that about 26,000 soldiers got converted to our ideas within a short period of four to five months. The main difficulty that we faced was the want of money. Some money was collected but that did not serve our purpose. As our programme was quite subversive, voluntary contributions were not forthcoming. Therefore, Kartar Singh Sarabha who was known to be a person of violent type, organized a group and committed some political dacoities to procure money. With the money thus collected, we started three Bomb factories at various places. One was opened in the Gurdwara of Gulab Singh, near Akal Takht, Amritsar, another with the kindness and help of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha was started in Lohat Badi, a town in Nabha State. The third and the biggest one was opened in village Jhabewal, three miles away from Ludhiana. Dr Mathra Singh and myself were the in-charge of these factories. Dr Mathra Singh was a good chemist and he arranged to collect all the material (chemicals) for preparation in which he specialized himself. We prepared a Foraminate of Mercury in Jhabewal factory.

These were prepared so as to destroy the bridges at the time of Revolution. The bomb shells, about 18,000, were got prepared by myself, Kartar Singh Sarabha and Amar Singh from the Iron factory, Lahore by using the name of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. I had been assigned the cantonments of Allahabad, Jhansi and Kanpur, and there I preached the revolutionary ideas among the soldiers. Kartar Singh Sarabha worked in Ferozepore, and Harnam Singh *Tuṇḍilāt* went to the cantonment of Mian Mir, near Lahore. Sardar Nidhan Singh Chugha who was the best and the ablest man of our party, was given the responsibility of the cantonments of Rawalpindi, Nowshera, Bannu, Kohat and Hoti Mardan. After finishing work in Uttar Pradesh, I went to Jamrud and Peshawar. After this organizational and preparatory work had been accomplished, a meeting of the party was convened on 16th February 1915 at Lahore. It was discussed that the forces were ready – for an open revolt against the British, and the date for this general uprising should be fixed. 21st February, 1915 at 12.00 midnight was the time and the date fixed for the general revolt. After this, we collected about 5,000 wire cutters to cut off the telegraph and telephone lines. Kartar Singh Sarabha and I brought these from Delhi. On the 17th February, 1915 all the members of the party went to their places where they had to do the work in case of a general revolt. Unfortunately, one Kirpal Singh who had come along with us in Toshamaru ship proved to be a traitor. It was learnt that he was a member of Intelligence Bureau of British Government. About 17 persons who were staying in our Head Quarters at Dhobi Mandi were arrested on the information given to Deputy Commissioner Lahore, by Kirpal Singh. He subsequently informed the Governor, Punjab also about the whole of our plan. Thus the Government got two days and they were able to send alert signals in the various cantonments. This was followed by combing operations of various forces in the whole of India to search the members of our party. Kartar

Singh Sarabha was arrested from Ferozepore fort, Nidhan Singh Chugha, the brain of our party, was arrested at Rawalpindi and Harnam Singh *Tuṇḍīlāṭ* in Mianwali. Pingley, a Maratha youth, was arrested in Meerut. I was saved from arrest at Peshawar with the help of a Sikh Subedar Major, but was subsequently arrested at Lahore in Dhobi Mandi; Sachinder Sanyal was arrested at Benaras. All of us were prosecuted by a Commission appointed by King Emperor, and this was presided over by A.A. Arvin and consisted of two other Judges named T.P. Alis, and Pandit Shiv Narain. The charge against all of us was that we had tried to wage war against the King (Section 121, 121-A, IPC). We were tried in the Central Jail, Lahore. Out of Sixty-three prominent members of the party, 27 were sentenced to death, Kedar Nath Sehgal and Mehta Nand Kishore were acquitted and the rest were given transportation for life. None of us tried to send a mercy petition except seven including Bhai Parma Nand Punjabi who had been recruited by us locally and whom we allowed. These prosecutions brought about a great awakening in the whole of the country, and people got agitated on a large scale. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Sir Ali Imam and Raja Harnam Singh of Kapurthala led a deputation against our persecutions and met the Viceroy at Shimla. Lord Hardinge was the Viceroy. He, after hearing the deputationists, sent the case to the Privy Council. The Privy Council acquitted one man – Kala Singh at the instance of Michael O. Dwyer, the sentence of death of seven persons was confirmed and the rest of us were awarded transportation for life. This trial continued for about 11 years. Afterwards about 300 other persons were sentenced to death. Some of the soldiers (about 200) who were said to have cooperated with us, were court-martialled in different cantonments and were shot dead. Some soldiers of 23rd Sikh Regiment were transported for life to Andamans. They were of officers' ranks and they met us there in Andaman Jail. We generally protested against the treatment

of British officers, and from time to time and there were hunger strikes. Some of us beat the officers of jail and about 9 persons (8 Sikhs and one Pandit Rakha Ram) died while on hunger strike. Life sentence generally means 14 years but in my case the Chief Secretary of the Viceroy Mr Henry Crake had said, "For Parma Nand life sentence means, really life sentence." My case was defended by Subhash Chander Bose and Mr Saklatwala a British M.P. There was a great discussion in the Parliament. Miss Wilkinson demanded voting on the issue of my release and thus I was released by the verdict of Parliament in 1937 after 23 years.

[Recorded by Prithipal Singh Kapur 15-3-56]

Judgement in the Case of Parma Nand of Jhansi

- (57) Parma Nand II, son of Gia Parshad, a Kayasth of Sukrada Kharka, District Hamirpur, United Province, aged probably about 28.

This accused, who pleaded "Not guilty" to the charges framed against him (page 573), is one of the most important of the accused before us. He, apparently, started for America, but says (page 380) that he was not allowed to go on there, and he admittedly joined the S.S. "Korea" at Yokohama and reached Calcutta on October 29th, 1914 by the S.S. "Tosha Maru".

He was identified on jail parade of April 18th by approvers Amar Singh, Mula Singh, the police spy, and the witness Ichhar Singh; on jail parade of April 24th by approvers Sucha Singh and Jwala Singh, and by P.Ws 68, 213 and 251 on jail parades. In Court by the aforesaid persons and the P.Ws. 28, 29, 66, 67, 213 (a Pathan tonga-driver), 261, 362, 379, 380 and 381. P.W. 172 mistakenly pointed him out in Court as a man who had joined the ship at Singapore, and P.W. 212 was unable to identify him in Court.

