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AGONY OF PUNJAB

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V.D. CHOPRA
R.K. MISHRA
NIRMAL SINGH



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NEW DELHI

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Introduction

The traumatic developments which rocked Punjab, have caused widespread anxiety. Events of the last three years in this border state have baffled political observers, evoked contradictory responses from political parties and caused anguish to common citizens. Outside the country, these developments have been viewed seriously by India's friend and with unconcealed plea by her enemies. Presentation of these events has, however, been woefully inadequate because of temptation to see them in a narrow, isolated context. Confusion has been further compounded by many distorted accounts of the recent events in Punjab. Very limited attempts have been made to identify the social forces which have contributed in creating an emotional and intellectual chasm by inventing, misrepresenting and exaggerating religious and cultural differences between various sections of the population.

The army action in the first week of June brought a sense of relief to the people who had lived in fear and tension for over two years; this feeling has again given way to a sense of anxiety caused by attempts to recreate an atmosphere of confrontation. The consensus which had emerged on the issue is evaporating as the controversy over 'kar seva' hots up; making the situation much more difficult and complex. Therefore, a rational and critical analysis of the Punjab problem, its origins and historical roots is urgently needed as an input in the efforts to clear the mist of misunderstanding and disorientation. Discussions on Punjab have been marked by trading of charges; against the Congress (I) for creating a mess in the state, against Akali leadership for being obdurate and neglecting their responsibility, against the moderates for becoming passive spectators of the

rise of terrorism and misuse of the Golden Temple complex and against opposition parties for trying to exploit the Akali-Centre rift for partisan gains. Views have been expressed that the events in the state would not have taken a disastrous course if certain mistakes in handling the Punjab problem had been avoided. It is always easy to be wise after the event and engage in a post-facto analysis on the basis of hindsight.

An attempt has been made in this book to trace the genesis of the Punjab problem in a historical perspective and bring out its essential character as yet another vestige of the colonial era. The point of departure for a comprehensive, indepth, assessment of the problem is the recognition of the fact that even after four decades of independence world imperialism is not prepared to accept India as a nation. On the contrary neocolonialism has been nursing and encouraging religious fundamentalism with a view to dismembering India. This conclusion is derived from the writings of western scholars, experts and official documents. Not long ago a former US adviser on national security, Zbigniew Brzezinski declared, during a visit to Islamabad: "We in the United States neither fear nor deplore Islamic resurgence, we see in it a new element of strength and contribution to the cause of peace". This enthusiastic support of the US policy makers to Islamic fundamentalism and that too after the shocking degeneration of Khomeini's 'revolution' in Iran has deeper and dangerous implications than what may appear on the surface.

Imperialist powers, especially US imperialism, is promoting religious fundamentalism, revivalism and other fissiparous tendencies in all the newly-liberated countries to undermine the process of nation-building and to set into motion the forces of disintegration of these nation-states. India has become their main target because of its policies of nonalignment, economic independence, secularism, adherence to the principles of peace and opposition to attempts to push the world into a war, particularly nuclear war.

American propagandists, many of them masquerading as scholars, have been working overtime to spread the insidious idea that by the end of the century India would disintegrate into a number of separate states. Paul Wallace, who till recently was a senior research fellow of the American Institute of Indian

Studies, New Delhi has put forward a thesis that ethnic and religious revivalism has added an inflammable dimension to contemporary national and international politics.¹

There are many sinister, political, economic, cultural and academic, dimensions of the American support to revivalism and fundamentalism in developing countries. These are reflected in the pronouncements of some of the well known spokesmen of revivalism and fundamentalism. We have confined our study of this phenomenon to Punjab only; but the broad conclusions brought out in this book are equally valid for all the fundamentalist and revivalist forces in our subcontinent and elsewhere.

Revivalist and fundamentalist elements are not new in our society. They can be readily traced to the period of British rule when Indian people had to contend with the challenge not only of imperialist rule and its economic onslaught but also with the European cultural invasion. Punjab is a tragically eloquent example. The danger has acquired grave and frightening proportions because whereas British imperialism used these revivalist movements to prop up its own rule, American imperialism is now harnessing them to destabilise and dismember India.

An attempt has been made in the last part of the book to trace the socio-economic roots of the Punjab problem. Our keenness in placing our findings in the hands of our readers, both inland and abroad, as quickly as possible, has obliged us to take only a bird's-eye view of the problem. We are conscious that it needs more analytical work to strike at the roots of mechanism of the revival of conservative, backward elements in Indian society which is passing through a decisive stage of transition. Nevertheless, the authors believe that this part would undoubtedly hold readers' attention to this vital aspect to look in for more basic, objective materials for further studies.

Asian nations did not lose their independence in the eighteenth century through conquest by western armies alone. They were brought under the domination of the west through a gradual, manipulated, erosion of their unity. Asian countries which achieved independence in the last few decades and continue to cherish it are targets of subversion so that they should not be-

1. See Paul Wallace (ed), *Political Dynamics of Punjab*, Amritsar, 1981

come self-reliant and economically independent entities. In this offensive, destabilisation is the most pernicious weapon being used against them.

It is not an accident that Punjab is currently being made the target of destabilisation. Punjab occupies a key position in India's defence, it makes a significant contribution to the country's armed forces. Punjab is also the granary of India. The state accounts for valuable share of India's export trade. This explains why forces of destabilisation are so active in Punjab.

The recent happenings in Punjab have been tragic indeed. The religious sentiments of a section of the people have been hurt. But a closer, dispassionate look, leads to the conclusion that the army action had become unavoidable. In the first part of the book we have gone into the reasons which led to the army action. We firmly maintain that Hindu communalism has played no mean part in complicating the issues in Punjab since independence, particularly regarding the question of linguistic reorganisation of the state. But for the extremely harmful postures adopted by the Hindu communalists, the course of events in Punjab would have been different; perhaps many tragic misunderstandings could be avoided.

We have referred to the need for curbing fundamentalist and revivalist activities on the ideological plane in the concluding chapter. Our study leads to the conclusion that in elevating Punjab's present vitiated atmosphere and restoring secular politics in the state an all-out campaign will have to be launched against secessionism and fundamentalism of all hues and shades. A simple Punjabi worker or peasant is still influenced by the traditional outlook on life and that is why in this most developed state of India which is moving rapidly towards modernisation of its economy, the influence of religious-communalist, separatist and other reactionary forces has operated on an alarming scale. This paradox needs a close analysis with a view to formulating an effective secular response.

To the extent this work succeeds in putting the agony of Punjab in a correct perspective and helps in drawing appropriate lessons, it would have served some purpose.

New Delhi
25 July, 1984

V. D. CHOPRA
R. K. MISHRA
NIRMAL SINGH

Part I

Army Action in Punjab

R.K. MISHRA

1. Upheaval in Punjab: Basic Issues

Events in Punjab have shaken the entire nation. At first glance, it would appear that the army action marks the failure of the civil system and the normal democratic political processes in resolving contentious issues. True in a sense, such an assessment mistakes the symptoms for the causes of malignancy. The explosion and the trauma in Punjab are not rooted merely in the disputes between the Akali Dal and the government nor the actions of groups of terrorists and extremists, who made these differences irreconcilable and their solution difficult to achieve. The upheaval in Punjab needs to be seen in a much broader context, national and international. The issues it has thrown open for serious consideration by the political system of the country are of more fundamental nature than merely transfer of territory, allocation of water or declaration of Amritsar as a Holy City.

Amongst political parties in our country, and a great majority of political scientists, there is inadequate awareness about the world-wide offensive now underway against the concept of independent nation-states. Countries with ancient civilisation were unable to thwart the onslaught of powerful nation-states with developed economies which came into being in the wake of industrial revolution. Tribalism in its broadest sense was the hall mark of these societies and its social and economic ramification.

After World War II, when colonialism was forced to beat a retreat from Asia and other parts of the world, it tried to leave behind several tension points in newly independent countries in the hope that these could be activated and tensions exacerbated with a view to maintaining the global domination of former co-

lonial powers. In order to prevent the newly independent countries from realising their full potential and emerging as strong and viable nation-states, neoimperialism relied on technique of divide and rule. Either the newly emergent nations were partitioned, e.g. Korea, China, Vietnam, India etc, or, over the years, political, economic and other steps were taken to identify points of potential tensions and exacerbate them with a view to preventing these nations from acquiring strength to challenge the global domination of former colonial powers and their neoimperialist incarnations.

In this game, the emerging nation-states became the principal targets. Given the wide disparities existing between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the world, the newly independent states historically became champion of redistribution of resources and power, internationally, on a more equitable basis. In order to achieve this objective, tribal, feudal and medieval societies launched a process of modernisation of economy and society and of welding their people into viable nation-states. The emergence of viable nation-states in societies endowed with rich natural resources and cultural potential, was perceived by the neoimperialist powers as a threat to their hegemony and domination.

Majority of the newly independent countries have not yet completed even the first phase of industrial revolution and the consequent modernisation of their polity and society. Neoimperialism, therefore, embarked on a campaign to exploit in many dubious ways their medieval sociological and psychological traits in pursuit of this sinister objective largely depending on backward levels of consciousness of different segments of population in newly independent nations. Since it is not possible to obstruct forever the modernising march of history and the rise of productive forces in these countries, neoimperialism seeks to subserve its designs by preventing the emergence of national consciousness which could become the foundation of a strong nation-state.

In this wider context, India has become one of the main targets of neoimperialist designs. The hope that partition of India will give rise to two states which could be manipulated by neoimperialism and engaged in perpetual conflict within the framework of a military balance of power received a setback be-

cause of several factors. Firstly, in spite of the trauma of partition, the Indian people refused to accept the ideology of a state based on religion and decided to establish a modern secular state which would weld different religious, ethnic, linguistic and other groups in a modern nation-state. Secondly, the developmental strategy pursued by India led to the creation of a strong modern economic sector and impressive advances in the field of science and technology. The foreign policy of nonalignment placed India at the centre of the struggle for a new international economic order and liquidation of the verbiage of colonialism and racism. Thirdly, their plan to maintain a balance of power between India and Pakistan received setback when Pakistan was broken into two with the emergence of independent Bangladesh.

Notwithstanding the weaknesses which exist in the social, economic and political structure of India, particularly the fact that a large percentage of its people are still to achieve a satisfactory standard of living, neoimperialism had to reckon with the prospect of India emerging as a major economic and political factor on the international scene if it succeeded in crossing the hump during the next decade. During the cold war period, neoimperialism had hoped to impose its domination on the newly independent countries by raising the bogey of communists which, it hoped, would win for it the support of the ruling elites of these countries. But the momentum of liberation struggles and the desire to assert their independence brought about a hundred of these countries into the nonaligned movement. Repeated attempts to disrupt this movement or disorient it failed and now two-thirds of mankind is committed to the goal of a new international economic order based on equality and respect for the interests of all nations. Democratisation of international relations is perceived by neoimperialism as a major threat to its domination. In this economic and political struggle of mankind, India, which had refused to compromise its Independence, now occupies a leading place. The Indian nation-state is emerging as a beacon light of assertion of independence and by its example of achievements, it is showing the way of modernising a polity without severing its links from the historical roots of an ancient civilisation.

The Indian nation-state has, therefore, become a threat to

neoimperialism's global designs. Its potentials are vast and it is on the verge of a significant take-off. It has set a model for cooperation between countries with different social systems and has emerged as a bridge between societies with diverse historical and political background. India, in the scheme of neoimperialism, must be broken and weakened, if its game is to succeed. Attempts to overwhelm it by external military aggression having failed, neoimperialism is engaged in identifying and activating points of tension within the Indian polity. Destabilisation and balkanisation of India is its strategic goal and forces of tribalism, medievalism, regionalism, communalism and other backward, fissiparous tendencies, its allies and instruments. The Punjab events need to be placed in this broad context. In Punjab, the foundation of the Indian nation is under attack. Secularism is the corner stone of Indian polity. It is India's reply to the ideology of Pakistan. Secularism is the guarantee of Indian unity and integrity. Without secularism, Indian democracy will become a hollow shell. Religious fundamentalism and its medieval tendency is protected, encouraged and nourished by neoimperialism internationally and reaction within the country to undermine all nation-states, to engulf them in protracted internecine violence and to force them to fritter away their energies and resources. This is being attempted all over the world; the same devious game is being played in our country.

In its essence, religious fundamentalism is neoimperialism's latest weapon to obstruct, reverse or delay the pace of human progress. This is a deadly menace in any country, but more so in a multireligious polity like ours. What has been witnessed in Punjab is not only terrorism or sporadic violence but a vicious experiment of using religious fundamentalism for unleashing irrational passion and hatred with the objective of destroying a buoyant economy, disorienting a brave people, brutalising a segment of our population known for tolerance and compassion, perverting the minds of youth who were being attracted by progressive ideas, and undermining an emerging powerful nation-state. The army action in Punjab has frustrated these designs, at least, for the time being.

2. Army Action: The Punjab Perspective

In the life of a nation there come moments of determined decision and decisive action, specially when its foundations are in jeopardy. Precisely at such moments, however, a nation and its people need to temper their responses with clarity and circumspection, when neither misplaced euphoria nor unwarranted panic should be allowed to distort their basic perceptions. The Indian nation-state and its people, so early in their post-independence history, are standing today at such a critical juncture. Notwithstanding anxiety and tensions, we should not be swayed by irrational passions. We must see the inevitable, nonetheless tragic events in Punjab in their correct perspective.

The Indian army was engaged in an extremely serious and delicate operation in Punjab. It performed its duty with courage, competence and, more than any thing else, with considerable restraint. The restraint with which it had acted has exacted heavy sacrifices from the *jawans* and officers of the security forces. These sacrifices are a proof that the action in Punjab was carried out with due consideration to the sentiments of the people; with sadness and reluctance; that certain steps had to be taken only when there was no other alternative.

The security forces have by and large executed the tasks assigned to them in the first phase. They are now engaged in mopping up operations and liquidating the remnants of terrorist groups. But that is not the end of the responsibilities of the secular forces in the country. In fact, liquidation of major terrorist groups will mark the beginning of an intense and protracted political battle to bring peace in the minds of all sections of our people, particularly the Sikhs, whose contributions to the defence and reconstruction of our country is a matter of pride for all of us. It is the

nature and dimension of this political task which must engage the immediate attention of the nation and its leaders. The government and all political parties — in fact, all Indians — must ask themselves: where have we reached and why? Where do we go from here and how? This exercise must begin with an objective and dispassionate evaluation of events in Punjab which made the present action necessary. A clear enunciation of the nature of the political battle ahead can be made only if correct lessons are drawn from the past.

It should be stated clearly that the army was called in to defend Indian secularism, a critical ingredient of the fabric of our nation. The state intervened not on behalf of any one section; it acted on behalf of all those who are an integral part of the Indian nation which is secular and non-denominational. The drift in Punjab had to be stopped by determined action to demonstrate unambiguously and emphatically the fundamental principle that the *Indian state would not permit communalism and fanaticism to overwhelm its secular character.*

The Golden Temple, more than any other place of worship in our country, is a symbol of Indian secularism, for its doors are open to men and women of all faiths and persuasions. Though the holiest shrine of the Sikhs, it is revered and visited by all, including the Hindus. The army was given the task of ending the defilement of the temple by a bunch of terrorists and criminals. The terrorists violated the sanctity of this hallowed centre of amity and brotherhood by misusing its precincts for spreading the venom of hatred and fratricide, for running murder squads and criminal gangs. Let us not forget that many innocent men and women have suffered heavily and lost their lives in the turmoil which has engulfed Punjab, and majority of them belong to the Sikh community. Officers and jawans of Indian security forces, who have laid down their lives in an attempt to end the terrorists' control of the Golden Temple have died in the most glorious tradition of Sikh history and the terrorists and criminals have proved traitors to that tradition. In fact, they restored the sanctity of the Golden Temple — a fact which future generation will be able to see more clearly.

The action in Punjab demonstrates India's determination to uphold the nation's unity and integrity. This is valid for all threats to these basic ingredients of Indian nationhood whether they arise

in north or the south, in the east or the west. It should, however, be obvious that the end of the army action in Punjab will not automatically eliminate these dangers, a product of international machinations which are likely to be further intensified in the days to come. Vigilance from external dangers, must include well-thought-out political measures to ensure that our own internal weaknesses and follies do not provide a fertile ground to the enemies.

Was it possible to avoid army action?

There is a section of commentators and leaders of public opinion which says it was possible. They do not see the Punjab events in their comprehensive context, particularly their international dimension. The whole sequence of events makes it abundantly clear that there was no other option left before the government. There is no need to be paranoid, but charge of external hand in Punjab events is supported by empirical evidence and the theoretical analysis of neoimperialism's strategy discussed earlier.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her broadcast to the nation, on the eve of army action,* made a passionate appeal for a negotiated settlement of pending disputes of Punjab and spelt out the broad frame for such negotiations. The Akali leaders became prisoners of terrorists because they were unable to understand the role of religious fundamentalist violence in the control of neoimperialism's global game. They were also, because of poverty of political understanding, unable to assess the response of the Indian nation-state when its foundations are threatened. Indira Gandhi underlined the "government's readiness to accept almost all reasonable demands put forward by the Akali Dal when they started their agitation". Elaborating the government's views on Akali demands in considerable detail, the Prime Minister outlined "the framework of settlement" and presented it with commendable persuasiveness. Akali demands fell in two categories. In regard to demands which "did not affect the rights of other states", the Prime Minister said, "the government had no hesitation in accepting them". This was confirmed by the steps initiated by the government to implement the decisions taken in respect of demands described as 'religious'. Issues pertaining the centre-

*See the full text of Prime Minister's broadcast to the nation in Appendix II.

state relations, which the Akali Dal had raised in its various resolutions, could be presented before the Sarkaria Commission. The Prime Minister also listed the government's positive response on such Akali demands as ban on sale of tobacco and liquor in parts of Amritsar, relay of Kirtan from the Golden Temple, formulation of All-India Gurdwara Act and amendment of Article 25 of the Constitution.

A careful analysis of that portion of the Prime Minister's broadcast wherein she had discussed the territorial dispute, revealed that this time the government had made an extremely significant gesture to meet the aspirations of the people of Punjab. "I have repeatedly stated that Chandigarh will go to Punjab", the Prime Minister said. The issue of Chandigarh was thus *delinked* from the proposal to transfer Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana, the only proviso being that "Haryana gets its share of some Hindi speaking areas which are now in Punjab". This was exactly the formula evolved at the tripartite talks and to which Akali Dal was a party. The government's preparedness to refer the dispute between Punjab and Haryana on sharing of surplus waters of Ravi and Beas to a tribunal presided over by a supreme court judge is also in accordance with the spirit of suggestions made by the tripartite meeting. The Prime Minister assured them that "if any misgivings or doubts remain, let us sit round the table and find a solution".

The Prime Minister's appeal reflected the national consensus on issues the Akali Dal had been agitating for the last two years. By their refusal to grasp this opportunity for a negotiated settlement, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and his colleagues only confirmed the charge that they were afraid of the terrorists and criminals who were holding them at gun-point, and were, therefore, in no position to settle the pending disputes on a reasonable basis. The decision to place the army to assist civil authority in Punjab was a clear warning that the government found the situation too grave to allow any further drift. But once again the Akali leaders failed to rise to the occasion. It is, however, necessary to underline that what happened in Punjab during the last two years of Akali obduracy, needs to be seen in a proper historical background. Hindu communalism played its own part in giving birth to religious fundamentalism amongst a section of the Sikhs. Both posed serious menace to the secular foundations of Indian nation-state. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is dead. But a Bhindranwale

need not always be a person professing Sikhism. He can belong to any faith. And in India, the situation is likely to become extremely dangerous when the spirit of Bhindranwale wears the robes of a Hindu.

Communal fanaticism, of which Bhindranwale had emerged as a frightening symbol, has not yet been extinguished. Elimination of communal venom from the body-politic of our society is not the job of the army. It is a task which must be performed by the political leadership of the country; all secular and patriotic forces, intelligentsia and social workers — in fact, by every conscious citizen who is in a position to contribute even in the slightest degree towards containing irrational passions and curbing the animal tendency of vengeance and vindictiveness.

What was witnessed in Delhi and some other places on the morrow of the army action was sad indeed. Though these disturbing incidents were few and far between and the communal passions were curbed soon, they indeed were ominous portents of rise of Hindu communal backlash. More than that, it was a warning — a grim warning — that viability of the secular fabric of our polity must not be taken for granted. Communal virus is poisoning the attitudes and actions of the people, the police and the media. Everything must be done *immediately* to stop the infection from spreading further. Let us not forget even for a moment that the monster of communal hatred, intolerance and violence has a tendency to appear in many forms if primordial responses of the masses are not channelised in a healthy manner. For this, a conscious direction must be given to their reactions. It should be ensured that communal bigotry, which pushed the situation in Punjab to such a tragic climax, does not grip the minds of the people in the rest of the country. Of paramount importance is the need to give a mandate to the police force that while threats to law and order must be dealt with firmly, officers and men must realise that excesses against innocent persons are *impermissible*. They have to combat and curb all manifestations of communal reprisals, without fear or favour. We must emphasise with all the power at our command that secularism, our cherished national commitment, will suffer a grave setback if even one innocent Sikh lives in fear and does not feel secure in any part of our country. It will be a triumph for Bhindranwale and the like of him.

The recent events in Amritsar cannot but evoke some reaction

amongst the Sikhs, particularly among those who do not know what really was going on within the Golden Temple complex. The misuse of this holiest of the Sikh shrines is a shock, an incredible shock, for a common Sikh and he would like to believe that all that is said is not true. He, therefore, catches at a straw which would give him this comfortable assurance. Nothing should be done, particularly, by the official media, which would give an opportunity to interpret elements to take advantage of the state of mind to create doubts even about facts and truth. Attempts continued to be made to deflect the Sikh sentiments towards a confrontationist course. Let us recognise the fact that the common Sikh today is distressed. Not every expression of his anguish need be condemned as communal nor should every manifestation of sorrow and anxiety misinterpreted as sympathy for the terrorists. His sentiments need to be judged with *understanding* and not arrogance.

Similarly, in view of the pent-up tensions and anger at the murder of innocent men and women in Punjab, some outbursts amongst the Hindus at the end of the army operations was not entirely unexpected. There is bound to be a sense of relief that the terrorists, who had held the state to ransom, have been liquidated. The problems that arise from such reactions cannot be dealt with only administratively. They have to be tackled at a political, popular level. Every Hindu must realise that any act of unfairness or aggressiveness towards innocent Sikhs serves precisely the purpose of those communal fanatics whom the army has tried to eliminate.

The grave challenges we face today are not merely problems of law and order. These involve the masses at large and relate to their passions and prejudices. In essence, these are problems arising from the communalisation of social and political life of our country. The fact that even some secular persons are forced to demarcate the Indian people as Hindus or Sikhs and appeal to them in these categories is a proof of the extent to which the rot has set in. It is necessary to stem it by curbing the tendencies which threaten to undermine the making of a unified Indian nation and sublimating primitive sentiments which come to the fore during emotional turmoils.

There are some who condone acts of communal vengeance by laying the blame at the door of Punjab terrorists. There are others

who treat these acts lightly and dismiss the disturbing phenomenon as an aberration which should be ignored. There is no dearth of people who find in communal backlash an opportunity to reap political dividends and there are others who rationalise communal behaviour by taking recourse to fraudulent sociological analysis. All of them by their action and acquiescence, contribute to the weakening of the Indian nation and undermine its secular fabric.

If communalism is an instrument of neoimperialism, the monster is likely to appear with many faces. It will not give up easily its designs to destroy the unity and integrity of the Indian nation. Those who are unable to appreciate this basic fact of our times and are soft to one face of communalism or the other are either naive or dangerous accomplices in the sinister design to break this country into pieces.

The army action in Punjab has given us an opportunity to reestablish the primacy of secularism and to assert the supreme importance we attach to the integrity of this country. Let it not be said that we wasted that opportunity by shortsightedness or inaction.

3. A Visit to the Golden Temple

It is a moving, stunning experience. Conflicting emotions tear your heart apart. A visit to the Golden Temple on Thursday the 14 June, 1984 left me dazed. Truth appeared too shattering to be believed.

*** *** *** ***

I enter the Harmandir Sahib; its golden dome shinning in bright sunlight. Four *granthis* are chanting *Gurbani*. The sadness in their voice touches your heart, their recitation soothes you. Behind them are a few *jawans* of the Indian army on duty to protect them from any harm at the hands of terrorists. True, the terrorists have been flushed out of the complex. But a thick pall of fear hangs in the air. The havoc they wrecked in this holy place is too recent to be forgotten so soon. The sound of machine guns, mortars, sten-guns, rocket launchers and hand grenades still echo in the heart of those who witnessed those traumatic scenes.

I take a round and stand at the door on the backside. Beyond the passage which takes you from the Harmandir Sahib to the Akal Takht, across the holy Sarovar, is a courtyard paved with marble. Some *jawans* are washing the floor. Suddenly a shattering scene begins to float before my eyes.

*** *** *** ***

June 6; 4 a.m. A small group of army commandos have managed to reach near the Akal Takht. They are facing intermittent fire from the building, from the roof and from the second floor. Machine-guns are showering death from two windows on the first floor. There are two four-storey buildings in the vicinity, outside the complex. Terrorists have taken-up positions on

their roofs and are hurling grenades. Attempts by the army to throw non-lethal gas into the Akal Takht building have failed. About 100 canisters have been lobbed with no effect because the windows are sealed with brick-fortification where deadly weapons have been placed. The commandos cannot retreat. Bullets are flying from every window, from buildings on all sides. They cannot move towards the Harmandir Sahib because terrorists have taken-up position there and are firing at the troops. One by one the jawans fall. The company commander counts: seventeen of his men are dead: 40 others are injured. He sends an SOS to his superiors. The only way out is to engage the terrorists in the Harmandir Sahib who are, perhaps, fewer in number and return their fire. But his commanders — General K. S. Barar, who is in a nearby building, General R. S. Dayal and General K. Sundarji, only 50 metres away from the scene of action — say no. Under no circumstances — repeat under no circumstances — a single bullet is to be fired in the direction of the Harmandir Sahib. The *jawans* continue to fall. The firing continues unabated. The officers get worried. The night is coming to a close. If they do not complete the operation before morning the situation will become precarious. They order firing of a rocket above the Akal Takht. It has no effect. The terrorists continue their attack. An armed personnel carrier is moved in to enable the commandos to forge ahead under the cover of its blinding lights. The terrorists fire an anti-tank weapon and put it out of action. Another tank is brought in. The troops move into the Akal Takht. There is heavy firing by the dogged terrorists from the staircase, from the windows, from the rooms. The heaviest machine-guns fire comes from the basement. Suddenly, a blaze is seen in the Akal Takht. Some ammunition has caught fire. Terrorists are seen running here and there, taking new positions. But now the commandos, after a heavy toll, have an edge. They move forward. A pitched battle follows. The troops suffer heavy casualties: 20 dead and 60 wounded. And then there is silence. The silence of death.

Later, Bhindranwale's body is discovered on the first floor with a mortal wound on his right temple, an empty holster tied to his body and a mauser gun nearby. Amrik Singh's body is also there. The body of Shahbeg Singh, the cashiered army general

who directed and master-minded the terrorists' action is found with a walkie-talkie in his hands in the basement. Perhaps he was wounded and moved there for safety and to escape.

I enter the Akal Takht and go to the first floor. The room is strewn with cases of used ammunition. The foundation of the building is intact. The top of the front portion, specially the roof, has been damaged. A portion of the dome is blown. The other portion is hanging precariously. The inside of the Kotha Sahib is intact, where *Guru Granth Sahib* is brought every night from the Harmandir Sahib. The historical relics that decorate the room have been saved. But the damage to the building is substantial. It will take time to repair it.

And from there I see *Darshani Deorhi* which bears marks of firing. I look at the Harmandir Sahib. An army officer, by my side prays "Thank God; Harmandir Sahib stands there intact, in all its serenity. But we had to make heavy sacrifices to save it".

I also pay my silent homage to those who, even in the face of certain death, did not return the fire from the Golden Temple. They were officers and *jawans* belonging to all faiths — Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. Among them was Lt Col Issrar Khan. He not only rallied his battalion despite heavy machine-gun fire from the terrorists, who would often come from the manholes and lob grenade on the troops, but also gave them courage not to fire towards the Harmandir Sahib. They were from all parts of India. They respected the sentiments of their brothers and sisters who rever the Harmandir Sahib and gave their lives to save it from damage. The army suffered heavy casualties — 84 dead and 262 wounded. Of these 40 are officers and JCOs, a ratio of 1:9 — an exceptionally high ratio.

Fortifications are visible on almost all buildings in the complex. Every opening is a firing position, every roof has bunkers and sandbags. There are factories for manufacturing weapons and ammunitions. All this comes as a shock and surprise.

Evidence is overwhelming that the terrorists were preparing for a battle for a long time. They had imported weapons, AK-47 gun of Chinese make capable of firing up to 500 metres on a still object and 300 metres on a moving one. There are rocket-propelled grenade launchers and another gun of Chinese make

which could fire 700 rounds a minute. All this could not have been secured in a day. All the fortifications could not have been built overnight. At least seven to eight months' preparation was necessary, if not more. "Intelligence was inadequate", General Sundarji says. It is an understatement of the year. The intelligence machinery was virtually non-existent.

Our bus wades through the roads and lanes of the walled city of Amritsar. Shops are open. But there are few buyers. People are moving in rickshaws and on cycles. Small groups — Hindus and Sikhs — are talking to each other, looking at us. On the surface life is normal. But under surface you could discern a sense of loss. As if things are not what they used to be. When will life really return to normal? No one can say.

The dance of terror and death in the place of worship and brotherhood is over, hopefully. But a monumental task has now begun. Is truth so explosive that it should not be revealed to those who are concerned? What will happen if the devotees come and see what happened to the Golden Temple complex? Will they only be shocked at the sight of the damaged Akal Takht? Will they not be relieved that the Harmandir Sahib is intact, unscathed and to ensure this many of their own sons and brothers laid their lives? Will they be disturbed only at the entry of the army in the complex? Will they not also be angry that a bunch of terrorists violated its sanctity by using it for their violent, criminal murderous activities, by converting it into a fortress and a battle ground? But if truth is not told, rumours and falsehood will prevail. When emotions are stirred, people tend to image the worst. What should we do?

How deep are the wounds? How severe the damage to truth and credibility? Unless we know this, unless we feel this, how will we heal the wounds? How will we restore faith and truth? This is the challenge we face as a nation and this is no ordinary challenge. Even an agnostic felt like praying. Let us all rise to the occasion!

4. 'Operation Blue Star'

Major General Kuldip Singh Brar was given the difficult assignment — 'Operation Blue Star' — to flush out the terrorists from the Golden Temple with a categorical instruction to cause no damage to Harmandir Sahib. The operation was conducted under the overall command of GOC-in-C, Western Command, Lieutenant General K Sunderji, with whom were Lieutenant General Ranjit Singh Dayal, Chief of Staff of Western Command and Major General Kuldip Singh Brar, who was the spot-in-charge of the operation. There were half-a-dozen other brigade commanders and officers of the first Commando Battalion of the Western Command. Following is the reproduction of excerpts from the brief by Major General Brar to the journalists who visited the Golden Temple on June 14, 1984 to see for themselves how terrorists operated from within its complex and outside and how the army performed its task of flushing them out.

*** *** *** ***

I was asked to flush out the extremists from the Golden Temple with instructions to cause no damage to Harmandir Sahib and to avoid as much as possible any damage to Akal Takht. I was to use minimum force for achieving this objective to avoid bloodshed. I was also to try and prevent internecine fighting between the Bhindranwale and the Longowal followers. This was the broad mission assigned to me.

The very ideas of forcibly entering the Golden Temple shocked me. Therefore, I thought: Was there any other means to enter the Golden Temple? Two ideas struck me. The first was: Would it be possible to lay siege around the Golden Temple complex and compel the terrorists to come out by starving them?

From the military point it was impossible. Because no amount of troops could have cordoned off the whole complex which is very closely built and has passages underneath. Besides, the buildings around the complex were also in the firm control of extremists. Therefore, the effective sealing off the Golden Temple was doubtful.

Secondly, there was a huge amount of foodgrain stock and war-like arms and ammunitions inside the complex. Then, there was the Sarovar which could have provided water to the extremists. Therefore, idea of starving them and forcing them out too was almost impossible. We also knew that they had plans to incite people to come to the Golden Temple to help and support them. This would have prevented any effective action to flush the terrorists out. Therefore, with great sadness in my heart I came to the conclusion that there was no other way but to enter into the Golden Temple.

The first condition that we lay down for ourselves was that we would cause no damage to the Harmandir Sahib at any cost. I warned my troops that even under extreme provocations from the terrorists, the troops would not fire towards the Harmandir Sahib. But there was every danger from the extremists. Those who were using the Golden Temple for murders and robberies, could have done anything. When they could use the Akal Takht for such purposes, they would even not desist from damaging the Harmandir Sahib, I thought. I felt that it could not be ruled out. Therefore, I requested my corps commander to take devout soldiers for the task. We had planned to swim to reach the corners of Harmandir Sahib.

Our next important task was to reach the Akal Takht. The terrorists had put up sandbag defences at every terrace. Therefore, any plan to clear the extremists out of the Akal Takht without causing any damage to it was almost impossible. Nevertheless, I requested the corps commander that he should see that the troops in the initial stage forbid even rifle or automatic firing. Secondly, I suggested him to use tank search lights which are so powerful that it leave a man almost blind. I also suggested to use non-lethal police gas and about 100 canisters of the gas with 200 gas masks were made available to the troops. The intention was to go in the Akal Takht area using the non-lethal gas to incapacitate the extremists. We had also planned

to enter the Akal Takht using only stungrenades, which are nothing but fire crackers that produce a blast. We had planned to use stungrenade because it would have caused no structural damage to the Akal Takht.

I had also planned to send a party of fire extinguishers just behind the stungrenade party in order to extinguish any fire the stungrenade might cause to the Akal Takht area.

The operation began on 5 June evening. First, some of the stalls, which were overlooking the main temple entrance, had to be eliminated in a parallel operation. It was done slowly on the 5th evening. That very evening I had to launch a parallel operation to secure the Hotel Temple View and to secure the Akhara view. I also had to remove the top portion of both observation towers and the top portion of the water tank because these were very heavily fortified with machineguns and they would not have permitted any movement of my troops even if we had approached the areas from which we were to launch.

As far as the other buildings under extremist occupation were concerned, I decided to leave them alone. I did not have the resources to deal with them but I did have to put up cordon all along the Golden Temple complex with an infantry battalion and equipment from paramilitary forces. The idea of cordon was to prevent any extremists from getting away from the Golden Temple complex in small bits because it was possible for some of them to step out of the building.

As far as fortification was concerned, the roof tops, the first floor, the second floor, the ground floor, and all parts and buildings of the temple complex were heavily fortified. They had bunkers, they had fire trenches and they had converted all doors and windows into fixed defences. I realised that even the approach to the Golden Temple complex would mean heavy casualties. In fact, the temple was fortified into an impregnable bastion.

In addition to fortification in three tiers — the top, middle and the bottom — the extremists had also defences in the basement. From the basement the extremists emerged from the manholes. They go round to cover verandah through these manholes, open fire at my troops, went back to these manholes and re-emerged into a room some 50 metres away to get into ac-

tion again. They also used staircases leading from the ground floor and the top floor and fired on our position. They even used the main staircase of the main entrance. To reach the Parikrama one had to climb some steps and in this part were concealed fire positions on either side of the staircase. Even before the operation really got on the way, I saw several casualties on the staircase without realising who was firing at us.

The Akal Takht, as brought out earlier, is offset. But eventually it was discovered that it had a machinegun bunker at ground level. Troop movement from any direction came under very heavy fire from the Akal Takht.

As we tried to enter the Harmandir Sahib complex the extremists fired at us from all openings coming out of the Harmandir Sahib. We had kept our force in reserve on the southern side. I had isolated the area on the eastern side and I had taken only one infantry battalion for this entire complex because basically this was the complex which houses pilgrims and innocent people. But in this part also there were militants.

The Babar Khalsa men, who were very well-equipped, were in this area. By isolating this area from the main complex we were able to achieve the aim and at the same time by the use of minimum force, with just one infantry battalion we were able to secure this area with minimum damage and loss to extremists lives.

Longowal and Tohra when surrounded gave themselves up. They did not put up any fight. But the extremists, who were in this area and had lodged themselves on the top of the building, did fight with our troops. They fired on us from all directions. We suffered heavy casualties in this area. But eventually when they found they were outnumbered, they gave in.

However, in the main temple complex we received pitched battle. Our progress towards the Akal Takht was extremely slow. My commandos, who were to lead the infantry and to reach the Akal Takht at the earliest, started suffering heavy casualties. The battalion which was earmarked from both sides of the main entrance suffered very heavily. Twenty troops died and 60 were injured in between the right gate of the main entrance and the left gate of the main entrance. I realised that it was difficult for this battalion to progress operations any fur-

ther. A part of the terrorists was on the ground floor level and unless they were forced to go to the first floor or to the roof top, it was difficult to bring the situation under control. Besides, until the extremists would remain on the ground floor, we would suffer heavy casualties.

In spite of heavy odds against them, my commandos had to take control of this area. I must give credit to the battalion commander, a very dashing soldier, Lt Col Issrar Khan who rallied his strength together and worked his way out. As commandos reached the entrance area of the Akal Takht, the terrorists hiding in manholes started suffering casualties. Now the extremists from the top started lobbing grenades on troops. The grenades they used were deadly, and inflicted heavy casualties on us. However, the commando battalion did succeed in getting into this particular area.

Now the commando task was to work their way towards the Akal Takht. When they attempted to move further, they came under extremely heavy fire and opposition from the extremists. Consequently, they were not able to make much headway. The commandos had the toughest deal heading for the Akal Takht and they had to get into the scaling ground at the earliest. In this scaling ground they suffered very heavy casualties. But they had to move on. There was no way out to retreat. There was no way of getting back. I asked them to either take a lodgement on top and press on towards the Akal Takht. I was coming at this stage from across on the southern side. So I was coming from the Harmandir Sahib side and fire was coming from the Akal Takht direction. Now my officers were asking for permission to return fire. Returning fire would have meant taking Harmandir Sahib in the line of fire. Therefore, a very difficult order had to be given to them that they will not return fire on anything which will endanger Harmandir Sahib. A very tall order which my troops cared to endure. Similarly, when the commandos and the troops came under heavy fire from the Akal Takht, I once again received a request that we would now have to fire towards Harmandir Sahib. Once again they were told not to do this at any cost. At this stage, the two companies (half a battalion) which were already engaged in the battle were joined by the other two companies. These two companies were kept in reserve. The two were under the command of Brigadier Dewan,

a Vir Chakra decorated officer. He was given the task to somehow link up with the commandos who were already suffering heavy casualties. I must say he did a splendid job. The reinforcement eased pressure on the commandos and as a collective measure the troops managed to close into the Akal Takht.

Now came the situation when the extremists became desperate and started extremely heavy firing from every side. The forces, trying to close into Akal Takht, were engulfed in the firing. Obviously, troops suffered very heavy casualties at this stage. Now I had no other alternative but to move armoured carrier, known as Scot which moves on wheels, hoping that it would have psychological effect on the extremists. I had thought once the extremists would see it, they would give up the pitched battle. On the contrary, the armed personnel carrier was knocked out of action by anti-tank weapons fired by the extremists from the Akal Takht. I realised that the Akal Takht was not only fortified with machineguns, rifles and all sorts of other weapons, but also with anti-tank weapons. Now a tank was brought to scare the terrorists. Even this failed to have any effect on them. The terrorists continued to fire on us.

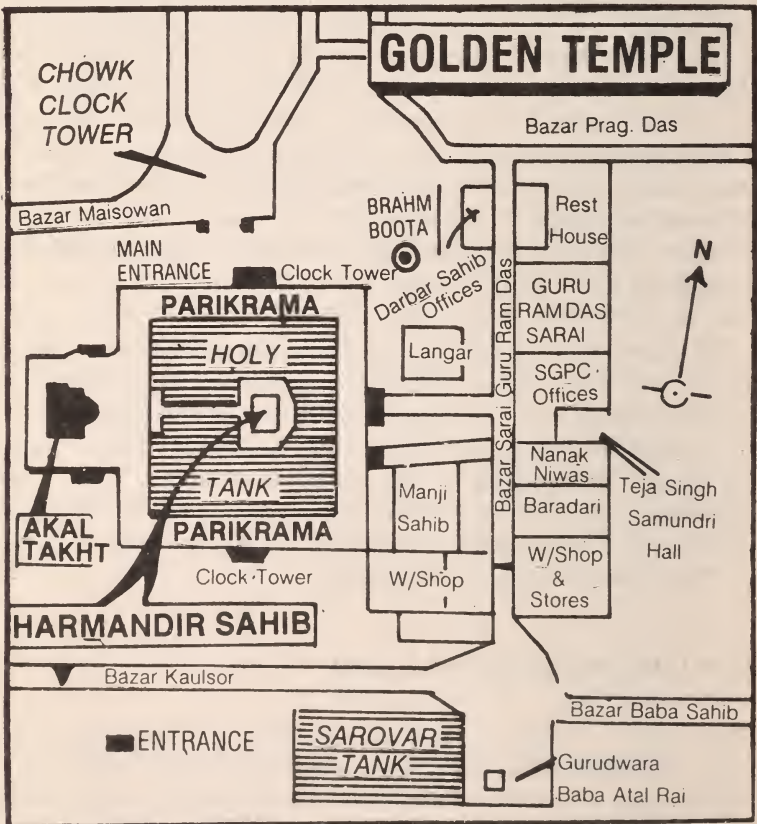
However, around 4.30 a.m. on 6 June, 30 soldiers managed to get into the Akal Takht. The battle continued for another two hours and the extremists fought to the last man. Ultimately, the firing stopped. When we reached the basement of Akal Takht we found the bodies of Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh and Shahbeg Singh. Bhindranwale was earlier on the second floor of the Akal Takht. He first came down to the first floor and then to the basement where he was died.

