



Department of Distance Education

Punjabi University, Patiala

Class : B.A. III (History)

Sem. : 6

Paper : History of the Punjab : 1799-1966 Unit : 2

Medium : English

Lesson No.

- 2.1 : First Anglo-Sikh War 1845-46
Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) and the Annexation of the Punjab
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LESSON NO. 2.1

FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR (1845-46)**Causes, Events and Results**

In 1809, Maharaja Ranjit Singh signed treaty of Amritsar with the British. For about 20 years the British respected this treaty sincerely but after that their intentions changed and they began to follow a policy of encircling the Maharaja territories. In 1836 they compelled him to withdraw his forces from Shikarpur which the Maharaja was so anxious to conquer and annex to his kingdom. A year earlier they had occupied Ferozepur and turned it into a military cantonment in 1838. In Sind the Maharaja was forestalled and he had to leave the field clear for the British. The British actually signed a treaty with the Amirs of Sind in 1832 which was renewed in 1834. In 1834 a more comprehensive treaty was imposed on the Amirs. British design on Punjab became very clear from what Osborne wrote in 1838 immediately after his visit to the Maharaja, "One course to pursue on Ranjit Singh's death is the instant occupation of the Punjab by an overwhelming force and the establishment of north-western frontier on the Indus." Ranjit Singh also was not unaware of the changed intention of the British. As the tradition goes the Maharaja once uttered the following words after looking at the map of India *Sab lal ho jaega* meaning the whole of India including Punjab will go red i.e. pass on to the British. From what has been said above it will be seen that the British danger to the independence of the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore was very much present even as early as the last decade of Ranjit Singh's reign. After his death in 1839, this danger greatly increased. This was because the internal situation in Punjab after Ranjit Singh was very favourable for the British.

Let us now turn to the internal situation. The first thing to be mentioned in this connection is the struggle for power between various factions at the Sikh Court. The whole atmosphere was vitiated by the intrigue and counter intriguers between factions. When Ranjit Singh died, Dogra Group was the most powerful of all. This created lot of jealousy in other groups. First of all, Maharaja Kharak Singh challenged the supremacy of the Dogras and appointed the Chet Singh as his Minister. His effort failed and the Dogras re-established themselves. Then Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh tried to cut down their powers but his untimely death left them as they were. At this stage the Sandhawalia group acquired power and made Rani Chand Kaur the supreme ruler. After a few months only the Dogras again succeeded in getting power. They supported Kanwar Sher Singh to acquire the throne. But even after that the internecine struggle continued. As a result of this there was much chaos in the country. Administration

became weaker and weaker. Financial condition also suffered heavily.

The successors of Ranjit Singh proved too weak to keep the various factions in check. Maharaja Kharak Singh who succeeded Ranjit Singh had a very poor intellect and his personality was still poorer. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh had many of the great qualities of his grandfather but he met a fatal accident on the very day he was to begin his reign. Then came Chand Kaur who ruled for a few months only and even that did permanent damage to the administration. Maharaja Sher Singh who came after this was a good man but lacked the necessary insight into state affairs. After his death Maharaja Dalip Singh ascended the throne but he was a mere child of 5 years when he was elected to that high position.

The incompetence of the ruler and the continuous fight among the factions at the Sikh court led to the rise of the Khalsa Army as a political factor of great importance. Different battalions and regiments formed Panchayats to regulate their affairs and then a central panchayat was chosen to determine the relations of the Khalsa Army with the Khalsa Darbar. Its power increased so much that civil authorities became mortally afraid of it. Jawahar Singh who came into power after the fall of Hira Singh, was murdered by the verdict of the Army Panchayat.

Seeing all this, the British became all the more eager to fish in the troubled waters of the Sikh kingdom. They strengthened their military stations of Ferozepur and Ludhiana. Many more troops and guns were brought to these stations. In the rear the cantonments of Ambala and Meerut were reinforced. A Pontoon bridge across the Satluj was built near Ferozepur and for that purpose boats were brought all the way from Bombay. Even a supply depot to be used in the event of a war with the Sikhs was built up at a place called Bassian, not far away from the frontier. The actions and words of Broadfoot, the British Agent at Ludhiana added further fuel to the fire. He often made provocative statements which caused great offence to the Sikhs. The greatest provocation given by him was that he declared all the Lahore Government possessions in the cis-Satluj areas to be under British protection. Similarly, the Sind Governor Lord Napier was frequently saying things which caused much offence to the Sikhs.

With the British danger looming large on the horizon, the soldiery of the Khalsa Army was awakened to a sense of patriotism. They felt it to be their national duty to defend the independence and integrity of their Raj at all costs. However, instead of welcoming this patriotic mood of the Army, Raja Lal Singh, the minister and Misr Tej Singh the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, saw in this situation a golden opportunity to seek the destruction of the Army. They entered into secret intrigues with the British authorities for this purpose and from time to time disclosed them all the secret plans of their army.

The immediate cause of the war is said to be crossing of the river Satluj by the

Khalsa Army on 11 December 1845. But this is not correct. The British had begun to move their troops from the Ambala cantonment towards the frontier quite some days before Sikh troops had even made their first move from Lahore. Secondly, the Sikh troops even after crossing the river remained encamped on their own territory. Thus though the British accused the Sikhs starting the war, yet it is established now that it was the British who did it and not the Sikhs.

EVENTS

The first battle of the war was fought at Mudki on 18 December 1845. Raja Lal Singh who at the head of the troops had played a big trick upon the Khalsa soldiery. He had split the army into three parts. A small portion was left near Ferozepur under the command of Misr Tej Singh, only to watch the situation and not to capture the place. The bulk of the army was left at Feroz Shahr to dig in for defence with the rest of it he advanced to meet the approaching army. The Sikh troops put up a strong fight and under a better commander would have caused much heavier losses to the enemy but Raja Lal Singh was not interested in their success and he left the field in the thick of the battle. The British casualties were 215 killed and 657 wounded, three days later, on 21st December, was fought the hardest contested battle of the war called the Battle of Feroz Shahr. The Sikh army fought from behind deep trenches. The major British army under Lord Gough and the Governor General Lord Hardinge affected a junction with John Litler's division from Ferozepur and commenced the fight on the afternoon of 21st December. The fight on that day went in favour of the Sikhs. The British got such a great thrashing that they were half inclined to withdraw from the field. The Governor General even issued orders to burn his confidential papers. But Raja Lal Singh who was not interested in Sikh victory took to flight during the night. A fresh army under Misr Tej Singh appeared on the scene the next morning but it preferred to retreat rather than fight with the British. The British at this time were in a miserable position. Their war ammunition had almost been exhausted. The morale of their troops was very low. Had the Sikh taken a firm stand, they were sure to win the battle. The British losses in this battle were 694 killed and 1721 wounded. Sikh losses were very heavy.

A few days after, a strong Sikh force crossed the Satluj under the command of Ranjodh Singh from the side of Phillaur and made a dash on Ludhiana. This army caused lot of harassment to contingent of British troops at a place called Baidowal. Sometime later, on 28 January, a battle was fought at Aliwal between Ranjodh Singh's army and Henry Smith's army. The British had the upper hand in this battle also.

The last battle of the war fought on February 10, 1846 at Sabraon. So far as the Sikh troops were concerned they made fullest possible preparations for the coming battle. Some Sikh Sardars like Sham Singh Attariwala made it a life and death question. But the hearts of the high authorities of the Lahore Darbar were not at

their right places. They all meant mischief and were in secret intrigue with the British Raja Gulab Singh was specially called by Rani Jindan from Jammu for help and advice. He was no better than Raja Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh. Even so, when the fighting started, the troops fought like lions and they continued fight even when Tej Singh had treacherously run away in the thick of the battle. About this battle the words of Mr. Wheeler are remarkable. Sabraon proved to be the hardest fought battle in the history of British India. The Sikh soldiers, unlike their treacherous commander Tej Singh, were prepared to conquer or to die for the glory of the Khalsa. While the soldiers did everything, the Sikh commanders, with the honourable exception of Sham Singh Attariwala, remained inactive or proved traitors. The English losses were 320 killed and 2083 wounded. The Sikh losses were estimated at about 8 to 10 thousand men.

The victory of Sabraon was decisive on 13th February, 1848 the British forces crossed the river Satluj and reached Lahore on 20th February, 1846.

RESULTS

Following the war a treaty was concluded between the Sikhs and the British on 9 March, 1846. Following were the terms of the treaty.

1. The Maharaja renounced for himself, his heirs and successors any claim to or connection with the territories lying to the south of the Satluj.
2. The Company, got all fronts, territories and rights of the Lahore kingdom in the Doab country, or hill or plain, situated between the rivers Beas and Satluj.
3. The Sikhs were required to pay a war indemnity of one and a half crore of rupees. They could pay only 50 lakhs. On the promise of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu to pay the British one crore, he was given the territories of Hazara and Kashmir.
4. The Maharaja's army was cut down to 25 battalions of infantry and 12000 of cavalry all other soldiers were to be disbanded taking from them their arms. All guns used against the British in the war were to be surrendered to the British.
5. Free passage was to be allowed to the British troops through Lahore territories.
6. The minor Dalip Singh was recognized as the Maharaja with Rani Jindan as Regent of the state and Lal Singh as the Prime Minister.
7. The Governor General undertook not to exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore state.
8. A British force was to stay at Lahore for one year and was to be withdrawn at the end of 1846. Sir Henry Lawrence was appointed as British resident and stationed at Lahore.

Thus we find that the Sikh defeat in the First Anglo-Sikh war caused a heavy damage to the kingdom of Lahore. Large portions of its territories were taken away from it. Its armed strength was greatly reduced. A British Resident and a contingent of

British troops were stationed to keep a close watch on the activities of the Government. Raja Lal Singh, Misr Tej Singh and Raja Gulab Singh who had betrayed the interests of their own government were rewarded for their service to the British.

SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR (1848-49)

Causes, Events and Results

Treaty of Lahore was signed on 9 March, 1846. Before the year 1846 came to a close another Treaty was imposed upon the Lahore Darbar. This is known as the Treaty of Bhairawal, also spelt as Bhyrowal, and was concluded on 16 December, 1846. By this treaty the British became the real masters of Punjab though they still wielded their authority in the name of the Maharaja. The important terms of this treaty were as follows :

1. The Regency powers were vested in a council of 8 members. This was to be known as Council of Regency.
2. Rani Jindan was deprived of her Regency powers and was given a pension of 1½ lakhs per year.
3. The Council of Regency was to function during the minority of Maharaja Dalip Singh under the control and guidance of British Resident.
4. British troops were allowed to stay on after 1846 and the Khalsa Darbar was to pay 22 lakhs of rupees for the maintenance of this force.

The above treaty virtually ended the independence of the sovereign Khalsa Raj. It came as a rude shock to all those people who had any patriotic sentiments in them. Actually the seeds of Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) lay in the Treaty of Bhairawal.

Firstly, Rani Jindan from now onwards was a sworn enemy of the British. She never forgot the humiliation she had been subjected to. Her image began to grow and from the mother of Dalip Singh she gradually became the mother of the Khalsa. All patriotic elements in the kingdom began to look upon her as the symbol of their national struggle against the British.

In February 1847 was uncovered a secret plot to assassinate the British Resident and Misr Tej Singh. This is known as the Prema plot. An attempt was made to involve Rani Jindan in this and to penalize her but no solid proof could be found. Prema was, however, executed. Six months later a Darbar was held at which the title of Raja was to be conferred on Misr Tej Singh. Maharaja Dalip Singh refused to perform the tilak ceremony. Rani Jindan was held responsible for this and was removed from the Lahore Fort to the Fort of Sheikhpura. Her pension was now reduced from 1½ lakh to Rs. 48,000 per year. The Rani lodged a strong protest with the British Government against this kind of treatment. Undaunted by what had been done to her the Rani effected secret links with important chiefs and generals

of the Khalsa Government. She sent a confidential messenger to Diwan Mul Raj to sound him on her anti-British plans. She also succeeded in tempering with the loyalty of the British regiments stationed at Lahore. But the plot was discovered and the suspects were executed, among them being one confidential Munshi of hers. Taking a serious view of her activities, the British decided to banish her from Punjab and to send her to Benaras. This action of the British sent a thrill of horror and indignation through out the state.

After the First Anglo-Sikh War thousands of Sikh soldiers had been dismissed from service and sent to their homes. They were all harbouring grudge against the British. Their discontent increased after the treaty of Bhairawal and their patriotism was aroused once again. They refused to believe that the British were superior to them in the battle field. They attributed their defeat not to any inferiority on their part but to the treachery of their commanders Lal Singh and Tej Singh. And they were on the look out for an opportunity when they could remove the blot of defeat from their names.

Realizing the grave danger to the Khalsa Raj, a saint of Naurangabad, Bhai Maharaj Singh took upon himself the task of mobilizing the people to face the British danger. He met Rani Jindan a number of times in the earlier part of 1847. Later on, he moved from village to village rousing the people to a sense of their national duty. He saw Diwan Mul Raj at Multan and Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala on the north west frontier. He was a selfless worker and his sole aim was to save the independence of Punjab from the foreigners. The British took a very serious view of his activities and tried every means to capture him but in vain.

Diwan Mul Raj's revolt in 1848 was the beginning of the trouble. The Diwan was put to a lot of harassment by the British Resident at Lahore. Being no longer able to stand it, he decided to resign. The Resident accepted the resignation and appointed Sardar Kahan Singh as the new governor. The Diwan handed over the charge to the new governor but just after that when Kahan Singh with his two English companions was returning to his camp, the soldiers of Diwan Mul Raj attacked the British officers and seriously wounded them. Shortly after, a still stronger attack was made on the camp of the same British officers. Both of them were killed off while Sardar Kahan Singh was taken into custody. The entire military escort that had accompanied him from Lahore to Multan went over to the Diwan.

Instead of taking immediate steps to put down the revolt of Multan, the Governor General Lord Dalhousie saw in its spread a good opportunity to carry out the annexation of Punjab to the British dominions. The result was as was expected and desired by the British. In a few months time the rebellion spread to other parts of the kingdom and assumed a formidable aspect.

Soon another trouble-spot appeared in the Hazara territory which was under the control of Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala. Following the Treaty of Bhairawal,

the British resident at Lahore had appointed a number of British officers to serve as his Agents in the north western parts of the Sikh Kingdom. Notable among them were Captain Abbot, Captain Nicholson, Major George Lawrence and Lt. Herbert Edwards. They were obviously supposed to help the Darbar authorities to maintain law and order and to conduct the state affairs with efficiency, but in reality they were instructed to win over the local Muslim population even at the cost of displeasing the Sikhs. Hazara was placed under the control of Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala and Captain Abbot was appointed to help and guide him. The captain, however, picked up the quarrel with the sardar and roused the local Mohammedans against him. When the Sardar called out his army and ordered it to fire in the enemy, one American officer named Canora refused to obey. He was immediately killed by the Sardar's loyal troops. When this matter was reported to Lahore, the Resident admitted the fault of Captain Abbot but even then refused to do justice to the Sardar. The Sardar had another grievance also. His daughter had been betrothed to Maharaja Dalip Singh and he wanted that a date be fixed for the marriage. He even volunteered to retire from service after the marriage. But no heed was paid to his request. Ultimately, in great distress he decided to revolt. When his son Raja Sher Singh heard about it, he also decided to join the rebellion. He was then laying siege to the city of Multan. Now with his whole army he marched northward with a view to joining his father. This happened on 14 September, 1848.

Lord Dalhousie was greatly pleased at the new developments on the Punjab situation. He at last got the kind of opportunity he had been long looking for. Soon after the receipt of the news about the change in the attitude of Raja Sher Singh, Lord Dalhousie declared at a Hall in Calcutta : "Unwarned by precedents, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nations has called for war, and on my words, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance."

Orders were soon issued to the Commander-in-Chief Lord Gough to march his army into Punjab and crush the rebellion. Thus began the second Anglo-Sikh war but without any declaration. The British position was really embarrassing. They did not know how to declare the war against Maharaja because the Maharaja as well as his Regency Council were still on the side of the British.

Main Events

Lord Gough crossed the Ravi on 16th November, 1848 : The first clash-between the British and Sikh troops occurred at Ramnagar near the Chenab. It was not an engagement of any great consequence but it gave a much-needed booster to the Punjabi morale. Three senior British officers were killed at Ramnagar. Sikh routed the force under the British Officer Campbell, captured one of his guns and the colours of a regiment.

