

# INDIA COMMITS SUICIDE

by G.S.Dhillon.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study seeks to make an analysis of the Punjab history since 1947 leading to the Dharam Yudh Morcha, the Operation Blue Star, the Operation Wood Rose and the Accord of 1985. The Moicha and the demolition of Akal Takhat during the attack on the Golden Temple are major landmarks in the history of Punjab. We shall examine the events that led to the demolition and the implications there of, whether or not these are going to leave a major scar on the life of Punjab, giving a turn to history. No doubt, these events are too recent for any proper historical analysis. But a watchful historian can certainly exercise his judgement and discern the broad trend of policies and events that have taken place in the last four decades. The need for a perceptive record of the forces and interests that have shaped the socio-political happenings necessary, especially because many of the reports and writings on the subject are, to a great extent, superficial, journalistic or an evident attempt to camouflage and distort the realities of the situation and motives. Emotions have blurred facts. For example, issues of water, territory, language, etc., simple inter-state controversies, became matters of confrontation between the Hindus and the Sikhs. All this has led to mutual mistrust and driven the two communities to develop antagonistic attitudes and to take almost intractable positions. It is true that a historian's job is considerably hampered owing to the nonavailability of authentic information especially from Government records on the related issues. The media coverage could on that account be considered hardly fair or accurate. Quite often, it has either shown the influence of communal politics or merely endorsed Government policies. Some aspects of the Punjab crisis have been blown out of proportion, some others under reported and still others completely overlooked or omitted

Because of the black laws and their ruthless operation, it has not been possible for the Sikhs even to counter the barrage of hostile propaganda against them. The present study attempts to lay bare the facts

**The Sikhs:** Here it is necessary to state who the Sikhs are and what they stand for. Sikhism has its own peculiar features. It differs from the earlier religious traditions in its basic postulates. It has a distinctive world-view; its conception of God, its unique code of ethics and its separate tradition give it a distinct religious personality. In Sikhism, there is no place for the doctrine of the world being √

Mithya (illusion) and the resultant renunciation, withdrawal, escapism or pessimism. Sikhism is not an inward looking salvation system. The world of sense and form is

looked upon as true and meaningful in which religion could be an effective vehicle of promoting the values of social harmony, love, equality, freedom and brotherhood of man.

In the integrated vision of the Sikh Gurus there is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the empirical realms of human existence. Life is one whole and cannot be segregated into separate compartments, religious, social or political. This view finds expression in the doctrine of and the consequent ideal of Sant-Sipahi.

In fact the Miri-Piri doctrine (the combination of the spiritual and the empirical life of man) is a fundamental of the Sikh religion. The philosophy of the Guru Granth, is entirely different from the other worldly, the Ahimsic

(pacifist) and the devotional systems of India. The role of the last six Gurus, their martyrdom and their anti approach follows exactly this fundamental of Sikhism. The Indian religious tradition laid stress on asceticism, monasticism and Sanyas as the means of attaining salvation. The Sikh Gurus completely disapproved of the practice of those who were unwilling to fight the battle of life or withdrew from the world for the purpose of cultivating spirituality.

Guru Nanak clearly laid down that 'one gets not to God by despising the world' The God centred lives truthfully while a house holder. According to the life affirming faith of the Gurus, a religious man cannot shun his family obligations and 'social responsibilities.

In a religious milieu, marked with negative and complacent trends, the Guru laid down for man a new religious path commending universal love and brotherhood of man without distinction of caste and creed. The Guru set in motion a new pattern of religious experience, in which man could find his complete self expression and fulfilment. With his emphasis on the ideals of love and service, the Guru kindled the spark in human nature that inspired men to acquire a sense of purpose and make sacrifices for the cause of truth, justice and righteousness. It was this faith that the ten Gurus lived for over a period of two centuries. It enabled the Sikh community to grapple with the grave socio-political challenges over the centuries and acquire a glorious heritage of honesty, chivalry, sufferings and martyrdoms. The religious faith of the Sikhs never wavered even in worst days of their persecution. It was the Sikhs, who after hundreds of years reversed the course of history by forcing the invaders back to their lands and, once for all, sealing the vulnerable borders in the North-West against all future invasions.

Even later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sikhs played a pioneering role in the country's struggle for freedom, out of all proportions to their small numbers. The first two revolts against the British, the Kuka revolt and Ghadr rebellion were almost wholly manned by the Sikhs. Out of the 2,175 martyrs for country's freedom 1,557 or 75 per cent were Sikhs. Out of 2,646 sent to Andamans for life sentence, 2,147 or 80 per cent were Sikhs. Out of the 127 Indians who were sent to the gallows by the British, 92 or 80 percent were Sikhs. In the Indian National Army led by Subhash Chander Bose, 60 per cent of the soldiers were Sikhs". Whenever it has been a question of fighting for a righteous cause or a question of fighting for human rights and freedoms, the Sikhs have always been in the vanguard.

In the economic field the Sikh peasantry led Punjab in the forefront of agricultural revolution. As a result, it became the most productive state and earned the distinction of

being the food bowl of the country. Again, it was the progressive Sikh farmers who converted the dry or most inhospitable regions in the neighbouring States of Rajasthan and U.P. into fertile lands. Whether it was in Layallpur, Montgomery or Sargodha (now in Pakistan) or in India or abroad in farflung countries like U.S.A., Canada or Australia, Sikhs have proved to be the best colonizers and migrants wherever new grounds had to be broken. The Sikh spirit of enterprise has been in evidence in all fields of life, whether agriculture, industry or trade. Their martial prowess has made the Sikhs the finest of soldiers. Till independence, they constituted about 25% of the Indian army.

Thus, the Sikhs stand apart from others in terms of the tenets of their faith, extroversion, dynamism, a spirit of enterprise, a progressive outlook and historical antecedents. Love for freedom and justice has been the basic element of the Sikh psyche. They have, on that account developed a tradition of struggle and sacrifice for the cause of righteousness. The daily Sikh prayer ends with the invocation 'Sarbat da bhala' (welfare of all). In the Sikh theology Dharam stands for righteousness, and Dharam Yudh stands for a fight for righteousness, not a holy war, as misinterpreted by many. Their faith and training have conditioned them to a new way of life and given them a fervour and single mindedness of purpose which determines their ethos and functioning.

The tradition of suffering and martyrdom forms a part of the Sikh heritage. A Sikh child is brought up on the tales of sacrifice and valour of men like Taru Singh, Baba Deep Singh, Bhai Mani Singh, Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phula Singh and others. He hears how the Sikhs humbled the pride of dreaded Pathans and Afghans through feats of endurance displayed by Sikh armies who marched for days on end, 20 to 30 miles a day, while carrying their full pack on their backs. He is told that a Sikh soldier considered it a disgrace if he suffered a wound on his back. Baba Kharak Singh a veteran freedom fighter who was fully nurtured in the Sikh tradition once remarked : "In the fight for India's freedom if you find a bullet in my back, do not count me as one amongst the Sikhs of the Gurus and do not cremate my

dead body according to the Sikh rites. A disciple of the great Gurus is an ideal saint-soldier and is supposed to fight in the vanguard and face the bullets in the chest and not in the back, and we the Sikhs shall never allow any foreigner to rule over our Motherland, and we shall brook no injustice."

He said this while presiding over the All India Sikh Conference, held in Lahore, in 1929.

The Sikh Gurdwaras have a basic significance in relation to the crystallisation of the Sikh tradition. They have not only served as repositories of the Sikh faith but have also become the rallying centres of socio-political activities of the community, in keeping with the Sikh doctrine of Miri-Piri or the inseparability of religion and politics.

The role of the Gurdwaras in guiding the lives of the Sikhs is even greater than the role of the family. Realising the vital significance of Darbar Sahib as the focal point of the Sikh faith, power and invulnerability, the invaders repeatedly made it the target of their attack in order to demoralise the Sikhs and sap their strength and determination.

Here it may not be out of place to refer to the democratic and republican character of the Sikh society which has largely shaped Sikh history and tradition. In the peculiar socio-

religious condition of the Sikh community there is very little gap between the leader and the masses. It is the moral stature and character and not wealth, prosperity or caste that make the leaders acceptable to the masses. It is well known that Master Tara Singh who because of his high character remained the undisputed leader of the Sikh community for four decades, lost his position as soon as he showed some minor infirmity in continuing his attempted fast.

**Background :** In view of the unique historico-political position of the Sikhs, the British had always acknowledged them as the third political entity in the country, with whom questions like the transfer of power had to be discussed and finalised. The Sikhs were entitled to an equal and honourable place in the Indian subcontinent as the second important minority and as a distinct religious and cultural community with an ethos and tradition—

of its own. In fact, the martyrdoms of the Sikhs are as intimately connected with the land of Punjab as the soil of Jerusalem with that of the Jews. For, in each case the soil is soaked with the blood of its martyrs. The Congress also clearly recognised and accepted this position, with both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru assuring satisfactory autonomy or status to the Sikhs.

Before independence, the Indian National Congress had consistently committed itself to the concept of unilingual states with a federal structure for free India, and had pledged constitutional safeguards for the minorities. A Committee was formed by the Congress, in 1928, under the Chairmanship of Moti Lal Nehru, to prepare a framework of the constitution for free India. In its report, the Committee upheld the principle of communal reservation for the Muslims, but denied the same to the Sikhs and other minorities. When Sikh leaders expressed apprehensions concerning their future in India, the Congress party, in its annual session at Lahore, in 1929, passed a resolution which said that “no future constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction to the Sikhs.”

Such categorical assurances were repeatedly held out to the Sikhs, right upto the partition of the country. At a function in Gurdwara Sis Ganj, which was attended by Gandhi, a Sikh leader, Madhusudan Singh, voiced the fears of the Sikhs that the Congress, once in power, might go back on its assurances to the Sikhs. Gandhi, in a bid to allay the fears of the Sikhs, declared, “I ask you to accept my word and the Resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual, much less a community. Let God be the witness of the bond that binds me and the Congress to you. I venture to suggest that nonviolent creed of the Congress is the surest guarantee of good faith and our Sikh friends have no reason to fear that it would betray them. For, the moment, it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover, the

Sikhs are a brave people. They know how to safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms, if it should ever come to that. Again, Pandit Nehru declared at a press conference, on the eve of the All India Congress Committee meeting at Calcutta, in July, 1946, that “the brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the North, wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of free-dom.”

- Finally, Nehru, while moving the executive Resolution at the opening session of the Constituent Assembly in 1946 envisaged, “the Indian Union as an Independent Sovereign Republic, comprising autonomous units with residuary powers, wherein the ideal of social, political and economic democracy would be guaranteed to all sections of the people and adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities and backward communities and areas.”

Nehru described the Resolution as “a declaration, a pledge and an undertaking before the world, a contract of millions of Indians and therefore in the nature of an oath which we mean to keep.”

The Congress leaders did their best to win the confidence of the Sikhs by giving them solemn assurances that no future constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction or autonomy to the Sikhs. It was in this background, and on the basis of concrete assurances given to them that, in 1947, the Sikhs threw their lot with the other people of India, hoping that the commitments made to them would be fulfilled and they would be able to maintain their identity and chalk out their own development in the future.

A significant event indicating the Sikh approach happened in May, 1947, where the representatives of the three communities had gone to negotiate with the British government about the future set up of India. When the Congress and the Muslim League failed to strike any mutual understanding and Jawahar Lal Nehru decided to return to India, some influential members of the British government made a specific approach to Baldev Singh, the Sikh representative, that he might stay on so that a proposal could be framed and finalised under which the Sikhs instead of being a permanent minority should have a political status enabling them “to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into the current of world history.”

This, evidently, involved a break with the Congress, and a vivisection of India with consequent setback to the overall Indian struggle for independence. Such a step, though clearly in the interests of the Sikh community as a whole, could not be in the overall interests of the country. Baldev Singh deliberated over the matter, had a word with Jawahar Lal and declined the offer. It is in this context that he gave the historic statement saying : “The Sikhs have no demand to make on the British except the demand that they should quit India. Whatever political rights and aspirations the Sikhs have they shall have them satisfied through the goodwill of the Congress and the majority community.”

The statement is of crucial significance, because in retrospect, it has been considered to be both a betrayal and a blunder. While one contention is that the statement being in line with earlier Sikh thinking, policies and political struggle against the British, Baldev Singh’s decision was logical and in good faith. But the opponents of this decision criticise it on three important scores. First, that Baldev Singh had gone there as a

representative of the Sikhs and not of the Congress and his primary concern should have been to secure the future interests of the community which he failed to do even while the opportunity to do so was offered. Second, that the the decision he made was clearly against the interests of the Sikhs since he consulted Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was obviously concerned more with the Hindu interests than with the future of the Sikhs as such. Third, that the events after 1947 have established the truth of the second reason that Jawahar Lal Nehru was primarily concerned with Hindu interests and not the interests of other communities. It is in this context that the argument is that Baldev Singh not only displayed a complete lack of political vision and foresight but also made almost an irretrievable political blunder, thereby giving a major set back to the future growth and development of the Sikh society. In fact, they relate the post©1947 struggle of the Sikhs as entirely due to this suicidal step of Baldev Singh. Whether it was a blunder or a betrayal or both is just a matter of opinion.

### **Nationalism Betrayed**

In retrospect, it is not difficult to identify the different interests and forces working before 1947. So far as the Hindus were concerned, their anxiety was that India should remain preferably as one country where they, being the preponderant majority, would naturally be the dominant rulers to determine its policies, growth and development. The trump card of the Congress was that its organisation, apart from having some representatives of the Muslim minority in India, had the advantage of securing the association of the Sikhs, the third important community in the Punjab, and the morally motivated group of 'Khud-i-Khidmatgars, who continuously represented the Muslim province of N.W.F. As it is, so far as the Sikhs were concerned, because of their demographic spread out, they did not want the partition of Punjab or of India since otherwise their population would have been badly split. The 'Khud-i-Khidmatgars' were traditionally and emotionally opposed to the Muslim League and for that matter had always been close to the Congress in opposing any partition of the country. But Jawahar Lal's backing out from its commitment on the Cripps Formula opened the eyes of the Muslim League and Jinnah's insistence on the partition of the country became emphatic.

Because it became clear that once independence was granted, the Hindu majority would not stick to its commitments and would enforce its will in the future framing of the country's constitution and running its affairs. Accordingly, thereafter Jinnah's concern was to secure the partition of India and to have the border line of its Pakistan drawn as far east as possible. This he could do only if he could win over the Sikhs and for this end he went to the farthest end by offering a virtual  $\checkmark$  carte blanche to the Sikhs. Meetings were arranged through Maharaja of Patiala and otherwise to negotiate a written understanding and

commitment with the Sikh leaders to secure and safeguard their status and interests in Pakistan. Similarly, some British administrators, for geographic, linguistic and other reasons, were keen and anxious that there should be no division of the old Punjab which was an integrated unit and that it would be calamitous to break that unity. For this end, Panderal Moon tried his utmost till the final decision for the partition of India.

A few British officers also wanted the Sikhs to join hands with the Muslims. Lt. General Francis Tukar points out, "We wished to see the Sikhs put wholly under Pakistan. But the Sikhs opted to remain with Indian Union and suffered much due to partition of the country."

On the other hand, the Congress while it was asking for a united India, and Mahatma Gandhi even stated that partition would take place on his dead body, appears internally out for the same game as that of the Muslim League except that its anxiety was that in cooperation with the Sikhs it should have the Indian boundary as far west as possible.

The above analysis makes one thing quite clear, namely, that neither—the Muslims, nor the British nor the Sikhs, nor the 'Khud-i-Khidmat gars' were for the partition of the country. And, as it is the last two bodies were the greatest opponents of the partition of the country.

Ultimately, the Congress succeeded in its goal. For without any written agreement with the Sikhs, it was able to secure their whole hearted association with it. That its plea for a unified India was just superficial became clear when Mahatma Gandhi leading his associates supported and pleaded for the partition of India, leaving Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 'Frontier Gandhi' and his associates 'Khud-i-Khidmatgars', nationalist Muslims led by Maulana Abul Kalam—

### **Azad and the Sikhs stunned and betrayed.√**

On this, Maulana Azad wrote, "But when I met Gandhiji again, I received the greatest shock of my life, for I found that he too had changed .. What surprised and shocked me even more was that he began to repeat the arguments which Sardar Patel had already used. For over two hours I pleaded with him but could make no impression on him. In despondency I said at last, 'If even you have now adopted these views, I see no hope of saving India from catastrophe.'"

This bitterness at the Congress betrayal and character was expressed by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan later when he said, "We Pathans never wanted any partition, nor did I ever agree to it. I fought for a united independent India. We ourselves wanted Pakhtoonistan

within India for Pushto speaking people. We gave 100 per cent support to the Congress right upto the end. I opposed my Muslim brothers in Muslim League and firmly stood by the Congress to win freedom for all Indians. But the Congress let us down. The Congress had promised to keep India united and for us Pathans it had supported our demand for Pakhtoonistan.”

a home for Pushto speaking people. We had fully trusted Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Ji and Sardar Patel, but when they should have stood firm and united to achieve nothing less than complete independence for a united India for which we had all fought so long, the Congress accepted partition and deserted us. What a tragedy ! The result was that you in India became independent and we Pathans are still slaves. You see that I am still fighting for Pakhtoonistan and live in exile.”

There is an important lesson of negotiations by the Indian leaders with the British government before independence, namely, that majorities would hardly be considerate towards the interests of the minorities whom they are willing to let down, if it should serve the majority interests. This was the indication when Jawahar Lal Nehru made the statement about the Cripps Formula relating to Assam. Jinnah learnt the lesson and never again wavered regarding his Pakistan demand. On the other hand, the Sikhs in regard to Punjab and Pakhtoons who wanted Pakhtoonistan in regard to N.W.F.P. consistently supported the Congress to the last for a united India. But both communities felt badly betrayed by Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian leaders. J.N. Sahni, a veteran editor of the ‘Hindustan Times’ says, “The letting down of the Red Shirts and the Sikhs was not an act of carelessness on the part of the Congress leaders nor even a blunder, but an act of gross and unpardonable betrayal.”

The disillusionment which started with Gandhi’s acceptance of partition became complete in 1949 when the Indian Constitution was framed and later when Master Tara Singh had a meeting regarding a linguistic Punjabi speaking state with the Indian leaders

Accepting assurances, the Akali members of the Legislature—

met separately on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1947 and voted for the division of Punjab. Thus the Sikhs threw their lot with the Hindu India, thereby relinquishing their bargaining powers, as the third party in the political life of the country. We have already indicated the outstanding sacrifices, disproportionate to their small numbers, made by the Sikhs for the freedom and cause of the country during the long period of India’s struggle for independence, but a ruinous step of self effacement was taken by the Sikh community and its leaders, when the decision of partitioning the country had to be made. Everyone is aware of the Muslim and the British anxiety to keep Punjab intact and to partition it on Hindu Muslim lines. The interests of the Sikhs, because of their demographic distribution and economic future, as also projected in their Azad Punjab Scheme, required that Punjab should have remained undivided. It was obvious that division would be suicidal for the Sikhs. Because not only forty per cent of the Sikh population would be left in Muslim Punjab but a major part of their agricultural and economic



interests, which are the backbone for the well being of any community, would be completely jeopardised. Following the assurances of the Congress leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, particularly in the Constituent Assembly in 1946, the Sikh legislators in the Punjab Assembly voted for the partition of Punjab,√

a step which was, and actually turned out to be, ruinous for the community. Had the Sikh representatives in the Assembly voted with the Muslim members instead of the Hindus, the boundaries of India would have been near Delhi and not near Waghah,

But what actually happened was even worse than the position anticipated. Partition brought a tale of horror, and suffering, vivisectioning the Sikhs just in the middle. They suffered far greater losses than the Hindus and the Muslims. About forty per cent of the Sikhs were rendered homeless.

Almost of the total Sikh population was brutally massacred.√

The Muslims regarded the Sikhs as their main enemies, for they were virile opponents who were bitterly opposed to the partition of the Punjab on the ground that their religious places of historical importance were situated in West Punjab and their canal irrigated lands were also there.√

G.D. Khosla, Chairman of the Fact Finding Organisation set up by the Government of India, observes : “The Sikhs had opposed the partition of India with even greater vigour than the Hindus, because they felt as a community they could only expect disaster in Pakistan; it was therefore, against the Sikhs that the spearpoint of the Muslim League attack was first aimed. In the March riots, the Sikhs of Rawalpindi faced annihilation and a large number of them left the district. Within a few weeks, almost the entire Sikh population (save those who were killed or converted) had migrated from the district.”

The looting and burning of villages, conversions, and murders soon convinced the Sikhs of West Punjab that choice before them was to be killed, converted or to be expelled from their homeland. By the first week of September, it was clear that the entire Sikh population had to quit West Punjab.

About seventy percent of the fertile, irrigated and rich lands of the community were left in Pakistan which they had to leave. Prosperous colonies developed by an industrious and capable peasantry had to be abandoned. Uprooted peasants had to start life anew on lands far less productive and greatly reduced in area. As against an area of 67 lakh acres of land, equivalent to 39,35,131 standard acres, abandoned by the Hindu©Sikh landholders in West Pakistan, only 47 lakh acres, equivalent to 24,48,830

standard acres, were available in East Punjab and PEPSU. The gap in area to the extent of 20 lakh acres, or 14,86,301 standard acres, i.e. 38 per cent of the total area abandoned, precluded possibilities of full compensation being given to the displaced landholders. The gap in area was bad enough, but the position was actually much worse when we consider factors like fertility of the soil and means of irrigation. Our land owners left 43 lakh acres of irrigated land as against 13 lakh acres of irrigated area left by the Muslims. Out of the irrigated area left in West Pakistan. 22 lakh acres were perennially irrigated, as against 4 lakh acres of such land left by Muslims in East Punjab and PEPSU.

In the pre-partitioned Punjab, the Sikhs paid forty per cent of the total land revenue, which meant that they were possessing that much percentage of—land before 1947. In order to make the distribution of land equitable, a scheme of graded cuts was introduced (even upto 95% in case of bigger land holdings)

and the rich and prosperous Sikh community was reduced to the level of other Indian communities. The urbanite Sikh was even more adversely hit than the peasant. Urban property left behind by the Muslims was infinitesimal compared with what the Sikhs left in Pakistan. But the actual position after partition is thus stated by Sir Campbell Johnson, “The Muslims had won everything they had hoped for. The leaders of the Muslim League, and the leaders of the Congress had won, in one case, not all that they had hoped for, but in the final analysis more than either had expected. The Sikhs had lost everything they valued, their homes, their property, irrigated rich lands and their holy places. The Sikhs realised that no one seemed to care very much as to what happened to minorities so long as the Congress and the Muslim League were satisfied. Jinnah probably did not care, while Nehru and Patel were not particularly interested “√

The five rich rivers that gave the Punjab its name were split, leaving a truncated homeland for the Sikhs. It was the worst migration that took place under the threat of murder and massacre. Actually more than six per cent of the Sikh population inhabiting West Punjab lost their lives before they could escape to East Punjab. In addition, their most sacred shrines, Mankana Sahib and seven hundred others, were left in Pakistan which became a foreign land. This is the background and the reality of the step of self-imposed mutilation which the community decided to take in the interests of the country as a whole.—

It is common knowledge that Jinnah tried to woo the Sikhs to remain in Pakistan by offering them written guarantees about their political status and interests. The story goes that he emphasised that the Sikhs had known the

Hindus only as fellow slaves and not as masters. The facts of political life in India became painfully disillusioning for the Sikhs. It is unfortunate that prejudice against the Sikhs at the highest Central circles started exhibiting itself even while millions of the Sikh masses were still migrating from Pakistan to East Punjab and were either roaming about rootless or were seeking shelter in refugee camps. Many of them were still coming in escorted or unescorted groups. Many still were sheltered in refugee camps in Pakistan and India and thousands were penniless living with distant relatives and friends with hardly any shelter from rain and sun. The Government, according to Kapur Singh, I.C.S., who was a Deputy Commissioner in one of the districts in Punjab, issued secret instructions in October, 1947, to the effect that “without reference to the law of the land the Sikhs in general, and Sikh migrants in particular, must be treated as a criminal tribe.”√

- Kapur Singh protested and refused to comply with the instructions and consequently he had to pay a heavy price for his stand.”—

Within a year or so when Master Tara Singh approached the Central leaders, for the creation of a linguistic Punjabi state, he was deeply disappointed. Sardar Patel, the then Home Minister of India told him very curtly, “I am ready to concede it. But you will have only that much land as falls to your share on the grounds of population. So Punjab area would be halved. And you will have to take back all the Sikhs from the rest of India. Now you form 17% of the army. They will have to be dismissed. Are you prepared for it?”

Master Tara Singh was stunned into silence. The authenticity of the above statement has been vouched for by no less a person than the late Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh.”

It clearly shows the new approach of the Central leaders towards the Sikhs and how they had gone back on their words and solemn promises immediately after Independence and as soon as their purpose had been served. This meant that while the commitment of the Congress for the linguistic States was valid for other parts of the country, it was heretical for the Sikhs to demand it for Punjab. Because according to Sardar Patel, justice and fairness demanded that after the creation of a truncated Punjab every Sikh in India, including every serving Sikh, had to be driven or dismissed—

sed to find his place or sustenance in the puny Punjab, which he proposed. It gives an insight into the minds of those with whom the Sikhs had to deal with for the last over forty years and the dismal designs that form the basis of all Central thinking and policies. Here it is necessary to state that this new policy towards the Sikhs was not confined only to Patel but was evidently part of a collective Hindu thinking of the Congress leaders because Indira Gandhi herself has stated that her father Jawahar Lal Nehru had been “strongly opposed to the idea of Punjabi State.”