The Golden Temple Layout

The Golden Temple is a huge complex. At its north is the Jalianwala Bagh of historical fame. Then close to the Golden Temple complex is the Hotel Temple View and Akhara, two observation towers, a number of buildings, a very high water tank, Guru Ram Das Sarai, the SGPC office, Guru Nanak Niwas, a workshop, Baba Akal Gurdwara, Manji Sahib, the Akal Takht, the Nisan Sahib, the Holy Sarover, the Toshakhana gate from where there

is a pathway going up to Harmandir Sahib, the Parikrama all around the Sarovar, the main entrance in the north and similar gate on the south.

Besides, there are a large number of houses with small winding lanes like Chandni Chowk in Delhi all around the Golden Temple. The area is very congested. There are even three-storey buildings in the area. Some of the houses outside the Golden Temple were also occupied by the extremist to watch any movement against themselves.



Layout of the Golden Temple

The Hotel Temple View, which was occupied by the terrorists, had become a good observation post for the extremists. From this point they used to watch the main entry of the complex. From the two observation towers, approximately 80 ft high, the extremists were able to observe the whole area around and were able to fire accurately. The langar is a three-storey building and its every floor—the ground floor, the first floor and the top floor—were heavily fortified. The Guru Ram Das Sarai building—a three storey building having about 80 to 90 rooms generally housing pilgrims but now full of extremists—had holes to fire on the army.

The SGPC office is also a three or four storey high building. Harchand Singh Longowal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra were putting up in this building. The Guru Nanak Niwas has over a hundred rooms in which a number of pilgrims were living. But then the building was under the extremists control. Baba Atal Gurdwara, not really located in this complex but dominating the complex, was also fortified. Manji Sahib, an open hall with a roof is basically a place where people gather to be listen sermons. Its roof was also fortified. Three sides of the complex, that is the northern, the western and the southern sides, were also fortified.

The western side basically separates the main hall in Temple complex. This complex, which besides the Golden Temple consists of other offices, workshops, ashrams, dharam sabha, langars, etc. A gate also leads to the Golden Temple complex from this side. All the gates have very prominent domes and were heavily fortified. The Parikarma, approximately 40 feet wide, is the area where the people visiting the Golden Temple walk around to pay their homage. Then is the Sarovar, which is 20 to 30 feet deep with continuously flowing water inlet as well as an outlet. Water is drained out only after a long period of 30 to 40 years.

The Akal Takht has a basement down below the ground floor, besides the first floor, the second floor and the roof. This was the main seat of militant groups of General Maley, Amrik Singh, General Shahbeg Singh and all their lieutenants. This is the place where the headquarters of the militants was actually located. Besides the Akal Takht is offset. It is not in line with, other buildings. It is offset and there are buildings which ham-

per any approach towards the Akal Takht. Then there are some buildings very closely located behind the Akal Takht which were also occupied by the terrorists. These buildings are so close to the Akal Takht that it is possible for some one to use a ladder to reach the Akal Takht building from these areas.

The gate, where the Toshakhana is, also had fortifications. On top of it, is a part of the Akal Takht which we call Kotha Sahib. Kotha Sahib is a very sacred place inside the Akal Takht where the *Guru Granth Sahib* is kept every evening. In the morning it is brought back to Harmandir Saheb.

This is the layout of the entire Golden Temple complex where army had to operate. Indeed, it was a difficult task.

Part II

The Genesis of Punjab Crisis

V.D. CHOPRA

5. Early History of Sikhism

The recent developments in Punjab have brought into sharp focus the interaction of religion on politics and vice versa. This unholy alliance is of course related directly to the centuries-old colonial heritage in all facets of life, particularly so in the realm of ideology. This is also closely related to the social reality which is extremely complicated and many-sided.

Like any other religion, the Sikh religion had supplied and continues to supply some deeply felt need of human nature. Religion had given a set of values to human life, and though some of these values have hardly any relevance today, or are even harmful, others furnished the foundation of morality.¹ Nonetheless, one thing is certain that religion always merges into mysticism and metaphysics. There have been great mystics, tall spiritual figures who cannot be simply disposed of as self-deluded persons. It has also to be admitted that metaphysics and philosophy, or a metaphysical philosophy of life, deeply appeal to mind, particularly to an irrational mind. Apart from this, in countries which are still in a transitional stage and have yet to build a fullfledged entity of a modern nation-state, emphasis on the "inward life" over external things predominates, inevitably resulting in overriding preoccupation with metaphysics and philosophy. Thus a philosophy of life embedded in religion becomes an article of faith for a vast mass of people. There is, however, the other side of the coin also.

The changes that have taken place in our socio-economic system during all these years have shaken the very fabric of In-

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, London, 1956. p. 12.

dian society and may even supercede it. Conditions of life are fast changing and with that thought process is changing too so much so that it is not possible for politics based on religion to survive for any length of time. Pakistan presents a graphic example of the forces of change sweeping over the land. Pakistan was created on the basis of two-nation theory as a theocratic state. Even after the creation of Bangladesh as an independent, sovereign state, it has not been able to build a stable political structure. The Bluch, the Sindhis and the Pathans are actively struggling for their self-identity, though all of them are Muslims.

The Sikhs in India constitute nearly two per cent of the population (though the rigidly orthodox among them do not consider other sects believing in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus—Nirankaris, Sahjedharis (shaven), Namdharis and the followers of Beas Guru—as genuine Sikhs) but their role in Punjab particularly after independence has attracted considerable attention.

The Sikhs in India today enjoy the constitutional status of a minority community within the framework of a secular state. The Constitution guarantees the linguistic and religious rights of the minorities. Unlike other religious minorities, the Sikhs in India occupy an enviable position in all walks of life — the armed forces, civil services, industry and agriculture. One need not give cold statistics to labour this fact. Punjab, where the Sikhs constitute over 52 per cent of the population, has the highest per capita income and largest area under cultivation through irrigation, nearly 80 per cent to be precise. An attempt, however, has been made, right from the times of British rule, to treat the Sikh minority as a privileged community, enjoying special status and rights. In actual fact, the Sikhs in India are of diverse ethnic origin like all those who inhabited Punjab before 1947.

The founding Gurus of the Sikh religion had themselves perceived a different religious identity for their followers. The Sikh faith came to flourish in the 15th and the 16th centuries. Those days saw a new ferment sweep the land and compel people to re-examine their values and refurbish their faith. India was face to face with a new situation, trying to absorb the foreign elements — the now established presence of

the Muslims; and in that process was herself undergoing a change. Out of this ferment, rose a new set of religious reformers who consciously preached this synthesis and unsparingly condemned the ills which had seized hold of the Hindu religion and society. There was the Hindu saint Ramanand in the south in the fifteenth century, with his more well-known disciple Kabir, a Muslim weaver of Varanasi. Kabir's poems and songs became, and still are, very popular. In the north, Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, held the sway. The influence of these reformers went far beyond the limits of the particular sects that grew around them. Hinduism came under the deep impact of new ideas and new ethical principles. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were not only becoming integrated within themselves but they were also giving birth to a new class structure within the confines of the Indian society as a whole.

The word Sikh is derived from Sanskrit *shishya*, meaning a disciple or learner.² Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion was a revolutionary, religious and social reformer according to whom the political and cultural domination of the people by the ruling classes was chiefly responsible for their degeneration. Their emancipation, he thought, could only be brought about by a new consciousness which would instill into them the unity and fatherhood of God and the equality and fraternity of man. He refused to recognise the distinction between man and man and between the sexes created by the old caste system and other out-moded social conventions and proclaimed that all women were born equal. He felt that the real cause of the misery of the people was their disunity engendered by diversity of faiths and beliefs. Thus in his own way Guru Nanak was arousing people to the changing realities. The fifth Guru Arjan Dev, a worthy heir to Nanak's teachings unpraised the low castes debarred for centuries from receiving religious teachings and religious ministrations. "To the knowledge of the basic creed of religion, all are entitled. Among all the four castes all are free to give utterance to God's holy name", declared Guru Arjan Dev and went on to say:

2. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1983.

3. Dr Ganda Singh, *A Brief Account of the Sikhs*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1977.

“The same religious teaching to all castes,
Be they *Khatris*, *Brahmins*, *Shudras* or
Vaishyas may be imparted.”

In the holy scripture of the Sikhs, the *Granth Sahib*, are included hymns from saints coming from different castes and religions. Among these are Kabir, a weaver, Ravi Das a cobbler, and Namdev, a tailor. These saints have freely given expression to the doctrines of caste equality.⁴

The intolerance practised by the Mughal emperors, especially after Akbar, was mainly responsible for turning the peaceful and peace-loving followers of Guru Nanak into a militant sect. Jehangir, grown suspicious of the spreading influence of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus tortured Guru Arjan to death in 1606 on a charge of treason. His son, Guru Hargobind, though in the employment of Jehangir, had to undergo 12 years' imprisonment in Gwalior. He rebelled against Shah Jehan and defeated the imperial army at Sangrama near Amritsar in 1628. Guru Teg Bahadur, who succeeded Guru Har Kishan, was seized by Aurangzeb and beheaded on flimsy charges.

It was in these historical conditions that the character of Sikhism underwent transformation at the hands of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. It was he who created the *Khalsa*. He initiated five persons into the *Khalsa* who, in turn, initiated him. By this act he terminated the Guruship transferring its sanctity to the Sikh community and their holy book — *Guru Granth Sahib*. From this time onward staunch Sikhs were commanded to observe the five symbols that clearly demarcated them from other religious communities. The five symbols prescribed were: keeping long hair and unshorn beards (*kesh*), carrying a sword (*kirpan*), wearing a knee-length underwear (*kachha*)—a bracelet (*kara*) and having a comb in the hair (*kangha*). It was under his leadership that the first serious blow to undermine the Mughal empire in the north was made.

It is significant in this connection to mention that the Guru considered Hindustan as mentioned in the *Adi Granth* as his homeland. The Guru has nowhere used the word 'Punjab'. He has called *Bengal* as his spiritual homeland as stated in one of

4. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Sikhism and Democracy* — SGPC. Amritsar.

his letters addressed to his followers in Dhaka. The Guru in fact was aware of the distress of the whole country and not merely of the Punjab. Again Aurangzeb's successor Bahadur Shah was on friendly terms with Guru Gobind Singh and wanted Guru's help for the subjugation of the Marathas and the Rajputs. The Guru refused any such help point blank because this was against his deep devotion to his country.

Four of the Guru's 'Panj Piaras' were non-Punjabis by caste and origin.⁵

Guru Gobind Singh's last days were spent in Deccan. He died towards the end of 1708 at Nand Pur on the banks of the Godavari. He left behind a trusted lieutenant Lachman Das who was renamed Banda Singh Bahadur. This valiant soldier fought many a battle for his Guru's cause. In December 1715, he was besieged by the Mughal forces near Gurudaspur and starved into surrender. His wife was forced into the royal harem and he along with his followers was beheaded publicly. For some years, the resistance to the Mughal rulers became weak and disorganised till Maharaja Ranjit Singh emerged as the rallying centre. Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was a Jat Sikh brought the various misls under his control and transformed the warring Sikh states into a compact national monarchy which subsequently extended its sway to Kashmir and the Frontier Province. After Ranjit Singh's death, his achievements began to crumble rapidly. One weak ruler after another was deposed in quick succession, till in 1843, Dalip Singh, a minor, was acknowledged as the king with his mother, Rani Jindan as Regent. The final collapse came as a result of the two Anglo-Sikh wars which followed each other in quick succession and the Punjab was finally annexed by Lord Dalhousie in March 1849.

In May 1857, the Indian army at Meerut revolted. It was much more than a simple military revolt and it spread rapidly and assumed the character of a popular rebellion and a war of independence mainly confined to Delhi, United Provinces and parts of central India and Bihar. This revolt strained British resources to the utmost though it was ultimately suppressed with the help of 'loyal' Indian soldiers. It brought out all the inherent

5. Major Ravi Batra, *Leadership in its Finest Mould — Guru Gobind Singh*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1979.

weaknesses of the feudal chieftains and princes, making desperate effort to drive out the foreign rulers. The feudal chiefs had the sympathy of the masses over large areas but they were divided and unorganised, without any constructive ideal or community of interest, guiding their efforts.

In meeting this armed challenge, the British leaned heavily on the support of the Gurkhas. What is much more shocking is that the Sikh chieftains played an important role in suppressing this war of independence. In return for this service to the British rulers, they were given big *jaigirs* both in Punjab and UP.

This first war of independence opened the eyes of the British rulers and they learnt their lesson for the future. The lieutenant-governor, Sir Michael O'Dyer held that the Punjab occupied the key position in the military situation in India. It was the main "recruiting centre for military men". "With one-thirteenth of India (in area) the Punjab furnished 60 per cent of the army recruited in India". "And the strain had fallen mainly on the country districts, which the local government considered it necessary to protect from any anti-government agitation likely to hamper work of recruitment."

"It was the basic thesis of the British view of the army that soldiers should be non-political and consciously preferred soldiers 'who came from areas not active in Indian political movement'".

And on top of all this, the Punjab as an English writer puts it, is a "pivotal province in the British Indian scheme".

(emphasis added)

"The official view of the Indian scene at any moment between the first war of independence of 1857 and the rise of Gandhiji was that if the Punjab was *tranquil*, there was no need for any serious anxiety as to the standing of the British raj. . . . Government of India held the view that Sikhism was identical with loyalty".

The British strategy in a nutshell was: to keep India slave — keep the Punjab tranquil, backward and safe for British empire in India and outside. The Sikh soldiers were the best bet for the upkeep and expansion of the British empire. Use this army to

suppress any agitation in India, just as it was used to put down the rebellion of 1857. Make it a cat's paw to crush any political movement anywhere in India so that the safety of the British raj is ensured. Whether this redounds to the credit or discredit of the Sikh princes and landlords of those days depends upon how one interprets the event since 1857.

It is clear, all the same, that there was a lack of strong nationalist sentiments which alone could have bound the people of India together. Nationalism of modern type had yet to develop. India had still to go through much sorrow and travail before she learnt the lesson which would give her real freedom.

It seems clear that India fell a prey to foreign conquest because of the inadequacy of her own people and because the British represented a higher and advancing social order. Nevertheless, the three centuries old history of the Sikh religion beginning with Shri Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.) and concluding with Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708) clearly brings out that their names are among the most illustrious in India. Their life and work were closely connected with the epoch of medieval India in its last phase. Full of struggle and sacrifice, their contribution to Indian philosophy and their sustained efforts in bringing about a synthesis among the various religions then prevalent in the country in order to satisfy the inner urges of human nature were indeed remarkable. That their philosophy of life became a potent ideological force explains in part the crusading spirit with which they fought against dogmatic beliefs, for equality of women in the society. Above all, their attempts to secularise the outlook of the people were truly noble. To the religious minded people, they achieved much more than this. They not only laid the foundations of morality and ethics but gave a new direction to spirituality in the then changing conditions. The scope of this survey does not permit to make a full assessment of their contribution to India's spiritual development nor is the intention of the author to undertake this task of such magnitude. But one thing is certain that the entire endeavour of the Sikh gurus was directed to creating a sense of 'oneness' among the people of India.

Viewing the human condition as a whole, the Sikh gurus repeatedly expressed their love for man and admiration for creativity.

Though Guru Nanak himself belonged to a high cast, he said:

'One of a low caste, lowest among the low am I;
With such go I, not with those reckoned great.
Lord, They glance of grace falls upon the realm,
where the lowly are cherished"⁷

And Guru Gobind Singh wrote:

"Know all mankind to be of one cast and group"

At another place he said:

"The Hindu temple and the Muslims' mosques are both holy as houses of worship. So is the worship offered in each. Men appear distinct, but all are made from the same elements. Like sparks flying from a fire, the particles of the dust from a heap or waves of water rising from the river, they appear distinct, but fundamentally are the same".⁸

By the end of the last century, long after Punjab had been annexed by the British rulers, two significant developments had taken place which had a direct bearing on the Sikhs, particularly on the Sikh peasantry.

After the fall of the Sikh kingdom, the peaceful spell which followed produced an attitude of unwariness. Conventional and superstitious rituals, which, forbidden by the gurus, had become acceptable as adjuncts of regal pomp and ceremony during the days of the Sikh power, now gained an increasing hold over the Sikh mind. The true teachings of the gurus which had supplied Sikhism its potent principle of reform and regeneration were obscured by this rising tide of conservatism. The Sikh religion was losing its characteristic vigour and its votaries were relapsing into beliefs and dogmas from which the gurus' teachings had extricated them. Absorption into ceremonial Hinduism seemed the course inevitably set for them.⁹

After 1857, a marked change took place in British policy and the character of the British rule. From this point the British policy shifted its centre of gravity increasingly to winning the support of reaction in India against the masses. The system of annexation of the Indian states into British India was abruptly

7. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Sikhism and Democracy*, SGPC, Amritsar, p. 5.

8. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1983.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

given up. Henceforth the remaining princes were zealously preserved and installed as puppet rulers though declared as 'allied' sovereign rulers. And the Sikh princely rulers of Punjab became the most favourite with their British masters.

The growing impoverishment and desperation of the peasantry consequent on the cumulative process of British capitalist penetration were beginning to assume serious dimensions by the second half of the 19th century. The peasantry of Punjab too was hard hit, particularly the Sikh peasantry in this cruel process. Thus by the last quarter of the 19th century the conditions had started developing for the beginning of the national movement in India and the Sikh masses too were naturally drawn into it. It is in the midst of these changes that two distinct and opposing trends among the Sikhs began to develop — the pro-imperialist and the anti-imperialist. These two trends came again and again in conflict with each other, giving Sikh politics and its institutions a new direction and a new content.

What is most obvious is that prior to British rule, there was no trace of any Hindu-Sikh conflict. Communal strife was thus a special product of British rule, and, in particular, of the last phase of its rule, or of the declining period of imperialism. It has nothing to do with the teachings of the Sikh gurus. This, however, does not mean that certain social forces and some individuals did not or even today do not play the game of their mentors.

6. Patriotic Tradition of Punjab

Punjab's history is replete with some of the shiniest examples of the struggle against tyranny. The strategic situation of the state, the many foreign invasions over centuries and the inherent disposition of its strong, sturdy and brave people have all combined to throw up at various periods of its chequered history some of the finest and noblest specimens of human endurance, grandeur and glory. Punjab's vast plains are covered with the blood of warriors fallen in the righteous cause. It has been the cradle of many a religion at whose altar the faithful have sacrificed themselves smilingly. Its precious soil has been hallowed by the memories of youthful patriots rushing headlong to the gallows and the old stalwarts braving cheerfully the blows of naked British imperialism for the liberation of motherland. It is in this nursery of unbounded heroism that the Punjabi speaking people have been nurtured—people steeled in the furnace of struggle and sacrifice.

The long, relentless struggle of the Sikh gurus against tyranny and bigotry and the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Mati Dass, the four Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh and of Banda Bairagi constitute an awe-inspiring saga of sacrifice. The stirring deeds of the brave sons of Rewari and Gurgoan during the first War of Independence in 1857 and the cannon-blasting of the brave Namdharis in 1872 have all built up the heroic traditions of the Punjabi people.

The failure of the 1857 uprising could not, however, suppress the urge for freedom. In fact, it laid the basis for united struggle throughout the country for ousting the foreign rulers. The Indian National Congress which had had tame beginnings soon

began to voice the growing unrest of the people. The 16th session of the Congress was held at Lahore in 1900 at which resolutions were adopted deploring the exclusion of Indians from the higher echelons of administration.

In the beginning of the century, Punjab was again in ferment. Lala Lajpat Rai came under the spell of the redoubtable Balgangadhar Tilak who declared with rare defiance: "*Swaraj is my Birthright and I will have it.*" He soon threw himself heart and soul into the national struggle. At the Benares session of the Congress (1905), he was one of the towering leaders. Soon, along with another great revolutionary, Ajit Singh, he was deported from the Punjab to the dreaded Andamans. The 24th session of the Congress was held in Lahore in 1909 under the chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Resolutions were passed at the session protesting against the introduction of separate electorate under the 'Minto Morley Reforms' embodied in the India Council Act of 1909. The basis of communal representation was rejected out of hand. And thus began to spread like wild fire in the Punjab agitation against the British rule.

In March 1913, the first steps were taken towards organising a revolutionary movement which later came to be known as the Ghadar Party. Amongst the sponsors were Lala Hardayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bisakha Singh and Jawala Singh. These Punjabis were a group of fiery, educated youngmen living abroad. Within the first six months, the membership of the organisation ran into thousands. It opened branches in Japan, China, Fiji and other parts of the world. In November 1913, the organisation brought out the first issue of its journal, *Ghadar* (Mutiny) in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi with Hardayal as its editor. A few months later, the historic event of "Komagata Maru" took place.

The Canadian government wanted to discourage the migration of Indians who were agitating for the freedom of their motherland. In 1914, Baba Gurdit Singh, a Punjabi patriot, chartered a Japanese steamer, 'The Komagata Maru' which he christened as "*Guru Nanak Jahaz*" for taking Indian families to Canada. Of the 376 passengers all except 30 were Sikhs. The steamer reached Victoria on 21 May, 1914, but no Indian except Gurdit Singh and his secretary were allowed to land. The ship was cordoned off by patrol boats and no local Indians were permit-

ted to meet their fellow countrymen aboard. The passengers ran out of food and water and faced starvation. On the night of the 18 July, 1914, a large contingent of Canadian policemen tried to take possession of the ship but they were beaten back. This show of strength infuriated the Canadian government and a battleship was despatched to deal with the death-defying patriots. The ship was thus forced to sail back. On the 27 September, it reached Calcutta and was piloted to Buz Buz harbour, to disembark the passengers quietly. They were forbidden to proceed to Calcutta and were ordered to board the awaiting trains to take them straight to their villages in the Punjab. The majority refused to obey and instead took out a procession. They were fired upon and 23 persons were killed. Gurdit Singh along with 30 followers overpowered the police party and escaped. He surrendered himself voluntarily only in 1921. Another Japanese steamer 'The Tasu Maru' with 175 Indian passengers on board including the founder-president of the Ghadar movement, Sohan Singh Bhakna, was not allowed to sail. The Ghadar Party called for action and hundreds of immigrants started returning to India. This created resentment throughout the country and the police got busy making arrests. Despite the measures taken by the government, several members of the Ghadar Party in India escaped the police draught and organised an underground movement. Ground had already been prepared for this by the revolutionary activities of Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai. Rash Behari Bose of Bengal and Pingley from Poona joined hands with Bhai Parma Nand, the Punjab leader, in organising a full-fledged resistance. Indian soldiers were contacted and some were persuaded to break into revolt. Arsenals were attacked and lines of communications snapped.

However, the major rising planned for the 21 February 1915, did not materialise. Then followed months of head-hunting in the Punjab. By March 1915, all the men suspected of links with the revolutionaries had been trapped and either shot or imprisoned.

After the First World War, when India was hoping to win some measure of self-governance, it got the notorious Rowlatt Act. The *Satyagraha* movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi against the Act found popular support in the Punjab. He was on his way to Amritsar when he was arrested at Palwal on the 8

April, 1919. His arrest was a signal for demonstrations and hartals against the British authority in the major cities of Punjab. The leaders were arrested, newspapers were suppressed and a reign of terror was unleashed in Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura which were in the thick of struggle. The Rowlatt Act, became a symbol of rulers' tyranny and of the atrocities committed by the police. Sir Michel O'Dyer who was at that time the governor of the Punjab, let loose unabashed terror against the nationalists. On the 10 April, 1919, the commissioner of Lahore division gave over the charge of the administration to Officer-Commanding of the troops. It was suggested that the town of Amritsar should be bombarded. The proposal was, however, dropped because of the Golden Temple, destruction of which might have led to a rebellion among the Sikhs. On the 11 April, the administration of the town was handed over to General Dyer. On the 12 April, the army flag marched through the town and made indiscriminate arrests. Then came the cold-blooded massacre in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar on the 13 April at a public meeting which was being held there. At Gujranwala an aeroplane dropped bombs. Indiscriminate bombing took place at several other places. Martial law was declared in Amritsar and in Lahore on the 15 April and at other places shortly afterwards. Flogging was resorted to mercilessly and General Dyer issued the notorious 'Crawling Order' which compelled anyone wishing to go across a street to crawl on all fours.

In 1928, when the Simon Commission visited the Punjab, it was greeted in the manner it had been treated elsewhere in India with people shouting "Simon Commission, Go Back" and waving black flags. Lala Lajpat Rai was the central figure in the procession that was demonstrating against the commission at Lahore. The procession was brutally lathi-charged and Lala Lajpat Rai fell under the murderous assault made on him by the police. His death heralded violent and determined unrest throughout the country. Saunders, under whose orders the lathi-charge had taken place, was shot dead one evening. The leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of whom Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev were the outstanding leaders were sent to the gallows in 1930 for Saunderson's assassination and several others were given long terms of imprisonment, charged

under "The Lahore Conspiracy Case."

The 44th session of the Congress was held at Lahore on the banks of the Ravi in 1929 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. This was a historic session. Resolutions demanding complete independence for India and sanctioning civil disobedience and no-tax campaign, as instruments for the achieving the goal, were passed in an atmosphere of patriotic fervour. Jawaharlal Nehru declared: "We have now an open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule, and all our countrymen and countrywomen are willing to join it. But the rewards that are in store for you are suffering and prison and may be death.'

At every turn of the national movement, Punjabi-Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims stood in the vanguard. The role of the Punjabis in the Indian National Army organised by Subhas Chandra Bose during World War II is well-known and need not be recapitulated. It must be stressed, all the same, that the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of Punjab had galvanised the national movement into an army of fearless freedom fighters and it was how a matter of time when the rising tide of nationalism would sweat the British rulers off their feet and throw them overboard.

In any assessment of India's freedom struggle, the part played by the peasantry in Punjab, the Sikh peasantry in particular can never be overstated. At the same time, it is revealing to mention that the Sikh leaders of these revolutionary movements had a dual loyalty all along, dedication to the teachings of the Sikh gurus and loyalty to the revolutionary upsurge. Members and sympathisers of the Ghadar Party in America were mostly Sikhs possessing a theological bent of mind. The founder of the *Kirti* magazine, Santokh Singh; quoted out of Marx's *Capital* and recited *Gurbani* in the same breath. The 'mind' fashioned by the wooden plough and the primitive myth had been cast into the world of science and industry. But the thought of the limited nature of their sojourn in America kept feeding their nostalgia, keeping alive the desire to go back to their natural surroundings in their villages. Their political commitment was naturally affected by the new environment because of the nature of their work in America and relatively short period of their stay there. Nonetheless, elements of their subjective world could not be properly sucked in; digested and

thus dissolved by the centres of industrial civilisation.¹ This is an important subjective factor because to some degree even today, it shapes the psyche of the Sikh peasantry.

Still another important element needs to be underscored. For decades this dual loyalty of the Sikh peasantry—loyalty to religious tenets and commitment to radicalism has not only existed but survived in strength. In fact, the ideological line of demarcation between the radical leaders—the Sikh congressmen and the communists and the Akali leaders—has always remained hazy. On the other hand, in the initial stages, most influential Akali leaders such as Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, Darshan Singh Pheruman (who later undertook a fast unto death for merger of Chandigarh with Punjab and died) and Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir who became president of the Congress and was a member of Parliament for a number of years had close links with the Kirti movement. As a matter of fact even the late Master Tara Singh who led the Akali movement and its various agitations for the Punjab Suba wrote for the *Kirti* in the initial stages. There is another aspect of this synthesis between modern radical social thought and the Sikh religion. It may look paradoxical but it is a fact of life that radical political leaders of the left have been taking keen interest in the politics of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) till the fifties.

As early as in mid-twenties the radical revolutionaries participated in the elections of the SGPC and this trend persisted till mid-fifties when the communists contested these elections on the basis of a broad-based platform, called Sadh Sangat Board. In a SGPC meeting in January 1926, Bhag Singh Canadian with his supporters of 50 to 60 members staged a walk out and formed a parallel committee. Bhag Singh Canadian became the president of this committee and Mangal Singh was elected as its general secretary. What is important to note in this connection is that this faction drew its strength primarily from the rural areas. The main support of the other faction was from among the non-Jats and the erstwhile princely areas of Punjab, known as Malwa belt. If on the ideological plane no clear line

1. Bhagwan Josh: *Communist Movement in Punjab*, Delhi, 1979.

of demarcation emerged among the three main anti-imperialist segments of Punjab—the Congress, the Akalis and the leftists including the communists in the consciousness of the people throughout the first four decades of the present century, no organised attempt was made to build an independent party of the lower strata of the peasantry on the basis of economic demands.

This particular aspect needs to be emphasised because after the first War of Independence of 1857, the British colonial rulers were following a well designed policy of keeping Punjab economically backward. The British colonial rulers had decided to make the pauperised peasantry of this state as the main recruiting base for its armed forces, both for the suppression of the national movement and extension of its colonial empire.

There is a myth that Punjab was and still is a land of undifferentiated peasant proprietors. There is also no doubt that after the partition of Punjab in 1947, the rehabilitation policy was pursued in such a manner that as compared to the united Punjab, the concentration of land decreased. However, the stock reality remains that in 1925, 58.3 per cent of the land owners owned less than five acres of land, had average holdings of 2.6 acres and cultivated 12 per cent of the total land. 26.2 per cent of the owners with holdings between 5 to 15 acres owned 26.6 per cent of the land. On the other hand, 3.3 per cent of the landlords with holdings of over 50 acres owned 25.7 per cent of the land, while 7.5 per cent of the owners with holdings of 20 to 50 acres possessed 27.2 per cent of the land. This means that 10.8 per cent of the land owners owned 52.9 per cent of land in the united Punjab. Thus, these landlords constituted the main social base of the colonial rulers.

This feature of land relations should also be seen in the context of the fact that Muslims played a predominant part as leaders of the uprising of 1857-59 as against the role played by the Rajas of Nabha, Jind and Patiala, who guarded the highways of the Punjab.² Muslims, particularly from Bihar, UP and Delhi became suspects in the eyes of the colonial masters. They were prevented from entering government jobs, particularly the

2. *Resurgent Punjab*; Punjab Government publication, 1956, p.9.

army³. Nevertheless over the years, politically backward districts of Punjab—Jhelum, Campbellpur, Sargodha, Rawalpindi etc became the main recruiting centres alongwith some districts in east Punjab in general and the princely states now mainly located in what is called the Malwa belt, in particular.

What emerges from this analysis is that the organised peasant movement remained confined only to left nationalist political demands and did not raise the question of land reforms till 1947. This is the harsh reality of peasant movement and its leadership. The foremost, universal and the most consistent demand of the peasant struggle in the entire pre-independence period was mostly for the reduction of land revenue and *abiana*—water rates. The only exceptions to this were the Nilibar, Montgomery and Multan movements organised to defend the interests of the tenants for reduction of rent, a minimum share of 50 per cent of the produce and anti-ejection. These struggles threw up new leaders like Ataulah Jehania and Wadhawa Ram. All the same, the social thrust of the peasant movement in Punjab was directed towards three basic directions. The mobilisation of the rural people in the various agitations, public meetings, conferences and *jathas* was largely limited to the small Sikh Jat peasant—proprietors of central Punjab. Firstly, the peasant movement was confined on the whole to the small peasant-proprietors or petty land owners. Secondly, it was largely limited to the Sikh peasants; the participation of the Muslim peasants and Hindu peasants remained only marginal. Thirdly, it was concentrated in the districts of the Central Punjab: Lahore, Amritsar, Jullundur and Ferozepur, and to a certain extent Ludhiana and Hoshiarpur and Lyallpur canal colonies.⁴

There is yet another aspect of this situation. The problem of rural indebtedness in Punjab was as acute as elsewhere in the country. In 1921, the total agricultural debt in Punjab amounted to Rs 90 crore. In 1929, the Punjab Banking Enquiry Committee came to the conclusion that the total debt of the province was

3. K K Aziz, *Britain and Muslim India*, London 1963, p. 27.

4. Bhagwan Singh Josh, Maridula Mukherjee and Bipan Chandra — *The Peasant Movement in Punjab Before 1947*. Unpublished monograph.

no less than Rs 135 crore. This meant an increase of full 50 per cent on the total debt in 1921. This debt swelled to Rs 200 crore. This meant that there was an annual recurring burden of Rs 36 crore on the agricultural population as against the average annual land revenue of some Rs 4 crore.⁵

Against this growing rural indebtedness, there was no organised movement at any stage. As a matter of fact, when the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934 and the Punjab Debtor's Protection Act of 1936 were passed by the pro-landlord Unionist ministry, the urban Congress leaders who controlled the *Punjab Beopar Mandal* opposed these measures and organised state wide agitation. This alienated the entire peasantry from the Congress and other secular forces in the state. In political terms it widened the gulf between the Hindu traders and money-lenders and the peasantry. This in turn consolidated the hold of the landlords over the lower strata of the land viewing class.

All these factors led to a situation in which the Muslim peasantry of West Punjab came under the influence of Muslim communalism and peasantry of south-eastern Punjab, which now constitutes Haryana, was dominated by the Hindu Jats. The hold of Akali communalism over the Sikh peasantry also increased. It is this colonial heritage which we carried forward in the post-independence period, a heritage which arose from the failure to forge political, economic and ideological struggle against communalism and parochialism.

5. Sir Chootu Ram as quoted by Madan Gopal in his book *A Political Biography*, Delhi 1977; Pp. 167-168.

7. The Gurdwaras and Akalis

The Punjab, especially the central districts of the erstwhile united Punjab, are hallowed ground for the Sikh community because every inch of this land is associated with some important event or another in the lives of the gurus or other great martyrs of the community. The whole movement of Sikhism turns round what may be called the 'Gurdwara-cum-Sacred Book' axle. To a large number of devotees of the Sikh religion the 'Gurdwara' is more than a mere place of worship and the 'Granth Sahib' much more than a book of spiritual guidance. Both are interwoven with the social and spiritual life of the people and growth of the Sikh religion over the centuries. To the Sikhs, *Guru Granth Sahib* represents the body and soul of the lives and teachings of the gurus while the *gurdwaras* are not only the embodiment of the struggles of the Sikhs but they are also integrated with day-to-day social life and religion of the entire community.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the *mahants* of the *gurdwaras* had become negligent in their duties to a large extent. However, after the annexation of the Punjab by the British rulers, the *mahants* and *sadhus*, in charge of the various *gurdwaras*, began to flout the guidance of the Sikh *sangat* and became hereditary masters of the sacred shrines. Gradually even the essence of Sikhism stood diluted and wearing of the beard and the turban remained the only distinctive marks of the keepers of the religious seats. The *gurdwaras* became dens of corruptions and vices which follow in the wake of unaccounted for unearned wealth.¹ The *mahants* assumed an ar-

1. Ruchi Ram Sahni; *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines* (edited by Dr Ganda Singh); Sikh Ithas Research Board, p 6.

rogant attitude towards the disorganised and powerless sangats and began to look upon the shrines as their personal property. Idol worship was not only tolerated but encouraged in some shrines to turn them into additional sources of income from the orthodox Hindus. Even the most important gurdwaras were not free from corruption and debauchery in direct defiance of the principles preached by the Sikh Gospel.²

During this period, two other significant developments took place.

When canal-irrigation was introduced in the Punjab, the incomes of the gurdwaras from land increased enormously. The office of the priest became one of great prestige and power. Some of the priests openly revolted against Guru Gobind Singh's tradition of democratic control. They denied Sikhism and asserted that the gurdwaras were Udasi places of worship. Hindu idols were placed in several gurdwaras along with the *Granth Sahib*. Anger mounted among the devotees of the Sikh religion. The British, using the plea that peace was threatened, assumed control of the four most important shrines of Amritsar, Anandpur, Patna and Nander (in Hyderabad). In the others, numbering 260, the mahants continued to be in power.

At many places, members of the sangats tried to gain control of the gurdwara by filing suits against the mahants who being rich and resourceful were able to delay justice through prolonged legal proceedings and confound those who dared question their rights. In 1914, the agitation for control of the gurdwaras took the shape of an anti-government movement. The government, busy in extending its new capital had acquired portions of the land of Rakabganj Gurdwara in New Delhi. When it started pulling down the walls of the gurdwara itself, there was a great commotion among the Sikhs. But for the outbreak of the First World War, the agitation would have certainly turned violent and unmanageable.

After the war, the agitation was resumed all over the Punjab. A body called the Sikhs League was formed in 1920 and a Gurmukhi paper called the *Akali* was started.

The Congress lent full support to this movement. At a meet-

2. *Ibid*, pp. 9-10

ing in October 1920, which was attended by Mahatma Gandhi, a resolution was passed by the Sikh League to non-cooperate with the government. Though the Rakabgunj dispute was settled peacefully, the Sikhs all over India began occupying gurdwaras on their own. Some of the *mahants* agreed to democratic control and Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) was formed to administer these shrines. But in 1921, the government sensing that these important institutions were passing under the control of the nationalists, encouraged the *mahants* to resist the forcible occupation of the gurdwaras. In Tarn Taran, a group of Sikh leaders who had gone to discuss the handing over of the gurdwara to the SGPC was assaulted. Two of them were killed and 17 injured. Immediately following this, occurred the massacre of 130 worshippers at the hands of the *mahant* of Nankana Sahib (birth place of Guru Nanak). The government tried to protect the *mahant*, but public opinion became militant. Gandhiji visited the shrine and the government retreated by handing over the gurdwara to a committee of seven. In 1921, the British authorities tried to gain control of the Golden Temple by seizing the keys. This again was foiled by determined public resistance. It was during this agitation to prevent the nominee of the government from entering the Golden Temple that Master Tara Singh came into prominence for the first time. He was one of the three leaders who were arrested.

Towards the end of the last century, the British rulers tried to manage the affairs of Sikh religious shrines directly by appointing managers of the gurdwaras and arbitrating in disputes by fixing the share of the *mahants*. Subsequently, even when they modified their policy, the control of the chief shrines of the Sikhs such as the Golden Temple, the Akal Takht, Tarn Taran Sahib, Baba Atal continued to remain in the hands of the government. Most other sacred places of the Sikhs with incomes of lakhs of rupees remained in the possession of *mahants* who always acted as stooges of the British authorities. Some *mahants* had been made honorary magistrates, *darbaris*, title-holders, nominated members of municipalities and notified areas. Most of them being unmarried and having large revenues at their disposal, without any accountability to public, naturally squandered their wealth in unworthy pursuits and activities.

Over a long time, the practice in keeping with the teachings

of the Sikh gurus was that people from the scheduled castes, the *harijans*, were freely allowed entry in the Sikh religious shrines including the Golden Temple and to offer prayers there. Later, this privilege was gradually withdrawn or curtailed. The *mahants* had now fixed certain hours when this poorest strata of the population could go to the Sikh religious shrines. But even during these hours, the *Karah Parshad* offered to Guru Granth Sahib was not accepted if it had been touched by them. They had, therefore, to engage the services of a man of a higher caste to carry it into the temple.

The Akalis were determined to see that the sanctity of the Sikh shrines was restored and its affairs were conducted by the *sangat* — the congregation in time with the original teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. With this began the struggle for the liberation of the *gurdwaras*.

The year 1919 saw a wave of mass unrest throughout India and Punjab was no exception to it. The movement assumed the undeniable character of an organised revolt against the British Raj.³ What shocked the British rulers most, was extraordinary scenes of fraternisation among the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. It was in this situation that the Congress at Nagpur in December, 1920 declared that the attainment of *Swaraj* was its new objective. This decision gave a new direction to the national movement and had tremendous impact on the masses in Punjab, particularly the Sikh masses. However, the growing national consciousness among the Sikhs found its immediate expression in their peaceful struggle for the democratisation of the management of the *gurdwaras*. "*Just as the rising sun awakens the people from sleep, in a like manner preparations for Swaraj have raised the Sikhs from their slumber. That is why they have demanded religious freedom as the first step towards the attainment of their objective*" (emphasis added), declared Jathedar Bhai Karter Singh at Nankana Sahib when Gandhiji, Maulana Shaukat Ali and Dr S. D. Kitchlew visited that shrine consequent upon the mass killing of the Sikhs by the *mahant* and his goons. The struggle for the liberation of *gurdwaras* from the clutches of the stooges of British imperialism now merged

3. Sir Valentine Chirol, *India*, 1926, p. 207.

with the struggle for 'liberation of the bigger Gurdwara, that is, India'.

There was hardly any outstanding congress leader who did not visit Punjab those days to give moral and material support to the Akalis in their peaceful struggle for democratic control of the gurdwaras.

The Akali movement of the early twenties was essentially anti-imperialist in character, though its form was obviously religious. That This movement evoked keen interest in Gandhiji further confirms this conclusion because he too was trying to build a national movement by bringing about some sort of synthesis among the various religions. Nonetheless, what is important to note in this connection is that next to the Sikh feudal aristocracy, the closest allies of British rulers were the Sikh religious preachers and the mahants of the gurdwaras. As has been mentioned earlier, if the British rulers gave *jaigirs* to Sikh landlords, they allowed the priests of some of the historical gurdwaras such as of Amritsar, Anandpur and Tarn Taran to retain a large portion of their endowments.⁴

The sociological survey of the Gurdwara Reform Movement reveals that it was confined mainly to the middle and lower strata of the rural Sikh peasantry and the Sikh intelligentsia.⁵ It is also noteworthy that Jat landowners were most active throughout the agitation.

In the midst of this Akali movement, a terrorist group emerged particularly after the Sikh killings in Nankana Sahib. This group was called the Babbar Akalis. The Gurdwara Act of 1925 was the achievement of this broad-based movement.