About a week after the action at Ramnagar, Gough went up to the River and

crossed it under cover of darkness. While Raja Sher Singh went up to hold Gough's advance down the right bank of the river, the rest of the British Army was able to cross the river in front of Ramnagar. Seeing the situation was getting out of his control, Raja Sher Singh after a brief gun duel at Sadullapur suddenly effected a retreat to fall back upon the Jhelum River. The British pursued him across the Chaj Doab.

The next battle was fought at Chillianwala on 13 January, 1849. In this battle the Sikh inflicted a defeat upon the British. The British Government felt the defeat so much that it was decided to replace Gough with Napier as the Commander-in-Chief. Writing about the Sikhs one British writer who was an eye-witness to the battle scene said. "The Sikhs fought like devils.....fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle.....such a mass of men I never set eye on and as plucky as lions : They ran right on the bayonets of the 24th (Regiment), and struck at their assailants when they were transfixed." Chillianwala was the worst defeat the British and suffered since their occupation of India.

But the Sikhs failed to take full advantage of their success as they had failed at Feroz shahr in the First Anglo Sikh War. Had they followed it up they could have won a decisive victory. But instead of doing that they wasted away their opportunity in mere skirmishes.

The last battle of the war took place at Gujrat on 21st February, 1849. By that time the situation had taken a definite turn in favour of the British. Multan had fallen and the British army engaged on the siege there had been released to march northward to join the army under Lord Gough. The Sikhs too, had gained some fresh troops, particularly from the army of the Kabul Amir Dost Mohammed. But the guns of the British army proved too much for the Sikhs and actually decided the day against the Sikhs who left the field and ran for safety in the direction of Rawalpindi. Their retreat further westward being blocked the Sikh Commanders ultimately, decided to lay down their arms on 14 March, 1849. Bhai Maharaj Singh, however, opposed the move and advocated the continuance of war. Not finding any response from the Sikh Sardars, he left them and moved into the Jammu territory with a view to continuing the national war.

Annexation of Punjab

On 29th March, 1849, Mr. Eliot Lord Dalhousie's Secretary, called a Darbar in the Lahore Fort. Dalip Singh took his seat on the throne, of his father Ranjit Singh. Eliot then read the proclamation declaring the Sikh kingdom at an end. The Koh-i-Noor diamond was handed over by the young Maharaja and he stepped down from the throne-never to sit on it again. Henceforth Punjab became part and parcel of the British Empire in India.

Strictly speaking, the annexation was a breach of faith, a violation of treaty. The Maharaja was a minor and during the period of his minority the British had

become his protectors. The Maharaja had done nothing to earth the displeasure of his protectors. His regency Council also had stood loyal to the British, by and large. When the rebellion took place, it was the duty of the British Resident to put it down. For this very purpose an Army was being maintained at Lahore at the cost of the Lahore Darbar. But the British did not care a bit for all these considerations and decided to annex the kingdom in defiance of all treaty obligations.

The whole thing seems to be a carefully calculated move on the part of Lord Dalhousie. When the revolt of Multan broke out, it could have been suppressed without much difficulty if the British had the intention to do so. But they deliberately delayed action in the hope that the revolt would spread and would give them a good justification for annexing Punjab. On these grounds Trotter has called Dalhousie's policy as "unprincipled and unjustifiable". Major Evans Bell who studied the annexation of Punjab in detail says that Dalhousie's act was "a violent breach of trust." "He violated treaties, abused a sacred trust, threw away the grandest opportunity even offered to the British Government of planting solid and vital reform upto the northern limits of India, and by an acquisition as unjust it was imprudent, weakened our frontier, scattered our military strength and entailed a heavy financial burden upon the empire." It was indeed a burglary of the Punjab.

As against this, Dalhousie tried to justify his policy on the following grounds :

1. He could not take immediate action against the Multan rebellion because there were inherent difficulties of the situation : fierce summer heat, proximity of monsoon and serious danger involved in moving away the British contingent from Lahore.
2. Bitterness of the Sikhs against British was so great that mere suppression of the Multan Revolt would not have solved the British problem.
3. When the revolt spread, it became a national war whose purpose was to expel the British from Punjab. Though the Maharaja and some Sardars remained loyal to the British, yet that made no material difference to the nature of the problem.
4. The utility of Punjab as a buffer against Afghanistan no longer held valid after a friendly alliance had been made between the Sikhs and Afghans.

It will be clear from the above arguments that the defence offered by Lord Dalhousie was not on legal or moral grounds but purely on the basis of British political interests. This shows that even he indirectly admitted the criticism of his policy made on legal or moral grounds.

SOME QUESTIONS

1. Explain the circumstance which led to the Second Anglo-Sikh War.

2. Give a brief account of the various battles fought in the course of the Second Anglo-Sikh War.
3. Lord Dalhousie's act of annexing Punjab was "a violent breach of trust." Discuss.
4. What role was played by party politics in the Sikh kingdom after the death of Ranjit Singh?
5. How did the Khalsa Army become a powerful political factor? What was its role in the First Anglo-Sikh war?
6. The British and not the Sikhs were responsible for the first Anglo-Sikh war. Discuss.

Self-Check Exercise

1. Fill in the blanks :

- i. Treaty of Bhairawal was imposed on the Lahore Darbar on 16 December.....
- ii. Treaty of Lahore was signed on 9th March.....
- iii. The Regency powers were vested in the council of.....members.
- iv. According to the Treaty of Bhairawal the Khalsa Darbar was to pay.....lakhs annually.
- v. Actually the seeds of the Second Anglo-Sikh war lay in the treaty of.....
- vi. Rani Jindan's pension was reduced from 1½ lakhs to Rs..... per year.
- vii. Lord Gough crossed the river..... on 16th November, 1848.
- viii. The first clash between the British and Sikh troops occurred at.....
- ix. The last battle of war took place at.....
- x. Punjab became the part and parcel of British Empire on 29th March.....

1846 viii. 1846 ix. 1½ crore x. Maharaja.

i. 1809 ii. Dogra iii. Kharak Singh iv. Chet Singh v. Mudki vi. Feroz Shahr vii.

Answer :

Check up your position

Excellent : Above 6 correct answers, Good : 5-6 correct answers

Satisfactory : 4 correct answers, Unsatisfactory : Less than 4 correct answers.

KUKA MOVEMENT

Kukas were the people who organized and led a movement of great strength and popularity, named after them, first of its kind to appear in British occupied Punjab. Their actual name was Sant Khalsa, but the term Kuka, derived from the frenzied shouts or loud cries emitted by them at religious congregations, gained greater currency on account of the great popular appeal that it possessed.

The founder of the Kuka movement was Baba Ram Singh, a man of great personal charm and deep religious faith hailing from a lower middle class family of carpenters of village Bhaini Arayan, district Ludhiana. Born (A. D. 1816) and brought up in his native place, he joined the Khalsa Army as an ordinary soldier. During his service, while posted on the north - west frontier, he met a pious and saintly man at Hazro (district Campbelpur), Baba Balak Singh and immediately fell under the spell of his magnetic personality. The latter's deep concern over progressive decline in the private and public conduct of Sikhs, particularly those of the upper class under the influence of the new-won wealth and power and his moving appeal for a life of simplicity and spirituality, made a deep impact upon his young and sensitive mind and after a few years he resigned his military service with a view to devoting himself to worship and social service. In 1857 Baba Balak Singh died after nominating him his successor. Conscious of the new responsibility thrust upon him, he decided to launch vigorously the movement which subsequently acquired the popular appellation of Kuka. For this purpose a comprehensive programme was chalked out which had as its basis the administering of amrit or pahul (baptism of the edged sword). The baptised persons were distinguished from the rest by the tie of turban, use of woollen rosary, white dress and the watchword of Sat Sri Akal Purkh. A strict code of conduct was enjoined upon all members of the new fraternity. They were forbidden to visit devidwaras, shivdwaras, mandirs, marhis, khankahs (Muslim monasteries), kabars (graves), mazars (Muslim tombs) and smadhis (Hindu tombs), or to worship Sodhis, Mahants and Brahmins and were required to have faith in one God only and to accept only one scripture i.e. the Holy Granth Sahib.

The importance of leading a life of regular prayer and meditation and noble actions such as abstinence from evils of stealing, adultery, falsehood, backbiting, smoking and use of liquor, hemp and opium was understood. cow protection was a cardinal principle of Kuka's social ethics. Beggary and parasitism were condemned as evils. Regard for personal hygiene, likewise, formed an essential ingredient of the Kuka code. No distinction was made between high and low castes, all people, being the creation of the same Supreme Being, were regarded as brother, equal in all respects. Like men,

women were also freely admitted into the ranks of the brotherhood and were allowed to participate in the functions of the community. Female infanticide, enforced widowhood, dowry system and marriage by sale were all forbidden strictly. Only simple and inexpensive marriages performed in the Sikh manner were permitted.

But the intention was not to create any order of saints and quietists. Baba Ram Singh wanted his followers to be heroes and emphasized the cultivation of qualities of physical strength and martial spirit. With the end in view the Kukas were urged upon to rear cows and buffaloes to make extensive use of milk products and to toughen their muscles by industry and endurance. They were further told to take to breeding of horses, learning of horsemanship, carrying of heavy lathis (staves), practising of gatka play and swords-manships. In this programme of inculcation of martial habits, was also included chandi da path (recitation of Guru Gobind Singh's famous epic in Punjabi depicting the allegorical fight between goddess Durga and demons) accompanied by a havan ceremony.

For the success of new programme an elaborate Organisation consisting of Subas, Naib Subas, Jathedars and local sangats was set up. These functionaries operated in more or less well defined territorial units and maintained with the centre at Bhaini Sahib, as also with one another, regular communication by means of a secret postal service.

The movement once set going made steady, albeit quiet progress. From the very inception it was dominated by ex-soldiers of the erstwhile Khalsa Army, which in fact lent an element of militancy to it, for when it first attracted the notice of the Government in 1863, the Kukas were already a large group of saints-cum-soldiers armed with lathis and practising drill secretly at night. A serious view of this new development was taken and Baba Ram Singh and his lieutenants were interrogated during their visit to Amritsar in April 1863. The result was a sharp reaction on the part of Kukas who in the militant background of their minds, has all along been cherishing feelings of hostility towards the foreign rules, called Farangis by them. Loss of Political power was not the only factor troubling their minds; cultural invasion that followed in the wake of political domination in the form of religious conversions, slaughter-houses etc. was even a greater menace. Realizing that the trouble must be nipped in the bud, government lost no time to place the Kuka organization under strict police surveillance with the leader being interned in his village, Bhaini.

The restrictions thus imposed has the opposite result of what Government had hoped for indeed a blessing in disguise for Kukas. There was now much greater halo around the personality of Baba Ram Singh. The urge to make a pilgrim's visit to Bhaini was intensified. In 1863 Kukas were in thousands, a few years after their number rose to lakhs. The official explanation for this tremendous boost was two fold :-

- (i) charm of mystery and esoteric magnetizing the Kuka leader's personality;

- (ii) efficiency of Kuka organization.

Encouraged by their rapidly growing strength, Kukas revived their activities. Their anger was particularly aroused against tombs, graves and smadhs and with more or less missionary zeal a vigorous and often aggressive campaign was launched against all such subjects of worship, though after a time for fear of earning a bad name for the community it was discontinued under orders from Baba Ram Singh.

The increasing progress of the Kukas compelled the government to have second thoughts on their attitude towards them. A careful reappraisal of the situation convinced them of the failure of their policy and they decided to withdraw all restrictions. Once again their calculations proved wrong. Instead of petering out, as was expected by officialdom, the Kuka activities received a stimulus. Two new dimensions made their appearance known:

- (i) establishing of contact with native states;
- (ii) unleashing of murderous attacks on butchers.

Among the native states Jammu Kashmir and Nepal were given top priority, in the former a regular Kuka company was raised under the command of Suba Hira Singh of Sadhaura, while a high powered Kuka mission consisting of two senior subas was sent to Nepal with presents for its ruler, Rana Jang Bahadur to ascertain if there was any opening for their people in the Gurkha army. The mission had many secret meetings with the Rana who at the time of their departure gave the Kuka leaders a hearty send off and some valuable presents for Baba Ram Singh. The efforts to have intimate contacts with both of these native states, however, failed to bear the fruit they were expected to do, largely because the rulers could not afford to earn the displeasure of the British. The second dimension, that of war against kine killers, was even more significant. The issue was not of saving delicate religious susceptibilities from being injured but also of encountering a dangerous challenge to their very way of living; still more, it was a question whether they were to be ruled by the ruthless foreigners determined to destroy their culture or they were to end their sway and restore the rule of the Khalsa which had banned killing of cows completely.

In their war on butchers. Kukas chose to make their first attack on a slaughter house in the sacred city of Amritsar. The attack was made on the night of 5th June 1871 between twelve and one by a band of 10 people. Four butchers were killed outright and three seriously wounded. The assailants remained untraced until one of the Kukas captured later turned approver and gave the names of his accomplices. Soon after seven of them were apprehended out of whom five were executed and two transported for life. Exactly a month after the Amritsar incident, a similar attack was made on the slaughter house of Rai Kot (district Ludhiana) situated not far away from the historic gurdwara of Guru Gobind Singh. In this onslaught three butchers were killed outright and nine wounded, four seriously. The assailants were tracked down and captured

and after a summary trial, six of them were hanged.

The above executions greatly agitated the minds of Kukas who now decided to come in the open and abandoned their former strategy of secret attacks. For this purpose a band of prospective martyrs was organised under the leadership of Hira Singh. and Lehna Singh of village Sakraudi. It was this band of desperadoes which later organised assaults on Malodh and Malerkotla. The attack on Malodh, on the night of 13-14 January 1871, was incidental to the main attack on Malerkotla and was motivated to capture by force some of the horses and weapons in the possession of the chief of Malodh, Sardar Badan Singh. The attack on Malerkotla came the following day, 15th January, at about 7 A.M. approximately 125 Kukas scaled a damaged part of the city wall and entered the palace of the ruler with the object of getting hold of money, arms and horses. But before they could lay their hands upon any of these desired objects a body of policemen and soldiers arrived on the scene. This led to a pitched battle in which both sides suffered grievous losses, eight killed, two dangerously wounded, two seriously wounded and nine lightly wounded on the Malerkotla side as against seven killed, one dangerously wounded. One seriously and thirty slightly wounded on the side of Kukas. The battle over the assailants retired to a nearby village Rur, while resting they were taken by surprise and apprehended, 68 in all. Barring two ladies who were handed over to the commandant of the Patiala troops summoned to Malerkotla, all of them were put to death in two batches after a mockery of trial-65 of them being blown off by cannon and one hacked to pieces.

The choice of Malerkotla as their first major target by Kukas was dictated by the fact that it was a notoriously weak and misgoverned. It was believed that there would not be much difficulty in getting hold of money, arms and horses from there, all necessary elements in the success of their plans. Government had the information that the attack on Malerkotla, if successful was to be followed by attacks on Nabha, Jind and Patiala leading to general uprising of Kukas on all sides.

But the summary executions of Malerkotla rendered abortive whatever plans they had. Baba Ram Singh and all his Subas were immediately arrested and detained under Regulation 111 of 1818. Ram Singh was removed to Rangoon. Subas were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and in some cases even deported without any trial whatsoever. Bhaini Sahib the Kuka headquarters, was subjected to a close cordon and a thorough search for arms and record. The local Gurdwara was locked and all people found in it were expelled and dispersed and then a permanent police post, one Sub-Inspector with twenty constables, was set up to keep continuous watch on the movements of members of Baba Ram Singh's family. The police post continued to exist till 1922. Likewise, the Kuka organization was placed under a complete system of surveillance and report. Local government

functionaries, Zaildars and Numberdars, were ordered to report under penalty of deprivation of office, or other punishment the movements of all Kukas within their respective areas. The assembly of more than five of them was forbidden throughout the province as also the carrying of axes, iron-bound sticks and other weapons in public was strictly prohibited. The states of Patiala, Nabha and Malerkotla did not lag behind the Punjab Government in anti-Kuka measures.