This complete change of policy and attitude of the Central leaders was also lamentably conveyed by Master Tara Singh in a public speech that he made at Amritsar after his meeting with the Central leaders concerning the demand for reservation to the Sikh

Scheduled Castes. The subsequent history of Central approach towards Punjab and its demands is a virtual unfolding of the above policy and objectives of Indian leadership.

With a long saga of sorrow and sufferings and a magnificent record of sacrifices, the Sikhs had expected the Congress leaders to give them a fair deal after Independence. But the post-Independence Congress leadership completely ignored all their undertakings and promises held out to them. The radical change in the Central thinking was crystallised in the draft proposals of the Constituent Assembly, formally circulated to the State Assemblies for eliciting their reaction and view. All the Sikh representatives in the Constituent Assembly, and all those who had earlier unani-mously voted for the partition of India at Lahore and whose support alone was decisive in pushing the Indian border to Wagah, were bitterly disillusioned. They unanimously reiterated their stand for a federal constitution saying that “the declared policy of the Congress from the outset was that India is to be Union of autonomous States, and each unit is to develop in its own way, linguistically, culturally and socially. Of course, Defence, Communications and Foreign Affairs must and should remain the Central subjects. To change the basic policy now is to run counter to the repeated creed of the Congress. In the considered opinion of the Akali Dal (they being members of the Akali Dal as well), residuary powers should be with the States.”

But in 1950, the Congress completely backed out from its promises to the Sikhs and its own declared objective of having a purely Federal Constitution. Instead, Constitution leaning heavily towards a unitary form of Government was formed. Thus, the Akali members vehemently and unmistakably declared in the Constituent Assembly that, “the Sikhs do not accept the Constitution; the Sikhs reject this Constitution Act.”

The main reason for rejecting the Constitution was that the Sikhs had expected the Congress leaders to honour the pledges given by them before and on the eve of Independence. Thus, the Sikh members declined to append their signatures to the Constitution, indicating their categorical rejection. Hukam Singh, a Sikh representative in the Constituent Assembly wrote :— “Today India is almost free of foreign domination and we pride ourselves on the freedom of our country. But the real content of our freedom can only be felt if the minorities are given due protection and provided safeguards for the development of their culture, language and religion.”

The above events and the motives taken into consideration while framing the constitution and verbal rejection of the Punjabi Suba show unmistakably that an entirely new chapter of approach towards the Sikhs had started. The subsequent events have to be analysed to see whether the new approach

towards the Sikhs was of democratic equals and of sister communities in the country, or of masters and slaves as had been indicated by Jinnah. For the understanding of the new policy, it would be very relevant to quote the famous view of Machiavelli in his 'The Prince', which he gave the purpose of ruling those dominions who prior to their ; occupied, were, "accustomed to live at liberty under their laws." He says, "there are three ways of holding them. ; first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in : the third is to allow them, to live under their own laws, ; tribute of them, and creating within the country a government composed of a few who will keep it friendly to you. Because this government, being created by the Prince, knows that it cannot exist without his friendship and protection, and will do all it can to keep them. What is more, a city used to liberty can be more easily held by means of its citizens than in any other way, if you wish to preserve it."

After discussion, the author concludes, "But in republics there is greater life, greater hatred, and more desire for vengeance; they do not and cannot cast aside the memory of their ancient liberty, so that the surest way is either to lay them waste or reside in them."√

Any analysis by the historian about the future events in Punjab has to keep the two opposing approaches in view, the one announced before 1947, envisaging a plural society of sister communities living under the principle of unity in diversity, while maintaining their individual, religious, cultural or linguistic identities and the second of rulers and the ruled as suggested by Machiavelli. The historian has to see how the implications and import of the decisions and the events synchronise with one approach or the other. Hindustani"

Hindi decision and its effects : This cultural and ideological shift under Jawahar Lal Nehru epitomises a historic shift giving up, once for all, the policies and aims of national integration by promoting the aim of a multicultural plural society, instead of owning the Hindu cultural ideals which was the urge of the majority community in the country. In fact, the future history of the country whether in Punjab, South or the East very clearly lays bare how this change in ideals has created the various problems and conflicts including social, political and economic. The underlying cause of most of those conflicts can very well be seen as a clash between the Congress ideals before 1947 and the acceptance of new ideology, which the change from Hindustani to Hindi represented. The irony is that the leaders who had strongly represented the first idea were the very persons who later, for reasons best known to them, gave it up. We are referring to Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and the other Congress leaders who first enthusiastically

espoused the ideal of one India and later gave it up in the Congress meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1947. An equally tragic event was Jawahar Lal's giving up the idea of Hindustani and accepting Hindi. For the historian, the task is not to pronounce a value judgement as to why certain decisions were necessary or inevitable but to assess the new forces or trends the change represented, the logical implications of those decisions and the natural occurrence of the problems and consequences to which those led. The Congress made this change in policy and new decision quite deliberately, but it became disastrous for the country and the overall credibility and character of the party. Owing to its clear consideration for the angle and the implications of the new ideology which it had now accepted, the Congress ceased, hence forward, to be a national party commanding the respect and confidence of all communities of the country. The post-independence Congress bore no resemblance to the pre-independence Congress which had fought for the freedom of the country. The Congress associated with the sentiments, emotions and values that were the cardinal principles of its policy at the time of India's struggle for independence, lost its moral standing and status, when it accepted the partition of the country. There is however a strong opposite view. Authorities like Moulana Azad, Ambedkar, H. M. Seervai, N. Sahni, and others state that actually it gave up nothing but only exposed the reality, shedding its external veneer. In this context Ambedkar's remarks are revealing : "The only difference between the Congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha is that the latter is crude in its utterances and brutal in its actions while the Congress is politic and polite. Apart from this fact, there is no other difference between the Congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha." While Nehru was otherwise known for his flexibility, on the Punjab issue he remained stubbornly dogmatic and rigid. This became the future policy. The Hindu trend of the Congress came evident in the framing of the Constitution itself. The Congress was aware of the Gandhi-Ambedkar tussle and the mass conversion of Hindu scheduled castes to Buddhism, though their conversion to Sikhism was forestalled by Gandhi.√

Therefore, to ensure that the scheduled caste Hindus desisted from conversion to other religions and remained in the Hindu fold, they confined the concession of reservation for scheduled castes only to the Hindu castes. This had a dual objective, first, that scheduled castes would stick to the Hindu religion and, second, that the same lower castes in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism would revert to the fold of Hinduism, in order to have benefits of reservation. Thus, the scheduled castes were taken out of the list of minorities and made a part of Hindus. The Sikhs understood this move and it was with great difficulty that they were able to have Mazhabi, Ramdasia, Kabirpanthi and Sikligar castes of the Sikhs covered by the clause of reservation.

The first tragic and communal impact of the decision to own Hindi in place of Hindustani in the Punjab appeared in the 1951 census. In Punjab, the leadership was entirely with the Congress, Hindu ministers and leaders influenced the Hindus to declare Hindi as their mother tongue instead of Punjabi.

The result, though ridiculous, became evident because the public in Punjab declared their mother tongue purely on communal lines. In the towns and cities, where the Hindus were a preponderant majority, the returns showed Hindi as the language of the people, with surrounding rural areas where Sikhs were in majority, declaring Punjabi as their mother tongue. It was evident to every one that the returns had been communalised and Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru strongly deprecated its evident falsity. But little did he realise that it was the logical consequence of the policy decision he had made of accepting Hindi in place of Hindustani as a national language. And the further tragedy is that instead of trying to learn from the blunder and rectify the position, he accentuated the tragedy by stubbornly refusing to form a Punjabi Suba, thereby increasing the divide between the two communities. If the Punjabi Suba had been formed in 1955 along with other linguistic states, the integration between the Hindu and Sikh population would have been promoted without any of the subsequent problems. What we mean to stress is that the 1951 census which represented the Hindu-Sikh divide was the direct result of the earlier tragic Hindustani Hindi decision. Its future evil effects could still have been averted, at least for the future of Punjab, if the lessons thereof had been learnt and the homogeneity of life in Punjab, which its history had represented, would have been maintained. This could have been done only by reversing the Hindustani-Hindi policy of Hindi-Hindu dominance, and instead creating a unilingual state of the Punjabi speaking people. But Jawahar Lal Nehru while deprecating the communal expression in the 1951 census, a direct result of the Hindustani-Hindi decision, continued the blunderous policy of stubbornly refusing to form a unilingual State in Punjab. For the census and the refusal of the Centre to oppose the Punjabi speaking state conveyed a clear message even to the ordinary Sikh that the Centre was opposed to the Sikhs having political power, much less allowing them autonomy or the glow of freedom in the state. Hence, instead of rectifying the evil result of the historic decision, policies were pursued which could only accentuate the Hindu Sikh divide.

After, 1947, along with the other linguistic area in the country, the Sikhs also continued to press for a linguistic state in Punjab, as was the repeated declared policy before independence. In pursuance of this united demand in India, the Centre appointed a States Re-organisation Commission in December, 1953, to divide the country on linguistic basis.

Several Hindu bodies, political as well as religious (Jana Sangha, Arya Samaj etc.) wanted the creation of Maha Punjab (a multi-lingual Hindu majority area) including the territories of PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.

‘ In order to thwart the evident logic of the unilingual Punjabi areas, the Hindus planned to oppose it by falsifying their census returns of 1951 and 1961, wherein they influenced the members of their community to give Hindi instead of Punjabi as their mother tongue. It is both relevant and important to state that the rrfve to frustrate the creation of a linguistic state was not a of defence mechanism on the part of the Punjabi speaking

Hindus, but it was a part of an overall attempt to create Hindu cultural dominance which had earlier made the Congress shed its consistent policy of accepting Hindustani as the lingua franca of India and own Hindi in its place.

The States Reorganisation Commission in its report rejected the demand for a Punjabi speaking state and instead recommended the merger of the existing states of Punjab, PEPSU and Himachal Pradesh.

The Sikhs were sorely disillusioned with the recommendation of the Commission, whereafter other linguistic states were created but Punjab was let out even though, Punjabi was one of the fourteen accepted languages of the country in the constitution. Evidently, discriminatory and incongruous as it was, the Commission instead of suggesting the formation of a Punjabi speaking linguistic state recommended that it should not be created in the North West of India. Master Tara Singh denounced the report as a “decree of Sikh annihilation.”

Instead of creating a linguistic state, the discriminatory policy against the Sikhs went to the extent of reducing the Sikh majority state of PEPSU to a Sikh minority area by merging it, in 1955, in the Hindu majority the Hindu area of East Punjab. The Sikhs who formed a marginal balance of 49.5% in PEPSU were reduced to 32.4% in the new state, without gaining anything anywhere.

The recommendations of the Commission reveal that there was a clear desire in the mind of the Commission and the Centre to keep the Sikhs in a perpetual minority so that they are unable to enjoy autonomy in their own home of Punjab and are always ruled by the Hindu majority by keeping the Hindi speaking areas unnaturally attached to it and creating a multi linguistic state. With this obvious objective, they pressed into service all sorts of arguments to reject the Sikh demand and to create Maha Punjab (bigger Punjab). While their communal angle was exposed, they could convince no one, much less the Sikhs, when they wrote in Para 575 of the report of the States Reorganisation Commission “From the point of view of the Sikhs themselves, the solution which we have proposed offers the advantage that the precarious or uncertain political majority which they seek will be exchanged for the real and substantial rights which a sizeable and vigorous minority with a population ratio of nearly one third, is bound to have in the united Punjab in the whole of which they have a real stake.”√

This rationale was repugnant to the concept of linguistic reorganisation of the states in the country. It betrayed a mentality of prepossession and mistrust. This was an echo of the voice of Hindu communalists

The struggle starts : Thus, the only, and obvious reason for not creating a linguistic state in Punjab was that the Sikhs would be in a majority in a Punjabi speaking state. Being calculatedly reduced to a minority in their homeland, the Sikhs started a struggle for the creation of a linguistic state. In a nutshell, Master Tara Singh put the position thus : “Without a determined and grim struggle, we shall get demoralised and will disintegrate, losing our identity and perish in the dust. It would be cowardly to accept this fate. If we struggle and fall, we die a brave and noble death and if we struggle and win, we live an honourable life. So the choice is clear.”√



Master Tara Singh was convinced that if he continued the struggle, he could keep the Sikhs united.—

Except for the period of the Chinese aggression of 1962, the peaceful struggle of the Akalis continued upto 1965, involving the death of scores of persons, and the arrest of over sixty thousand Sikhs. It is significant that this small community had to suffer the arrests and imprisonment of such a huge number for its legitimate demand, while during the entire Independence movement not more

thirty thousand persons had been jailed during any period of time. Even during that struggle, we know that the contribution of the

Sikhs in the matter of deaths and life imprisonments suffered was more than seventy per cent in each case. Though the Sikhs were omitted at the Central treatment meted to them in the calculated

steps keep them in a minority in their homeland by PEPSU in Punjab, in 1956, it is significant that through out that period, there were no Hindu Sikh riots or any tension between two communities. It is significant to note that the Sikh struggles throughout history have always been pursued from the precincts of the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and with a religious fervour expressed in a moral ethos.

1965, the war with Pakistan broke out. On the appeal of the President of India, the Sikhs suspended their struggle and again, as in 1962, whole heartedly contributed to the War effort.

Demand of Punjabi Suba Accepted : The outstanding contribution of the Sikh soldiers and the Sikh population of Punjab during the Indo-Pak War of 1965 was so impressive that public opinion in the country felt unable to resist any more the demand for a Punjabi speaking area in Punjab. Besides, Kamraj, the President of the Congress, being from Tamil Nadu was obviously not among the Hindi chauvinists and, for that matter, found nothing repulsive or anti-national in the demand for a linguistic state in Punjab. Accordingly, the decision to reorganise Punjab on a linguistic basis was taken at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, which passed the following resolution”

“Out of the existing State of Punjab, a State with Punjabi as the State language be formed. The Government is requested to take necessary steps for this purpose.”

Obviously, the Congress Working Committee had not perceived the creation of a rival state of Haryana. It would have been in the fitness of things if territorial adjustments could be made with the neighbouring State of U. P. The move to create Haryana was in fact a move to erode the proper creation of a Punjabi Suba. It was an act of political subversion by which the seeds of discord between the two rival States were sown. Following a Congress Working Committee Resolution, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri appointed a Parliamentary Committee to consider the question of creating a Punjabi linguistic state in North India

The creation of Punjabi Speaking State scuttled : It is evident that as soon as the Parliamentary Committee for the creation of the Punjabi speaking state was constituted, the opponents of the proposal, including the leaders of Punjabi Hindus, started working against it.

The following extract from Indira Gandhi's writings quoted by Hukam Singh, former Speaker Lok Sabha fully supports the above observations about the very unfortunate and biased thinking and activities of this important group in the Congress, which later came into power after the demise of the Prime Minister. The appointment of Hukam Singh as Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee was not liked by Indira Gandhi, who was the Minister for Information and Broadcasting at that time, as she was afraid of his proposed verdict in favour of Punjabi Suba.

This is also fully borne out by her statement in her autobiography, 'My Truth', which reads as under "

"My father had been strongly opposed to the idea (Punjabi Suba), but, by 1966, the demand had grown so strong that the Centre was in no position to resist it ... Unfortunately Mr. Shastri had made Sardar Hukam Singh, the Speaker of the Lower House, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba, although he was biased in favour of Punjabi Suba.... I went to Mr. Chavan and said that Sardar Hukam Singh was going to give a report in favour of Punjabi Suba and that he should be stopped. Indira Gandhi and Chavan met Shastri in this connection. Shastri said that they need not bother as he was fully in touch with the situation. "But I (Indira Gandhi) was very bothered and I went round seeing everybody. Of course, once, the report came, it was too late to change it. This startling reversal of Congress policy was totally unexpected. While a Sikh agitation had been averted, Hindu minority in the projected Punjabi Suba felt let down."

Prompted by Indira Gandhi, Shastri contacted Home Minister Nanda and conveyed to him the concern about the feared report. Nanda admitted that he had suggested Hukam Singh's name for the Chairmanship of the Committee under the mistaken impression that he (Hukam Singh) was opposed to the Punjabi Suba demand. But it was too late to mend matters. Hukam Singh later wrote, "The intention of the government then was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report and then reject the demand."—"

Why the Government had been so strongly against the Parliamentary Committee making a report in favour of Punjabi Suba and why Indira Gandhi had felt bothered and ran about 'seeking everybody to stop Hukam Singh has been explained by Mrs. Gandhi herself.

"The Congress found itself in a dilemma ; to concede the Akali demand would mean abandoning a position to which it was firmly committed and letting down its Hindu supporters in the Punjabi Suba."

But on December 22, 1965, the Parliamentary Committee, with twenty two members, chaired by Hukam Singh, Lok Sabha Speaker submitted its report to the Parliament with a copy to the Government.

This was being opposed by the Union Home Minister, Nanda, who wanted to dictate his own terms regarding the scope and functions of the Committee. Nanda insisted that it was a Consultative Committee of the Government and not a Committee of the Parliament and, therefore, it had to submit its report to the Cabinet Committee, which would examine it along with other factors and make its report to the Central Government for further consideration by the Parliament. The evident object was that the Ministry would be in a position to undo, mould, tone down or twist the recommendations of the Parliamentary

Committee before presentation to the Parliament for its final acceptance, but Hukam Singh had no doubt about the status of the Committee and he straight away submitted the Report to the Parliament, recommending the creation of a Punjabi Suba, on the basis of Sachar or Regional Formula. It proposed that 'the Punjabi Region specified in the first schedule to the Punjab Regional Committee Order 1957, should form a unilingual Punjabi State, that the hill areas be merged with Himachal Pradesh and Hindi region be turned into Haryana State.

In retrospect, it can be seen that the appointment of a Cabinet sub-Committee by the government was with a view to subverting the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee, and to bringing into being the rival state of Haryana. Consequently, the Punjabi Suba as we shall see later, was reduced to a truncated sub state. This move to circumvent the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee, was fraught with grave portents for the future.

So far as the demarcation of the linguistic state was concerned, there was no ambiguity whatsoever in this regard either in the recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee or the accepted demarcation under the Sachar and the Regional Formulae. In 1949, under the Sachar Formula to the point of every village, the boundaries of Punjabi speaking areas and Hindi speaking areas were defined. This demarcation had been unanimously accepted by the people, legislators and the Ministers from the two areas as also the State and Central Governments. This demarcation also stood virtually accepted by an Act of Parliament. This was known as the Regional Formula which constituted a Punjabi Speaking Regional Committee and a Hindi Speaking Regional Committee, in which members drawn from the two different regions or linguistic areas sat and worked. Hence, for over seventeen years from 1949 to 1966, there was no question of any ambiguity or any objection from any one about the demarcation of the two linguistic areas. Further, it is clear that the Congress Working Committee had clearly recommended the creation of a Punjabi speaking state. Second, that even the Parliamentary Committee had explicitly recommended and required that the linguistic demarcation should be on the basis of the Regional Formula.

It is in this background that the scuttling of a full fledged Punjabi speaking linguistic state by its opponents has to be seen and understood. A clear mandate of the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Committee was defied and linguistic boundaries, unambiguously demarcated and for long accepted by all concerned, were upset by a manoeuvre which was apparently motivated against the autonomy of the proposed State in which the Sikhs were likely to be in a majority.

In order to frustrate the recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee, Nanda took three steps. First, he appointed a Boundary Commission for which, as we have stated, there was no necessity at all. Second, he made the 1961 census, which was officially known to be communally oriented and frivolous, to be the basis for demarcation. This in fact was a direction that the demarcation had to be not on the linguistic basis but on the communal basis. Third in the framing of the Punjab Reorganisation Act (1966) he introduced provisions (78-80), which made Punjabi Suba to be a permanently ineffective sub state.

These Sections of the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 were considered highly detrimental to the economic and political interests and future of the state and its people. Under these Sections, the powers of control, administration, maintenance, distribution and development of the waters and hydel power of Punjab rivers were vested in the Central Government. This Act was patently violative of the Indian Constitution because (a) it made a legislation about the river waters and hydel power of Punjab rivers which subjects were in the exclusive jurisdiction of the State, and (b) it was discriminatory since, on the one hand, it applied the riparian principle to Yamuna waters by letting it remain as a subject for the exclusive jurisdiction of the Haryana Government and legislature, and, on the other hand, it took Central control for the maintenance, distribution and development of the waters and hydel power of Punjab rivers running exclusively in the State. It was a case of patent violation of the Indian Constitution, which embodies the universally accepted riparian principle, based on the equitable rule that those who for centuries had suffered losses in life and property from the ravages and floods of a river are the only people entitled to the benefits of its waters and hydel power. It was this principle that had been observed at the time of division of the Madras State into Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and, again, at the time of decision about Narmada waters when it was clearly laid down that Rajasthan had no locus standi nor any rights to its waters, it being non-riparian regarding that river.

Thus the State in its power and status was reduced to a crippled sub-state under the virtual control of the Centre. These powers kept by the Centre had a far reaching effect, as we shall explain later on in ruining the economic fate and future of the people of the area. In fact, it is this permanent reduction of Punjab to a virtual Central colony that became the basis of the Akali struggle during the subsequent years.

The text of these Sections is given below, though the story about their abuse, the Sikh attempt to have these Ultra Vires Sections eliminated and the Government going out of the way to frustrate such attempts and maintain them to the detriment of Punjab will be given in the subsequent chapters.

### ***“BHAKRA NANGAL AND BEAS PROJECTS***

78(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act but subject to the provisions of sections 79 and 80, all rights and liabilities of the existing State of Punjab in relation to Bhakra Nangal Project and Beas Project shall, on the appointed day, be the rights and liabilities of the successor States in such proportion as may be fixed and subject to such adjustments as may be made, by agreement entered into by the said States after consultation with the Central Government or, if no such agreement is entered into within

two years of the appointed day, as the Central Government may by order determine having regard to the purposes of the Projects:—

Provided that the order so made by the Central Government may be varied by any subsequent agreement entered into by the successor States after consultation with the Central Government.