This accuser's *dossier* is a big one.

Approver Amar Singh tells us of accuser's joining the "Korea" at Yokohama, and says that on the "Tosha Maru" accused lectured on "Unity". We have pointed out elsewhere that this approver appeared to be trying to modify his statement in favour of the accused. This approver's story continues as follows: 'On arrival at Calcutta, the accused manages to remain behind there; and later, comes enquiring at accused Bhai Parma Nand's for accused Jagat Ram and this witness, and meets them in a temple. He is told by the witness of a proposed meeting at Chaherta; and goes there with him about the first week in November, but returns at once to Lahore. A little later he meets accused Kartar Singh and the witness, and tells them that arms are obtainable on payment from Calcutta. His attempt to go there with Kartar Singh *via* Benaras fails (page 68), and he tells the witness of this at Jullundur, and says that he is going to Kapurthala to meet accused Pingle. The witness accompanies him there, and they meet the conspirators Pingle, Kartar Singh and Nidhan Singh, and Pingle states that a Bengali is going to join them. About the end of December, at Amritsar, accused assists at the experiment with the test bomb prepared by the absconding Dr Mathra Singh. He proposes going to Ludhiana with Mathra Singh and Harman(?) Singh of Jhelum after buying chemicals. About February 14th, he accompanies the witness and others to Lahore from Amritsar to discuss plans with Rash Behari Bose, and on the 15th or 16th is sent to Amritsar to find out the whereabouts of Mula Singh's separate house, and bring to Lahore any articles therein (it will be remembered that Mula Singh was arrested on February 13th). On the 16th or 17th, he returns to Lahore, bringing bombs, cartridges and a country made pistol (exhibits 25 A to F), which are put in the Wachhowali House, along with other chemicals in the possession of accused – the keys being made over to witness (page 78). After the alteration of the date for the rising to February 19 accused

is sent to Peshawar with literature and flags. A noticeable point is the absence of cross-examination of this approver on any but general points, what there is of cross-examination will be found in a small paragraph near the bottom of page 84.

Mula Singh, approver, first meets accused at the Virpali *Dharamsālā*, when Dr Mathra Singh is introduced. Accused explains his failure to meet Kartar Singh on the trip to get arms. This approver then corroborates Amar Singh's evidence re the test-bomb. He says that he and accused went and bought a brass inkpot and chemicals, and accused brings *kirpāns* and helps Mathra Singh to grind chemicals on the stone slab (exhibit p. 34). He then goes with a masonry boundary pillar (page 96). The witness gives (material to) accused and Mathra Singh and Nidhan Singh Rs.150 – for making bombs at Jhabewal. About the middle of January Dr Mathra Singh tells the witness that accused has gone to Bengal for arms. On about February 18th accused arrives at Amritsar and says that he had been arrested by the Police but had been released and that arms and partisans are available in Jhansi direction, and is told by witness that accused Hirde Ram will be sent with him. Nothing was elicited from this approver in cross-examination.

Approver Nawab Khan states that accused was brought on board the "Korea" at Yokohama by accused Jwala Singh, and Kesar Singh wearing Japanese dress. The witness speaks of him as "a great Sanskrit scholar" and says that he used to recite seditious Sanskrit poems on the ship – some of them on the "Tosha Maru" – between Hong Kong and Calcutta. At Singapore, accused is one of those who attempts to tamper with troops, and is one of those sent to despatch the telegram at Penang to the *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*. On or about December 14th, Kartar Singh tells this witness that accused has made over a revolver to Bhai Parma Nand who has passed it on to Kartar Singh. On February 18th after this approver's release on bail, Nand Singh, accused, tells him

that accused had supplied many revolvers, and had sent 2 chests by train, which had failed to arrive. (This approver's brief cross-examination as to his conversation with Nand Singh will be found at page 142 and as shown on page 144, he was practically asked not a single question to test his veracity re the present accused).

P.W. 198 Ichhar Singh has explained his calling accused "his old friend" at the court identification by saying that accused "grinned" at him in Court. He states that accused was brought to Lohatbadi by the Anarkali murderer as knowing how to make bombs, and that he gave accused Rs. 30 for rail fare to Bengal, accused being told to consign revolvers obtained to the witness at Kup railway station. This evidence goes to corroborate that of the previous witness. Accused tells the witness that the Delhi bomb thrower is ready to come to the Punjab to make bombs, but the witness says he cannot find him a hiding place. From Cawnpore the witness receives a letter from accused saying that accused is going to Allahabad. Now, how come this witness to invent all these details, if his story be false?

Approver Sucha Singh (page 272) also mentions the accused and Dr Mathra Singh in connection with bombs and is told by accused and the Anarkali murderer of their intention to go to Calcutta. On February 11, the witness finds him at one of the Lahore houses, Rash Behari being there also. On February 17, witness again meets accused in company with approver Amar Singh and is directed to Rash Behari's private house. In cross-examination (page 286), this witness merely replied to Defence Counsel that he had never met accused at Jhabewal and that accused "was not mad".

Approver Jwala Singh only said that "he thinks he saw a Bengali like accused on board, who had no beard then" and that he saw him at the Penang Gurdwara.

Approver Umrao Singh states that accused recited verses at Hong Kong Gurdwara, and speaks of accused, along with Dr Mathra Singh, visiting Jhabewal and selecting a

place near a well about a mile from that village for bomb making. Accused spends his nights there with Mathra Singh grinding chemicals and is given by the witness 5 seers of a chemical supplied by Sucha Singh. About the 8th January, accused and Mathra Singh leave Jhabewal on the witness's telling him that people are becoming suspicious. A few days later at Jhabewal, he tells the witness that he had been without success to Bengal for arms – and leaves for Ludhiana.

P.W. 16 (Liaqat Hayat, Deputy Superintendent of Police) tells us that Mula Singh, approver, mentioned this accused (before that approver's statement began to be regularly recorded) as having been present at the bomb experiment; and as one of the 3 "actual makers of bombs" – the other two being accused Hirde Ram and the absconding Mathra Singh.