Despite the severity of all these repressive measures, Kukaism did not lose its charm and appeal in the eyes of the common people. The void of leadership created by Baba Ram Singh's detention was ably filled in by his younger brother Budh Singh who functioned under the assumed name of Hari Singh. New Subas were appointed to take up the work left by those who had been apprehended. Baba Ram Singh, too did not allow his deportation to snap the links between him and his people. A regular line of communication was maintained with the help of devoted messengers, which went a long way in bolstering up the moral of Kukas. A supplementary but extremely effective factor was the wide circulation of prophecies assuring an early termination of foreign rule in India. The hopes thus raised were encouraged by the negotiations between the Russian authorities in central Asia and the Kukas leadership conducted in mediacy of one Subha Gurcharan Singh who made for this purpose quite a few trips across the borders.

The decade beginning from 1879 was a period of great expectations for Kukas from 1882 to 1885 all eyes were rivetted on Russia and the activities therein of Suba Bishan Singh. In the heat of their enthusiasm, they even refused to accept the news of their Guru Ram Singh's death in Burma in 1885. In 1886 Maharaja Daleep Singh decided to return to India. This thrilled them and a delegation of four Kukas left for Bombay to receive him. When the Maharaja's return to India was disallowed, he made a stealthy trip to Moscow, which in fact raised Kukas expectation sky high. In great excitement a party of them left for Russia via Iran. They were detected by the British while passing through Meshed. But the Maharaja's departure from Russia in 1889 proved a great damper for the spirit of Kukas. There was, however, a change in their basic attitude towards the government. Towards the end of the century there were again reports of great excitement among the community but this phase too did not last long.

From the dawn of the present century, the fervour of Kukaism gradually subsided but their commitment to the cause of freedom left its deep impact on the future course of the country's struggle for independence. In boycotting courts, services, postal and telegraphic arrangements and educational institutions of the Government. Kukas have been accepted as torch bearers since the use of noncooperation and boycott as political weapons as demonstrated by them was employed on a much larger scale by latter national leaders. In Punjab particularly the Ghadar movement, one of the greatest

national upsurges of early twentieth century owed a deep debt of gratitude the Kuka movement.

In religious and social spheres of life of the Sikh community as well the Kuka movement made deep impact despite its limitations. It paved the way for the subsequent Singh Sabha Movement. The latter carried forward the work began by Kukas without their open clash with the Government; giving in the process a new interpretation to the Sikh doctrine in the light of Western influence.

Over the decades certain, new developments have overtaken Kukaism. One is the replacement of the term Kuka with the new name-Namdhari, which is the present widely used nomenclature of community as well as individual members. Secondly the fraternity at first only a separate sect with its own line of personal Gurus based on the hereditary principle of succession and believing that the line of Sikh Gurus did not end with Gobind Singh but is a continuing process. As a corollary from this, the Sikhs scripture which is recognized as Guru by the main body of the Sikhs, is only respected as a sacred book by Namdharis. The difference being of a fundamental nature has naturally pulled the two sides apart from each other.

At present, the Namdharis are closely knit little fraternity headed by Baba Jagjit Singh who took over his office of responsibility after his father Baba Partap Singh's death in 1961. The latter inherited this exalted office from Baba Hari Singh, younger brother and successor of Baba Ram Singh. The total strength of fraternity is not known exactly but according to Namdharis themselves, Their number anything between 5 and 10 lakhs; consisting largely to Jats, Ramgarhias, Aroras and Mazhbi Sikhs. They are found concentrated in the districts of Hissar, Amritsar and Ludhiana and have their own gurudwaras and only on rare occasions join in other Sikh religious congregations. They do not intermarry with other Sikhs unless, the party concerned agrees to enter into their religious fold. Nevertheless, they strictly abide by the teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus although their Ardas (prayer) invokes not ten but fifteen Gurus including the five Gurus of their own, Balak Singh to Jagjit Singh, commonly addressed by them as Satgurus. Their religious places are not ostentatious. They led austere lives, wear simple clothes and observe a rigid code of conduct. They are very particular about attending religious services in their Gurdwaras and observing taboos of food and drink, particularly those pertaining to meat eating and alcoholism. Marriage among Namdharis are inexpensive and simple and are usually performed in group, on special occasions like Holla Mohalla. Further the community has a firm and persistent belief that Baba Ram Singh is still alive. Bhaini Sahib (district Ludhiana) and Jiwan Nagar (district Hissar) are the two principle centres of the Namdharis.

LESSON NO. 2.3

THE SINGH SABHA MOVEMENT

The Singh Sabha Movement, which enjoyed the leadership of Sikhs for nearly had a century (1873-1920), will go down in the history of the Modern Punjab as the greatest Socio-religious reform movement of the Sikhs. It came as a great awakening force at a time when Sikhism was in danger of losing its very existence. There were fears that Sikh religion might disappear altogether. "Sikhism is a waning religion that will soon belong to History" wrote Dr. Trump.

Factors leading to the Singh Sabha Movement

The annexation of Punjab by the British, in 1849, had left a demoralising effect on the Sikhs. Besides the loss of political power, there was also religious and cultural decline. The Sikh population, too began to show a gradual decline. This spread of western education culture and science posed a serious challenge to age old customs, beliefs and tradition. The materialism of the west had begun to clash with the spiritualism of the East. There were fears that the British were trying to strike at the root of Indian culture.

Another big challenge came from Christian missionaries who had increased their activities in the Punjab after annexation. The historic conversions of Maharaja Dalip Singh and Raja Harnam Singh of Kapurthala came as a rude shock to the Sikhs. The lower caste Sikhs were easily attracted towards the new faith due to the lure of service opportunities and better social status. The Sikh youth who studied in the Missionary schools, also came under Christian influence and did not like to observe the religious formalities such as keeping of hair and wearing of turban.

The attacks of the Arya Samaj on Sikh religion also alarmed the Sikhs. In his attempt to establish the supremacy of Hinduism and the Vedas, Swami Dayananda under estimated all other religions. He wrote a book, *Satyarth Parkash* in which he made derogatory reference to Sikh Gurus. This was intolerable for the Sikhs. The British government also followed a policy of 'divide and rule', Sharda Ram Phillauri a British agent delivered a series of lectures at Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar and also at Darbar Sahib in which he made contemptuous remarks against the Sikh Gurus. He also published a book '*Sikhan de raj di Vithya*' in which he misinterpreted the teaching of Sikh Gurus. This added fuel to the fire.

There were several other incidents which led the Sikhs to form an Organisation to safeguard their Social and religious interests. In 1873, four Sikh students, studying at the Mission High School Amritsar, under the influence of Christian Missionaries

offered themselves to be converted to Christianity. They publicly shaved their beards and hair. There were protest meetings all over the province and the prominent Sikh leaders persuaded the boys not to abandon their faith. But the incident came as an eye opener for the Sikhs.

In July 1873, Thakur Singh Sandhawalia convened a meeting of leading Sikh chiefs, Sardars, Granthis Mahants and Pujaris of Sikh Gurdwaras at the Darbar Sahib Amritsar. It was decided to form an association of the Sikhs which should effectively unite the community and guide it on the right path. The new association which came into being on July 28, 1873, was given the name of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Amritsar. Thus was born the Singh Sabha Movement.

The Aims and Objectives of the Movement

The Singh Sabha Movement was mainly concerned with the social, religious, moral and educational uplift of the Sikhs. It sought to protect the rights of the Sikh community by securing an independent religious status for the Sikhs. The objectives, as laid down before the Singh Sabha, were :

- (i) To restore Sikhism to its former purity by checking all outside influence.
- (ii) To edit and publish historical and religious books.
- (iii) To propagate current knowledge, using Punjabi as medium and to start magazine and newspapers in Punjabi.
- (iv) To remove social evils which hinder the progress of the Sikh community.
- (v) To give a true interpretation of the teachings of Sikh Gurus and define the principles of Sikh religion and demolish false doctrines.
- (vi) To reform and bring back into the Sikh fold those who had been misled from the right path due to ignorance
- (vii) To secure the association of the highly placed Englishmen with the education programme of the Singh Sabha.
- (viii) To cultivate loyalty to the British Crown.

Various Phases of the Movement

Within a short span of few years, a large number of Singh Sabha cropped up all over the Punjab and elsewhere. The most prominent was the Lahore Singh Sabha, founded in 1879, six years after the birth of the Amritsar Singh Sabha. While some of the Singh Sabha got their inspiration from the Amritsar Sabha, others were more influenced by the Lahore Sabha. The Lahore and the Amritsar parties had ideological differences over many issues. The Amritsar Singh Sabha extended its membership even to the Sahjdhari Sikhs. On the other hand, the Lahore Singh Sabha laid great stress on the code of conduct (five K's or religious symbols) prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. It did not allow Sahjdhari Sikhs to enroll as members of the Sabha. However, in some respects, the Lahore leaders proved more radical. They converted a large number of Muslims to the Sikh faith. The Amritsar party was opposed to the conversion of

Muslims to the Sikh faith on the plea that the Sikhs having originated from the Hindus, had nothing to do with Islam. The priests of Sikh Gurdwaras, who mostly came from the Udasi Nirmala sects, also sided with the Amritsar Singh Sabha.

The rivalry between the Amritsar and the Lahore parties led to attacks counter-attacks and the work of reform suffered. The number of Singh Sabhas was also increasing. Some public spirited leaders felt that all Singh Sabhas must join under a common platform so that the pace of reform may not be affected. This led to the formation of the Khalsa Diwan Amritsar in 1883. At the time of its inception the Khalsa Diwan had 37 Singh Sabhas, affiliated to it. The Diwan undertook to control and guide the activities of various Singh Sabhas.

But the new body did not make a good beginning. No definite rules and regulations were laid down for the conduct of its business. The Amritsar leaders came forward with a proposal that the names of all Singh Sabha, be changed to Sikh Singh Sabha. The purpose was to include Sahajdhari (Non-baptised) Sikhs into the fold of the Singh Sabha. But the proposal was not acceptable to the Lahore party which enjoyed the support of large number of Singh Sabhas. Baba Khem Singh Bedi, a leader of the Amritsar Sabha wanted to have a complete control over the Khalsa Diwan. Being in the line of Guru Nanak he desired to be worshipped like a Guru. He wanted a well-furnished seat 'Gudelai' for himself in the presence of the Holy Granth. All this was resented by the Lahore leaders who wanted equal treatment for all.

The Amritsar leaders, who mostly came from the rich and aristocratic section of the Sikh community were not ready to give up prejudice against the low-caste Sikhs. The Lahore leaders were more democratic in out-look and temperament. They were strongly opposed to the non-Sikh practices of Gurudom and untouchability.

Now the questions arose whether the Amritsar or Lahore was greater. None of the parties was willing to yield before the other. The gulf between the two parties continued to be widened and ultimately culminated in the formation of an independent Khalsa Diwan at Lahore in 1886. There were as many as 30 Singh Sabhas which separated themselves from the Khalsa Diwan Amritsar and joined the Khalsa Diwan Lahore in 1886. The Khalsa Diwan Amritsar, thus received a big setback with only 7 Singh Sabhas at its back. It almost became defunct in a few years and was left with only three Singh Sabhas of Amritsar Faridkot and Rawalpindi.

The old rivalry between the two Khalsa Diwans of Lahore and Amritsar led to bad taste and bitterness. This lack of unity gave a big setback to the Singh Sabha movement. Once again, efforts were made to bring about unity. These efforts took a practical shape with the founding of the Chief Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar on Nov. 30, 1902.

With the establishment of the Khalsa Diwan, the Singh Sabha movement entered upon a new phase, Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh Atari and Bhai

Arjan Singh Bagrian were some of the guiding forces of this Diwan. They represented the Progressive and enlightened section of this Sikh Community. Unlike the leaders of the Khalsa Diwan Amritsar, they were more democratic in outlook. They stood for social equality, removal of caste distinctions, abolition of Gurudom and observance of religious discipline (the five K's) prescribed by the tenth Sikh Guru. The Diwan also undertook to organise Sikhs.

Henceforward, the Chief Khalsa Diwan became the guiding force of the Singh Sabha movement. It assumed the undisputed leadership of the Sikh community and won great popularity. The New leadership was liked by both the Amritsar and the Lahore parties as it was neither too conservative nor too radical in its approach. It found a via-media between the two extremes and was moderate in tone and temper. It continued to have absolute control over the Sikh affairs until the leadership of the community passed into the hands of the Akalis in 1920.

Achievements

The Singh Sabha movement played a vital role in the social-religious reconstruction of the Sikh Community. It made the Sikhs aware of their great spiritual and cultural background, of being the Khalsa, the 'pure'. It released them from the religious and social domination of the Brahmans. It removed all doubts regarding the future independent community bound together by the teachings of their Gurus, distinct social laws, customs and language.

Religious Reforms

In the religious sphere, the Singh Sabha leaders aimed at restoring the purity of Sikh faith by giving a fresh interpretation of Sikh theology and history. As enjoined by the Sikh Gurus they preached the worship of one God and condemned Gurdwaras including the Durbar Sahib Amritsar. They launched a crusade against the worship of various Gods and goddesses which was fundamentally opposed to the tenets of Sikh religion. They laid emphasis on simplicity of worship and disapproved of the Hinduism mode of prayer which was costly and elaborate. The Sikh mode of prayer, which enjoins direct communion with God and rejects all formal observances like the performance of Arti and visits to places of pilgrimage as meaningless, was revived.

For the attainment of God's grace, the Singh Sabha leaders laid stress on the inculcation of such virtues like love of God service of one's fellow beings purity of living, charitableness and truthfulness. They made it clear that the way to one's moral and spiritual uplift lay through good deeds and not through miracles mysteries and mantras. A misguided notion current at the time was that Sikhism was a sect of Hinduism.. Singh Sabha leaders asserted that Sikhism was an independent religion. In the words of Giani Ditt Singh (a leader of the Lahore Singh Sabha), "Having sprung from and brotherly to the Hindus, the Sikhs are a separate community, clearly distinguished from them in outward form, religious and social outlook, conception

of God and Gurus, mode of worship, language of the scriptures and their ideas regarding caste, pilgrimage and the priesthood."

The Singh Sabha affirmed its faith in the religious discipline (the five K's) enjoined by the tenth Guru. Thousands of apostates were brought back to the Sikh faith and a large number of Sahijdharis were persuaded to become the Khalsa. The Singh Sabha sent preachers and missionary teams not only to the different parts of the country but also to Malaya, Burma and Singapore. A committee was constituted to scrutinise the religious books of the Sikhs and prepare the authentic biographies of Sikh Gurus and also to prevent the publication of inferior editions of the Granth Sahib. Many biographies of the Sikh Gurus and handy and cheap reprints of the Sikh scriptures were brought out at this time with a view to projecting the true image of Sikhism, Macauliffe's monumental work on Sikh Religion written in 6 volumes, was also produced at the initiative of Singh Sabha aimed at the moral and spiritual uplift of the community.

However, the task of religious reform was vast and limitless. It could not be completed without reform of Sikh Gurdwaras which were in the hands of corrupt priests who enjoyed the support of the Mahants. Despite its best efforts the Singh Sabha failed to release the Gurdwaras from the control of these priests who were opposed to the spirit of reform. It was left to the Akali movement to take up the matter of freedom of Gurdwaras.

Social Reforms

The Singh Sabha also did commendable work in the field of social reforms. It directed its reformatory activity against many social abuses like untouchability, child-marriage, polygamy and female infanticide. With stress on the equality of sexes, female education and widow remarriage, the Singh Sabha leaders succeeded in moulding public opinion in favour of emancipation of women. They also launched a campaign for the removal of 'purdah' system which did not have the sanction of Sikh scriptures.

The Lahore Singh Sabha carried a resolute struggle to secure better social status for the low caste Sikhs. They viewed with concern the proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries who were trying to gain converts from the lowcaste Sikhs by assuring them of a better social and economic status. The Lahore Shuddhi Sabha was set up to counteract the conversion of low-caste Sikhs to other faiths. It was successful in reclaiming hundreds of converts, who had gone over to Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Despite opposition from the conservative Sikhs and the orthodox Mahants and Pujaris of Sikh Gurdwaras, the Singh Sabha reforms fought valiantly for the removal of caste prejudices.