Within the Akali ranks, three distinct trends came to surface. Some elements constituted the core of the orthodox Akalis, others joined the Congress and some came over to the communist movement. However, it was the Akali Dal in the main which started projecting itself as the spokesman of the Sikhs as a religious minority.

4. Extracts from the Administration Report: Punjab 1851-52 G. W. Leitner as quoted by Joginder Singh in his article in *Punjab Journal of Politics*, July-December 1983, p. 3.
5. Gobinder Singh, "The Gurdwara Reform Movement", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, July-December 1983, p. 64.

Between 1925 and 1939, the main area of the activities of the Akali Dal was the struggle to control the SGPC and voice the political demands of the Sikhs for share in political power as a religious minority. After the agitation for the democratic control of the Sikh religious shrines, it did not launch as a party any movement to articulate the demands of the Sikh peasantry, though its followers did join the national struggle for freedom and participated in agitations for the specific demands of the peasantry such as reduction in land revenue and abiana—water rates.

The struggle for the control of SGPC is undoubtedly the dynamic part of the Akali politics influencing Sikh politics on the whole and thus deciding most matters in the state. Neither the Congress (now the Congress-I) nor the left in Punjab—both CPI and CPI(M) has ever successfully challenged the Akali Dal on the political and ideological plane. In this sense the Akali Dal has been holding a key position in the politics of the State, though its mass influence has always been out of proportion to its real strength.

In the first few years after the formation of the SGPC which is an elected body on the basis of adult franchise of the Sikh population in the state, its control was exercised by Baba Kharak Singh's group. But later it passed on to the hands of Master Tara Singh. His group started calling itself the Akali Party, while the Kharak Singh group assumed the name of the Central Akali Dal. That the Akali Party was the strongest political influence amongst the Sikhs had to be acknowledged from the fact that in 1947 when four out of the five Sikh members returned to the Constituent Assembly were Akalis. The popularity of the Akalis did not mean then, as it also does not mean now, that it was a united organisation. Within the Akali party, groups centering round Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Isher Singh Majhali developed. Master Tara Singh was acknowledged as the undisputed leader till he maintained neutrality between the two other groups. These groups in their turn accepted such leadership only as long as the Master had the wholehearted support of the rich individuals like Sardar Baldev Singh (former defence minister) and Sardar Ujjal Singh.

The heavy overtones of communalism that politics of all brands shows in the Punjab is the result of three decades of nar-

row opportunism practised by many of its leaders. The Akali Dal did not begin as a communal organisation. It started as a movement for social reform and gathered strength when the sturdy Sikh peasantry of Punjab attained political awareness and began to lend their full support to it. A second wave of the nationalist awakening swept through the Punjab, especially among the Sikhs, after the First World War when the Indian national movement assumed a mass character. Like the Khilafat movement among the Muslims, the Akali movement spread among the Sikhs—religious in form but essentially anti-imperialist in content.

By 1925-26, two opposite developments emerged within the movement—a left nationalist trend consisting of nationalist Sikhs and communists and the other of pro-imperialist elements mainly centering round landlords and urban traders. In the late thirties, the opportunist group within the Akali party took a sharp turn away from nationalism. On eve of the 1937 elections, the Akali leadership arrived at an understanding with the pro-imperialist Sunder Singh Majithia group and in the post election period, it made desperate effort to join the Punjab ministry. When the Second World War broke out and the Congress decided not to cooperate in the war effort, Master Tara Singh chose a different course and called upon 10 lakhs Sikhs to join the army. This opportunism led to the Sikaner Kyat Khan-Baldev Singh pact and the Akalis joined the Unionist ministry. In North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) the Akalis joined the Muslim League ministry. Within a decade of its formation the Akali movement had thus shed most of its progressive and democratic character and had come to be dominated by separatism and communalism. The Muslim League slogan for the partition of the country made the Akalis sectarian and communal more than ever. When the Cripps Mission came in 1942, the Akalis demanded that an 'Azad Punjab' state be created simultaneously with Pakistan and Hindustan. In this Azad Punjab, the Akalis visualised that the population of Hindus would be 40 per cent, Muslims 40 per cent and of the Sikhs 20 per cent. Subsequently the concept of Azad Punjab was developed into a Sikh state in 1945 by Giani Kartar Singh, then Master Tara Singh's chief lieutenant in the Akali Dal. The Akalis fought the 1946 elections on the slogan of the Sikh state and

won 23 seats. They joined both the central and the provincial government as *Panthic* leaders.

After attainment of Independence, the Akalis joined the Congress and merged with the Congress, but just before the first general elections, they broke away under the leadership of Giani Kartar Singh. In the elections, out of the 57 seats, with a substantial proportion of Sikh votes, which they contested, they could win only 12 seats. This defeat was a great setback to Akali prestige but soon after when the Akalis won 110 out of 132 seats in the SGPC election, it was like a shot in the arm. Under this morale-booster the Akalis launched an agitation demanding Punjabi Suba. A large number of Akalis were arrested. Master Tara Singh made use of this opportunity to bargain with the Congress from a *position of strength*. A Congress-Akali compromise was reached in 1956 on the eve of the second general elections. The Akalis agreed to give up the slogan of Punjabi Suba and in return the Congress offered what has come to be known as the 'Regional Formula'. Master Tara Singh, however, hankering for recognition as the sole spokesman of the Sikhs, never felt satisfied with this formula. He expressed his dissatisfaction over the distribution of tickets and went to the extent of opposing all Sikh candidates who were not his nominees, put up by the Congress in the elections.

During the next one decade, between 1955 and 1965 an intense struggle ensued among the Akalis both for the control of the SGPC and the Akali Dal. A series of agitations were organised in this period from within the precincts of the Golden Temple. In these manoeuvres Master Tara Singh took a hawkish stand while Sant Fateh Singh maintained a relatively moderate posture. Sant Fateh Singh who had risen into prominence, from an obscure religious preacher in Ganga Nagar district of Rajasthan to an outstanding Akali leader managed to ease out Master Tara Singh from Akali politics. This made Master Tara Singh desperate. He started demanding "A Sikh homeland" with complete autonomy. Since this demand had isolated the Akali Dal from the people of the state, including a large section of the Sikhs, Sant Fateh Singh decided that a purely communal demand would not get him the support of the Punjabi people. He decided, therefore, to press the demand for

reorganisation of the Punjab on linguistic basis.

Late one night in January 1961, the Master enfeebled by eighteen days of fasting and seven months stay in the Dharmasala jail told the Sant that it was "a terrible *Dharmayudh*". To this Sant Fateh Singh replied: "No Masterji, we have conducted it as a struggle for the language". This was the beginning of a clash between two powerful currents in Akali politics — a clash which became sharper and sharper in the subsequent years. It culminated into an open split in the Akali Dal and Sant Fateh Singh captured both the SGPC and the Akali Dal.

Thrice within a period of five years, between 1960 and 1965, the Sant had threatened suicide after shutting himself up within the precincts of the Golden Temple, the highest Sikh religious seat. On all the three occasions, the threat had something to do with the demand for the Punjabi Suba. But it has to be admitted that in all these agitations, the Akali Dal and its followers remained peaceful.

Another significant fact which needs to be mentioned here is that in 1965 Sant Fateh Singh announced that he would undertake a fast unto death on September 10 and in case he survived the first fifteen days, he would immolate his life by setting fire to himself at the same place, the Akal Takht, inside the Golden Temple complex. But the Sant put off his fast when Indo-Pak hostilities broke out. In fact, the Akali Dal under the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh, actively participated in the defence of the country. The Sikh peasantry in the border districts stood like a rock behind the armed forces of the country.

Soon after the hostilities were over the then Union Home Minister G. L. Nanda appointed a parliamentary committee headed by the Speaker Hukam Singh to go into the question of linguistic reorganisation of the state. This committee broadly recommended that Punjab should be reorganised on a linguistic basis and that the boundaries should be those of the "regions", mentioned in the scheme of 1956. The Congress working committee then passed a resolution that a "Punjabi-speaking State be carved out of the existing Punjab State", and the union government appointed a boundary commission to demarcate the boundaries of the state. The union government accepted in substance the recommendations of the

boundary commission with the modification that *tehsil Kharar* should be *bifurcated*, a part of it going to Punjab and Chandigarh to be made a union territory in which was to be located the Capital of both the new states of Punjab and Haryana.

Sant Fateh Singh had not accepted the 1961 census as the basis for demarcation of the boundaries of the two regions but he appeared to be satisfied with the reorganisation of the state and went out of his way to press that the disputed point should be settled through negotiations. In an interview with a reporter, he said on July 26, 1966, "I am satisfied with the formation of Punjabi Suba but not fully satisfied with its form". In reply to another question, he emphasised: "Peaceful negotiations are the only method in my mind" to settle all disputes. Later in London, according to an agency report, he said on September 18, the same year, that he was "satisfied with the decision of the Government of India on the creation of a Punjabi Suba and hoped the minor boundary questions would be settled amicably".

During this period many of his lieutenants hinted that the Sant would enter into an electoral alliance with the Congress during the next general election. He himself, whenever he spoke of the elections, mentioned alliances with "other parties, including the Congress".

The reorganisation of the State in 1966 on a linguistic basis was primarily the result of pressures from the Akali Dal. In the given circumstances, historically and politically, communalism and language had got inextricably mixed. Even after the reorganisation, just as before it, the demand for merger of additional Punjabi speaking areas continued unabated. The only difference was that earlier it was rooted in the communal notion of political deprivation while now the main thrust was the communal notion of economic discrimination. The peculiar demographic composition in the newly carved state of Punjab, coupled with 'green revolution', gave a distinct shape to the assertion of various communal groups in politics.

This peculiar demographic composition is evident from the 1971 census, according to which Sikhs form 60.22 per cent of the total population of Punjab and Hindus 37.54 per cent, whereas according to the 1951 and 1961 censuses, in composite Punjab, the Hindus constituted 62.3 per cent and 63.7 per cent

of the population respectively.⁶ The demographic composition indicates that Sikhs are largely concentrated in the rural areas, except in Hoshiarpur, and Hindus in the urban areas.

Nevertheless after the trifurcation of Punjab and creation of a Punjabi speaking state, a process of 'secularisation' of the Akali politics, within the framework of anti-congressism began, though it turned out to be a temporary phase. Between 1967 and 1971, the Akali Dal was able to form three coalition governments with the help of the Jana Sangh. Three main factors were responsible for this new 'secular orientation' of the Akali Dal.

Notwithstanding the fact that in the reorganised Punjab, the Sikhs constituted a majority population, the Akali leadership through its own experience came to the conclusion that it could not come to power on its own. Though the Akali leaders pretended and continued to do so till the other day (in fact, they do so even today), they knew it more than anybody else that they did not enjoy the support of the entire Sikh community in the state. The social base of the Akali Dal although expanded, was confined to a section of land-owning Jats and urban Sikh trading community. As a matter of fact, both congress and the two communist parties—the CPI and the CPI(M)—continue to retain their influence in a section of the Sikh peasantry.

According to a survey, the proportion of the Jat Sikhs to the total Sikh population roughly varies between 35 per cent and 66 per cent in different districts. In Patiala, Sangrur, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Faridkot and Amritsar more than 50 per cent of the Sikhs are Jats. The other Sikh castes are Ramgarhias, Mazhabi and Khatri (Bhapa) Sikhs.⁷ The total votes secured by the Akali Dal was 31.43 per cent in 1977. The percentage of the Sikh votes polled by the Akali Dal has usually varied between 30 and 45 per cent.

There are thus two options open to the Akali Dal to gain political power in the existing democratic set-up. They have to align themselves with the Congress or with the Jana Sangh and now

6. Parmod Kumar & others. *Punjab Crisis Context and Trends*. Chandigarh, 1984, p. 49.

7. Parmod Kumar & others. *Punjab Crisis Context and Trends*; Chandigarh, 1984, p. 50.

with the Janata Party. So far they have chosen the second course, though there have always been influential persons in the party who have been wanting to come to a long term understanding with the Congress. In fact, a section of leadership of the Akali Dal too has been striving to come to a political understanding with the Congress (I) on the condition that the Akali Dal rules the state and gets some share in power at the centre.

Secondly, the 'green revolution', the industrialisation of the country and prospects of better future outside the Punjab have opened up new fields of activities for the Sikhs in other parts of the country. Besides, in the short span of a decade, some of the Akali leaders themselves have become industrialists and have an eye on the markets outside Punjab. A graphic example of this is of former Finance Minister Balwant Singh who has established himself as a leading industrialist-cum-contractor.

Thirdly, the Akali leadership has come to the conclusion that an era of one party rule both at the centre and at the states is coming to an end. Therefore, they must come out of the shell of Punjab and build bridges with other parties outside the state.

It is significant to mention here that in its policy programme the Akali Dal committed itself to the goal of a "a secular-democratic-socialist society" of Guru Gobind Singh's concept. The Akali Dal in keeping with this orientation organised a big rally at Ludhiana for Jaya Prakash Narayan against Indira Gandhi's government in October 1974 and participated in another all-India opposition rally led by JP in June 1975. It contested 1977 elections in collaboration with the Janata Party and took part in the joint oath-taking ceremony at Raj Ghat after the electoral victory of the Janata Party in 1977. But there is the other side of the medal also.

After the death of the outstanding Akali leaders like Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh and Sardar Gurnam Singh (who had left the party even before his death), a political vacuum was created in the Akali Dal. There is no doubt that there has always been in-fighting in the Akali Dal between those who control the party and others who dominate the SGPC. Both Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh handled these conflicts with remarkable political skill.

Whenever the Akali Dal was in power in the state in 1977, it

shared power with the Janata Party at the Centre also, the inner conflicts in the Dal remained within manageable limits. Thus the Akali Dal leadership was able to deal with many a serious internal challenges with dexterity and confidence. One such challenge came during the Akali-Nirankari clash in April 1978 which signified the emergence of a new fundamentalist force. Soon after followed the formation in August of a militant Sikh youth organisation named Dal Khalsa which was committed to the achievement of an "Independent Sovereign Sikh Nation". All the same, the ruling leadership was able to withstand with assurance the pressure of this militant group led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as is evident from 1979 SGPC elections in which the 32 candidates supported by Sant Bhindranwale lost the election.

Nevertheless, between 1979 and 1984, particularly after the Akali agitation over sharing of river water which came to be known as the '*Nehar Roko Morcha*', three power centres developed in the Akali movement—one led by Sant Bhindranwale, the other by SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra and the third by former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. In this triangle of power-centres, Sant Bhindranwale became the most decisive factor mainly because Jathedar Tohra who controls the SGPC oscillated between the moderates and the fundamentalists, to the advantage of the latter. The potential for forcing the Akali Dal towards a fundamentalist, extremists direction was already there, irrespective of the fact whether or not a section of the Congress (I) leadership provided a cushion to Dal Khalsa and Sant Bhindranwale. The Akali Dal *itself* provided the ideological base for it and the internal struggle for-power created a fertile soil for this group to consolidate itself. The emergence of break-away groups of Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi and Sukhjinder Singh further compounded the situation because they took to separate agitation on pronounced extremist lines. Against the backgrounds of Dal Khalsa's violent activities including political murders, the main Akali Dal led by the moderate Sant Harchand Singh Longowal was pressurised to fall in the general line.

If one looks back in retrospect and examines the entire sequence of events over the last two years and a half it becomes clear that any negotiated settlement with the dominant section

of the Akali leaders on issues like Chandigarh, sharing of river waters and territorial adjustments would have been impossible, as long as the extremists and fundamentalists dominated the political scene and controlled the Golden Temple complex. This can be illustrated by a single instance. Sant Bhindranwale virtually captured the Gurdwara Manji Sahib stage within the Golden Temple complex and started his own *morcha* in July 1982 against the arrest of his close followers. The Akali Dal leader Sant Longowal clearly read the writing on the wall, adopted Bhindranwale's *morcha* on August 4 and later even agreed to receive back the breakaway groups into the Dal led by him. This virtually turned the party agitation into a Sikh movement enveloping forces with divergent orientations.

Any attempt or explanation of the recent crisis in Punjab in terms of various conflicting trends in the Akali Dal which does not take into account the role of the SGPC would be partial and therefore lopsided.

The SGPC has, of course, vast financial resources. The income of the eleven leading shrines managed by this body stood at Rs. 307,68,963 in 1980. The receipts of these shrines are increasing exponentially. Between 1966 and 1981 alone the income of the eleven important gurdwaras has recorded a 656.64 per cent increase. The budget of the SGPC itself, which was Rs. 650,25,312 in 1980, has increased by 577.41 per cent over the past decade and a half.

The vastness of the financial resources of the SGPC apart, equally important for determining their appropriation in class terms is the pattern of expenditure. Most of its funds are expended on salaries of the staff, education, printing and stationary, propagation of the faith, research and public welfare. The budgetary allocations to these heads of expenditure for 1980 are given on the facing page.

This means that SGPC, next to the state machinery in Punjab has become the highest centre for distribution of patronage.

What is more important is that it has a well-lubricated machinery throughout the state to disseminate its ideology to the Sikh masses at the grass roots. Religious and political sermons are delivered to the masses in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* from the gurdwara stage by the leaders who control the

Budgetary allocations to major heads of expenditure of the SGPC during 1980-81, (in rupees).

<i>Head of Expenditure</i>	<i>Allocation</i>
Salaries	25,64,200
Education	9,47,000
Printing and stationary	15,06,000
Propagation of the faith	25,82,000
Research	99,000
Public welfare and charity	85,000
Total	77,83,200

Source: SGPC Sri Amritsar de Budget 1980-81, Amritsar, 1980.⁸

SGPC. Thus the SGPC not only imparts religious teachings of the Sikh Gurus but also moulds the political consciousness of the Sikhs. The SGPC has, therefore, become a very important instrument for wielding political power.

Over the years the character and composition of the SGPC has also changed. Those who wield economic power among the Sikhs have come to occupy a key position in this body. Gobinder Singh has calculated that the representation of the high status members in the key position of the SGPC has never been less than 75 per cent.⁹ In this sense those who control the SGPC not only influence the political opinion of the Sikh masses but also give a positive direction to Sikh politics. This also explains the Akali Dal demands of an all-India gurdwara act. It is surprising indeed that no political party in the country or even the secular forces in the Punjab has found it necessary to make an objective assessment of this issue.

Thus, over the last four decades; the composition and the role of both the Akali Dal and the SGPC has undergone a basic change. With the union of religion and politics and turning of religious places into centres of political struggle, non-violent in

8. Gobinder Singh, "The Gurdwara Reform Movement", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, July-December 1983. *op. cit.* p. 67.

9. Gobinder Singh, *Religion and Politics in Punjab*, unpublished thesis.

the first phase and violent in its subsequent development, the history of the Sikh religious shrines and their role have registered a *qualitative* change. Are not some of the old evil practices against which the gurdwaras reform movement was launched in the early twenties again raising their head? Is it not a fact that a new class of 'mahants' now occupy religious seats? These are some of the questions which are bound to be asked as passions cool down. But it is for the ardent devotees of the Sikh religion to raise and answer these questions. What nobody can fail to notice is that for the first time in the glorious history of the Sikhs, the secessionist forces not only took shelter in the gurdwaras but actually turned some of them into their 'command centres'. Thus how the management of the gurdwaras is run is now no more merely a question of protecting their sanctity in keeping with the teachings of the Sikh gurus, it has come to have a direct bearing on country's unity and integrity.

8. Rise of Sikh Fundamentalism

Religion has shaped the beliefs, values and attitudes of people in India over the centuries and to a great extent this is true even now. Religion as conceived and religion as practised through rituals and dogmatic interpretation shows its historical transition from its initial spirituality to subservience to socio-economic-political vested interests—from one era of civilisation to another.

The communal problem, as it is understood now in India, is one of meeting the claims of the minorities and offering them sufficient protection from majority action. Minorities in India are not racial or national minorities as, for instance, they are in Europe; they are religious minorities. Racially, India is a patch-work and a curious mixture and therefore no racial questions have arisen or can arise in India in future. Religion transcends these racial differences, which fade into one another and are often hard to distinguish. Religious barriers are obviously not permanent, as conversions can and do take place from one religion to another, and a person changing his religion does not thereby lose his racial background or his cultural and linguistic inheritance.

The concept that the Sikhs in India are an ethnic or racial minority was introduced, both overtly and covertly, by the British rulers as early as the middle of the last century.

“This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India—that there is not and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious: no Indian nation, no ‘people of India’, of which we hear so much.”¹

1. Sir John Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress*, 1888, p.5.

Another British expert on India said:

“The notion that India is a nationality rests upon that vulgar error which political science principally aims at eradicating. India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not mark the territory of a nation and a language, but the territory of many nations and many languages.”²

It was on this premise the British colonial policy in India, the policy of “Divide and Rule” was based. As far as back 1821, a British officer writing under the name of “Carnaticus” in the *Asiatic Review* of May, 1821, declared that “*Divide et impera* should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military.”³

Divide et impera implied that the policy of British rulers was to uphold in full force the so-called separation which existed between different religions and not to endeavour to amalgamate them.

Unlike many other states, the British policy of Divide and Rule had its own characteristics because apart from the fact that Punjab was a quite close to western borders of the united India, it had three main religious communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. That explains why as early as the middle of the last century the British colonial rulers had come to the conclusion that to keep India under subjugation, the tranquility of Punjab had to be maintained at any cost.

How was this policy carried out in Punjab?

As a matter of fact before the first war of independence in 1857, the British had started strengthening the feudal elements among the Sikhs and thus made the interests of the Sikh landlord, the princely rulers common with those of British rulers. After the first war of independence in 1857 it was decided to grant jagirs to those who showed “active loyalty” at the time of the “mutiny.”

That the Sikh aristocracy and priests became loyalists in reality is clearly reflected in their memorandum against the Kukas, the Sikhs who had taken up arms against the British raj soon after the

2. Sir John Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 1883, pp. 254-57.

3. R Palme Dutt, *India Today*, Bombay, 1947, p. 371

'mutiny'. That memorandum which was submitted to the lieutenant governor in a *Durbar* held at Amritsar on 22 March 1872, showed that by that time the memorialists had become supporters of the British empire. To fight the Kukas they offered full support to the government and appreciated the government's "appropriate and effective measures" for controlling that "wicked and misguided sect".⁴

In this period the British rulers adopted a new recruitment policy to win over the Sikh youth and declare the Sikhs as a martial race, particularly the Jat community. It was decided that the Sikh troops should be one of the main components of the provincial armies. From 1860 onwards, the Sikhs formed a valuable part of the forces sent abroad to China, Afghanistan and to many parts of the vast African continent. They constituted "the backbone of local forces as legionaries of the empire, thus making the Punjab, what was later described as, the "bulwark of defence against foreign aggression" and 'the guard room of the Eastern Empire".⁵

In this connection it is of interest to note that the pro-British imperialist elements among the Sikhs organised themselves into the Singh Sabha in 1873. The Singh Sabha of those days was out of bounds for those Sikhs who had proved disloyal to the government. They also decided not to discuss at their meetings anything against the British government and thus loyalty to the British government became an article of faith for them.⁶

It will not be incorrect to say that all these measures were directed to plant and promote a sense of separate entity among the Sikhs as distinct from the rest of the Indian nation.

This trend which started in the seventies of the last century marked a turning point in Sikh history, because it gave a new direction to the attitude and the social behaviour of the emerging upper classes among the Sikhs.

It will not be incorrect to say that the main motivation of the Singh Sabha was a search for Sikh identity and self-assertion.

4. Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Dian Lehraan*, Patiala, 1974, pp. 79-80. as quoted in Joginder Singh, "Socio-Political Beliefs", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, July-December 1983, p. 5.
5. J. H. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, Patiala, 1970, pp. 221-22.
6. Joginder Singh, "Socio-Political Beliefs", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, July-December 1983. p.5.

The British rulers distorted and exploited Sikh and other religions for their own political ends. But they did not leave at that. They appointed an Englishman named Mecaulliffe to study Sikh religion. He translated the Guru Granth Sahib with the help of Sikh scholars and twisted it in favour of loyalty to the British government.

Petrie corroborates this thus:

“With his relapse into Hinduism and readoption of its superstitions and vicious social customs, it is notorious that the Sikh loses much of his martial instincts and greatly deteriorates as a fighting machine. Mecaulliffe, in alluding to the fact that loyalty to the British is enjoined by various prophecies in Sikh Holy Writ, considers that “it is such prophecies as these, combined with the monotheism, the absence of superstition and restraint in the matter of food, which have made the Sikhs among the bravest, the most loyal and devoted subjects of the British crown”.⁷

The British rulers patronised Sikhism for their own expansionist and military ends.

“At the present time one of the principal agencies for the preservation of Sikh religion has been the practice of military officers commanding Sikh regiments to send Sikh recruits to receive baptism according to the rites prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. Sikh soldiers too are required to adhere rigidly to Sikh customs and ceremonials and every endeavour has been made to preserve them from the contagion of idolatry. Sikhs in the Indian army have been studiously ‘nationalised’.”⁸

But there is another respect also. Some soldiers and officers retired from service were used to promote fundamentalist tendencies among the Sikhs in the rural areas. One of the regiments had constituted a choir of reciters to go round the villages and sing Sikh hymns at congregations. Though most retired soldiers and officers were ardent devotees of the Sikh religion, some among

7. Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party*, Bombay, 1947, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

8. *Ibid.*

them gave extremist and fundamentalist interpretation to Sikh principles and traditions.

Since the end of the last century and till the sixties of the present century scholars mostly from England, Canada and America have been working over time to establish the separate entity of the Sikhs. There have been some Sikh scholars too who have gone abroad to make a study of the Sikh religion. All these studies were directed to show that the Sikhs had a history independent from the rest of India and that they were therefore an independent entity in every respect.

Harry Izmirlian, who received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley conducted field studies in Punjab in 1961-62 and 1965-66 with a view to study the behaviour of the Sikhs in the villages in socio-political terms. After showing that the Sikhs constituted an independent identity he underscored that the Punjab and the Sikh farmer most frequently provide a surplus of agricultural products.... it is not surprising that Sikhs are inclined to view their contribution to the security and the prosperity of the country in terms far greater than small number might warrant.' He goes on to say that the "agitation for greater representation" in the political power structure "makes sense if viewed in this context. From the Sikh point of view both the British and the post-1947 Indian Government's responses were inadequate."⁹ To establish this thesis, he has very skilfully justified all the Akali agitations.

There are other American scholars who have been working to prove that the Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab did not have any common cultural heritage and emotionally they were poles apart. In his book *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, Jones Kenneth builds this thesis.

This intellectual exercise by the western and pro-western Sikh scholars was directed to create the subjective consciousness of an independent entity and a sense of discrimination among the Sikh elite.

Its objective obviously was to declare that Sikh religious philosophy was not the continuation of the Indian philosophical thought

9. Harry Izmirlian, Jr., *Structure and Strategy in Sikh Society—The Politics of Passion*, Amritsar. p. 14.

but something entirely new. It was necessary to draw this line of demarcation to build the theory that the Sikhs are an independent nation.

Quite apart from this aspect, there was only one frame of reference — Vedantic — available for the interpretation of Sikhism till this trend emerged. Western scholars offered a new understanding of Sikh philosophy and tradition and tried to isolate the principal concepts of Sikh religion from those of the main philosophical trends in India.

What were the reasons for this deliberate and conscious attempt to give a new interpretation to the teachings of the Sikh gurus?

It was directed to delink the Sikh masses from the age-old ideological traditions of the country and thus deprive them of the national spiritual heritage. Secondly, it was aimed at emotionally disarming the Sikh masses in their fight against colonial tyranny, exploitation of the landlords and the princes.

What is most important to note in this connection is that as the national movement started gaining momentum generating a new national consciousness, ideologues of imperialism started selling their own interpretations on the rich heritage of our country and the Sikh intellectuals became their special target. After independence, this ideological offensive assumed a new dimension because sowing seeds of fundamentalism and secessionism in Punjab became the pre-requisite to destabilise India on the one hand and render the Sikh masses politically passive in the fight against neo-colonialism on the other.

Therefore, hostility between Sikhism and Hinduism was projected as a historical reality in the writings of administrator-scholars. Among these scholars were Gordon, Bingley and Payne. For instance, Bingley reiterated the arguments of Lepel Griffen while explaining the adverse effects of Hinduism on the Sikhs. The chief cause of the decline of Sikhism, as he wrote, was the strong alternative force of Hinduism. While repeating Griffen's argument, he further added, that "the ivy-like vitality of Hinduism enfolds and strangles everything which it has once grasped." He also concluded that Hinduism had been always hostile to Sikhism and warned the Sikhs that "In course of a few generations, Sikhism is likely to be superseded by some form of *Vaishnavism*

which is always more popular in times of peace.

This psyche of an independent entity of the Sikhs, nursed and promoted by British scholars with the active participation of Sikh landed interests and a section of Sikh intellectuals, received a new boost when the colonial rulers gave new teeth to their policy of "Divide and Rule" by introducing separate electorates notwithstanding the fact that communalism and the concept of separate identity did not grip the minds of the Sikh peasantry.

The British rulers, however, did not relent in their efforts to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Sikhs on the one hand, and the Hindus and the Muslims, on the other. Under the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909, when separate electorate was introduced and Muslims were given weightage, the upper classes among the Sikhs became active in aspiring for similar privileges.

The Chief Khalsa Dewan led by Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia articulated this hope. But till the late twenties the Sikh masses had not become receptive to the concept of a separate identity, notwithstanding the fact that the British Government had offered 33 per cent of the seats in the Punjab Council and a Sikh University besides additional concessions of setting free Sikhs arrested in connection with the Ghadar movement of 1914-15.

It is pertinent to note that despite all these developments, Baba Kharak Singh rejected the Nehru Report on the ground that it had laid the foundation for communalism by accepting separate electorates.

All along this, an alarming tendency was also gathering strength. Slowly but surely, the Sikh religious shrines started becoming the hub of political activity, particularly after the Gurdwara Act of 1925. It was in the early thirties that the Akal Takht within the Golden Temple complex became a centre of Akali politics. On 25 September 1932, a meeting of the Sikhs was called at the Akal Takht to voice its opposition to the communal award.

Nevertheless, even at that stage, there were two discernible divisions among Sikh political leaders, the anti-imperialist and

10. S. K. Bajaj, "Gordon Bingley Pagan", in Fauja Singh (ed), p. 192, as quoted in Joginder Singh, see note 6.

the pro-imperialist. And naturally the anti-imperialist section of the Akalis continued to cooperate with the Congress.

However in the forties, a fusion between religion and politics had taken place to such an extent that the trend for a separate identity of the Sikhs gained fresh momentum when Pakistan as a Muslim state began to loom large on the political horizon. The more aggressive the Muslim communalism became and the more defensive the Congress chose to become, the louder became the demand of the Sikh for recognition as a separate entity. And in this process was born what was not always noticed — the nexus between Sikh religion and Sikh politics.

In a speech at an all-party Sikh Conference in Amritsar in August 1944, Master Tara Singh declared that the Sikhs were a "nation" and that, is "the country was going to be split, they should not be left at the mercy of either Pakistan or Hindustan". The Akali Dal demanded an independent Sikh state—a demand which was first made by Giani Kartar Singh. Later, the Akali Dal passed a resolution on 22 March 1946.

The resolution said:

"Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language, traditions and history claim it as their homeland and the holy land which the British took as a 'trust' from the last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the community of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and the danger of absorption by the Hindus on the other... the Akali Dal demands for the preservation and protection of the religious, cultural, economic and political rights of the Sikh nation, the creation of a Sikh State which would include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their sacred shrines and historical gurdwaras with the provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property".¹¹

Thus, long before the famous Anandpur Sahib resolution was passed and the recent secessionist forces started their vio-

11. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1983, p. 302.

lent operation, the concept of the Sikh state had been spelt out.

In this connection, another fact of history also needs to be mentioned.

Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala admitted in an article published in a newspaper as late as on 19 July 1956 that at a meeting with Jinnah at a dinner hosted by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, "Liaquat Ali Khan and Begum Liaquat Ali.... went out of their way to offer on behalf of the Muslim League everything conceivable. He was to be the Head of this new Sikh State... the Sikhs would have their own army and so on." This admission by the late Maharaja speaks for itself and needs no comment. That the Sikhs did not fall a prey to this conspiracy speaks volumes of their sense of patriotism. Once again, the credit goes to the robust Sikh peasantry and the nationalist Sikhs.

All the same, the fact that after 37 years of independence the strident cry of 'Khalistan' should have been raised by a handful of people from the Golden Temple complex before the army action is revealing as it is disturbing. It shows the degree of erosion of our commitment to secularism that has taken place, notwithstanding the glaring reality that the generation of Hindus and Sikhs which migrated from the areas now in Pakistan still recall with horror how they had been thrown out of their homeland without pity and with so much violence and inhumanity.

It would be a totally subjective estimate to conclude that the entire community of Sikhs has turned fundamentalist, though their religious sentiments have been deeply hurt. In fact soon after independence, the SGPC itself rejected the two-nation theory of the Muslim League in unmistakable terms. Making a comparison between India and Pakistan, it pointed out "a State based upon the thesis that the Muslims of India (united India) are a separate nation, and as such need a homeland and state for themselves" stands as a complete contrast to "India as a secular state, which she is and is also sought to be made in effect". It went on to say that India was divided for various reasons and "one was the clear need of British government in the event of parting with power with India: which they well knew, could

not be long delayed, of leaving behind them a warning and divided India".¹²

The SGPC was more forthright in its criticism of the League: "The ideology of the Muslim League.... is based on the fundamental principle that Muslims of India are an independent nationality"¹³

An overwhelming majority of the Sikhs still believes in secularism and does not subscribe to the theory of Sikh nationhood. To say this does not mean that they do not adhere to the tenets of the Sikh religion. The problem facing Punjab today is: how to integrate the Sikh masses in the national mainstream.

Nevertheless it will be a great mistake to brand all Sikhs as fundamentalists and revivalists. It will be equally wrong to consider every Sikh as a potential supporter of the Akalis. Even among the ardent adherents of the Sikh religion, there are different sects. If in the past *Mahants*, the Sikh Rajas and landlords were poor examples of the virtues and piety advocated by the Sikh gurus, the policy of oppression and exploitation followed by the Sikh vested interests today is not in keeping with the teachings of the Sikh religion. Reactionary forces have always interpreted certain precepts of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in a way that suited them. And to defeat these forces, it is necessary that a politico-ideological struggle against them should be initiated and a policy of softness towards them given up.

12 *Muslim Attack on Sikhs and Hindus*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1950, pp. 1-18

13 *Ibid*

9. Hindu Communalism

Punjab is the gateway to India from the west and the Punjabi people including those who are now in Pakistan had always borne the brunt of foreign invasions. They had, thus, hardly any respite for centuries. The climate was not propitious for literature and culture of any sort. In this process, the mother tongue was neglected, and learning of Sanskrit also dwindled. After the Muslim rule, the problem became more complex with the influx of Persian language and literature. All these factors distorted the evolution of Punjabi speaking people as a distinct entity.

Before the partition of Punjab in 1947 and thereof the Punjabi speaking people, Punjab had two distinct language areas, which however, telescoped imperceptibly into one another. These areas broadly were Hindi (or Lahnda) in West Punjab and Punjabi proper in East Punjab. Western Punjabi was not a single language. it was a group of dialects, which could never be bound together by a common literary thread. These dialects were current in the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and in West Punjab. Multani, the Shahpur district speech, the speech around Attock and western Punjabi remained undeveloped throughout the last two to three centuries barring a few song and ballad compositions. On the other hand, east Punjabi had some literary life, mostly under the inspiration of the Sikh religion, though a good number of Hindu and Muslim writers too made valuable contributions.

Till 1947, Punjabi was written in three alphabets — Gurmukhi, Nagari and Perso-Arabic. Gurmukhi and Nagari are allied scripts and very similar to each other.

For certain historical reasons, the Punjabi speaking people from West Punjab neglected their mother tongue and took up the readymade early Hindi speeches of gangetic India in various forms. On the other hand, by the beginning of the 17th century, Punjabi had already developed into a full-fledged language. Gurmukhi script was fashioned in the 16th century under the Sikh gurus and on the basis of Lahnda as also under strong influence of Nagari. It was after this that Punjabi literature started flourishing. In the 15th-16th century, Guru Nanak's compositions (1469-1538), though not written in pure Punjabi, elevated the language to a higher level. The fifth Guru, Arjun Singh compiled about 1605 A.D. the poems of Guru Nanak and his successors including himself, and also the 'Hindi' hymns of a number of *Bhakti* saints earlier to Guru Nanak such as Kabir, and others. This collection supplemented by certain other unitings forms the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib*. Strictly speaking, it is not in Punjabi. Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708) and some poets of his time wrote a number of religious works in verse. Some of them are in old Hindi and others in Punjabi. A second *Jenam-Sakhi* was composed by Sewa Singh and a third by Mani Singh, both are in eastern Punjabi.

All these facts help to show that the evolution of the Punjabi language is closely related with Sikh religious scriptures. Though this was the main source of the Punjabi language and its literature, there were other currents also. In the 16th century, a poet named Damodar of Jhang (now in Pakistan) is said to have composed during the reign of Akbar, a poem immortalising the story of Hir and Ranjha in one thousand stanzas. It is still the most popular folk song on both sides of the Indo-Pak border.

In the 17th century, another turning point in the history of the Punjabi language began when Muslim, Hindu and some Sikh writers started writing in Punjabi. In fact, it will not be incorrect to say that Hindu and Muslim writers by far were the most prolific in producing memorable literature in Punjabi language in this period. However, the best minds of Punjab of this period favoured either Persian or Sanskrit and old Hindi as medium of their expression. In this connection, the richest contribution to the Punjabi language in this period came from a Hindu

Punjabi scholar, Chander Bhan of Lahore. He mostly composed Sufi poems and tracts in Persian.

During the 17th century, Punjabi language came to be split in three scripts, Persio-Arabic, Nagri and Gurmukhi.

Most of the Punjabi writers of the 17th century such as Muslim poet Abdullah and Gurudas wrote didactic poems, delivering sermons through stories and fables. The rather thin stream of Punjabi literature continued through the eighteenth century. Hir Ranjha story by Waris Shah composed in 1766 is regarded as the outstanding piece of Punjabi literature. The story of Sabha and Mirza, a love tragedy has two versions, one by Pillu and the other by Hafiz Barkhurdar. This is another valuable piece of Punjabi literature of this period. The tragic love story of Sassi and Punhu too has various versions in Punjabi. One of them written by Sayyad Hasham Shah has been brought out in Gurmukhi characters by Professor Harnam Singh Shan.

The Punjabi literature of this period clearly brings out that secular songs and didactic poems and love lyrics, often with Sufi colouring, were fairly common in this period. The outstanding poets of this era were: Arur Rai, Isar Das, Kisan Singh Arif, Hidayatullah and Muhammad Buta.

With the process of consolidation of British rule, by 1848, the evolution of Punjabi took a new turn. On the one hand English learning started influencing the cultural life of the people and on the other hand, revivalist tendencies started growing. Muslim revivalism encouraged Urdu and the study of Arabic and Persian. The Hindu revivalist movement strengthened the position of Hindi and Nagari characters and re-established once again the influence of Sanskrit among the Punjabi Hindus. Government and educational institutions encouraged either exclusively or very largely Urdu only; in the law courts and government offices, next to English it was all Urdu. Thus Punjabi had to face a severe handicap because it had to cope with three powerful rivals — English, Hindi and Urdu.

Undoubtedly, the Punjabi people inherited an unweildy past, divisions and inequalities, as every people has its own legacies and special problems. But in Punjab, these problems were more acute than in any other part of the country. Even in the matter of language British imperialism followed a well-

designed policy of fostering and maintaining divisiveness and cultural backwardness of the Punjabi people.

Towards the end of the last century, Christian missionary activity suddenly increased and Sikh majority areas attracted special attention. Instructions given to the missionaries read:

“Though the Brahman religion still sways the minds of a large portion of the population of Punjab and the Mohammeden of another, the dominant religion and power for the last century has been the Sikh religion, a species of pure theism, formed in the first instance by a dissenting sect from Hinduism. A few helpful instances lead us to believe that the Sikhs may prove more accessible to scriptural truth than the Hindus and Mohammedans.”

This challenge of Christian ethics set off an exercise in self-examination and reinterpretation by various Indian religions. The result was that a vast movement of reformation took pronouncedly sectarian forms in Arya Samaj fundamentalism in Hinduism and Ahmadiyah heresy in Islam. For Sikhs, it was a critical period. In this process Hindus drifted further away from their command language — the Punjabi language. Nonetheless, the Punjabi language did not get official status during the British rule.

Before the partition in 1947, the official languages were English and Urdu; almost every literate person knew Urdu and used it for correspondence and for other literary purposes. But, by a perversion of communal politics in the pre-partition Punjab, Urdu came to be looked upon as the language of the Muslims, Hindi as the language of the Hindus and Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as the language of the Sikhs. The communal organisations of the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs fanatically promoted the interests of their respective languages.² Educational institutions set up by Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims further compounded the problem because their medium was the language of that community which controlled

1. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi 1983, P. 229.
 2. J.C. Anand, *Trends and Phases of Punjab Politics*, unpublished thesis.

the institution. Of course, English was taught as a compulsory language.

The 1951 census, operations led to serious communal tensions and census-slips on language were widely discarded. The 1961 census operations gave a distorted picture about the mother tongue of the people because the champions of 'Save Hindi' among the Hindu communalists called upon the people to declare Hindi as their mother tongue. In most cases religious affiliations determined the response to the census query on what language a respondent normally spoke.

This led to a new controversy in Punjab and thus the problem of language hinged on the question what script may be used for Punjabi—a controversy which raged till very recently. As has been stated earlier, in the pre-partition Punjab, Punjabi used to be written in all the three scripts — Persian, Devnagari and Gurmukhi. Persian and Gurmukhi scripts were in greater use than Devnagari. That is why west Punjabi saw literature of a very high quality produced in Punjabi even after the partition. Following the refusal of Hindu communalists in this part of Punjab to accept Punjabi as their mother tongue in the first instance and later their insistence that they should be allowed to write Punjabi in Devnagari script, the alienation between Hindu and Sikhs further increased. The Sikhs on the other hand not only insisted that Punjabi should be written in Gurmukhi but started passionately identifying it with themselves and their religion.