P.Ws. 28, 29 and 17 (Inspector Ahmad Khan) speak as to the arrest of this accused when loitering outside House No. 2 on February 23. On his person was found exhibit p. 112, the missing page of the Atlas (exhibit p. 110A – found in House No. 2) – upon which page 6 large stations have pencil cross marks set against them, whilst other places have been underlined in pencil. Exhibit p. 113 is the list of things found on accused and this witness says that accused when arrested, stated that he had come to Lahore to study Sanskrit at the DAV College. This witness further states that accused admitted that he had buried a copy of the *Ghadr Sandesa* near Peshawar and this was recovered (exhibit p. 129). P.W. 42 corroborates *re* the finding of exhibit p. 112 on accused – and signed the search list exhibit p. 113. P.Ws. 66 and 67 speak as to accused's residing at different times in the *Āryā Samāj Maṇḍir* in Anarkali, Lahore (compare approver Amar Singh's statement about meeting in a temple); and P.W. 68 is on the same point and regarding accused leaving a *lohī* with him at Jullundur. In February, accused left some clothes at this last witness's shop in

Lahore, saying that he had come to study Sanskrit at the D.A.V. College but had not been admitted. P.W. 72, the Police spy, saw accused at house No.1 on February 15 and again on the 16th when accused was given a pistol in a leather case, which the spy could not get into his pocket – after which, accused left with the spy and Bela Singh, *Zaildār*, for Amritsar. In cross-examination, this witness stated that he did not mention accused's name to the Police as he did not know it, it being part of the conspirator's policy not to be too curious about names. To the Police he spoke of accused as the "Rajpur". In cross-examination on behalf of this accused, approver Narain Singh admitted that he himself had never seen "the Bengali". P.W. 384 tells us that on March 19, accused admitted having buried a copy of the *Ghadr Sandesa* near Peshawar, and it was dug up (exhibit p. 129) on March 20 by accused himself in the vicinity of Jamrud. This piece of evidence is corroborated by P.W. 213, a Pathan *tonga*-driver of Peshawar. P.Ws. 242 and 243 are as to accused's presence in Jhabewal. The first of them could not identify accused but "saw two men dressed as *Sādhus* pounding some yellow stuff." The second (a *Zaildār*) identified accused on Jain parade and in Court as a "stranger" who was in Jhabewal about January 9 and this witness also identified two pestles and mortars. P.W. 251 (of Jhabewal) also identified accused on Jail Parade and in court as having come with "a doctor" – the "doctor" being anxious to meet accused Nidhan Singh at Lohatbadi, where the witness used to teach grids in the *Dharamsālā*.

P.Ws. 362, 379, 380 and 381 have been produced in respect of the seditious speeches on the "Tosha Maru"; and the first of these has spoken of accused as "a leader".

It appears from the above what a vast volume of evidence there is against this accused – who only produced two defence witnesses. They are D.Ws. 227 (a pensioned Army *Havildār*) and 228 (a *Mukhtār* of a *Zamīndār*). Their evidence is to the effect that accused went to Japan in May

1914, and returned in November, because work stopped on account of the war. He remained in his village for 11 months and returned there for a month in January. One of his brothers is a *Mukhtār* and another *Patwārī*. These two witnesses belong to accused's District in the United Provinces.

Accused in his statement (page 380) has denied most of the allegations to the witnesses for the Prosecution; but his statement is full of half-admissions, which tend to corroborate the Prosecution evidence. He admitted having recited a poem on board at Singapore, which Nawab Khan or Amar Singh copied – namely, the poem *Bhārat Mātā*, which accused has actually described as “not seditious”. We cannot agree with him – it is only necessary to read the poem to see how seditious it is. He admits staying at the *Āryā Samāj Maṇḍir* in Lahore in November 1914; and has given as his reason for coming to the Punjab that approver Amar Singh gave him 2 sovereigns to enable him to learn Sanskrit at the D.A.V. College. He says that on December 29, he was taken to Kapurthala by Amar Singh, Pingle and Kartar Singh, to show him the Maharaja's Palace. He did not see accused Nidhan Singh there but saw accused Ram Sarn Das, who was asked by Pingle and Kartar Singh to join in “national work” – accused did not understand what was meant. He admits going to Sant Gulab Singh's Gurdwara at the beginning of January and meeting Amar Singh, Mula Singh and Mathra Singh at the *Virpali Dharmśālā*, where (he says) there was a discussion about starting a newspaper. He never had anything to do with bombs. He admits going to Ludhiana with Dr Mathra Singh and meeting accused Nidhan Singh but denied having gone to Jhabewal. He denies seeing approver Sucha Singh at House No.1 on February 11, but saw him on February 17 or 18. He identified the photograph (exhibit P.31) of Rash Behari; and says that he saw such a man in House No.1 on February 14. Arur Singh, who took him there, called the man some name like “Gorindar

Ravendra Nath". Accused first stated that he had conversed with that Babu on February 16 or 17, and then said that there was no direct conversation, but that Amar Singh told Rash Behari that he (accused) had come to learn Sanskrit, and was a "quiet fellow, who would not tell any one anything". He admits the circumstances of his arrest; and says that he went to House No.2 specially to see Amar Singh, who was his friend and Dr Mathra Singh, who was Amar Singh's friend. He has not suggested why Amar Singh should have tried to get him into trouble; nor why the witness Ichhar Singh should have concocted the piece of evidence about the letter from Cawnpore. He admits that the page of the Atlas was found on him – he took it out of the Atlas with Amar Singh's permission – but denies having made the pencil cross-marks on it. He admits being taken to Peshawar for the purpose of identification – but denies having recovered exhibit page 129.

The Crown Counsel did not trouble to argue the case against this accused. Counsel for the Defence has not attempted to support his bare assertion that the "Tosha Maru" witnesses (P.W. 362, 379 etc.) have laid themselves out to implicate every one they could recognize. It is urged (why we do not know) that accused is of the "type of which *Sādhus* are made." We are told that it would have been "an act of madness" to take the *Ghadr Sañdesa*, and bury it at Peshawar – but why should the Police have invented this? We agree with accused's Counsel that this accused cannot be connected with the "Barman Singh" spoken of in Inder Singh *Granthī's* confession. Lastly, accused's Counsel has pleaded that "accused is very young, and played a subordinate part."