The Singh Sabha leaders strove to build a new social order with distinct social laws, customs and ceremonies for the Sikhs. They had a tough time in bringing about a change in the social outlook of the Sikh who till then, were too much

under the influence of Brahman priests. They urged the Sikhs to simplify the complicated and expensive social ceremonies and stressed the need for simplicity, austerity and purity in rituals and ceremonies and directed by the Sikh Gurus. As in the field of religion the Sikhs were made aware of their independent social status. The passing of the Anand Marriage Act, in 1909, legalising the Sikh form of marriage, was a significant achievement of the Singh Sabha. This was an important step towards the recognition of Sikhs as a separate social entity as distinguished from the Hindus. As in the sphere of religion, so in the sphere of social reforms it was a grim battle to restore the purity of Sikh faith.

Education

The Singh Sabha reforms evinced keen interest in the spreading of education among the Sikhs. Their educational programme aimed at combining religious instruction with secular education. They spread a net work of educational institutions which sought to provide such opportunities to the Sikhs as would help them in acquiring modern education combined with the advantage of instruction in the Sikh religion, Sikh history, Sikh literature and also Gurmukhi script. The Khalsa schools, opened by the Singh Sabha throughout the length and breadth of provinces, helped the Sikh in competing with other communities in the field of educational advancement. Not only this, these schools helped the Sikhs in preserving their religious and cultural traditions. In the words of Prof. Teja Singh, "The Sikh schools were not only dispensers of education but they also served as stronghold of Sikhism, wherever they were established."

Female education also received due attention from the Singh Sabha reformers. Bhai Takht Singh a great champion of this cause devoted his whole life towards this end. In 1892, he founded the well known Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Ferozepur. The precedent set by Bhai Takht Singh was followed by many other Singh Sabhas and Khalsa schools were opened at various places like Lahore, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and many other places. Gurmat Kanya Pathshala Amritsar founded in 1898 was a school of its own kind, which trained Sikh girls for Gurmat Parchar. The Singh Sabhas workers struggled hard to mould public opinion in favour of female education at a time when strong prejudice prevailed against the education of girls.

The establishment of the Khalsa College at Amritsar in 1892, was another note-worthy achievement of the Singh Sabha. There was also a plan to develop this into a Sikh University on the pattern of Benaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University but it could not materialise for want of funds. The Sikh educational conferences were organised every year and left a school or a college at the place where held. Within a brief span of a few decades the percentage of literacy of the Sikhs considerably increased the number of schools and colleges multiplied at an astonishing speed. Singh Sabha sought the co-operation of highly placed Englishmen in their education campaign.

Punjabi Language and Literature

The Singh Sabha Movement made a valuable contribution towards the enrichment of Punjabi language and literature. It gave rise to an unprecedented literacy activity in respect of both volume and variety. Bhai Vir Singh who 'dominated' Punjabi literature for half a century, was a product of his movement. Some of the other prominent writers of this period were Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, Bhai Kahan Singh, Giani Ditt Singh and Giani Gian Singh. Most of the literature of this period aimed at the moral and spiritual regeneration of the Sikhs. The Khalsa Tract Society Amritsar founded in 1894 contributed a lot towards the enrichment of Punjabi prose. The journalistic output of the Singh Sabha was also quite remarkable as over a dozen Punjabi newspapers like Khalsa Samachar, Khalsa Akhbar, Punjab Darpan, Dukh Nivaran, Khalsa Sewak, Singh Sabha Gazette and Punjabi Bhain were brought out. Apart from being the vehicle of reform, they enriched language which was capable of giving expression to the up-to-date socio-religious themes and political thoughts. Thus the Punjabi language was renovated and modernised to suit the literary requirements of a generation which had borne the full impact of western learning. The Singh Sabha conferred upon the Punjabi language a new literary status and gave it a form and finish. Although Punjabi could not get official recognition yet it emerged as a popular language and began to be owned by the Sikhs as a part of their culture.

Politics

In the beginning, the Singh Sabha leaders deliberately chose, to remain aloof from politics as their main concern was social religious reforms. But in the beginning of the twentieth century, the rising tide of political consciousness prompted the leaders to play their role in the political life of the province. The Chief Khalsa Diwan did pledge to remain loyal to the Government but it took upon itself to protect rights of Sikhs.

In their political outlook, the Singh Sabha leaders were moderates, believing in the efficacy of constitutional methods. They shunned violence and took care to avoid clash with the government. Like the moderate wing of the Congress of that period, they adopted the method of prayers, petitions, representations and deputations in order to impress upon the government on such issues affecting the Sikhs as the development of Punjabi, distribution of patronage and representation of the Sikhs in civil services. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 granted the right of separate electorates to the Muslims, whereas the claim of the Sikhs for a similar concession was ignored. The Singh Sabha leaders, sent petitions to the government demanding similar concession for the Sikhs. The Montford Reforms of 1919 conceded their demand. Although concession given to the Sikhs was not commensurate with their political importance yet it acknowledged, in principle, the right of the Sikhs to be regarded as a separate political entity.

LESSON NO. 2.4

THE ARYA SAMAJ MOVEMENT IN THE PUNJAB

The peaceful development of the Punjab under the British Administration produced a new awakening among the upper class in the province. The Western system of education introduced in pursuance of the new policy of the British rulers produced a new generation of Punjabis who had been greatly influenced by the new civilisation introduced under the British administration.

British rule in the Punjab brought in its wake a new force in the form of Christianity which resulted in considerable religious ferment as a results of its powerful impact on the thinking of educated Punjabis. Under the first flash some of the upper class people showed considerable inclination towards Christianity because it promised closer contact with the rulers and quicker advancement in life. The new ideas were a challenge to the older form of religion as they prevailed in the newly annexed province.

Hinduism during the long period of Muslim rule had hardened into a rigid and conservative society. The missionaries took full advantage of the age long superstitions, dogmas of the Hindus. They tried to create aversion among the Western educated Hindus towards the traditional form of Hindusim. The newly educated elite felt so much over-whelmed by the Western civilisation and rationalist Protestant Christianity that either they developed distinct disinclination towards Hinduism or laboured under strong self pity. Though Muslims were the conquerors but Hinduism never felt impressed by their culture and civilisation for the obvious reason that the Hindus thought that they had nothing to learn from Muslim culture .Things were different under the British. The Western civilisation and Protestant Christianity made them feel inferior. Protestantism as a product of reformation had given rise to a new spirit of scientific rationalism. Later on it was responsible for the industrial revolution which charged the entire outlook of the society in Western countries.

Indian society was backward in comparison to western countries. The Christian missionaries who came for the purpose of proselytising would never miss an opportunity to tell Indians that if they also wished to be as advanced as their masters they should adopt the religion of their masters.

Even the caste Hindus found caste restrictions oppressive. The British system of administration and the Industrial economy introduced new avenues of advancement which were against the spirit of the caste norms. When a Bhalla Khatri in Lahore opened a shoe shop there was such indignation that his caste men staged a 'siyapa' outside his shop for doing a business fit for the caste of Chamars. Trade and industrial ventures involved sea voyage, inter-dining but the caste rules prohibited them.

The situation in the mid nineteenth century was that either Hindu society

refused to change and disintegrate or reform and consolidate itself To meet the challenge there arose a number of movements. Of them, the prominent were the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay and the Arya Samaj in north west India. The most effective was the Arya Samaj which was founded by Swami Dayanand Sarasvati. He was born in Gujrat though the major part of his public life was spent in the north.

The Arya Samaj was thus a direct result of the, proselytising zeal of the missionaries on the one hand and the campaign of conversion launched by Islam on the other. The new movement had a two fold purpose. viz (i) purification of Hinduism and (ii) its protection against the inroads of Islam and Christianity. In its essential character the Arya Samaj represented an earnest attempt at revival of Hindu religion and a reaction to the activities of foreign religions.

The Founder

The founder of Arya Samaj was Dayanand Saraswati, Mul Shankar, as he was named by his parents, was born in 1824 at Tankara, in Morvi State, Gujrat, Kathiawar in an orthodox Brahmin family. Though desired by his father to become a devout Saivite like himself, Mul Shankar felt disillusioned with the traditional religion and set out in search of truth. For 15 years he wandered in search of a guru who could give him the knowledge to overcome death. He scoured the fastness of the Himalayas and the retreats of the river valleys. He went wherever he was told there lived yogis who had overcome death. But he met none who could satisfy him. He would accept nothing that would not appeal to reason. But these fifteen years were fruitful in another way. He saw popular Hinduism at close quarters and fathomed the depths of its decline. One question assailed his mind was: what he saw true religion? If not, what was? Since the Yogis and Gurus had failed him, he decided to go to the ancient scriptures.

The Mentor

The mentor of Mul Shankar was Virja Nand, 'sanyasi' in Mathura. His fame as a teacher of Sanskrit grammar had spread far and wide. Mul Shankar went to him to learn grammar. Virja Nand was born in a village near Kartarpur in Jalandhar district. He was a blind having lost his sight after an attack of smallpox. He had left home while he was a boy because of the ill treatment of his brother's wife after his parents death. He had acquired perfection in Sanskrit. The special thing about him was that he taught only 'Arsha' works on Sanskrit grammar. The Vedas fall in the 'Arsha' category while the Puranas and Tantras fall in the 'Anarsha' category. An ancient rule is that when-ever there is conflict between 'Arsha' and 'anarsh' the 'arsha' shall prevail. 'Arsha' encourages free and rational thinking.

In the Upnishads when a student goes to his teacher on the completion of his education, the teacher's final advice is : "Follow what is good in me, but not what is not good in me." The Guru does not demand his shisya's blind adherence. When Yudhister

in the "Mahabharat asks Bhishma:" What is dharma"? His reply was that what could be tested on the touchstone of reasoning is 'dharma'. On the other hand 'Anarsha' scriptures demand complete surrender of reason. The Guru is always right, he should be obeyed blindly.

The core of Dayanand's teaching is rationalism. There is no contradiction between reason and 'Arsha' scriptures. They are identical. His studies led him to believe that all the evils in Hinduism were supported by the 'anarsha' scriptures. Starting from this point of views, Dayananda rejected all irrational customs and institutions as 'anarsh' innovations.

Three year's rigorous studies in the traditional ways gave Dayananda proper under-standing of the Vedas. Thereafter he was launched by his Guru to dedicate his life in the form of 'Dakshina' to the preaching of the Vedas which, in his opinion, "had long ceased to be taught in Bharat Varsha". He was further enjoined to "teach true shastras and dispel by their light, the darkness which the false deeds had given birth too."

Social Uplift

The one institution that has kept Hindu society under its stranglehold is the caste system. It had immobilised society and caused stagnation. Each caste is tied to a particular occupation and had a fixed status in the social hierarchy. Caste is based on kinship that is the bond of blood. Varna has two connotations one is colour, the other is choice. There are four varnas, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Their functions are demarcated. But long ago varna was turned into a status symbol. It lost its original meaning. Under the common designation of Brahman there are numerous castes which have no social interchange between themselves. The same is true of other varnas.

Dayananda rejected caste as 'anarslia' institution, but he accepted varna because it is an 'arsha' institution. He said the 'varnas' were determined not by birth but by profession. A Brahman, is not, born. A Brahman is one who performs the duties of Brahman whatever his origin. The same applies to other varnas. A man could rise to any position by dint of merit. The *varans* by merit opened the Hindu fold even to those not born Hindu. In a caste society there is no chance for a non Hindu to become Hindu because all relations are on the basis of caste. But in a varna society there is no such rule. This was a most revolutionary step for Hinduism. Hinduism had never accepted non Hindus in its fold but now it could. Dayananda wanted to bring about such radical changes in Hinduism because he unlike other reformers sought support from Hindu scriptures. Others were dubbed as preachers of Westernism, but Dayananda was a hundred percent product of ancient Hindu heritage.

Since the caste system was also responsible for the degradation of women, the rejection of caste also proved the movement of liberation for woman. Women freedom had been sacrificed at the altar of caste. Since it was woman who could cause inter-

mixture of caste Hinduism put all sorts of curbs on her. She was married off early so that she might have no-say in marriage and when her parents would chose a bridgeroom the would be from within the caste. To avoid contact with men of different castes, she was kept in seclusion. She was kept illiterate so that education should not give her ideas to rise in protest.

In north-west India the Arya Samaj was the first among non-Christians to start girls education. Unlike others who thought that girls needed only elementary education, its founder advocated higher education for women. In this region the first girls school was the *Kanya Mahavidyalya* of Jalandhar started in the last decade of the last century. There was stiff opposition to girls education. Whenever castemen found anyone sending daughter to the school they threatened him that if he did not withdraw his daughter from school no one would marry her.

New Philosophy

Dayananda felt that a programme of social reform would not make much progress unless it was backed by a philosophy. The traditional Hindu outlook is that this world is full of sorrow. It is temporary halt for the soul in its long journey from one birth to another. The only way to be free from sorrow is to escape from this world. With such an out-look there could be no zest for life and no zeal for improvement of society. Why one should do any thing to improve this world if one is here for a while. Since -the time of the Budha the leaders of Hindu thought have preached a life of world negation philosophy Dharma and Moksha have been the main preoccupation.

Dayananda gave a life affirming philosophy. He resurrected the ancient fourfold aim of 'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kama' and 'Moksha', The 'Anarsha' religions had dropped 'artha' and 'Kama' that is wealth and enjoyment . Dayananda said the fulfilment of life lay in the adoption of the four aims. A man should live a life of virtue, make wealth, enjoy himself and than seek liberation.

New Mission

Fired by his new zeal Dayananda Saraswati embarked upon his new mission of religions and social reform of Hindu Society. Having visited some important religions centres like Hardwar, Benaras and Allahabad, and having met some leaders of the newly started Brahmo Samaj at Calcutta, he came to Bombay and founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. His fame and teachings spread far and wide in Northern India. He happened to visit Delhi during the celebrations of the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1887, as the guest of one of the native princes. There Swami Dayanand met some prominent Hindus and visited Ludhiana and Lahore.

His success at the capital city of the Punjab was so great that the Arya Samaj founded there soon eclipsed the society organised in Bombay, Lahore became the headquarters of the new movement in 1877. At Lahore the Arya Samaj took its final shape. The principles were revised for the last time, the constitution was re-framed and finally settled.

The remaining years of his life from 1877-83 were spent by the Swami in preaching, teaching and writing books and also in organising Arya Samajees.

The Arya Samaj movement made rapid progress in the Punjab and a net work was established before the death of the founder. By 1928 the Punjab could boast of no less than 500 Arya Samajees, the largest number in the country.

Aims and Objects

The aims and objects of the Arya Samaj, as embodied in the ten principles, which formed the basis of the organisation were the social and religious regeneration of the Hinduism as propounded in the Vedas, which were to form the fundamental basis of the new Samaj. The Vedas were sheet anchor of Swami Dayanada's teaching and he wanted the new Samaj to conform to their teachings. His slogan was 'Back to the Vedas'. For guidance of the followers the view of swami Dayananda were elaborated in his book Satyarth Parkash, which had come to be treated as the correct exposition of the social and religious creed of the Samaj.

Organisation

Every Arya Samaj became a unit in itself. Generally one Samaj was set up in every city or town which came under its influence, but in some cities there were more than one, either on account of the followers, or on account of some differences in principles.

The affairs of every Samaj were governed by an executive committee consisting of five elected office bearers, who were elected annually by effective members. The provisional assembly consisted of the representatives of the Arya Samajis. According to the size of the respective Samajies, every Samaj contributed 10% of its gross income to the provincial assembly. The general assembly was elected every year. At the head of the whole Organisation was the All India body formed by the representatives of the various provincial assemblies. Closely connected with the Samajees of the adults there are 'Kumar Sabhas' or Youngman's Arya Samajis which served as the recruiting centre of the main body.

Every Arya Samaj has a meeting place where the members meet every week in the principal cities all over India, except in the south, the Arya Samaj possesses splendid buildings consisting of lecture halls and committee rooms etc. In some places the premises used for daily prayers and club purposes.

The Split in the Arya Samaj

For some years a great controversy raged in the Arya Samaj as to how far the opinions expressed by Swami Dayananda were binding on the Arya Samaj as a body. The differences were more acute on points regarding individuals right of private judgement in matters not covered by the main principles. In 1892 the Arya Samaj split into two sections ostensibly as a result of differences of the opinion (i) as to the righteousness of meat diet and (ii) the lines on which the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College founded in the memory of Swami in 1886, was to be run. Thereafter the two sections became distinct as the Gurukula and D.A.V. college branches and set up their separate

Samajees throughout Punjab. The former known as the Mahatma party headed by Shri Munshi Ram, who latter came to be christened as Swami Shardha Nand, favoured ancient Hindu education, vegetarianism and religion. The College or cultured group stands for modern education, freedom of diet and declared that Arya Samaj is the one universal religion.