The problem of the Punjabi speaking state, which has figured so prominently in the Punjab politics in recent years, is a spill-over of the language controversy into the area of regionalism. It has been proposed as also opposed largely in terms of communalism. The States Reorganisation Commission noted that internal tension in Punjab "follows communal and not territorial lines".

This is how the linguistic reorganisation of Punjab has always created problems since the partition of the country in 1947. It has defied all solutions and every solution so far evolved has created new complications, leading to communal polarisation in the state. Apart from this aspect, the Akalis

themselves have been frequently shifting ground and after every concession made to them with a view to solve this problem, they have been coming forward with new demands and thus there has been no finality about what has come to be known as the linguistic reorganisation of the state. This becomes evident from a hurried survey of the developments in this border state since 1947.

The Sachhar formula was announced on October 2, 1949 to solve the language problem of Punjab. It was signed by Bhim Sen Sachhar, the then chief minister, Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, leader of the rival Congress faction and a minister in the Sachhar cabinet, Giani Kartar Singh, leader of the Akali Party in the Punjab Assembly and Sardar Ujjal Singh, as representative of the rival faction in the Akali Dal.

It provided for a gradual and progressive replacement of English and Urdu as official and court languages by Hindi and Punjabi in the two regions to be demarcated as the Hindi speaking and the Punjabi speaking regions.

In the PEPSU areas a different formula was in operation. Under PEPSU formula evolved in 1949, the state was notionally divided into Hindi and Punjabi speaking regions. Unlike the Sachhar formula, all people living in the Punjabi areas had to learn the language of the region and it became the medium of instruction — Punjabi in Gurmukhi script in the Punjabi speaking region and Hindi in the Hindi speaking region.

These two formulas continued to operate in their respective areas even after the reorganisation of Punjab in 1956 when PEPSU areas were merged with Punjab. In November 1957, they were incorporated into the regional scheme promulgated by the President's Punjab Regional Committee Order.

But this did not solve the language problem and the mid-fifties witnessed the demand for linguistic reorganisation of Punjab.

Ironically, when the Akali leaders were busy organising another agitation, Hindu communalists too became active. In 1957 (May 1957 to December 1957), the 'Save Hindi' agitation was launched by the *Hindi Samiti* under the general direction of the *Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha*, New Delhi, for the modification of the language formula and the regional arrangement

made in 1956-57. The Jana Sangh and the Arya Samaj were the two constituent organisations of the Hindi Samiti. Over 10,000 persons courted arrest. It will not be incorrect to say that this agitation greatly contributed to the failure of the regional formula. As long as the 'Save Hindi' agitation continued, Akali leaders including Master Tara Singh supported the regional formula but as soon as the agitation tapered off the Akali leaders moved away from the theme of 'Save Regional Formula,' arguing that 'Punjabi Suba alone can satisfy the Sikhs'. This shows that course of history in Punjab would have been perhaps different, if Hindu communalism had taken a secular stand on the Punjabi language.

Another important fact which needs mention is that it is after the 'Save Hindi' agitation that the Jana Sangh started emerging as an important political factor. In the 1962 general elections, it won eight seats, four in the Hindi region and four in the Punjabi region.

Till 1966, when Punjab was reorganised, the Jana Sangh and its allies spearheaded the movement against the Akali demand for Punjabi Suba. Despite the decision of the Jana Sangh to share power with the Akalis in Punjab after the 1967 elections and despite the continuation of this collaboration till events took an ugly turn in recent years, its unit in Haryana has been opposing the demand for merger of Chandigarh with Punjab. In vitiating the atmosphere in this region and fanning communal passions, Hindu communalism has played an important role. This in turn has eroded the common consciousness among the Punjabi-speaking people. Obviously, the Jana Sangh and the RSS intentions were inscrutable.

The stepped-up campaign for Hinduism by the Jana Sangh and the RSS and now by their new platforms — the *Hindi Vishva Parishad* and *Hindu Suraksha Samiti* has brought the question of religious or religio-cultural identity into sharp focus again. The slogans painted in some of the cities of Punjab that "we are Hindus and we are proud of it" have exacerbated inter-religious tensions. What are the motives behind this aggressive assertion of religious identity and that too in a state like Punjab?

This question needs to be objectively assessed.

It is important to note that in the pre-partition (1947) Punjab, the Sikhs were only 13 per cent of the total population. In east Punjab (now Punjab), they formed about 30 per cent of the population. In the united Punjab, the Sikh population was so scattered that they were in minority in every district. After the partition, the Sikhs became a majority in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana. With the reorganisation of Punjab in 1967, the proportion of the Sikh population in Punjab further increased. According to the 1971 census, the Sikhs in Punjab numbered 81.59 lakh as against a Hindu population of 50.87 lakh. Thus the Sikhs became the majority community (something which the Akalis had desired) as a result of the reorganisation of Punjab generously acceded to by the Congress. This led not only of further communalisation of politics but also generated a new aspiration among the most communal elements among the Hindus for the creation of a "Maha-Punjab".

There is another aspect of hindu communalism in Punjab and Haryana. After the partition of the country, a large number of the Sikhs were settled outside the present areas of Punjab, particularly in Ambala and Karnal districts. There has also been considerable migration of the Sikhs from Punjab to other states. This is reflected in the census figures of other states. For example, the Sikh population increased during 1951-61 in Rajasthan from 1.48 lakh to 2.74 lakh and in U.P. from 1.97 lakh to nearly three lakh. This migration, particularly of the small land-owners and skilled and semi-skilled industrial workers had been going on over the years. Thus even before the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966, the percentage of the total Sikh population in the state had been steadily decreasing. This exodus of the Sikhs as well as inter-regional migration inside Punjab has been mainly due to economic factors. Nonetheless, this created certain problems for the Sikh fundamentalists. This could be why the SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra at one stage demanded a right to vote for 'permanent' residents of the state. He even tried to link it with property. This has given a new political handle to Hindu revivalists in Punjab.

Consequently, Hindus began thinking in terms of 'minority' in the sense that psychologically and emotionally they began regarding themselves as Hindus than Punjabis.

Thus the Punjabi speaking people had developed a peculiar psyche. The Sikhs, though a majority in the state are constantly fed with the fear of 'Hindu dominated India' and were made to believe that the Hindus would 'assimilate' them. The Punjabi Hindus on the other hand did not want any political dispensation which was dominated by the Sikhs because they thought that they would be reduced to the status of 'second class' citizens. Therefore, Hindu communalism as it is now shaping itself in Punjab has its own specifics. In a way a new type of communalism is being superimposed on traditional communalism. There are also certain socio-economic factors which intensify communal feelings.

¹ It sounds ironical, on the face of it, that such a strong feeling of 'separate' identity should emerge in a state, whose prosperity has been, for quite some time, the envy of the rest of India and among a people whose self-confidence and optimism has been some kind of legend. Yet the reality cannot be ignored.

What is quite obvious is that the reorganisation of Punjab had very little to do with language, culture and common traditions. The slogan of linguistic reorganisation of Punjab instead of becoming a cementing force had only succeeded in dividing the Punjabi speaking people. As a result of this, both Sikh and Hindu communalism have become formidable forces and it is the secular forces — both of the Congress and the left — which have been conceding ground to them. This is the empirical reality of Punjab today. It is also a graphic illustration of the havoc which dogmatic application of the principle of linguistic reorganisation has played in this state. May be Jawaharlal Nehru's incisive mind could foresee it and as long as he was alive, he was opposed to the reorganisation of Punjab, though he went out of his way to promote the Punjabi language.

Part III

**Imperialist Game of
Dismemberment**

V.D. CHOPRA

10. From 'Azad Punjab' to 'Khalistan'

In the midst of the second World War itself, the deep crisis which was overwhelming Britain could no longer be concealed. All the grandiose dreams of new schemes and alliances with internal reactionary forces turned out to be hollow and insubstantial. The new strategy which British imperialism evolved to keep India in its grip was built on sand and was doomed to collapse before the gathering strength of the popular forces of revolt. A new era of human history was opening out.

British imperialism, the oldest imperialist set-up and the most experienced in the technique of colonialisation refurbished its policy of 'divide and rule'.

The competent and well-informed British observers in India themselves came to the conclusion that new political measures were needed to face the new crisis and harness the popular upsurge following the war. "India in the opinion of many was on the verge of a revolution before British Cabinet Mission arrived. The Cabinet Mission has at least postponed if not eliminated the danger."¹ That also explains why as early as in 1942, Reginald Coupland, a professor at the Oxford University and official adviser to the Cripps Mission had chalked out a blueprint to dismember India on the basis of "river-basin" theory.

Coupland Plan of Dismemberment

According to Coupland, North-West Pakistan was to form a re-

1 P. J Griffs, the leader of the European group in the Indian Central Legislative Assembly, in his speech to the East India Association in London, June 24, 1946.

gional state of the Indus river basin. *Bang-i-stan* was to consist of Bengal and Assam. The Hindustan state of UP and Bihar was stated to be the regional states based on the Ganges river basin. Then was to be carved out *Princistan* in Rajputana and other areas and finally the formation of the Deccan.

Reginald Coupland has elaborated this plan in the third volume of his 700-page report entitled 'The Constitutional Problem in India'. He has expatiated upon the constitutional future of India with the assurance of an erudite and impartial research scholar.

According to Coupland, separatist movements were not "unnatural" and "in the course of the last few years... the sense of Provincial patriotism has been strengthened by the advent of full Provincial self-government".²

Some other aspects of the Coupland Plan needs to be examined with equal care. He has suggested that Pakistan may like to enter as a "fifth subscriber to the Saadabad Pact" between Turkey, Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan. "Since it is only her unnatural marriage with *Hindu India* that has hitherto compelled her to turn her back on it, should she not seek a divorce?" he poses a rhetorical question.

Secondly, he has pointed out that the Sikhs would be the major obstacle to the realisation of North-West Pakistan and that there may be a 'civil war' if they are coerced.

Thirdly, Coupland saw clearly that the Princes would not agree to join either Pakistan or Hindustan and princely states may form a separate dominion having direct treaty relations with Britain.

Fourthly, he visualised a weak 'agency centre' which will have three subjects under it: (i) foreign affairs and defence; (ii) external trade and tariff policy; and (iii) currency.³

But the most mischievous part of this 'plan' that its author conceived was the provision for a large tract of contiguous territory between Sind and Orissa placed at the disposal of the Empire, through a treaty with the concerned states. Such a States-Dominion might not only have a 'defence treaty with the

2. Girish Mishra, in *Patriot* 5 July, 1984.

3. G. Adhikari: in *People's War*, 1944.

British, but might also seek British assistance in the development of its armament and other industries. His estimate was that such an arrangement would be desirable from the British side from a purely military point of view.

“A group of aerodromes occupied by British airmen in the heart of India would accord with the strategic needs of the British Commonwealth.”⁴

This is how the British rulers wanted to use both Pakistan and the princely states in the post-war independent India to safeguard their interests.

It was well known even in those days that Coupland's was a political mission inspired in all probability by Churchill himself. There was a special reason why he was chosen for this job. Coupland for his erudite scholarship, had previously distinguished himself by producing a 'plan' on Palestine leading to the division of the territory into two hostile states—the Arab state and the Jewish state. As it is, British imperialism only partially succeeded in enacting the same tragedy in the subcontinent of India.

It is a strange irony of history that just two years before this plan was spelt out, the Muslim League in its annual conference at Lahore in 1940 had declared that “Muslims are a separate nation” and demanded that those portions of India, in which Muslims were in majority should be demarcated and constituted into a sovereign state, though this concept of the 'separate nation' had been originally enunciated by Chaudhri Rahmat Ali, a student at Cambridge in 1933. Nevertheless, the possibility of a Muslim state coming into being was clearly visualised in the British War Council's formula presented by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942. In fact, this formula laid the basis for the division of the country because it offered to give Indian provinces the right to choose whether they would join any union that might be formed at the end of the War or stay out and form their own state, separately or in collaboration with other provinces similarly inclined.⁵

4. *Ibid.*

5. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi; 1983, p. 299.

'Azad Punjab': Seed of Separatism

Though British intelligence services functioning in India including the military intelligence had been deliberately fostering separatist trends among the Sikhs, these attempts now assumed a new dimension. The colonial rulers wanted to wean away the Sikhs from the main national stream. It was in this situation that the concept of 'Azad Punjab' was evolved by the agile and fertile mind of Giani Kartar Singh. The author of the 'Azad Punjab' visualised that those territories of the Punjab where Hindus and Sikhs predominated should constitute a separate unit. The 'Azad Punjab' would have included the maximum Sikh population, with no single community being in an absolute majority. The Hindus and the Muslims would have been 40 per cent each in the population and the Sikhs 20 per cent. The population of the Sikhs would have increased to 24 per cent with the merger of the Sikh princely states.

By the time it became clear that India would be divided into two states on the basis of 'two-nation theory', the Sikh communalists also started demanding an independent state. Till then the word Sikh 'Qaum' was loosely used to convey that all those who were devotees of the Sikh religion constituted a religious minority. But when the 'two-nation theory' was accepted and India was divided, the Sikh communal leaders too raised the demand that since the Sikhs were a 'nation', they should not be left at the mercy either of Pakistan or of Hindustan.

It was in this backdrop that Akali leaders demanded an independent state for Sikhs. The demand was formally put forward by the Akali Dal in a resolution passed on 22 March, 1946: "Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language, traditions and history claim it as their homeland and holy land which the British had taken as a 'trust' from the last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the community of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and face the danger of being absorbed by the Hindus on the other, the executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal demands for the preservation and protection of the

religious, cultural, economic and political rights of the Sikh nation the creation of a Sikh State which would include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their sacred shrines and historical Gurdwaras with a provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property, wherever possible and necessary."

It is not accidental that Coupland's concept of an 'agency centre' and this resolution of the Akali Dal should leave no one in doubt that the slogan of 'Khalistan' which has been raised in recent years have many common features. It means, what British imperialism failed to accomplish in the mid-forties is now being sought to be achieved.

Another important fact of history also needs to be examined in this connection.

Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala admitted in an article published in a newspaper as late as on 19 July, 1956 that in a meeting with Jinnah at a dinner hosted by the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten, "Liaquat Ali Khan and Begum Liaquat Ali...., went out of their way to offer on behalf of the Muslim League everything conceivable. I was to be the Head of this new Sikh State..... the Sikhs would have their own army and so on."⁶ This admission by the late Maharaja speaks for itself and needs no comment. That the Sikhs did not fall a prey to this conspiracy speaks volumes of their sense of patriotism. Once again, the credit goes to the robust Sikh peasantry and the nationalist Sikhs for having upset the apple cart of the communalists and the Sikh princes.

Organised Violence to Force Dismemberment

Since this knocked down the British plan to dismember India, organised communal violence was unleashed to uproot the people from their traditional homeland. The fury of violence was let loose on the Hindus and Sikhs in Rawalpindi division for obvious reasons. The size of non-Muslim minorities in the proposed Pakistan state was considerable. To enable Pakistan

6. *The Tribune*, Chandigarh 19 July, 1959.

to create a theocratic state, it was essential to change the composition of the population of the areas which were to constitute the new Muslim state. The table given below makes this abundantly clear:

Table showing Composition of population in the areas of future Muslim States.

	North-Western Area	
	Muslims	Non-Muslims
Punjab	16,217,242	12,201,577
N.W.F. Province	2,788,797	249,270
Sind	3,208,325	1,326,683
British Baluchistan	438,930	62,701
	<hr/> 22,653,294	<hr/> 13,840,321
	62.07%	37.93%
	North-Eastern Area	
	Muslims	Non-Muslims
Bengal	33,005,434	27,301,091
Assam	3,442,479	6,762,254
	<hr/> 36,447,913	<hr/> 34,063,345
	51.69%	48.31%

Source: *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1950 p.30.

It was under these circumstances that the Akali leaders gave up the demand for an independent sovereign state. Articulating the aspirations of the patriotic Sikhs, Baba Kharak Singh, in a press statement on 14 April, 1947 said:

"I am a staunch advocate of Akhand (undivided) Hindustan... Should, however, partition become inevitable and be unfortunately thrust upon us, I would plead for adequate safeguards and legitimate protection for the non-Muslim minorities living in the territories proposed to be partitioned".⁷

However, behind the scene attempts continued to wean away the Sikhs from the national main stream. Three different alternatives were placed before the Akali leaders by certain go-betweens. These alternatives were:

- (1) a separate unit of eastern Punjab with a position in Pakistan equal to that of any other unit such as Sind or western Punjab;
- (2) special privileges for the Sikh minority in western Punjab; and
- (3) special privileges for the Sikhs in Pakistan as a whole.

But all sections of the political opinion among the Akalis and other Sikh leaders rejected these proposals. Naturally the British rulers were far from being happy with this 'mood' of the Sikh leaders who had decided by that time to save for India and for themselves as much of the Punjab as they could from going into Pakistan. At the meeting with the Indian leaders on June 2, 1947 Lord Mountbatten said that "he was most distressed about the position of the Sikhs". Incidentally, this is how Punjab came to be partitioned and with it the Punjabi speaking people.

'Punjabi Suba': Basically a Communal Demand

After 1947, there was a temporary thaw in the communal politics of the Akalis. The Akalis joined hands with the Congress to form the first government in East Punjab (now Punjab). This nominee, Sardar Baldev Singh, was already a member of the Central Cabinet. At that stage, the Akali Dal took a clear stand that it was opposed to communal electorate. But after a few years later, in the mid-fifties, the Akali Dal raised the demand for the linguistic reorganisation of the Punjab, though this demand had communal orientation, as in the past.

In their memorandum submitted to the States' Reorganisation Commission (SRC), for instance, they had proposed that the 'Punjabi Suba' should comprise Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur,

Ambala, Karnal (excepting Panipat) Sirsa, Bhatinda, Kapurthala, Fatehgarh Sahib and Sangrur (leaving out Jind and Nirwana tehsils) districts of the Punjab and the Ganganagar district of Rajasthan with a population of nearly 1.20 crore.

Subsequently, when the regional formula was introduced, the Akalis agreed that the Punjabi region should consist of the districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jullunder, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Kapurthala, Bhatinda, the Ropar and Chandigarh assembly constituencies in Ambala district, Patiala district excluding Kandaghat and Nalagarh tehsils and Sangrur district excluding the Jind and Nirwana tehsils having a total population of 86,02,608.

Significantly enough, Kangra district with a population of 9.32 lakh which with the exclusion of Lahaul-Spiti and part of Kulu, is a Punjabi speaking district, was not included in the Akali proposals made to the SRC. Moreover, that part of Himachal Pradesh which adjoins Punjab, leaving out North Mandi, North Suket, parts of Chamba Mahasu Rampur areas, Bushair and Chini tehsils, are essentially Punjabi speaking areas according to the Linguistic Survey of India. These areas were also excluded from the Akali blueprint for the 'Punjabi Suba'. The reason for these exclusions are obvious. In fact, the Akalis wanted to carve out a state in which Sikhs would be in majority. If Punjab had been reorganised *strictly* on the linguistic basis the proposed state would not have served the Akali communal objective, the Sikhs being out-numbered there.

It is a commonly known fact that Devi Lal as the representatives of all the parties comprising 'Haryana Committee' and Gurnam Singh as the representative of the Sant's Akali Dal alongwith ten other leaders had concluded written agreement that the two regions should be made the basis for the demarcation of the boundaries of the two states and any adjustments should be made through negotiations. It was also decided that village should be made the basis for settling disputes arising over the fixing of boundaries. Though no negotiations were actually initiated following the agreement, Sant Fateh Singh had committed himself to settle disputes over adjustments of boundaries through consultation and discussion. He resiled from this position soon after Punjab had been reorganised.

Linguistic Reorganisation: A Baffling Problem

The Punjab Pradesh Congress, after the reorganisation of the state, reiterated that the demarcation of the boundaries should be done strictly on a *linguistic* basis and did not hesitate to demand the main chunk of Kangra district for inclusion into the new state. Though Sant Fateh Singh too gave support to this stand of the Pradesh Congress, he did not firmly state that he would press for the inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas of Kangra district in the Punjabi speaking state, despite his professions of secularism. If this were not so, he would have come out of the Golden Temple and campaigned among the masses particularly among the non-Sikhs to convince them about the legitimacy of this demand.

After Punjab was reorganised and trifurcated into three states Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, the Akalis started another agitation and demanded that Chandigarh should be given over to Punjab and all the so-called 'common links' between Punjab and Haryana such as the High Court should be snapped.

Curiously enough, Chandigarh under the regional formula, was declared 'bilingual' and after the reorganisation of Punjab, it became the common capital of the two states.

Within a few months, the Akalis again started an agitation over the merger of Chandigarh with Punjab. It was in this situation that another solution was evolved and it was agreed that Chandigarh should be given to Punjab and in return Fazilka and Abohar areas should be handed over to Haryana. This was obviously a very odd decision. The Sant had then accepted this arrangement. Now, once again, true to form a controversy over Chandigarh is raging in Punjab and predicated passions are running high.

This is how linguistic reorganisation of Punjab has always been a baffling problem since the partition of the country in 1947. It has defied all solutions and every formula so far evolved has created new complications, leading to communal polarisation in the state. Apart from this aspect, the Akalis themselves have been shifting ground and after every concession made to them with a view to solving this problem, they

have been coming forward with newer demands and thus there has been no finality about what has come to be known as the linguistic reorganisation of the Punjab.

Hindu-Sikh Relations: The Basic Issue

It is obvious that the problem of Punjab today essentially is: how Hindu and Sikh relations are to develop? There are two directions in which these relations can move: integration or a loose binding together with grouses and grievances multiplying on both sides leading ultimately to disastrous consequences. The Sikhs represent a variation on the Hindu way of life and culture which is frankly heterodox. This means that the entire question of emotional, cultural and linguistic integration of the Punjabi speaking people as a part of the national mainstream has to be examined in depth and both long and short term policies must be evolved to achieve this objective.

Both the communities — the Hindus and the Sikhs — are closely bound to each other through ties of culture and race and a strong belief in progress through dynamic hardwork. After independence, the Sikhs inside Punjab and in the rest of the country became active participants in the task of nation-building. They are getting integrated into the political entity of the Indian nation, comprising all the components of the Indian people. In the new conditions owning in independent India, communalism based on religion or more specifically, on fundamentalism and revivalism, lost much of its pull with the Sikhs. It is obvious that till the sixties, objective conditions did not readily provide any fertile ground for movements of the nature of fundamentalism, including Sikh fundamentalism. This is to recognise the fact that in the name of the Sikh religion outright divisive and secessionist ideas could not be preached, or at least they did not appeal to the general Sikh masses. This is confirmed by two facts. In the fifties, Master Tara Singh who approached the Sikh masses with fundamentalist propaganda slowly lost ground to Sant Fateh Singh. Secondly, soon after the reorganisation of Punjab, the Akali politics began to be somewhat influenced by secularism.

Growth of Sikh Fundamentalism

Nevertheless, in the late sixties, communalism in Punjab as in other parts of the country began once again to raise its head. A revival of communal activities in the political field surfaced distinctly among the Sikhs during the following decade. The precondition for this phenomenon had been created by the sharpened, internal socio-economic contradictions which were reflected in the political structure also. Reactionary forces made use of the opportunity to boost communalist and separatist tendencies. They incited communal conflicts with the intention of weakening the democratic movement by dividing and antagonising the various sections. An attack was launched against the principles and policies of independent India and the principle of secularism, being the first to be undermined. The role of Hindu chauvinist organisations under these conditions has been nailed down recurrently by democratic parties as well as governmental institutions. As a simultaneous and parallel move, reactionary elements and organisations among the Sikhs focussed their attention on the Sikh masses, in order to win them over to their side and to weaken and break their link with the democratic and left forces.

Conservative and reactionary elements in different camps bagged maximum benefit from this move. Their activities assumed a menacing proportion and began to pose a challenge to national unity, integrity and social progress. On the basis of their common opposition to the secular-democratic set-up of the country, the Hindu as well as Sikh communal bodies found an appropriate platform for an understanding and even for a political collusion to a degree. Evolving a modified approach as a seemingly new attitude, representatives of both the sides began in the later part of the seventies to issue clean chits to each other denying the harbouring of any communal designs. All this coincided with mounting attacks—open or subtle—by imperialist and other external reactionary forces on India's policy of principled unity among the nonaligned, on her support for national liberation struggles and forces of social progress in the liberated countries, and on her policy of friendship and cooperation with socialist states. It is in this context that revivalist trends in India can be meaningfully evaluated.

In recent years, ideas of Sikh fundamentalism have sought to be spread among the Sikhs in India and abroad through conservative organisations. The dissemination of such ideas in the given circumstances only strengthened the attitude of communal exclusiveness and helped to juxtapose communal identity and national unity. Linked with hostility to social progress, the propagation of Sikh fundamentalism in contemporary Indian public life paved the way for the legitimacy of internal as well as external forces of conservatism and reaction.

Though it may be incorrect to draw firm conclusions from the election results, they do reflect to a certain degree the erosion which has taken place in the social base of the congress (now the Congress-I) and the two communist parties — CPI and CPI(M), as a result of the rise of Sikh fundamentalism. On the other hand, both the Akali Dal and the Jana Sangh (now the Bharatiya Janata Party) have gained at their cost.

The Congress in the Punjab after independence became the weakest Congress organisation in any of the major regions, a fact reflected in the percentage of votes polled by it. The Congress polled 31.3 per cent of the total votes as against 24.0 per cent polled by Akali Dal. However, under the leadership of late Pratap Singh Kairon, the Congress widened its base in the Sikh peasantry. Nevertheless even in this period the hold of the Congress among the Sikh peasants remained weak in the Malwa region which mostly consists of the erstwhile princely states.

The Congress support-base among the Sikh peasantry in the Punjab state as a whole from 1962-65 to 1977-80 may be measured from the percentage of support base of the party in the two districts in these two periods. On this basis it seems that the Congress support-base among the Sikh peasantry came down from around 34 per cent in 1962-65 to 14 per cent in 1977-80. In the same period, the Congress succeeded in consolidating its support-base amongst the scheduled castes in view of the prevailing class conflict between the peasant proprietors and the landless scheduled caste labourers.⁹

This is further confirmed by the changes in the composition

9. M.S. Dhani, "Changing Support Base of the Congress Party in 1952-80" *Punjab Journal of Politics*, January-June 1984, p. 94.

of the Congress legislature party over the last three decades. The Sikh representation in the party came down from 62.4 per cent in 1962 to 44.4 in 1980.

What seems to have happened is that if in the Kairon period, the base of the Akali Dal under the leadership of Master Tara Singh was mostly confined to the urban areas, especially among the refugee Sikhs, in the post-Kairon period, it was extended to the rural areas also. In the same period, the Congress further consolidated its support-base among the scheduled castes, including the *Mazhbi* Sikhs and other backward Sikh communities.

Though in terms of the votes polled, both the CPI and the CPI(M) have not lost ground, the social base of the two parties too has been undergoing a major change. In 1952 the CPI and the Lal Communist Party (a splinter group which later joined the CPI) polled 8.2 per cent of votes and in 1980 these two parties were able to increase it to 10.84 per cent. All the same, the steep decline in the influence of the communist-led *Kisan Sabhas* and the rise of pro-Akali trend in the communist movement in the Punjab is a clear reflection of the change in the political and ideological commitment of the Sikh peasantry.

Economic Roots of Sikh Fundamentalism

One obvious explanation for the growth of Sikh fundamentalism is rooted in the economy of the state and particularly in changes which have taken place in the state's economy, both in industry and agriculture since independence. In the urban areas, the trading castes among the Sikhs operate at a lower level as compared with the Hindu traders. Agriculture and trade are evidently very much linked with each other. During the last fifteen years or so, this link has grown much stronger in the wake of modernisation of agriculture since most of the agricultural inputs and outputs in the rural areas have to pass through the traders in urban areas. It results in a clash of economic interests between the dominant castes in the two religious categories.

At the same time, Sikh traders, smaller in number and opera-

ting at a lower scale, have to contend with competition from Hindu traders. Such a clash of interests is inevitably extended to all other domains of economic activity. Findings show that Hindus display a greater tendency towards flocking to the urban areas as compared with the Sikhs. The Sikh trading castes — which are not particularly loved by the Sikh cultivating castes in fact, the stereotypes of distrust and dislike between the Bhabha and the Jat are not insignificant—find in religious symbols the only way of defending their trade interest.

The green revolution has led to phenomenal change, with wheat production rising to a record of 2,538 kg per hectare and rice to 3,001 kg per hectare with a rate of annual rise in productivity of 5.86 per cent, per capita income rising to Rs 1,962, per capita consumption of electricity rising to 308 kwh and consumption of fertiliser to 108 kg per hectare.

The green revolution has brought forth a highly prosperous class of capitalist landlords and rich peasants. They are not only ruthless exploiters of the local landless workers hired out by them and of the migrant land workers from Bihar and UP, hired through their agents and contractors and treated as bonded labours, they are also contenders for power at all levels—from the *panchayat* and *bloc samitis* to the state legislature. They work through both the major parties in the state—the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal—though a considerable majority supports the Akali Dal and in fact, virtually controls it.¹⁰

Class Character of Akali Politics

There is yet another side of it. Though the green revolution has increased agricultural production, it has enormously strengthened the hold of the upper rung of the landowners on the economy of the state. It is they who have been the main beneficiaries. According to the agricultural census of 1971, 21.5 per cent of cultivators tilling less than half an hectare each, account for only 1.94 per cent of the total cultivated area, 56.2 per cent of cultivators who till less than two hectares cultivate only 15.1 per cent and 82.7 per cent tilling less than 5 hectares of land ac-

10. Avtar Singh Malhotra, "Post-Independence Economic Developments in Punjab" *Party Life*, June 1984 p. 17.

count for only 43.8 per cent of the areas while only 5 per cent of the farmers who cultivate above ten hectares account for 26.9 per cent of the total cultivated area. According to another survey those owning 20 acres or more constitute 10 per cent of the total number of cultivators while they own 37 per cent of the total cultivated area, and those owning less than 5 acres constitute 48.44 per cent of total cultivators and own only 13.13 per cent of the cultivated area. This unequal distribution of land has further increased over the years.

It is interesting to note that *some of the biggest land owners among the Sikhs today hold key positions both in the Akali Dal and the SGPC*. The class composition of the Akali Dal and the SGPC graphically illustrates this fact. Former Akali chief minister Prakash Singh Badal is one of the biggest landlords of the state and he has landed interests outside the state also. To say this does not, however, mean that the Congress(I) does not have substantial support and backing of the big landowning classes. In 1980 election, the Congress won maximum percentage of 49.25 per cent in Ludhiana and won nine out of the twelve assembly seats. This became possible because seven constituencies were urban or semi-urban. In the other two constituencies won by the Congress, they had put up pro-Akali congressmen who could appeal to the Sikh masses. On the other hand, in rural district of Kapurthala, having around 61 per cent of the Sikh population, the Congress could win only one seat out of the total of four, the rest of the seats going to the Akali Dal.¹¹

Along with the concentration of land in the hands of a small minority of land owners, the number of the agricultural workers in Punjab has been rapidly increasing. In 1961, of the total workers on land the agricultural workers constituted only 17.30 per cent while in 1971 the percentage rose to 32.1 and in 1981 to 38.26. The socio-economic survey conducted by the Punjab government shows that 8.24 lakh families lie below the poverty line (i.e. with an income of Rs 3,600/- per annum) and are mostly in the rural areas and comprise 38 per cent of the rural population. Nearly 50 per cent of them belong to the scheduled caste. It has been estimated that 24 per cent of the

11. See Note 8, p.93

small farmers and 31 per cent of marginal farmers live below the poverty line.

In political terms, the new prosperous land owning class naturally wants to match its economy-muscle with political power. Since this class which controls both the Akali Dal and the SGPC cannot capture political power on its own, it is exploiting Sikh religion for its interest. This class is conscious of the need to broaden its political base. It has attempted unsuccessfully to share power with the Congress as its junior partner in the fifties. After the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966, it tried another experiment and shared power with the Jana Sangh. But this experiment also failed because the two communal forces could not provide a stable government nor could the Akali Dal further strengthen its position. Therefore, it needed new slogans to rally the poor and the marginal Sikh farmers who had become mistrustful of those Akalis who were in power. The various 'Dharam Yudhs' launched by the Akali Dal during the last one decade, some on territorial questions and others on economic issues were directed to raise the expectations of the poorest sections of the Sikh population, including the frustrated youngmen both the rural and urban areas. The higher their hopes are raised the more bitterly they feel betrayed by the policies of the Akali leadership. This drives the Akali leaders to become all the more communal and sectarian and exploit religious ideology ruthlessly. The need to exploit religious ideology is therefore directed to achieving ideological consolidation, particularly among the frustrated and dispossessed Sikh masses.

It will not be incorrect to say that the ideological basis for establishing 'an independent entity' of the Sikhs, different from the Indian nation was laid in a calculated manner by the Akali Dal itself including its moderate leaders. A close scrutiny of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution passed on 16-17 October 1973 and the list of 45 demands submitted by the Akali Dal in September 1981 to the Centre are quite revealing in this regard.¹²

12. See the text of Anandpur Sahib Resolution in Appendix V

Anandpur Sahib Resolution: A Fundamentalist Document

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution does not limit itself to demanding a restructuring of centre-state relations and to ask for more powers to the state. It calls for "maintaining the feeling of a separate independent entity of the Sikh Panth and creation of an environment in which the 'national aspiration' of the Sikhs can be full and satisfactory", as one of its political aims. It lists a number of areas from neighbouring states for the creation of a 'New Punjab', as a "sample administrative unit wherein Sikhism and the interest of the Sikhs can be specially protected". The division of powers between centre and states is not simply based on a desire to rationalise centre-state relations but is actually an insidious attempt to emasculate the centre. In 'New Punjab' the authority of the centre is to be confined only to the "defence, foreign relations, communications, railway, and currency. All the residuary subjects (departments) are to be under the jurisdiction of 'New Punjab', which should have the right to frame its own constitution for these subjects"... "New Punjab should contribute its share of the necessary finances for the Centre in the ratio of its members in the Lok Sabha.... the Akali Dal will strive to make the constitution of India federal in the real sense and ensure that the authority and representation of all the States are equal at the Centre". Then follows a denunciation, in line with the then stand of the Janata government at the centre, of the country's foreign policy.¹³

What is most revealing is that in these two documents of the Akali Dal religion, politics and economics have been so closely interwoven that it becomes abundantly clear that the Akali leaders are *determined* to establish a theocratic state. Though these documents talk about establishing socialism in accordance with the teachings of the Sikh gurus, they seek to *demolish* at every step the integrity and unity of India. In this process, the Akalis arrive at the inevitable conclusion that "the monopolistic hold of the capitalists foisted on the Indian economy by 30 years of Congress rule in India" has led to a situation in which

13. Avtar Singh Malhotra, *Save Punjab Save India*, New Delhi, 1984. pp. 14-15

the central government has assumed all powers in its hands "after the manner of Mughal Imperialism".

After having made out that the Akali Dal "is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation" and that the "SGPC is the only representative institution of the Sikhs", it does not have to labour the point that on all essential matters it wants to *retain the existing exploitative system, in which the new emerging landed aristocracy will dominate.*

The Akali Dal has demanded that necessary amendments be made in the Hindu Succession Act so that "a woman should be given rights of inheritance in the properties of her father-in-law instead of the father's". It has also reiterated that the agricultural lands "of the farmers should be completely exempted from the Wealth Tax and the Estate Duty". It opposes application of Land Ceiling Act to gurdwaras and urges that the land holdings up to 30 standard acres should be exempted from the land ceiling legislation. Though the Akali Dal has demanded complete nationalisation of trade and food grains, it has strongly opposed "the demarcation of food zones and the attendant restrictions on the movements of foodgrains".

So far as the industrial policy of the Akali Dal is concerned, it has demanded that all key industries should be brought under the public sector and that each public sector undertaking should be made autonomous. Interestingly, in the same breath, the Akali Dal has *opposed* nationalisation of the Punjab and Sind Bank.

In these comprehensive documents of the Akali Dal there is *nothing concrete offered to the industrial workers and the agricultural workers.*

The Centre is sought to be emasculated through the increasing autonomy of the state to near independence, and by making it *helplessly dependent* on the states. The formulations about the Sikh nationhood and the role proposed to be assigned to the SGPC are blatant assertions for taking the Akali Dal to the very threshold of Khalistan. There is much in common between the ideological and political position of the moderate Akalis and the extremists and whenever and wherever they have differed,

the former have readily yielded ground to the latter. Thus there has been only a thin line separating the dominant Akali leadership and the exponents of the 'Khalistan'.

'Khalistan': A Neoimperialist Game

Though it was on October 13, 1971 that Jagjit Singh Chauhan inserted a half-page advertisement in *The New York Times* detailing the reasons for establishing the 'sovereign' Sikh state of 'Khalistan', its ideological basis in India was evolved later. At that stage neither the international community nor the Sikhs in India paid much attention to this advertisement. The slogan for 'Khalistan' was generally dismissed as a cry in wilderness. Chauhan had first raised the slogan of 'Khalistan' publicly at a press conference in London in September, 1971. On April 12, 1980, he announced the formation of 'National Council of Khalistan' with himself as the president and Shri Balbir Singh Sandhu as its secretary general. Three months later he proclaimed from London the formation of the state of 'Khalistan' a similar announcement having been made in India by Balbir Singh Sandhu.¹⁵

It is not without reason that soon after, Ganga Singh Dhillon, an Indian-born American national, in his presidential address to the 54th Sikh Educational Conference at Chandigarh, in March 1981, described the Sikhs as a nation and advised them to seek associate membership of the United Nations on the lines of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.¹⁶

The Akali Dal (Talwandi group) did not take long to pass a resolution echoing the same sentiments. The SGPC leadership also fell in line in course of time.

It is not difficult to see how the ground for the secessionist slogan has been prepared, wittingly or otherwise, both by the Akalis of all hues and factions and by the congressite Sikhs. They have been trying to outdo each other at the tricentenary and quincentenary celebrations of the first and tenth Sikh

15. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, Government of India, New Delhi, July 10, 1984, pp. 35-36

16. Satinder Singh, *Khalistan*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 44

Gurus, Nanak and Gobind Singh in 1967 and 1969, respectively, the centenary celebrations of the formation of the Singh Sabha in 1973, the tricentenary observation of the martyrdom of the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur in 1975, and at the current centenary celebrations of the birth anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab.¹⁷

During the last two years or so most of the Akali leaders, excepting Parkash Singh Badal, have denied or soft-pedalled the doings of the extremists in one form or the other. Even Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, the president of the Akali Dal who is supposed to be opposed to the demand for 'Khalistan' and who has often reiterated that he stood for Hindu-Sikh unity has never taken a bold or firm stand vis-a-vis the extremists. For instance, he failed to realise that his threat at the time of the Asiad games or his appeal to the Commonwealth leaders on the occasion of CHOGM meet was an openly disruptive move. Such postures do not only tarnish the country's image but also provides ammunition to the anti-Indian forces. The burning of Article 25 (ii) of the Constitution was yet another step which strengthened the ideological base of extremism.

Though the army action in the first week of June 1984 has struck a mortal blow at the entrenched position of the secessionists, in the Golden Temple complex, their hold on the minds of the Sikhs has yet to be broken on the political and ideological plane. A sense of disquiet among the Sikh masses has been surfacing of late, particularly as reports about recent happenings within the gurdwaras, particularly within the Golden Temple complex, have started percolating through the masks of lies and slander. It has to be admitted, however, that several secessionist organisations are freely operating abroad. The chief among them which have raised the slogan of 'Khalistan' or a 'separate Sikh state' are the National Council of Khalistan, Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa and Akhand Kirtani Jatha. The 'National Council of Khalistan' headed by Jagjit Singh Chauhan is active in the UK, West Germany, Canada and the USA. The Dal Khalsa activities are mainly concentrated in UK and West Germany, while the Babbar Khalsa is operating largely from

17. *Ibid* p. 45

Vancouver in Canada. The Akhand Kirtani Jatha has units in UK and Canada. They obviously have their 'mentors' goading them on.

Nonetheless, the time has come when the Sikhs whether living inside Punjab or outside, should assert themselves unequivocally against the desecration of the gurdwaras, above all of the holiest of the holy in Amritsar. It is heartening to note that, a section of them in India as well as abroad have already started raising their voice against the crimes committed by the extremists.

The moral of the recent happenings in Punjab is that attempts to foster communal ideologies and aid and abet religious revivalism run counter to the goal of the democratic advance and provide not only convenient levers to the forces engaged in undermining country's sovereignty and integrity but also create conditions for the reversal of the nationally accepted foreign policy of nonalignment and anti-imperialism.

11. US-Pak Collusion: The Punjab Theatre

As India enters the mid-eighties, her future has become a major question in world politics. There are many reasons for this. The seven hundred million people of this country comprise nearly one-fourth of the total human race. They have not only wrested political independence from the British rulers but also have embarked on the path of economic independence. If colonial India in the past was the bastion of British imperialism, today's free India with its dynamic domestic and external policies, has become a vital factor in global politics. India is not only the head of the nonaligned movement but has also been a consistent champion of peace, disarmament, elimination of the danger of nuclear war and above all, of a new international economic order. Thus India is playing a great and positive role in shaping modern international relations, for which the American ruling circles are naturally far from being happy. They have, therefore, engaged themselves in a tough battle for destabilising India, if possible balkanising her.