We most certainly cannot agree with him; and the evidence of accused's (being) guilty is overwhelming.

[Home Political File Nos. 121, 122, 124A]

CHAPTER 11

Brigadier Sukhdev Singh

Brigadier Sukhdev Singh, born at village Bahawal District Ludhiana (PB), educated at Anglo-Sanskrit School, Khanna, Mahindra College, Patiala, and commissioned in 1935 from IMA Dehradun, joined the Patiala State Army's 1st Patiala Rajindra Sikh Infantry in 1937.

This Sikh unit, after being a part of the British Indian Army and having earned the reputation of "The Most Decorated Battalion" for its glorious record of having earned the reputation during Japanese invasion of Burma and the North East during the Second World War, Malaysian Peninsula and Indonesia. It was the first Indian Army unit to be airlifted to Jammu and Kashmir to defend the state, after its accession with India; to go into action against the Pakistan sponsored incursion of 'tribal' hordes into Kashmir. This brave unit also threw the Pakistani Gilgit Scouts out of the Kargil-Drass region of Kashmir and Ladakh after first capturing and then crossing the snow covered high altitude Zojilla Pass on the cold Himalayan heights. It now constitutes the 15th Battalion of the Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army. This unit became the most decorated unit after having earned 7 Mahavir Chakras, 16 Vir Chakras and 43 Mentioned in Despatches gallantry awards in the Kashmir operations in 1949.

Brigadier Sukhdev Singh, himself a highly decorated soldier (Military Cross), gives an eye-witness account of the steadfast bravery and valour of the Sikh soldiers and the rare military leadership and strategic command of its top military commanders like Late General Balwant Singh D.S.O., C.B.E., Brig. Bikrander Singh and himself.

Statement of Brigadier Sukhdev Singh

I am told I was born in February, 1912, at Bahomajra, District Ludhiana. Till about the partition this village was in the erstwhile Patiala State. On the formation of PEPSU, it was transferred to Ludhiana district. I was schooled at Anglo-Sanskrit School, Khanna, from where I passed Matriculation in 1928. In the same year, I joined Mahendra College, Patiala. In 1932, I was selected by the state authorities to undergo training at Indian Military Academy (then newly started) at Dehradun and graduated and commissioned from there in 1935. In December 1935, I joined the erstwhile Patiala state.

I joined the famous 1st Patiala Rajendra Sikh Infantry in 1937 as a Commissioned Officer. This unit was designated as Imperial Service Troops, and was organized and trained on Indian Army lines, so that during mobilization, it could take part in operations along with them. At the end of 1939, my unit was mobilized and we received some British Officers as part of mobilization scheme and were ready to join Second World War wherever required. In January 1940, we moved to Lahore Cantonment and later in June 1940, we moved to Waziristan (NWFP). Under the command of famous Late Gen. Balwant Singh C.B.E., D.S.O., the unit very soon established a very high reputation for professional military skill and competence amongst the tribal hostiles. In a matter of few months, the British Officers attached to the unit were considered unnecessary, and hence withdrawn. This was the 1st unit of the state forces which was considered from training, discipline and efficiency point of view as being the most fit for war under its own officers. This was a befitting recognition of the quality and leadership of Late General Balwant Singh, his officers and men. During the period of 11 years, the unit took part in a number of operational exercises in the tribal areas and successfully completed its assigned tasks.

In recognition of its services, it was attached as a permanent part of a fighting formation to the 1st Infantry Brigade. The unit was moved back for a short rest at Abbotabad in Hazara District (NWFP).

In April 1942, the last British possession in the East of our country (Burma) was being evacuated under the invading Japanese forces. This unit, as the part of 1st Brigade, was moved to Assam and Burma border, There, it took positions on forest covered hills to facilitate the withdrawal of the Burma Army. It had the honour of being the most forward on this front and helped thousands of refugees, trudging back into India after the loss of Burma to the Japanese.

It may be mentioned that though the troops were on quarter rations due to indifferent and virtually non-existent lines of communications at that time, the men of this unit gladly shared their meagre food with the helpless refugees. So It was significant that all the Northern Indian refugees from Burma were in a reasonably healthy shape and were bearing well with the difficulties of a long and arduous journey, whereas people from other areas were in a bad state of health and suffered heavy casualties. For the next year, while the British forces were being regrouped and organized, only small scale patrolling activities and protection of main approaches to India were carried out. During this period, when the general state of morale was not very high, and people had not recovered from the shocks of Japanese successes, late General Balwant Singh devised several long patrols to trace the locations of Japanese troops and maintain contacts with the Japanese. This was greatly admired by the senior army commanders. Then, in the rainy season in 1943 when the entire area was flooded with heavy rains and even small hill streams were not crossable, he led a hundred-men patrol, one hundred miles deep into enemy territory successfully crossing the hurdles and brought back very valuable information which later helped the higher

authorities in planning. This performance was also commented upon by BBC, London, and he was described as "Toughest of the Tough". He was also recommended for an award.

In March 1944, when the Japanese opened a new offensive and almost reached the railhead at Dimapur in N.E. and the entire force was cut off and supplies were sent by air, this unit was the first to engage the advancing enemy. The whole army, as a part of the plan, withdrew into Manipur plains and its surroundings. It was again this unit, which carried out an operation behind the enemy lines, thus forcing the Japanese to retreat and enable our forces to get a new approach. For this operation, as also the earlier achievement of his long patrol, General Balwant Singh was honoured with the immediate awards of D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order) and C.B.E. (Commander of the Order of British Empire).

This was the unique recognition of his talent in that this award was exclusively meant for only Higher British Commanders. The unit fought in this area till the Japanese were thrown back into Burma. The record of this unit would not be complete without a mention that the 1st Patiala Sikhs were regarded the top unit of the XII Army and the C.O., late General Balwant Singh, despite his age, was selected for higher command. He was the first amongst a couple of Indian Officers to get the command of a Brigade.