The efforts of both the sections were mainly directed towards education. D.A.V. College branch started and developed the Daya Nand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore, which soon became the centre of its activities, Starting with a school in 1886 under Lala Hans Raj as its first Honorary. Headmaster, the institution became popular and grew into a big College. Lala Hans Raj was largely responsible for its rapid growth and zealously served it free of any charge for eight years. The D.A.V. College, Lahore became the biggest institution in Northern India. A net work of colleges secondary and primary schools soon grew up around the college throughout the Punjab. Until the partition of the Province in 1947 the D.A.V. College in Lahore remained the premier institution of the Samaj in the state. Subsequently the D.A.V. College Jalandhar has assumed the importance of the parent institution.

The Mahatma group organised a similar college at Hardwar under the leadership of Lala Munshi Ram in 1907. The Guru Kula Kangri, as it came to be called, was devoted to the spread of Vedic education according to the ideals of ancient Hinduism. The new system of education laid great stress on building character as well as the mind of the pupils in the company of their teachers.

While spread of education was the main plan of the Arya Samaj, it attended to a number of other social, cultural and philanthropic activities.

Outside Christian circles, the Arya Samaj was the first to organise orphanages and widow homes. The first Hindus Orphanage was established at Ferozepur with attached schools and workshop, for boys and girls. There are a number of other orphanages controlled and managed by Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj did commendable work during the famines of 1897-98 and 1899-1900. The Arya Samaj organised relief on a large scale on a non-official bases during the period of distress through orphan relief movement and saved them from conversion to Christianity.

The Arya Samaj also rendered valuable social service at the time of the great Kangra earthquake of 1904. The Arya Samaj was the pioneer in starting social service in an organised form in Northern India.

Reclamation and Conversion

As a missionary Church Arya Samaj included in its programme the reclamation of those who had left the Hindu society and converted those who were prepared to accept its teachings. It aimed at checking the spread of Islam and Christianity. Alongside it attempted to raise the social status of the depressed classes and their retention in the Hindu fold. 'Shuddhi' or reconversion was launched by Swami Shardhanand, who

provoked the retaliation of the Muslims and suffered death at the hands of a Muslim fanatic in 1926, the movement also caused riots, disturbances and murders and atmosphere become surcharged with hatred and hostility among the members of the Hindu and Muslim communities 'Shuddhi' and 'Tablig' set one against the other. The greatest work of the Arya Samaj lay in the so called backward classes. Side by side with conversion and reconversion their amelioration was taken up. Many schools and social service centres were started for the uplift of the depressed classes. Numerous institutions were started for the removal of untouchability, dissemination of education and general, social moral and economic uplift movement started by Mahatma Gandhi and supported by certain orthodox leaders like Madan Mohan Malviya. Through the pioneering efforts of the Arya Samaj untouchability has been outlawed in our Constitution.

Arya Samaj and Politics

Since its inception the Arya Samaj movement was looked upon with suspicion by the foreign rulers. Its independence of tone, national outlook inculcated through social and religious reforms and above all the spirit of self help and self reliance made it an eye sore for the alien rulers. The movement, though avowedly religious in character was believed to contain the seeds of sedition. Some influential members of the Muslim and Christian communities tried to discredit him in the eyes of the authorities. The association of some prominent Arya Samajists, including Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand, was believed to be the proof of the anti-British propaganda carried on by the Arya Samaj. In the famous Patiala sedition case not less than 76 Arya Samajists were defendants. From the participation of a large number of Arya Samajists in the early nationalist movement in the Punjab the Samaj was held as a whole to be hotbed of sedition. The Arya Samajists were placed under strict surveillance and many of them suffered deportations prosecutions and dismissals on one charge or other. The misunderstanding of the aims and objects of the Arya Samaj persisted for a long time. For some time (1907-1910) Arya Samaj was the object of singular persecution by the British authorities. The Arya Samajists in Government employ were dismissed for being members of the movement and many were coerced to sever their connection with the Samaj. The Government tried to influence the policies and programme of the Samaj in many overt and covert ways and by indirect means. At one time the loyal Samajists disowned many of its notable members, who had incurred the wrath of the Government.

While the D.A.V. College section veered round to pro-British ideology and established itself in the confidence of the government, the Guru Kul party continued to follow an independent policy. Many of its leaders like Swami Shardhanand, were in the forefront of the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi.

Despite the political vicissitudes Arya Samaj in the Punjab has done useful work by its testimony to monotheism, opposition to idolatry and other educational and social work. Its polemic against child marriage, priestcraft and untouchability placed it in the front rank of reform movement in the country.

LESSON NO. 2.5

GURDWARA REFORM MOVEMENT (1920-25)

The Gurdwara Reform Movement, also known as the Akali Movement because of the *Jatha*, of Akali reformers having launched the struggle, began in the twentieth century with a view to purifying the Sikh Gurdwaras from the evil and un-Sikh like practices that had gradually crept in these shrines. The Sikh Gurdwaras were earlier managed by pious and devoted priests like Baba Buddha and Bhai Mani Singh. Latter during the days of the Sikhs persecution at the hands of the Mughal Emperors and their Governors in the Punjab-Abdus Samad Khan, Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan and Mir Mannu, when the Sikhs were forced into exile, the important Sikh shrines passed under the control of the *Udassi Mahants*, who professed Sikhism but did not strictly conform to its outward symbols. In the earlier stages, these Mahants enjoyed the support of the *Sikh Sangats*. Gradually this tradition of purity and austerity started giving away, as a result of enormous increase in the income of the shrines and revenue fee *Jagirs* attached to them by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh *Misaldars*. With sudden increase in their income some *Mahants* and their *chelas* gradually changed their style of living and began converting the trust property in their personal *Jagirs*. The British officials, who took over the administration of the Punjab after its annexation in 1849 consciously did not disturb these vested interests since they wanted to use these “national leaders” of the Sikhs to strengthen their powers and position in the province. After securing official patronage, the *Mahants* and their *chelas* began ignoring the *Sikh Sangats* and started indulging in all types of evil practices in the very precincts of the temples. Attempts to purify the Sikh temples by the moderate Leadership of the Singh Sabha did not bring any good results. However, in the beginning of the twentieth century, as a result of growing awakening among a section of the Sikhs, mentioned in Official circles as the neo Sikhs’, a passion for the purification of the historic Sikh shrines was created. These radical Sikhs tried to give air to their grievances over the mis-management in the Sikh shrines and tried to build up a movement for Gurdwara reform through press and platform. They warned the Mahants for Gurdwara belonged to the Sikh community and not to the priests who were mere servants of the *Panth*. To begin with the reformers attempted to liberate their shrines through legal means, sued some of the Mahants under the provisions of Charitable and Religious Endowment Act (Act XIV) of 1920., But this involved huge court fees and uncertain delay, the reformers thought of adopting social-boycott of the concerned Mahants. This new method proved ineffective as the Mahants were getting enormous income from the *Jagirs* attached to the shrines and stoppage of the offerings by the devotees as a

result of social boycott did not disturb them. Having been convinced the ineffectiveness of the two methods, the reformers now organised themselves in the form of local *Akali Jathas* and adopted the weapon of peaceful agitation to dislodge the corrupt *Mahants* and their *Chelas* from the control of their holy places. Initiative in the field of reforms was taken by the local *Akali Jathas* in respective areas but soon after two representative bodies of the Sikhs-the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal-came into existence. During their five year's struggle (1920-1925) these two bodies were able not only to obtain control over all their important Sikh shrines through peaceful agitation and passive suffering but also to strengthen the forces of nationalism in the province by ejecting the Mahants, priests, Government appointed Managers and other pro-British interests and by providing a new type of middle-class nationalist leadership to the Sikh community.

The Golden Temple and the Akal Takhat Amritsar

The Akali Jathas, after gaining control over the Gurdwara babe-di-Ber, Sialkot through peaceful agitation, next turned their attention to the premier Sikh shrines at Amritsar. During Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule these shrines were richly decorated with gold plates and came to be known as the Golden Temple. A rich revenue free Jagir was also attached to the shrine. After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the British Government took over the control of these two shrines and appointed a committee of ten members headed by a *Sarbrah* to look after their management. Corrupt and non-Sikh practices in the precincts of the Golden Temple and Akal Takhat and the official control over its management had been a source of great discontent to the Sikhs much before the beginning of the Gurdwara Reform Movement, while the reformers were anxious to free these central Sikh shrines from the evil influences and the official control as early as possible the British officials in the provinces carefully tried to forestall any efforts at reform or change in the existing system of management which might deprive them of the privilege of using or rather misusing the religious places of the Sikhs in consolidating their power and in weakening the political opponents. The loyalty and support of these Government-appointed priests and other vested interests was sought to be given out as the 'proverbial loyalty' of the Sikh community as a whole. It were these priests of the Akal Takhat who were made to issue *Hukamnamas* against the Ghadrite heroes describing them *Thugs* (renegades) and calling upon the Sikh masses not to give any shelter to them. After the tragedy of Jallianwala bagh when the country was busy in condemning the most brutal and inhuman action of General Dyer, Arur Singh, the Government appointed Manager of the Golden Temple, Amritsar invited the General to the temple and after honouring him with a *Saropa* declared him a "Sikh" The dialogue which took place between Arur Singh and

other priests on the one hand and General Dyer on the other, is worth quoting here :

“Sahib” they said “You must become a Sikh even as Nikalseyan Sahib became a Sikh.”

The General thanked them for the honour, but said that he could not as a British officer, let hair grow long:

Arur Singh laughed, “We will let you off the long hair”, he said.

General Dyer offered another objection. “But I cannot give up smoking”. The priest conceded, “We will let you give it up gradually”.

“That I promise you,” said the General, at “the rate of one cigarette a year”.

According to the biographer of General Dyer, “the priests chuckling proceeded with the initiation. General Dyer and Captain Briggs were invested with the five *Kakars*, the sacred emblems of that war like brotherhood and so became Sikhs.”

It was on the basis of this facade of an honour that the General later boasted of his action having been ‘approved’ of by the Sikhs. The above incident grossly scandalised the Sikh community and brought to the advocates of Gurdwara reform the necessity of putting to a stop to the prevailing system of Gurdwara management and with it the greed, licentiousness and exploitation of the vested interests in the Sikh shrines.

While the reformers were agitating for the termination of the Official control over the Golden Temple and the authorities were trying to soft-pedal the issue by deferring the question till the implementation of the Reforms Scheme in the Council, the walk-out of the priest of the Akal Takhat in protest against the entry of the newly baptised low-caste members of the Khalsa Biradari into the premises of the Golden Temple, virtually brought these important shrines under the control of the reformers who appointed a representative committee for the management of these two shrines.

The Tragedy of Nankana and its Impact

So far the Akalis had gained control over the important Sikh shrines through peaceful means and without shedding much of blood. But the tragedy of Nankana in which over 130 peaceful Akali reformers were done to death by Mahant Narain Das and the mercenaries hired by him proved a turning point both in the annals of the Akali struggle for reform as also the official policy towards the Movement. British official involvement in the Nankana tragedy, particularly that of Mr. C.M. King, Commissioner of Lahore Division and the support extended to Mahant Narain Das by the officials, convinced the Akali leadership that the bureaucracy was at the back of the vested interests in the Sikh shrines.

On the other hand the Government of India’s criticism of the Punjab Government’s failure to deal with the “Akali Movement firmly and consistently from beginning” and the responsibility of the local officials for their having not taken necessary precautions to avert the tragedy, seems to have provided the British officials in the province a good

excuse to come out in open support of the Mahants. In consultations with the Viceroy of India and other member of his council, the Government of Punjab now inaugurated a strong policy towards the Movement with two-fold objectives of (i) suppressing the Akalis by force and (ii) weakening the growing Akali agitation with the promises of suitable legislation. It was the implementation of this new policy which resulted in the subsequent agitation over the Key's affairs and later opening of fresh fronts, first at the Guru-Ka-Bagh and then at Jaito in the Sikh State of Nabha.

Akali Agitation over the Keys of the Toshakhana of Golden Temple

As stated earlier, the reformers, after taking over the management of the Golden Temple and Akal Takhat at Amritsar, formed a provisional Committee for their management Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, who was holding the dual office of the Secretary of the newly established Committee of management under S. G.P.C. and also the Government-nominated *Sarbrah*, was still holding the Keys of Toshakhana with himself. To ensure its complete control over the shrines the S. G. P. C. asked Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia to hand over the Keys to the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. But before the *Sarbrah* could do so, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar forestalled the Akali move by immediately sending an Extra Assistant Commissioner and taking over the Keys from Sunder Singh Ramgarhia.

This action of the Deputy Commissioner created a stir among the Sikh community which was already agitated over the tragedy of Nankana and official involvement in the affair. A period of intense agitational activity in the press and on the platform followed the official taking over the Keys. The Punjab press particularly the pro-Akali papers, reacted very spiritedly.

Noticing the flood of protests and indignation that had come to engulf the central districts of the Punjab and the increasing sympathy of the various, sections of the Sikh population with the Akali Movement the Government of India advised the authorities in the Punjab that the only way to give or severe rebuff to the increasing movement of non-co-operation among the Sikhs was to successfully prosecute five or six leading men especially Dan Singh and Jaswant Singh. Accordingly, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar arrested these leaders of non-co-operation when they were addressing the Sikh *Diwan* at Ajnala, near Amritsar, on the 26th November, 1921.

Akali reaction to the arrests of the above leaders was immediate. As soon as the news of their arrests reached Amritsar, the S.G.P.C. which was in session at the Akal Takhat adjourned its meeting to meet again at Ajnala, Soon, over 50 members of S.G.P.C. reached there and continued the proceedings of the Diwan: The authorities declared the assembly illegal arrested all its members. However, the arrests, instead of checking the advance of the Movement as the Government had thought, gave a fresh fillip to the Akali agitation. The S.G.P.C. by a resolution, called upon the Sikhs to hold religious *Diwans* everywhere to explain the facts about the Keys affair.

When the Government realised that a repressive policy, instead of weakening the Akali Movement had made it more and more resolute and the Akalis had joined the Congress programme of non-co-operation at the provincial level, it thought of solving the Akali problem first by appointing committee of few moderate Sikhs to take the Keys from the Government and later their failure to do so, by negotiating with the Akali leadership and by announcing unconditional release of the Akali prisoners.

But as the Akalis, even after securing unconditional release of all the prisoners including Dina Nath and other Congress workers were not willing to go the Deputy Commissioner to collect the Keys. A gazetted officer was sent by Deputy Commissioner to hand over the keys to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the S. G. P. C. at a *Diwan* at the Akal Takhat specially arranged for the purpose. Unconditional release of the Akali prisoners arrested during the agitation over the Keys affairs and the return of the keys to the Akali leadership was described by a contemporary European writer in the following words :

“Never was there a more, shameful defeat. One thinks irresistibly of the capture of *Calais* by an English King, when the leading citizens had to bring the Keys to him clothed only in their shirts and with ropes round their necks. The Punjab Government has humbled itself to dust before the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.....”

The defeat of the Government was seen by the nationalist leaders in the country who had been backing the Akali in their struggle against the bureaucracy, as a decisive victory for the forces of nationalism in the country. Mahatama Gandhi sent the following telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the S.G.P.C.

“First Battle for India’s Freedom won, Congratulations”

Akali Morcha at Guru-Ka Bagh

Official stand on the issue of the keys and unconditional release of the Akali and other prisoners arrested in connection with the agitation for the restoration of the keys made the Government feel that its efforts to suppress the Akalis and to thus set an example before the forces of nationalism in the country it had suffered a political defeat and humiliation. In a circular to the Deputy Commissioners of the various districts in the province, the Chief Secretary of the Punjab Government wrote that “the release of the Akali prisoners has been misunderstood” and desired them “to bring the Akalis to their senses by strictly enforcing the law and order”. It was with a view to achieving the above object that vigorous campaign of repression against the Akali was launched in the various districts in an attempt to retrieve lost prestige by ordering the arrest of the Akalis for cutting wood from the dry *kikker* trees attached the Gurudwara Guru-ka-Bagh. This action of the district officials, in anticipation of the Mahant of the Gurdwara lodging a formal complaint with the local police; points to the pre-planned policy of the Government for the implementation of which Sunder Das, the Mahant of

Gurdwara Guru-Ka-Bagh, became mere tool in the hands of the local British officials.