(2) An agreement or order referred to in subsection (1) shall, if there has been an extension or further development of either of the projects referred to in that subsection after the appointed day, provide also for the rights and liabilities of the successor States in relation to such extension or further development. (3) The rights and liabilities referred to in subsections (1)

**(2) shall include”**

- (a) the rights to receive and to utilise the water available for distribution as a result of the projects, and
- (b) the rights to receive and to utilise the power generated as a result of the projects,— but shall not include the rights and liabilities under any contract entered into before the appointed day by the Government of the existing State of Punjab with any person or authority other than Government.—

**(4) In this section and in sections 79 and 80,“**

- (A) “Beas Project” means the works which are either under construction or are to be constructed as components of the Beas-Sutlej Link Project (Unit I) and Pong Dam Project on the Beas river (Unit II) including—
    - Beas-Sutlej Link Project (Unit I) comprising—
      - Pandoh Dam and works appurtenant thereto,—
      - Pandoh
      - Baggi Tunnel,—
      - Sundernagar Hydrel Channel,—
      - Sundernagar-Sutlej Tunnel,—
      - By-pass Tunnel,—
    - (f) Four generating units each of 165 M.W. capacity at Dehar Power House on the right side of Sutlej river,—
    - (g) fifth generating unit of 120 M.W. capacity at Bhakra Right Bank Power House,—
    - transmission lines,—
    - Balancing Reservoir;—
    - Pong Dam Project (Unit II) comprising —
    - Pong Dam and works appurtenant thereto,—
    - Outlet Works,—
    - Penstock Tunnels,—
  - (d) Power plant with four generating units of 60 M.W. each,—
    - (iii) such other works as are ancillary to the works aforesaid and are of common interest to more than one State;—
- “Bhakra-Nangal Project” means—  
Bhakra Dam, Reservoir and works appurtenant thereto;—

Nangal Dam and Nangal Hydel Channel;—

Bhakra Main Line and canal system;—

(iv) Bhakra Left Bank Power House, Ganguwal Power House and Kotla Power House, switchyards, substations and transmission lines;—

(v) Bhakra Right Bank Power House with four units of 120 M.W. each.—

Bhakra Management Board—

- (1) The Central Government shall constitute a Board to be called the Bhakra Management Board for the administration, maintenance and operation of the following works namely :—
- (a) Bhakra Dam and Reservoir and works appurtenant thereto;—
  - (b) Nangal Dam and Nangal Hydel Channel up to Kotla Power House;—
  - (c) the irrigation headworks at Rupur, Harike and Ferozepur;—
  - (d) Bhakra Power Houses:—  
Provided that the administration, maintenance and operation by the said Board of the generating units of the Right Bank Power House as have not been commissioned shall commence as and when any such unit has been commissioned;—
  - (e) Ganguwal and Kotla Power Houses;—
  - (f) Substations at Ganguwal, Ambala, Panipat, Delhi, Jajaira, Sangrur and Hissar and the main 220 KV transmission connecting the said substations with the power stations in clauses (d) and (e); and—
  - (g) Such other works as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify.—
- (2) The Bhakra Management Board shall consist of:—
- (a) a whole-time Chairman and two whole-time members to be appointed by the Central Government;—
  - (b) a representative each of the Governments of the States of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan and the Union territory of Himachal Pradesh to be nominated by the respective Governments or Administrator, as the case may be;—
  - (c) two representatives of the Central Government to be nominated by that Government.—
- (3) The functions of the Bhakra Management Board shall include:—
- (a) the regulation of the supply of water from the Bhakra-Nangal Project to the States of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan having regard to:—
    - (i) any agreement entered into or arrangement made between the Governments of the existing State of Punjab and the State of Rajasthan, and—
    - (ii) the agreement or the order referred to in subsection (1) of section 78;—
  - (b) the regulation of the supply of power generated at the power houses referred to in subsection (1) to any Electricity Board or other authority in charge of the distribution of power having regard to:—
    - (i) any agreement entered into or arrangement made between the Governments of the existing State of Punjab and the State of Rajasthan,—
    - (ii) the agreement or the order referred to in subsection (1) of section 78, and—

(iii) any agreement entered into or arrangement made by the existing State of Punjab or the Punjab Electricity Board or the State of Rajasthan or the Rajasthan Electricity Board with any—  
other Electricity Board or authority in charge of distribution of power before the appointed day in relation to the supply of power generated at the power houses specified in sub-section (1);—

(c) the construction of such of the remaining works connected with the Right Bank Power House as the Central Government may specify;—

(d) such other functions as the Central Government may, after consultation with the Governments of the States of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, entrust to it.—

(4) The Bhakra Management Board may employ such staff as it may consider necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act :—

Provided that every person who immediately before the constitution of the said Board was engaged in the construction, maintenance or operation of the works in sub-section (1) shall continue to be so employed under the Board in connection with the said works on the same terms and conditions of service as were applicable to him before such constitution until the Central Government by order directs otherwise ;—

Provided further that the said Board may at any time in consultation with State Government or the Electricity Board concerned and with the previous approval of the Central Government return any such person for service under that Government or Board.—

(5) The Governments of the successor States and of Rajasthan shall at all times provide the necessary funds to the Bhakra Management Board to meet all expenses (including the salaries and wages of the staff) required for the discharge of its functions

and such amounts shall be apportioned among the successor States, the State of Rajasthan and Electricity Boards of the said States in such proportion as the Central Government may, having regard to the benefits to each of the said States or Boards, specify.—

(6) The Bhakra Management Board shall be under the control of the Central Government and shall comply with such directions, as may from time to time, be given to it by that Government.—

(6J) The Bhakra Management Board shall be under the—

control of the Central Government and shall comply with such directions, as may from time to time, be given to it by that Government.—

(7) The Bhakra Management Board may with the approval of the Central Government delegate such of its powers, functions and duties as it may deem fit to the Chairman of the said Board or to any officer subordinate to the Board.—

(8) The Central Government may, for the purpose of enabling the Bhakra Management Board to function effectively, issue such directions to the State Governments of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan and the Administrator of the Union territory of Himachal Pradesh or any other authority, and the State Governments, Administrator or authority shall comply with such directions.—

(9) The Bhakra Management Board may, with the previous approval of the Central Government and by notification in the Official Gazette, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder, to provide for—

- (a) regulating the time and place of meetings of the Board and the procedure to be followed for the transaction of business at such meetings;—
- (b) delegation of powers and duties to the Chairman or any officer of the Board;—
- (c) the appointment, and the regulation of the conditions of service, of the officers and other staff of the Board;—
- (d) any other matter for which regulations are considered necessary by the Board.—

Construction of Beas Project :f

80. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act or in any other law, the construction (including the completion of any work already commenced) of the Beas Project shall, on and from the appointed day, be undertaken by the Central Government on behalf of the successor States and the State of Rajasthan :—

Provided that the Governments of the successor States and the State of Rajasthan shall at all times provide the necessary funds to the Central Government for the expenditure on the project [including the expenses of the Board referred to in sub©section (2)] and such amounts shall be apportioned among the successor States and the State of Rajasthan in such proportion as may be fixed by the Central Government after consultation with the Governments of the said States.—

- (2) For the discharge of its functions under sub©section (1), the Central Government may;”
  - (a) by notification in the Official Gazette and in consultation with the Governments of the successor States and the State of Rajasthan, constitute a Board to be called the Beas Construction Board with such members as it may deem fit and assign to the Board such functions as it may consider necessary; and—
  - (b) issue such directions to the State Governments of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan and the Administrator of the Union territory of Himachal Pradesh or any other authority, and the State Governments, Administrator or other authority shall comply with such directions.—
- (3) The notification constituting a Board under clause (a) of sub©section (2) may empower the Board to appoint such staff as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions :—

Provided that every person who immediately before the cons“titution of the Board was engaged in the construction or any work relating to the Beas Project shall continue to be so employed by Hie Board in connection with the said works on the same terms and conditions of service as were applicable to him before such consti©;

lioD until the Central Government by order directs otherwise :—

Provided further that the Board may at any time in consul©with the State Government or the Electricity Board con©√

with the previous approval of the Central Government √  
any

such person for service under that Government or—

- (4) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed as enabling the Central Government to reduce or enlarge the scope of the Beas Project as agreed to between the Governments of the State of Rajasthan and the existing State of Punjab except



after consultation with the Governments of the States of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan.—

- (5) Any component of the Beas Project in relation to which the construction has been completed after the appointed day may be transferred by the Central Government to the Board constituted under section 79 whereupon the provisions of that section shall apply as if it were a work included in sub-section (1) of that section.—
- (6) The Bhakra Management Board constituted under section 79 shall be renamed as the Bhakra Beas Management Board when any of the components of the Beas Project has been transferred under sub-section (5), and the Beas Construction Board shall cease to exist when all the components of the Beas Project have been so transferred”√ It is evident that persons like G. L. Nanda, then Home Minister, and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who was now the Prime Minister, and who appeared to inherit the anti-Sikh bias and thinking of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, tried to thwart in every possible manner the creation of a Punjabi speaking state. They clearly showed their bias in favour of the Punjab Hindus and against the creation of Punjabi Suba.—

The three member Boundary Commission, presided over by Justice Shah, which demarcated the boundaries of the Punjabi speaking State, decided to award Chandigarh and many important Punjabi speaking areas to Haryana. This was done on the basis of the communal census of 1961. In 1961, the city was inhabited mostly by Government employees, majority of whom were Hindus, who though they were actually Punjabi speaking had got their mother tongue registered as Hindi, on account of communal considerations. However, the Commission’s recommendation to transfer—

### **Chandigarh to Haryana was** √

implemented and the town was kept as a Union Territory, as the capital of both the States and the seat of the common High Court.—

Thus the intentions of the Government became suspect, and the people of Punjab lost faith in the Government decision and the Commission. In the circumstances, this distrust was inevitable because the recommendations of such an adhoc and non-statutory Commission are always partial towards the prejudices and interests of the Government that appoints it. This is evident from the fact that the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who appointed Justice Shah to head the Punjab Boundary Commission herself later defied and rejected the proceedings of a Commission headed by the same Justice Shah, who had been appointed by the Janta Government to inquire into the “excesses” of the Emergency during her regime. Indira Gandhi had lodged a written protest against the Commission and had reminded that more than hundred members of the Parliament had sought the impeachment of Justice Shah, as he was not a fair minded or an honest Judge.—

Thus Chandigarh was made another bone of contention between two neighbouring States with the Centre gaining the position of an arbitrator. The Congress Working Committee only wanted the creation of a Punjabi Suba. But the Central policies produced a number of running sores and artificially created issues between neighbouring States so that they remained warring all the time, and perforce had to seek the arbitration of the Centre.—

We have already stated that the issue of demarcation stood settled and accepted by all concerned but it was made a bone of contention between Punjab on one hand and Haryana and Himachal Pradesh on the other hand. The issue remains still unresolved.—

### **In pursuance of the Reorganisation Act of 1966, Punjab was i**

ected and cut into four pieces. The major portion of its territory was ceded to Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. A sizeable—

chunk of its territory, about 23%, was transferred to Himachal Pradesh, while the State of Haryana secured 35.8% of the territory (4386959 sq. kilometers) of the pre-organised Punjab. Chandigarh too was lost to Punjab. This city was built by Punjab Government but now it stayed there as a tenant. While elsewhere in the country the state capitals were retained by the parent States, e.g. Bombay in Maharashtra and Madras in Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh was not given to Punjab. The extreme unfairness of the Boundary Commission is indicated by the fact that whereas Simla, the Capital of Punjab from 1947 to 1954 was allotted to Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab from 1954 to 1966 was transferred to Haryana. Even the Gobind Sagar lake and the uninhabited area around, though adjacent to Nangal Town and a part of the Bhakra Nangal Project, always administered by Punjab, were not transferred to Punjabi Suba.—

But the biggest violation of the constitution was the assumption of the control and distribution of the waters of all the three Punjab rivers and hydel power in Central hands. These rivers ran entirely in Punjab territory but over seventy five per cent of their waters was allotted to the non-riparian neighbouring States of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. Hence, these neighbouring States were given ill gotten gains and were made, in one sense, interested adversaries of Punjab. And with all powers of arbitration and decision in Central hands, the Government was always pretending reluctance to have to perform the thankless task of the arbitrator. And yet, as we have said, all the three disputes were Centrally created in order virtually to arrest all economic and political development in the Punjab.—

The above narration gives us a clue both to the minds of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister and the basic reasons and policies for creating a mutilated sub-state of Punjab, as also for the future events of the √

### **Dharm Yudh Morcha f**

during the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi Both the recommendations of the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Committee gave a very clear direction that a Punjabi Suba had to be created as a linguistic state, equal in status and powers with other states like Maharashtra, Gujrat, Tamil Nadu and Andhra. In fact, the Parliamentary Committee gave clear directions that the territorial demarcations should follow the settled demarcations under the Regional Formula. But the views of Indira Gandhi, and the then Home Minister Nanda were entirely different. In fact, they had a communal angle, because they were concerned only with the interests of the Hindus in Punjab, and had felt very much disturbed at the anticipated creation of the Punjabi speaking state. After the demise of Prime Minister Shastri, what follows has to be seen in this light. A clear bias-sought to undo the Resolution of Congress Working Committee and the; Parliamentary Committee.—

Conclusion : Before Independence the Sikhs had the clear assurance that they would have an area, where they could enjoy a life of freedom and autonomy. The foregoing narration makes it clear, that after 1947, the wheel of the central policies started moving exactly in the opposite direction; first by creating a unitary constitution instead of a federal one, second by declining to form a linguistic state in the Punjab and third by creating a truncated and economically crippled sub-state virtually under the direct control and administration of the Centre. The disillusionment of the Sikhs and their consequent loss of faith in the Centre became increasingly clear from the policies, steps and measures adopted by the Central Government. In short, increasingly nationalistic

suffered a blow and communal interests gained strength, at often under the cloak of national interests.—

The preceding two decades were for the Sikhs a period of disillusionment and frustration. It was indeed heart-breaking for them to realise that they were considered virtually in the country for the freedom of which they had fought

preceding five hundred years and that the struggle between Centre and Punjab had been given a purely communal shape.—

While every area in the country was fighting for its linguistic demarcation and autonomy, the Sikhs alone had to fight for the Punjabi speaking areas and their welfare. The Punjabi speaking Hindus had openly started working against their autonomy and interests. While a Maharastrian fought for the interests of Maharashtra, a Bengali for the interests of Bengal and a Gujrati for the interests of Gujrat, it was an irony that the Sikhs alone were left to struggle for the interests of Punjab. And they were dubbed as separatists but those who out of communal consideration betrayed the interests of Punjabi claimed to be nationalists. To the Sikhs, it became clear that the Centre had taken a clearly communal line.—

Virtually the entire community of Punjabi speaking Hindus in Punjab had made a false statement about their mother tongue. The statement had been deprecated as false by even Pandit Nehru. All this was known to the Central political and official circles. The making of this communally oriented statement by the Home Ministry as the basis of the demarcation of Punjabi speaking linguistic state exposed all national pretensions of the Centre. This made it clear to every one as to what was the nature of the Central policy towards the Sikhs and Punjab. The important fact for the historian to understand is a clear and logical link among the Hindi-Hindustani decision, the Punjabi Hindus' declaration of their mother tongue as Hindi, the Home Ministry's accepting and making that census (1961) as the basis of the demarcation, the assumption of Central control over Punjab under the newly framed Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 and the entire future policies of the Centre towards the Sikhs and Punjabi Suba.—

As the talk between Sardar Patel and Master Tara Singh reveals, after Independence, the Sikhs were governed clearly by a Machiavellian policy considered suitable for areas acquired where a freedom loving people had lived under their own laws and customs. The three steps of the Punjab policy mentioned above made it plain that the Sikhs were not to be allowed to come into power even at the provincial level. Instead they were—

to be kept in a perpetual minority in the area. And when a state was formed, its constitution was framed in a manner that it remained a satellite state under the control of the Centre and became, as we shall see, increasingly weak economically and politically.—

The unjust vivisection of Punjabi speaking areas and the creation of four rival entities of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, with the Centre as the ultimate political arbitrator was bound to lead to a chain of conflicts. These conflicts were fully exploited by the Centre. In fact, the future struggle took an entirely different colour. It became ugly in shape and turned into a fight between the majority and a minority with the former opposing the latter's assertion of a distinct regional or political identity. It was a long and tough battle with victory for none.—

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2

## WATER AND HYDEL POWER ISSUE : PUNJAB! SUBA SABOTAGED

The water and hydel power issue is the most important, revealing and dismal chapter of the Punjab problem. We shall state its story under different heads.—

### 1. Introduction of Sections *f*

We have given the text of these provisions and shall first indicate how its introduction is illegal and why it has been introduced. We have already indicated that water being an inseparable part of the land on which it flows, and territory being an integral component of a state, 'Irrigation' and 'Hydel Power' are state subjects under Item 17 of the State list. Further, under Articles 162 and 246 (3), our constitution gives full and exclusive legislative and executive powers to the states over water and hydel power. Agriculture and industry being entirely dependent on irrigation and hydel power, these have been



kept purely state subjects in our Constitution and in other countries as well. There is hardly any state which, except Punjab now, does not enjoy final and exclusive power in relation to irrigation and hydel power of its own state rivers. Hence, the introduction of Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act ©1966, which gave all powers to the Centre is ultra vires of the constitution being beyond the legislative power of the Parliament and being violative of the Articles of the Constitution referred above. In addition, these Sections are violative of the equality article 14 of the Constitution because these are discriminatory for the reason that while the Act gives exclusive rights of the waters of Jamuna, to Haryana, it makes the waters of three exclusively Punjab rivers not only distributable by the Centre but also vests their control with the Central government. Hence, Punjab's stand since 1966— water hydei, power issue punjabi suba sabotaged has been that this patently unconstitutional Act either should be revised and the control of Punjab rivers given to Punjab or the issue should be referred to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court to determine the constitutionality of these provisions of Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966.—

Evidently, the introduction of Sections 78 to 80 is unconstitutiional and for that matter a highhanded act involving serious encroachment on the constitutional rights of the Punjab State. The seeming excuse of this discrimination and usurpation is that before the Reorganisation of Punjab, there was a project called the Bsas Project, under which about 0.9 M.A.F. waters were supposed to be used in the Haryana area of the erstwhile Punjab, whereas the remaining waters of the Punjab rivers were to be utilised in Punjabi Suba and for which channels, etc. had also been dug But since the reorganisation took place in 1966, and Haryana had become non©riparian vis©a©vis Satluj, Beas and Ravi, just as Punjab had become non©riparian vis©a©vis Jamuna, the question of giving even this 0.9 M.A.F. to Harvana could not arise, nor could that be made an excuse for introducing the unconstitutional and discrimi"natory sections 78 to 80 in the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966. We shall further see how by the introduction of these sections Punjab Government has almost completely been excluded from the administration and development of the three Punjab rivers and their hydel power. Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act are unconstitutional, discriminatory and uncalled for. because no part of the three Punjab rivers runs through any part of Haryana territory. The definition of basin accepted everywhere in the world is as under :—

“A drainage basin is an area within the territories of two or more states in which all the streams of flowing surface water, both natural and artificial drain a common water©shed terminating in a common outlet or common outlets either to the sea or to a lake or to some inland place from which there is no apparent outlet to a sea.” It

well known that geographically neither any rivulet, drain, river or channel from Haryana

√  
falls

in the Punjab rivers nor ends in the Arabian sea, where Punjab rivers fall. In short and in fact, the Haryana basin is entirely different from the basin of the Punjab rivers.—

## 2. Abuse of Sections 78 to 80 Starts :—

- (i) Control of Punjab Rivers Assumed : Before 1966, Punjab was in complete control of its rivers and the utilisation of their waters and hydel power. The multi©purpose projects in Punjab were controlled by a board. Its Chairman, Secretary, the General

Manager and three members were from the Punjab Administration. There were only two members from Rajasthan and one from Himachal Pradesh. This Board and its administration worked under the Punjab Government. ✓

The entire budget and the administration of the Punjab projects were controlled and approved by the Punjab Government and its legislature. But after 1966, the Centre under Sections 78 and 80 constituted a statutory Board which works under the Central Government. The Chairman, two Working Members and two other members are appointed by the Centre and one member each is taken from Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.\*—

The important fact is that whereas earlier every employee in multi-purpose projects was an employee of the Punjab Government—

hence forward every one has become an employee of the—

Central Government. In short, the entire control, administration, motioning and development of the Punjab rivers and their hydel—

power have been taken over completely by the Centre from the—

Punjab Government.—

- (ii) S.Y.L. and Indira Gandhi Canals : We have indicated how the Beas Project, in which at a later date only C.Q. (A.F. was to be given to Haryana, was made an excuse for the introduction of Sections 78 to 80, giving unlimited powers of control, development and distribution of waters to the Centre. In 1947 water to Ganganagar area, part of erstwhile Bikaner—

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state of Rajasthan, was being paid for by the Bikaner state to Punjab, the sole owner of the waters of Punjab. But, in 1966 having, once, gained unconstitutional powers under Sections 78 to 80, the Centre abused those powers, on the one hand, to curb and deprive Punjab of its legitimate rights, and, on the other hand, to let non-riparian states make use of Punjab waters and hydel power.—

In the Beas Project, or before 1966, there was not the least indication that Haryana would have a project for the use of 4 to 5 M. A.F. of waters of the Punjab rivers. Yet without reference to Punjab or its approval, the riparian owner of the rivers, Haryana made a scheme for the use of 4 to 5 M.A.F. of Punjab waters. The proposed channel is to be linked with a canal from Yamuna waters and by lift irrigation, water is to be used in the table lands and other areas in the Yamuna basin of Haryana. On the basis of this Scheme, called the Satluj-Yamuna Link Canal, which Haryana had got approved from Delhi, it put a claim with the Centre for allocation to it of Punjab waters. Naturally, Punjab seriously objected to it, the Scheme being beyond the scope of the Beas Project and for that matter beyond the purview of Section 78, which related only to the two multi-purpose projects of Punjab i.e. Bhakra and Beas Projects. In this background Haryana naturally created a dispute and wanted the Centre to arbitrate under Section 78 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act.—

In 1976, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi gave the Award that out of the available 15.2 M.A.F. of the waters of Satluj, Ravi and Beas, Punjab and Haryana would get 3.5 M.A.F. each, and Delhi 0.2 M.A.F. The remaining 8 M.A.F. were unilaterally earmarked by the Centre for Rajasthan, another non-riparian State, unconcerned with the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966.√

These 8 M.A.F. were considered to have been allotted by the Centre under an executive order of Shri G.L. Nanda as Central Minister of Irrigation. In 1955, he had without any concurrence of the Punjab Government, allocated them to Rajasthan.

#### INDIA COMMITS SUICIDE;

Punjab had framed a Scheme called the Thein Dam Scheme on the river Ravi for the use of its water and hydel power in the State. This purely Punjab Scheme was framed in 1964 and was originally to cost only Rupees seventy crores. But in contrast the Centre never approved this Scheme for decades on end, even though its cost had risen over eight hundred crores. This is a clear instance of how unfairly and discriminately the Centre has been using its unconstitutional powers of control over Punjab waters.—

Another instance of discrimination is that of a canal Scheme, presently known as Indira Gandhi Canal, of 8.6 M.A.F. in non-riparian Rajasthan. The Centre approached the World Bank for a loan to construct this Canal. They sent a team of experts to assess its feasibility and productivity. The team was headed by David E. Lilienthai, erstwhile Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Chairman of U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. In this connection A.A. Michel, author of 'Indus Rivers', writes :—

“Viewed realistically the Rajasthan Project in its ultimate form is a dubious one . ...The ideal of extending the Rajasthan Canal—

parallel to the Indo-Pakistan border in the northern portion of the Thar Desert down to a point about opposite the Sukkur Barrage was a seductive one: 7.9 million acres could be brought under command and 6.7 million of these are potentially cultivable although the project in its present form is limited to supplying water to only 4.5 million acres of which only 3.5 million would be cultivated in a given year. Even then, these lands will receive only 1 cusec (F. N. [I]) of water for each 250 to 300 acres, an intensity lower than what has prevailed in the Punjab since the British times (1 cusec for 200 acres; and less than one third of what prevails in the US..... Assured by her geographical position and later by the treaty of the full use of the Eastern Rivers, India naturally sought √

area to irrigate, an area in which to demonstrate that free India could do as much as the British in bringing new lands under cultivation. Forgotten or overlooked were the fundamental differences between the Punjab, with its convergent perennial streams, tapering doabs and silty soil, and the Thar desert, hundreds of miles from—  
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the Sutlej with its sand and sand dunes. The cumulative irrigation experience in India, Egypt, the US, and the Soviet Union indicates that more food and fibre can be obtained by increasing the water allowance to existing cultivated lands than by spreading thin water over new tracts.....But to introduce it into the Thar Desert is—

economically unjustifiable. The 8.8 MAP of Beas-Sutlej-Ravi water that are to be diverted from Harike for the Rajasthan canal could be put to much better use in the East Punjab, north and the south of the Sutlej, and in the eastern margins of Rajasthan served by the Bikaner Canal and Sirhind Feeder. Combined with concentrated application of the limited fertilizers at India's disposal, yields in the established areas could be doubled or trebled at a saving in cost and pain in Rajasthan. The very experience with the Bhakra project itself, which increased water supplies to 3.3 million acres south of the Sutlej demonstrates this. Yet even here, out of every 182 run into a canal, 112 are lost by seepage, evaporation and non-beneficial transpiration of plants. On the Rajasthan canal, although the lining will reduce seepage in the main canal to a minimum, evaporation alone might reduce supplies by 50 per cent. And the seepage losses in the unlined branch canals, dis-tributaries, minors, sub-minors, water courses, and on the bunded fields themselves will further reduce the share of water that can be used beneficially by plants of economic value... .."√

The U. S. Bureau of Reclamation severely criticized India for wanting to undertake an irrigation Scheme in desert lands. They warned that the consequences of persisting with the project from the technical and economic point of view would be plain frustra-tion. And yet we find that out of 15.2 M.A.F. Punjab river waters, 8 M.A.F. remained ear-marked for non-riparian Rajasthan, and later actually 8.6 M.A.F. were allotted to it. The net result is that out of 15. 2 M.A.F. only 3.5 M.A.F. were given to riparian Punjab and the rest were managed to be diverted to non-riparian States. It is significant to note that the same Rajasthan applied to the Narmada tribunal for water of that river. Its request was rejected outright because Rajasthan was non-riparian in regard to—

river Narmada. But knowing all this the same government almost gave half of the available waters to non-riparian Rajasthan and only 25% to riparian Punjab.—

(iii)Judicial Process Thwarted :—

(a) Case Withdrawn from the Supreme Court :—

Since the Award of 1976, as indicated above, was highly detri-meotal to Punjab, in 1978 when an Akali Ministry was in power in the State and the Janta Ministry was at the Centre, it filed a case before the Supreme Court, seeking a verdict on the cons-titutionality of Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act. It was obvious that the Sections were ultra-vires of the legislative powers of the Parliament and apprehensions of a judicial verdict against Haryana and Rajasthan became evident. In 1980 Indira Gandhi returned to power. It became clear that the apple cart of allotment made by her to non-riparian States might be up set by the judicial verdict of the Supreme Court. At that time there were Congress Ministries in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. She called the Chief Ministers of the three States and virtually got the allotment under her Award endorsed through an Agreement (1981) among the three states. The allocations made under this Award were as under :—

Haryana (non-riparian);

3.50 M.A.F.—

Rajasthan (non-riparian);

8.60 M.A.F.—

Delhi (non-riparian);

0.20 M.A.F.—

Punjab (riparian);

4.22 M.A.F.—

Jammu and Kashmir (riparian);

0.65 M.A.F.√

There is a public report that the Punjab Chief Minister Lmrbara Singh was made to sign the above Agreement virtually i\*;

er the threat of a “gun”. It was a report confirmed and reitera©√

by the correspondent of the Tribune.√

Throughout the period of dispute the demand of Punjab has jwsz. :iat the issue being purely a constitutional matter, the only ;

ape solution could be, and to which no party could have any—

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objection, a judicial verdict of the Supreme Court on the constitu`tionality of Sections 78 to 8u of the Punjab Reorganisation Act. Because the question was not of the distribution of Punjab waters; the real issue was whether a non©riparian state had any right to any portion of the waters of Punjab rivers. Here it is pertinent to point out how Rajasthan pleaded its case before the Narmada Tribunal. Rajasthan, a non©riparian State, sought waters of Narmada river on the ground that though a non©riparian state vis©a©vis Punjab rivers it had got waters from these rivers. The clear verdict in the case was that Rajasthan was non©riparian vis©a©vis Punjab rivers and Narmada, and, as such, it could not get any waters from those rivers as of right.√