The unit was moved from Burma front to Bombay in November 1944 for training for overseas operations. After intensive training, in combined sea-land operations, the unit was earmarked as part of a big formation to land on the Malaysian Peninsula. While we were embarked, the Japanese surrender took place and we landed at port Dixon in Malaya. Here this unit helped in bringing about normalcy in the area and the new CO Col Bikaramdev Singh DSO, took the surrender of the Imperial Japanese forces at Seremban.

After a three-week stay in Malaya, unit was rushed to

Java (Dutch East Indies, now called Indonesia) and landed at Batavia, now called Jakarta, at the end of September 1945. In Indonesia, the unit was constantly engaged in operations against the hostile elements who were opposed to the reinstatement of the Dutch Regime by the British forces. This unit, though engaged in the unpleasant job, covered itself with glory. In one of the toughest operations while the unit was moving from Jakarta to Bandungs, escorting a big convoy under the leadership of Brigadier, then Lt Col, Bikramdev Singh DSO, fought a brilliant battle and saved not only several hundred refugees in the column, but also helped a British armoured unit that was surrounded by highly entrenched hostiles. For this operation, the CO, Brigadier Bikramdev Singh, was awarded the DSO, and I was also lucky to be awarded with the Military Cross (MC) for my part. The unit returned to India and reverted to state control in July 1946. From August 1947, for the next 3 months, the unit was responsible to bring about law and order, and saved many refugees during the partition riots.

The troops had hardly settled down from their work connected with the partition riots, when an urgent call from the Central Government was received to meet the threat of Pakistan-inspired insurgency and infiltration in J&K State. With hardly a days' notice, I was asked to fly out as an advanced party. I flew to Jammu on 2nd November and landed at a satellite air field. It was a great experience to see an aircraft being guided by hand signals by a solitary army officer deputed by J&K Government to meet us. I carried a letter from His Highness Patiala to His Highness Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh. I met the Maharaja in the presence of Mr Mehr Chand Mahajan, the then Prime Minister of J&K State and the Indian Agent Sir Dalip. I noticed an atmosphere of gloom around the palace. Apparently, as a result of disturbing reports of deterioration of the situation in the state, the Maharaja made anxious enquiries as to when my unit would reach Jammu. On 3rd

of November the whole unit, in some 35 civilians Airline Dakotas, landed at Jammu. There was a sense of remarkable relief amongst the local population on the arrival of Indian troops. Our unit was immediately asked to carry out a flag-march in the town to create confidence amongst the population for a brief period. There was a state of confusion as to whether this unit was to take orders from the Maharaja or from a senior Army Officer of the Indian Army, who had also reached there with a nucleus staff by then.

It became clear that the out-lying areas of Jammu Province of the state like Poonch, Mirpur, Kotli, were being infested by the invaders and a large number of hostiles were planning to march towards Jammu from Bhimber side.

A couple of companies were engaged on guarding the refugees, and some troops were sent on the Jammu-Srinagar Road to secure that side. In the meantime, a large number of refugees from the border areas started pouring into Jammu. In the second week of November, we got orders to be ready to relieve Naushehra and Kotli. As a preliminary to this, the unit moved to Akhnoor bridge on the river Chenab. From 15th November onwards, for next two-three weeks, the unit rushed around to the various threatened parts on the border. In the 1st week of December, a serious threat had developed to Akhnoor bridge and the area between Bhimber and Akhnoor. Some 50,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees started evacuating their homes and move towards Jammu. The unit moved to Monabbar-ki-Tawi with a view to operating against the hostiles. In a sharp flanking manoeuvre, the unit crossed Monabbar-ki-Tawi and routed the hostiles at Chhambh village, capturing a large number of arms and ammunition. It was a great success, and the advance of the invading hordes was blunted. The invaders reassembled, and several thousand attacked the Battalion on 14th December in their last bid to break through to Jammu on this side. In the process, they suffered heavy casualties, and again the unit had a field day. We received many

congratulations from various quarters on this successful operation. Towards the end of December 1947, the hostiles had over-run Jangher and were threatening Naushehra. In the 1st week of January, 1948, the unit was engaged in stabilizing the position around Naushehra and the hostiles were making frantic efforts to capture Naushehra. During the whole of January, the unit moved about endlessly to meet the rising threats from the invaders at various points on the border. Towards the end of February, CO, Lt Col Bikramdev Singh proceeded on leave, handing over the charge to me. In the second week of March, it was decided to clear the hostiles from Jangher. The unit cleared all the nodal points on approaches to Mirpur and Kotli, and entrenched its position above Jangher on 17th March and the road was clear for further operations to recover Mirpur and Kotli.

After this success, we were moved back to Jammu at the end of March. In appreciation of the Unit's good work, Maharaja J&K entertained the full unit on 13th March. During the next month (April) the unit remained on mobile duty and carried out the maximum number of moves. In the 1st week of May, we learnt that the Battalion was to move to Kashmir.

The Battalion moved to Srinagar on 10th May, and for the next two weeks the unit was employed on Srinagar – Sonamarg Road with the intention of securing Zojila pass, which at that time was blocked with snow. Late Bakhshi Gulam Mahammad, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister, visited us and congratulated the unit on its performance in Jammu. In the 4th week of May, a small body of troops were sent to Zojila pass to help the stragglers of Jammu Kashmir forces who had been pushed out by the raiders from Baltistan. On 23rd May, we had a very sharp engagement with Gilgit Scouts and foiled their bid to take Zojila pass before us. We received congratulations from General Cariapa and J&K Government authorities for