This unprovoked action of the Deputy Commissioner was seen as a fresh challenge by Akali leadership. To protest against official high handedness and to assert their right to cut wood from the land attached to the Gurdwara for use at the free Kitchen, Jathas of five Akalis each started marching daily towards Guru-Ka-Bagh. A new wave of enthusiasm prevailed among the Sikhs and soon Akali Jathas from the surrounding areas reached Guru-Ka-Bagh and began helping in the cutting and storing wood for the *Guru-Ka-Langer*.

To check the continued influx of the Akali Jathas and their supporters and sympathisers, police pickets were placed on the roads leading to Guru-Ka-Bagh. Arrangements were also made to stop Jathas travelling to Amritsar by rail or road. By an order of Mr. J.M. Dunnett, the District Magistrate of Amritsar Akali collected at Guru-Ka-Bagh in Ajnala Tehsil were declared illegal assemblies and consigners and carriers rushing supplies to them were awarded that "they were engaged in the commission of cognizable offence and anyone helping them would be penalised under Section 143/109 of the Indian Penal Code" and were prevented from doing so. The Magistrate also directed "the police officer of the pickets at Ranewala and Chinnawala bridges on the Lahore branch of the Upper Bari Doab to prevent the transmission of such supplies to the illegal assemblies at Guru-ka. Bagh".

In spite of these preventive measures of the Government, the Akalis continued pouring in at Guru-Ka-Bagh. Jathas of 50,60,100 and some time even 200 Akalis started marching to Guru-Ka-Bagh every day after taking oath of non-violence at Akal Takhat, Amritsar. On the way these *Jathas* were stopped by groups of police officials and mercilessly beaten with sticks till they became either unconscious or were otherwise unable to stand on their legs and proceed further towards Guru-Ka-Bagh.

Criticism of the official high handedness by the Indian and the foreign press combined with the secret reports about the adverse effects of these beating on the Sikh soldiers in the Indian army and the fear of alienating the support of the moderate elements in the Sikhs over the official action at Guru-Ka-Bagh unnerved the authorities in the Punjab and the higher bureaucracy in Delhi and London. They wanted an immediate escape without further loss of prestige. A way out was soon found when Rai Bahadur Sir Ganga Ram a retired Government Engineer, offered his co-operation by getting the disputed land on lease from the Mahant and allowing the Akalis to cut wood. On Sir Ganga Ram's informing the Deputy Commissioner that the police was no longer required, the Government withdrew the police. The barbed wire around its enclosures having been immediately removed, the Akalis took possession of the land attached to the Guru-Ka-Bagh. Thus ended the long drawn struggle between the Government in which over 1500 Akalis were injured

and over 5000 of them put in prisons.

Struggles in the Sikh States

It was during their agitation in the Sikh States that the Akalis met the strongest opposition from the British officials, who decided to put an effective stop to these activities by declaring the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, the Shiromani Akali Dal the various Jathas affiliated to them as “unlawful associations” and by arresting the top leadership on charges of “treason against the King-Emperor.” It was in the Sikh states again that the Akalis who had humbled the powerful bureaucracy in the Punjab during the earlier phases of the struggle, were put to the severest test by the official policy of suppressing their movement through the Sikh groups and institutions, the Sikh princes, particularly Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala the Sikh troops, the Sikh Sudhar and Zila Committees consisting of loyalists and other vested interests in the Sikh community who rallied the British Government in weakning popular peoples’ movement.

The Akali struggle in the Sikh states started with the Akali leadership taking up the issue of the restoration of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha to his throne. Ripudaman Singh, who ascended the throne on 20th December, 1911. was forced to abdicate in favour of his minor son, Partap Singh, on 9th July, 1923. The Maharaja who held advance political views and had close links with the nationalists of his time, fell into disfavour with the officials because of his openly championing the popular cause. After the tragedy of Nankana when the S.G.P.C. asked the sikhs to wear black turbans in protest against the official involvement he also joined the Sikhs by wearing a black turban. He was also helping the Akalis with moral and material support. The British Government considered him as “dangerous” and used the Nabha-Patiala dispute as pretext to force him to abdicate. It took a serious turn when the Nabha Officials disrupted the Akhand Path at Gurdwara Gangasar, Jaito, while forcibly removing an Akali reading the Holy book. The action caused a commotion and the Sikhs who were already sore over the forced abdications of the Maharaja of Nabha and the arrest of the organisers of the Akali Diwan at Jaito.

The Jaito Morcha

The above action of the Nabha officials resulted in the launching a big *Morcha* at Jaito, a village in the Nabha State when Jathas of 100 Akalis each started marching to Jaito to protest against the official’s action in disrupting the Akhand Path and for the restoration of the Maharaja. The Jaito agitation took a very serious turn when on 21st of February, 1924, a *Shahidi Jatha* of 500 was fired at by the Nabha police, killing in the process 19 Akalis and wounding over 28. The official high handedness won, for the Akalis sympathy of all India Congress leaders and the press. Principal Gidwani. Dr. Kitchlew and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru went to the Nabha jail along with a number of Akali reformers.

While the official action at Jaito was till being criticised by the nationalist press and the Akali leadership demand for an independent enquiry being repeated, the S.G.P.C. continued its programme of sending more and more *Jathas* to Jaito, even though Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders advised the Akali leadership to suspend more *Jathas* to avoid the repetition of miseries that befell the first *Shahidi Jatha* and to give time to the authorities to think over the problem with a view of finding a settlement. It was under these circumstances that the second *Shahidi Jatha* left for Jaito on 28th February 1924, over 40,000 people bid farewell to its members. More *Shahidi Jathas*, including a Military pensioners Jatha and Canadian Sikh's *Jatha*, continued marching to Jaito. While these activities were going and outwardly both the parties were showing signs of high morale, a careful persual of the Akali and official sources shows that there were signs of weariness in both the camps. At this juncture the Akali leadership was facing multiple difficulties. The S.G.P.C's decision to defend the Akali Leaders's case, opening of front at Bhai Pheru in the Lahore district while the Jaito Morcha was still on, and Malcolm Hailey's new policy of creating divisions among the ranks of the Akali leadership and organising powerful opposition to the Akali movement in the name of Sikh Sudhar Committees consisting of the loyalist elements, combined with various other factors, created a real difficulty for the Akali leadership. On the other hand the Government also was getting tired of the increasing number of the Akali prisoners as a result of the Akali leadership's decision not to suspend the *morcha* at Jaito.

The Gurdwara Bill and Finale

It was under above circumstances that both the Akali leadership and the Administrator of Nabha and the Government of the Punjab showed anxiety to find a solution to the Akali problem, While the Government was prepared to enter into negotiation with the Akali leadership through Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Bhai Jodh Singh, the main difficulty was the Akali stand regarding the Maharaja of Nabha. Though the Government was willing to allow the Akalis to complete the interrupted *Akhand Path* on certain conditions, it insisted that the Akali leadership must drop the question of the restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha for all times to come. While negotiations between the Administrator of Nabha and the akali representative were still going on the Government of the Punjab in the meantime introduced the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill in the Punjab Legislative Council which was unanimously passed on the 7th July, 1925 and accepted by the Akali leadership. On the successful passage of the Bill, Sir Malcom Hailey, the Governor of the Punjab, made an important declaration with regard to Jaito and announced during his speech in the Punjab Legislative Council on July 9, 1925, that the Administrator of Nabha would permit bands of Akalis to proceed to Gurdwara Gangsar, Jaito, to complete the *Akhand Path* on certain conditions. This announcement was followed by

release of most of the Akali prisoners arrested in connection with the Jaito *Morcha* on 21st July, 1925. Two Jathas of Akalis from Amritsar and Delhi arrived at Jaito and on 27 more *Jathas* reached after their release from the Nabha and other jails. The deadlock finally ended with Akalis completing 101 *Akhand Paths* on 6th August, 1925 in place of the one interrupted by the Nabha officials and thus ended the long drawn struggle between the Government and Akali leadership in which over 30,000 men and women went behind the bars, 400 of them suffered martyrdom and 2000 wounded, while a large number of them faced dismissal from services, withdrawals of jagirs and pensions, imposition of fines to the tune of fifteen lakhs of rupees forfeiture of properties and various other forms of punishment.

Suggested Readings

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| Ruchi Ram Sahni | : | <i>Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines.</i> |
| S. Gopal (Ed). | : | <i>Selected Works in Jawahar Lal Nehru</i> , Vol I, pp. 369-75. |
| Jawaharlal Nehru | : | <i>An Autobiography</i> , pp. 109-116. |
| Ganda Singh (Ed) | : | <i>Confidential Papers Akali Movement</i> , pp. XXX. |
| Sohan Singh Josh | : | <i>Akali Morchian da Itihas</i> (Punjabi). |
| Mohinder Singh | : | <i>The Akali Movement.</i> |

LESSON NO. 2.6

THE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE PARTITION OF PUNJAB

The Partition of Punjab was the outcome of the partition of India into India and Pakistan. There were certain special circumstances which ultimately led to the partition of Punjab. These circumstances were :-

1. Separate Representaion for the Muslims

The communal representaion granted to the Muslims in 1909 and extended to other communities in 1919 gave rise to communal consciousness. The Muslims, who constituted about 55 per cent of the population of the Punjab according to Census Report 1921, and 57 per cent according to Census Report 1941, had apparently very narrow majority over the Sikhs and Hindus, that made communal problem tense. In the Punjab, the Muslims were in a majority. It was the only province where the majority community had been granted the right of separate representation. The Report of the Franchise Committee, Indian Constitutional Reform, 1919 stated, “....special electorates for the Mohammadans could be admitted only in Provinces where they are in minority of votes As regards the Punjab, our calculation goes to show that Mohammadans are in slight Majority over combined strength of the Hindu and Sikh voters. The margin is not great and it is even possible that actual enumeration might convert it into a minority. As the Sikhs claim to separate representation has been conceded it clearly consideration of expediency rather than logic that would place the large majority of residuary voters in separate constituencies.”

2. Economic Domination of the Non-Muslims

The main considerations of this extraordinary treatment for the majority community in the Punjab were their narrow majority and their economic backwardness. The Hindus and Sikhs dominated in the fields of industry, commerce, trade and banking. In the provincial capital. viz, Lahore the non-Muslims owned 108 registered factories out of 186. They paid eight times as much sales tax as Muslim traders. Banks, commercial institutions Insurance companies and industrial concerns were mostly in their hands. The urban property tax, income tax and other taxes paid by the non-Muslims were far excess of those paid by the Muslims. Even in the Muslim majority districts the trade & industry were in the hands of the Hindu and the Sikhs who lived in the towns and cities. The non-Muslims owned more than half of that number of industrial establishment in the whole of the Punjab. In the Central districts the Sikhs were biggest land owners. In the Lahore division the Sikhs paid 46% of the land revenue. The Jat Sikhs from the Central districts of the Punjab were mainly responsible for building up the colony areas of Lyallpur and Montgomery.

Next to agriculture, money lending was the most lucrative activity in the province.

Money lending was entirely done by the Hindus and Sikhs as usury was a taboo for the Muslims. According to Sir Malcolm Darling the total agricultural debt of the Punjab was about nineteen times of the land revenue and the Punjab agriculturist was more in debt than any other agriculturist in India and more than half of the debt was incurred by Muslim rural population. The Muslim peasants of West Punjab were as a body heavily under debt to the Hindu and Sikh money-lenders of Multan and Rawalpindi Divisions.

The economic domination of the non-Muslims over the Muslims gave a force to the Muslim contention that they were in danger of economic exploitation at the hands of the Hindus and the Sikhs. It was on this ground that the Punjab Committee constituted in 1928 by the Punjab Legislative Council to confer with Indian Statutory Commission, recommended, "the interests of an economically and educationally backward community cannot be safeguarded unless it allowed a free choice in the selection of its representatives. If common electorates are introduced, the money-lenders and financially stronger community will be able to influence the voters of the backward and poor communities and get their own nominees elected which will practically mean the backward communities being left unrepresented in the legislature."

3. Political Domination of the Muslims

The Sikhs and Hindus opposed the communal representation and reservation of seats which had been granted by the Communal Award to Muslims because it gave them statutory majority of 51 percent in the legislature. The Hindus who were about 30% argued that there must not be any reservation of seats for majority community, a minority community must not be given less representation in terms of their population and weightage must not be given to one minority at the expense of another minority. The Sikhs who were about 10 percent paid about 40 percent of land revenue and water rates combined and supplied a gallant and valuable element in the Indian army demanded that they must have substantial weightage as enjoyed by the Muslims in the provinces where they were in minority. Secondly the Muslim representation must be less than 50 percent so that no one community should be able to rule over the others. The Sikh delegation to the Round Table Conference at London raised the issue and argued that, "In the Punjab they (Muslims) claim to have their majority ensured by statute. If the Muslim demand for this majority is made a basis of separate electorate, it would mean that other two communities could not influence the permanent majority chosen as it would be by constituents swayed by none but communal motive and aim".

Significantly enough the claim put forward by every community had its justification, but it could not be met without doing injustice to another community. In case the Sikhs were granted sufficient weightage the Muslims would be deprived of their narrow majority in legislature. If the weightage, to the Sikhs was granted out of the portion of the Hindus it would be injustice to the latter. If no weightage was given to the Sikhs it would be injustice to them as similar privileges were enjoyed by the Muslims in

other provinces. In this way the communities in the Punjab were so distributed that their legitimate claims were mutually antagonist and solution of the problem seemed impossible. Nehru Report rightly stated that, "It is this circumstances in the Punjab, which apart from general consideration, has so far defied all attempts at a satisfactory adjustment". The soil was ready for the seeds of partition.

4. Proposal for the Partition of the Punjab

In order to solve the communal tangle in the Punjab, Sir Geoffrey Corbett, who had served in the Punjab as Financial Commissioner, brought out scheme. He advocated the separation of Ambala Division from the Punjab to make one community predominant. He argued 'Historically Ambala Division is a part of Hindustan and its inclusion in the Province of the Punjab was an incident of British rule. Its language is Hindustani, not Punjabi and its people are akin to the people of adjoining Meerut and Agra Divisions, Ambala Divisions is not irrigated from the rivers but from the Jumna system on which the adjoining districts of United Provinces (of agra and Oudh) also depend. It is, therefore, fair to assume that in any rational scheme for the redistribution of Province Ambala Division less Simla district and North west corner of the Ambala district would be separated from the Punjab." This scheme greatly attracted the public attention. Mahatma Gandhi, during his deliberations in the Round Table Conference in London got this scheme circulated to all members. The proposed exclusion of Ambala Division meant the exclusion of 3,09,900 Hindus, 240,296 Sikhs and 1418,136 Muslims which would have raised Muslim majority to about 63 percent. This could have solved the communal problem, in Punjab by making one community predominant over the other, But this line of argument did not final favour with the Punjab as it would reduce the Hindu minority into a small minority and upset the balance between various communities. The Committee, therefore, recommended "That any large disparity between the communities in the pretent circumstances is undesirable in the interest of province and good government. As the Communities are at present balanced there is not even remote chance for any one community to form Cabinet on communal lines."

In order to counteract. Sir Geoffrey Corbett's scheme the Sikh delegates to the Round Table Conference, London, brought out another proposal for the division of the Punjab. It was stated in their memorandum that "We ask for a territorial rearrangement which would take from the Punjab the Rawalpindi and Multan Division excluding Montgomery and Lyallpur districts. These Divisions are over whelmingly Muslims as well as racially akin to the North Western Frontier Province. These overwhelmingly Muslim districts with popuplation of seven millions can either form a separate province or be amalgamated with the North West Frontier Province. "The exclusion of Rawalpindi, and Multan Divisions would have raised the Hindus and Sikhs to majority in the remaining Punjab. It is very important to note that Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the great Muslim poet and statesman of the Punjab, who is considered to be the father of the idea of a "single state for the Muslims" after amalgamtion of the Punjab, North Western Frontier Province

and Sindh, clearly foresaw that in this political arrangement, Ambala Division and some other districts would have to be separated from the Punjab. He stated in his famous address at Muslim Conference in 1929, that "The exclusion of Ambala Division and perhaps some districts where non-Muslims predominate will make it (the Punjab) less extensive and more Muslim in population."