Long before the recent developments in Punjab, American scholars forecast that by the end of the present century, India would no longer remain as a united nation and *split* into a large number of states. This academic exercise in reality betrayed the thinking of the American ruling circles. In the last three years, these prophets of doom have been more outspoken on this crucial question relating to the unity of India. Let us examine the following:

“Unfortunately, for reasons too complex to discuss in detail here, the United States has generally failed to come to satisfactory terms with India since independence. The

Gandhi regime pursues an anti-American policy on a number of issues, the most obvious being Afghanistan and South-East Asia, but India is not the giant it claims to be, in fact, it more aptly suggests the Chinese epithet, a paper tiger. *Its weakness lies in its many unresolved domestic and international problems; apart from endemic poverty, there is a noticeable growth of separatist movements, to the extent that there is a real possibility of the balkanisation of India which would destroy its influence in the Third World and elsewhere. Such a development, while raising a host of new problems, would undoubtedly seriously damage the interests of the Soviet Union, a traditional friend of neutralist India. But even if India does not succumb to balkanisation, the non-Communist opposition to Indira Gandhi might consolidate its ranks and create an increasing possibility for the emergence of a realistic alternative government. The United States could watch the erosion of the Nehru-Gandhi tradition, almost irrespective of the form it takes, with some complacency*"¹ (emphasis added).

In fact, since the notorious Coupland plan, the US policy makers have developed a passion for disintegration of India. Though the game started with the 'Kashmir dispute', over the last 40 years, they have been drawing maps of India with new 'Sikh', 'Christian' and other American satellite states. It was, however, not merely an academic exercise.

Before we come to this aspect of the American policy towards India, it will be pertinent to make a passing reference to other facts of destabilisation.

India for long has been the target of neocolonialist policies aimed at destabilising her. Numerous attempts have been made to bring pressure to bear upon its governments. Nefarious acts, from prompting anti-government actions to bribing select opposition leaders, have been undertaken.

1. Mrs Jean Kirkpatrick's "Operation Balkanisation of India". Jean Kirkpatrick, US Ambassador to the United Nations, not only authored the blueprint, *Balkanisation of India* but also presented the broad outlines of her plan in Washington on February 27, 1982 before a group called the "Conservative Political Action Conference". For full text see appendix IV

The US has, over the last few years, been attempting to destabilise the internal political situation in India with the help of CIA operations and domestic extremist and separatist forces. It has also been seeking to create a hostile atmosphere around India and to change the alignment of forces in the region to India's disadvantage, thus forcing the country to divert funds from development purposes, and join a forced armed race. This end is pursued through massive exports of up-to-date arms to neighbouring Pakistan.

Washington also pursues an economic policy which is detrimental to the interest of India. It curtails, or even *denies* financial aid to India. Washington has been contemplating to impose 'tougher terms' for giving loans to India.

Here is a remarkable example. According to western classification, India is a 'low-income bracket country'. However, she had in 1980 received an official aid from the industrialised capitalist states which was smaller than the one received by Israel, which has 195 times less population than India and ranks as an industrialised capitalist country.

Moreover, in mid-1982 the IBRD, under whose aegis a consortium for aid to India operates, announced its decision to cut almost by half its relatively easy-term IDA loans to India.

Another instance of western, particularly American, policy of economic blackmail regarding the states that would not toe the western line, is the World Bank's decision to cut India's share *substantially*.

Now, let us analyse why the imperialists chose Punjab to start their offensive. It is among those states which constitute the backbone of the Indian economy. It has the highest per capita income. Around 81 per cent of its area under agriculture is irrigated and 98 per cent of the area under wheat and 94 per cent of area under rice are under high-yielding varieties. Punjab has recorded the highest average per hectare yield both of wheat and rice. Between 1974-75 and 1983-84, the production of foodgrains doubled. During this period the share of Punjab in total national production of rice increased from less than 3 per cent to around 9 per cent. At present Punjab accounts for more than one-fifth of the total national output of wheat. The state has been the largest contributor of both rice and wheat to na-

tional kitty. Without its contribution it is difficult to run the public distribution system and keep prices under check. Punjab provides employment opportunities to a large number of agricultural labourers from Bihar, Orissa and eastern UP.

The decline in Punjab's agricultural economy will adversely affect country's industrial economy too. Punjab with its highest per capita income has a very high demand for industrial goods. It has the highest per capita consumption of motor vehicles, synthetic fibres, tractors, pumping sets, fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides and a large number of consumer goods.

It plays an important role in India's export trade. Its exports consist of engineering goods, electrical appliances and gadgets, woollen and cotton hosiery goods, sports goods, readymade garments, etc. It produces 60 per cent of bicycles, and 95 per cent of woollen hosiery units are located in Punjab. As much as 75 per cent woollen hosiery products are exported. Any slackening in the production of industries, catering to export needs, will lead to further deficits in the balance of trade. India will have to curtail its imports or seek commercial loans and both these alternatives are infurious. Products of Punjab's industrial units constitute a significant portion of India's exports to the Soviet Union. If India fails to fulfil its commitments to supply agreed volumes of these goods, the Soviet Union will be forced to look elsewhere. The loss of the Soviet market cannot be easily made up.²

On August 30, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi lashed out at the US for not honouring its commitments and for violating agreements. Her anger was understandable. Notwithstanding, India's efforts at improving relations with the US, the US administration has undertaken actions that only inevitably lead to a further slide in relations. This is precisely what is under discussion here. As a matter of fact, American suspicions regarding India not only persist but are hardening under the Reagan administration primarily because India is following an independent policy.

More relevant to India is Washington's view of the regional

2. Girish Mishra, "Punjab: Economics of Destabilisation", *Link*, New Delhi, July 15, 1984.

equations and the way it is building the military might of Pakistan and is working out some sort of an alliance with other countries in the region with Pakistan as the key link. Whatever might have been Carter administration's reservations about India and whatever might have been the nature of its attempts to strike a balance between India and Pakistan, it is certain that Washington now is actively engaged in destabilising India, both economically and politically. The *operation destabilisation Punjab* has both these objectives in view. But here we are mainly concerned with the overt and covert attempts of the Reagan administration to weaken Punjab.

The former director of the CIA William Colby had in an interview to *Time* newsmagazine declared that "The US intelligence service has interfered and will go on interfering in the affairs of other States if their policy infringes upon USA's interests". These words are true of India too.

After India won independence, it began to occupy a special place in CIA's plans. The American secret services have set for themselves the aim of destabilising at *all costs* the political situation in our country in order to make India give up its progressive foreign policy.

Elections to the various bodies of power have always been regarded by the American espionage department as convenient time for implementing its plans. For example, Carol Lucy, former first secretary of the US embassy in India, was expelled from India in 1957 for her attempts to influence the outcome of the election campaign. CIA agents Keeland and Moor, who worked in the guise of correspondents, were forced to leave India in 1962 on the same ground, William Grimsley, Herbert Spivak, Edwin Peachouse and a number of other American citizens staying in India were accused of interfering with the course of the election campaign in 1967. Americans Terrence Douglas, Norbert Garret and John Yates were found giving active assistance to right-wing forces during the general elections in 1977.

The situation has not changed now. Several months before elections were held in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura—separatist violence broke out in Tripura in North-East India. A certain Dr Barutz, who turned out to be a CIA agent, was implicated in instigating them.

As far as the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are concerned, the US Consulate in Bombay, the closest American centre to them, received instructions to step up work among the local branches of the ultra rightist terrorist organisation 'Anand Marg'. Clearly the aim of the CIA was to plant its own people among politicians, the army and the police.

Some American experts, who have conducted research in CIA operations, have come to the conclusion that a major change has taken place in the *technique and operation* of the CIA in the eighties in the third world countries, particularly those countries which are following an independent foreign policy. The most important facet of this technique is what these experts call "to spy and disrupt". In fact, this has become the cornerstone of almost all undercover activity organised by the CIA in political parties, groups and institutions of those countries, which have been identified as 'hostile and unfriendly'. India obviously comes in the category of an 'unfriendly' country. The crux of the matter is that the CIA is an important political limb of the US administration in implementing its foreign policy.

It is against this backdrop that the CIA activities in Punjab need to be examined. Any analysis at the moment, of CIA operations in Punjab in the recent past has its own limitations, as more facts are yet to be unearthed. It is well known that both in India and abroad the CIA has been the *most active American instrument for the promotion of the secessionist movement of Khalistan*.

In this connection, two revealing facts need to be recapitulated.

Harry Barnes, US ambassador in India, equated the 'Khalistan' demand with the freedom struggle of the people of Puerto Rico in an interview in mid-June 1983. It was widely reported in the Indian press. It may be mentioned here that Barnes has been listed in authoritative *Who is Who in CIA*, compiled by Dr Julius Mader on pages 46-47, though the US ambassador has covered more areas since this publication. And he knows more languages than mentioned there. This controversial book is taken seriously by American researchers into, and campaigners against the CIA.

It is also worth mentioning here that the posting of another CIA operator George Griffin as a diplomat in India in the US embassy was blocked by the Indian government.

However, a senior American diplomat of the rank of the first secretary has been a frequent visitor to Chandigarh in the recent past. During the course of his various visits to this ultra modern city, he has been meeting journalists, politicians and some officers. Obviously these mysterious visits had some definite link to what was happening in Punjab.

The self-proclaimed 'Khalistan' leader Jagjit Singh Chauhan's enjoying patronage from top-ranking US authorities raises genuine fear about America's direct involvement in the present Punjab crisis.

"Despite protests from the Government of India he (Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan) was able to secure an entry visa to the United States in 1982 in March 1983".³

The version that Chauhan was admitted into the United States without a valid passport for 'humanitarian' (specifically health) reasons despite Indian protests appeared to be a fiction that even the man's fellow-travellers did not take seriously.

"He's healthy like a horse", said Ganga Singh Dhillon, the other active figure claiming to speak for the 'Sikh nation' and trying to whip up secessionist sentiments from sanctuaries in North America, told *The Hindu* in reply to a question.

When the assurance from the US secretary of state to the Indian external affairs ministry that Chauhan would not be permitted to engage in advocacy of "violent means to challenge the authority of the government of India" and to propagate the 'Khalistan' demand was mentioned by this correspondent, Mr Dhillon laughed. He described the government's credulity as "very childish", and added: "I can tell you one thing for your information. He (Chauhan) has given no commitment to any government".⁴

3. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*. Government of India, July 10, 1984 p 37

4. N. Ram, in a despatch from Washington, *The Hindu*, Feb. 26, 1983.

Chauhan has been acting in close liaison with Ganga Singh Dhillon, an American citizen of Indian origin and president of the Nankana Sahib Foundation of Washington. Dhillon has also been canvassing that the 'Sikhs are a separate nation' and maintaining contacts with US senators, and persons in the higher echelons of the Pakistan administration.⁵

However, the Washington-based propagandist of non-Indian nationality denied not in response to any question but on his own — that he was a 'CIA agent'. He described himself as an "independent man, a business consultant with investments" who had "more money than I can use". After having bitterly attacked Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and accusing her of "dancing at the instance of a foreign power, namely the Soviet Union" he predicted that "the next explosion will be like a *Jwalamukhi*, that will leave everlasting scars on the face" of India. He did not stop at that. He said that if a meaningful dialogue with the Sikh leadership did not take place, it would be making "the same mistakes Mrs Gandhi's father had made with Jinnah".

Dhillon and his associates are known to have active contacts in the US Congress and in official and political circles in Washington. He has been brushing shoulders with the American senators.

It is equally significant that Dhillon has been in close contacts with the Pakistani rulers. In one of his letters to Dhillon written as early as on October 13, 1979, the Pakistani military dictator General Zia offered 'optimum facilities' for the Sikh religious shrine of Nankana Sahib (in Pakistan). Dhillon has been claiming that he has 'personal friendship' with General Zia.⁶ Even if one overlooks this direct evidence about the US involvement in the secessionist movement of 'Khalistan', there are other revealing facts too, which establish its complicity.

Eugene Ray Clegg, 35, an American school teacher in Islamabad, was sentenced in February 1983 to ten years' imprisonment by a Pakistani military court on the charge of smug-

5. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, Government of India, July 10, 1984 p. 37.

6. N. Ram, in a despatch from Washington based on his interview with Mr. Dhillon, *The Hindu*, Feb. 25, 1983

gling arms. The government story was that Clegg had imported a consignment of rifles for use in his science classes. Islamabad's diplomatic community assumed that Clegg had been selling arms both to the Afghan *Mujahedins* and the 'Khalistani' secessionists.

The CIA operations in India had to be extraordinarily discreet; neither the United States nor Pakistan wanted to give any political handle to New Delhi. The agency's rule was largely limited to arranging shipments of arms, paying the bills and training the terrorists in the various camps in Pakistan.

Recently a Pakistani businessman who had lived long in the United States started building a tyre factory in that country. It was discovered that some of the crates of 'equipment' delivered to the factory contained arms. The businessman was arrested, released and has faded from view. Many Pakistani industrialists do not think he would have embarked all by himself on such a major investment as a freelance arms merchant. The CIA, they point out, was probably a silent partner.

In the first phase of the secessionists movement, it seems most of the arms were supplied either by Pakistan or by the US. In the final phase, however, China too joined the gamble through the Jammu and Kashmir state. There were, of course, many middlemen and both Indian and Pakistani smugglers who played a major role in this matter.

Covert operations by CIA have increased five-fold under the Reagan administration. The administration is now said to be conducting about 50 covert operations in the whole world. A return to covert action was forecast in the 1980 platform of the Republican Party. "We will provide our government with the capability to help influence international events vital to our national security interests, a capability which only the United States among major powers has denied itself", it proclaimed, in pointed reference to the decimation of CIA undercover ranks under President Jimmy Carter and CIA Director Stansfield Turner (operatives were pared down to perhaps 300 from a high point of a few thousands in the early 1960s).⁷

The CIA and Pakistan intelligence establishments were ac-

7. *Newsweek*, Washington, October 10, 1983.

tively involved in the training of anti-India terrorists in specialised camps in Pakistan. This was also corroborated by terrorists apprehended and interrogated after the army action in Punjab in the first week of June 1984.

The information revealed that terrorists and extremists were trained in camps at various places in Pakistan by its intelligence agents, one of whom was designated as 'station chief' and another 'second-in-command'.

Muslims in the guise of Sikhs were trained in Qasur by a brigadier of Pakistan artillery regiment. Each batch consisted of 300 to 400 Muslims and the term of training was three to four months.

Another centre was run in a gurdwara at Emnabad in Gujranwala district specially for espionage and 'black propaganda'. Similar centres were run at Rahim Yar Khan near the Rajasthan border, Attock Fort, Daud Fort and Sheikhpura city.

Training was also imparted to extremists in the military college at Abbotabad in batches of 200 to 300.

The trainees in these camps were smugglers, proclaimed offenders and other bad elements operating on the borders. They were recruited by Pakistani intelligence with the help of 'influential persons' living in the border districts of Punjab and Rajasthan who lured them with substantial financial help.

After the completion of training, which included use of sophisticated weapons and ammunition and 'hate campaign against India', these terrorists were smuggled into Punjab from various points in Jammu, Rajasthan and Punjab for carrying out operations. These points included Hira Nagar in Kathua district in Jammu, Bassaobarwan sector in Gurdaspur district, Khem Karan and Dull posts in Amritsar district, Mamdoot sector in Ferozepore district and Ganganagar in Rajasthan.

Arms and ammunition were also being smuggled into Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) from various points of Punjab and Rajasthan for use in Jammu and Kashmir for sabotage purposes.⁸

8. *The Daily*; Bombay, June 26, 1984

Preliminary interrogation of an extremist arrested by the army from the Golden Temple revealed that he was a Pakistani who had supplied specialised detonators to the extremists positioned inside the temple, disclosed Lt Gen K Sundarji GOC-in-C western command, at a press conference. The extremist had admitted that he entered India on a Pakistani passport to supply these detonators. He had stayed at the Golden Temple even after his visa had expired several months ago.⁹

The CIA and Pakistani involvement, both morally and materially, evoked indignation in all political circles in India. Several members of the parliamentary consultative committee attached to the external affairs ministry demanded that it should categorically identify Pakistan and the CIA and establish their direct involvement in the Punjab happenings.

What madness has come over Washington that it should let the CIA play with fire in the Indian subcontinent? This pertinent questions had been posed by the entire Indian press. But what intrigued the people most was that when this sordid drama was being enacted US Vice President George Bush told the Indian press that the Reagan administration regarded India as a pillar of stability of this part of the world. He obviously was not speaking the truth.

Though official circles are keeping their lips tight, they have admitted that there was some foreign hand behind this secessionist movement. External affairs minister P V Narasimha Rao had to fall back upon diplomatic fineness to wriggle out of an awkward situation created by these disclosures. He had to admit that "we now have certain positive evidence of foreign involvement in our internal affairs".¹⁰

Nonetheless, it has been officially admitted that Chauhan has links with various organisations in the US and Dhillon too has been proclaiming that the Sikhs are a 'separate nation' and maintaining liaison with the US senators, and persons in the higher echelons of the Pakistani administration.¹¹ In this connection a startling fact which has come to light is that Chauhan has contacts with the Heritage Foundation of Washington —

9. *The Telegraph*; Calcutta, June 19, 1984

10. *The Daily*; Bombay, June 28, 1984

11. *White paper on the Punjab Agitation*; New Delhi, July 10, 1984

which is a CIA outfit — though official circles have not identified this foundation in these terms.

CIA director William Casey was not far from the truth when he said that the CIA's 'main target' in the next few years would be developing countries and it would support 'US friends' in these countries.

India is a 'unfriendly' country and the US is supporting its 'friends' and the Sikh secessionists are one among them. The US in collusion with Pakistan has launched an all out attack on India's unity and integrity. The CIA has found right contacts among a small section of the Sikhs both in India and abroad. China too is a party to this game, though at present it is striking a low profile.

What is important to note is that in addition to direct military intervention in some of the 'unfriendly' countries, latest example being Nicaragua, the new strategy of the Reagan administration as evolved by the new CIA boss William Casey is to lend active support to counter-revolutionary and secessionist forces. What is happening in Afghanistan, Angola, and Kampuchea is too well known, though this is by far an incomplete list of US imperialism's 'accomplishments' in the realm of international terrorism and violence.

In the arsenal of the CIA's secret subversive operations, priority is now patently given to what is referred to a 'paramilitary operations' that enable Washington to fight 'undeclared wars' against many nations, to knock together with every new army of mercenaries, to destabilise the situation in some countries and regions, and to bring into play fascist and rightist terroristic gangs. This kind of 'para-military' activities, according to calculations of John Stockwell, former chief of the CIA's task force in Angola, led to the death of more than a million people over a period of 30 years.

The CIA has set up numerous special camps in the US and in other countries for the training of mercenary cut-throats. State-sponsored terrorism against Cuba has been practised for a quarter century now. It included the landing of mercenaries in Cuba and more than 20 attempts on the life of Fidel Castro.

In all, according to US experts, the CIA is now carrying out paramilitary operations in some ten countries, Afghanistan

included. The scale of 'para-military' operations against Kampuchea, Libya, Angola, Ethiopia, and Guatemala is also being enlarged. The CIA takes steps to destabilise the situation in Iran, Chad, Ghana, and in the Indian states of Assam and the Punjab.

This policy of state-sponsored terrorism undermines and eventually wrecks generally accepted standards of international behaviour in the first place, and the principle of peaceful co-existence of states with different social system.

Seen in this context, it will not be difficult to conclude that the destabilisation of Punjab through active support to the forces of terrorism may lead to dangerous consequences, the chief among them being the creation of a new area of tension in the Indian subcontinent.

What is more disturbing is that the the CIA support to secessionist forces in India, especially in Punjab, assumed a new dimension after the US Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was incorporated into a new regional command of the United States armed force (CENTOM) in the beginning of 1983. Though its headquarters are at present located at McDill near Tampa, Fla, the military base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean is identified as the future location.

The strategy for South-West Asia, including the Persian Gulf, requires that the US forces be prepared, if necessary, to get access by force and not to wait for invitation from a friendly government.¹²

The rapid deployment force has another objective — to prevent anti-imperialist changes such as those which, took place in the 1970s in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Iran. J Holst, the director of the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Politics said in this context that this force could "produce the effect of a deterrent. It ... may ... encourage regional forces in their intention to resist a process of transformation".¹³

Significantly CENTOM is responsible for a large number of

12. *New York Times*; May 30, 1982.

13. J J Holst, *Bedrohungen ausserhalb des NATO: Gebiets, Europa Archives*, Bonn, 21/1982 p. 635

countries in Asia and Africa and among them Pakistan stands on top.¹⁴

Notwithstanding official denials, Pakistan has already become a springboard for imperialist subversion and intervention in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. As a matter of face, after the construction of a military base at Mehdi-Ye-Koh in Baluchistan, a special unit of Pakistan army has been created, which is directly linked with the American Central Command (CENTOM).

Even a cursory glance at the map would indicate the confluence of interests between the US and Pakistan in this region, especially with the latter's obsessive hostility towards India.¹⁵

Against the background of conflict and discord, mutual distrust and suspicion in Indo-Pak relation Pakistan's return to the US fold is hardly surprising. In return for promoting US interests, Pakistan is being armed with some top-of-the-line weapons which would be more suitable against India than in the rugged mountains to the West.¹⁶

All these facts make it clear why the Washington-Islamabad axis has been coordinating activities to destabilise and balkanise India. Sober elements in Pakistan have begun to see through this game. The Urdu daily of Karachi *Aman*, has said that there is evidence of external involvement in the Punjab.

The paper has listed three main indications of possible foreign involvement in Punjab. Firstly the weapons found in the Golden Temple were not meant merely for committing terrorism and dacoities. The quantity of sophisticated arms found in the complex could not have been stolen from the ordnance depots without being detected. The source of most of these weapons was external.

Secondly, Shahbeg Singh had been cashiered and therefore was an aggrieved man. A foreign country apparently exploited his grievance and secured his services for training insurgents...

14. *Frankfurter Allegemeine*, December 28, 1982.

15. R. G. Sawheny; *US-Pak Security Relationship*; monograph presented at a Seminar on Indo-Pak Relations, New Delhi, 24-25 April, 1984.

16. *Ibid.*

The cost of the training was being met by affluent Sikhs abroad who had admitted that they were making preparations for a 'Khalistan' government in exile¹⁷ (emphasis added). But more telling was the response of the Ataulah Khan Mengal, the former chief minister of Baluchistan (Pakistan's western province) almost a month before the recent crisis took a precipitous turn in Punjab. In a letter to Khan Wali Khan, another democratic leader of Pakistan, he said:

"In South Asia, a strong, united and independent India could not serve the interests of the British rulers. It was, therefore, necessary to create into being a country (Pakistan) which could not only block India's development but become a permanent threat to its independence. The British rulers could not find a better instrument for this than exploiting religious sentiment For this dirty trick, they selected this tool This is how India was divided.

He goes on to say in this letter that

a country which has been created to serve the interests of imperialism.... a country which is based on genocide how can people of such a country comprehend what is the significance of human rights, humanism and above all democratic values..... But in spite of this, the rulers of Pakistan call it an 'Islamic State'.¹⁸

Mengal, who has lived in exile since his release from prison in 1977, is still regarded as a potent political force in the province. His arrest in 1973, along with most of his provincial cabinet, set off a province-wide rebellion which the Pakistan army could suppress only through brutal repression.

What Mengal has said is not only an incisive attack on the imperialist conspiracy in this subcontinent but unmasking with remarkable courage the logic of building a theocratic state.

17. *Azad Baluchistan*; London, April 1984, a free translation from Urdu.

18. *Ibid*

Part IV

**Socio-economic Roots of the
Present Crisis**

NIRMAL SINGH

V.D CHOPRA

12. Sikh Fundamentalism and its Support Structure

In recent years, a new phrase, the 'rise of fundamentalism' has entered the currency of journalistic jargon and academic discourse, though the term 'fundamentalism' has not yet acquired a precise definition. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines 'fundamentalism' as "maintenance, in opposition to modernism, of traditional orthodox beliefs such as the inerrancy of Scripture and literal acceptance of the creeds as fundamentals of protestant Christianity"; whereas 'fundamental' is explained as "of the groundwork, going to the root of matter, serving as base or foundation, essential, primary, original, from which others are derived". But this does not lead us much to present day's understanding. In fact, this phrase seems to have come in usage in the recent decades and it originated in the United States. It has now acquired a definite content. 'Fundamentalist' is a group of theologically conservative protestant churches that arose in the United States in the 1920s. Derived from a group of dissenters who called themselves 'fundamentalists', these churches have claimed to defend the standards of orthodox Christianity against the Liberals or Moderates; i.e., those protestants who incorporated biblical criticism into their theologies and attempted to make the church relevant to the social dilemma of the era (emphasis added).¹ It is also relevant in this context that Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the most influential American theologians of the 20th century. His special contribution was his stress on the issues on the borderline between theology and social ethics. His criticism of the prevailing theological liberalism of the 1920s significantly changed the in-

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 7 p. 357

tellectual climate within the protestant churches in the United States, and his enormous contribution in political thought, both inside and outside the church made him the "greatest living political philosopher of America".² This is no place to go into the details of fundamentalist, revivalist movements in our own country but one thing is certain that a blind veneration for the various religious philosophies did exist in our long history.

Certain events in the last decade, in a number of former colonies and semicolonial countries of West Asia, especially the spectacular Iranian 'revolution' led by Ayatollah Khomeini, gave a jolt to the self-confidence of the thought categories in the west. In the years of the anti-colonial struggle, broad sections of the population in many Muslim countries, especially in Afghanistan, Algeria, Líbya and Syria rallied under the banner of Islam and counterposed its ideas to the hostile ideologies of the colonialists. As in India, in these countries too, in the minds of the masses, religious ideas are very often blended with nationalist ideology. In this situation, the term fundamentalist became a handy instrument to lump together, the progressive urge of the people for liberation from the imperialist stranglehold in all walks of life — political, economic and cultural. But it has another aspect too.

One of the principal ideas of Islam for instance is that of obedience — submission to fate. This fatalist attitude towards life, a feature which is common in all the religions, has always suited the ruling conservative forces in the Muslim countries, since they want to see the working masses kept in submission to the sultans, amirs, sheikhs and other feudal lords. This idea is also seized upon by the imperialist countries, who rely upon the local feudal aristocracy to help them plunder and exploit the masses. Even today, the landlords, wealthy capitalist bankers and usurers continue to enrich themselves by exploiting poor Muslims whom they still call 'our brothers' as they loudly profess their loyalty to 'true Islam'. In this way traditional institutions and ideas are deliberately and erroneously, taken over by the ruling bourgeoisie to 'fit' into their grand capitalist scheme, in full knowledge that such superficial nods in the direction of

2. *Ibid* Vol. 13, pp. 74-75

tradition do not affect the existing economic structures and relationships (between landlords and their tenants, capitalists and labourers). Similar in intent is the official religious policy of the state (Pakistan). *The call to prayers is broadcast by the official media, and the masses are asked to pray regularly, to fast in the month of Ramadan, and to pay Zakat from their savings. These rituals have no effect on the existing economic structures; on the contrary, they render them sacrosanct, as the poor people are reminded again and again that poverty and riches are divinely decreed and their distribution is not a function of the economic system.*³

The mix of politics and religion, conceptually is inherent in 'fundamentalism' and needs to be explicitly brought out to avoid confusion, especially when our country too is witnessing a similar phenomenon.

Sikh Fundamentalism

In the multireligious country like India, the denotation and connotation of fundamentalism and revivalism obviously is different from the 'Muslim world' or the 'world of Islam'. Unlike these countries, religious minorities — Muslims, Sikhs and Christians together constitute about 15 per cent of the population. That being the situation, Hindu fundamentalists and revivalists with their slogan of 'Hinduisation' of our polity and culture create more favourable conditions for growth of fundamentalism among the religious minorities. The psyche of being a religious minority in itself provides a fertile soil for fundamentalism to grow among them for 'Islamic unity' or 'Panthic unity' which spontaneously sinks into their consciousness. More aggressive and articulate the Hindu fundamentalism is, more intense becomes the urge among the religious minorities to rally round the fundamentalists from their respective religions and vice versa.

Rise of Sikh fundamentalism is not a recent phenomenon. But it came to be recognised after Sant Jarnail Singh

3. Ziaul Haque: "Pakistan and Islamic ideology" in Hasan Gardezi and Jamil Rashid (eds), *Pakistan: The Roots of Dictatorship — The Political Economy of a Praetorian State*, Delhi, 1983, p. 370

Bhindranwale shot into national prominence on April 13, 1978 when some of his followers 'marched to death' from the Golden Temple to attack a Sant Nirankari Samagam, which was regarded by them as an 'anti-Sikh heretics' assembly. Since then he managed to continuously hit the headlines in national and international media till his death in the wake of Indian army's 'Operation Blue Star' on June 5-7, 1984. His actions ranged from 'pious' calls for 'religious purification' for Sikhs to organising terror squads to kill leaders of Nirankari faith and many prominent Hindu and even Sikh intellectuals, journalists and publicmen who disavowed his approach. Even those who gave half-concealed support to the secessionist 'Khalistan' demand or to open communal violence earned his wrath. Bhindranwale phenomenon, his ideology of dogmatic sectarian interpretation of Sikhism, organisation of terrorist actions both against dissenters within the Sikh fold, and Nirankari and Hindu opponents and government leaders and functionaries and finally the aim of carrying out a state where his coreligionists would enjoy constitutional supremacy over others—has been called 'Sikh fundamentalism' by a number of foreign and Indian commentators. The term has got a currency for which Bhindranwale phenomenon provides a denotational element.

If one accepts this concrete historical manifestation as an accidental aberration, there is nothing more to it. This assumption will lead to the conclusion that the phenomenon is dead with the person of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Alternatively, one has to look for the underlying structures in cultural traditions and societal arrangements to comprehend the roots of the phenomenon termed as 'Sikh fundamentalism'. We take the latter view, hopefully our efforts would provide some answers, howsoever lacking in certitude, to the question. How serious is the challenge to India's survival as a modern nation-state with multi-religious society?

We have now accepted calling the historically specific Bhindranwale phenomenon as 'Sikh fundamentalism' with a view to discover the connotation or intension of the term, by spelling out its important attributes. By asking the question as

4. *Index and Abstract of News on Communal Tension in Punjab, 1982*, CRRID, Chandigarh July, 1983 provides an excellent recall of the phenomenon.

to why the term is applied to Bhindranwale phenomenon, we can also unearth other — past, present or future — denotations or extension of the term. Orthodoxy, puritanism, dogmatism, militancy, violence, terrorism, political religiosity, communal politics, communal identity, self-image of being the *elect*, separatism and secessionism are some of the attributes that have been associated with the manifestation of the phenomenon. We would argue that three traits of dogmatism, terrorism, and separatism are quite comprehensive to subsume or develop other traits. None of these can be set aside, if the phenomenon is to be recognised.

This, however, does not mean that one should ignore or underestimate the role of an individual in giving a new dimension to Sikh fundamentalism. But what is important to remember in this regard is that emergence of certain individuals, who become symbols of a certain politico-ideological trend and in this case of Sikh fundamentalism, is not a chance of events; they themselves are product of certain social forces. Before influencing the course of events, they themselves are subjected to the influence of objective conditions. Of course, an individual who comes to represent a particular ideological trend is a product not only of the given historical circumstances but also of the individual conditions influencing the formation of his personality. This close relationship between the social forces which give a new lease of life to fundamentalism, and the role of an individual needs to be studied, because a large number of analysts and academics have tried to interpret the recent developments in Punjab in terms of the role of one individual or the other. This approach is *superficial* and takes into account only the features that strike the eye. It is quite easy to be deluded into thinking that the emergence of an individual or the role of another individual is the chief cause of the tragic events of Punjab. Such an approach creates an 'optical illusion' in which the individual overshadows the social forces which give birth to the 'individual' to play his role in the history. The natural corollary of such a superficial analysis leads one to an erroneous solution, as the problem is seen in a *distorted* framework, in which the entire focus is on the *individual* and not on the objective reasons.

Though it may look simplistic, but conceptually, fundamentalism in Punjab's context can be described as an amalgam of

religious fanaticism, separatism and terrorism.

Fundamentalists' deep-seated hatred against the Nirankaris — a religious sect which preaches the concept of one formless God and believes that he can be realised only with the help of a living guru — the assassination of Baba Gurbachan Singh, the spiritual head of the Nirankaris; their preference for baptised Sikhs (*Amritdharis*) over all others; spirit of intolerance shown by them towards all voices of dissent including from the devotees of the Sikh religion add up to bring out, how bigoted they had become.

The stand of the Akalis on the famous Anandpur Sahib resolution needs no comments. But the extremists among them openly advocated that the Sikhs cannot either live in or with India.⁵ Thus they not only stand for the separate entity of the Sikhs but openly proclaim that they want an *independent state*. The fundamentalists outside India, however, are more forthright in raising this demand. Political religiosity, assertion of separate identity and the idea of being the elect — the various facets of communal politics — get logically and empirically linked with separatism. The idea of being God's 'chosen instruments' and the so-called 'identity crisis' are expressions of their degree of separatism from the national current. The milder forms with passage of time and in supportive context mature into secessionist demand for a separate sovereign state. Militancy and violence are abstractions without any social content, unless tagged on to some tangible goals. Hence the slogan: "Political power is not served to anybody on a platter; nor it can be acquired through *Bhakti*, without guerilla warfare and without an armed revolt it would be impossible to achieve our aim. Political power flows out of the barrel of a gun".⁶

A Brief History of Traditions

What support does fundamentalism find in Sikh tradition?

Sikh religion is relatively a very young religion. It began with

5. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, *Sunday Observer*; June 10, 1984, the interview was given on June 3.

6. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, New Delhi, July 10, 1984

Guru Nanak in the later half of the 15th century. It emphasised unity between the two existing religions of the Punjab after stripping them of empty ritualism, dogmatism and in egalitarianism that had crept in their social practices. As with so many other reform movements routinisation set in with later institutional development.

By the 17th century the movement developed into a formation of a third religious community. That century saw the institutionalisation of Sikhism in compilation of sacred writings of the gurus, founding of places of worship, assignments of persons in different areas to gather new adherents to propagate the faith and finally in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh organising baptismal (*Amrit*) ceremony at Anandpur Sahib, transforming the Sikhs into militant crusaders (*Khalsa*).

As the Sikhs grew in numbers and organisation, they earned friends and foes among ruling chieftains, pretenders, the Mughal emperors, their courtiers and contenders.

These 200 years witnessed the growth of Sikhism and its transformation from a religious sect into a military cult, though the final transformation of the Sikhs into a militant sect was accomplished by Guru Gobind Singh. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, militant Sikhs flourished for less than a decade in central Punjab under Banda Bahadur Singh. The 18th century found the Sikhs living in adverse socio-political climate of foreign attacks and internal disunity till the emergence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1799 he established himself as the first and the last Sikh sovereign. He established a vast empire conquering Kashmir, spreading influence in Sindh and keeping the British at bay till he died. Nevertheless, his rule cannot be described as a Sikh rule in theological or even communal sense of the term. *Hindus and Muslims enjoyed highest position and influence with him.*

Sikh traditions, like all historically evolved traditions, are marked by heterogeneity. Any reconstruction of tradition, has of necessity, to be selective idealisation, to keep it logically consistent and active in the contemporary society.

'Fundamentalism', conceived as a complex of dogmatism, separatism and terrorism, can derive very little sustenance from the Sikh traditions on any consistent basis. The trouble for

the 'fundamentalists' increases more they go 'fundamental' in terms of the religious ideas propounded by the gurus. Sikhism arose with Nanak in opposition to the then prevailing dogmatic practices of Hinduism and Islam. The Holy Granth has a heterogeneous collection drawn from Sikh gurus and *Bhaktas* coming from both Hindus and Muslims, the case to be built for Sikh separatism on the authority of *Granth Sahib* is impossible except by a gross distortion of isolated excerpts and for terrorism unthinkable. The dogmas of Sikhism from Nanak through Arjun Dev to Gobind Singh are so consistently antidogmatic, opposed to all distinctions among men of caste, creed or breed and aimed at total eradication, of fear from human mind, that support for 'fundamentalism' has to be sought outside the fundamental (basic) sources of Sikh religious tradition or with the help of 'logical' interpolations.

According to Sikh tenets no body can push away anybody else from a gurdwara, wherever there is a *sat sangat*.⁷ *Rahitnama Prem Sumarang*, ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh has in its 5th injunction: If a person comes to the congregation of the Khalsa, then five Sikhs should go out to receive him and seat him in their midst with due courtesies. Again injunction 6 of *Rahitnama Bhai Desa Singh*, an associate of the tenth guru, enjoins: All the religions and ways of life that are there in the world, one must not disparage any of them.⁸

Guru Arjun Dev says: I have forgotten the concept of otherness, since I have realised '*Sat Sangat*': Now none is a stranger to me and I am in tune with all.⁹

Guru Tegh Bahadur says:

Bhay kahun ko det nahin na bhai manat an.

Kaho Nank sun re mana giani tahey bakhan

(Oh my mind listen Nanak says that one who neither terrorises others nor gets terrorised then alone is he called learned one).

7. Sher Singh Sher: *Glimpses of Sikhism and Sikhs*; New Delhi, 1982, p.207.

8. Dr Gopal Singh: *History of the Sikh People*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 740.

9. n.7

Guru Gobind in Dasam Granth says: The temple or the mosque are the same, the Hindu worship or the Muslim worship are the same, all men are the same, it is through error they appear different.

Even *The Sikh Rahit Maryada*, brought out by SGPC in 1950 after a thorough discussion by various bodies of the Sikhs and Sikh intellectuals for more than twelve years, requires of a Khalsa (a baptised Sikh) to maintain his distinctive ways of life, but the Khalsa should not injure the followers of other faiths.

In principle, as Sher Singh has concluded after a detailed study, the Khalsa did not belong to any party or group, nation, race or language. The traditional Sikh greetings, "*Wahiguruji ki fateh*", (Pure belongs to God; Victory to God!) envisages the Khalsa as totally submerged in All Mighty and His Creation. That is why the daily prayer ends in "*Nanak name charh di kala, tere bhane sarbat ka bhala*" (God's name is always on the ascendancy and by His will everyone would be benefited). Thus in principle the Sikhs scriptural traditions did not lend any support to dogmatism, separatism or terrorism.

Roots in Traditions?

Does that mean that 'fundamentalism', is without any roots in Sikh traditions? This is not quite true. No religion or for that matter, no group lives entirely by its declared principles. A number of half-authentic stories connected with the biographies of gurus are passed on from generation to generation through written (*Janam Sakhis*) and word of mouth (*kirtan* in Sikh congregation). They are designed to band together the lay followers of the faith, arouse passions sometimes even against other religious communities and reinforce the desire to subdue the infidels. They are stories of valour, violence and war.

Fed by these stories, imagination can run riot and passion does have the better of reason. Guru Har Gobind took up the combined role of *Miri-Piri* (secular and religious headship). The slogan of *Deg-Teg-Fateh* (victory to shared religious life and the sword) was given. He also made the statement: "Religion cannot flourish without political rule" under conditions of extreme persecution. Guru Gobind Singh had to live under worst condi-

tions of religious suppression and developed the concept of *Sant-Sipahi* (Saint-Soldier). Now these can easily be expanded to occupy the entire space of Sikh traditions and be made to look as if the total tradition is to wage a war all the time and under all circumstances against adherents of other faiths and against government in which members from other religions also share power.

It is worthwhile to recall that both Har Gobind and Gobind Singh were installed Gurus at a very young age, after their fathers had been done to death on the orders of the Mughal emperors.¹⁰ 'Fundamentalist' misreading and context-free accentuation of certain historical events is made effective by a statutory control of some two hundred important gurdwaras by Akalis (through SGPC along with its seven crore annual budget) and thousands of paid employees and religious preachers including the Jathedars of Akal Takht, Dam Dama Sahib and Anandpur Sahib Takhts. These Takhts can also issue judgments (*Hukumnamas*) on secular matters concerning the Sikhs. These religious structures can lend support to 'fundamentalist' interpretations.

It is from the secular traditions developed in later period establishment of the Sikh Mils culminating in original Dal Khalsa¹¹ and Ranjit Singh's rule, that martial and violence stories lend themselves to support separatist and terrorist ideology, by relegating the religious dogmas to the background. Sikh communal leadership, in the British period, had succeeded in advancing a dubious tradition of separatism and inflated self-image of physical prowess as against other Indians. The building of these new traditions was well supported by the British rulers and scholars. For roots, these traditions looked adjacent to separatist tendencies in adjacent communal formations like the Muslim League, rather than in Sikhism. Two illustrations are worth quoting. They exemplify the substructure of contemporary 'fundamentalism' also, with only a change of personalities involved. Following in the wake of Muslim League separatism, Shiromani Akali Dal, led by Master Tara Singh, asked for separate electorate with weightage for Sikhs, reservation of a disproportionately high quota for army

10. See n.8

11. *Ibid* pp.382-85

recruitment and in other governmental jobs, and finally through a March 22, 1946 resolution demanded a Sikh state to escape Muslim majority domination and Hindu absorption. In his autobiography Master Tara Singh, undisputed leader of Akali Dal and SGPC for decades, regretted that through ignorance he could not materialise in the Punjab the example of Israel, where Jews a minority could convert themselves into the dominant group through legal and illegal population transfers.¹² But then these traditions of separatism and terrorism do not go deep in Sikh history, certainly not in the religious history. They have to look side ways for support in anti-democratic imperialist propped-up political formations and propaganda.

The apologists of British imperialism tried to make out that India with the diversified assembly of religions, with the barriers and division of castes, of the languages and other differences and with the widely varying range of social and cultural levels, inhibiting the vast subcontinental expanse of India did not constitute a nation. To establish this, they distorted the entire history of our country and gave it a communal interpretation. According to this brand of historians Guru Gobind Singh “organised the sect into the *most dangerous and implacable enemy of the Mughal empire and the Musslim faith*”¹³ (emphasis added).