successfully securing Zojila pass. During the 1st week of June, small bodies of J&K forces troops, (some wounded), trickled back. As the snow in Zojila area began to melt, it was clear that the hostiles were again making attempts to dislodge us from Kashmir Valley from the North-East. The unit was instructed by higher authorities to hold Zojila pass at all costs, while operations elsewhere to clear the valley were being carried out. The unit was honoured on 28th June by the visit of Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, S Baldev Singh, the then Defence Minister, and Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of J&K. The Prime Minister took great interest in the plans and seemed to know the area backwards. Pandit ji gave us a few books as a monument of his visit. It is interesting to note that the unit at this time was holding pickets at the height of 16,000 ft around the pass and were in constant fire-fight with the hostile Gilgit Scouts. The hostiles brought heavy mortars and MMGs in an effort to get a firm foothold on Zojila pass, but our troops were more than a match for them. For the next couple of months, the enemy made a number of attempts to drive us from the pass but each time the enemy retreated with losses. We also made an attempt to improve our position in early September without much headway as the hostiles had dug up proper positions on the important hill-peaks. During this time, the hostiles' pressure in Ladakh had increased tremendously and it became imperative to break through Zojila pass to stop them before the next snow season. It was considered that the going through the narrow pass against the heavy opposition would be costly and the road, therefore, had to be built for the use of light tanks. On 1st November, in a blinding snow-storm, led by tanks, we surprised the enemy and they withdrew from some positions of the pass. At night when it was snowing, this unit stormed the heights above the pass, taking the enemy completely by surprise while he was sleeping in his bunkers and captured a Mountain-Gun, which remains a proud prize of the unit till today.

Incidentally, this is the only gun captured in Kashmir by our troops. Besides killing a large number of hostiles, who ran helter-skelter, we captured large quantities of ammunition and clothing, and the whole pass was cleared of the enemy. This was a very befitting success after the unit's long endeavour. The hostiles were now on the run. This gave a considerable relief to our troops isolated in Ladakh. Efforts were being made to bring up supplies and ammunition for further advance. This operation was slow due to snow and sub-zero temperatures, while the troops were not suitably clothed for such a climate.

The next place was Darass, some 30 miles away and supposed to be the highest inhabited village in the area. The hostiles took up the position on frozen Darass river which was halfway to Darass. The unit was assigned a task of clearing this position so that Guru Nanak's birthday could be celebrated at Darass. With God's grace, the pledge we had given to higher authorities of getting into Darass, on Guru Nanak's birthday was fulfilled. The hostiles were in full retreat now. The unit had completed its assigned role with resounding success and in recognition of the work, the higher authorities showered a lot of appreciation on the unit. In the midst of winter, when this area was considered impassable, we not only crossed the pass once, but having fought successful actions, recrossed into Srinagar in the second week of December. At this stage, negotiations were going on at the UNO, between India and Pakistan. The ceasefire was ordered on 1st January 1949. The unit moved back from the state on 13th January, 1949, having achieved great operational successes, which were recognized by the award of seven Mahavir Chakras, 17 Vir Chakras and 43 Mention-in-Despatches. It may be pointed out that the record of this unit for being the best decorated unit in gallantry stands even today.

[Recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh]

CHAPTER 12

Major General Mohinder Singh Chopra

Major General Mohinder Singh Chopra (Born August 12, 1907) was the first Indian Border Brigade Commander when the Indo-Pakistan borders were being demarcated after the declaration of partition of India. He was also closely associated with the work of Military Evacuee Organisation, Amritsar that came into being on September 1, 1947. An Advance Military Evacuee Organisation was simultaneously established at Lahore to facilitate the movement of evacuees from Pakistani territory. These organizations were wound up in November 1948 after evacuation work was largely over. Major General Chopra gives an eye-witness account of the plight of refugees that entered the Indian territory. He flew with Wing commander Mehar Singh to over-see the caravans of refugees marching from Pakistan to India and drop 'food parcels and cooked *chapattis* and vegetables in sacks'. He also sent a few British officers under his command to recover the abducted women-folk. He reveals that he sent the belongings of Sir Zaffar Ullah, Pakistani representative at the U.N. from Qadian (Gurdaspur) to Lahore. He remained engaged in relief work as well. He was associated with the formal establishment of the border check-post at Wagah-Attari. The interview was conducted by Dr Kirpal Singh on December 4, 1979.

Statement of Major General Mohinder Singh Chopra

"The crazy partition between India and West Pakistan – zigzagging through farms and fields – plunged the country into its greatest and worst communal crisis, and raised new barriers of fear, hatred and hostility between the two major communities in India."

Amritsar in 1947 looked like a bombarded city. It was more or less decimated and on the G.T. Road between Amritsar and Lahore there was mile upon mile of people going East and West carrying their paltry belongings – looking forlorn and desolate. The Hindus and the Sikhs from Pakistan moving on one side of the road, the Muslims from India on the other. Every now and again a goat or some cattle would run across it back again. Shortage of food and fuel led to the consumption of even the bark of trees to a height of over 10 feet, as high as one person standing on the shoulders of another could reach.

This was the scene when I arrived as Border Brigade Commander at Amritsar in September 1947 to see the horrors of bloodshed and sufferings of refugees due to butcheries on trains and on roads. There was hardly any semblance of law and order existing at that time. Problems facing us were colossal. We had to face breakdown and restoration of law and order and face the logistic problems, involved.

Helpless women and young girls coming from West Pakistan came in for special attention of the *gunḍās* elements who abducted them in large numbers. There were gruesome stories of women abducting and raping. During this period of holocaust lakhs of people migrated from one country to the other.

Thousands of refugees were murdered, injured or maimed for life with unbelievable cruelty. It was the greatest crisis in history. Masses of non-Muslims streamed out of towns/villages in Pakistan on the main highways, fleeing from their homes to escape the fury of infuriated mobs. Endless columns moved slowly with their meagre belongings on their shoulders. One witnessed thousands with the stamp of terror on their faces and eagerness to cross over to India to safer territory. Frenzied acts of destruction took place. Those who escaped the mob fury in West Pakistan and came to India narrated their woeful tales of looting, murder and rape.

While India fought against religious hatred, Pakistan fanned it. The refugees told how their relatives had been killed. Muslim villagers and officials butchered them. They took whatever they wanted from their houses, their womenfolk were insulted, and no one listened to their complaints. There were forcible conversions to Islam. Terror was let loose.