- (b) Chief Justice Transferred : There is another incident which clearly suggests that the Centre had a conviction that its diversion of waters and hydel powers to non©riparian States of Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi was un©constitutional and untenable. For this reason it was very particular that the issue about the v ires of Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act was not allowed to be adjudicated upon by the Supreme Court. In 1984, a farmer’s organisation from Punjab filed a writ in the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the ground of the unconstitutionality of Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, and the diversion of Punjab waters, which were badly needed in the State, to non©riparian States. After some preliminary argument, Chief Justice S.S. Sandhawalia constituted a full Bench with himself as a Presiding Judge. He announced the order on the last working day of the week and fixed the case for hearing on the following Monday (25.11.1983). But before the hearing of the case could start, in the intervening holidays two things happened. Chief Justice Sandhawalia was transferred from Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh to Patna High Court.√

Secondly, the Attorney General made an oral application to the Supreme Court that the case was of importance and should be transferrd from the file of the Punjab and Haryana High Court to that of the Supreme Court. The request was granted and the case transferred to the file of the Supreme Court,√

where it continued pending without any decision. This shows how reluctant the Central Government is to follow the constitutional course which otherwise is the only right solution of the issue about the water and the hydel power dispute.—

Here we may record a judicial opinion expressed regarding the water rights of Punjab in relation to the waters of the three Punjab rivers. It has been stated that since under the Indus Water Dispute, the Indian Government made a small contribution for the construction of replacement works, which were to be completed in Pakistan to enable it to feed the irrigation channels from Chenab and other rivers, instead of as earlier from the three Punjab rivers, the water so released by Pakistan was purchased by the Indian Government. This is a fallacy because minor payment was for the replacement works and not for the water. In fact, the World Bank and other international institutions had furnished a much larger amount for that purpose. The opinion of S.M. Sikri, formerly the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is noteworthy: “The fact that the Central Government paid to Pakistan a sum of Rupees 62 millions in order to obtain unrestricted use of all waters of Eastern Rivers, the Sutlej, Ravi and Beas, is irrelevant to the question, namely, what if any, are the rights of Haryana in the Ravi and Beas. It is irrelevant because the effect of the Indus Treaty, 1960, was that the sovereign right of erstwhile State of Punjab to control or regulate the use of waters of Ravi and Beas which was a limited right in 1966 in view of the existence of International Servitude (Page 51 of law or Succession by Counsel) ceased to be limited in 1970. It was the reorganised State of Punjab which had either retained the sovereign right under the Act or acquired it under the Act.”√

The point of constitutional importance is that land and water being an integral component of a State, territorial jurisdiction over them can neither be transferred nor sold, because the transfer of material rights means the transfer of the land and the territorial rights hereof. Such a contradiction about the transfer or sale of water is thus a constitutional impossibility.—

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- (c) Channel to the Thermal Plant; Under its power of distribution, the Centre has been allotting the hydro power of rivers to the non-riparian States even though it is the State and not the Centre that has exclusive jurisdiction in the matter. This cheapest source of electricity having been diverted to non-riparian Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi, Punjab has been obliged to put up thermal plants which produce very expensive energy. Apart from the hazards of bringing coal from distant coal mines, interruption in the daily carriage of coal can always cause serious dislocation in the production of electricity. In 1984, Punjab had completed a thermal plant at Ropar, at a cost of over four hundred crores of rupees.” In order to enable it to function, a cooling channel of water had to be drawn from the main canal. After cooling the thermal plant, this water had again to be thrown back into the main channel. This short channel was to be created within the Ropar district of Punjab. But the non-riparian Rajasthan objected to the same and an obliging Central Management Board declined to allow the channel to be dug.√

This dispute was, thus, made a lever to pressurise Punjab to come to an extra-judicial Agreement involving a virtual arbitration by the Centre through its appointed nominees. This Agreement is considered to have an important implication. The Agreement of 1981 among the three Chief Ministers only

related to waters. The result of it was that whereas the case in the Supreme Court about water had been withdrawn, the issue about the unconstitutionality of Sections 78 to 80 in relation to hydel power could still be raised in the Supreme Court. It is in order to bar that door for obtaining the verdict of the Supreme Court that this Hydel Power Agreement among the three States was made. And the impropriety of the Agreement is that since there was President's rule in Punjab, the Governor was the representative of the Centre and it was he, not the duly elected Government in the State, who entered into an Agreement with the other States.√

- (d) Trap of Tribunal Adopted: Another point is that whereas insistent Sikh demand has been for the judicial verdict of the Supreme Court, the Centre has persistently declined to follow that simple course in order to solve the Punjab problem. On the other hand, as we have seen, when the matter was pending with the Supreme Court, an arrangement was made to have it withdrawn from its file and the judicial verdict avoided. Instead, the suggestion of the Centre has been that the issue be placed before the Government appointed tribunal under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act. The evident object of this suggestion was two fold, first, the tribunal cannot give a verdict on the constitutionality of the Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, and, second, that once the tribunal gives the verdict, the issue cannot, thereafter, be placed before the Supreme Court for its judicial verdict. Thus, the Government suggestion for a tribunal, was just a method to avoid permanently the constitutional verdict of the Supreme Court. All we seek to emphasize is that whereas the simplest and the only solution of the water problem was a verdict of the Supreme Court, this has, in the preceding about quarter of a century, been carefully avoided. One of the chief objections to a reference to the tribunal was that Punjab rivers were not inter-state rivers and under the Inter-State River Waters Disputes Act only a dispute concerning an inter-state river could be entertained by a tribunal. Hence, a reference to the tribunal ^ was not only legally uncalled for but was considered a trap. And, in 1985, under an Agreement (Accord), instead of following the constitutional course, a reference to the Tribunal was made. The Centre has succeeded in its plan in having the verdict of a Government appointed Tribunal, even though it knew that Rajasthan, on its own admission, was non-riparian vis-a-vis Punjab rivers and the dispute did not relate to the waters of any inter-state river. The Tribunal has virtually endorsed Indira Gandhi's Award and made the following allotments :—

Rajasthan (non-riparian);

8.60 M.A.F.—

Haryana (non-riparian);

3.83 M.A.F.—

Delhi (non-riparian);

0.20 M.A.F.—

Punjab (riparian);

5.00 M.A.F.—

Jammu and Kashmir (riparian);

0.65 M.A.F.—

18.28 M.A.F. ✓  
water  
hydel power issue f  
punjabi suba sabotaged f

Actually the waters for distribution remain, as earlier assessed, only at 15.2 M.A.F. The present assessment of 18.28 M.A.F. is the result of technical and mathematical jugglaries, that have no relation to realities on the ground.—

Thus the Government appointed Tribunal has allocated to

the non-riparian States about seventy five per cent of the waters of the Punjab rivers that stood unutilized in the Indian Punjab in 1947, and are essentially required in the State.—

The above four instances of avoiding the judicial verdict, make it plain that the Centre has the conviction that Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act are unconstitutional and cannot stand the judicial scrutiny of the Supreme Court. It has, therefore, studiously been avoiding the simplest method of resolving the tangled problem of the water and hydel power issue through a verdict of the Supreme Court. Instead, whenever an attempt was made to get a judicial verdict, the Central Government went out of the way to frustrate that recourse to the judicial process. Instead, when after the tragedies of June 1984, and November 1984, the Akali leadership stood totally discredited, both with the people and the Government, it entered into an Agreement (Accord 1985) with a demoralised Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and succeeded in referring the water issue of purely State rivers, to a Tribunal, under the Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956. ✓

In fact, there was a clear legal opinion that the amendment made by the Centre to enable this issue to be referred to the Tribunal had no validity or meaning. Nor could the amendment, it was considered, give any jurisdiction to the Tribunal to entertain the issue of State rivers till the definition of 'Water dispute' under Section 2 of the I.S.W.D. Act 1956 was amended. But this amendment could not take place because of the constitutional hurdle. For the Act was about disputes concerning inter-State rivers, and not about State rivers regarding which Parliament was not competent to legislate.—

3. Water Requirement of Punjab : We have already indicated what was the terrible loss both of land and the irrigated area—

of the Punjab, following partition of India at the time of Independence. The irony of the matter is that it is the Punjab and Punjabis, who had to sacrifice property, land and blood for the sake of Indian independence. But they were not allowed any compensation for their losses by allotment of Government land or irrigated area outside the Indian Punjab, to which they were kept confined. They were given meagre compensation only to the extent of the land and property left by the Muslim migrants to Pakistan. And the still greater irony or injustice is that of the seventy five per cent of the available waters of the Punjab rivers which could irrigate the berani lands of the Punjabis and the displaced persons, instead of being utilised locally, have been transferred to other States, including distant Rajasthan deserts in order to benefit non-displaced persons there.—



The Punjabi Suba has an area of 105 lac acres. According to the experts of the University (P.A.U., Ludhiana) and official estimates about 5 to 6 acre feet of water are required annually to mature an acre plot for the normal paddy-wheat rotation. As such, the minimum annual requirement of the total cultivable area comes to 52.5 M.A.F. The Punjab rivers have a total annual water flow of 32.5 M.A.F. of which about 10 M.A.F. were used in Punjabi Suba (then part of Eastern Punjab) at the time of partition. Now of the remaining about 22 M.A.F. hardly about 5 M.A.F. or so, have been allotted to Punjab under the Central powers of distribution. The rest of the water has, without reference to the Supreme Court of the Constitutional issue, been allotted to non-riparian Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi to be used in Yamuna basin and the Rajasthan desert outside the basin of Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.—

Here, apart from the Narmada case in which the request of Rajasthan was rejected outright because of its being a non-riparian State, we would like to state a decision by a Court in California about the water rights of the people of a state. The riparian law is based on the principle of equity that those who suffer, for centuries on end, loss of men, property and land from the floods—

water

hydel power issue *f*

punjabi suba sabotaged *f*

of a river, are alone entitled to the benefits of water and other rights in the stream concerned. For, over a century the inhabitants of Southern California (U.S.A.) were using exclusively the waters of a stream for their lands, but the Government land and property situated in this State were not allowed any water from that stream. The Federal Government filed a case for use of waters for its lands. The Court allowed the request in a limited manner and subject to the water rights of the private users of water for their lands. But the private owners felt deeply aggrieved and upset by the decision and were preparing to go in for appeal against that decision on the ground that persons suffering perpetual losses are alone entitled to the benefits of a river.√

“ And since Government never suffered any loss of life, cattle or property, it was not entitled to any benefits.√

Here it is necessary to record that in a single year of 1988, Punjab suffered scores of deaths and over a billion dollar worth of flood loss in property, land and housing.√

But Haryana and Rajasthan did not suffer even a penny worth of loss from the floods of Punjab rivers in that year or earlier. And yet, they have been made, under the Central dispensation, the chief beneficiaries of the water and hydel power of the Punjab rivers. The inequity and injustice of the allotment is too apparent and glaring to need any further comments.—

We have already stated that whereas Punjab needs every drop of 32.5 M.A.F. of its waters, it has been deprived of most of its available waters by diversion to the non-riparian States. The present situation is that out of about 105 lac acres of cultivable area, only about 37 lac acres are irrigated by canals. Of the remaining area, √

lac acres are irrigated by private tubewells. Apart from the capital cost of over Rupees 1100 crores, at two thousand per acre for private tubewell irrigation, its running cost is 3

to 4 times more than the cost of canal irrigation. Diesel tubewell irrigation is 10 to 12 times more expensive than the cost of canal irrigation.—

#### 4. Dismal Failure of Tubewell Irrigation : f

As indicated above, the present wellbeing of Punjab agriculture is largely dependent on expensive tubewell irrigation. We have seen how the Centre by its powers has given a very serious blow to the Punjab economy by transferring a very major percentage of Punjab waters and hydel power to non-riparian States. And, whereas Punjab agriculture is dependent very largely on expensive tubewell irrigation, cheap canal water and electricity have been diverted to non-riparian States to benefit their people and agriculture.—

But the most significant and real danger to Punjab agriculture is the feared fate of tubewell irrigation. At present, each year over eight lac tubewells are over drawing subsoil water, with the result that the subsoil water table has gone down from 3 to 10 feet in different parts of the State.√

This is making tubewell irrigation not only increasingly expensive, but also difficult or even impossible because of the need of lowering the pipes and the pumping on account of the falling water table.√

There are different estimates of the annual recharge of the subsoil water in Punjab, varying from 3 M.A.F. to 10.6 M.A.F.\*√

Considering the annual draw of water to irrigate fifty lac acres of land, the overdraw per annum is between 12 to 24 M.A.F. This involves a continuous fall of water table of about one foot each year. The result is that most of the 118 community blocks in the State have been declared unsuitable for further irrigation. The fear is that by the end of the Century most of the eight lac shallow tubewells will become non-functional because of the fall in water table. Experts have already given the warning that it will not take long to make most of our tubewell irrigated land barani. A Professor of the Punjab Agriculture University (P.A.U.) Ludhiana writes : “How long shall this state of affairs last ? We must take steps to correct the situation, lest our grand children inherit a land returned to semi-desert.”—

And the irony is that all this has been happening under the powers of irrigation and hydel unconstitutionally assumed—

by the Centre over the Punjab rivers. Further, this diversion of water, as stated above, while it is, from the point of the country, going to be less productive in distant Rajasthan, it would have been far more productive by its use in the Punjab.—

5. Loss of Punjab : (a) Economic Implications of Reorganisation Act : The production loss to Punjab' agriculture by the diversion of canal waters and the corresponding gain of production in Haryana and Rajasthan areas is estimated between Rs. 2200 to 2500 crores per annum.√

- The loss in the field of industry and employment is far greater each year. In addition, the Punjab farmer is losing Rupees 100 to 150 crores each year by having to resort to expensive diesel tubewell irrigation. But the greatest calamity that is feared is that

within about a decade forty lac acres under tubewell irrigation will become barani or un-irrigated. Involving, in addition, a waste of most of the private capital investment of Rs. 1100 crores.

Critics have stated that the facts are too clear and the approaching disasters so realistic that it is not possible to avoid the inference that the impending calamities seem to appear to follow the dictum of Machiavelli, who suggested that the best way to rule an area which is used to a tradition of liberty and independence is to despoil it.—

(b) Political Implications of the Reorganisation Act : We—

have seen how Punjab has become, under the existing political dispensation, completely helpless in avoiding the economic ruination of its lands and people, much less has it the political capacity and power to improve the socio-economic fate or the future of the State. The reason for it is that under the provisions of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, not only has the economic fate of its people been sealed but a virtual ceiling has been put on the political growth or autonomy of the State. Punjab unlike other states is politically incapable of developing its agriculture and industry since the entire administration, development and distribution of the waters and hydel power of its rivers are completely controlled and—

worked by the Centre. This being the insurmountable hurdle in relation to water and hydel power, and consequently in regard to agriculture and industry, the question of any political growth or autonomy in the State does not arise. Gaining advantage of trading facilities apart, Sikhs have felt that hardly has a colonial power ever diverted the natural wealth of a state in the manner done under the P.R. Act.—

Three aspects of the water and hydel power dispute are important. First, that the facts indicate that there has been a calculated plan to denude Punjab and its people of its natural wealth and thereby seriously to jeopardise the economic, industrial and agricultural destiny of the State. The facts show that apart from the arrest of its socio-economic growth, the State seriously faces calamities affecting the irrigation and production of its lands and, consequently, the economic well-being of its people. The second aspect is that the political fate and status of the State stands arrested or sealed. It can hardly have any hope of growth unless the provisions of the Punjab Reorganisation Act and decisions made there under are undone and the political fetters broken. In the present State its fate is worse than that of a colony which is normally allowed periodical doses of liberation. The third dismal aspect of the Punjab problem is that when facts are seen in their nakedness and the realities understood, it becomes clear enough that—

After every Government decision or agreement, the Centre made its strangulating control over the politico-economic structures of Punjab increasingly tight and firm. There is nothing in the events of the last two decades that should give hope of any solution of the Punjab problem. Because a fair and constitutional solution of the

water and hydel power dispute is necessary for resolving the Punjab issues and bringing about amity in the State. But so far,

we have seen, every step taken in this regard aimed towards a contrary direction.—

6. Conclusion

: The water and hydel power issue forms a every f respect the core of Punjab problem. It has three funda—

nMI aspects which portray the conflicting approaches of the—

Sikhs on the one hand and the Centre on the other hand. The important fact we seek to emphasize is that unless the realities underlying the clash of interests are understood and resolved there can be no solution of the Punjab problem. For that matter, there has to be a perceptive change of policies and trends before peace, understanding and amity can be brought about in the State.—

The first aspect of the water dispute is its ruinous economic impact and implications on the future of Punjab and its people. Following the Partition, the Sikhs were huddled together and confined to a few districts of Punjab. They became deprived of their lands which is the strength of a bold peasantry. The second blow is that about three fourth of the 22.5 M.A.F. waters available in the Punjab have been diverted to the non-riparian States. Apart from the recurring loss of industrial production and employment, the annual loss of agricultural production to Punjab and gain to Haryana and Rajasthan is about a billion dollars each year. In addition, in a single year the riparian Punjab suffered a loss of one billion dollars due to the floods. This denuding of the Punjab's natural wealth and consequent annual production have been sought to be made permanent. Today Punjab has been contributing over 60% of the annual grain reserves of India. But that is not because of its canal-irrigation. It is because of the initiative and investment of the peasants in sinking over eight lac private tube-wells. Consequent to the over draw of the sub-soil water, the continuously falling water table has given a clear warning that by the end of the century, about three-fourth of the tubewell irrigated area would become barani and unproductive. The irony is that most of these trends are man made. The first stage was the catastrophic formation, the biggest forced migration in human history, that deprived Punjabis of their hearths, homes and sources of sustenance. The second step in this direction was to ask the refugees to be content with what the Muslim migrants had left. The third blow came with the large scale transfer of the waters and hydel power to non-riparian States and to let the riparian Punjab suffer its natural fate of floods. The writing on the wall is too clear and bold to—

be ignored or misunderstood. It is difficult to deny that existing policy aims at virtual despoliation of the agricultural and industrial base of the State. The economic results are going to be catastrophic unless the existing trends are reversed.—

The second aspect of the issue is political. The Sikhs have a spirit of freedom and self-confidence, as also the capacity to struggle for socio-political values and independence. Today the key subjects of irrigation and hydel power which form the base both of agricultural and industrial development are in the Central hands. Unless the existing position is undone and the ceiling placed on political growth of the State is removed the question of gaining any further political autonomy or status does not arise. The State would, thus, continue to be politically a dwarf sub-state. Therefore √

in Punjab the benefits, the welfare and healthy socio-political development that are the result of self rule and political autonomy have become out of question. Instead, there have been frustration, malformations and conflicts. Everyone acquainted with the Sikh

history and ethos could easily apprehend that these struggles and clash would be inevitable.—

The third aspect which a study of this problem reveals is that whatever has happened, whatever decisions have been made and whatever results have ensued, have not been fortuitous but have been the result of calculated and well-planned policies that have been followed both with purpose and precision. “We have seen that between 1947 and 1966 all steps, direct and indirect, were

taken to see that the Punjabi Suba was not formed and the Sikhs did not have a homeland or an area where they could be in a

fight

majority. Second, when Punjabi Suba became inevitable, in apparent violation of the Constitution, Sections 78 to 80 were amended, on the flimsy excuse of the Beas project, in order to be used later as a ruthless lever, on the one hand, to drain out the scenic wealth of Punjab and, on the other hand, to stop its industrial growth permanently.—

They have seen that, whereas the simple, unobjectionable and—

reference of the water and hydel power dispute was a reference—

to the Supreme Court, how every door of access to it was studiously—

closed so as to ensure that the judicial verdict was avoided.—

It is evident how promptly the Centre acted whenever there—

was some possibility of a judicial consideration or decision. Ultimately, by a process of camouflage the verdict of the tribunal has been obtained with the evident desire permanently to exclude any approach to the Supreme Court. Of course, in making that reference, it could not amend the definition of an interstate dispute, because Punjab rivers could not be defined as interstate waters. That chink in the Central armour still exists. What we mean to say is how the Sections which to the outsider appeared innocuous and necessary for the purpose of the Beas Project were employed increasingly to drain Punjab of its wealth and make the State politically ineffective. And while all these years these sections were calculatedly employed to the detriment of the economic and political well being of Punjab, the entire destructive process was kept camouflaged by raising the bogies of communalism, law and order, separatism, secessionism and terrorism.—

Here we seek to stress three points. The first that by allegedly transferring water of Punjab rivers to Rajasthan, the Central Government has not at all served national interests, because use of the water in Punjab could have been far more productive to the nation. This would seem to suggest that first priority in the matter was the damage to be avoided by diversion would cause to Punjab and not the production that would accrue to Rajasthan. The second point is that by transferring water and hydel power to Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi and giving them unconstitutionally gotten gains, the Centre has made those States and their people the hostile rivals of Punjab and its people, because any return of those unwanted benefits to Punjab would be seriously resisted and resented by the people of those States. Thus artificially a regular schism has been created between the people of different States of the country. Further, we find that the judicial channel through which

that drain and exploitation could be stopped without raising the back of any state, has studiously been closed. As it is, the channels and lines to carry the wealth of Punjab to non-riparian States are rapidly sought to be made a fait accompli. The third point we emphasise is that whatever has happened has followed a planned process of studied decisions. Therefore, unless there is a clear and well recognised policy to undo the existing direction and trends, there can neither be a solution of the problem nor any hope in that direction.—

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### 3

#### WHY THE DHARAM YUDH MORCHA 1966-1981?

but the same being not excise duty, no part of it is transferred to the states which are by this device deprived of a revenue of Rs. 2600 crore. ✓

The major part of the development expenditure is of a capital nature. The States have virtually little or no independent powers of contracting loans. Since the Centre has an exclusive power to obtain foreign aid or local loans or draw on deposits with the nationalised banking and financial institutions, the States remain completely at the mercy of the Centre in the allocation of funds. Obviously, the existing devolution of taxes and methods of distribution of revenues are too inadequate to enable the States to discharge their responsibilities within their own sphere.—

In this context, we give below the plan assistance given to Punjab as reported by Economic Survey of India 1930<sup>81</sup>; “For every Rupee spent on Plan Programmes in Punjab, the Central Government contributes only 15 paise. Compared to this meagre amount, Kerala receives 43 paise, Bihar 42 paise, Andhra Pradesh 20 paise, Tamil Nadu 30 paise, Uttar Pradesh 31 paise and West Bengal 20 paise.”<sup>√</sup>

Public sector investments too have been the lowest in the Punjab resulting in industrial stagnation. The Industry Minister, Ajit Singh, stated in the Lok Sabha; “Maharashtra had the highest Central public sector investment and Punjab the lowest in the past ten years. While investments in Maharashtra were to the tune of Rupees 15,150 crore, in the Punjab they were Rupees 457 crore. The total investment in the public sector projects, numbering 70 was Rupees 80,912 crore, in the past ten years.”<sup>√</sup>

Thus, the share of the total investment in the public sector projects in Punjab comes to less than 0.6 per cent as against 18.72 per cent of Maharashtra.

The discrimination against Punjab on the economic front was brought out by I. K. Gujral, former Foreign and Planning Minister: “The Punjab has been a victim of two myths: One, as Indira Gandhi put it, “it is an advanced and prosperous State ... and two, that the people of Punjab— but the same being not excise duty, no part of it is transferred to the states which are by this device deprived of a revenue of Rs. 2600 crore.”<sup>√</sup>

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are well above the poverty line since its per capita income is the highest in the country. Undoubtedly production of rice and wheat has gone up impressively but so has that of sugarcane and cotton. Unfortunately, the recycling industries have not been sanctioned leading to, what may be described, as lopsided growth. Apart from economic imbalances, it has also generated a belief that the Central planners deliberately want to sustain the economy's colonial pattern... The Planning Commission's concept of 'diversification' is on the whole a narrow one and, all said and done, confined to the cereals."

Gujral further asserted that Punjab has had an unfair deal in the setting up of industries: "During my brief tenure as a Minister in Planning Ministry in 1976, five additional mills (sugar) had been sanctioned. Subsequently after my departure for Moscow these were reallocated to some adjoining States. In sum, only one mill was sanctioned in the decade 1970-80 when the sugarcane production was annually increasing at the rate of 2.54 per cent compound."

A major measure of economic exploitation of Punjab is the credit-deposit ratio which is the lowest. The resources mobilised by the commercial banks from Punjab are not utilised in the State. These banks receive huge remittances from over one million Sikhs, who are either permanently settled abroad or go temporarily for the purpose of earning. Bank deposits in Punjab are quite high but ironically 70 per cent of the deposits are diverted for development to areas outside the State.

In other words the State has capital but is not allowed to use it for its own people. For example, in 1966, against the deposits of Rupees 145 crore, only 45 crores were used in the State. In 1967 of the deposits of Rupees 167 crore, only 45 crores were advanced in Punjab, i.e. a credit-deposit ratio of 27.17 per cent. In 1968, Rupees 54 crore were advanced out of the deposits of Rupees 193 crore.