This is not only a patent falsehood but a deliberate attempt but to communalise our history.

Nonetheless, the fundamentalists are facing another problem. Notwithstanding the fact that the Sikh gurus fought against the caste system, the devotees of the Sikh religion are still divided into ‘Keshadharis’ and ‘Sahajdharis’. Besides this, there are various other sects of the Sikhs—Nihangs, Namdharis, Nirmalas and the Udasis — fact which is recognised by the Akali leadership and the SGPC. These sects have their own interpretation and thus give their own emphasis to the Sikh religion. They have separate organised structures, properties and institutions.

The fundamentalist, therefore, have to place their reliance either by misrepresenting the traditions of the Sikh religion or

12. Ibid pp. 652.

13. *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol IV, p. 245.

to certain isolated religious statements, which can be interpreted differently by different people. Since no interpretation has been made about the Sikh religion and its evolution in the context of the historical conditions in which it was evolved and how it was essentially a movement for religious reformation on one hand and to bring about a synthesis between Hinduism and Islam, by mixing together the best elements of these two religions in those conditions, the fundamentalist have a free field. This does not mean that one should underrate the importance of exogenous structures for bolstering up or blocking Sikh fundamentalism.

Caste Hierarchy Among the Sikhs

Sikhism arose with Nanak, as much against empty ritualism of the Brahmins as against the closed caste system that prevailed in the society at that time. It was a revolt of the downtrodden in religious form, common with Bhakti movement in the diverse parts of India. Nanak's triple code of conduct for the Sikhs — Kirat Karo, Wand Chaako, Nam Japo — has an instant egalitarian appeal for peasants, artisans and small traders only, as they were already engaged in manual labour for their living, had only to gain in egalitarian shared living and to find solace in the conceptualisation of God, who wills the good of all.

The appeal of Sikhism as a faith for the lower castes is a historical fact right up to the time of Ranjit Singh, when one of the lower castes itself, namely Jats, came to occupy dominant position through military exploits. All the Sikh gurus came from the trading caste of Khatri. But it is worth-noting that of the two constant companions of Nanak one was a Jat and the other a Mirasi. His dearest disciple Bhai Lalo was a carpenter (Tarkhan). When the eighth guru died without naming the successor, it was a Shudra who discovered Tegh Bahadur to be the ninth guru of the Sikhs. After Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in Delhi, two persons from the lowest caste reclaimed his severed body when imperial terror kept others away. When Gobind Singh in 1699 started the *Khalsa Panth*, four out of the five original initiates (*Panj Piaras*) were from lower Hindu caste and it is they who initiated Guru Gobind Singh as a Sikh.¹⁴

In principle Sikhism denounced and abolished caste system but in social practice even the Sikhs were taken over by the system.¹⁵ The castes among the Sikhs have undergone many changes in occupations, property relations and differential political advantages through various phases of accretion to the Sikh faith. Today about 60 per cent of Sikhs are Jats, a landowning peasant caste.

It would be poor sociology if the remaining 40 per cent were to be discounted. Castewise Sikhs are a heterogeneous group but united in their faith across castes. Caste distinctions are almost banished from the religious congregations, somewhat weakened in the socio-economic fields due to modernisation effects and also as a consequence of adherence to Sikh faith but they still play significant role in determining political positions and behaviour.

A detailed study of the castes and its hierarchy among Sikhs, since the end of the last century up to the advent of Independence, has revealed that the Jat Sikhs were on top unlike the hierarchy among the Hindus. But the absence of Brahmins at the top and in absence of Sikh religious sanction for the caste system the hierarchy finds legitimacy almost entirely in the volume of property owned and control of political power. i.e. mundane bases. Jat supremacy was due to their being early converts to Sikhism, numerical preponderance at all times and Jats being the ruling group in Ranjit Singh's times. Recent increase in the economic power of the farmers has further strengthened the status of the Jats. Khatri Sikhs rank next as all Sikh gurus were *Khatri*s. *Tarkhans* and *Kalal*, were below but very near the *Khatri*s by virtue of educational and industrial attainments. *Kambohs*, *Malis* and *Sainis* were other agricultural castes and *Arora*, *Lahars*, *Sonars*, the trading and artisan castes came next. At the bottom came the scheduled castes — *Ramdasi*s and *Mazhabis*. The *Mazhabis* had moved up as a corporate group much so that the British declared them agriculturalists. A number of *Tarkhans* and Jats have come up as business entrepreneurs and also in professions.¹⁶

15. n.8. p.289.

16. Ethne K. Morenco. *The Transformation of Sikh Society*, New Delhi, 1976. pp. 295-96.

The Jat are the dominant caste among the Sikhs. But for the Sikhs there is no lack of internal contradictions based on caste-link, which get reinforced due to conflicting class interests, especially between the landowning gentlemen farmer's and landless labour represented by Jats and scheduled castes respectively. The rural classes in the Punjab almost replicate the extremes of the Sikh caste hierarchy.

It is no accident that Bhindranwale a Jat himself did not find any known adherent from the lower castes. And if communist leader Satyapal Dang is to be believed, in about 35 villages in Amritsar the youth from these lower castes constituting the farm labourers (about 25 per cent of the population) had threatened armed defence against being involved in Bhindranwale politics.

Caste-Class Dialectics

It has been noted that "not only were the social classes heterogeneous, but that members of a particular Sikh caste in changing their occupation on the individual level, become part of more than one social class".¹⁷ So it would be futile to seek explanations for political ideological phenomena like 'fundamentalism' in simplistic representations. Yet it may not be fortuitous to observe that none of the Marxist groupings extended any support to Bhindranwale at any stage. Probably their working class orientation put them in opposition to 'fundamentalism'. Both Sikh and non-Sikh communist leaders found top place in the fundamentalists' hit-list. Even Naxalite groupings in the Punjab with their own brand of terrorist proclivity denounced Bhindranwale and one of their editors paid with his life.

Yet another aspect of Punjab's problem is that after 1947 its demographic composition has changed in favour of the Sikhs. This in turn gives a communal complexion to the socio-economic situation in the state and becomes handy for the fundamentalists. There is no doubt that out of the five 'Sikh Takhts' — the seats of religion — two, namely Patna Sahib and

17. *Ibid.* pp. 302-3.

Nander Sahib are outside Punjab. Nankana Sahib Gurdwara associated with the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak is in Pakistan. Again it is also a fact that for every four Sikhs of Punjab, at least one lives outside the state. Migration of the Sikhs from the state to other parts of the country on a large scale too is an important factor. Despite all this, the main concentration of the Sikh population is in Punjab and this has increased rapidly after 1947. This should make it clear that demographic structural changes, if seen along with other aspects of the society in Punjab, promote fundamentalism.

Economic Development and Emerging Class Interests

Punjab indeed has made a remarkable economic progress during the last two to three decades. Diverse political and ideological conclusions have been drawn from the same set of facts. Over the entire period of 1969-74, the primary sector in Punjab has grown three times faster than the rest of India, the secondary sector 1.3-times faster and the tertiary sector has grown at slightly higher than the national average¹⁸

If one looks at Punjab's economic development, particularly in the field of agriculture and increase in its per capita income, it is not difficult to arrive at the conclusion that age expectancy in the state up to 1978 was 1.4 times higher than the national average. Out of 40 per cent of country's population, those who live below the poverty line, Punjab's share comes to one per cent as against 16 per cent in UP and 13 per cent in Bihar.¹⁹ However Punjab's requests for generating more power and water were thwarted by every succeeding government at the centre and a fair proportion of central resources and setting up of heavy industries were denied to the state.²⁰ This too has generated extremist demands for separation and decentralisation of the powers of the centre, some experts feel. But there are some Sikh intellectuals who have given a different interpretation to this economic growth of Punjab and have traced it to Sikh religion!

18. Dr. G. S. Bhalla, in a monograph, *Summary, New Wave*, New Delhi, July 8, 1984.

19. n. 8 p. 714.

20. *Ibid.*

"It is a collective endeavour of sheer skill and resilience furthered by a deep adherence to the basic tenets of Sikhism.....It is thus not surprising that the Punjabi Sikh man or woman is perhaps the handsomest and the most healthy and vigorous of our people.....The talk of total independence is alluring, the Sikhs are competent both to create and sustain an independent sovereign state for a time" (emphasis added).²¹

This shows how telling is the impact of fundamentalism. It betrays dangerous opening to 'Sikh fundamentalism'. It proves to the hilt that economic development, though important and perhaps the most important factor in modernising human minds cannot alone become an antidote to communal separatism.

Nonetheless a dispassionate analysis of the economic development and the economic policies is urgently called for. What clearly stands out is that most of the resources have been cornered by the big owners and the percentage of work force on land of the total work force has steadily increased from 17.3 per cent in 1961 to 38.2 per cent in 1981. We are faced with a rural class structure in which capitalist landlords and rich peasants have an exploitative relationship with the agricultural workers. If we superimpose the communal and caste structure on this mapping the Jat Sikh proprietors, especially the top section is in a structural conflict with the scheduled caste land workers and more so with the semi-bonded non-Punjabi labourers. This is a simplistic distortion, but helpful to understand the support base of 'fundamentalism' and the structural obstacles that it has to reckon with. It is known that most of the Jat farmers are with the Akalis, with a smaller section being with the Congress, and the scheduled caste and other rural poor owe allegiance to the Congress and the communists. The rural poor and lower caste people cannot have any interest in separatism and terrorism, and that too when conditions of labour scarcity combined with increased productivity has pushed the wages up for the local labour and the arduous jobs are being performed by relatively low-paid non-Punjabi labour. Their being duped by appeals of

21. Ibid. p. 716.

religious orthodoxy also has a low chance, as this ideology is being mouthed by sections of their exploiters. That is the explanation why rural poor are mainly with the national secular parties. Almost total political confrontation, in which the Congress and the communists find themselves, has created a piquant situation.

The lopsided development with little development of industry, to which many observers have drawn attention should logically cause more concern to the entrepreneur class than to the rural rich. There is no disputing the fact that communal minded Hindus preponderate in this class among the traders. Amongst Sikhs *Ramgarhias* are a significant part of the industry oriented new bourgeoisie. Thus the facile economic interest explanation does not hold ground. Moreover, even the rich farmers can have little economic class interest served by full-fledged 'fundamentalist' approach in a period where productivity and profits have shown no signs of being choked off. All said and done, it would be a safe conjecture that 'fundamentalism' can be a weapon as a bargaining counter for the rural rich, which in the Punjab means a major part of the upper classes, but when taken to its logical culmination, it results only in a failure of its political management skills. Therefore, in the prevailing economic structure 'fundamentalism' would neither breathe its last nor achieve its full political objectives.

Another aspect of the social structure of the Punjab, not touched till now, but important for our present study is the structure of the regional divisions of the Punjab. Relatively speaking the leadership and cadres for the 'fundamentalist' movement has been provided by the 'Malwa' region, less so by 'Majha' and the least by 'Doaba'. Bhindranwale, along with all his close associates, belonged to Malwa and so also Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, Sukhjinder, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and even Parkash Singh Badal come from this region. Two Congress(I) MPs Amrender Singh and Devinder Singh Garcha to resign from the Congress(I) and the Parliament in sympathy with 'fundamentalism', also hail from Malwa.

This fact has structural foundations and provides important clues to the issues under discussion. Firstly the militant tradition of the Sikhs had developed in this region in Guru Gobind

Singh's days, the period of Banda Singh Bahadur's exploits and finally in the original Dal Khalsa days.

Secondly, most of this region except Ludhiana, in the British period, was under Indian princes. Who were Sikhs by religion and many were Jats. Being formally covered by princely states, political consciousness aroused by the struggle for independence came late and in weakened form in this region. When these states were merged as PEPSU after independence, the Union had a clear Sikh majority with Sikh rulers lording over them and deliberately spreading a communal understanding to delay the merger of the Union in the Punjab state and ensure for themselves their lions' shares in the event of such a merger materialises. Maharaja of Patiala had even earlier, through British support, tried to assume Sikh leadership.

Thirdly, merger of PEPSU in Punjab had simultaneously strengthened Akali communal politics by favourably altering the communal population ratio and the hold of feudal elements in the Congress. And finally, a point hammered by the former chief minister Darbara Singh again and again, this region abounds in large semifeudal and holdings, much beyond the ceiling law, because of its princely past. The absence of industry in Malwa region with the exception of Ludhiana is notable. The region presents a queer mixture of backward economy, feudal traditions and consciousness and religio-communal makeup. Structurally speaking break-up and taking over of big landholdings and a massive programme of industrialisation can break the back of 'fundamentalism'.

It must be admitted that our attempt to analyse the support structure of Sikh 'fundamentalism' essentially remains partial and fragmentary. As 'fundamentalism' in the Indian context serves the grand strategy of US imperialism of destabilising the nonaligned bulwark, its major structural support comes from external academic, political and material sources. Some support to 'fundamentalism' comes from a sense of guilt feeling from which many non-resident Indians of Sikh origin suffer, for having deserted their country and in some cases external forms of Sikhism to ease their disturbed conscience. They extend moral and material support to fundamentalism. In this process these elements get linked up with neocolonialists and their agencies of subversion, in particular with the CIA.

It has also been not possible to pay attention to the support that 'Sikh fundamentalism' drew from the policies of the centre and the Congress(I), particularly its efforts at accommodation and cooption of ideologies and structures which promote fundamentalism. Our attention has been in the main on complex factors within Sikh religious traditions, community organisation and changing social structural context in the Punjab. Whatever the date we may accept as the inception of the present 'fundamentalist' turn in the Punjab either 1978 or 1981, no change of social structural nature seems to have occurred in the Akali or SGPC leadership or base since then. The only certain change, as a consequence of the continued 'green revolution', seems to be the phenomenal rise, in the economic power of the gentlemen farmers — the class and the caste constituting the Akali leadership, including its extremist wing. There is evidence from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and even Andhra Pradesh that newly acquired economic power by the rural rich is seeking a redistribution of political power in its favour from the industrial the national bourgeoisie which is in control of the Indian state. The forms that this struggle for a greater share in political decision-making takes are varied.

13. Socio-economic Basis of Fundamentalism

It is extremely important to understand the socio-economic basis of Sikh fundamentalism. There is a great deal of confusion about it, and often it is understood in terms of affinity with the teachings of the Sikh gurus and Sikh religious scripture, that is the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The phenomenon is much more complex and has many aspects. Religion is only one of them, although on account of its emotional appeal, it is a very important aspect. The Sikh religion came to flourish in the 15th and the 16th centuries when the socio-economic system of the country was passing through a transition, from the old tribal society to a feudal formation. That is why the teachings of the Sikh gurus had a strong strain of social egalitarianism. That could also be why when in the last phase of the Mughal rulers, the country was ruled through a small, rich and largely corrupt elite, the belief in fundamental human equality that many Sikhs then shared was offended. In the years of the anti-colonial struggle, broad sections of the Sikh masses rallied under the banner of Sikhism and counterposed their ideas to the hostile ideology of the colonialists. In the minds of the Sikh masses, religious ideas very often were blended with nationalist ideology. That possibly is the reason that major militant anti-imperialist movements in Punjab were led by the Sikhs, though leadership came from the Muslims and the Hindus also. There were nothing accidental in that religious ideas playing an important role in the national independence movement in Punjab. However, after the British rule, a powerful pro-imperialist trend also gripped the Sikhs. This trend was nursed, both by the Sikh princes and a section of the Sikh religious leaders who controlled gurdwaras — the *Mahants*.

This shows that diverse social forces had relied on the Sikh re-

ligion and teachings of the Sikh gurus differently in different historical conditions.

The best example in this context as to how a socio-economic or a socio-political struggle would get transformed into a religious stir is provided by the communalisation of Indian history. History, which reflects the past glory of a community or a country, provides another potent mobilising force from the communal point of view and hence it has been tapped to the maximum extent by communalists of all hues in the Indian subcontinent. The political struggles, where religions differed, were projected as struggles against 'religious tyranny' or against foreign domination, and where the religion did not differ, it was construed as a rebellion against central authority.¹

This is carried a stage further by depicting all movements opposed to the central government, irrespective of their objective and social content, as Hindu resistance to Muslim tyranny. Thus, leaders such as Rana Pratap and Shivaji who fought for regional independence and represented certain social classes, are regarded as national heroes fighting against oppressive foreign rule. From this, it would be futile to argue that the entire Muslim period in India was foreign rule and that even Akbar or Dara could not change its basic character.²

The history of Punjab too has been interpreted almost on similar lines and even today in the midst of the roused passions of the Sikhs over the recent tragic developments, day in and day out the same line of argument is being put forward. The point under discussion is that certain new social forces in Punjab are again, at this game though in a different historical condition have come up

Communalism in post-partition Punjab was essentially an urban phenomenon, mostly confined to cities and towns where Hindu and Sikh refugee population was settled, the chief among them being Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana and Patiala in the Punjabi speaking areas and Rohtak, Panipat and Sonapat in the Hindi speaking areas. It was in these urban areas that the Jana

1. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Socio-Economic Basis of Communalism", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, Amritsar, January-June 1984, p. 55
2. Satish Chandra, "The Roots of Hindu Communalism", in B N Pande (ed), *National Integration*, Allahabad, 1970, p. 35 as quoted in Asghar Ali Engineer.

Sangh became a major political force. The main social base of the Akalis led by Master Tara Singh too was in the urban areas, with pockets of influence in the rural areas of the erstwhile princely states. But over the years, the social base of Sikh fundamentalism has changed. To say this does not mean that sectarianism with a streak of fundamentalism did not exist in the late forties and the fifties. The potential for forcing the Akali Dal towards a fundamentalist extremist direction was always there. There is also an element of truth in that a section of the Congress(I) leadership too provided "cushion to Dal Khalsa and Sant Bhindranwale".³

But this does not explain the whole reality.

Punjabi society is mainly agriculture based. In 1980-81 agriculture and livestock contributed 58.12 per cent of the state income at 1970-71 prices. According to the 1981 census, agricultural sector employed 59.1 per cent of the total working force of the state. Punjab agriculture has been registering capitalist development at a relatively faster rate since 1965-66. A section of the peasantry with extensive ownership of land and command over capital resources have become capitalist farmers. They find their family labour insufficient to carry on work on their farms. A major part of the work is handled by hired farm labour. The income of these farmers is greater than their consumption needs. They use their surplus income for accumulation. These are the farmers who have benefited most from government facilities such as cooperative credits, subsidies on inputs, etc. Many of them have begun to invest in transport trade and industry. Along with the capitalist farmers, a major part of the Punjab peasantry consists of middle and poor peasants. Though these peasants have also gained in proportion to their land ownership from capitalist development in agriculture popularly known as the 'green revolution' yet many of them are far behind the capitalist farmers.

According to a recent estimate, 24 per cent of small farmers and 31 per cent of marginal farmers live below the poverty line in the green revolution state of Punjab. Though there is an economic stratification of peasantry into different layers yet there is much similarity at social level. Most of the peasants belong to the Jat

3. Harish K Puri, "The Akali Agitation: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Protest", *Political and Economic Weekly*, Bombay, 1983.

caste and believe in a common religion, i.e. Sikhism. Secondly, with capitalist development, a distinct class of agricultural labour has come into being in 1981, constituting 37.7 per cent of the agricultural work force of the state. These agricultural labourers depend on the sale of their labour power in the market. Their labour power is mainly purchased by capitalist farmers. But during the busy season, even small marginal farmers hire extra labour power. Therefore, whenever, agricultural labour demand higher wages and launches its struggle, the entire peasantry opposes them en bloc. Besides most of the agricultural workers, belonging to backward and scheduled castes, are mainly *Harijans*. Thus in the rural Punjab, agricultural labour is distinguished from the peasantry not only at the economic level but also at the social level.⁴

There is no doubt that Punjab was deficit in foodgrains to the tune of 35,000 tonnes soon after the partition.⁵ But the reorganised Punjab, though much smaller in size and population than the united Punjab, has emerged as the 'bread basket' of the country. The contribution of the state to the central pool of wheat was 61.9 per cent in 1968-69 and in 1983-84 it increased to 73 per cent. The wheat procurement in 1984 was five million tonnes. Punjab, though not a traditional rice producing state, contributed 48 per cent of the rice to the central pool, procured in 1980-81.

Punjab has the highest irrigated area in the whole of India, — 81 per cent. In 1978-79, the irrigated area in Punjab comprised 26.56 per cent of the total area cultivated in the country as a whole. The positions of advanced states in this regard was as follows in 1978-79:

Haryana: 52.55 per cent; UP: 50.96 per cent; Maharashtra: 46.43 per cent; Tamilnadu: 45.96 per cent; Bihar: 32.69 per cent; Andhra Pradesh: 32.1 per cent.

The use of fertilisers has enormously increased in Punjab during the last two decades. It has shot up from 5,000 tonnes in 1960-61 to 8,12,000 tonnes in 1981-82. Mechanisation of agriculture has kept pace with all the above changes. In 1961, there were only 4997 tractors in the state and in 1981-82, their number increased

4. Sucha Singh Gill and K. C. Singhal, "Punjab Problem: A Genesis of Present Crisis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, April 7, 1984.
5. Pritam Singh. *Emerging Pattern of Punjab Economy*, Bombay; 1975, p. 15

to 1,46,332. This increased mechanisation of agriculture also meant an equal increase in the consumption of diesel oil and electricity. In 1960, 15 per cent of power generation was consumed by agriculture and in 1980, it increased to 40 per cent.

Along with the green revolution, rapid commercialisation of agriculture too has taken place. This process has been further accelerated with the development of roads, road transport and the fast multiplying markets and purchasing centres.⁶

The socio-economic changes in Punjab's agriculture can be assessed, if one keeps in mind the land ownership structure in the state. The agricultural census of 1971 has clearly established the gross inequality of landholdings in the state, where 21.5 per cent of the cultivators tilling less than half a hectare each account for only 1.94 per cent of the total cultivated area; 56.2 per cent of cultivators who till less than two hectares each cultivate 15.1 per cent and 82.7 per cent tilling less than five hectares of land account for 43.8 per cent of the area. As against this only five per cent of the farmers who cultivate more than ten hectares account for 29.6 per cent of the total area. According to another estimate, those owning 20 acres or more constitute 10 per cent of the total number of the cultivators, while they own 37 per cent of the total cultivated area. Those owning less than five acres constitute 48.44 per cent of the total cultivators and own only 13.3 per cent of the cultivated area.

Another characteristic of the agrarian economy of Punjab is that the bulk of the land is cultivated by owner-cultivators, land under tenancy being only 19.3 per cent. In 1947 land under tenancy was 48.6 per cent.

This means that *10 to 15 per cent of the cultivators control over 50 per cent of the agricultural production in the state.* This finds confirmation from two other economic indicators. According to a survey of big farmers in Punjab in 1968-69, the total number of farms above 20 acres was 67,000 covering 26.19 lakh acres of cultivated area. A further break-up of big farms revealed that farms of the size of 20-25 acres expanded only by five per cent where those of the size of 100-150 acres increased by 40 per cent and that most of the additions took place through purchase.⁷

6. - Avtar Singh Malhotra, *Party Life*, New Delhi: June 1984 p. 15 and 16.

7. - Ashok Rudra, Abdul Majid and B. D. Talib, in *Economic and Political Weekly*; Bombay September 27, 1969.

Though these statistics do not fully reflect the present reality in Punjab, the conclusion is obvious that the 'green revolution' has strengthened the hold of the upper rung of the landowners on the agrarian economy. In a note presented to the National Commission on Agriculture in 1971, the Punjab government made a candid confession that "the wheat revolution has neither improved the economic conditions of the marginal farmers nor benefited the agricultural labour. They still continue to lie below the subsistence standard of living".⁸

Another survey shows that big farmers provide about 90 per cent of the marketable surplus, though poor and marginal farmers also sell part of their produce to meet immediate cash needs.

Thus we come to the conclusion that the dynamics of rural economics in Punjab has worked against the interests of the small and marginal farmers who constitute the bulk of the landowning rural population. It is evident that the shifting sands of time have resulted in passing of the land holdings from the hands of the small cultivators and concentrating them in the hands of the bigger land owners. This conclusion becomes evident from glaring facts cited in official reports themselves. In 1961, of the total workers on land, agricultural workers were only 17.30 per cent, while in 1971, this percentage rose to 32.1 per cent and in 1981 to 38.26 per cent. These figures speak for themselves and need no comment.

While the landless, both *Harijans* and non-*Harijans* including *Mazhabi Sikhs* and *Ramgharis* (artisans), have developed a new self-confidence, the new rural rich have become far more vicious and aggressive. The majority of well-to-do landowners, mostly *Jats*, belong to the upper and middle rung castes. Nothing suits their interest better than to incite the casteist prejudices and passions of the non-untouchable poor peasants and marginal farmers against the landless.

But along with this another process has also been surfacing in Punjab. The growth of urbanisation, industry, commerce, education, communication, transport, mass media, eating together in common hotels and restaurants and above all, the impact of national and international factors have tremendously increased so-

8. Pritam Singh, *Emerging Pattern of Punjab Economy*, 1975 p. 24

cial intercourse between all castes and communities. The subjective consciousness of caste and communal distinctions has started wearing out.

The new rural rich in Punjab has now started mixing religion with the caste factor to widen its social base. They have made this their instrument for capturing political power. An appeal based on casteist bonds on the one hand and religious slogans on the other is the easiest device for the rural vested interests to seize all organs of power.

It is necessary to see, therefore, that the social content of fundamentalism in the rural areas has undergone a substantial change during the last two decades. With the improvised peasants tenaciously clinging to their small holdings, it is but natural for the new rich holding sway over the Punjab villages to raise fundamentalist slogans to divert their attention. It needs to be stressed here that the growing unemployment among the educated Sikh youth has further complicated the problem.

There is yet another factor which needs to be analysed. Punjab is one of the leading states as far as industrial development in the small-scale sector is concerned. In 1973-74, there were 30,691 small-scale industrial units with the value of production at current prices amounting to Rs. 408.25 crore. These industrial units employed over 2.33 lakh workers. In 1979-80, their number increased to 47,437 and the value of production to Rs. 888.19 crore. The number of workers employed in these industries too increased to 3.33 lakh. Against this, the number of large and medium industrial units increased from 122 to 203 during the same period. The production of these industrial units, however, increased from Rs. 282.83 crore to Rs. 945.99 crore.⁹

This shows that small business in Punjab is the product of industrialisation and the 'green revolution'. This phenomenon of small businessmen has certain political implications. It is, for instance, unable for the time being to put forward a consistent programme of radical transformation of the economy and generally supports rightwing forces, the Hindu segment being represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Sikh segment by the Akali Dal. They often come under the influence of religio-

9. Promod Kumar and others, *Punjab Crisis, Context and Trends*, 1984, p. 59

communalist, separatist and other reactionary movements.

A small section of the Sikhs settled abroad also plays a significant role in this context. Most of them come from the peasantry. Some of them have become rich and have a lot of surplus money. Emotionally they have not been integrated with the countries in which they are settled because of a policy discrimination in the western society. Though they have a subjective desire to invest their money in India, the gap between their perception of the realities in India and their experience of what is called a 'free economy' is so wide, that they feel frustrated. This frustration among them which is superimposed on their communalist and traditional consciousness becomes handy for certain forces in the western countries to use some of them as their tools. That could be why fundamentalist and separatist demands are articulated more vociferously by those who are settled abroad than the people residing in Punjab.

There are some political analysts who have come forward with the 'theory' that beneath the rise of Sikh fundamentalism in Punjab lies the sharpening of contradictions between the urban and commercial bourgeois interests on the one hand and the capitalist landlords and rich peasants on the other. They argue that the contradiction between monopoly interests and the commercial bourgeoisie on the one hand and the mass of the peasantry and the capitalist farmers on the other has also accentuated the Punjab crisis. This boils down to saying that the rise of fundamentalism and revivalism is primarily due to these two contradictions, namely, between the commercial bourgeoisie and the new rural rich and the monopoly interests and the peasantry.

Of course, these contradictions do exist and will become sharper and sharper. But this theory does not go far enough. As a matter of fact, it provides an ideological cover to put the Sikh revivalists at par with the Congress(I).

What appears to be nearer reality is the fact that in the course of the modernisation of the Indian economy and its industrialisation, acute social conflicts have been generated. The traditional communalist, clan, caste, tribal and semi-feudal ideology of small proprietors, both urban and rural, is reasserting itself because they are aspiring to grow rich overnight and become big entrepreneurs both in industry and agriculture. Hence their tena-

cious adherence to a religio-ethical order. What is more important than this is that this new class of the rich, especially in the rural areas, has developed some sort of an anarchist *defiance* against the existing law and order machinery. The basic problem which recent developments in Punjab have posed is: when India is passing through a period of transition and is on the threshold of becoming a major modern nation, fundamentalism and revivalism have launched a new ideological offensive. This challenge can only be met through a secular, anti-imperialist ideology. The building of a new and modern India will become more complicated and difficult in the absence of such an ideological rudder.

Perspective and Prospect

In recent years, a new expression, resurgence of fundamentalism — Hindu, Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism — has attracted the attention of social scientists, politicians and some western scholars. The developments in Punjab during the last two to three years, particularly the vigour with which the Akali Dal has been pressing that the centre-state relations should be restructured on the basis of their Anandpur Sahib resolution, have clearly established that a section of our population is tenaciously holding on to feudal and pre-feudal concept of nation-state. This resurgence of religious fundamentalism and revivalism is not merely confined to India and it has appeared in the most virulent form in some of the countries in our neighbourhood such as in Pakistan, what is most intriguing is that some of the advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States, are evincing keen interest in this emerging phenomenon in the newly liberated countries, which have come to be described as 'third world' countries. It is, indeed, a strange irony of the situation that those who claim to be 'defenders' of democracy and rationalism should have chosen in the mid-eighties to identify themselves with religious fundamentalism without any qualm. Never did a US President ever before acknowledge a Muslim festival such as *Idd-ul-Fitr* to the extent of making it an occasion for sending felicitations to a group of Muslim refugees, as did President Reagan in a message to Afghans camped in Pakistan. And now attempts are being made to discuss the Punjab situation in the American Congress

fix responsibility' for what happened in the state in recent months.²

Equally revealing is the fact that a retired high army officer has allegedly confessed that subsequent to the army action in the beginning of June, 1984 a conspiracy was hatched by some persons to smuggle arms into India to assassinate top Indian leaders. This allegedly took him to the USA, where he found 'willing partners'. He raised funds, bought arms and ammunition and returned to Delhi after arranging further supplies from Pakistan.³

What does this all lead to?

In the pre-independence period, communalism and its ideological superstructure was used by the imperialists, feudal landlords and Hindu orthodoxy for buttressing their interests and fighting the rising national patriotic movement. And in this operation, Punjab occupied a key position. For almost a century, beginning from 1857 till 1946, British imperialism utilised this instrument of *Divide et impera* to maintain its stranglehold over our country. The notorious Coupland Plan graphically underscores this. The way the concept of an 'independent' Sikh state and its various versions were planted in the consciousness of a section of the Sikhs with the help of Sikh princely rulers, the chief among them being Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala, is a fact of history and needs no recapitulation. Nevertheless, the sweeping tide of the national movement surged forward and anti-communalism together with anti-imperialism was inscribed on the banner of the patriotic freedom forces. In particular, not to come out against communalism and not stand for secularism was considered to be downright *unpatriotic* and pro-British posture of the worst type. Apart from other objective conditions, Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru played a great role in building up this consciousness. It was in the midst of this process, combined with the united struggle of the working people that the consciousness of being an Indian first, and foremost — the consciousness of being one nation despite diversities in religion, culture and languages — struck deep roots in the minds of our people.

2. J.N. Parimoo, in *Times of India*, New Delhi, July 14, 1984.

3. *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, July 28, 1984.

A sea of changes has come about in respect to communalism in independent India. Against all expectation, it has shown no sign at all of 'withering away' with the passage of time and process of modernisation of our socio-economic structure. Even the great expansion in education, in technical education for that matter; encompassing a large mass of the stratas of society, has not modernised the minds of the people with the result that religio-communal moorings of the people have, for all practical purposes remains almost intact. Those who are directly and indirectly engaged in the most modern economic structure, stick to fanaticism, mysticism and obscurantism instead of developing a rational approach. It is distressing, indeed, that in the closing decades of the 20th century, India should be witnessing a new awakening to the truth of religious belief-system and its moral and ethical axioms! Or does it mean that the beliefs and ethical systems of various religious philosophies are being consciously given fundamentalist, orthodox and reactionary interpretations with a view to disrupting the pride of being Indians?

In order to answer these questions, one has to dispassionately analyse the whole sequence of developments in Punjab which led to the appearance of the monster of fundamentalism so long that it nearly pushed our country to the brink of a precipice. There is a section of political opinion in the country which is being articulated by some analysts also that extremism in Punjab was the culmination of the politics of grievance on the one hand and of its appeasement on the other. There may be an element of truth in this premise. But it does not fully explain this phenomenon and its modified versions appearing in some other states, though not to an alarming degree as yet.

This premise is based on a wrong assumption because it treats the Sikhs as a homogeneous socio-economic entity, merely because they have a common religious faith, notwithstanding the fact that they belong to *different social stratas* — from the most affluent industrialists and rich farmers to the agricultural workers, commonly known in Punjab as *kamins*. Those who talk about the injury to the Sikh psyche and the alleged discrimination against the Sikhs virtually gulp down the theory that the Sikhs constitute an independent nation and thus bring us back to the period of mid-forties when the two-nation theory was in its ascendancy and had not only entered the currency of

journalistic jargon but had also become fashionable in British diplomatic parlance and academic discourse. There are certain Sikh 'intellectuals' who have been voicing the fear that behind the recent spurt of terrorism and fundamentalism is the lurking fear among the Sikhs that they would be 'assimilated' in Hindu culture and Hindu ethos. Thus the entire focus even in the post-army action period is once again shifting to the 'Sikh demands' as raised by the Akali Dal, the corner-stone of which is that the Sikhs constitute an 'independent nation'.

What really is the essence of these demands and what is the logic behind them?

There are three sets of demands —religious, economic and political. All these demands are interrelated, the underlying motive being to establish the 'independent' entity of the Sikhs as a nation. Even a hurried scrutiny of these demands would reveal how fundamentalism has become the dominant factor in the socio-economic outlook of the Akali leaders of all the hues. This stark reality can no longer be ignored.

The religious demands include recognition of the 'holy city' status of Amritsar, installation of 'Harmandir Radio' at the Golden Temple and enactment of All-India Gurudwara Act to bring all the Sikh religious shrines in the country under the management of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. These demands assumed a new dimension in January 1984, when the Akali Dal gave a call for an amendment of Article 25(2)(b) of the Constitution to strengthen what they call the "distinct identity of the Sikhs".

The main economic demand of the Akali Dal relates to the allocation of surplus waters of Ravi-Beas, though of late, they have also started demanding that Yamuna waters should also be taken into account on the basis of the 'Riparian Doctrine'. It has also demanded that farmers should be completely exempted from wealth tax and estate duty. Instead of asking that the land-ceiling should be lowered, it insists that a ceiling of 30 standard acres should be enforced firmly. It has also called for an amendment to the Hindu Succession Act and that women should be given rights of inheritance in the properties of their fathers-in-law and that all the public sector undertakings should be made autonomous. The Akali Dal has also laid claim

to certain territories in other states and of course, to the immediate handing over of Chandigarh to Punjab.

The most important political demand of the party is that centre-state relations should be restructured in such a manner that the centre retains only foreign affairs, defence, currency and communications, and all other subjects must be transferred to the states. "Besides, the Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation", the Akalis continue to maintain. (emphasis added).

Thus if one looks at all the demands of the Akalis in totality, one will be led to a certain conclusion, howsoever disturbing it might be.

On the face of it, the religious demands of the Akalis look innocuous. That may be the reason that even the left parties in Punjab have not taken a serious objection to these demands. What do the grant of 'holy city' status to Amritsar, installation of 'Harmandir Radio' at the Golden Temple ostensibly to relay *kirtan* and the demand for All-India Gurudwara Act and amendment to article 25(2)(b) of the Constitution mean?

In the first instance, the Akali leaders want through these demands, to let the concept conceded that the Indian nation constitutes a conglomeration of various religious groups and not a unified 'modern' nation. This approach has without doubt a far-reaching implication. This would mean accepting the principle that India is a patchwork of various religions and its unity means adjustments between various claims and counter-claims of different religious minorities and dominant Hindu religion. Once this concept is accepted, the secular edifice comes crashing and a theocratic basis of the state is laid. And in the course of planning all these demands, it is probably taken for granted that the Hindu revivalists would be sitting quiet, with folded hands.

It would not be out of place to mention here that the central government has already offered to arrange for relay of recitation from the *Guru Granth Sahib* from the Golden Temple through the Jalandhar station of All-India Radio.⁴

4. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, Government of India, New Delhi, July 10, 1984 p. 9.

There is no dispute about the provisions in our Constitution for protection of the rights of the religious minorities. There is nothing in the Indian history to compare with the bitter religious feuds and persecutions that prevailed in Europe.⁵ What has to be understood is that through these demands a subtle move has been made to shake the foundations on which our secular democracy is based. Once one accepts the responsibility of using the state machinery for propagation of religious scriptures of any one religious community, irrespective of the fact whether it is a religious minority or majority, there is going to be no halt to the acceleration of the vicious process. If the central government must be charged of dithering it is precisely in this area. Even in the *White Paper*, it has not taken a categorical stand on this crucial issue of mixing religion with the state machinery though it has been stated that the "grant of 'holy city' status as such to any city would not be in keeping with secular nature of the Constitution".⁶

Now, let us examine the economic and political demands of the Akalis, particularly their demands that sharing of river waters should be done on the basis of the 'Riparian Doctrine' and centre-state relations should be restructured on the basis of Anandpur Sahib resolution in the context of their claim that the "Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation".

As a matter of fact, all these three demands of the Akalis are directed towards establishing an independent entity of the Sikhs as a 'nation'. Though one need not go into the history of the Riparian Doctrine and examine its various interpretations regarding sharing of river waters, this doctrine and the way the Akali leaders have interpreted it, amounts to accepting the thesis that Punjab exists as an independent economic entity and is not part of the integrated whole, that is India. It also raises another question. The settlement about India's share of the Indus water. After the partition of India, the distribution of waters of Punjab remained an unresolved issue between India and Pakistan since Pakistan had argued that India was not in a position to utilise all its waters. The settlement about India's share of

5. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, London, 1956, p. 387.

6. *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, Government of India, New Delhi, July 10, 1984 p. 9.

Indus water was reached accepting the validity of India's claim that water would be utilised to irrigate the arid and dry lands of the Indus basin in Rajasthan.⁷ The present stance of the Akali Dal would mean that it wants to reopen the entire question of sharing of water in this region.

This, however, does not mean that just demands of Punjab about sharing of the river waters, redistribution of certain areas on Punjab-Haryana borders and handing over of Chandigarh should not be satisfactorily settled. They need however, to be resolved within the framework of integrity and unity of India.

This shows that those who fondly believe that if the deadlock between the central government and the Akalis had been broken on the basis of one formula or the other, the tragic developments in Punjab, leading to the army action, could have been avoided, have yet to grasp the root cause of the crisis. The real problem in Punjab's recent history is not why the central government failed to resolve the crisis, though this in itself is not unimportant. The complex situation of Punjab would continue to evade a satisfactory solution so long as it is studied on the assumption that something suddenly went wrong in Punjab in the late seventies and the early eighties and if the parameters of this analysis remain bound by certain sequence of events connected with the centre-Akali negotiations.

Again, the facile theory based on certain historical accidents and the role of certain individuals both in planting separatism among a section of the Sikhs and in organising terrorism will not take us very far. Punjab's situation would continue to worry us for years unless the basis of the present fundamentalism is properly understood and a multidimensional approach is evolved to tackle the complex problem.

As long as Punjab's problem is viewed as a "struggle for power between the Congress(I) and the Akalis" and simplify the developments of the last three years as a byproduct of this conflict, it would only lead to a superficial understanding of the situation. This will be even a misinterpretation of the events. These happenings undoubtedly contributed in deepening the crisis but the basic cause of this crisis lay elsewhere. The Akali Dal leadership for decades has been vociferous in proclaiming

7. *Ibid*, p. 12.

the Sikhs as a 'nation' and unleashing force of separatism on the ideological plane and thereby building up a theory of 'religious nationalism'. There were a large number of Akali leaders who did not want an independent state for the Sikhs. May be they still subscribe to this principle and there are no valid reasons to doubt their bona fides. Nevertheless, they did preach the gospel of separatism, though it was clothed in the garb of 'greater autonomy' for the states. There were others who were more insistent and outspoken when they raised the demand for 'Khalistan'.

The root cause of the crisis in Punjab which during its last phase took such a dangerous turn that the army had to be called in to save the unity and integrity of the country needs a deeper and more dispassionate analysis.

If one looks into the chronology of events during the last three years or so, one can clearly see how the concept of the Sikhs as 'nation' laid down an ideological basis for secessionism and for terrorism to spread apace. Though the demand for 'Khalistan' had been raised by Jagjit Singh Chauhan in 1971 in London, it was only on April 12, 1980, that he formally announced the formation of 'National Council of Khalistan' with himself as the president and Balbir Singh Sandhu as its secretary general.⁸ Three months later, he proclaimed the formation of 'Khalistan' and started issuing passports, postage stamps and currency notes. It was soon after this, that acts of sacrileges of gurudwaras and temples in Punjab began. Throwing of cow limbs in front of Shiva temples and scattering of the torn pages of *Guru Granth Sahib* were reported from various parts of Punjab. In 1981, the Akali Dal led by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal launched an agitation — the 'Nehr Roko' *morcha* which gradually passed into the hands of the extremists. If the Akali Dal needed an agitation badly to check the erosion of its popularity, the extremists needed urgently an ideological base for their operation. Whatever might have been the subjective desire of the Akali leaders, they objectively created conditions for the rise of secessionism in Punjab. This was the logical result of bringing about a fusion between religion and politics.