I visited Khemkaran – a border town in Amritsar District in February 1948, accompanying Sir Chandu Lal Trivedi – the then Governor of East Punjab. It was a sight to see exhausted and weakened by hunger refugees arriving on the Indian soil from West Punjab. Many pregnant women would give birth on the roadside or on trucks proceeding to Amritsar. Everywhere I found refugees sprawled on roadside in camps, in school buildings, in private houses, in fields and on the streets. This place was flooded with refugees, who had come from Multan and Montgomery to India. They said the water wells and ponds enroute were poisoned or filled with the carcasses of slaughtered cows. There was an acute shortage of drinking water on the way, and was sold by Pakistani villagers enroute at exorbitant prices.

Those refugees told a tale of standard pattern of cruelty. Their villages were surrounded by local Pakistanis from nearby villages who killed all the young men, burnt their homes and took away their cattle. Young girls were raped and some had the nipples of their breasts bitten off by their ravishers.

These convoys, which came from Montgomery, were fairly well organized, because they had among them a sprinkling of retired army personnel who provided safety and security to the refugees with whatever means they had.

It was over these refugee columns coming on foot from Pakistan entering India at Khem Karan, in Amritsar District, that I took many opportunities to fly over while still in Pakistan territory, stretching anything from 10 to 12 miles long, with Wing Commander Mehar Singh – affectionately

nick-named in the Indian Air Force as *Mehar Bābā* – in a small plane, and dropped food parcels and cooked chapattis and vegetables in sacks.

Hundreds of separated women were rescued by our troops from Pakistan under my command (other than Sikhs and Dogra troops) who were not permitted to enter Pakistan, just as “Baluch” Regiment was not allowed to come to India, as they had played havoc in Sheikhupura.¹ When they were brought back to safety at Amritsar, some parents were in hysterics at the happy re-union, whilst others refused to accept them back as they had lost their virginity (through no fault of their own). In fact, the parents were to be blamed for cowardice. For, abandoning these girls at the mercy of *gunḍās*, they had escaped themselves to save their skin. However, many of our “Jawans” in the army volunteered and married these girls.

Although it was not my official duty, I used to listen to the complaints for recovering the abducted girls from various places. Every day relatives and parents used to come to my office in the Cantonment for the recovery of their women-folk. For this, I used to dispatch British officers; a few were under my Command, to assist me in the recovery work. They went deep into Pakistan as far as Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Kohat and Peshawar to rescue these unfortunate girls.

Trains coming from West Pakistan were found with human bodies butchered and mutilated beyond recognition. These trains carried slogans like *Katal karnā hamse seekho* – And return butchered train with replies like *Katal karnā seekh līyā*. No words are enough to describe these mass killings.

In the refugees’ camps established by us at Amritsar, one heard of innumerable tales of woe. All very similar and

1. For details of Sheikhupura massacre on 24th August 1947 by Baluch Regiment, see Kirpal Singh, *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab*, Document No. 233, p. 692.

yet different in the worry and the suffering, the helplessness and the despair of each family.

In early October 1947, I, along with my troops, was escorting a large Muslim convoy from Beas to Amritsar. Nearing the camping ground at Amritsar I noticed great excitement, and hundreds of Amritsar citizens shouting and shrieking hysterically waving swords and spears that they would not spare this Muslim convoy to proceed to Pakistan alive. The situation was explosive and desperate. I was told that a refugee train of non-Muslims coming from Sialkot had been butchered and young girls abducted. Since no one could hear me, I stood on top of a standing bullock cart and at the top of my voice shouted our war-cry – *Jo bole so nihāl – Sat Srī Akāl*. Immediately there was silence and I appealed to the crowd to listen to me, which they did. I stressed that if they killed this lot of Muslims there would be further retaliation and revenge. I told them two wrongs do not make one right and moreover our Prime Minister, Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru had given explicit instructions that those Muslims who did not want to stay in India, should be allowed to go unmolested. The crowd, to my surprise, listened to my appeal and dispersed. Thus I was successful in avoiding an ugly situation.

During a visit to one of the refugee camps at Amritsar, I came across a lady completely covered up in a *chaddar*. She refused to show herself to any male. I was told that while in Pakistan she had been raped over twenty times during one night and she was bitter about it, and did not want to see the face of any man any more.

Sir Zafar-Ullah, Pakistan representative in the U.N. and later in the World Court, wanted his belongings from Qadian (District Gurdaspur), his home town², to be sent to Lahore. This message was conveyed to me through his brother-in-

2. Qadian was not his home town. His home town was Daska, District Sialkot. That he himself told me in London in 1964. Since he was a follower of the Qadiani sect, he had a house at Qadian, District Gurdaspur also. (K.S.)

law, Brigadier Nazir Ahmed, who was my opposite number in Lahore and belonged to my Regiment. All of Sir Zafar's household goods, furniture and books in the library were loaded in three 3-ton trucks and sent to Lahore after taking receipts. And yet, I understand he denied having received any of his goods from India and told the august Assembly at the U.N. that he could not remove even a stick out of his house.

A number of refugee camps to accommodate several lakhs of uprooted people were established at Amritsar at this time. One cannot imagine the organizational and administrative problems that arose. Providing shelter, clothing, blankets and food for lakhs, as well as their onward transportation were a colossal problem. I was very ably assisted by my wife, Jagjit Kaur, and her team of helpers who did a Herculean task of collecting old and new garments, jerseys, blankets in thousands, all of which she got donated from charitable organizations and individuals for distribution to the needy in the camps. Often late at night we visited camps and the railway stations to cover people who were without blankets.

The canteens were opened by the army wives to offer tea, biscuits, bread and other snacks much needed by the refugees moving in road convoys or on trains. My jeep, in which I moved around, carried a bagful of roasted grams and *gur* for distribution to the hungry.

These were the fateful days of partition, when the worst riots occurred mostly due to retaliation. It would not be out of context to mention the commendable spirit of the people of Amritsar who always rose to the occasion and came forward with help of every kind, at all times.

Before I sign off, it would not be out of place to mention two landmarks literally established by me during the events of partition. The 1st was the referendum carried out in Sylhet in East India and some months later the formal establishment of the new major frontier border check post at Wagah-Attari.

Indians holding King's Commission, but I knew there was some discrimination against Indians in other Regiments. My Colonel R.D. In skip and other British Officers looked after me and liked me as any other British Officer.