In Punjab: Over 70% of the deposits in banks are from rural and semi-urban areas. Besides Punjab is the most heavily taxed State in the country. The per capita incidence of tax is Rupees 251 as against Rupees 153 in the highly industrialised States like West Bengal, Rupees 170 in Tamil Nadu, Rupees 226 in Maharashtra and Rupees 192 in Gujrat. The percentage of tax revenue to the total revenue in Punjab is 74.39, whereas it is 72.13 and 67.58 in Maharashtra and Gujrat respectively.

Punjab is made to suffer yet another disability in industrial licensing. Punjab's share of licenses has almost been negligible. In fact, there was a backslide in the industrial position of Punjab between 1965-66 and 1977-78. In 1965-66, Punjab ranked eighth with 4.1 per cent of the share of value added; in 1977-78, it had come down to the tenth position accounting for only 2.8 per cent of the share of all India value added. The position has worsened further since 1977-78.

I.K. Gujral points out: "The Punjabi protest is against being treated as producers of raw materials while value added benefits go to others."

It is noteworthy that the neighbouring State of Haryana, already much ahead of Punjab in the industrial field, has been allocated an oil refinery, a petrochemical complex and a fertiliser plant. There is a proposal to link the State with petroleum and gas pipelines which will terminate at Karnal.

One fails to understand why similar treatment has not been extended to Punjab.—

The Central Government is keen to reduce its expenditure and subsidy, in the distribution of food to urban areas in other States. It has thus a vested interest in keeping the procurement prices low, thereby causing a major loss to the farmers of Punjab who contribute each year over 60 per cent of wheat and rice to the Central pool. The entire market mechanism is heavily loaded against the farmers. Thus, the plenty that Punjab farmer has helped to create has been neutralised. The much trumpeted fertiliser subsidy to the farmer is in reality no assistance to him, it being just a concealed method of helping the urban consumer. The Tribune editorial of September 5, 1991, clearly states : “The so-called subsidy on fertiliser and food was meant to keep the cost of living of the—urbanite low, even when it did not in any way directly benefit the producer.” The major drain of cheap canal water to non-riparian States has made the tubewell irrigation so expensive that “the farmer has been caught in a situation of high production © high investment © lower returns. There is no assured market and at the time of harvesting the rate of farm products, especially paddy, fall below the assured prices and the farmers have to make distress sales. The outstanding credit of commercial banks according to sanction and utilisation in Punjab, has been more than the combined due from the States of Haryana, Himachal and Jammu and Kashmir together. The outstanding credit of banks, of Rupees, 44,352.42 lakh for agriculture alone in Punjab, exceeded one-third of the total outstanding credit in the State. This clearly shows that agriculture in Punjab is highly credit loaded and the farmers cannot pay back their loans. The outstanding credit in the State has further increased from 1982 to 1983 and the per capita outstanding credit in Punjab comes to Rupees 950 during 1983”.√

The procurement agencies exploit the helplessness of the Punjab farmers, the producers of wheat and paddy, who have made India self-sufficient in food, besides saving colossal amounts of foreign, exchange each year. Instead of a reward or bonus as in other countries, he is punished for his work and production.—

Similarly, the cotton growers feel cheated, when the price falls by 30 per cent in a single season or when there is just no customer for their cotton. Punjab grows 22 per cent of the total cotton produced in the country. But, only 3.3 per cent is being processed in the State and the rest goes out, raw to other States for processing. In order to process just 50 per cent of the total production in the State, there is need to have atleast twenty seven mills, each with a 25000 spindle capacity.√

- The Punjab sugarcane growers are able to sell only 13 per cent of their produce to the mills. The all India average is 33 per cent. It is 90 per cent in Gujrat, 82 per cent in Maharashtra, 50 per cent in Bihar, etc.\*\* There is enough justification, for the setting up of new sugar mills in the State, in view of higher sugarcane productivity per unit area, higher sugar recovery and further potential for higher yields.

As a result of the Central policy, “Punjab is slowly and surely slipping backwards: both visibly and invisibly. The much-publicised fact of the highest per capita income is being overplayed only to cover up this unpleasant fact. The Central grant to Punjab has been cut from Rs. 308 crore to Rs. 246 crore in 1990©91 as against an average increase of all States of more than Rs. 100 crores. The average deficit of the State has increased

from Rs. 288 crore in 1989-90 to Rs. 468 crore in 1990-91. The contribution of industry to the State income is roughly 13.5% against the national average of 16% at the current prices. Punjab's small scale industrial sector suffers on account of marketing. A major purchaser of their goods is the Central Government. The small-scale sector, as a whole, has a share of hardly 11% in the total purchases of over Rs. 3000 crore. Punjab units have a bare minimum share in that."

It is indeed unfortunate that while economic demands raised by the Akali Dal were for the betterment of the State and its people as a whole, whether Sikh or Hindu, urban or rural, the Punjab Hindus instead of endorsing these demands, have always fallen in line with the Central leadership even though that involved serious damage to the interests of the State and its people. The politically conscious Hindus lend support to all India parties like the Congress or the Bhartiya Janta Party, which out of their communal bias favour Haryana and Rajasthan and are never willing to raise their voice against any unfair deal with Punjab. This approach of the Centre and the Punjab Hindus reflects purely a communal bias and the Sikhs alone are left to espouse the struggle for the rights and interests of the State.—

To make matters still worse, Punjab has continued to suffer from serious disorientation and a form of colonial exploitation, Punjab's lop sided development has made it a predominantly mono-cultural agrarian State, where the State or its' people lack all control over market conditions. At the present level, Punjab is primarily a peasant and an agrarian State. The above facts make it clear how in a studied manner rural Punjab, which is the backbone of the State, is sought to be impoverished and drained of its—

resources. In the history of colonialism, no imperial power has ever drained its colony of its water resources. In fact, British Imperialism always tended to develop the riparian resources of a State for the benefit of the local population. But in relation to Punjab, the Indian Government has pursued the triple policy of exploitation. It is heavily draining out its water and hydel power to erode the base of all agricultural and industrial development. Second, its financial resources are being largely diverted to other States. Third, it is seen that processing industries for the raw materials produced in the State and for which it has a natural advantage, are not developed in the State, which like any colony continues to supply only raw materials to the far away industries of the country. The economy of Punjab has been shattered. The loan burden on the State has increased to Rupees 5640 crore during the 1980's from Rupees 703 crore, a rise of 801 per cent. Punjab is now (1991) the fourth highest indebted State in the country, while it was 14<sup>th</sup> in the early 1980's. The growth of expenditure on development became negative at 9.6 and 1.6 per cent during 1986-87 and 1988-89. Punjab recorded a growth of only 5.6 per cent against 13 per cent for all States in 1989-90. The per capita net state domestic product in Punjab, grew by 10.82 per cent in 1988-89, while the growth in the country was 16.7 per cent."

' In addition, the exports from Ludhiana and other major districts have sharply declined."

\* Everything seems to be done in a calculated manner, clearly leading to the Machiavellian despoliation of the State and its people.—

b) Sikh Struggle : We have indicated earlier how in structuring the Punjab and framing the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966, the Central Government not only frustrated the

territorial integrity ;” the Punjabi Suba by excluding accepted Punjabi speaking areas from the linguistic State, but also laid a firm foundation of keeping a permanent constitutional and administrative grip over this dwarf—

“= State. While the Centre continued its policy of despoiling the kiie, it kept the people, as we shall see, embroiled in petty or scripfaeral issues, in order to make such disputes a camouflage to its damaging designs. As the division of Punjab was unjust in relation to territory and State powers, and the Central policy and decisions were unprecedented and discriminatory, the Working Committee of Akali Dal considered the subject and in order to have the injustice undone decided in its meeting, on November 16, 1966, to launch a struggle, giving full powers to their President, Sant Fateh Singh, to choose the course to be adopted in pursuing the objective.√

- At a largely attended Sikh Diwan, held at Manji Sahib on December 5, 1966, Fateh Singh announced his decision to undertake a fast unto death at the Akal Takhat from December 17, 1966 and that in case he survived the fast till December 27, 1966, to commit self-immolation on that date.√

Addressing the gathering, the Sant complained that it was on account of the lack of trust of the Sikhs that the Government had deprived Punjab of important Punjabi speaking areas, and taken away its rights and powers, over its waters and hydel resources. He explained that the efforts to secure justice through negotiations had failed and, therefore, the only alternative left to him was to fast unto death and immolate himself in order to prick the conscience of the rulers.\*\*—

Master Tara Singh, too, issued a statement to the press, supporting Fateh Singh’s stand, and saying, “I am in agreement with the Sant’s demand for the abolition of common links, the inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas and Chandigarh and the control of Punjab waters.”\*√

Home Minister Y. B. Chavan, issued an appeal to Sant Fateh Singh on December 8, 1966, to reconsider his decision and expressed Central Government’s willingness to appoint a separate Governor and a separate High Court but stated that Government was not, “able to consider any claim for the re-adjustment of the boundaries of the two States unless the parties concerned could evolve a mutually agreed solution.”\*√

A message was also sent to the Sant by the Prime Minister inviting him to a meeting. The Sant declined the invitation.—

Sant Fateh Singh could not remain firm. He terminated his fast and gave up his resolve for immolation on the assurance that the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would settle the issue.” The Sant saved his life but lowered himself in the estimation of the Sikh masses. Provoked by this failure of the Sant to live upto the Sikh tradition, a strong willed freedom fighter Darshan Singh Pheruman decided to undertake a fast unto death on August 15, 1969.√

He demanded an immediate decision on Chandigarh, the left-out Punjabi speaking areas and the control of river waters. Pheruman went through his self-inflicted ordeal for seventy four days and breathed his last on October 27, 1969,√

upholding the great tradition of martyrdom in Sikhism. Pheruman’s sacrifice did not produce the desired effect. The chief reason for it was that at that time, an Akali Ministry

under Gurnam Singh, had been functioning in the State since 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 1969. In order to continue in power, it was hardly sympathetic to Pheruman, since his sacrifice, by a clear implication, involved a stigma on the role of Sant Fateh Singh and the Akalis. Obviously, this partisan approach was used by the Centre to disregard the cause for which Pheruman had laid down his life. But his sacrifice created a feeling in the Sikh masses, on the one hand, against the Central Government and, on the other hand, against the weak policy of the Akalis. However, it brought the issues to the forefront. Home Minister, Chavan, made an announcement that a decision on Chandigarh and other connected disputes would be announced before the budget session of 1970.—

Pheruman's sacrifice, apart from casting aspersions on the Central Government, whose members swore by Gandhism, also gave a blow to Sant Fateh Singh's prestige, because he had failed to live up to his solemn pledge. The Sant announced his second fast on January 26, 1970, in a fresh bid to retrieve his lost position ✓

But this time, too, he did not remain firm in his resolve to die and terminated his fast after the announcement of Prime Minister's long awaited Award, on January 29, 1970.\*✓

According to this Award, Chandigarh Capital Project area was to be transferred to Punjab within five years (by January, 1975). The villages in the Union Territory were to be divided between Punjab and Haryana as per Regional Formula. A part of Fazilka Tehsil (including Abohar) of Ferozepur district of Punjab was to be transferred to Haryana; and as regards other claims and counter-claims for the re-adjustment—

of inter-State boundaries, a Commission in consultation with the Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, was to be appointed. To provide contiguity between these Hindu majority areas of Fazilka and Abohar and the rest of Haryana, a ✓  
four long wide 'strip of territory' or a corridor along the Punjab-Rajasthan border was also to be transferred to Haryana. ✓

There were wide-spread demonstrations all over the State over the proposed transfer of ✓  
known and adjudged Punjabi speaking areas of Punjab to Haryana. ✓

It was considered that the transfer of 114 villages was done with the dual objective of ✓  
breaking Punjab's contiguity with the Sikh majority villages in Rajasthan and also of trying to make Haryana a riparian State, thereby seeking to give it a ground for claiming the Punjab river waters and hydel power. The allotment of these villages to Haryana was both inexplicable and communal in character. It was inexplicable because at no time of the division of a state, the allotment of a capital to one state had involved compensation to the other state. Though the villages under the 1971 census (and later even under 1981 census) were clearly Punjabi speaking, they were proposed to be transferred and corridor created, simply for the reason that the population in parts of the area was by and large Hindu. Another injustice was that to connect Haryana with the Hindu Punjabi speaking areas, the corridor was to be carved out of the Sikh villages, which were also to be transferred to Haryana. This indicates the clear discriminatory, unjust and communal character of the line of thought that directed the Central policy. The principle of compensation and corridor had not been applied in any other part of the country. Moreover, Chandigarh had been built after uprooting the Sikh farmers who were Punjabi speaking. It was, therefore, highly unjust that first a Punjabi speaking Sikh area should

have been uprooted and the capital built thereon and since the population of the town comprised mostly Government servants and commercial

classes, who were largely Hindu the town should be transferred to the Hindi areas because the Hindus, though Punjabi speaking, formal resolution condemning the decision to give Punjabi speaking areas of Fazilka and Abohar to Haryana and called it an “arbitrary, unprincipled, unjust and a politically motivated decision.”

A meeting of the All Parties Action Committee, under the Chairmanship of Baldev Parkash, the Jana Sangha President was held on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1970. It passed the following resolution:—

“The Committee is of the view that a grave injustice is being done to Punjab by arbitrarily transferring the Punjabi speaking areas of Fazilka Tehsil to Haryana and to do this unprecedented step for creating a corridor is being taken. This is highly unjust, discriminatory and deserves condemnation. It is also a complete violation of the legitimate principle of secularism. It is bound to encourage communalism and can become a bad precedent. This decision is also illegal and improper, in view of the fact that a Commission is proposed to be appointed.”

The statement showed that no one could conceal the blatantly unjust and communal aspect of Indira Gandhi’s Award relating to Fazilka and Abohar.—

Thus, after getting the so-called Punjabi speaking State, the prospects that the Sikhs and the Punjabis had to face were that they got a State economically denuded of its natural resources and politically crippled, since the Centre controlled its river waters and hydel power, the only two resources of Punjab on which depended the economic future of the State and its people.—

© Democratic Process Throttled :—

Another aspect of Central policy is a consistent attempt to reduce leadership in the State to a position of political ineffectiveness. There is one political feature in Punjab which is entirely different from conditions in other States. Rural masses in Punjab are far more politically conscious of their rights than masses in the neighbouring States like Rajasthan, U.P., etc. This consciousness is due to the fact that an unprecedented social revolution had taken place in the Punjab under Banda Singh Bahadur. This had never happened in the world before. In this revolution, the structure of the ruling class had been radically changed with the result that the lowest strata in the Indian society viz. Jats, Kalals, Carpenters, Lohars (Ramgarias), Mazhabhis and Shudras, became the ruling class. In this revolution though Jats, Kalals, Carpenters and Mazhabhis became the new militant (or Kashtryas) class, land some how was not generally distributed among the Mazhabhis. Hence, in Punjab the status of these classes became equal to those of Brahmins, Kashtryas, Rajputs and Vaishyas. This is something which has hardly ever happened in any revolution in the world and may be, for that reason, our armchair academicians are hardly aware of this most important factor which governs the socio-political life of Punjab. What we mean to stress is that the Indian society in Punjab underwent a radical change, in 1712-15 A. D., far more potent in its implications, than envisaged under the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, which relate only to a segment of the political domain without change in property relations. And the noteworthy contrast is that

these minor changes are also resisted by the Indian elite even in 1990's. It is because of this that the Punjab peasant, whatever his caste, never considers himself lower in social status than a Brahmin, Rajput or Kashtrya or Vaish. Thus, the Sikh revolution permanently raised the social status of the Sikh peasantry en masse to such an extent that, "in the Sikh tract, the political position of the Jat (who constitute majority of the Sikh population) was so—

ugh that he had no wish to be called Rajput; under the hills the—  
'status of the Rajput is so superior that the (non-Sikh) Jat has no—  
hope of being called Rajput.'"√

It is important to understand—  
that the Sikh Revolution has been more radical than the French Revolution under which the leadership remained only with the—

middle and upper middle urban classes and the peasants were not—  
"were near gaining any political power or status.—

Thus, in Punjab the dominant leadership is from the peasantry and the cleavage between the rural and the urban interests is quite sharp and well-known. Unfortunately, the demographic position—

is such that this division of interests represents at its base communal interests as well. Accordingly, on one pretext or the other, policies of the Centre have generally and calculatedly sought to serve the interests of the urban section which constitutes the Hindu majority. That is the reason why the Centre has gone out of the way in suppressing, harming and discriminating against the rightful interests of the majority in the State, while framing the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 and making various constitutional and administrative arrangements.—

In the history of free India Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru by dismissing the duly elected Akali Ministry in PEPSU, for the first time imposed the President's rule in 1953. This narrow approach towards the Sikh majority State in PEPSU or Punjab has continued since then. In fact, as we have already indicated the Sikh majority problem in PEPSU was solved by merging it in Punjab and making it a Sikh minority area. After the formation of Punjabi Suba (1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966), the Akalis won four elections and formed their Ministries in Punjab, but every time within a year or two the democratic will of the people of the State was subverted by the Central Government. The total span of time, the Akali were allowed to rule in Punjab after winning four elections, was only seven years, six months and twenty one days. On the other hand, the Congress won only two elections and formed their Ministries twice in Punjab and ruled over the State for eight years, seven months and two days. In addition to it, the Congress supported a minority Government and ruled the State by proxy for nine months. The remaining period of seven years seven months and sixteen days, Punjab had been kept under President's rule in different spells of time. Here it is pertinent to point out that thrice the Akali Ministry was a coalition Government with the Jana Sangha, now called the Bhartiya Janta Party. As such, these were the periods of communal harmony and amity in the State but every time the Ministry was not allowed to function beyond a short span. Singh Gill to defect and form a government with their support."√

‘ After about nine months, the Congress support was withdrawn and President’s rule was imposed. Practically the same has been the case every time the Akalis representing the peasant interests came into power to form a Ministry.—

It is evident that since Independence, there has been consistency of objectives and policy, as stated by Chaudhary Charan Singh about the approach of Sardar Patel. This approach expressed his clear going back on the Congress commitments to the Sikhs and hostility towards and discrimination against their rights in every field. This explains the reluctance of the Centre in creating a linguistic State in Punjab, its forming of a mutilated sub-State and its subsequent subversion of the democratic process whenever rural interests or Sikhs came into power in the State. The policies pursued and the political steps taken by the Central leadership, openly incongruous with their earlier commitments and their policies in other States, have never remained secret to the politically conscious rural peasantry of Punjab, who always interpreted them to be prompted basically by the spirit of narrow communalism. The result was a disillusionment and a growing but clear distrust of the professions of Central leadership whose credibility became gradually but surely minimal. In fact, Indira Gandhi has openly admitted her concern for the Hindu urban minority in Punjab, when she felt disturbed and approached the Prime Minister Late Bahadur Shastri and other leaders, in order to frustrate the creation of Punjabi Suba. The Central leadership always conducted itself in a manner that would enable it to win Hindu support and reap electoral harvests. The Congress in Punjab being a combination of Hindu urban minority interests and rural minority interests never produced a leader of even a provincial status. Punjab Congress leadership has always been nominated by the Centre and has been naturally obliged to toe the line of the Government in the Centre. When Jawahar Lal Nehru repeatedly declared that he would never form a Punjabi Suba, Partap Singh Kairon, the Chief Minister of Punjab, in order to outdo him and show him his loyalty stated that Punjabi Suba would be formed only on his death bed. It was during his Chief Ministership that following the Indus Water Agreement, Punjab had agreed to contribute waters to the phoney Scheme of Rajasthan Canal, regarding which there was a clear advice from the World Bank experts that the waters of Punjab rivers could much more fruitfully be utilised in Punjab itself rather than in the deserts of Rajasthan. If a Congress Chief Minister had championed the cause of a Punjabi speaking State as Y.B. Chavan had done of a Marathi speaking State, the issue would never have turned into a Hindu-Sikh conflict and thereby acquired communal overtones. Nor would it have turned into an unnecessary conflict between the Centre and the State. But perspective leadership could not be found in the State Congress, it being purely constituted of the nominees of the Centre. While the Congress Chief Ministers in other States pleaded the cause of their respective States, their counterparts in Punjab, without any exception, worked as mere instruments of a dictatorial and arbitrary regime at the Centre, showing little concern with the politico-economic welfare of the State. As already pointed out, Giani Zail Singh, the Congress Chief Minister of Punjab did not have the courage either to protest against the unconstitutional and ruinous Award (1976) of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the issue of Punjab river waters or to file a suit in the Supreme Court against it. Later, Congress Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, was coerced into signing an Agreement (1981) on the same issue with the non-riparian States, thereby withdrawing the case filed by the Akali Ministry in the Supreme Court, sealing the socio-economic fate of Punjab. Thus, the Congress in Punjab not only failed to acquire a representative



character but also failed to prevent the socio-economic ruin of the State. In fact, this failure was due to its not having its roots in the rural Punjab nor being perceived as

the interests of the State, its leaders being just the nominees of the Prime Minister, whose favours they sought and on whose election depended their leadership. It is a known fact that the leaders of the Punjab Congress in the State legislature and outside—were always nominated by the Prime Minister and their election in the legislature or the Party was just a subsequent formality. Hence, the question of Punjab Congress leadership trying to serve and safeguard the politico-economic interests of the State and its people could not arise. This is evident from the complete erosion of the economic interests of the State that has been detailed by us earlier. For, no worthwhile democratic Government of the people could ever have allowed things and events to happen as they did; much less would it have agreed to those (economically) suicidal steps. Here it is relevant to quote the reply of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, when Prem Bhatia, Editor of The Tribune, Chandigarh, suggested that she should find a political solution to the Punjab problem, “Do you think I can hand Punjab over to a community which shares common borders with Pakistan?”\*

This cryptic reply of the Prime Minister reveals the cat out of the bag and is symptomatic of the fundamental policies of the Central leaders in the preceding four and a half decades. His remarks are completely in line with the approach of Sardar Patel, discussed earlier and the role of Indira Gandhi and Gulzari Lal Nanda, regarding the formation of the sub-state of Punjabi Suba. These observations reveal both an excuse and a reality, an excuse because the Sikhs who had before and after independence fought valiantly for the freedom of the country, as also in the War of 1965, could hardly ever think of selling their State to Pakistan from which country about 40% of their population was forcibly evicted. It was a good excuse because

it would be a very satisfying argument to a Punjabi Hindu journalist, or, for that matter, to any Hindu in the rest of the country. It clearly discloses the reality of Central thinking and the trend of its policy towards Punjab. Because, if the Central Government had allowed a fully representative Government in the State, it could not have succeeded in denuding and despoiling the State of its wealth in the manner it had been doing under its stooge Governments in the State.—

Thus, in dealing with the Akali Dal of Punjab, the Central leadership could never ignore the partisan interests of the Punjabi.—

Hindus or the Hindus in other States. Likewise the Bhartiya Janta Party, in order to safeguard its communal interests and votes in the Hindu majority States of Haryana and Rajasthan, had never been willing to be fair to Punjab, when it was a dispute with those States. Because of Party or communal interests and discipline, the Punjab Hindus always fell in line with the Central leadership, however, unreasonable or detrimental its stand might have been to the interests of Punjab. The position was no different with the Punjab Communist Party, which has remained equally blind to the interests of the State. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a prominent Communist leader, has been doing some tight rope dancing, but the Communist betrayal became clear when they first joined the Morcha at Kapuri and later backed out from the demand of obtaining a judicial verdict. As such, the Sikhs alone were left to espouse and fight for the legitimate rights and interests of Punjab

and it is this gap between the Sikhs and the Hindus that the Centre tried to exploit by giving the Punjab demands the bad name of secessionism, extremism and terrorism, thereby further communalising the Punjab problem.—

Thus, every Punjab Congress leader knows of his dependence on Hindu votes in the State and the predilections and prejudices of the Central leadership with the result that he can never do anything—

rich is in the overall or rural interests of Punjab, as against the interests of the Hindus in the State or the Hindu States, the—

Centre wants to serve. The fact is that 'Delhi Prince', being—

a outsider, always, as a matter of policy, props up a leadership—

the State which remains unrepresentative of the people and looks—

only to the Centre for its existence, thus in the words of Machiavelli—

“Creating within the country a government composed of a—

sovereign will keep it friendly to you (Prince). Because this—

government being created by the Prince, knows that it cannot—

exist without his friendship and protection, and will do all it can to keep them.”√

Thus, in the case of a representative government,

in the interest of the people, there could always be the risk of what has happened in relation to the Kaveri dispute. For,—

neither be the rule of law nor the possibility of obtaining justice from the courts whose jurisdiction stood practically eliminated. This involved an unbridled Police Raj without its being, in any manner, accountable to any authority. All this generated an unprecedented fear complex among all the people in the country. One instance alone is symptomatic of the atmosphere created, the mind of the authorities and the manner of its working. Bhim Sen Sachar, a former Chief Minister of Punjab, an ex-Governor and a respected and old Congress leader of the State, was just given the midnight knock and unceremoniously put behind the bars/√

His offence was that he had, as a veteran and a senior Congressman, written a letter to the Prime Minister indicating the impropriety of imposing the Emergency. Thus, there was a studied attempt to create an atmosphere of terror so that people may not raise their voice.\*√