8. *Ibid* pp. 35-36.

The main thrust of the Akali demands and their various religious struggles — *Dharam Yudhs* — is for establishing an 'independent identity' of the Sikhs as a 'nation'. It is not a communal exercise of the familiar brand, it is a deliberate attempt to effect a fusion between religion and politics. This is a highly significant development in the contemporary history of India because both overtly and covertly an attempt is being made to bring about a synthesis between a socio-religious ideology of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries and modern polity. This is the solid content of Sikh fundamentalism of today.

What a vast majority of the devotees of the Sikh religion do not see at the moment is that by giving a new 'political' orientation to their religion, the Akali leadership is *undermining* the social values of the teachings of the Sikh gurus and thereby destroying their moral and theological base. The growing stress on the ritualistic aspect of the Sikh religion, politicisation of religion and above all the rousing of irrational emotionalism to the exclusion of social responsibility in the national mainstream will simply breed hypocrisy and obscurantism. In this sense it snaps the relationship between what is called the 'spiritual value system' of the Sikh religion and the social responsibilities of a devotee of the Sikh religion to his motherland, that is India. Externalised religiosity, therefore, provides a defence-mechanism for the new Sikh rich — the kulaks and the capitalists — to insulate themselves from the united movement of the working people. The Sikh religion like all other religions can be interpreted differently by different people. Though it is for the modern Sikh intellectuals to interpret their religion in a meaningful way, what the Punjab experience has shown is that a new ideological structure is being carefully constructed by the Sikh vested interests to obfuscate the social reality and sidetrack the economic problems of the poor masses and eventually reconcile them to their lot — to hunger, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. This wilful distortion of Indian reality and deliberate relegation of the social problems by the Sikh elite through the political use of religion is the most outstanding characteristic of the recent developments in Punjab — a characteristic which has escaped the attention of even the left intellectuals. Equally important is the fact that quite a few of the custodians of the Sikh ideology have become willing instru-

ments in the hands of neocolonialism, wittingly or unwittingly. They are busy in fabricating religio-political ideas, concepts and theories which not only create an atmosphere of instability in the country but also promote secessionism. It is in this backdrop that the slogan of 'Khalistan' being raised from the various capitals of the western world needs to be examined critically.

This new linkage between the Sikh religion and the contemporary polity of India as it has appeared in the form of complete autonomy for Punjab in terms of the Anandpur Sahib resolution which has manifested itself in the extreme demand for 'Khalistan' is a very significant development. Elsewhere, it has surfaced in the form of regionalism and parochialism such as Telugu Desam's slogan of Andhra Pradesh for Telugu speaking people and Tamilnadu for Tamils. But in this study we have confined ourselves to the developments in Punjab only.

The most characteristic feature of the demand for an 'independent entity' of the Sikhs has many similarities with the *jihad* raised by the Muslim League for the partition of India on the eve of the independence. The idiom is the same and to a large degree the tactics and *modus operandi* are also the same.

In his presidential address at the Lahore session of the All-India Muslim League in March 1940, Jinnah observed that Islam and Hinduism were not religions in the strict sense of the words, but "two different religious philosophies, social customs and literatures . . . Their outlook on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Musalmans derive their inspiration from different epics, different heroes and different episodes . . . Hindus and Muslims brought together under a democratic system forced upon the minorities can only mean Hindu Raj".⁹

Thus Islam was utilised by the Muslim fundamentalists to bring all classes of Muslims together to carve out an independent state though it is a different story that Islam has not been able to become a cohesive force in the various Muslim countries of the world.

9. Ziaul Haque, "Pakistan and Islamic Ideology", in Hassan Gardezi and Jamil Rashid (eds), *Pakistan: The Roots of Dictatorship — The Political Economy of a Praetorian State*, Delhi. 1983, p. 373.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the Akali leadership in the final analysis has argued its case on the similar lines.¹⁰

This politicisation of religion or using religion to achieve political objectives is taking place in our country when a new consciousness of Indian nationalism has started striking deep roots in the minds of people.

The concept of Indian nationhood is rooted in our history spread over centuries. It is only in this context that we can hope to understand the continuing nexus of Indian integrity which the western experts have been unsuccessfully trying to erase from our minds. Unless we try to understand the developments in our country since independence within the framework of the continuing national idea, we may be forced to give way to the growing pressures of fundamentalism, revivalism, parochialism and regionalism.

“That unity is geographical, historical, and cultural, and all that; . . . Many of us are of the opinion that India is essentially a nation; Mr Jinnah has advanced a two-nation theory and has lately added to it and to political phraseology by describing some religious groups as sub-nations. Whatever these might be, his thoughts identify a nation with religion. That is not the usual approach today”.

This is what Jawaharlal Nehru wrote nearly four decades ago. He did not leave it at that. He saw things clearly enough to hold out the warning:

“In recent years a great deal has been written and said on the future of India, and especially on the partition or unity of India; and yet the astonishing fact remains that those who propose ‘Pakistan’ or partition have consistently refused to define what they mean or to consider the implications of such a division. They move on the emotional plane only . . . a plane of imagination and vague desire, behind which lie imagined interests . . . Any decisions taken primarily on the basis of emotions, or when emotions are dominating consideration, are likely to be wrong and to lead to dangerous developments”.¹¹

10. See Anandpur Sahib Resolution in Appendix V.

11. Jawaharlal Nehru; *Discovery of India*, London, 1956: pp. 544-46

What Jawaharlal Nehru said for years ago fits in the current Indian situation notwithstanding the notions which have been aroused among a section of the Sikhs.

India is witnessing two parallel developments — the rise of fundamentalism and deepening Nation consciousness. Foreign observers have expressed surprise that with all its difficulties and problems — corruption, growing disparities, regional rivalries — India is on the threshold of becoming a great world power. And this is so because the consciousness of the Indian national state is indestructable and has been further deepened by socio-economic transformation which has been taking place in the country through independent economic development. However, unless those who constitute the Nation and those who run the Indian state honestly admit weaknesses and failures and strive to overcome them, the self-confidence that our tradition, history and modern economic growth have given about the Nation would be dissipated. And as the most necessary step for strengthening this 'self-confidence', we would have to go all out to demolish the socio-economic and ideological base of fundamentalism, regionalism and parochialism.

What the developments in Punjab have underlined is not simply the obvious threat to our unity and integrity in physical terms. It is very much more than that. Along with the preservation of the territorial integrity of India after independence, an integration of the national economy has also been taking place giving a new strength to our nation. The internal forces of destabilisation and disintegration egged on by the neocolonialists have also not been sitting idle; in fact they have spared no chance to attack the socio-economic base of this national integration.

In nearly forty years of independent economic development India has not only become self-sufficient in foodgrains but also in large areas of manufacturing industries producing industrial equipment such as textile, sugar, sewing machines, bicycles, soda ash and aluminium. The powerful coal and metallurgical belt of eastern India stretches across the country consolidating its production and territorial integrity. India soon hopes to become self-sufficient in crude oil production and this is certain to transform the entire economy the country.

Without going into further details, what needs to be realised is that the raising of modern infrastructure, the creation of heavy industrial enterprises and emergence of new industrial centres all over the country have all contributed to the process of economic integration of the country.

The Calcutta-Damodar belt forms the coal and metallurgical base of the country. The east Indian region comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and certain areas of Madhya Pradesh are developing into a base of heavy mechanical engineering. The Bombay-Ahemdabad belt, a traditional region of the textile industry has also become a leading region of oil refining, petrochemical, chemical industries, mechanical engineering and precision making. On top of all this five regional power grids have been functioning since the mid-sixties and now a unified nation-wide power system is taking shape.¹²

This nation-wide territorial-economic integration would not have been possible but for the industrialisation of the country and planning as envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru.

It is in this context that the onslaught of regionalism, parochialism and secessionism in Punjab and certain areas of north-eastern region should be seen. The motive behind the sinister pressures that each state should become an 'independent' economic entity, is eloquent enough from the demand of some states, including the Congress(I) ruled states: "each state must have its own fertiliser factory and its own machine tool factory". To a certain degree, it has already impeded the economic integration and increased wasteful expenditure. However, it must not be forgotten that the problem of the joint use of river waters has become intractable — a problem which has intensified the political crisis in Punjab. Instead of rationally using the water resources in the river basins and augmenting them, the water dispute has been deliberately politicised.

If we analyse the 'Operation Brahmaputra Plan' of 1980 and also Jean Kirkpatrick's plan of 'Balkanisation of India' and read in this context the demand for so-called regional autonomy as spelt out by the Akali leaders, it becomes crystal clear that these

12. Galina Sdasyuk: "Territorial Economic Integration of India", in *Problems of Development*; USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1982, pp. 69-70.

moves are directed not only to subvert political and geographical integrity of India but also are aimed at disrupting smooth economic progress. These plans and moves are essentially directed to *deflect* India from its path of independent economic development and self-reliance. This is in truth the economic content of the new offensive of neocolonialists and their internal agents and lackeys.

This brings us to another question: How is that while modernisation of Indian economy and its integration is taking place, the fundamentalist, parochial and regional forces have succeeded in expanding their mass base?

We cannot expect our working people, particularly the peasantry to support with any enthusiasm the modernisation of the economy, especially radical agrarian reforms without weeding out from their minds at the same time, their deeply rooted feudal outlook. They have been fed for centuries on the ethical beliefs that their miserable lot is the result of their 'sins' committed in the previous incarnation or wrong-doing in the present life rather than the outcome of the backward, unjust and grinding economic order. Feudal socio-economic dogmas regulate their minds and direct their consciousness, reinforced by some mumbo jumbo of theological hotch potch. This breeds strange mystical attitudes and metaphysical beliefs. One cannot accept veneration for a reactionary feudal socio-economic outlook and yet hope to work for its liquidation. It goes without saying that an important pre-condition for creating a modern, rational outlook is by supplanting the material conditions that sustain the feudal world. But since any such radical move is bound to bounce back on the material conditions and make them all the more resistant, a sustained and relentless struggle against them will have to be mounted. Thus the ideological offensive against fundamentalism is as important as the fight against the feudal socio-economic order which gives birth to it. One cannot have a compromising attitude towards it and yet claim that one is fighting to dislodge it.

There is no doubt that the present day intellectuals, particularly the Sikh and Hindu intellectuals of Punjab have been brought up in an atmosphere in which loyalty to their respective religious philosophies continue to influence their intellectual commitments and endeavours. An emphasis on the su-

premacny of the 'inward life' over external phenomena inevitably leads to metaphysical preoccupation. Therefore, there should be no illusion that age-old veneration for feudal ideas and beliefs can be easily wished away. All the same, there is no need to despair for truth is not necessarily what we have become accustomed to imagine as true for centuries and something being time-honoured is no sufficient reason for its acceptance.¹³ We shall perhaps have to wait for a genuine revolution in our thought-processes and practices. In the meanwhile, we may take upon ourselves a humbler responsibility for making the right use of opportunities thrown in our way by our philosophical heritage itself. Among traditional philosophers in our country, there were also those who did challenge from time to time the existing patterns of thought and time-honoured beliefs which, for the sake of science and our progress, we propose to oppose today.¹⁴

The situation in Punjab is further complicated by the tragic fact that even the left movement has been following a conciliatory attitude towards Sikh fundamentalism on the ideological plane. Understandably enough, at the height of the anti-imperialist stage when Akali *jathas* courted arrest, they used to sing songs of heroism from Sikh history. This did in no uncertain terms, generate a feeling of a separate and special Sikh identity. While rightly responding to the anti-imperialist content of the Akali movement, the left for some mysterious reasons overlooked its communal aspect and were obviously soft towards it. It can be said that the seeds of communalism and future separatist trends existed within the Akali movement within this anti-imperialist phase.¹⁵ The capacity of the communists in Punjab to fight communal trends among the Akalis during the Second World War was hampered as they were committed not to impede war efforts under the compulsions of supporting the people's war. Communal trends naturally gained in strength during the war and in the post-war period. The disastrous policy of the communists on the Pakistan question is well-known. Out of a similar faulty understanding developed

13. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi; 1975, p. xiii.

14. *Ibid*

15. Harkishan Singh Surjit; in *Sunday*, Calcutta

their concept of the Sikh nationality and their support to the demand for Sikh homeland.¹⁶

The history of the communist movement in Punjab plainly shows that the 'hang over' of the mid-forties about the independent entity of the Sikhs as a nationality has persisted in one form or the other. In fact, the communist movement in Punjab has been witnessing an intense *inner party struggle* between those who advocate a conciliatory attitude towards the Akalis and the exponents of a consistent ideological and political struggle against Sikh fundamentalism. However, the CPI has periodically exhibited more firmness than the CPI(M) on this vital question. This is also borne out during the recent developments in Punjab. The upshot of the matter is that a genuine struggle against Sikh fundamentalism has yet to mature. The Congress(I) in Punjab has neither the will nor the resources to undertake this ideological task. The left movement is unmistakably divided on this crucial issue. Possibly, this equivocation is due to the primacy of parliamentary politics since the CPI(M) at least has never ruled out an electoral understanding with the Akalis. In its efforts to enter Parliament the CPI(M) may also enter into an electoral understanding with other political parties on the basis of 'a specific programme', 'depending on' the overall political dispensation'.¹⁷ There is no doubt that there is a vocal section within the CPI which wants to undertake the fight with an uncompromising zeal against fundamentalism, both among the Sikhs and the Hindus.

To return, however, to our main thesis of fundamentalism and how its tentacles are at present reaching out throughout the length and breadth of Punjab! The hopeful sign in this dismal scenario is that a new generation has emerged in the process of building up a modern India. It is obligatory on our part to nurse these hundreds of thousands of young men and women on patriotic lines and save them from falling prey to the evils of fundamentalism and revivalism. We must train them to understand in a rational way the demands of social reality as it exists today. The fight against fundamentalism has undoubtedly assumed a newer significance and greater urgency.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

The vested interests are already adjusting themselves to the need of the hour to squarely meet the new challenges. In place of the old style of landlords, a new class of big and medium farmers has emerged as a force of political importance. Speaking in the name of rural people and playing skilfully upon their sentiments and expectations, its reliance on religious fundamentalism has increased manifold. This new class has been rightly characterised as a 'vote bank' for all political parties. This fact coupled with its economic power has enabled it to enjoy enormous bargaining power in a political system based on adult franchise. It has successfully exploited its power to scuttle programmes of radical agrarian reforms and the mounting need for taxation of its agricultural wealth. That the Akali Dal in Punjab should have persistently opposed the mopping up of surplus income for national reconstruction and made this as the main plank of its policies is not accidental. The vacillation shown even by the left parties in the matter of imposing tax on this class is a measure of its authority and influence.

All along this, the most pronounced feature of the social situation during the last two decades has been the rapid politicalisation of the landless agricultural workers, artisans and poor farmers. These vast submerged numbers have been for ages a driven mass of humanity rather than a driving force of historical changes. The new awakening in this section of the rural population has predictably alarmed the new rural rich. As these rural masses are getting increasingly politicalised new instruments are being frequently put to use to derail and demoralise them.

If one views at the developments in Punjab from this angle, it will perhaps become easier to analyse the entire course of events in an objective manner. Indeed, in a state like Punjab, there is only one acid test for demarcating the secular forces from obscurantism and entrenched orthodoxy. The measuring stick is provided by the politico-economic programmes and policies of a party in ameliorating the lot of the rural poor and bringing them into the fold of secular political articulation and organisation. From the standpoint of the Akali Dal and for that matter even of the Bharatiya Janata Party, any effective mobilisation of the rural poor is bound to become a threat to their political leadership.

It is noteworthy that in the present crisis in Punjab, while the upper crust of the land owning class was shivering in its shoes and kept its lips tight with some of them even deserting the Congress party, the rural poor stood like a firm rock to defend the secular edifice. In village after village, they not only refused to join the so-called 'Dharam Yudh' of the Akali leadership but also stood up to guard their Hindu brethren. That in Punjab no communal clashes took place in the rural areas, despite provocations by the extremists, should not be dismissed lightly. Though they have yet to emerge as a political force so as to secure their due representation in the power structure and win their share of economic opportunities their patriotism and their sound instincts are a telling indictment of the secular forces in the state. That they not only hailed the army action but also rallied around the national leadership is a vivid manifestation of this potent force for the secularisation of politics.

The army action was certainly unavoidable. It has broken the back of extremism and clearly demonstrated that all attempts at dismembering the country will be nailed. There can be no two opinions about it. However, there are some analysts who keep on harping that the army action reveals a new strategy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of setting one community against the other. Thus they are trying to make out with a rare ingenuity that the 'Operation Blue Star' was primarily directed against the Sikhs and the Akalis. Nothing could be farther from reality and sense. Perhaps, even they recognise this secretly. Nonetheless, if the elitists come out of their ivory towers and go to the countryside and meet the downtrodden masses of our population — a large number of them are naturally Sikhs — they may have the real feel of the situation.

All things considered, the Punjab is at the crossroads. One obvious danger is that psyche of emotional injury to the religious sentiments of the Sikhs would be exploited to create conditions of instability. The other possibility is that all the secular forces in Punjab would unite to unmask the real face of fundamentalism with determination and courage and in the process help bring the broadest social strata of Punjab into the political mainstream. The political process is the sieve through which economic problems are sorted out. It is the medium through which the class pressures come to the surface and compel rec-

ognition and action. So far in Punjab the upper section of the land-owning class has been successfully exploiting religious sentiments to achieve its political and economic ambitions. As long as this situation continues, Punjab's agony will not end. This is the bitter lesson which events in Punjab have sharply brought out. There should be no room for misgivings or to 'uphold' the concept that the Sikhs are an 'independent' entity. Similarly, the mischievous allegation that the Sikhs are facing a 'discrimination' is not only a farce but a cruel joke. It should be apparent that if anyone is subject to discrimination in Punjab today, it is the underprivileged or the unprivileged, who constitute Sikhs as well as Hindus. There does not yet exist a political force in Punjab determined to change the balance of forces in favour of the dispossessed majority of the people. The religious sentiments and the religious shrines are nonetheless being used to maintain the hold of the forces of *status quo*. Historically speaking, a new collusion between internal reaction and foreign imperialist interests has surfaced in Punjab with a renewed vigour. The slogan of 'independent' entity of the Sikhs will not for long be able to conceal the sordid fact that a concerted attempt is being made to reverse the wheels of history and Punjab at the moment is earmarked to serve as their new area of operation.

V.D. CHOPRA

Appendices

Sanctity of Religion in Secular India

GIANI ZAIL SINGH

Today, I am addressing you at such a distressing moment when my heart, as also of all right thinking persons, is heavy with the deep wounds of the past happenings. It is but natural for every thinking being to feel this way over such events. But, we have a responsibility. Before we are swayed by emotions, we should go into the background of these events, look at the present and reflect on the future.

In the recent past, the situation inside the gurdwaras of Punjab, especially the holiest of Sikh religious places — the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht—so developed that even the elected management committee of the gurdwaras could exercise no control. Under these circumstances, despite repeated appeals, all that was against the teachings of the Gurus took place in these holy places with impunity. Even the appeals of the gurdwara management were ignored. With the result, the Gurdwaras, which were for our spiritual upliftment, for inculcating the teachings of Guru Nanak as enshrined in his supreme and universal Bani and, as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh, for imbibing the message contained in *Guru Granth Sahib* and were also for the devotees to visit, passed to the hands of a few terrorists. All types of dangerous weapons and such other things which were contrary to religious traditions, were collected at these places, and even used, ultimately making it difficult for the devotees to visit Gurdwaras.

In this context, I cannot absolve those in control of Punjab Administration of their responsibility in the matter. The situation continued to deteriorate because of their laxity and care-

lessness. The responsibility is also of the terrorists, as also of those who encouraged the terrorists while wanting to harm India. The situation in Punjab provided them with an opportunity to seek to divide our country and break our age-old bonds by violating the sanctity of our holy places. Getting inspiration from these powers, some young men and women and even some elder persons took to the wrong path. And the path led to the murder of many Hindus and Sikhs—businessmen, farmers, journalists, politicians and religious leaders. Even the former *Jathedar* of the Akal Takht, Singh Sahib Giani Pratap Singh, was not spared. As is well known, he was a great man of our country—a known scholar, writer, preacher and a selfless being. It is likely that he did not share the views of those who had occupied the Gurdwaras through improper means. He too was murdered though he was 85, when he was resting at home. Such heart-rending happenings escalated. I do not want to dwell on them in detail; but I would say that many appeals were made to stop them. So far as I am personally concerned, I had been trying, at times even by going out of the way, to put an end to them while maintaining the dignity of the President's office; but these happenings continued.

Two religio-political leaders, when compelled, let themselves be arrested. Similarly, when the security forces issued an appeal, the terrorists should also have come outside the Gurdwaras to preserve the sanctity of the gurdwaras. It would have been better had they offered themselves for arrest and demanded that they be put on trial. But, it is not proper to conduct an armed fight by taking the shelter of gurdwaras and the holy Akal Takht Sahib. This has pained every right thinking person, especially those who have faith in Guru Maharaj and those Sikhs who know their traditions fully well.

We know during the days of the country's slavery, many had to lay down their lives to rid the gurdwaras of the mahants and their misdeeds. At that time, the government of the day was supporting them. That was why, the Sikhs had to make many sacrifices. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was formed with a view to preserving the sanctity of the gurdwaras, to see that *Gurbani* was preached and the gurdwaras were managed in keeping with the pious teachings of the Gurus. In the *Guru Granth* is written.

*At the Guru's door one hears the Lord's praise;
Yes, meeting with the True Guru, one utters the
Lord's praise with the tongue,
And one is rid of one's woes and afflictions, and the
Lord blesses one with glory in His Court.*

*All that seems is Thou, O God
And, All that we hear is Thy speed
Yea, there is no place where Thou art not, and
it is thou who upholdest all.*

and Gurdwaras are those places:

*Kabiri seek Thou the Door that is ever open
unto thee. And, leave not that Door ever;
yea, cling to it tenaciously.*

The Golden Temple materialised, as conceived by the Fifth Guru. Later on, the beautification of its structure continued. It became "Swarn Mandir". The Akal Takht was founded by the Sixth Guru, who kept his residence at Chehhartha Sahib, about seven miles away, to establish the supreme traditions of the Takht. But those traditions were shattered and the condition became such that:

*Such intense is our suffering, O Lord, and
Thou feelest no pain.*

*If the powerful duel with the powerful I grieve not.
But if the ravenous lion falls upon a flock of sheep then
the Master must answer.*

Guru Nanak Dev Ji had so said in his pious Bani.

I have given deep thought to it. When no other alternative was left, then the Punjab government had to send the security forces. On reaching there, the security forces made an appeal. Acting on that appeal, two Sikh leaders offered themselves for arrest. Many others also courted arrest. Many devotees, who were in the temple left feeling that they had nothing to do with that fight.

I don't want to repeat, but unfortunate events transpired. How the building of Sri Akal Takht suffered damage or how the damage to the main Golden Temple building was avoided, even at the cost of security forces' jawans and many others sacrificing their lives—these will be probed into later. But the tragedy of those who lost their lives has left an indelible mark on my

heart. These happenings could have been stymied but this could not be because the terrorists had taken over the complex premises. It is also being investigated, as told by our Generals, how these terrorists had acquired such dangerous and foreign weapons and what hand the foreign powers had in this. All this testifies to there being a deep-rooted conspiracy.

Now, the question is the how to heal these wounds and how to face the facts? This is duty of both the government and the society as a whole. We should recall the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur and his pledge to protect those who had come to seek his help for the protection of religion—

*Guru Teg Bahadur who protected the frontal marks and
sacrificial threads of the Hindus*

And displayed great bravery in the Kali age.

When he set off, all his devotees, in particular Saifuddin, did not allow Guru Sahib to move on for more than a month. They said, "You are going to Delhi. If you reach there, you will be beheaded,". Guru Teg Bahadur replied, "No, I would like to be beheaded. I would go to my killers; but I would not hide in the holy Guru Astan. I would also not seek refuge in the house of a friend. I would not deceive anybody because:

Whom-so-ever we give our hand-

May we lose our life but must not leave his hand.

Today, I feel very sorry that some people have appealed that Sikhs in Government positions, especially in the Army, should give up their offices. Does religion sanction this? Religion, in other words, means *duty*. Once, one has taken an oath of duty in the name of the Guru and does not abide by it, it is nothing short of cowardice and being led astray. Therefore, I am thankful to those who performed their duties honestly and loyally. I know fully well that my government has not acted with the intention of vanquishing anyone or ensuring the victory of another—when adopting its course of action. My government is above the issues of victory or defeat. The real issue is how to heal the wounds? It has been quite sometime since when these wounds have been there. Who was responsible for that? Only history will tell or investigations will reveal. I don't want to refer to these. But, with deep anguish I mention that I have been to Punjab—that Punjab which once smiled, played, walked, danced and sang, which was vibrant and prosperous because of

its tradition of hardwork—that Punjab was now closeted in houses. Why did this happen? It is necessary to examine this in depth.

Common Bonds

Countrymen, the Hindus and Sikhs have a common ancestry, they are products of the same environment and milieu, they have wept and smiled together. But the time came when one community wept and the other smiled. This had never transpired before. I want that they would now again share their joys and sorrows.

We should serve our motherland. We, the inhabitants of this country, are the progeny of this motherland. It is our duty to ensure that our mother does not face any trouble. All our religions have been nurtured in the lap of this *Bharat Mata*. Our country has holy places, saints and seers, the brave ones, scientists and servicemen and labourers and farmers. It is our bounden duty to share the sorrows of all these sections of society. I feel and also appeal to everybody that we should now foster unity. We should talk of peace; not only talk but also constitute committees which should help improve the atmosphere. In this way, we can forge unity once again. There is no harm in seeking pardon for mistakes one may have committed.

There is need for us now to pay attention to rendering voluntary service in the holy place. And, I hope that not only the Sikhs but other devotees having faith in their own religions and having respect for all religions, will also volunteer for Kar Seva there. It is my desire that we undertake the Kar Seva of the holy Sarovar also, and share the religious fervour by carrying baskets on our heads. In this way, the wave of love and affection, once started by Guru Arjun Dev in the city of Guru Ram Das, will be revived. In this way, we shall restore the glory of that place.

Oneness of Mankind

My beloved countrymen, our great Guru taught us the oneness

of mankind, notwithstanding the faith one professes and the way one offers his prayers.

There is need for us to remember the saying of the Tenth Guru. He has said:

Some are accepted as Sanyasis, some are shaven heads, others are Yogis or Brahmacharis, and Jatis. Some are Hindus and others Muslims; among the latter are Rafazis, Imams and Shafis — know that all human beings are one, Karta (the creator) and Karim (the Beneficent) are the same, Razak (the Provider) and Rahim (the Merciful) are the same; let no man even by mistake suppose there is a difference. Worship the one God who is the one divine Guru for all; know that His form is one, and that He is the one light diffused in all.

I expect, especially from the Sikh religious leaders that they get inspirations from the Bani of the Guru as our Tenth Guru has said that “the Guru of Sikhs after me will be Guru Granth Sahib”. In the Guru Granth is enshrined the Bani of all saints like Sheikh Farid, Kabir, Ravidas and Ramanand. I cannot name all of them. There is need for us to exercise caution so that we do not get astray and I appeal to all my countrymen to recall the pious saying of Guru Granth Sahib:

*Listen all, the truth I hereby proclaim;
Only those practising loving devotion shall attain God.*

Jai Hind

“Don’t Shed Blood, Shed Hatred”

INDIRA GANDHI

These past months my heart has been heavy with sorrow, each day’s tragedies adding to the anguish. Punjab is uppermost in all our minds. The whole country is deeply concerned. The matter has been discussed and spoken about time and again. Yet an impression has been assiduously created that it is not being dealt with. My colleagues and I have repeatedly explained in Parliament and outside, government’s readiness to accept all reasonable demands put forward by the Akali Dal when they started their agitation, but new demands continue to be pressed. Unfortunately the leadership of the agitation appears to have been seized by a group of fanatics and terrorists whose instruments for achieving whatever they may have in view are murder, arson and loot. Large scale violence and terrorism grip the state.

Let us look at these problems and issues in perspective. In 1981 the Akali Dal presented a large number of demands. As soon as we received their memorandum I began a dialogue with them. Since then the process of consultation and discussion has not been interrupted by the government. From the very beginning we regarded these issues as national issues, transcending narrow party interests. We took the opposition parties into confidence and associated them with the discussions in an effort to work out a solution that would command the widest acceptance.

Throughout these discussions our attitude was one of accommodation of all reasonable demands. Turmoil and violence

in Punjab benefit no one except those who want to undermine the unity and integrity of India. It was against the background of these larger national considerations that we have been trying to evolve a consensus on the disputed claims and counter-claims.

Why then, some people ask, has there been no final settlement? This question should legitimately be addressed to those who are unwilling to give up *morchas* and *bandhs*. Wherever the demands did not affect the rights of other states or where they could be fitted into a wider framework, the government had no hesitation in accepting them. For example, the Government accepted all Akali Dal demands generally referred to as 'religious' and have initiated action to implement the decisions. The sale of tobacco, liquor and meat within demarcated areas in the walled city of Amritsar has been banned. The government agreed to arrange for the direct relay on All India Radio of the *Kirtan* from the Golden Temple. However, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee has so far denied facilities within the temple for such relay. Sikh passengers have been allowed to carry *kirpans* on domestic flights of a size agreed to between the representatives of Akali Dal and the government. The government also agreed to consider the formulation of an All-India Gurdwara Bill for historical gurdwaras in India and started discussions with various concerned parties.

The demand for amendment of Article 25 of the Constitution was not included in the original list. However, we did not wish to take a legalistic attitude. When this demand was presented belatedly, and even though it was backed by a highly reprehensible agitation of burning copies of the Constitution, government offered to consult the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and other representatives of Sikh community as well as legal experts, and undertake such legislation by way of amendment of Article 25(2)(b) as may be necessary to remove doubts on this point.

On the question of centre-state relations, a high level commission under Justice Ranjit Singh Sarkaria has already been established. We have informed the Akali Dal that they are free to present to it any submissions on this subject which falls within the terms of reference of the commission.

The two remaining demands involve the rights and claims of

states other than Punjab. These relate to river waters and territories. On the river water issue, government agreed to refer the dispute between Punjab and Haryana on the surplus waters of the Ravi-Beas to a tribunal presided over by a supreme court Judge. There was agreement on this at a tripartite meeting between the governments and with the representatives of the Akali Dal and of opposition parties, but the Akali Dal now seeks to reopen the decisions reached as early as 1955 regarding the sharing of waters with Rajasthan and has also raised the issue of the Yamuna waters.

As regards territorial disputes, I have repeatedly stated that Chandigarh will go to Punjab, provided Haryana get its share of the some Hindi speaking areas which are now in Punjab. In spite of our best efforts the two states have not been able to reach an agreement on the territories to be transferred. government had suggested that the whole territorial dispute including Chandigarh and Abohar-Fazilka could be referred to a commission whose decision should be binding on both the states. Unfortunately, the Akali Dal has not accepted our suggestions regarding the transfer of areas to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh or of reference of the whole dispute to a commission.

I have spoken of the various demands of the Akali Dal, and government's stand on them in great detail only to remove the impression which seems to persist among some people that government have not done enough to reach a settlement. May I ask in all seriousness, what more can any government do when disputes affect more than one state? The reality that has emerged is not the adequacy or otherwise of the terms of settlement offered by the government on the various Akali Dal demands, but the fact that the agitation is now in the hands of a few who have scant regard for the unity and integrity of our country or concern for communal peace and harmony or the continued economic progress of the Punjab. Every three or four months a new *morcha* is started, and Punjab is torn by a senseless and tragic strife. Terrorists and anti-national elements have gained the upper hand. Innocent people, Sikhs and Hindus, have been killed. There is arson, looting and sabotage. Holy shrines have been turned into shelters for criminals and murderers. Their sanctity as places of worship has been undermined. A deliberate and systematic campaign is spreading bitterness and hatred

between Hindus and Sikhs. And worst of all, the unity and integrity of our motherland is being openly challenged by a few who find refuge in holy shrines.

In spite of this vitiated atmosphere, we kept talking to Akali leaders in the hope of reaching an understanding. To our great disappointment issues could not be clinched. Whenever a settlement seemed in sight, they came up with fresh demands or hardened their attitude on matters earlier agreed on. The leadership which started the agitation seems to have lost the will and the capacity to control its consequences.

What do we do in this new situation? I should like to clarify two points. First, in spite of all the disappointment experienced during the last two years of talks and negotiations with the representatives of the Akali Dal, I still appeal to them to accept the framework of the settlement government has outlined. If any misgivings or doubts on any issue remain, let us sit round the table and find a solution. In a democracy the right and only way to settle problems is through discussions. Second, while the government is committed solving all pending problems through negotiations, it should be obvious that no government can allow violence and terrorism any premium in the settlement of issues. Those who indulge in such anti-social and anti-national activities should make no mistake about this.

A special word to my Sikh brothers and sisters, whether they are in the Punjab, the rest of India or outside India, India belongs equally to Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains, Parsis and others. All of them have equal rights or must get equal respect and protection. Sikhism itself was born as a faith to bring together people of different religions. The life of Guru Nanak Dev symbolised tolerance. The great Guru taught love and brotherhood. The moral of the *Granth Sahib* is truth and kindness. In the long and glorious age of national independence, Punjab and the Sikhs made a shining contribution. Let not a minuscule minority among the Sikhs be allowed to trample under foot civilised norms for which Sikhism is well known, and to tarnish the image of a brave and patriotic community.

This is not the time for anger. Too much blood has been shed. Violence leads to counter-violence and some misguided Hindus seem to think that this is the heroic way to meet terrorism.

There can be nothing more senseless and dangerous than such thoughts and actions. We have to recognise anew our responsibility to the future — a future of which all can be proud. To night I ask each one of you to work for this future. The people of Punjab, on whom history has cast great burdens and responsibilities, should think clearly of what lies ahead. Should you unwittingly become parties to the sinister designs of those who want to see India weak, and sinking into chaos and instability? I am deeply conscious of government's responsibilities but when feelings are high and so much is at stake, it does become the duty of every citizen to cooperate with the government in putting down violence which mars the fair name of the land of five rivers, and in courageously facing up to the fanatics and terrorists. At this juncture another agitation will not bring settlement closer but will give more strength to anti-national elements. Even at this late hour, I appeal to the Akali leaders to call off their threatened agitation and accept the framework of the peaceful settlement which we have offered.

Let us join together to heal wounds. The best memorial to those who have lost their lives is to restore normalcy and harmony in the Punjab which they loved and served. To all sections of Punjabis I appeal: *"Don't shed blood, shed hatred"*.

Jai Hind

Sikhism Today: A Perspective

GIANI ZAIL SINGH

This is reproduction of an article written by Giani Zail Singh when he was the union home minister. It is a brilliant 'expose' of the glorious democratic and secular tradition of Sikhism. Counterposing this tradition to the SGPC and Akali distortion of Sikhism, he criticises the 'Sikhs-are-a-nation theory', and says, 'No religion has contained the boundaries of its faith to a state or a nation-state'. The article was written in September 1981, but is as relevant today as was when written.

For quite some time, some extremist elements amongst the Sikhs have been raising slogans, the implications of which are not very clear even to them. At first an attempt was made to claim a separate nationhood for the Sikhs, a description which was based neither upon the teachings of the Sikh gurus nor upon any contemporary political logic. The forum of the Sikh educational conference which held a few meetings at Chandigarh a few months ago was grossly misused by an American citizen to extend support to this claim.

Even though the resolution passed at the conference declaring Sikhs as a separate nation was countermanded by the Chief Khalsa Dewan, the sponsors of the Sikh educational conference, the mischief already done did create some misgivings not only about Sikh politics but also about Sikh religion as such. To add to the confusion the SGPC, a purely religious body dominated by the Shiromani Akali Dal, a political party deemed it

expedient to pass for the first time in the last 60 years of its existence an uncalled for resolution declaring Sikhs a separate nation.

The lead given by SGPC was followed by the Akali Dal after some time. The issue was further complicated by some foreign-based elements by putting forth the demand of 'Khalistan', as also for associate membership for Sikhs in the UNO. It is not very difficult to see some connection between these different extremist demands and some powers which are inimically disposed towards India and are keen to destabilise the Indian political and social structure.

What is most heartening, however, is the fact that by and large the Sikh masses have refused to be swayed by such empty, though catchy, slogans.

It needs no special pleading to say that the Akali doctrine that religion and politics are inseparable for Sikhs has meant, as shown by the historical experience only subordination of the faith of the Sikh gurus to the vagaries of power-politics and not the manner in which the Akalis are trying to interpret it. In fact they are debasing the Sikh religious heritage and misleading the Sikh masses. It is a sad day that a statutory body like the SGPC deriving its legitimacy from a legislative act to provide proper management to the Sikh gurdwaras, should have thought of passing a resolution that the Sikhs as a political entity are a distinct nation because for them religion and politics are inseparable.

The passage of the resolution by the SGPC was a glaring act of over-stepping its specified sphere of activity and thus committing a constitutional impropriety. It also exposed the *Khalsa Panth* to ridicule. Firstly, it was none of the business of a body charged with the specific task of providing good administration to the gurdwaras, which according to Sikh ideology and Sikh tradition are the places of worship, service and religious congregation, to dabble into politics. Secondly, the latest pronouncement has far-reaching consequences which should not have been made without a sound basis and also without looking into their wider implications.

It is quite ironical that a religious body, which has failed so far even to evolve a self-regulating system for its own election

and management, arrogated to itself the authority of reducing a universal faith, the Sikh Panth, into a narrow political grouping. Whatever the protestations of some of the Akali leaders to the contrary, the resolution declaring the Sikhs a nation is at best a political monstrosity and at worst a thinly veiled move for disturbing the integrity of our country by promoting Sikh separatism. If religious identity alone is accepted as a determinant of nationhood, the Sikh nation would imply a super-national status because Sikhs are residents not only of Punjab and citizens not alone of India, but of many countries in the world. What shall be the constitutional status of a Sikh citizen of America if not an American? Any other suggestion will be received with nothing but derision and ridicule. On the other hand, the separatist implications of the move are quite apparent because in political theory a nation is a category which has either attained statehood or is struggling for that. No religion has contained the boundaries of its faith to a state or a nation-state.

Sikhism, a faith and a way of life, is based upon teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. It has a universal appeal. Guru Nanak's spiritual quest took him not only to all the four corners of Indian subcontinent, but even beyond its frontiers. The only reference of political import, apart from the trenchant criticism of the kings of his times and their minions in his sacred hymns, is to the invasion of India by Babur, the conqueror of India and founder of Mughal empire. In this reference his vision of the unity of Hindustan is quite boldly expressed directly:

Khuasan khasmana kiya Hindustan drayeya.

To claim that only a portion of India is sacred to the Sikhs is to commit a blasphemy. The sacred Sikh geography extends far beyond the territorial boundary of Punjab or any imaginary 'Khalistan'. Leaving alone the places of Sikhs pilgrimage in Pakistan and Bangladesh, I would like to point out that the Sikh gurus extended the Sikh sacred geography to cover the whole of India. Right from Guru Nanak onwards, the Sikh gurus maintained and continued strengthening integral links with Sikhs Sangats all over India and abroad without any reference to any regional, territorial or racial grouping.

Guru Amar Dass spread the Sikh prelacies all over Indian subcontinent. Similarly, Guru Hargobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur made extensive tours all over northern and north-eastern India restoring faith of and giving hope to a long suffering humanity. Some of the Sangats established in different parts of India by the gurus have survived up to our times. Two of the five centres of Sikh faith known as Takhts are situated outside Punjab; Takht Sri Patna Sahib in Bihar where Guru Gobind Singh was born in 1666 A.D. and the Takht Sri Hazur Sahib at Nanded in Maharashtra where he breathed his last in 1708 A.D. Similarly, there are more than 100 Sikh shrines spread over the length and breadth of India. Any scheme of things or move that seeks to promote Sikh separation will ultimately lead to vivisection of the integrity and solidarity of the organic unity of the Sikhs.

Not in the matter of extension of the sacred geography of Sikhism alone, but in the constitution of the *Khalsa Panth* as well, Guru Gobind Singh's view of Indian unity found expression in a pan-Indian base for a new order. The first beloved ones (*Panj Pyare*) who formed the bed-rock of the *Panth* and the way of life, that Guru Gobind Singh revealed and laid out for the humanity, were drawn not from the narrow confines of the Punjab but from all over India, Bhai Daya Singh hailed from Lahore in Punjab, Bhai Dharam Singh from Hastinapur in UP, Bhai Mukham Singh from Dwarka in Gujarat, Bhai Sahib Singh from Bidar in Karnataka and Bhai Himmat Singh from Jagannath Puri in Orissa. Caste-wise also they represented the whole spectrum of what were then believed to be outside the pale of civilised Hindu society—the weavers, the barbers, the water-drawers and the farmers. Only one of them belonged to one of the so-called high castes.

Thus, both by way of territorial and caste origin, Guru Gobind Singh aimed at an integrity, and not a separatist, disunited and parochial one within which some ill-advised protagonists of the Sikh cause are trying to quarantine Sikhism by declaring Sikhs as a nation.

All religions are universal in their self-identity and not restrictive. Sikhism is all the more open because it describes the Guru's faith as a door open to all, and closed to none. How can

a 'nation', a political grouping afford such openness?

Those who never tire of saying that for the Sikhs their faith is inseparable from their politics, conveniently forget that a distinction in this sphere was made even during the lifetime of the guru themselves. The holy precincts of the Hari Mandir (Harmandir Sahib, Golden Temple) were never used for political gatherings or any other non-religious purposes. This distinction was very clear to Guru Hargobind, who raised Akal Takht outside the holy precincts of the Hari Mandir. It is being increasingly felt that instead of providing good administration of the Sikh gurdwaras and propagating the universal teachings of the Sikh gurus, the SGPC only politicised the management of the holy shrines, and thus the conduct of all Sikh religious affairs. A reason for the present-day decline of Sikh faith may as well be found in such politicisation of the Sikh faith.