The terms of the Lahore Resolution of Muslim League (1940), which is known as the Pakistan resolution, clearly state the Muslim State was to consist of "Geographically contiguous units, demarcated into regions with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary". According to Professor R. Coupland the words "territorial readjustment" were particularly mentioned for the splitting of Punjab and to exclude Ambala Division because the whole of the Punjab could not be included in Pakistan as there were areas where Muslim were not in majority nor there was any Geographical contiguity with Muslim majority areas. This point has also been made more clear from the letter of Dr. Syed Abdul Latiff member of the Muslim League Constitution Committee formed to work out details of Pakistan. He wrote to Sir Abdullah Haroon, the Chairman of the Committee-"Lahore Resolution aims at homogeneous compact blocks or states with an overwhelming Muslim majority."

5. Demand for Sikh State

The Draft Declaration issued by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 proved to be one of the landmarks in the history of the Punjab. One of its main features was to give right to the provinces to secede from the Centre and "such non-acceding province should they so desire". were to be given new constitution giving them the same full status as Indian Union. According to Brecher, the Draft Declaration implied acceptance of Pakistan demand by the British. Thus clearly envisaged Pakistan and afforded us a clear chance to get full Pakistan of our conception without danger of a claim for partition of the Provinces of Punjab and Bengal" subsequently wrote Chaudhary Khaliqzaman, a prominent member of the Muslim League Working Committee. Sir Stafford Cripps wrote to Mr. Jinnah in his letter dated April 2. 1942, that any province which should secure 60 percent votes in Assembly for accession to India would have the right to do so. In case of its failure to secure the required percentage a party could then claim of plebiscite of the whole population of the province, which meant that the Sikhs and Hindus of the Punjab could never secure 60% votes for the accession of the Punjab to Indian Union.

The Draft Declaration greatly alarmed the Sikhs in Punjab because it meant that Punjab being a Muslim majority province could secede from the Centre and could acquire the same status as the Indian Union. In that case, the Sikhs, the Hindus were to be subjected to Muslim domination. In a memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps. the Sikhs therefore, launched a vigorous protest by stating that "their position in the Punjab has been finally liquidated." They demanded, "why should not the population to any area opposed to separation (from the Centre) be given the right to record its verdict and to

from an autonomous unit". When the Sikhs were convinced that they could not escape Pakistan, they put forward the proposal of the partition of the Punjab. It was stated in the memorandum, that if the Sikhs cannot attain their rightful position or cannot effectively protect their interest unless the Punjab is re-distributed into two province with River Ravi as forming the boundary between them." It also asserted that "By delimiting the present Provincial boundaries of the Punjab, a new province comprising of Ambala and Jalandhar Divisions with the Districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lahore be constituted." It is very significant to note how this demand of demarcation of boundary with districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lahore has been partially fulfilled by Redcliffe Award.

In order to counteract the Muslim League demand of a sovereign Muslim State, Shromani Akali Dal put forth the demand of a Sikh State, The main aim and the most prominent feature of this demand was to insist upon the partition of the Punjab. It was based on the argument that "the splitting up of the existing province of Punjab with its unnatural boundaries so as to constitute a seperate autonomous. Sikh State in these areas of the Central North Eastern and South Estern Punjab in which the overwhelming part of the Sikh population is concentrated and which because of the properties in it being mostly Sikh and its general character being distinctly Sikh, it is also the *de facto* Sikh Home Land." The proposed Sikh State was to consist of the territories of Central Punjab with Division of Lahore Jalandhar, parts of Ambala and Multan Division with the area of Sikh States and Malerkotla with certain hills in the North East."

6. Rajaji Formula

Rajagopalcharia's formula conceded the principle of the Punjab as "contiguous". The Rajaji formula stated, "a.....commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous disrticts in the North West and East of India where in Muslim population is in absolute majority." The Congress agreed to the principle that Muslim majority areas were to be given the right of self determination and they were not to be compened to join the centre. This new development, according to Master Tara Singh, vitally affected the Sikhs but there was no clarification about the position of the Sikhs. In order making their position clear Sikhs put forward the Azad Punjab Scheme. According to this scheme a new Punjab was to be carved out after separating over whelming Muslim majority areas. It was argued that it was to be an ideal province with about equal proporation of Hindus. Muslims and Sikhs. In case of partition of the country it was to remain in the Indian Union, Master Tara Singh, explained the case of this province in his letter to Sir Stafferd Cripps, "the Sikhs certainly cannot dominate in any decently large portion of the country and hence they do not demand domination. But a big province in area, population and wealth can certainly be carved out in which the Sikhs are denominated by no single community."

7. Jinnah's Rejection of Partition Proposals

Mahatma Gandhi accepted the principle of partition of the Punjab when he

wrote to Jinnah "proceed on assumption that India is not to be regarded as two or more nations but as one family consisting of many members of whom the Muslim living in North-West Zone i.e. Baluchistan, Sindh, North West Frontier Province and that of the Punjab where they are in absolute majority, desire to live in separation from the rest of India. "Proceeding on this basis Gandhi ji wrote, "the areas should be demarcated by a Commission approved by the Congress and the League. The wishes of the inhabitants of the areas demarcated through some equivalent method. If the vote is in favour of separation, it shall be agreed that these areas shall form a separate State as soon as possible after India is free from foreign domination." Mr. Jinnah, the President of Muslim League, did not agree with Gandhi ji because he was deadly against the partition of provinces. In reply he argued that he did not want separation on the basis of plebiscite in which all inhabitants could participate but he wanted the issue to be decided on the basis of "Self determination confined to the Muslim alone." He wrote to Gandhi, "We claim the right of self-determination as nation..... You are labouring under the idea that "Self determination means only of a "territorial unit"..... Ours is a case of division and carving out two independent sovereign states by way of settlement between two major nations Hindus and Muslims and not of severance or succession from any existing union". On September 25, 1944 Jinnah again wrote to Gandhiji giving reference to his proposal for partition of provinces. "If his terms were accepted and given effect to, the present boundaries of these provinces would be maimed and mutilated beyond redemption and leave us only with husk". After the failure of the talks with Gandhiji. Jinnah said to the representative of the New Chronicle., London "There is only one practical and realistic way of resolving Muslim, Hindu differences. This is to divide India into two sovereign parts-Pakistan and Hindustan by recognising whole of North Western Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sind, Punjab, Bengal and Assam as sovereign Muslim territories as now stand".

8. The 'Conspicuous part' by Dr. Iqbal

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, the prominent poet of the Punjab not only conceived the idea of separate state for the Muslim but was successful in persuading Sir Sikander, the Unionist Premier of the Punjab, to join Muslim league alongwith Muslim members of his party even though Muslim League had suffered crushing defeat in the elections of 1937. Dr. Iqbal had been persuading the Muslim members of the Unionist party to join Muslim League. The Muslim members of Unionist Party were prepared to make the following declaration "That in all matters specific to the Muslim community on all India minority they will be bound by the decision of the League". He again wrote to Jinnah when Sir Sikander joined Muslim League. A strong contingent from the Punjab is expected to attend the Lucknow session of League. The Unionist Muslims are also making preparations to attend under the leadership of Sikandar Hayat Khan". Joining Muslim League by Sir Sikandar particularly at a

time when he had a solid majority of 119 members (95 Unionist, including 74 Muslim, 13 Khalsa National Board and 11 National Progressive Party) in the house of 175 proved to be a blunder. This action of Sir Sikandar became the death knell of the Unionist Party. Unionist Party of which he was the leader as he made Muslim members of his party subject to the discipline of the Muslim League whose aims and objects were not identical with those of the Unionist Party. Sir Fazli Hussain, the founder of the Unionist Party had firm belief that any communal approach to political tangle of the Punjab was likely to disintegrate the Unionist Party which was based on mutual co-operation of all communities. It was on this account that Sir Fazli Hussain had refused Mr. Jinnah's request to join Muslim League in 1936. Sir Sikander's joining Muslim League greatly enhanced the power and prestige of that party.

The Political alliance, it has been significantly remarked, is always a case of rider and a horse, Mr. Jinnah ultimately played the rider and put the saddle, on Sir Sikander's back and reins in his mouth, howsoever inwardly he might chafe. Sir Sikander had fundamental difference with Mr. Jinnah on the future constitution of India. Sikander had framed a scheme for the Indian Federation. According to this, India was to be divided into seven zones and each zone was to have its Regional Assembly. The central Government according to this scheme was to have limited powers. In the meeting of the working Committee of the Muslim League on 4th February 1940, Sir Sikander pleaded for two hours for the acceptance of this scheme but Mr. Jinnah rejected it on the ground that Muslim League could confine its demand to the Muslim Zones only and not to the whole of India. This resulted in the Muslim Leagues's resolution of March 1940 which is known as Pakistan resolution. Sikander disliked the idea of Pakistan and he irreverently called it "Jinnistan" as he was convinced that Pakistan would mean massacre in the Punjab. He never reconciled himself to the Muslim League object of Pakistan. He stated in the Punjab Legislative Assembly on March 11, 1941: We do ask for that freedom where there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj else where. If that is what Pakistan means I will have nothing to do with it. I have said before and I repeat it once again here on the floor of this House".

9. Muslim League Influence Consolidated

After the death of Sikandar in 1942 Muslim League adopted a very firm attitude towards the Unionist Party. Mr. Jinnah asserted that the Ministry in the Punjab should be named Muslim League Coalition Ministry instead of Unionist Ministry as all the Muslim members who constituted majority in the Unionist Party were the members of Muslim League. Sir Khizar who had succeeded Sikandar, did not agree to this.

Soon after, Mr. Jinnah took a very firm attitude towards the Unionist Party and intimated the following terms of alliance to Sir Khizar Hyat Khan :-

1. That every member of Muslim League party in the Punjab Assembly should declare that he owed his allegiance solely to Muslim League Party in the Assembly and not to Unionist party or any other party.

2. That the present label of the coalition namely the Unionist Party should be dropped.
3. The name of the proposed coalition should be Muslim League Coalition Party.”

The leader of Unionist Party could not agree to such terms as it would have dealt a blow to the Unionist Party. Consequently the Muslim League members of Punjab Assembly whose strength had risen from 1 to 22 crossed over to the opposite benches just before dissolution of the Assembly for elections of 1946.

10. Muslim League Victory in Election

The elections of 1946 proved a turning point in the history of the Punjab. The Muslim League secured 73 seats of Punjab Legislative Assembly out of 83 seats contested whereas the Unionist Party won only 19 seats out of about 99 seats contested. The Muslim League polled 65.26 percent votes whereas Unionist Party polled 26.61 percent votes. The Muslim League emerged as the largest single party in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Despite Muslim League's victory in the election Khizar Hyat Khan formed Coalition Ministry with the support of Akali Party and the Congress Party. This had very adverse effect on the Muslim League. It caused frustration and consequent communal bitterness.

From the compromise point of view the Ministry of Khizar Hyat Khan with the support of the Hindu and Sikh members of the Punjab Legislature proved to be a blunder as it precluded all chances of mutual adjustment between the majority community and the minorities in the Punjab. In every Punjab Ministry since the beginning of provincial autonomy the Muslims had played a leading part as their number entitled them to do. Now for the first time a predominantly non-Muslim Government was installed in power. The Muslim League members found themselves totally excluded by their combination of Congress, Unionist and Akalis. Sore and resentful the Muslim League set out to inflame Muslim feelings. The existence of the Coalition Government made reconciliation impossible. If Sir Khizar had not formed Ministry and the League leaders had been left with some hope of office. They would have been compelled just in order to gain power to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards minorities. Once installed in power and responsible for peace and well being of the province they would have been less tempted to stir up strife.

In another way this coalition Ministry lent strength to the Pakistan. The alliance of Akalis, Congress and Unionist was considered to be a well planned conspiracy to keep Muslim League out of power. According to Pandit Moon not only the League but the whole Muslim Community felt enraged and affronted by “this unnatural and unholy alliance”. It was an example of just the thing Mr. Jinnah always feared and what had prompted the demand for Pakistan. He argued that in United India the Hindus would always succeed in this manner in attaching to themselves a section of Muslim and using them to defeat the larger interests of the community. Sore and resentful, the

Muslim League had now a real grievance to inflame Muslims to fight for Pakistan.

The elections results in 1946 had already indicated that the Muslim of the Punjab were solidly behind Muslim League and were aspiring to establish Pakistan with the Punjab as one of its provinces. In that event the Sikh and Hindu minorities of the Punjab would have been left in Pakistan. In order to avoid this, the Sikhs and the Hindus of the Punjab insisted on partition of the Punjab. They demanded the creation of a Sikh Hindu Province. Giani Kartar Singh stated "If this demand is not conceded it will mean ruin of the Hindu martial as well as commercial class under the permanent domination of those who believe in their being a separate nation. Similarly the Sikhs, 95 percent of whose world population resides in the Punjab will become politically extinct. A people who even not hundred year ago, were rulers of this land would become subservient to those whom they had conquered and ruled. This is unjust, unfair and preposterous and shall not be permitted. Therefore, by right of self-determination, by right of majority and by inherent right of a culturally homogenous people to live in their own life, the division of the Punjab is absolutely essential."

On the appointment of Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India in 1947, the British Prime Minister made a significant speech fixing the date for transfer of the Punjab politics. Sir Khizar Hyat Khan, the Unionist Prime Minister of Punjab, resigned. There broke out communal riots in the districts of Rawalpindi, Attock and Multan in which thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were killed. These riots convinced the non-Muslims that they could not be safe under the communal domination of the Muslims. On April 8, 1947 the Congress passed the following resolution : "these tragic events (communal riots in the Punjab) have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem of the Punjab by violence and coercion and no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way out which involves least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate the division of the Punjab into two provinces so that the predominantly Muslim parts may be separated from predominantly non-Muslim parts."

The Partition Plan announced on 3rd June 1947 was the basis of the Indian Independence, Act. 1947 passed by the British Parliament. The plan has the provision for the partition of Punjab and the predominantly Muslim districts of the Punjab had been mentioned in the appendix of the Plan. According to Plan, a Boundary Commission was appointed which decided the demarcation of the area to be included in the East Punjab and West Punjab.

Suggested Readings

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| 1. | Kirpal Singh | : | Genesis of the Idea of partition of Punjab". <i>Punjab Past and Present</i> . |
| 2. | Kirpal Singh | : | <i>Partition of Punjab</i> . |
| 3. | Allen Campbell Johnson | : | <i>Mission with Lord Mountbatten</i> . |
| 4. | Maulana Azad | : | <i>India Wins Freedom</i> . |

LESSON NO. 2.7

Re-Organisation of the Punjab, 1966

Indian sub-continent was divided in 1947 in two Parts, India and Pakistan, to please the communal demigods. The whole of non-Muslim population had to migrate to the Indian side of the border. Similarly a large majority of the Muslims in East Punjab chose to opt for Pakistan as their fatherland. The whole-sale loot, carnage and plunder made by the communities against each other in their communal frenzy is a sad proof of the devil is man and what havoc can it play if left unchained. The partition of the country solved our problem but created many. The unfulfilled aspirations of the Sikhs, a minority community in the pre-partition and partitioned Punjab was one of the political problems which the leadership of India had to contend with.

The partition had created a new situation. The command parties of pre-partitioned days continued to have their way in the Punjab after the independence of India, except that three pronged communal politics changed into two pronged Hindu-Sikh politics. The rehabilitation of the refugees in the areas upto Ghaggar river resulted in a Sikh majority in certain tehsils of West Punjab where as in the Princely states. Sikhs constituted a majority of the population. According to 1951 Census there were 63.3 per cent Hindus and 33.4 per cent Sikhs in Pepsu. The Sikh and Hindu percentage in the population was 49.3 and 48.8 respectively in Punjab populations combined together give the Hindus a percentage of 62.3 and Sikhs were 35%.

Soon after independence the Sikhs under the leadership of the Shiromani Akali Dal started demanding reorganisation of Punjab in which Sikhs could have a majority. This gave rise to a movement for the creation of Punjabi Suba. Baldev Raj Nayar in his book. *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, makes out four major factors that provided the basic impulse for the aspirations to political power by the Akali Dal on behalf of the Sikh community through the Punjabi suba. These factors were :

1. The nature of the Sikh community as interpreted by leaders, intellectuals and sympathisers of the Akali Dal.
2. The momentum of separatist claims before the partition of India.
3. The fear about the possible disintegration of the Sikh community resulting from religious unorthodoxy; and
4. A sense of grievance about alleged discrimination against the Sikh community.