In the process, the press was gagged, all civil liberties were suspended and fundamental rights abrogated. During the nineteen months of Emergency, nearly one lac and twenty thousand people, including the entire opposition and some Congress leaders, were thrown into prisons.√

- Over twenty thousand public servants were compulsorily retired for their non-cooperation with the Emergency regime,√

At least one lac people were forcibly sterilized.√

‘ The Prime Minister assumed dictatorial powers through a series of extra-constitutional measures. The Emergency provided the Government with an excuse for censorship and detention without trial. Repressive measures like MISA (Maintenance of Internal

Security Act) and DIR (Defence of India Regulations) crushed the civil liberties and human rights of the people.√

The entire nation was stunned into submission. The framers of the Indian constitution had granted considerable discretionary powers to the Government with the hope that the latter needed them to transform the social order. Excesses committed during the Emergency rudely shook the people to the reality that the State power meant for the welfare of the people could be arbitrarily and arrogantly abused for the benefit of a few and the destruction of the fragile structure of the infant—

democracy in the country. Emergency raised crucial issues of constitutional propriety, political morality and Centre-State relations. It exposed the littleness and pettiness of the people in power.—

The ignoble nineteen months of Emergency were times of trial for the entire country. Most of the people were frightened into submission and talked against the excesses of Emergency only in hushed voices. Even the enlightened segments of the society betrayed signs of collective cowardice and sycophancy.—

In keeping with their tradition of fighting against social and political injustice or oppression, the Sikhs alone came forward to oppose, in an organised manner, the Emergency tooth and nail. It is well known that the most sustained opposition to the Emergency in the country was put up by the Akali Dal in the form of 'Save Democracy Morcha', launched from the premises of Darbar Sahib. They condemned the Emergency as a fascist step, a 'reign of terror', a 'rape of democracy', and a clear step towards dictatorship.\* While most of the other sections of society bore the nineteen month long nightmare with placid calmness, the Akali Dal continued their crusade till the end. They remained united and steadfast in their protest. Effort to 'buy' their support for the Emergency could not succeed. The Akalis have had a bad press; that is why their heroic role during the Emergency has not been highlighted. But there is no denying the fact that the most sustained and organised agitation against the Emergency, operated from the Gurdwaras, was put up by the Akalis.√

Unlike the R.S.S., the Akalis remained steadfast in their opposition to the Emergency till the very end. M.J. Akbar has analysed the reasons why the R.S.S. sought a compromise with the Government, during the Emergency. He points out that it was mainly due to the nature of its support base among the urban middle class, mostly 'Baniyas' or traders. These traders got frightened of Government repression and particularly of the tax raids.√

The R.S.S. Chief P. J. Deoras began pleading for a compromise, to provincial quota on the basis of the population of a State.√

It may be noted that in all other services or jobs, selections are made on the basis of merit. Recruitment to the Defence Services on the basis of quota system is unwarranted, unjustified and unconstitutional. It is violative of the principle of equality of opportunity embodied in Articles 15(1) and 16(2) of our Constitution which lays down that no distinction on the basis of the place of birth of a person shall be made. This unconstitutional policy has been followed to deprive the Sikhs of the greatest avenue of public employment. Lacs of Sikh families are nursing a feeling of being discriminated against on this issue.—

(f) The Kirpan Issue : In recent years there has been a lot of controversy regarding the wearing of Kirpan and its possession by the Sikhs as provided under Article 25 of the Constitution. The Sikhs are rudely shaken to know that certain institutions ; in India are framing rules and regulations either to limit the size of the Kirpan or even to ban the entry of Kirpan-wearing Sikhs on their premises. Such restrictions, apart from being unconstitutional, would also be a clear bar against the Sikhs practising their religion. However, the Centre is not supposed to be unaware of the unconstitutional and other implications of its executive orders and the consequent hurt to the Sikh psyche which is caused by such measures. Among the Fundamental Rights in the Constitution, is the right to freedom of Religion under Article 25 of the constitution. It states:—

“25(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.—

(2) Explanation 1 :—

The wearing and carrying of Kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.”—

The right of the Sikhs to wear and carry Kirpan was also incorporated in the Indian Arms Act, 1878. This right was duly acknowledged by Motilal Nehru Committee (1928) as well as the Sapru Committee (1945) and was then accepted as the Fundamental Right of the Sikhs in the Constitution. A plain reading of Article 25 shows that the carrying and possession of Kirpans is deemed to be included as a part of the profession of Sikh religion. According to H. M. Seervai: “Any law which prohibited Sikhs from wearing or carrying Kirpans would be void unless such law was justified as necessary to public order. Though not defined in the Constitution, Kirpan being a sword and its size or shape being not prescribed by the Sikh religion; it may therefore, be a sword of any size or shape.”√

Thus, the wearing and possession of Kirpans by the Sikhs is a fundamental right. As such, it is inalienable and cannot be taken away by executive instructions, much less by an enactment unless the Fundamental Right is in itself amended or withdrawn. The wearing and carrying of Kirpans is the very basis and foundation of Sikh psyche and ethos and in fact goes much deeper than what appears to the naked eye, at the surface.—

(g) Anandpur Sahib Resolution: We may be pardoned for some recapitulation of the background. We have briefly indicated earlier how for over decades after 1966, the Punjab administration has been run and its resources heavily exploited and its future well-being jeopardised. By one means or the other, over 75% of its available waters are being diverted to other States with the impending prospects of about forty lac acres of its cultivated land becoming barren. The Satluj Yamuna Link (S. Y. L.) and other canals are being dug and water drained out when the State itself needs every drop of their waters. Unfortunately, in the matter of floods, Punjab suffered, in a single year, a flood loss of over a billion dollar of its property, crops and land whereas the non-riparian beneficiary States have not lost even a penny worth of their property on account of the Punjab rivers to the waters of which Central fiat had made them fully entitled. The loss of hydel power is an equally heavy blow to the industry and irrigation in Punjab. And yet the entire administration of these two subjects has remained in Central hands That grip is so tight

that the State is considered incompetent to dig even a minor water channel in its own land from its own waters to cool the thermal plant at Ropar. As if this was not enough, the Centre has diverted more than 70% of the savings of the people for development in other States. On top of it, the Centre ensures that processing industries regarding the raw materials produced in the State are not allowed to develop in Punjab and those materials are supplied to industries outside the State.—

In addition, we have noted how the unconstitutional and arbitrary method of population formula of recruitment to Defence Services has seriously damaged the economic prospects of rural Punjab. In a field where, by all standards, they had a merit, because of their aptitude and health.—

In relation to the keeping of the Kirpan, the Centre has created an unnecessary irritant even though the Arms Act and the Indian Constitution gave a clear right to the Sikhs to wear it.—

As to the question of local autonomy and representative Government, it has already been explained that whatever be the reasons, the Central Government would not allow any Ministry to function in the State that would fail to fall in line with the exploitative policy of the Centre.—

It is in this context that we have to understand the genesis of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution and its being the only inevitable solution for the vexed problems of the State. For, the history of the earlier decades has shown unambiguously that otherwise the unconstitutional, unjustified and destructive exploitation of the State and its people could neither be stopped, much less undone.—

Under this caption (Anandpur Sahib Resolution) we shall state, how (i) the going back of the Indian leaders on their promises to create a federal structure with autonomous states, (ii) a studied attempt to prevent the Sikhs from coming into power in PEPSU or Punjab by one political manipulation or the other and, (iii) repeated centralisation of the Constitution and its working, made it inevitable for the Sikhs to reiterate their demand for an autonomous Sikh area in the form of what came to be known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.—

(i) Congress Goes Back on Promises Made: We have already given the details of promises and commitments given by the Congress leaders, from time to time, to the Sikhs and the other minorities that the Indian Constitution would be a federal structure with residuary powers with the autonomous States. But a Constitution heavily leaning towards a unitary structure was framed, even though all the Sikh representatives in the Punjab Legislature reminded the Congress of its promises and formally protested against it. So much so that the Sikh member of the Constituent Assembly refused to sign the Constitution.—

The Constitution of India contains provisions which put the States in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the Centre. For example Article 248 gives residuary powers to the Centre; Article 24 provides that the Rajya Sabha, in the national interest, can authorise the Union Parliament to pass laws with respect to State subject Article 250 authorises the Parliament to legislate on State Subject during national Emergency. Article 356 envisages President's take over of a State administration, in the event of a failure of Constitutional machinery. Article 360 makes provisions for financial Emergency; and

Article 155 gives powers to the Central Government to appoint Governors of its choice. These Articles have brought the Centre and the States to a sharp confrontation, because the Union Government purposely tries to make political interference in the day-to-day functioning of the States.—

Legitimate State functioning has been eroded by undue and excessive centralisation and extra-constitutional methods encroaching on the powers of the States. Both in the field of education and law and order, Central powers have been enhanced by including these subjects in the Central or Concurrent list. It is a known maxim that Central planning is a hidden tool completely to throttle state functioning. This is what has been done by the growing expansion of the Planning Commission and its powers of sanctioning projects and making financial allocations. The institutions of Planning Commission, Water and Power Commission, University Grants Commission (U.G.C.), etc. have been created and employed increasingly to curtail the discretion of the States to exercise freely the powers conferred on them by the Constitution. These are non-statutory and extra-constitutional bodies, with not only wide powers to make financial allocations but also with almost unfettered discretion to approve or disapprove development schemes even where such projects are exclusively within the purview and financial competence of the States concerned. A classic instance, already mentioned, of the Central delay caused by the extra-constitutional bodies of the Water and Power Commission and the Planning Commission is of the Thein Dam Scheme of 1964, with the initial estimate of seventy crore Rupees, designed to utilise the Ravi waters flowing into Pakistan. It was never approved for over two decades though in the mean time its cost multiplied from seventy crore Rupees to more than one thousand and five hundred crore Rupees.√

Similarly, the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bill introduced by Rajiv Gandhi Government in Parliament, in 1989, is yet another classic example of Central intentions, trends and designs to penetrate the administrative, social and political life of even the villages and towns in a State.√

Rajni Kothari observes : “The thunder and aplomb of the Prime Minister on the Panchayati Raj, after having undermined local and federal institutions, is no more than a propaganda gimmick that verges on being a fraud on the people.”√

At present, all irrigation and multi-purpose schemes costing more than Rs. 5 crore are required to be technically cleared by the Central Water and Power Commission and the Planning Commission. This is evidently a glaring method of unconstitutional intrusion in the jurisdiction of the states. This prompted late Prof, D.R. Gadgil, a pioneering economist and once the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission to observe : “Such stranglehold of activities by the Centre and its agencies and officials make any real progress impossible.”√

The Planning Commission came into being in March 1950, through a simple resolution adopted by the Union Cabinet with the Prime Minister as its Chairman. The Planning Commission became very powerful as an executive limb of the Central Government exercising total control over the developmental programmes of the State Governments. It began to decide what resources were to be transferred to the States. Subsequently, the Finance Commission became very peripheral. When India became independent, the provincial budgets, in most cases, were in surplus and the Central budget was in straits. But now we have large deficits in the Central budgets as well as in the State budgets.—  
In order to maintain linguistic, cultural and original identity it is essential that education

should remain a state subject. For otherwise, with education as a Central subject, it can be used as an instrument to erode and distort the cultural entity of the States. But it is not without purpose that education has been made a concurrent subject. For example, the existing historical tradition is that the martyrdom of the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur was related to the upholding of Dharma and confrontation with the Empire due to its policy of forcible conversion in Kashmir.” It is recorded that one Kirpa Ram from Kashmir came to the Ninth Master and made a complaint against forcible conversions of the Hindus in Kashmir. Thus, this is one of the important historically accepted causes of the martyrdom of the Ninth Guru; and it was so recorded by the Tenth Master himself that the martyrdom was for the protection of Hindus i.e. the “Tilak and Janju”.√

But after the transfer of education to the concurrent list, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (N.C.E.R.T.) has prescribed a textbook of history: ‘Medieval India’ by Professor Satish Chandra, former Chairman U.G.C. for class XI students, which reads as follows: ‘The Sikhs were the last to come into military conflict with Aurangzeb... However, there was no conflict between the Guru and Aurangzeb till 1675, when Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested with five of his followers, brought to Delhi and executed. The causes of this are not clear. According to some Persian accounts, the Guru had joined hands with a Pathan, Hafiz Adam, and created disturbances in the Punjab. According to Sikh tradition, the execution was due to intrigues against the Guru by some members of his family who disputed his succession and who had been joined by others. In Kashmir, the previous Governor, Saif Khan, is famous as a builder of bridges. He was a humane and broad-minded person who had appointed a Hindu to advise him in administrative matters. Stories of mass persecution by the new Governor appear to be exaggerated because Kashmir had been predominantly Muslim since the fifteenth Century.”√ In fact the ground of the connection of the martyrdom with compulsory conversions in Kashmir has been completely discounted and eliminated. Consequently, the students are bound to come to the conclusion that the Sikh historical tradition is not a fact but a fable. This has been considered a serious distortion of Sikh history and it is understood that Punjabi University, Patiala, had also addressed the N.C.E.R.T. regarding this evident fault. This is just one instance how the powers of the U.G.C. vis-à-vis the Universities and their functioning and the centralisation of education can be used to erode the regional, cultural or linguistic identities, even the State Universities are being discriminated against by the U.G.C. Of the total financial assistance of the U.G.C., 80 per cent is spent on the Central Universities, while the remaining 20 per cent is distributed among 113 State Universities.√

Here, it is not irrelevant to point out that in a multilingual country like India, irrespective of the size of the linguistic groups, the imposition of

of

of Hindi through these central bodies, does not help the process of emotional integration, rather impedes it.—

The above analysis makes it obvious that while there has been an overall centralisation of economic, administrative and political powers with the Centre, in the case of Punjab, there is a calculated attempt to denude it of its natural and economic resources and make it a subservient administrative limb of the Central Government. Even in other States

where financial and administrative erosion of state power has been far less than in the Punjab, there has been a strong demand for state autonomy.—

The Government has taken a series of steps to erode the State autonomy. For example, law and order is primarily a state subject, but the ever increasing strength of the para-military forces under the direct control of the Centre, is viewed by the States as an encroachment on their rights. The total strength of the para-military forces in 1947 was not more than two battalions (about two thousand in number). The Central Reserve Police Force (C.R.P.F.) was created under the Central Reserve Police Force Act 1949 (passed by the Constituent Assembly under the Government of India Act 1935). This force has continued to grow in its strength and functions. In addition to the C.R.P.F., other para-military forces like the Border Security Force (B.S.F.), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (I.T.B.P.), Assam Rifles, Central Industrial Security Force (C.I.S.F.), etc. have been raised since 1947. At present their total strength is 4,92,950 with an annual cost of Rupees 1262 crore as per the 1990-91 Budget.” This strength is greater than the total strength of the regular army of independent India in 1947. Quite often, the para-military forces have been used in various parts of the country to play the role of the police, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the State Governments. The worst performance of these forces could be seen in Punjab, Kashmir, Mizoram and Nagaland, the States where ethnic minorities are the worst sufferers. Protracted stay of these forces, apart from being a burden on the State economy, is bound to alienate the local population. Unmitigated repression, fake encounters and undue harassment often lead to grave consequences and deterioration of the situation still further, as in Punjab and Kashmir. The purpose and impact is evident from the fact that today about 343 Companies of para-military forces are permanently stationed in Punjab.√

In addition 300 more companies were posted in Punjab during the proposed elections on June 22, 1991, which have been postponed since then√

. Apart from this, the strength of the Punjab police as on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1991 was 56,376 with a budget provision of Rs. 202 crore for the year 1990-91.√

There has been a rapid increase in expenditure on police in the Punjab budget from 1978 onwards. In the 1978-79 Punjab budget the total number of police personnel was 28,283 with an expense of Rs. 18 crore. This number increased to 56,376, with a total burden of Rupees 202 crore in 1990-91. Ever since Indira Gandhi's time the only method to solve the political problems, has been to send an increasing number of para-military forces and, in case of their failure, to send the army to suppress its own people. Ruinous, as it has proved to be, 'Operation Blue Star' was the logical culmination of this suicidal policy. For, in the eyes of the common man, the army has a heroic image as the saviour of the people from external aggression and enemies. Its use against its civilian brothers and sisters, not only tarnishes its heroic image, converting it into that of an oppressive force but also lowers the role and morale of the army and its sense of pride in its patriotic role. The damage to the image and role of the army in a multi-regional country like India, where the army is drawn from different sections and communities of the State, is far greater both for the internal cohesion of the army and the image which it leaves with the people in the area of its operation where the people come to consider to be its role of oppression.—



Another point that reduces the states of the constituent units is the method of representation in the Upper House. As a consequence there is a wide disparity in the representation—

, 7 for Punjab as against 34 for Uttar Pradesh).—

In a truly federal constitution, representation in the Upper

House,

if at all it has to be retained, should broadly be in

proportion to the basis of the competing federal units and not on the basis of—

population. This would give virtual equality of representation to the States, so as to make the Upper House the mouth-piece of all nationalities, minorities and other groups and give them a 'participation'. The administration of the All India Services, a legacy of the British Raj, is being run by the Centre. Since their conditions of service and the right to punish them are controlled by the Centre, these services often show contempt towards the governments and the people of the States. They are a class by themselves, who are totally alienated from the masses. This has led to the emergence of an increasingly vast chasm between the rulers and the ruled. The grip of the bureaucracy on the administration is being strengthened and democratic processes are being snuffed out. There is total alienation of masses not only from the regime but also from the system and the situation is fraught with grave danger for the survival of the State and democracy.—

The role of the Governor is a legacy of the British Raj. It has lately sparked a good deal of controversy and this office has become incompatible with the democratic will of the people of the states. Even in the U.S.A., the States have their own Governors and they are the elected chief executives of the States. Whereas these Governors in India, as in the colonial times, are appointed by the President, who act on the advice of the Central Government and hold their offices depending solely on the pleasure of the latter. In actual practice, they are often appointed in recognition of their services to the ruling party at the Centre. It is well-known that the job is such where incompetent, inconvenient, or aged leaders of the ruling party are accommodated. Thus, they serve as convenient tools of the Central Party in power so as to manipulate state politics for its benefits. This office is being retained largely because it provides the Centre a necessary stick with which to beat a state back to the path chosen by the former. We shall detail how the powers of the Centrally appointed Governors have been used to subvert democratic rule in a State and utilise it for the State becoming a Centrally administered area.—

(ii) Akali Governments Not Allowed to Function : The consistent misuse of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution makes a very strong case for its deletion, whatever might have been the original idea behind its introduction. This is opposed to the spirit of the Constitution, which envisages disinterested governors. Governors—

are not like party ministers that they should go or resign, when a government falls.

But in practice the institution of the Governor has been political and the Governors also know that they have to please the political bosses since their term normally synchronises with the term of the Government at the Centre. This is something that goes outrageously against the spirit of the Constitution or democracy. For, it strikes at the very root of objectivity in so far as the Governor is obliged to view the functioning of the State Government from the angle of the political party at the Centre and not from any impartial angle, it is because of this undemocratic convention that the political Governors have, with the change of party in power at the Centre, sent

reports against the State Governments that were dismissed for the sole reason that they belonged to a party other than the one in power at the Centre. This happened both in 1977 and 1981. A state should not be deprived of the representative government simply because it is not to the liking of the Centre. Nor should the President's rule be imposed on the whims or prejudices of the Central Government.—

The use of Article 356 in relation to Akali Ministries in PEPSU and Punjab shows both the evident bias of the Centre against the Sikh majority governments and how it can be abused to throttle the democratic will of the people. For example, in 1953, when the Akali Government of Gian Singh Rarewala in PEPSU was dismissed by Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and the President's rule imposed, for the first time in the country, B.R. Ambedkar, the author of the Indian Constitution, observed in the Rajya Sabha: "The people got a very legitimate ground for suspicion, that the Government was manipulating the Articles in the Constitution for the purpose of maintaining their own party in office ✓

ill parts of India. This is a rape of the Constitution." ✓

The first Akali Ministry of Gurnam Singh, formed on March 8, 1966, after the creation of the Punjabi Suba, was removed on November 11, 1967. A minority Government under Lachhman SJBgii Gill, with the support of the Congress from outside, was brought into power on November 25, 1967, and was allowed to last—upto August 21, 1968. There after President's rule was imposed. Again on February 17, 1969, after the President's rule, an elected Akali Ministry was formed. This Ministry was allowed to function upto March, 26, 1970, when another Akali Ministry came into power which could last only upto June 13, 1971. Congress attempts to topple this Ministry continued. Ultimately in June 1971, these attempts succeeded and President's rule was imposed. There is yet another instance of the dismissal of the duly elected Akali Ministry in the mid-term, without any rhyme and reason. In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned to power at the Centre. The Akali Government led by Parkash Singh Badal had come into power on June 20, 1977. But after her return Indira Gandhi dismissed it on February 17, 1980. This dismissal was both motivated and unwarranted. The Ministry had the necessary backing in the legislature. But its "sin" in the eyes of Indira Gandhi was that a case had been filed in the Supreme Court regarding the unconstitutionality of her Award of 1976 on the Water issue. Evidently, she could not allow that all her game of despoiling Punjab should be upset. Therefore, she hastened to dismiss the Ministry by introducing the President's rule. The last Akali Ministry of Surjit Singh Barnala had to meet a similar fate, as it was not allowed to function for more than two years (June 26, 1985 to May 11, 1987). No Akali Ministry was allowed to complete its full term of five years. After a year or so, with one strategy or the other, the Centre imposed the President's rule in Punjab after the removal of the Akali Ministry. Ever since the formation of Punjabi Suba in 1966 till 1991, a span of twenty five years, the Akalis won four elections and were allowed to rule for seven years, seven months and sixteen days in all, whereas the Congress won two elections and ruled for eight years, seven months and two days To cap it all, Punjab has had the longest spell of President's rule in India. To date the total period of President's rule in this State has been seven years and seven and a half months. The State still continues to be under the President's rule. The Constitution has been amended six times to scuttle the democratic process in Punjab. ✓

- Directive principles of the State policy laid down in the Constitution have been flouted and all democratic norms thrown to the winds.—

The above facts indicate how biased and high handed has been the Central approach towards the Sikhs in Punjab, following the creation of Punjabi Suba. In no State has the President's rule been imposed and prolonged for a longer time than in Punjab. The history of Government in Punjab reveals two things. First, that the Centre would never allow any representative Government to function in the State and would demolish it by one means or the other and create a stooge Government. The second point is that, when, for one reason or the other, the creation of a stooge government was not possible, a resort to Article 356 was made and the State was governed directly by the Centre. Both these measures strictly follow the dictum of Machiavelli that the 'Prince' should either create an unrepresentative Government in the acquired territory which should only look to the 'Prince' for its assistance or he himself should go and live and administer the acquired territory. The second part of the dictum was observed in the manner of a Central nominee (Governor) being appointed to govern the State according to the dictates of the Centre.—

Here, it is necessary to restate that it was during the term of a stooge government that all the agreements relating to the unconstitutional and ruinous drain of Punjab waters and hydel power were made. So much so that when the Akali Government had filed a suit in the Supreme Court, it was dismissed and later a Congress Government was made to sign the Agreement (1981) ✓

withdraw the case from the Supreme Court. It is also very significant to note that the Electricity Agreement of 1984, as mentioned earlier, was signed not by a representative Ministry at the Punjab but by the nominee of the 'Prince' itself, namely, ✓

Governor in 1984. Obviously, no representative Government of the Punjab could ever sign such agreements or take such steps (iii) Anandpur Sahib Resolution: The origin of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution may be traced to the deliberations of the Batala Conference held on September 26-29, 1968. Sant Harch Singh in his presidential speech wanted to ensure that there was "no excessive interference" by the Union Government in the administration of the States. ✓

He called for the amendment of the Constitution to determine the Centre-States relations as the Centre, with its undue interference, wanted to restrict the powers of the State Governments. He wanted the powers of the Governors appointed by the Centre to be reduced to a considerable extent so that they did not unduly interfere in the State functioning to curtail the autonomy of the States. Baldev Parkash, President of the State unit of Bhartiya Jana Sangha, was also present at this Conference and was a party to the decisions taken over there. ✓

On December 11, 1972, the Working Committee of the Akali Dal formed a sub-Committee which, in the context of the experience of the earlier quarter century, was to 're-draw aims and objectives of the Sikh Panth'. ✓

This Committee prepared the draft, which was approved by the Working Committee of the Akali Dal at Anandpur Sahib on October 16, 1973. ✓

The Resolution was further unanimously approved and accepted by the General House of the Akali Dal, attended by over a hundred thousand members and workers at its session in Ludhiana, on October 28-29, 1978.√

By way of elaboration and concretization of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the Akali Dal proposed, inter alia, the following definite measures through different resolutions at the Ludhiana General Body meeting : “The Shiromani Akali Dal realizes that India is a federal and republican geographical entity of different languages, religions and cultures. To safeguard the fundamental rights of the religious and linguistic minorities, to fulfil the demands of the democratic traditions and to pave the way for economic progress, it has become imperative that the Indian Constitutional infrastructure should be given a real federal shape by redefining the Central and State relations and rights on the lines of the aforesaid principles and objectives.” “The concept of total revolution given by Jaya Prakash Narain is also based upon the progressive decentralization of powers. The climax of the process of centralization of powers of the States through amendments of the Constitution during the Congress regime came before the people in the form of Emergency, when the fundamental rights of all citizens were usurped. It was then that the programme of decentralization of powers ever advocated by Shiromani Akali Dal was openly accepted and adopted by other political parties including Janta Party, C.P.I. (M), A.D.M.K., etc.”√