So far as the political aspect of the problem is concerned, it will be necessary to go back to pre-independence day when the Muslim League had raised the bogey of two nations based on religion. The Sikh political leadership was unreservedly opposed to the protagonists of the two-nation theory and never subscribed to the pernicious two-nation theory by deliberate choice. The Sikh leadership called upon the Sikh people to emigrate en masse from the theocratic state of Pakistan to the democratic and republican state of India which was the creation of a secular faith in the theory of one nation and which cherished the value of equal respect to all faiths and equality of all men before God as cherished and nurtured by the Sikh Gurus.

The wounds of partition may have healed, but the memories of the holocaust in the wake of the communal frenzy have not yet faded. It will be crucial for the so-called protagonists if the theory of Sikhs being a separate nation or of Khalistan to ponder over the fact as to why the Sikh masses and the Sikh leadership chose to cast their lot with protagonists of India being one nation and not with those committed to the two-nation theory which was the real basis for the creation of Pakistan. Any other course would have meant repudiation of the unique contribution of the Sikh patriots to the national struggle for India's independence. It is in this background of the basic commitment of the Sikhs to the cause of the Indian nation that one can appreci-

ate the fact that over 50 per cent of the then Sikh population migrated from the new state of Pakistan to India leaving behind their hearths and homes and even their holy shrines. Above all, this migration was symbolic of their identification of the faith of the Sikh gurus with the secular, democratic and socialist structure of the Indian polity.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the Sikhs were in the forefront of the national struggle for independence throughout. Starting with the *Namdhari* movement which had begun in 1849 barely eight years after the annexation of Punjab to the British Indian empire, the Sikhs made tremendous contribution to the national cause till the dawn of Independence. A large number of those who mounted the gallows in British India on charges of sedition against the British government were Sikhs. The Ghadar movement which blazed a new trail of patriotic fervour in the latter half of the second decade of this century, was composed predominantly of the Sikh immigrants to North America. The victories of the Sikh gurdwara movement were hailed by Mahatma Gandhi at the first decisive victory in the war against British imperialism.

Never in their supreme involvement with the Sikh cause, the Sikh masses faltered from their commitment to the cause of national freedom. For this cause they rose to great heights of self-sacrifice of suffering detention and long-term internment in British jails and numerous other trials and tribulations. Surpassing it all was the havoc through which the Sikhs had to pass in the wake of communal riots preceding and consequent upon the partition of Punjab. During all these trials the Sikhs upheld their categorical stand against separatism, parochialism and sectarianism.

The misguided or the misdirected elements which are today trying to create confusion and cast doubts in Sikh minds as also in the minds of others about the intentions of the Sikhs, are trying to blot out this glorious and sacred heritage of the Sikhs in the modern history of India. The Independent India under the awakened and farsighted leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru extended warm welcome to the Sikhs uprooted from Pakistan and provided them with all the opportunities to strike their roots and flourish anywhere in India as

their motherland and homeland. It is a tribute to this farsighted national polity that one-third of Sikhs in India today lives outside Punjab.

The entire India is today the homeland of the Sikhs. Any wilful action in promoting Sikh chauvinism in Punjab is fraught with consequences which are against the interests of Sikhs themselves. These mischievous elements know it very well, but then they are mischievous. This only shows that they are not honest in their aims and are somehow or other beholden to some powers which are more interested in misusing them for creating instability in Punjab and illwill against Sikhs elsewhere.

Jean Kirkpatrick's 'Operation Balkanisation of India'

The notorious 'Kirkpatrick Document' nakedly exposes the American design on India. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Mrs Jean Kirkpatrick not only authored the blueprint, "*Balkanisation of India*", but also presented the broad outlines of her plan in Washington on February 27, 1982 before a group called the "Conservative Political Action Conference".

A careful study of the document makes it clear that the "*Operation Balkanisation of India*" has been conceived as a part of Washington's new geo-political strategy for the developing countries to achieve the objective of establishing its "political and military dominance over key strategic zones" because these countries are "striving for full control of their natural resources" and because a "drastic radicalisation of the non-aligned movement" is taking place. Apart from this aspect, Washington wants to have "a permanent American military presence in such areas". It also is seeking to establish a "dominant influence in the regions of the Third World where there are governments which pursue an open or concealed anti-American policy". In this connection countries like "Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Iran, Libya, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique as well as Algeria and India" are the special target of attack of the new American policy. It is in this context that India figures prominently in this document.

The document specifically mentions that "the Gandhi regime pursues an anti-American policy on a number of issues" and pointedly mentions that India's "*weakness lies in its many unresolved domestic and international problems*" and that "*there is a noticeable growth of separatist movements, to the extent that there is a possibility of balkanisation of India, which would destroy its influence in the Third World and elsewhere*". But it does not leave at that. It in unmistakable terms says that "*even if India does not succumb to balkanisation, the non-Communist opposition to Indira Gandhi might consolidate its ranks and create an increasing possibility for the emergence of a realistic alternative government.*"

The word "realistic" conceals more than what it reveals be-

cause the document itself mentions that "the United States could watch the erosion of the Nehru-Gandhi tradition, almost irrespective of the form it takes with some complacency".

The document admits that "several government agencies, working in close cooperation with the State Department. . . contribute to the effective implementation of our strategy and policy in the Third World". And it is in this context that the role of the CIA has been highlighted and justifies "upgrading of the CIA" and "wider powers" granted to it.

It is for the patriotic forces of India to analyse the real significance of this American Plan, particularly in our present domestic context, to fully comprehend what Washington has in mind for our great nation.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss an issue which is of primary concern to this administration — our policy toward the countries of the Third World.

Analysis of present trends in the world situation, economic, political and military, indicates the growing significance of the raw materials and energy resources of the developing countries for the interests of the United States. A parallel interest in these resources is being evinced by other countries of the free world and of the Communist Bloc. The Third World itself is turning to policies of economic nationalism. As a result, we may confidently expect that the 1980s will bring confrontations and conflicts over access to the economic resources of the Third World.

In the forthcoming struggle, we must ensure for ourselves unassailable positions of strength in order to facilitate the establishment of a world environment in which we can successfully defend our values while actively resisting both the Soviets and other nations which wittingly or unwittingly oppose us in the thrust for influence in the Third World.

We must take careful reckoning of a sinister aspect of the policies of many developing nations — a wholesale revision of existing international economic relationships. In more specific terms, I refer to their efforts to achieve full state control of their natural resources, irrespective of the requirements of the world economy and in complete disregard for our own interests. Such a development could lead to a diversification of their economic ties and a restriction of the activity of American business in

favour of the economic expansion of Western Europe, Japan and the Communist Bloc. If that were allowed to happen, we might be unable to satisfy in full our requirements of strategic raw materials and of others essential to the prosperity and welfare of our people. I am prepared to argue with anyone on earth that world growth is inconceivable without a rich and stable United States. Any arbitrary curtailment of American business enterprise is wholly unacceptable in the interests of ourselves and of others.

It is now abundantly clear that the policy of detente, supported by previous administrations, has played into the hands of the Soviet Union and other Communist Bloc countries. In many developing countries, detente has promoted an increase in anti-American and nationalist tendencies and prompted them to open confrontation with nations wedded to the free market. They have used their raw materials as instruments of pressure and have demanded with growing stridency a remodelling of the entire system of world trade relations. Detente has also triggered interest in economic cartels and new political grouping which damage the free world far more seriously than the totalitarian systems. The Third World has been siding with the Communist Bloc in the United Nations, turning the organisation into a forum for anti-American propaganda leading to resolutions damaging to American interests. This tendency has been increasing with every passing year. It harms the image of the United States in the Third World and has found reflection, among other things, in drastic radicalization of the non-aligned movement. We must counter this development by rejecting detente in favour of tougher diplomatic action, economic measures and an increased American presence in the Third World.

In emphasising this call for more vigorous policies, I am not suggesting that the picture is wholly black. The Third World is not a cohesive international structure or a single entity. It is divided in several ways by such factors as different levels of development, disparities of wealth, ideological cleavages and even personal rivalries. These offer us promising opportunities for a new hard look at our foreign policy with a view to separating the sheep from the goats and taking tougher and firmer unilateral decisions appropriate to each category. While holding to our own principles for ourselves, it would be absurd to apply

them too rigorously to most of the Third World countries whose people have no experience of their practical application and little conception of their meaning.

In the struggle for the Third World, the United States must be capable of decisive action in many areas to which I now propose to draw your attention.

We must do everything to limit Soviet influence in the Third World.

We must establish political and military dominance over key strategic zones, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, South Africa, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans including the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and over regions producing essential raw materials. A multiplicity of ends must be used for this purpose, including special operations to seize the sources of essential raw materials in the event of internal or external pressures threatening suspension of their production or delivery. A corollary of this is a permanent American military presence in such areas.

We must also seek a dominant influence in regions of the Third World where there are governments which pursue an open or concealed anti-American policy. To indicate the vast scope of this problem, I may give as example Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Iran, Libya, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, as well as Algeria, India and Madagascar. These are nations to be isolated, restrained or set against one another. While we should not flinch from the threat or even the use of force in extreme cases, a necessary first step is the fostering of divisions in the Third World and the prevention of a united front of developing countries hostile to the interests of the United States. To this end, a method which should be used more consistently than in the past is the enlistment of help from friendly countries which play roles of major local influence, such as Egypt, South Africa, Zaire, Morocco, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the ASEAN nations. In Parallel, we must oppose any uncoordinated moves by our allies in respect to the producers of raw materials if these moves undermine our positions. I do not have to tell you that our allies need us more than we need them.

Social development in the countries of the Third World must

be protected from the corrupting influence of Marxist ideology and other political or religious doctrines detrimental to the ideals of the free world. It should be impressed on the most developed and influential groups in these countries, as well as on the world public, that all trends in the development of society in the Third World which reject our historical, political and economic experience, are clearly linked with organised international terrorism and, more specifically, with the growing threat of Soviet domination.

We must ensure a reliable supply of oil and other raw materials and the uninterrupted export of our own goods. These relations cannot be based on the previously proclaimed principle of mutual dependence because this principle, or rather catchword, distorts the real correlation of forces and exaggerated the importance of the countries of the Third World, prompting them to make foolishly unrealistic demands which neither the United States nor any other industrial nation can meet. We must actively oppose all demands for the establishment of a new international economic order, which would be fraught with detrimental consequences for the United States and would certainly backfire on those most vocal in pushing the idea.

We must also counter, both in the UN and within the framework of the North-South dialogue, any discussion of global problems which questions the validity of the free market and of free enterprise in countries of the Third World. The scope of private national and multinational corporations should be extended by lifting unreasonable restrictions of their activity imposed by many governments of developing countries. Such countries should rely on free enterprise and recognise that their governments bear a great share of responsibility for their own backwardness. This is the result of the incompetence of their leaders to exploit their own resources or make rational use of American aid. There is now overwhelming evidence that much of foreign aid is wasted on the payrolls of inflated bureaucracies and perhaps even more on the personal enrichment of those in power.

We must ensure, in providing economic and financial assistance to the Third World, that it is not used to bolster systems or regimes inimical to the United States. Aid should be confined

to reliable allies and friendly nations, even if their domestic policies may cause us qualms, or to countries of wavering loyalties when there is solid ground for believing that they would respond positively to American assistance.

There is strong case for reducing the total volume of foreign aid provided through US government channels and through international organisation and foundations, to eliminate the wanton waste of resources which we have seen in the past. We must weigh once again the expedience of financing at the present level the development banks for Latin America, Asia and Africa as well as the international food aid programmes for the developing countries. Food should be used more actively as an effective instrument of our foreign policy. We should also refuse, except in overriding political or military emergencies, to subsidise the public sectors of developing nations — a prime cause of the wanton waste of resources to which I have just referred. The reduction of our aid through government channels will not be popular in much of the Third World.

But adversely affected regimes should seek compensation by encouraging a greater influx of private capital into their economies which would benefit them more in the long run. Meanwhile, American businessmen would contribute more actively to the implementation of US foreign policy while making substantial profits as a solid contribution to the US balance of payments. This administration is prepared to make vigorous efforts to support a major export drive in Third World markets hitherto.

I have spoken mainly of economic matters. I now turn to military aid. It is the administration's view that more, not less, emphasis should be laid on military assistance—and not merely assistance limited to the supply of equipment. It should harness the recipients more firmly to the strategic plans of the United States by means of standardised equipment and training, and by defence agreements and joint manoeuvres to demonstrate our military capability and global reach. Existing limitations on arms deliveries to the Third world should be lifted. Careful control must be enforced to ensure that these arms do not fall into the hands of the Communist Bloc or of such terrorist organisations as the Farabundo Marti Front in El Salvador, the ANC in South Africa or SWAPO in Namibia. Countries shown

to have transferred American arms without due authorisation must be severely sanctioned. The sale of arms must be a major component of our foreign policy strategy. Its importance will steadily increase together with the role of special operations and the procurement of intelligence. We should also bear in mind that both Moscow and our Western allies are competing for the arms markets of the Third world, and excessive restrictions should not inhibit the aggressive salesmanship of American companies. The natural scruples of a free society should be tampered by the recognition that we live in the world as it is, not in one we would like it to be.

That concludes my statement of general considerations. I will now deal with regional issues, beginning with our nearest neighbours in Latin America.

This region has always been of extreme importance to the security of the United States, a truth enshrined long ago in the Monroe Doctrine. It is of vital necessity to retain our traditional influence there so as to ensure our access to its raw materials and their free and undisturbed transport to the United States.

The main problem for the United States in this region today is to reinforce the commitment of OAS member states to the Rio treaty and to broaden its practical application so that any violation of stability in Central or South America would provide sufficient grounds for the automatic implementation of the mechanism calling for mutual assistance.

The activities of the Castro regime in Cuba have aroused serious concern for the stability of the continent. We cannot tolerate the continuation of activities which could lead to the emergence of other hostile regimes in close proximity to the borders of the United States. A blockade of Cuba is in force, and we are actively pursuing a policy of restricting influence on neighbouring countries. Several options are under consideration for tightening the diplomatic, economic, psychological and military pressures on the Cuban regime. In addition there is a special plan, conceived within the frame-work of controlling terrorism, which will show our resolve to use all available means to counter any interference in the region.

We are following closely the alarming events in El Salvador which have developed as a result of the terrorist activity of rebel elements stimulated and fostered from outside the coun-

try. To help stabilize the situation we are stepping up all round assistance to the lawful government. Steps are also being taken to prompt other countries in the region to share responsibility for the future of El Salvador. We have in preparation resolute measures in respect of Nicaragua where a clearly pro-Cuban regime is being established which could spread its influence to El Salvador and beyond. We shall continue to exert political, economic and, if necessary, other forms of influence on the Mexican government in order to inject some measure of consistency into its foreign policy. It is a leading power in the area and its frequent and inexcusable equivocations in the past have positively encouraged unfavourable developments.

The Pentagon is grappling with the task of ensuring strategic coordination between our Pacific and Atlantic fleets. The significance of the Panama Canal is thereby enhanced and it is imperative for us to guarantee the United States' unimpeded use of the waterway. Our strategic interests also call for a permanent US military presence in the Panama Canal Zone, Guantanamo and other strategic locations in the Caribbean. In this connection, we have a special interest in enlisting the help of our friends in the Third World to block the adoption by the UN, the non-aligned movement and other international organisations of any resolutions on Central America which could embarrass the United States. Acting on the advice of the Secretary of State who is personally following developments in the Caribbean Basin, President Reagan has set up an inner operations group, consisting of senior State Department and Pentagon officials and fully empowered to take urgent action in the event of a deterioration of the situation.

We attach great significance to our ongoing efforts to create a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation to match the NATO system in the north. If we succeed in our enterprise, we would expect the formation of such an alliance to play a major part in strengthening our positions in Latin America and Southern Africa. The main difficulties to be overcome arise from the uncertain attitudes of Brazil and Argentina toward the issues, the product of the traditional rivalry between the two countries. As for the government in Pretoria, it has expressed its unhesitating approval for the project.

And now for one of the thorniest of the world's problems —

the situation in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. Here we have an extremely sensitive and unstable zone, a stage of fierce rivalry for political and military influence and guaranteed access to essential raw materials; major lines of naval communication pass through this area as well as the oil routes via the Mediterranean and round the Cape. It is also the home of fanatically pursued rivalries of almost inconceivable variety and complexity offering ideal opportunities for the fomenting of mischief.

American policy in this vortex is based on a balanced strategy proceeding from the fact that the process of establishing peace and the process of cooperation in the sphere of security supplement each other. That is why we attach such great importance to the maximum possible build-up of our military presence in the region and to military agreements with friendly regimes. To this end, we envisage the strengthening of the political and military positions of Israel, which is our closest ally and a catalyst for dissent within the regimes hostile to Jerusalem. This dictates the maintenance of Israel's permanent military superiority over its local enemies. We continue to support the view that the participation of the PLO in any Middle Eastern settlement can be possible only if it reverses its policies, abandons its terrorist tactics and unequivocally acknowledges Israel's right to existence within secure and recognised borders. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the opportunity to strengthen and develop our relations with nations which, like Egypt, are prepared to help us resolve existing and potential conflicts in a manner we are able to accept. In this connection we attach special significance to our relations with Saudi Arabia, Oman and the smaller States of the Gulf and the Red Sea. We believe that they fear the spread of Soviet influence, the religious fanaticism of Iran and the erratic and mischievous policies of the Libyan leader, and that they are therefore ready for closer military cooperation with the United States. We are pursuing similar aims in Jordan and have not yet given up all hope of Iraq.

Our long-term strategy envisages the reorientation of majority of the Arab countries toward greater reliance on the United States in the face of threatened communist expansion in the Gulf. Our current policy should be directed toward the creation

of conditions which would prompt Arab nations to seek us support as the most reliable guarantee of the stability of existing regimes. We intend to step up our role of mediator in Lebanon to increase American influence there and reduce that of Moscow's Arab allies. At the same time, we will toughen our policy of containment with respect to such Communist Bloc allies as Syria, Libya and South Yemen by means of diplomatic, economic and military pressures.

The State department and the Pentagon are cooperating closely, under presidential directive, to neutralise the efforts of certain Asian and African governments to achieve the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean. This would restrict our military presence not only in the open ocean but in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and a number of African countries as well. It would create serious difficulties for our rapid deployment force, the essence of which is to take immediate action in the event of an oil embargo, rebellions or revolutions in the oil producing nations, or an outbreak of local conflict between them which could affect oil deliveries to the United States and its allies. For these decisive reasons, the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean is out of the question. On the contrary, we must strengthen our forces in the area.

At this point, I would like to emphasise that the administration rejects suggestions that have been made to limit our military presence in the Indian Ocean to a mere token force. A token force might invite the very aggression it was designed to deter, and then be unable to repel it. No, our military presence in the Indian Ocean must not only be substantial in itself, but capable of rapid re-inforcement. We are not playing war games in this vital area.

Now, the conflict between Iran and Iraq is a special case, we have been careful not to intervene directly in the war since it serves to weaken the regimes of Tehran and Baghdad, both hostile to the United States, and helps our efforts to activate friendly democratic forces which might emerge after prolonged blood-letting. Yet the administration is aware that the defeat of the Hussein regime could have a negative impact on the United States, so we have not opposed the grant of aid to Iraq from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan. As for Iran, we are following developments closely since the further spread of Shiite

terrorism and subversion would be a recipe for chaos which would endanger the political, economic and military interests of the United States throughout the region. I should mention here that we must also keep an eye on the attempts of some of our European allies, France, for instance, to exploit Middle Eastern tensions to promote their selfish national interests. This could strengthen the oil-producing countries and reduce the leading role of Israel. It could seriously undermine our strategy throughout the Middle East. The Afghan crisis and Moscow's military intervention led us to launch major diplomatic and propaganda campaign in the Third World to aggravate relations between the Soviets and the Islamic nations. These campaigns had a powerful impact on such countries as Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Guinea, to mention but a few. This could become a major factor in muting anti-American trends in the Moslem world, as was shown dramatically at the Islamic conference of January and May, 1981. Our relations with Pakistan have taken a particularly favourable turn. It is a country of strategic importance and is well placed to help our efforts to influence the policies of Iran, Afghanistan and India.

Unfortunately, for reasons too complex to discuss in detail here, the United States has generally failed to come to satisfactory terms with India since independence. The Gandhi regime pursues an anti-American policy on a number of issues, the most obvious being Afghanistan and South-East Asia, but India is not the giant it claims to be, in fact, it more aptly suggests the Chinese epithet, a paper tiger. Its weakness lies in its many unresolved domestic and international problems; apart from endemic poverty, there is a noticeable growth of separatist movements, to the extent that there is a real possibility of the balkanization of India which would destroy its influence in the Third World and elsewhere. Such a development, while raising a host of new problems, would undoubtedly seriously damage the interest of the Soviet Union, a traditional friend of neutralist India. But even if India does not succumb to balkanization the non-Communist opposition to Indira Gandhi might consolidate its ranks and create an increasing possibility for the emergence of a realistic alternative government. The United States could watch the erosion of the Nehru-Gandhi tradition, almost irrespective of the form it takes, with some complacency.

From India I shall now move to East Asia and the Pacific. The region is of continuing importance for our interests and calls for a restoration of the former American leadership which was cast in doubt by the failure of previous administrations in Vietnam. The main problem is to create a barrier to the spread of Soviet influence, backed by the present regimes of Vietnam, Kampuchea and, to a lesser extent, Laos, such a barrier could be formed by the creation of a grouping of nations to include Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN countries, a grouping which could expect toleration, if not active support, from China. We hope to link this grouping to our strategy through economic and military agreements to ensure American support and participation in the event of aggression. The administration also considers it desirable to consolidate cooperative relations between South Korea and Taiwan through the friendly brokerage of the United States, although it recognises the difficulty of realising this aim without damage to our relations with China. This requires a careful balancing act. One of the main objects of such measures would be to undermine the efforts of Vietnam to create a federation of Indo-Chinese nations under its own domination.

These arrangements should enable us to strengthen the American military presence in the region and to extend the presently inadequate chain of bases. This could be achieved by reactivating the abandoned military bases in Thailand, by winning access for the US navy, to the ports of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka, and by building new military installations in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia. We will also have to tackle the serious problem of increasing Japan's military contribution to the security of the Pacific in the face of significant opposition within Japan and of the concern which such an increase would arouse in countries formerly under Japanese occupation. Another important task is to create a favourable political climate for the more active participation of the ASEAN countries in matters of defence. We will have to exert considerable effort, including economic pressure, to persuade them to reject the concept of a South-East Asian zone of peace which is being exploited by Vietnam to improve relations with ASEAN.

We also intend to intensify our efforts to discover the issues

on which our views coincide with those of the Chinese leadership. It is clear that China's interest in strengthening its military capability is a base for closer cooperation with Peking. At the same time, we are aware of the need to check China's traditional drive for expansion at the expense of its southern neighbours. There have been occasions in the past when this drive was raised to the level of national policy by the Chinese Communists. We will always be prepared to safeguard our interests and those of our allies, if they are endangered by Communist China. Our relations with Peking Marxists will continue to incorporate flexibility and tactfulness in order that Taiwan remain a political and economic entity in the region. Pressure on the Marxists of Indo-China is one thing, scaring ASEAN out of wits is quite another.

I must now complete this survey of American involvement in the Third World by some remarks on Africa, which has recently become yet another arena of bitter struggle against Communism for influence and access to raw materials. It is a struggle which the United States cannot afford to lose. We must be guided by hard facts, not by abstractions, by sentiment. The main goal of this administration in Africa, I do not hesitate to say, is to ensure the stability of the South African regime and to terminate its present unnatural isolation. Yet the United States must also retain, and when possible improve, its relation with the countries of black Africa. These objectives are difficult to reconcile with one another. But there is some promise in sustained attempts to associate important nations such as Nigeria and Zaire, together with the front-line States, with peaceful reforms to solve the problems of separate development in South Africa. We have no quarrel with separate development as such, only with the apparent unfairness of its present application. We are prepared to help Pretoria in mitigating that unfairness. As President Reagan not long ago reminded us, the South African whites stood beside us, through two world wars and deserve better from us than a perpetual cold shoulder. We must firmly reject the application of sanctions against South Africa. Its economy is far too closely intertwined with that of the United States and its allies to permit such irresponsible action. Nor should we try to restrain its efforts to build up a strong defence capability, since we want the South Africans to participate in

SATO and play a leading role in the defence of the oil routes round the Cape. These considerations transcend by far the limits of Africa and must be cornerstone of our policy in the continent

Our trade with black Africa is important and must be promoted with energy, but not at the cost of weakening the economy or defence potential of South Africa. The stand of black African countries on other international issues must also be given due weight. Of most immediate interest is their attitude to our determination to exclude the Marxist SWAPO from any say in the future of Namibia. We will also be swayed by the extent to which they have supported or resisted the policies of the Soviet Union and its surrogates. The administration is taking steps, including the reinforcement of US influence in their neighbourhood, to curb African countries which pursue extremist policies and encourage terrorism. In this connection I may mention Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Algeria and Benin, among others. President Reagan has personally ordered effective measures to undermine the dictatorial Libyan regime and to discredit the Cuban presence in Africa. I need hardly tell you that the presence of Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia has a serious obstacle to the restoration of a moderating western influence in countries which have experienced radical, social and political upheavals, with generally disastrous results. We must spare no effort to remove the Cuban factor from the African continent even if it means enlisting the resources of Pretoria.

We attach particular significance to those parts of East Africa which border directly on the Middle East. Our policy there is to encourage military cooperation with Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. This should include a stronger military presence and an unimpeded right to the use of air and sea bases. More active encouragement in the form of material aid should be extended to the separatist movements of Ethiopia in the Eritrea, Tigre and Ogaden. The governments of Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Somalia are already pressing us in that direction. Elsewhere in Africa, our traditionally friendly relations with nations such as Zaire, Morocco and Tunisia should be developed in the shape of stronger political, economic and military cooperation, while the strategic importance of the African island States,

Madagascar, the Seychelles and Mauritius, is moderate Government in the islands.

You are all well aware that the activities of the OAU are sometimes detrimental to US interests, we propose to strengthen the moderate forces within the organisation, those which are prepared to compromise on major African and other international problems. The possibilities of the OAU have been generally neglected by previous administrations. We intend to remedy that error of omission, and I hope confidently that we shall soon see progress in consonance with our long-term interests.

In conclusion, I will touch on certain special supporting measures to secure our vital interest the world over and to restore our somewhat diminished prestige.

As a result of the weakness of the Carter administration, we did not support the Shah of Iran, although we should have done everything in our power to do so. Now we are paying the price. If we had not abandoned Somoza, Cuba would not have penetrated Nicaragua. There are other examples to demonstrate what seems to have been a sort of paralysis of the American will, with the advent of the new administration our mental attitudes must be completely changed. The use of force has always been part of the historical process and, apart from nuclear war, we need not fear it. American interests can be defended only by decisive action. If we are convinced that the measures we take are to our advantage, then we must persist to the end, without heeding the objections of our European allies, still less of the Third World.

Several government agencies, working in close cooperation with the State Department under the direction of the President, contribute to the effective implementation of our strategy and policy in the Third World.

Thus, the CIA has been granted wider powers. Upgrading of the CIA is fully justified by the current international situation which reflects a menacing confrontation with the Communist bloc. Wholesale criticism of the agency encouraged by the former administration was unfair.

Ill-considered and contrary to the national interest, the President deems it necessary to restore confidence in the intelli-

gence community. He recommends a daring and active approach to the procurement of intelligence and the mounting of special operations, especially in the Third World.

Great importance is attached to vigorous propaganda in support of our Third World policy, we must counter the unrelenting onslaught of Communist propaganda which seeks to inflame public opinion in poorer countries and incite them to hatred of the United States and the West in general. This calls for the reorganisation of the international communication agency and the peace corps with a view to increase their effectiveness in propagating the American way of life throughout the world. The outcome of the battle for the minds of the present and potential leaders of developing countries is of major importance for the success of our policies. The nations of the Third World must be made to see the United States as the guarantor of their security in the face of Communist expansion as the only friend who can give them effective aid and support.

Courtesy: Link, February 6, 1983.

Anandpur Sahib Resolution

as authenticated by
Sant Harchand Singh Longowal

Basic Postulates of the Shiromani Akali Dal

as adopted by the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal at its meeting held at Sri Anandpur Sahib on 16-17 October 1973.

(A) Postulates:

1. The Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation. The basic postulates of this organisation are human co-existence, human progress and ultimate unity of all human beings with the Spiritual Soul.

2. These postulates are based upon the three great principles of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, namely, a Meditation on God's Name, dignity of labour and sharing of fruits of this Labour. (Nam Japo, Kirat Karo, Wand Chhako).

(B) Purposes:

The Shiromani Akali Dal shall ever strive to achieve the following aims:

1. Propagation of Sikhism and its code of conduct denunciation of atheism.

2. To preserve and keep alive the concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth and to create an environment in which national sentiments and aspiration of the Sikh Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and growth.

3. Eradication of poverty and starvation, by increased production and more equitable distribution of wealth and the establishment of a just social order sans any exploitation.

4. Vacation of discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or illiteracy in keeping with basic principles of Sikhism.

5. Striving for the removal of diseases and ill-health, denouncement of use of intoxicants and enlargement of facilities for physical well-being to prepare and enthuse the Nation for the national defence.

First Part

The Shiromani Akali Dal considers it its primary duty to inculcate among the Sikhs, religious fervour and a pride in their rich religious heritage for which it proposes to pursue the following programme:

(a) Reiteration of the concept of the unicity (Oneness) of God, meditation on His Name, recitation of Gurbani, renewal of faith in the ten Holy Sikh Gurus and the Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other appropriate measures for such a purpose.

(b) Grooming accomplished preachers, Ragis, Dhadis, and poets in the Sikh Missionary College for a more effective propagation of Sikhism, Sikh Philosophy, belief in Sikh code of conduct and Kirtan etc., at home and abroad, in schools and colleges, in villages and in cities as indeed at every place.

(c) Baptising the Sikhs (Amrit Parchar) on a vast scale, with particular emphasis on schools and colleges of which the teachers and the taught shall be enthused through regular study circles.

(d) Reinculcate the religious practice of 'DASWAND' among the Sikhs. (Giving one tenth of one's earnings for the welfare of the community).

(e) Generating feelings of respect for the Sikh intellectuals, writers, preachers, granthis, etc., who also in turn, would be enthused to improve upon their accomplishments while conforming to the basic Sikh tenets and traditions.

(f) Streamlining the gurdwaras administration by giving better training to their workers. Appropriate steps would also be taken to maintain gurdwara buildings in proper condition. For such a purpose, the party representatives in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and local committees would be directed time to time to pull their weight.

(g) Making appropriate arrangements for the error free pub-

lication of Gurbani; promoting research work in the ancient and modern Sikh history as also its publication; rendering Gurbani in other languages and producing first rate literature on Sikhism.

(h) Taking appropriate steps for the enactment of an All India Gurdwara Act with a view to introducing improvements in the administration of the gurdwaras throughout the country and to reintegrate the traditional preaching sects of Sikhism like Udasis and Nirmalas with the mainstream of Sikhism without in any way encroaching on the properties of their respective individual 'maths'.

(i) Taking such steps as may be necessary to bring the Sikh gurdwaras all over the world under a single system of administration with a view to run them according to the basic Sikh norms and to poll their sources for the dissemination of Sikhism on a wider and more impressive scale.

(j) Striving for free access to all those holy Sikh shrines, including Nankana Sahib from which the Sikh Panth has been separated, for pilgrimage and proper upkeep.

Political Goal

The political goal of the Panth, without doubt, is enshrined in the commandments of the Tenth Lord, in the pages of the Sikh history and in the very heart of the Khalsa Panth, the ultimate objective of which is the pre-eminence of the Khalsa.

The fundamental policy of the Shiromani Akali Dal is to seek the realization of this birth right of the Khalsa through creation of congenial environment and a political set up.

FOR ATTAINMENT OF THIS AIM

1. The Shiromani Akali Dal is determined to strive by all possible means to:

(a) Have all those Punjabi speaking areas, deliberately kept out of Punjab, such as Dalhousie in Gurdaspur district; Chandigarh; Pinjore-Kalka and Ambala Saddar etc., in Ambala district; the entire Una tehsil of Hoshiarpur district, the 'Desh' area of Nalagarh; Shahabad and Gulha blocks of Karnal district; Tohana sub-tehsil, Ratia block and Sirsa tehsil of Hissar district and six tehsils of Ganganagar district in Rajasthan; merged with Punjab to constitute a single administrative unit where the in-

terests of the Sikhs and Sikhism are specifically protected.

(b) In this new Punjab and in other States the Centre's interference would be restricted to defence, foreign relations, currency and general communication; all other departments would be in the jurisdiction of Punjab (and other states) which would be fully entitled to frame own laws on these subjects for administration. For the above departments of the Centre, Punjab and other states contribute in proportion to representation in the Parliament.

(c) The Sikhs and other religious minorities living out of Punjab should be adequately protected against any kind of discrimination.

2. The Shiromani Akali Dal would also endeavour to have the Indian Constitution recast on real federal principles, with equal representation at the Centre for all the states.

3. The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly denounces the foreign policy of India framed by the Congress party. It is worthless, hopeless and highly detrimental to the interests of the country, the Nation and the Mankind at large. Shiromani Akali Dal shall extend its support only to that foreign policy of India which is based on the principles of peace and national interests. It strongly advocates a policy of peace with all neighbouring countries, especially those inhabited by the Sikhs and their sacred shrines. The Akali Dal is of the firm view that our foreign policy should in no case play second fiddle to that of any other country.

4. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall raise its firm voice against any discrimination against any Sikh (or even other) employees of the Central or State governments. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall also endeavour to maintain the traditional position of the Sikhs in all the wings of the defence departments and the Panth would pay particular attention to the needs of the Sikh armymen. The Shiromani Akali Dal would also see that 'kirpan' is accepted as integral part of the uniform of the Sikhs in the Army.

5. It shall be the primary duty of the Shiromani Akali Dal to help rehabilitate the ex-servicemen of the defence departments in the civil life and for such a purpose it would extend them every help to enable them to organise themselves so that

they are able to raise their voice in an effective way for gaining adequate concession and proper safeguards for a life of self-respect and dignity.

6. The Shiromani Akali Dal is of the firm opinion that all those persons — males or females — who have not been convicted of any criminal offence by a court of law, should be at liberty to possess all types of small arms, like revolvers, guns, pistols, rifles, carbines etc. without any licence, the only obligation being their registration.

7. The Shiromani Akali Dal seeks ban on the sale of liquor and other intoxicants and shall press for prohibition on the consumption of intoxicants and smoking in public places.

The Economic Policy and Programme of the Shiromani Akali Dal as adopted by its Working Committee on 17th October, 1973, at its meeting held at Sri Anandpur Sahib:

Although the mainstay of the Indian economy is agriculture and all those political powers who claim to raise social structure on the basis of justice cannot afford to ignore this fact, yet this is a hard fact that the lever of economic powers continue to be in the hands of big traders, capitalists and monopolists. Some marginal benefits might have accrued to other classes, but the real benefits of economic growth have been reaped by these categories during the last 26 years after Independence. The political power has also been misappropriated by these classes which are wielding the same for their own benefits. As such, any peaceful attempt to usher in a new era of social justice would have to break the economic and political strongholds of these categories of the people.

The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly advocates that the growing gulf between the rich and the poor, in the urban and rural areas both should be abridged but, it is of the firm opinion that, for such a purpose, the first assault would have to be made on the classes who have assumed all the reins of economic power in their hands. In rural areas, the Akali Dal determined to help the weaker classes, like the scheduled castes, backward classes, landless tenants, ordinary labourers, the poor and middle class farmers. For such a purpose, it stands for meaningful land

reforms which envisage a ceiling of 30 standard acres and the distribution of excess land among the poor farmers.

The motto of the Shiromani Akali Dal is to provide employment for all, requisite food and clothing for all, a house to live in, suitable transport and to create means to fulfill all those necessities of a civilized life without which life appears incomplete.

As such the economic policy of the Shiromani Akali Dal shall endeavour to achieve the following objectives:

Agriculture Sector

During recent years the agriculture sector has witnessed land reforms and green revolution. The Shiromani Akali Dal undertakes to enrich the green revolution by an increase in yield per acre. It shall also ensure perceptible improvement in the standard of living of all rural classes, more particularly of the poor and the middle class farmers, as also the landless labourers. For such a purpose it plans to work on the following lines:

(a) Introducing land reforms and measures for increasing agricultural production with a view to remove the growing gap between the rich and the poor. For such a purpose the existing legislation on land ceiling would have to be revised and a firm ceiling of 30 standard acres per family would have to be enforced with proprietary rights to the actual tillers. The excess land would be distributed among the landless tenants and poor farmers, while the cultivable government land lying unused shall be distributed among the landless classes, especially the scheduled castes and tribes. While distributing such lands the interest of Harijan and landless labourers would be particularly taken care of. The Akali Dal would also consider the possibilities of allowing the tenants to service loans by mortgaging land under their plough, as also prohibiting the scheduled castes/tribes and backward classes from mortgaging the land distributed among them.

(b) The Shiromani Akali Dal shall work for the modernization of farming and would also try to enable the middle class and poor farmers to seek loans and inputs made available by different agencies.

(c) The Shiromani Akali Dal shall try to fix the prices of the

agricultural produce on the basis of the returns of the middle class farmers. Such prices would be notified well before the sowing season and only the state government would be empowered to fix such prices.

(d) The Shiromani Akali Dal stands for complete nationalization of the trade in foodgrains and as such, shall endeavour to nationalize the wholesale trade in foodgrains through the establishment of State agencies.

(e) The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly opposes the demarcation of food zones and the attendant restrictions of the movements of foodgrains. The whole country should be the single food zone.

The party shall make special efforts to bring the Thein Dam and the Bhatinda thermal plant to a speedy completion so that increased and cheaper power and irrigation facilities are available. Definite efforts would be made for the establishment of an atomic power station in the state.

Co-operative societies would be set up in the rural areas. In all those areas where canal water is not available small irrigation projects would be taken in hand.

Industrial Sector

The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly advocates that all key industries should be brought under the public sector.

It is of the opinion that basic consumer industries should be immediately nationalized to stabilize the prices of the consumer goods and to save the poor consumer from exploitation at the hands of the industrialists and the middleman.

The public sector industries should be established in such a way that the imbalance between different states is removed.

A planned effort to establish agro-industries in the rural areas should be made to relieve the growing population pressure in the urban areas. The industrial management should be democratized by enabling the workers to have a say in the management and by fair distribution of profits between the industrialists and the workers. The credit agencies, especially the nationalized banks should be directed to invest a fixed ratio of their deposits in the rural areas. Every industrial unit beyond

worth one crore assets should be brought under the public sector. The Akali Dal stands for progressive nationalization of transport.

The public sector units should be fully autonomous and manned by competent young executives drawn from a central pool of talent.

Economic Policy

The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the whole tax structure be revised in such a way that the evasion of taxes and the flow of black money is completely eradicated. It stands for a simple and straightforward system of taxation. The present infrastructure of taxation weighs heavily against the poor and enables the rich to bypass it. The party stands for a more realistic policy in this respect so that the black money running a parallel economy may be usefully employed.

WORKERS, MIDDLE CLASS EMPLOYEES AND AGRICULTURAL LABOUR:

For their benefits the Shiromani Akali Dal would try its best:

1. To fix need based wages for industrial workers.
2. To bring progressive improvement in the standard of living of government employees.
3. To re-assess the minimum wages of agricultural labour and to standard of living for them.
4. To take necessary steps to provide roofed accommodation for standard of living for them.
5. To take necessary steps to provide roofed accommodation for the rural and urban poor.

UNEMPLOYMENT: The Shiromani Akali Dal stands for full employment in the country. For such a purpose it is of the firm opinion that the Government must provide immediate employment to the educated and trained persons, otherwise reasonable unemployment allowance should be paid to them. This amount should be shared by the Centre and the State governments. The minimum rates of such an allowance should be as under:

1. Matric and or trained hands	Rs.*	50/-	per month
2. B.A.		75/-	„ „
3. M.A.		100/-	„ „
4. Engineers and Doctors		150/-	„ „
5. Other trained Labour		50/-	„ „

*(These rates were fixed in 1973).

All persons above the age of 65 should be given old age pension.

WEAKER SECTIONS AND BACKWARD CLASSES: The Shiromani Akali Dal shall try to improve the economic conditions of the backward classes and weaker sections of society by extending them facilities for education, employment and other concessions, to enable them to come at par with other sections of society. Foodgrains at cheaper rates would be made available to them.

Educational and Cultural

The Shiromani Akali Dal aims at grooming the Sikhs into a strong and sturdy nation highly educated, fully aware of its fundamental rights, very well versed in various arts and ever ready to honour the more outstanding of its sons. For such a purpose:

1. The Shiromani Akali Dal regards the educationalists, scientists, philosophers, poets, writers and artists of the Sikh nation as its most prized asset.

2. The Shiromani Akali Dal stands for compulsory and free education upto matric standard.

3. To check the growing rate of unemployment, the Shiromani Akali Dal would try to introduce such courses of study as would enable their students to get immediate employment on completion of a course.

4. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall make arrangements for the education of the rural and weaker classes and would also make provision for the higher education of the more promising students among them.

5. Punjabi would be a compulsory subject for all students up to the matric standard.

6. Special attention would be paid to the science and technical fields of education, with particular emphasis on the study of nuclear physics and space science in the universities.

7. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall try to improve the standard of games and bring them on level with international standards.