A brief explanation of these factors is given in relation to their relevance for the demand of Punjabi Suba.

(1) The Nature of Sikh Community : The basis doctrine of Sikh faith, as

understood by the Akali leadership, has been that in Sikhism, religion and politics are not separated. Sikh religion does not advocate indifference to the political problems*. Mr. Gurnam Singh has written that (1) "there is no ultimate dichotomy in the Sikh doctrine between this world and the next, the secular and the religious, the political and the spiritual (2) the meta legal constitution of the Sikhs prescribes that "they must be approached and dealt with at a state level as a collective group and entity and not by atomising them into individual citizens." Mr. Nayar asserts that such belief of the Akali leadership provided ideological moorings for the demand of a Punjabi Suba. He feared that with the creation of Punjabi Suba there was a possibility of "the imposition of its (Sikh community) rule, as a religious-cum, political community, over other religious communities." Such a fear was based on the author's view of the nature of the demand for Punjabi Suba. To them the demand was purely communal based on the doctrine of the separate entity of the Sikhs.

(2) Pre-Independence Legacy of Akali Dal : According to Mr. Nayar the demand for Punjabi Suba flowed out of the pre-independence pattern of political claims made by the Akali Dal on behalf of the Sikh community. He believes that the demand was only an updated version of the pleas for Azad Punjab and a Sikh state made before independence. According to him the 'intensity of passion with which Akali leaders have pursued the demand for Punjabi Suba is understandable in the light of the events before independence. Akali leaders and part of the Sikh community had committed themselves to intensely to the idea of a sovereign Sikh state that they felt compelled later in independent India to search for a substitute arrangement giving the Sikhs political power in the same region.'

(3) The Threat of Religious Unorthodoxy : The third major factors which formed the main motive (but not the argument for the demand of Punjabi Suba) was the fear of growth of religious unorthodoxy among the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh, says Mr. Nayar made no secret of his motives in asking for a Punjabi Suba. The Sikhs as a distinctive community, he emphasised must be preserved and they could be preserved only in a homeland of their own. Left in their present position.....the Sikhs would be gradually absorbed by the majority community..... Prem Bhatia wrote thus "The Sikhs with their exterior symbols of distinction can last as a separate community only if they enjoy power and can extend patronage for the continuance of the symbols."

(4) Sense of Grievance about Discrimination : The Sikh leadership was spurred to demand a separate Suba where Sikh will be in a majority due to the complaints of discrimination against the Sikhs in free India. They felt that only in such a state in which the Sikhs are in an influential political position can an end be put to this discrimination and justice ensured for the Sikh Community.

* Rather, it exhorts the Sikhs to fight against injustice and political tyranny.

Khuswant Singh in his "A History of the Sikhs" (Vol. II) has also portrayed the woes and fears of the Sikhs after partition which in turn led to the demand for an autonomous state. According to him the government showed little imagination in dealing with the Sikhs. Sikh cultivators were piqued by administrative delays in granting of rehabilitation loan. Sikh trading classes of Western Punjab were more severely hit. Transport of goods by road over which the Sikhs had virtually a monopoly, was nationalised. In U.P., H.P. and Rajasthan, Sikh settlers were regarded with the suspicion natural towards more virile strangers. In Calcutta their control over the taxi and bus services had to be ended to provide employment for Hindu refugees from East Pakistan.

The chief cause of Sikh uneasiness in free India was the resurgence of Hindu revivalism, which threatened to engulf the minorities. Renascent Hinduism manifested itself in a phenomenal increase in Hindu religious organisations, the revival of Sanskrit and the ardent championing of Hindi. The Punjabi Hindus were more aggressive than the Hindus of other provinces. Organisation, notable those connected with the Arya Samaj and its political counter-part, the Jana Sangh, started a campaign to persuade Punjabi speaking Hindus to disown their mother-tongue and adopt Hindi instead.

Opposition of Punjabi Suba

Below are given the different points of view and factors regarding the origin and nature of the demand for the Punjabi Suba. The majority of the Punjabi speaking Hindus believed and made the Central leadership believe that the demand was purely communal without any merit on the linguistic basis. They had gone to the extent of doubting loyalty of the Sikhs to the Indian nation. They viewed the demand as desire of the Sikhs for an independent state. The vernacular Hindus press projected the movement for Punjabi suba as a threat to the Hindus of Punjab. They advanced the arguments of national unity and defence. Punjab being a border state, they argued, it should not be further subdivided. They further pointed out that if the Sikhs fear from the dominance of the Hindus why should not the Hindus be apprehensive of a demand which aims at the establishment of a Sikh majority province. With such mutual distrust and recriminations the bitterness between the two communities increased. The Hindus chose to oppose the demand for a Punjabi suba since they viewed it to be a Sikh communal demand.

It should be noted by the end of the 1949 there was no organised demand as such for the creation of linguistic state though views to that effect were expressed by individuals including Master Tara Singh. Emphasis was, however, laid on due safeguards in the constitution or to adopt conventions to give the Sikhs an effective position in the body politic of the state and the country. In May, 1949, the demand for special constitutional safeguards for the Sikhs was rejected by the minorities sub committee of Constituent Assembly. At this stage, the Akali leadership felt disgusted and resolved to press for a separate linguistic state. Arthur Moor, a well meaning Englishman who had gone on fast

until death with Gandhiji in November 1947, when Gandhiji protested against the withholding of certain amounts to Pakistan by the Indian Government, wrote in the weekly. "Thought" on October 29, 1949, "We must learn by our mistake. It is bad enough that we have today two nations in the Indian sub continents. Let us not do anything that might tend to the creation of a third. Let it be said in fairness to the war like Master Tara Singh that he is not demanding an independence Sikh National state. His greater concern is much the same as that of those who are clamouring for linguistic provinces, namely a redistribution of boundaries as to provide to Sikh with a viable province in which there should be Punjabi."

States Recognition Commission and the Demand for Punjabi Suba

In 1953 Government of India set up a three men commission (S.R.C.) to recognise the Indian states. The case of a Punjabi Suba was put forth by the Sikhs, particularly the Akalis. The Hindus some Sikh Harijans and the nationalist leadership opposed the demand through various memorandums to the SRC. The Hindu Maha Sabha Jana Sangh. All Parties Maha Punjab Front Samiti other Hindu organisations and even then Punjab Government pressed for the demand of Maha Punjab. The main thrust of the argument advanced by the Hindu organisations was that the demand for Punjabi Suba on the supposedly innocent basis of language was merely a camouflage for the attainment of Sikh hegemony and the establishment of a base for an eventual sovereign state.

The Commission submitted its report in the end of 1955. It rejected the case for a Punjabi Suba on the ground that "minimum measure of agreement necessary for making change in the existing set up did not exist."

Master Tara Singh denounced the report as a "decree of Sikhs annihilation." He proclaimed with some justification, "that if there had been so Sikhs, Punjabi would have been given a state of its own like other major languages recognised by the Indian constitution. The refusal to concede Punjabi State was, therefore, tantamount to discrimination against the Sikhs." Disgusted at the commission report, the Akalis launched a passive resistance movement which was opposed by the Hindu communalists by a counter campaign to "Save Hindi". Communal tension thus generated led to rioting between Hindus and Sikh in many towns.

Creation of two regions-one Punjabi and other Hindi speaking did not satisfy the Akalis and in 1960 they decided to launch an agitation to get their demand for Punjabi Suba conceded. But before the party could mature its plans, The Chief Minister Kairon ordered the arrest of the Akali Dal leaders including Master Tara Singh. The Master appointed Sant Fateh Singh to act as dictator and to continue the agitation for the Punjabi Suba. Sant Fateh Singh organised passive resistance on massive scale. According to the Akali Dal over 5,700 according to Govt. only 30,620 men courted arrest. Masters came to a head when Sant Fatah Singh went on fast upto death. The passive resistance was called off on January 9, 1961 on assurance from the government that the Sikh grievances would be looked into.

The negotiations with the government failed. Nehru was under strong pressure from communal minded Hindu Congress men who were not prepared to place the "Punjab Hindu in an inferior political position". So he refused to accept the contention that denial of a Punjabi speaking province amounted to discrimination against the Sikhs. At this Master Tara Singh undertook a fast unto death unless the Suba was accepted. But the Government did not yield. He broke his fast after 42 days. Master Tara Singh saved his life but killed his political career. Sant Fateh Singh outmanoeuvred him and eventually captured the Akali Dal and S.G.P.C.

After vanquishing his political opponent Sant Fateh Singh took up the demand for Punjabi Suba with greater vigour. He made it amply clear that his demand for Punjabi Suba was purely linguistic. He reiterated earnestly that we want a Punjabi Suba purely on linguistic basis and we are not concerned whether Sikhs are in majority or minority in the State.

With the change over from Nehru to Shastri matters came to a head. The Sant had two meetings with Shastri in August, 1965. Home Minister Nanda and Home Secretary L.P. Singh were present at these talks. The Sant made clear that his patience had been exhausted that unless the injustice done to the Sikhs by the centre by denying them a Punjabi speaking state was quickly rectified he would be forced to resort to direct action. The Sant was counselling a little more patience in the situation of bellicose attitude of Pakistan. The Sant placed the outcome of his talks with the Prime Minister before the Working Committee of his Akali Dal. As per the decision of Akali Dal Working Committee (Sant Group) the Sant declared before the Akal Takhat that he would begin his fast on 16th August and immolate himself on 25 September exactly at 9 A.M. At this grave decision the Sant was invited to Delhi for further talks. Five Akali leaders went to Delhi for talks with the P.M. But in the wake of Indo-Pak War the Akali Dal was left no choice but to ask the Sant to postpone his fast till after the cessation of the hostilities.

Following the end of the Indo-Pak conflict on 28th, Sept., 1965 Home Minister G.L. Nanda announced that a three men sub committee of the Union Cabinet would consider the question of forming a Punjabi speaking State. The sub committee consisted of Y.B. Chavan, Indira Gandhi and Mahavir Tyagi. To assist the committee a 22 member Committee of Parliament was set under the chairmanship of Hukam Singh, Speaker of the Lok Sabha. On March 22, 1966 the All India Congress under the presidency of K. Kamraj passed a resolution favouring the reorganisation of Punjab on the basis of language.

After Shastri's death Mr. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India. Her mind was already made up in favour of the Punjabi Suba demand. Therefore she overruled the objection of the leaders of Punjab Government. The Parliamentary Committee on March 18, 1966 recommended a partition of the state into Punjab and Haryana.

There are still a few things which the two states share. For example, they have a common High Court, Common Capital, Chandigarh. The Akalis are opposed to the Central management of the Bhakra dam complex. According to one author the Central control over Bhakra may stay for Bhakra dam complex is multi state complex.

Its Impact on State Politics

The reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 was carried out primarily under pressure from Sikhs in Punjabi speaking area of Punjab. Naturally it gave them sense of fulfillment and achievement and it was felt that this has given Sikhs an opportunity to join the Indian main stream. As satisfied minority communities always strengthen and enrich the nation. So it was felt that as their main demand of Punjabi Suba has been conceded their energies can be channelised for national development. But the recent happenings and agitations have belied all these hopes. As all the issues related to reorganisation were not settled immediately, the Sikhs remained dissatisfied. This has resulted into a militant protest in which even moderate Akali leaders are taking a hardline. The main demands are implementation of Anandpur Resolution which aims at more autonomy for Punjab state judicious sharing of Ravi Beas waters, handing over of Chandigarh of Punjab and many other issues which are religious in nature. Despite prolonged negotiations between the centre's emissary S. Swaran Singh and Akalis, no amicable solution is in sight so far. As population of 11,149,654 with 2,533,306 urban and 8,579,748 rural people. The Sikh constituted 55% of the population.

In Haryana the Reorganisation Act was generally welcomed but it was opposed by the Punjab Hindus generally and Sikhs particularly. The Hindus were sore at being reduced to a minority in the new Punjab. The Sikhs under Akali leadership were dissatisfied at various clauses of the Act. Master Akali Dal rejected it altogether. S. Kapur Singh stated in the Parliament that he rejects the Bill on behalf of his parent party. Shiromani Akali Dal, for three reasons, Firstly it is conceived in sin, Secondly it has been delivered by an incompetent and untrained midwife and Thirdly, it is opposed to the best interests of the nation and it will almost certainly lead to weakening of the national integration and loss faith in the integrity of those who exercise political power in the country.

The Akali resentment over the Reorganisation Act was often expressed through agitations and 'Morchas'. But the basic frame work of the Punjab Reorganisation Act survived despite a fast upto death and self immolation threat by Sant Fateh Singh on Chandigarh issue. The Chandigarh issue has claimed one precious life that of S. Darshan Singh Pheruman and Still remains unsolved to the satisfaction of the Punjab and Haryana. This was inspite of the signing of the Rajiv-Longowal accord. According to the terms of this settlement, Chandigarh was to be transferred to Punjab by January 26, 1986 and the waters dispute was to be referred to a Tribunal, headed by a Supreme

Court Judge. Haryana would get some Hindi speaking areas in lieu of Chandigarh.

According to J.C. Anand, the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 has brought about far reaching changes in the demographic and political structure of Punjab. The most important change is that the new Punjab is a Sikh majority state. The Sikhs were in a minority in the composite Punjab before reorganisation. Now they form about 60% of the State's Population. The Sikhs are in a majority in all except three districts (Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and Jullundur) of Punjab. The Hindus who form second largest community constitute about 40 percent of the population.

The special distribution of the Hindus and the Sikhs in the state has important social and political implications. The Hindus are largely concentrated in the urban areas and thinly scattered in the rural areas and those in the urban areas are largely scheduled caste Hindus. The Sikhs dominate the rural areas and form the main land owning class. Thus the differences of outlook and interest between the urban and rural population are sharpened by distrust generated by religious difference between them.

Since the political behaviour of the common man in Punjab is considerably influenced by the political parties, it needs to be studied. Akalis have gained the most by reorganisation. In the composite Punjab, the Akalis could never hope to win a majority of seats. In fact, in previous elections, they won their seats from the Punjabi speaking areas only now forming the state of Punjab. An analysis of election results since the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 reveals that 62 out of the total of 117 constituencies have always been returning Sikh legislators while there are only 19 constituencies from where Hindu candidates have been winning. The remainder are mixed in the sense that they have sometimes been returning a Hindu and sometimes a Sikh legislator. The numerical strength of the Sikhs in the Punjab legislation Assembly has been about 70%.

According to Anand the reorganisation has also benefited the Communist Parties—The C.P.I. and C.P.I. (M) for their traditional mass base had been the Punjabi Speaking areas.

The Congress, which had been drawing its support from both Hindi speaking and the Punjabi speaking areas of composite Punjab, stood to lose by the reorganisation of Punjab. Previously the Congress could balance its losses in one region by its gain in the other but in reorganised Punjab it had to compete with the Akalis almost equal terms for winning a majority in the legislature.

The political party to suffer the most was the Jana Sangh, which with its limited appeal confined only to urban Hindus, could never hope to improve its electoral prospects in Punjab. At best it could play the role of a junior partner in coalition governments led by the Akalis.

The reorganisation of Punjab gave to the Sikhs a majority in the new state but

did not fully satisfy the Akali's. It did not solve the language problem for a considerable section of the Hindus, mostly urban Hindus, continued to claim that they constituted a Hindi-speaking linguistic minority. Nor did it lead immediately to any change in the communal outlook and style of politics. It has not so far resulted in a cultural fusion making for a common Punjabi culture. But the reorganisation did go a long way in setting up constitution structure and a frame work which was regarded by almost all as a permanent arrangement. And in so doing it created objective conditions in which all such differences as existed in the Punjabi speaking region composite Punjab would get adjusted or resolved with the passage of time. Punjab has been able to solve many of its problems during the year of its existence and until recently it seemed that new focus of politics is on economic rather than communal issues. But recent events have shown that communal monster is once again raising its head and economic issues are not getting due importance. The whole attention of the government is centred on restoring law and order in the state and thus giving confidence to an average citizen that life is safe and secure.

Books Recommended

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| 1. | Iqbal Narayan | : | State Politics in India |
| 2. | Kailash Gulati | : | The Akalis, Past and Present |
| 3. | Baldev Raj Nayyar | : | Minority Politics in Punjab |
| 4. | Khushwant Singh | : | A History of Sikhs |
| 5. | Ajit Singh Sarhadi | : | Punjabi Suba |