The Preamble to the Constitution should be amended so as to incorporate the expression “federal” to characterize the Republic of India as such. This is essential to underline that the Indian System is basically of a federal nature. There should be re-distribution of subjects. The Centre should have only four subjects of Defence, Communications, Currency and Foreign Affairs. The residual powers should vest with the States. The centre should not have the power or competence to destroy or dilute the ethnic, cultural and linguistic self-identity of a federating unit. The legislature of a State should have exclusive power and competence to legislate over matters given in the re-drawn State list.√

The institution of Governor, his powers, functions and duties should be brought in line with a federal polity so that the Governor does not remain an executive agent of the Centre but becomes a truly constitutional Head of the State. Constitutional provisions which empower the Centre to dissolve a State Government and or its Assembly should have no place in a federal framework. In the event of a Constitutional break down in a State, there should be a provision for immediate holding of elections and installation of a democratic set up.√

The field of All India Services should be demarcated from the field of the State executive machinery. The executive machinery in the State should be under the direct control and discipline of the State Government itself.√

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution also took up issue of recruitment in the Defence Services on merit basis instead of State quotas, “removal of restrictions on the carrying of Kirpans by the Sikhs”, as per Article 25 of the Constitution. Among the other issues raised in the Resolution were the restoration of right of Punjab river waters and hydel power, as per the Constitution, and the inclusion of the Punjabi speaking areas in accordance with the Sachar and Regional Formulae.\*√

The most important issue raised by the Anandpur Sahib Resolution related to the Centre-State relations. It was indeed an expression of a long standing grievance of the Sikhs. This demand in view of the experience of the earlier decades after partition had become inevitable. Because the Sikhs found that under the existing Constitution there could be no means or hope of their being able to serve the socio-economic and politico-cultural interests of the Sikhs, the State and its people, Hence, autonomy as envisaged by the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was considered essential for the future well being and the development of the State.—

In fact, whereas Punjab had, as explained earlier, very compulsive reasons for making the demand for autonomy, that being the only method to undo the continuous drain and exploitation; the experience of other States like Tamil Nadu and West Bengal was no different. They too had voiced this complaint quite strongly and raised the demand. Tamil Nadu had actually appointed a Committee and its Assembly had passed a unanimous resolution on April 20, 1974, approving the recommendations of the Rajmanner Report.√

This demand was even more drastic than the one made through the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. According to the Report, the subjects relating to Defence, Foreign Policy, Inter-State communication and Currency alone should remain with the Centre.√

The States should have all other powers, including those on the concurrent list. It also recommended that an Inter-State Council should be constituted, consisting of all the Chief Ministers or their nominees, with equal representation for all the States, with the Prime Minister as its Chairman√

. No other Union Minister should be a member of the Council. In respect of any action to be taken in any matter relating to Defence, Foreign Affairs, Inter-state communications and Currency, in so far as it affects the Centre-State relations or State or States, the Inter-State Council should be consulted.” Similarly, it should have the opportunity to discuss all economic, fiscal, monetary and financial measures undertaken by the Federal Government. The recommendation of the Council should ordinarily be binding on the Centre and the States. If for any reason any such recommendation is rejected, the recommendation together with the reasons for its rejection should be laid before the Parliament and the State Legislatures.√

In fact, what Jawahar Lal Nehru had himself recommended to the Constituent Assembly in December 1946, was in no way less than the demand in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. No one ever accused Nehru or the Tamil Nadu Assembly of having committed secessionism or having tried to break up India. This being the reality and the demand put forward in Anandpur Sahib Resolution, being quite logical, natural and essential, arising out of the actual experience of the previous decades, it is only symptomatic of the approach and mind of the Centre parties and the media that while suppressing everything, they started trumpeting that this Resolution was separatist or secessionist.” Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi used it as election rhetoric and said that there was no difference between the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of the Akali Dal and the 1940 Resolution of the Muslim League, which was responsible for India’s partition.√

Akalis consistently demanded that the Constitution of India should be reviewed and recast on the federal lines so as to grant requisite autonomy to the States. The Anandpur

Sahib Resolution, which pleads for autonomous States, with the Centre retaining federal functions in respect of only Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications and Currency, is in consonance with what Pandit Jawahar La! Nehru had been urging before 1947. In addition, the Resolution is looked upon as the best way to protect Punjab's socio-economic interests and preserve Sikh culture and heritage.—

Every student of Indian politics is aware that the greater there has been the attempt at centralisation, the greater has been the ferment and discontent among the ethnic and other minorities, ending in local and state level agitations and demands for autonomy. Seen in this background and the lessons of history, it is obvious that increasing centralisation for the purpose of avoiding break up of a large state, quite often, on that very account, has led to cracks and disintegration of a centralised state. This centralisation was sought to be carried to such ludicrous proportions that, in 1989, the Congress Government under Rajiv Gandhi introduced in the Parliament a Panchayati Raj Bill, "which wanted to keep village councils under the Centre, instead of under the States."

The planning in New Delhi hardly takes into consideration local needs; in fact, it kills the initiative at the grassroots. "Like supplicants, the State Chief Ministers come to the Planning Commission, which behaves as if it condescends to accept or reject their demands.. Planning from above, as New Delhi has been doing despite the criticism, is palpably wrong. That explains the waste, corruption and political graft. Even Rajiv Gandhi admitted, though when he was out of power, that only 15% per cent of the funds allocated reached the people in the countryside."

The lesson which New Delhi should learn from Moscow

is that Centralised power makes the States feel like municipalities. "Decentralisation of power all the way down will give the people a sense of participation in the country's governance."

Robin Jeffrey observes, "If the Indian State is to survive, federalism and democracy are essential. In no other way can the State adjust to tensions of steady modernisation, in no other way except in explosions can such tensions be responded to and released."

It is our belief, that a satisfactory balance between the centrifugal and centripetal forces is essential for the health of every big organisation, state or society, more so in the modern democratic times. True federalism alone can keep India together and strengthen her from within and without. For, neither centralisation, nor the use of force can be the right means either to administer or keep together a large country like India with its numerous divisions of plurality of religions, ethnic groups, regions, languages, cultures, etc. This being the reality, 'force is not the mortar which binds together a nation or a country'.

In fact, the lesson of history, more especially recent history in Russia, is clear that any attempt at over centralisation or the maintenance of unity or homogeneity in a plural society can be not only counterproductive but ruinous under democratic conditions.—

Conclusion : We have already recorded how immediately after Independence, the Central leadership changed its mind and policies towards the Sikhs. The clue to the policy is given in the statement of Sardar Patel, as communicated by Chaudhary Chiran Singh. If that new basis of Central policy towards the Sikh is kept in view, the entire history of Punjab in the subsequent forty years becomes clear. To an outsider the new policy of the

Government would look quite incongruous and unproductive, but seen from the new approach the Central leadership had adopted, those policies howsoever destructive they may have proved to be, looked quite logical. All means were employed, economic, political, social, administrative, constitutional and even unconstitutional, to see that the Sikhs did not gain strength or power even in their homeland. Their very identity has been

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ought to be defused and their socio-economic base eroded.—

The strength of the Sikhs lies in their masses and the religious and moral orientation of their bold peasantry. The first political step was to see that the Sikhs should be perpetually kept as a—

minority in their homeland. This is evidenced by the repeated—

the structure of the Government to form a linguistic State in Punjab. This is definitional in Punjab was in contradiction to the pre-partition resolution of the Congress and its policies in the rest of the country. Second, when a truncated Punjabi Suba was created, it was made a politically and administratively an ineffective sub-state, directly under the direct administrative control of the Centre. For not only the basic subjects of hydel power and irrigation were kept in Central hands but the Central institutions of Planning Commission, Water and Power Commission, U.G.C., etc. were used to see that nothing worthwhile even in their own field of functioning could take place in Punjab without the prior approval of the Central Government. Clear political, administrative and constitutional arrangements were made to subdue and dwarf Punjab as a State.

Agriculture is the life of the Punjab masses which gives them sustenance, strength and a sense of independence. It is because of its peasantry and agriculture that Punjab has become the food bowl of India and supplies over sixty per cent of the food reserves of the country. The policy to denude Punjab of its hydel power and water by allotting over 75 per cent of its waters to non-riparian States has caused the maximum damage to the State. And, instead of its hydel power, it has to use expensive thermal power with daily dependence on coal from distant States. This is not only a crippling blow to the progress of all agriculture and industry in the State but threatens to despoil large areas of cultivable area. Apart from this, consistent economic measures have been adopted through banks, financial institutions, licensing and pricing policies to inhibit the economic and agricultural production and growth in the State. In addition, through the population formula, it has been ensured that soldiering as a profession does not become easily available to the Punjab peasant and the avenue of employment in the Defence forces is reduced drastically.—

We have already noted that in making these attacks on the political, social and economic life of Punjab, even unconstitutional means have been employed to destroy the strength of the State and its people. It is noteworthy that questions regarding territory, the population formula and the water and hydel power were purely constitutional issues and could be solved and settled judicially which was, in fact, the only course for their solution. But, these questions were kept hanging for decades. Instead ancillary communal law and order issues were promoted and raised so that the real issues may get side tracked. So much so that the constitutional issue regarding water and hydel power,

pending before the Supreme Court, was withdrawn and the matter was prolonged and complicated.—

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## **DHARAM YUDH MORCHA 1982**

### (i) Nehru Roko Morcha

During the Akali Ministry (June 20, 1977 to February 17, 1980) headed by Parkash Singh Badal, an important step for the solution of the water and hydel problem was taken. After consulting the senior most lawyers of the country, the Akali Government filed, in 1978, a case with the Supreme Court to challenge the validity of Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act.—

The Central Government was fully cognizant of the fact that the Act was unconstitutional and the Supreme Court would obviously give a decision in favour of the Punjab State. Since on the same constitutional issue they could not give one ruling regarding disputes in other States and a contrary ruling of law in the case of Punjab. To frustrate this attempt for a constitutional solution, Indira Gandhi, as soon as she came into power in 1980, took two steps. For no reason whatsoever, even though the Ministry had come with a mandate from the people and enjoyed majority in the State Assembly, she dismissed the Punjab Ministry and introduced President's rule. This was to prepare the ground for the return of the Congress Ministry in Punjab. Elections were held during President's rule and Congress Ministry, headed by Darbara Singh was formed in Punjab. As the issues of water, hydel power, territory, etc. were of basic and continuing importance for the well being of the State and its people, the Akalis resorted to the constitutional path of representing to the Centre for the redressal of the injustices done to the Sikhs, the state and its people.—

At least, twenty six rounds of meetings of Akali representatives with the Centre and Indira Gandhi were held√

. Out of these there were ten tripartite meetings in which opposition leaders were also invited✓

. The Akali Dal had finalised a number of demands, which included economic, political and religious issues. Major demands put forward by the Akali Dal were as under “

(a) The most important demand was for the restoration of river waters as per constitutional, national and international norms, based on the riparian principles. This was the major issue discussed at these meetings.—

(b) Regarding the demarcation of Punjabi speaking areas, the Akalis wanted the application of the Sachar and Regional Formulae, which had effectively operated in the State with the consent of all concerned till 1966 and had the sanction of the Parliament. This demarcation had the full acceptance and support of the people, the legislators and Ministers from the two areas.—

(c) The abolition of the unconstitutional quota system, based on the population of a State, introduced in the recruitment to the armed forces. The policy was considered unconstitutional, being violative of Articles 15 and 16,

of the Indian Constitution that bar the making of distinction on the basis of the place of birth of a person for entry to any public service.—

(d) The carrying of Kirpan and its possession is a constitutional right of the Sikhs as provided in Article 25 of the Constitution of India and no restriction could be placed on it.—

(e) On the issue of the capital city of Chandigarh, the Akalis demanded the same yardstick to be applied to Punjab which had already been applied while handing over Bombay to Maharashtra, Madras to Tamil Nadu and Simla to Himachal Pradesh. In all these cases the capital cities were to remain with the parent States, but in the case of Punjab alone its capital city was made a Union Territory with the Punjab Government as the Centre's tenant.—

(f) Another important demand was the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution for political autonomy based on the pre-Independence promises to the Sikhs, who felt it to be the only way Punjab could stop its exploitation.—  
Of the most crucial significance was the issue of water and hydel power, which defied a negotiated settlement as the Akalis did not want to compromise Punjab's constitutional and riparian rights over its river waters and hydel power. As mentioned earlier, the Central Government was afraid of the anticipated judicial verdict on this issue because of the clear and known provisions of the Constitution which no court could ignore.—

The Akalis had argued before the Prime Minister's team that water was the greatest wealth of Punjab as it had no sea-coast, no natural resources,✓

no coal, oil or iron ore. Nor was there any major industry in Punjab. Loss of its water and hydel energy would be the biggest setback to the State and its people. However, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi played a ruse with the negotiators. On the one hand she kept them at bay by prolonging the negotiations, on one ground or the other. On the other hand, she got the case on Punjab river waters withdrawn

From the Supreme Court by pressurising Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh into having an agreement on the Punjab waters, which was ruinous for its future interests. The enormity of injustice in the Agreement (1981) was that it not only endorsed the unconstitutional act of Indira Gandhi of 1976 by giving almost equal shares to Punjab and Haryana out of 7.2 M.A.F. of Punjab waters, but also allotted 8.60 M.A.F. of Punjab waters to Rajasthan, which was never a party to the issue, either under the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966, or under the Award of 1976 and which had no legal, moral or constitutional right whatsoever to Punjab waters. Following the Agreement, the case filed by the Akali Ministry about the sole constitutional rights of Punjab to its waters and hydel power, was withdrawn by the Congress Government of Punjab. One wonders, if in the entire history of inter-state disputes especially relating to water and hydel power, such an indefensible step had ever been taken to throttle the constitutional path and course of justice. It is indeed extremely unfortunate that persons, politicians and mediators who glibly talk of constitutional methods, have just turned a blind eye to the enormity of this high-handed step which forms the very cause and base of the entire subsequent struggle and troubled history of Punjab. For, the steps clearly showed that both the constitutional path and the method of negotiations to seek justice had deliberately been barred for the Sikhs. Ruinous damage to Punjab had been done. The deadlock suited Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's designs. Her reluctance to follow the constitutional path and calculatedly to exploit Punjab was clear.—

It was at this stage that the Akalis woke up to the realities of the situation and the working of the mind of the Centre. Indira Gandhi had virtually banged the door against the Akali negotiators and further hastened to lay the foundation of S.Y.L. Canal in Haryana on April 8, 1982, at village Kapuri on the border of the two States.√

It was almost an unethical trick of Indira Gandhi to go on negotiating the water issue with the Akalis, lull them into the belief that she wanted an honest negotiated settlement and on the other hand, suddenly to call on their back a meeting of the three Chief Ministers to conclude the issue in a single sitting. Thus she succeeded in stabbing the Akalis, who were left with no choice except to launch a Morcha against the construction of this Canal. In this Nehru Roko Morcha (agitation for the stoppage of the digging of the illegal Canal, on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1982), the Communists also joined the struggle√

but only to back out when it suited them.—

It was extensively argued at all levels that the digging of the Canal would jeopardise the interests of millions of Sikh farmers of Punjab and would completely shatter the agricultural and industrial economy of the State. It must be noted that the Centre's anxiety to camouflage its unjust and illegal Award under the Inter-State Agreement (1981) and to avoid the impending verdict of the Supreme Court, was so great that it would not wait even for the conclusion of its talks with the Akalis. As was obvious, the talks broke down since the Centre presented a fait accompli and the Akalis felt cheated on an issue which meant the ruin of Punjab. In dealing with the Akali Dal, Indira Gandhi could never ignore



the communal angle and the partisan interests of the Hindu States and areas. As we have stated already, the pro-Hindu factor had always been present in her calculations. She was particularly keen to maintain her Durga image and in her anxiety to help the Hindu States, did not refrain from hitting the Sikhs. However, confrontation with the Sikhs helped to enhance her prestige as a fighter for purely a Hindu cause. This shows both what the North Indian masses cherished, by and large, and her thinking, trend and communal policy. Similarly, because of communal interests and party discipline, the Punjab Hindus, always fell in line with the Central leadership, however, ruinous or detrimental the step may have been to the interests of Punjab. It is an unfortunate reality that no all India Party has been able to rise above partisan communal considerations while trying to judge Punjab issues.

While the State units of the Congress in other parts of the country vehemently took up the cause of their respective States, the Congress in Punjab toed the communal line of the Centre, thus betraying its own peviple. Here it is note-worthy that not only in Punjab but also in Jammu and Kashmir, the behaviour of the State units of the Congress follows the same pattern. These are the States where the Hindus are not in majority and the interests of the Sikh and Muslim majorities are involved. Here the State units of the Congress or for that matter any all India party, would shy away from espousing genuine regional interests, that might, even inci-dently, benefit the communities other than the Hindus. Demands relating to the other communities are, often, dubbed as anti-national and are viewed as a danger to the country's unity and integrity.—

Here, it would be important to mention the role of the Cong-√

and other regional and national parties in a dispute between Ike two riparian States of Tamil Nadu and Karnatka over the distribution of Cavery waters. Significantly on this issue, “the ting party and the opposition in the D.M.K. ruled Tamil Nadu : as itrongly united as are the ruling party and the Janta Dal opposition in the Congress ruled Karnatka.”√

We would also like to give another extract from the recent newspaper reporting to prove our point of view further: “It seems clear that Mr. Virendra Patil, Chief Minister of Karnatka, is set to take the Cavery river waters dispute to the streets in the event of an adverse judgement in the review petition filed in the Supreme Court by Karnatka on May 16, 1990.—

As the consensus has emerged among all political parties in the State on this issue, following an all party conference, there is every likelihood of the dispute snowballing into a major State wide agi-tation. The dispute has dragged on for over 20 years, and neither party Karnatka or Tamil Nadu © is willing to be seen as a loser.”√

As noted earlier, it is relevant to state that whereas Karnatka and Tamil Nadu are both co-riparian States and their disputes have to be dealt with by the judicial process of the Inter-State Tribunal under Article 262 of the Constitution, yet all political parties of each State are united to back the interests of their own State and no Central party is issuing a fiat to its local branch to follow the constitutional

path and not to demonstrate in the streets. The contrast of communal bias is so glaring in the all India parties; that at the time of Indira Gandhi's forcing an unfair Agreement (1981) on Punjab to endorse her unconstitutional Award (1976), and withdrawing the case from the Supreme Court and thereby frustrating the constitutional path and pursuing partisan communal interests, not a single all India party raised any objection or voice against the injustice nor suggested that the only right and logical course was to refer the issue to the Supreme Court, Nor has the media or any of its member, during the quarter century after 1966, ever written that the evident solution of a constitutional issue was a reference to the Supreme Court. Infact, even letters written to the editors of the various dailies suggesting a reference to the Supreme Court as the only solution, were never published. This shows the stone wall of communal prejudice; the Sikhs have to face in relation to the injustice done to them. This made it plain that in India, Akalis were the only party who till then had faith in the Supreme—

Court and in following the constitutional path. And if such facts and approach of the Central parties have consequential impact on the Sikhs, the disinterested historian cannot fail to note why the course of events has come to its present stage.

What we seek to emphasise is that Central policies aim at deliberate despoliation. In Punjab the Centre, which has no authority whatsoever over Punjab waters and hydel power under the constitution, has diverted more than 75% of available Punjab waters to non-riparian States. Instead of the stooge Congress Governments of Punjab representing against this deprivation and filing a case in the Supreme Court against the unconstitutional step of the Centre they willingly became a party to the denuding of Punjab resources. The contrast of this action with that of the Congress Government of Karnataka who have issued Ordinance to stop the flow of water even to riparian Tamil Nadu and that too against the direction of the Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunal set up at the direction of the Supreme Court, is so obvious

. It is equally contrasting that whereas the Congress Government withdrew the case that had been filed by the earlier Akali Government

set aside the executive order of the Prime Minister, unconstitutionally transferring Punjab waters to non-riparian States, thereby making the unconstitutional drain to non-riparian States a fait accompli, the Congress Government of Karnataka has refused to abide by the direction even of the Tribunal mentioned above. For

feel that the direction is damaging to the riparian interests of Karnataka\*, Equally contrasting is the conduct of the Central Government in the two cases. Evidently, the entire Punjab agitation and problems would have been avoided and solved if the Centre had agreed to refer the water issue to the Supreme Court as mandated by the Akalis. But it declined to do so for almost twenty years since 1966. This shows that though the Central Government was all the time aware of the realities and injustice involved yet, it was, because of communal prejudices out to make—

stitutional drain and ruinous damage to Punjab. On the hand, as soon as the Karnataka Government has stopped the—

water, the Centre has within a week made a Presidential reference to the Supreme Court for its solution. Further, while in the Cavery case the Centre is unwilling to enforce the verdict or direction of the Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunal between the two riparian States, in the case of Punjab, the Centre made a special amendment, which to us seems apparently unconstitutional, so as to force a reference of the Punjab issue to the Tribunal, even though the dispute is not between the two riparian States and, for that reason, is beyond the jurisdiction of the Tribunal which under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 can take cognizance only of an issue concerning inter-state waters, which Punjab rivers are not.—

Here it would be relevant to quote a statement of the Punjab Congress (I) President, Beant Singh regarding the construction of the Sutluj Yamuna Link Canal. The statement gives us a glimpse of the attitude of the Congress Party towards the Punjab waters issue: “He clarified that his party had no concern with the anti-Satluj Yamuna Link Canal campaign and would not involve itself in any controversy pertaining to this carrier channel. The Congress (I) would not involve itself in any campaign to stop the construction of the SYL, the foundation of which was laid by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.”√

This statement clearly reflects the subservience and the anti-Punjab stance of the Punjab Congress. In the case of Punjab, the Congress Chief Ministers always became the willing tools of the Centre to sacrifice the interests of the State. They were, invariably, the Central nominees or stooges always looking to the Centre to safeguard their positions. It happened in the case of Giani Zail Singh, who never contested the unconstitutionality of Indira Gandhi’s Award (1976) on waters. Cast in the same mould was Darbara Singh, who made an Agreement (1981) on the issue of waters and withdrew the case from the Supreme Court. How is it that while for decades on end the Centre could not have any agreement made between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, it had effected overnight an Agreement (1981) between Punjab and the two non-riparian States. The reason is obvious, namely, Punjab always had a stooge Government whenever its betrayal of interests took place.—

From the above, it is abundantly clear that whether it was the Central Government, the all India parties or the media, no one, even while knowing full well the injustice done to Punjab, ever tried even to suggest that the constitutional course should be followed and the matter settled judicially, which was the only right and speedy course of action. On the other hand, every party while sidetracking the real issue, raised shrill voices about law and order, separatism, communalism or the like. It is in this context that the various moves and developments of the Central Government in Punjab for confusing, camouflaging and diverting the public attention from real issues should be understood and seen. Every attempt was made to hide the realities and instead to raise communal problems that were non-issues and served merely to misrepresent the truth and misdirect public attention.—

Thus, this struggle between the Centre and the Akalis became the last ditch battle for both the sides. Because, if the Akalis won, not only the economic erosion of Punjab would have been averted, but it would have also exposed the Congress and seriously jeopardised its political future in the State. For the same reason, it was clear to Congress and other all India parties that the Sikhs were conscious of the situation and the big chunk

the Centre had taken of the economic cake of Punjab, could be successfully swallowed only if it could demolish the Akali Party and its support base. Little did Prime Minister Indira Gandhi realise that any attempt to weaken the mainstream Akali leadership would strengthen the forces of extremism in the border State and would legitimise them in the eyes of some of the masses, especially because they were fully conscious of the ruinous effect of Central policies on Punjab agriculture, industry and their well being.—

We have already indicated the Central policy, approach and attitude towards the Punjab. We have also stated some of the economic, political and legislative moves to undermine the agricultural and industrial well-being of the State and its people. We shall now state some of the subversive, overt and covert moves of the Central Government to erode the religious, social and—

ive strength of the Sikhs.— (ii) Government Interference in Sikh Religious Affairs :

Government knew full well that the strength of the Akali Party and the Sikhs was drawn from its religious base in the Gurdwaras and the control of the S.G.P.C. With the Sikhs, politics and religion have always been closely linked since the times of the Gurus. As such, while the Government felt that the entire opposition to its political and economic designs came from the Sikhs and the Akali Party, it made a plan to gain the control of the S.G.P.C. from its adversaries, the Akali Party. It was of no consideration to the Congress or, for that matter, to any other all India political party that it would be very damaging both to its image as a supposed secular party and its claimed considerations for the interests of the religious minorities. Nationalism, which is identified with Hindu nationalism was used as a convenient ploy to dub minority voice as communalism. While the Akali Party was castigated for mixing religion and politics, the ruling party never refrained from communalising its own approach. Its anxiety to induct its own proteges into the S.G.P.C., became very obvious when it decided and directed Congressmen to contest S.G.P.C. elections with the help, support and influence of its Government and administration in the State. This policy was initiated first in 1954 S.G.P.C. elections”. However, the attempt failed. Despite this reverse, the policy was continued again in 1960 believing that at the time of earlier elections, the Chief Minister was a Hindu (Bhim Sen Sachar) and perhaps that might have swayed the electorate in favour of the Akalis. In 1960, the Chief Minister was Partap Singh Kairon, who tried as effectively as possible to organise elections in favour of the Congress candidates. The verdict was both the times clear and emphatic and reflected two things. It revealed how the mind of the rural Punjab worked and how it was conscious of Central policies, discrimination and injustice against the Sikhs. It also showed that Congress rule in Punjab was purely dependent on its Hindu majority in the joint Punjab.