Q. What are your impressions about the Military Evacuee Organization in 1947?

Ans. I was not directly involved, but from all accounts the Military Evacuation Organization did excellent work.

Q. What were your assignments during 1947? Kindly give some eye-witness account of that period.

Ans. My assignments were to defend the border against aggression as well as help in evacuation work. I took over the command of 123 Infantry Brigade at Amritsar on 11th September 1947 during the height of communal riots from a British Officer-Brigadier Solomons, a highly decorated officer. I was the first Indian to take over this responsible post. Brigadier Solomon had under him three battalions while I was given seven more to look after the border and to protect the refugees.

Q. What are your impressions about Indian National Army?

Ans. No comments.

Q. What is your role as a Military Officer in free India? Have you taken part in Kashmir operation?

Ans. In free India, as a Military Officer, I wanted to be a good citizen, uphold and enhance the traditions and good name of Indian Army. I personally could not take part in Kashmir as my Infantry Division was moved to Fazilka to look after that border of the Punjab.

Q. What are your impressions about Indians living in Philippines?

Ans. As Ambassador of India in the Philippines, naturally I was concerned about the Indians who had settled down and lived in these Islands. The community still retains its distinct individuality, but otherwise is happily integrated in the Philippine way of life. Most Indians

are in business as traders, and are colloquially referred to as "Bombai's". As a whole, the Indians are very hard-working and doing well. In the Indian Community, Punjabis are fifty per cent mostly shaven Sikhs.

Q. How were Muslims in Amritsar evacuated in 1947?

Ans. Every protection and facility was given to the Muslims to proceed to Pakistan without any molestation at all. They were escorted by Indian troops upto Attari border. To the best of my knowledge, every Muslim was given protection after my taking over in September 1947. I remained there till October 1949. I had under my command over 10 (ten) battalions numbering over eight thousand soldiers, including six battalions of Gorkhas.

Q. What are your achievements as Director of National Institute of Sports, Patiala?

Ans. When I took over the sports Institute of Patiala, the standard of sports in India in general was deteriorating. To improve the standard of games and coaching, I got foreign coaches from America, England, Russia, Iran, Philippines, Malaysia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to coach our coaches in Swimming, Cricket, Football, Gymnastics, Volleyball, Wrestling, Basketball, Badminton, Athletics, and table tennis.

It was a challenging job. Foreign coaches did a magnificent job in passing their knowledge and experience to our Indian coaches. We benefitted a lot.

Q. Have you got some knowledge as to how the fighting bands were organized to expel the Muslims from the East Punjab?

Ans. No, not to my knowledge.

Q. Kindly comment on communal riots in Punjab. How far the British officers were responsible for the communal riots?

Ans. While India fought against religious hatred, Pakistan fanned it. It was not so much the British Officers who

were responsible for the communal riots as some of leaders and politicians on both sides with vested interests.

Q. Kindly give your views about the working of East Punjab Liaison Agency?

Ans. Did excellent work.

Q. How it worked successfully or otherwise in recovering the abducted women?

Ans. East Punjab Liaison Agency's endeavours were very successful in some cases but not in the recovery of abducted women.

Q. It is alleged that military under the Punjab Boundary Force was taking sides in the communal riots to kill the opposite community.

Ans. This is not surprising, as they were influenced by the riots. After all they were part and parcel of the same community on both sides. However, on our side strict control was maintained at all times, to avoid their mixing up with civil population.

Q. Do you know anything about the Military men in India or Pakistan committing excess on women?

Ans. No knowledge.

Q. How did military act in those days of confusion and chaos in restoring law and order?

Ans. The Armed forces did a Herculean task of maintaining and restoring law and order, and acquitted themselves most honourably at all times. A large number of Muslim women who had been abducted in Amritsar and did not want to go to Pakistan were instructed by me and my troops that they should go to Pakistan according to the agreement of our Governments. I was fortunately assisted by a good team of officers like Lt Col Randhir Singh Grewal.

[Recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh]

Appendix

Major J.M. Short¹

In 1964 while making preparation for my maiden overseas research tour for six months, I approached Master Tara Singh, the veteran Akali leader, to give me some introductory letters for such persons who could guide and help tap sources of contemporary Punjab History. Very kindly he gave me one in the name of Major J.M. Short describing me as Sikh historian on a visit to England to collect material on contemporary Sikh history. I contacted Major J.M. Short and he willingly helped me in locating family archival material. He introduced me to Helen Lady Hardinge, the grand-daughter-in-law of Viceroy Hardinge of India (1910-1916 A.D.). Viceroy Hardinge was the grandson of Sir Henry Hardinge who had fought first Anglo-Sikh War in C.E. 1845 and 1846. The family archives of Hardinges were preserved at Penshursts which was near to Major Short's village, Birchden Corner. I was able to consult the Hardinge's family archives and subsequently used the material therefrom in my book entitled *Hardinge Papers Relating to Punjab*, published by the Punjabi University, Patiala.

Since I was more interested in material regarding partition of the Punjab that took place in the wake of withdrawal of British authority from India, I put a number of questions to Major Short. It may be mentioned here that he was considered an expert on Sikh Affairs. Major J.M. Short had served XI Sikh Regiment and retired in 1931. He was re-employed in 1940 when the Sikh Squadron of Central India Horse refused to embark for the Middle East. He was successful in restoring the loyalty of the Sikh forces. During the Great War II when the pro-Congress activities of Akali Party were likely to affect adversely the military recruitment, he was successful in dissuading the Akali leaders from supporting the non-cooperation call given by

1. James Short surely cannot be credited to deserve a mention as one of the Makers of Modern Punjab. But his statement has been included as appendix only to draw attention of the scholars towards the British mindset vis-à-vis the Sikh situation during the fateful period of 1947.

increasingly our own escapism, and that of a few more-English-than-the-English Indians. We did so despite the warnings of history, and our being better equipped to profit by them. Inevitably the upshot had to be much as it was. Inevitably, the responsibility for it lies much more with us.

October 30, 1964

Birchden Corner
Groombridge
Tunbridge Wells

[Recorded by Dr Kirpal Singh]