The Congress participated in S.G.P.C. elections in 1954 and 1960, under the banners of Khalsa Dal and Sadh Sangat Board

respectively.√

Even an anti-religious party like the Communists also contested these Gurdwara elections under the banner of Desh Bhagat Party.√

The Akalis under the leadership of Master Tara Singh contested the S.G.P.C. elections, in 1960, on the plank of Punjabi Suba.√

Chief Minister Partap Singh Kairon, with the support of Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, along with the Communists, formed the Sadh Sangat Board to oppose the Akalis to establish that the Sikhs were not for Punjabi Suba and would not accept any such forces to administer their religious shrines. The mandate of this election was very clear and overwhelming against this unholy and unprincipled alliance of the Congress and the Communists to have control of the management of the Gurdwaras. The Akali Dal won 132 out of the 140 elected seats\*, and the Sadh Sangat Board could get only four seats and the remaining four went to the independents. The election results were interpreted as a clear verdict in favour of Punjabi Suba and the right of the Sikhs to manage their religious affairs without any outside intervention.—

Similarly, the interference of the Centre in the management and the administration of the Delhi Gurdwaras became well known. Many a time, the elections of the officebearers of the DSGMC had been postponed to accommodate the pro-Congress leader Jathedar Santokh Singh√

, who did not fulfil the eligibility of educational qualification. Section 16(3) of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee Act (DSGMC) read: “That a person would not be eligible for election as President or hold any other office unless he was a matriculate, or had passed the higher secondary examination of a recognised university or board, or was a Giani; or possessed any other equivalent qualification.”√

As the elections to the Managing Committee of the DSGMC were due to be held on January 22, 1981, the Government decided to promulgate an Ordinance making the necessary changes in the Act. This Ordinance was approved by the Union Cabinet at an emergency meeting called by the Prime Minister and was signed by the President the very next day. The Ordinance, called the Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras (Amendment; Ordinance, 1981, omitted subsection (3) of Section—

16 and thereby waived the eligibility condition regarding the minimum educational qualification for the officebearers of DSGMC√

. After the promulgation of the Ordinance Jathedar Santokh Singh, a nominee of the Centre, was elected as the President of the DSGMC, in June, 1981.” This shows how the thinking of the Central Government works and the speed with which it seeks to accomplish its own design in openly interfering in the religious affairs of a minority. As we have seen, the print media in general and the Government controlled media in particular have generally failed to take note of such contradictions and communal policies of the Congress and the Communists, whenever they attempted to denigrate the Sikhs and the Akalis with one stratagem or the other.—

Having made two attempts to subvert Sikh policies from within and having failed dismally the Congress neither made a subsequent attempt in this direction nor did it hold periodic elections at the right time so as to enable the electorate to express their verdict correctly. In Sikh parlance, politics and religion being a clear combination, Government understanding as to what were the political views of the Sikh masses became clear enough. Those were the days of the Akali agitation for Punjabi Suba. Since pre-partition, the Sikhs had remained disciplined and maintained their cohesion under the unquestioned selfless and able leadership of Master Tara Singh. It is a great tribute to his ability and selflessness that he not only kept the community well-knit and in good spirits but also

kept its elau and morale at a high level. The manner in which later leaderships have been changing after a few years and the wa/ in which political leadership and influence have been exploited for personal ends in the country and in all parties by itself is a high tribute to the stature and character of this man. And it is also a very significant feature of the Sikh masses that they would not call on any man of lapse in his character to command their respect and leadership. Th√

s also reminds one of the editorial in the Tribune, written on the demise of this great leader of the Sikhs, which reads as under: ' The tension filled months before the partition

ave Master Tara Singh's acti"vities a wider significance. It was primarily his bravery, courage and—

dynamism which prevented the whole of Punjab from going© to Pakistan. It is a great pity that in the post©partition years, the various Congress Ministries did not come upto his expectations, henceforth he became an inveterate critic of the Organisation, in fact, a 'rebel'. He continued to agitate for Punjabi Suba and moved from 'struggle' to 'struggle', every time bringing his goal a little nearer."√

Om Prakash Kahol, in a perceptive article, 'Master Tara Singh : A Tribute' in the Tribune, on this occasion wrote "what he advocated was unity; but what his opponents demanded was uniformity. The die hards among Hindus wanted to iron out all angularities by a steam©roller , leaving no room for regional and sec"tional diversities. This basis of Hindu©Sikh unity was not acceptable to one who believed in unity in diversity."√

Master Tara Singh pos"essed an indomitable spirit and would go down in history as a leader who had the courage of his convictions. He led a simple and austere life and never cared for personal comforts. He never hesitated to court suffering and hardship for the causes that were dear to him. He was a devout patriot and an ardent fighter for whatever causes he espoused and was always motivated by a spirit of public service. He spanned almost five decades of Punjab's history. In the evening of his life, Master Tara Singh found himself desperately alone; the comrades on whom he had depended and who were in fact his own creations, could not resist the lure of the loaves and fishes of office.—

(iii)The Nirankari Issue :—

During the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Sikhs had come to political power in Punjab. During this phase, as always happens in time of victory, many Hindus embraced Sikhism. Though this was hardly the work of any Sikh mission, naturally, most of the converts of convenience could not overnight shed their old Hindu practices and customs, many of which went contrary 10 the injunctions of the Gurus and the Sikh tradition. It is in tils background that Baba Dayal (1783 to 1850) ot Peshawar, appeared and started his missionary work in the early days of the ©i"e of Ranjit Singh.√

- He promoted Sikh practices and denoun©scfi idolatry and other Brahmanical practices. He insisted on the strict observance of the Bani of the Guru Granth and other injunc"tions of the Gurus. He especially condemned the worship of a living person as a Guru by his often repeated saying :—

“Dhan Nirankar; Deh Dhari Sab Khawar.”\*√

(Hail the One Creator, Worship of mortals is futile).—

Baba Dayal wanted that the Sikh marriage ceremony as required should be simple and performed in the presence of the Guru Granth by the recitation of Bani. This revivalist movement received a great fillip during the stewardship of Darbara Singh (d. 1870), the successor of Baba Dayal.—

The Nirankaris had kept one Boota Singh (1883©1944), as a paid hymn singer at its Rawalpindi headquarters.√

He was removed from his job because of certain reported personal lapses on his part, which were considered incongruous in a missionary organisation, whose leaders had a high moral character. Boota Singh, no doubt, had musical talent and tried to set up a rival organisation at Peshawar but failed. This group who called themselves Sant Nirankaris had hardly a religious base in the normal sense. One of Boota Singh's ardent devotees was Avtar Singh, who ran a bakery shop first in Peshawar and later in Rawalpindi. Boota Singh nominated him as his successor in 1943. Avtar Singh, apart from the old practice of Kirtan, took to speech and writings to propagate his cult. After partition, he shifted to Delhi and got his organisation registered in 1948. Avtar Singh was succeeded by his son Gurbachan Singh in 1963 as the head of the Nirankaris.\*√

Later the Nirankaris brought out a publication called ‘Avtar Bani’ and their head started claiming himself to be a godman. This √

book” (Avtar Bani) contained certain statements like the following :—

“So far as the question of long hair and beard is concerned, if you deem all this an essential feature of Sikhism, then, I am prepared to settle the issue just now by calling in a barber to cut off the hair and beard and would direct my followers also to do likewise”. The Nirankari head proclaimed himself to be a prophet and incarnation of Guru Nanak in the following lines :—

“Gurbachan is the world's Guru,—  
He Himself is Avtar,—  
Both determinate and indeterminate God—

“He is dwelling in all.” He adds,—

“How sad that I was not bom,—

In the age when Guru Nanak had descended on earth.—

One day, someone gave the good news to me in my village,—

that a godman (refers to the birth of his son Gurbachan Singh)—

Had appeared in Delhi as an incarnation of Guru Nanak”.√

A few excerpts from the writings of the Nirankaris are noteworthy : “How can any sensible person call the writings in this big bulky miscellany (refers to Sikh scripture Guru Granth) as Divine Revelation? True, it contains didactic material but nothing more.”√

Gurbachan Singh wrote: “I the lowliest of the lowlies, was much devoted to diligent study of the Sikh scripture. This craze is now all over.”√

“While Guru Gobind Singh had ordained only Five Beloved Ones while creating the Khalsa, T Avtar Singh, have now ordained Seven Beloved Ones.”√

A Nirankari wrote about Gurbachan Singh, in the ‘Illustrated Weekly of India’, “Before I was converted to this new faith, I was an agnostic (i.e. a misguided Sikh), Gurbachan Singh has completely changed my psyche. I now freely consume beef and pork. I also freely indulge in alcoholic drinks This makes no deleterious effect on my inner purity and spiritual progress.”√

The above statements show that while Nirankaris themselves claim no connection with Sikhism and have numerous non-Sikhs & their followers, their writings are clearly directed against the Sikhs and denigrate their Gurus and religion.—

It has been alleged that the Nirankaris of Delhi were clandestinely supported and promoted by the Government in pursuance of its policy to create schism and ideological confusion among the Sikhs. It is an important fact that, except for some Arya Samajists in the seventies of the nineteenth century, never has any Hindu, Muslim or Christian spoken a word against the lofty spiritual status of the Sikh Gurus. Hence, the broadcast of insinuations directed against the Sikhs came as a painful surprise to the community. Apart from seriously hurting the Sikh sentiments, all this gave rise to a mounting suspicion or even conviction that the Delhi based Centre of these Nirankaris had official backing, because otherwise no one could dare to attack the Sikhs so openly. Many other facts and factors also strengthened this suspicion. A write up by a prominent journalist, Sat Pal Baghi of Ferozepur in the Indian Express is revealing. It observes :—

“The genesis of the real trouble between the Nirankaris and Akalis goes back to the years when Mrs. Indira Gandhi headed the Union Government. She wanted to weaken the Shiromani Akali Dal, but found that Akalis could not be brought to heel. She thought of an elaborate plan to strengthen the √

Nirankari f

sect not only in Punjab but throughout the country and abroad. Official patronage was extended to the Nirankaris, much to the chagrin of Akalis who have always considered the Nirankaris as heretics.—

In pursuit of this policy of divide and rule, Mrs. Gandhi personally gave clearance for a diplomatic passport to be issued to the Nirankari Chief and the Indian High Commissioners and Ambassadors abroad were instructed to show him respect and regard. This was meant to help the sect to improve its image and increase its following abroad. During Mrs Gandhi’s regime, the Nirankaris were known to be receiving financial help from secret Government funds, not open to audit or scrutiny by Parliament.—

During Emergency the recalcitrant attitude of the Akalis—

india commits suicide;

further annoyed Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Sanjay Gandhi. Efforts for building a parallel organisation among the Sikhs of Punjab as a counterblast to the Akalis were intensified. At the instance of Mrs. Gandhi, the Congress regime began giving great official patronage to the Nirankari sect. Mr. H. S. Chhina, I.A.S., a staunch Nirankari, was appointed Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government in 1976.—



As a result of open official patronage and support this sect got a considerable boost within the administrative set-up of the Punjab Government. Mr. Chhina appointed Mr. Niranjjan Singh, I.A.S., as Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur. Mr. Niranjjan Singh tried his best to enlarge the field of operation of the Nirankaris. It is during this period that Sant Bhindranwale took up the challenge posed by this growing sect.”√

The write-up provides a clear insight into Indira Gandhi’s consistent policy of damaging the Sikhs culturally and socially as well. In fact, by doing so she was toeing the line of her predecessors, Nehru and Patel, who had always disliked the talk of a separate Sikh identity. This reported continuous support of the Organisation by the Government is also evidenced by the fact that, during a very short span, the Nirankaris established 35 branches”

27 abroad and the rest in India. The total property of the Mandal runs into several thousand crores. The Mandal has a paramilitary organisation called Seva Dal, which has membership of over 7,000, headed by a Commander called Mukr. v ^ Shishak.√

The above two facts about this Organisation are very unusual; 2.” raise some pertinent questions. First, could the phenomenal increase in the influence, prestige and resources of this sect, be explained; without its having patronage of the Government? The second, ¿ ;;. was the vicious attack of this group directed against the Sikhs √

their institutions? Few truly religious groups make their way with an unethical and almost an irreligious resort to Against a sister community. Secondly, as the organisation and—

activities were all Delhi based, the Central Administration could not remain unaware of everything. And yet, the group received increasing support from the Government. Hence, it was not without reason that among other traditions, especially the Sikhs, a conviction started growing that the Delhi Nirankaris were a brain child of the ruling elite and Government support to it was a part of its policy to attack, erode and create division in the Sikh community. The Sikhs felt that since the created hostility between them and the Nirankaris could benefit only the Government, it was really a sinister design of the Central policy to undermine the Sikh religion, its tenets and institutions, and that the Nirankaris were being used as a cat’s paw for its political ends.—

The provocative utterances and activities brought the Nirankaris into open clash with the Sikhs. In 1951, at Amritsar, the then Nirankari Chief Avtar Singh, held a ‘Satsang’ attended by his about two hundred followers. Some Sikhs clashed with the Nirankari Chief as he had committed an act of sacrilege by proclaiming himself a Guru in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib.√

- These

bickerings continued and ultimately the two important Sikh organisations known as the Dam Dami Taksal and the Akhand Kirtni Jatha also came forward to confront the attack of the Nirankaris√

(iv) Dam Dami Taksal and the Akhand Kirtni Jatha :f

There is a Sikh seminary called Dam Dami Taksal which has been well known for preaching and missionary work and for proficiency in the exposition of doctrines of

Guru Granth. This Taksal traces its lineage to Baba Deep Singh, a devout follower and a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh. He was both a scholar and a martyr. When the Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Abdali had assigned Punjab to his son Tairaur in 1757, Baba Deep Singh led an army against the invaders to prevent the desecration of Darbar Sahib.

\*. This Organisation has, over the centuries, been primarily an important Centre of Sikh religious education, training resident students in the Sikh tradition and culture. These graduates of profound religious commitment took up the—

work of Sikh mission in the later part of their lives. The Head of this mission has always been a nominee of the earlier Head who has to dedicate all his life to the work of the Taksal.—

Because of this background both the organisation and its Head command high respect in the Sikh religious life. So much so that Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale (1932-1977),

the predecessor of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1947-1984) was given a State funeral by the Akali Ministry at the time of his death on August 20, 1977. Kartar Singh had some formal college education, before he joined the Dam Dami Taksal.

Sant Kartar Singh got a resolution passed by the S.G.P.C. on November 18, 1973, condemning the various anti-Sikh activities of the Delhi Nirankaris.

The resolution asked the Central Government to take cognizance of the provocative postures of the Nirankaris. The attention of the Government was also drawn to the undue importance given to Baba Gurbachan Singh by the Indian High Commissions and Embassies during his visits abroad.

“ The resolution took exception to the misuse of their official position by the Nirankari officers with regard to the propagation of their mission and bringing thereby people into their fold. There were many instances of people joining the Nirankari fold to get undue favours from senior Nirankari officers. A P.C.S. officer is said to have written a secret note to the Government about the increasing influence of the Nirankaris in the Civil Secretariat of the Punjab Government.

This was a time when a top Nirankari, Niranjan Singh, I.A.S., was posted as Deputy Commissioner, Gurdaspur. As Deputy Commissioner, Gurdaspur, Niranjan Singh literally made his official residence as Nirankari headquarters. Any one coming for administrative favours was allegedly asked to join the Nirankari sect. The situation had become so bad that there was a C.I.D. report against him which warned that there was a possibility of Sikh-Nirankari clashes in the district. But no efforts were made to curtail his activities by the then State Government headed by Giani Zail Singh because the Chief Secretary, Hardev Singh Cheena,

was a Nirankari. The anti-Sikh activities of the—

Nirankaris were resented by the members of the Dam Dami Taksal, whose headquarters were located at Chowk Mehta in the Gurdaspur district. The tension that had been building up for quite some time, resulted in clashes at Batala, Sri Hargovindpur, Pathankot, Qadian, Ghuman and Gurdaspur between the Nirankaris

and the followers of Sant Kartar Singh. Clashes were also reported from Tarn Taran, Ludhiana and Ropar.”—

It was during the phase of confrontation between the Nirankaris and the Taksal that Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale met with an accident on 16<sup>th</sup> of August, 1977 and breathed his last after four days. Before his death, the Sant had appointed Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, because of his religious zeal, as his successor to lead the Taksal√

. Young Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale assumed the leadership of the Taksal at a very crucial juncture. He became the fourteenth Head of the Taksal at the age of thirty.—

Soon he gathered a large following especially among the Sikh youth, who had been in search of a charismatic leader for the articulation of their socio-political grievances. He was instrumental in generating the enthusiasm of the Sikh youth through the medium of revivalism and Amrit Parchar. He geared his activities to counteract the anti-Sikh activities of the Nirankaris and others.—

Intensely loved and intensely hated, Bhindranwale was the most talked about man of his times, who was looked upon both as a villain and a hero. There were many who wanted to see him dead while there were many who bestowed their absolute faith in him and were willing to die for him. His religious training gave him the courage to say and do what he considered right and even to hazard his life if his conviction demanded. His transparent sincerity created a strong emotional bond between him and his followers. A man of unflinching zeal and firm convictions, Bhindranwale could not succumb to the pressure of big wigs in the Akali Party nor could he be manipulated by the authorities to serve their ends. Those who tried to mend him or bend him to suit their designs underestimated his tremendous will and ultimately lost their own ground.—

He never became their tool. People who promoted his cause or helped him to rise to prominence were disillusioned, when he refused to play the second fiddle to them and declined to tread the path laid down for him. Paradoxical though it may seem, they became his unwilling tools. Thousands listened to him with rapt attention at the Manji Sahib gatherings. He had tremendous power to mobilise the masses. His charisma and eloquence overshadowed Longowal, who just maintained the facade of being the Morcha dictator.—

Congress was also keen to project Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, in order to counter the Akalis, and to create schism in the Sikh ranks. The manoeuvres of Zail Singh and Sanjay Gandhi, with the consent of Indira Gandhi, were aimed at neutralising the Akalis as a political force.√

The role of the Congress in giving tacit support to Bhindranwale has been the subject of controversy√

. But a few facts are evident. It is well known that Bhindranwale put up candidates for the S.G.P.C. elections in 1978, who contested with the Congress support.

Bhindranwale is also reported to have extended his support to some Congress candidates during 1977 elections,\*” His close connections with Santokh Singh, President, D.G.P.C., a protege of the Congress, are within the knowledge of everyone.

However, in the absence of access to secret Government records, it is very difficult to say how Bhindranwale agreed to align himself with the Congress during the S.G.P.C. elections i.e. whether it was due to his personal desire to improve the management of Sikh shrines or as a reaction against the Akalis, who, many felt, were mismanaging the Gurdwaras. But from all accounts it is evident that his primary motivation was his religious zeal that brought the Taksal and him in the religious-political field.—

The introduction of Bhindranwale in Sikh religious and political affairs can be understood by taking two extremely important facts into consideration. Then only we can easily grasp the course of Akali Morcha from 1980 onwards. The first is the position of the use of force for a righteous cause in Sikh ideology.—

Second, a continuous attempt by the Government to communalise the atmosphere so as to lead to incidents of violence. The aim ultimately was to try, on the one hand, to justify state violence and repression before the rest of the country on the seeming ground that it had no option but to destroy the religious base of the Sikhs, and, on the other hand, calculatedly to make two kinds of moves, one of avoiding and side tracking every possibility of solving the real problems of the State and, on the other, of taking further measures that it knew would only escalate violence and communalism.—

On the first issue it is a part of the Sikh history that Massa Rangar who attacked the Darbar Sahib and desecrated it, became the subject of attack by Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh. Similarly, Shaheed Baba Deep Singh's attack on Amritsar, in ITS'?, also followed the possession of Darbar Sahib by Taimur, son of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Incidentally, the Taksal is an old institution and traces its lineage from the same Shaheed Baba Deep Singh. In the like manner, the devout Namdharis' attack on the butchers for innovating the practice of openly slaughtering kine in the holy city of Amritsar, after the annexation of Punjab, is another instance of the same Sikh approach. Not insignificant is the fact that the Sikhs under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Bhakna, a devout Sikh, organised the Ghadr rebellion, which had two outstanding Sikh mystics, Baba Wasakha Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh, as its leaders, both of whom were sentenced to life imprisonment. Similarly, it is also well-known that during the Gurdawara Reform Movement of the early 1920's, there was a spontaneous Babar Akali Movement, making use of militancy, since the cause was to save their sacred places from the clutches of the Administration, which was denigrating their religious base. All we seek to state in relation to the Sikh ideology, the training and psyche of the Sikhs is that when it is a question of the desecration or an attack on their Gurus and their sacred places, the reaction has been most intense and spontaneous, particularly from devout Sikhs.—

Here, it is relevant to quote the confessional statement of Mewa Singh, in 1914, who had eliminated William Hopkinson, Superintendent of Police, recruited from India for suppressing a ferment among Canadian and American Sikhs and whose agent Bela Singh had murdered two Sikhs in the Gurdwara. Prior to his execution, he stated :  
“My religion does not teach me to bear enmity with anybody, no matter what class, creed or order he belongs to, nor had I any enmity with Hopkinson. I heard that he was suppressing my poor people very much...I being a staunch Sikh could no longer bear to see the wrong done to my innocent countrymen and the Dominion of

Canada...and I, performing the duty of a true Sikh and remembering the name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry babe does towards its mother. I shall have the rope around my neck thinking it to be a rosary of God's name. .”<sup>47</sup>

Now, who had taught Mewa Singh an ordinary Sikh coming from a remote Punjab village and migrating to Canada for earning his living, an essential principle of Sikh religion, namely, to react against social injustice. Sikh history is replete with examples like that of Mewa Singh.—

Here we should like to state again that Sikhism is primarily a whole life or Miri-Piri spiritual system in its character and is therefore cognizant of all the socio-political problems of man. The Sikh approach to all such problems is spiritual. It is for this reason that both during the Guru period and later in its history. Sikhs have been waging a socio-political struggle. That is how the most devoted Sikhs joined the Sikh struggle, even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whether it was the Kuka rebellion, the Ghadr rebellion, Gurdwara Reform Movement or the struggle for Independence, It is because of their religious status as Sikhs that the leadership of the Sikhs has devolved on men like Baba Kharak Singh, Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Thus while to an outsider, the plunging of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the Head of the Taksal, into the political arena may look abnormal, it was nothing unusual in the context—

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Bhindranwale, the Head of the Taksal, into the political arena may look abnormal, it was nothing unusual in the context

of Sikhism and its history. In an interview, with a correspondent of 'Sunday' magazine, Bhindranwale remarked, "No Sikh is afraid of dying, death is a game for a Sikh, there is a difference between a mere man and a Sikh. When you cut off a part of man's body he screams with pain, when you do the same to a Sikh, he reads the *bani* (scripture)." <sup>48</sup> Impartial historians have established that the Bhindranwale phenomenon was not the product of alleged Sikh separatism but of the Sikh ethos and psyche. However, it was also the direct outcome of political intrigue of the ruling elite. For the same devious reasons, the Government later on turned against Bhindranwale, when he was not prepared to further the designs of the Government.

(V) Akhand Kirtni Jatha :

The Akhand Kirtni Jatha, founded by Bhai Randhir Singh (1878-1961), a great Sikh mystic, also had the revival of Sikh tradition as its ideological focus and sought to propagate Sikhism through the medium of Kirtan. Randhir Singh had played a very significant role in the Gadr and Independence movements and was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andaman islands. When the provocative utterances and activities of the Nirankaris brought the question of Sikh political and religious identity to the fore, the Jatha, under the leadership of Fauja Singh and his wife Amarjeet Kaur, raised a strong voice of protest against the Nirankaris.

(VI) Nirankari-Sikh Clash (1978) :

The Nirankaris decided to hold their convention in Amritsar on April 13, 1978, the birthday of the Khalsa, when a large number of Sikh devotees thronged the holy city. It was alleged that the place, date and time of the convention were deliberately chosen by the Nirankaris in connivance with the Congress, which had been out of power and was trying to embarrass the Akali-Janta alliance, in order to get political leverage. One day before the Convention, on April 12, the Nirankaris took out a procession, during the course of which their Chief allegedly made some derogatory remarks against the Sikh religion <sup>49</sup>. These provocative gestures led to a lot of resentment in the Sikh circles in the city.

Next day some followers of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and those of the Akhand Kirtni Jatha, went totally unarmed to the venue of Nirankari congregation to dissuade the Nirankari Chief from denigrating Sikh religion and its Gurus <sup>50</sup>. The Nirankaris, who were well equipped with rifles and sten guns fired at the approaching Sikhs, resulting in the death of thirteen of them <sup>51</sup>. In the morning of April 14, a day after the incident, police force headed by the Senior Superintendent of Police and Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar, thoroughly searched the Nirankari Bhavan premises in the city and carried away firearms, lathis and uniforms of the volunteer force of the Nirankaris <sup>52</sup>. The Akhand Kirtni Jatha claimed that eleven of their followers were among the dead <sup>53</sup>. They made two demands. Firstly, they demanded justice according to the law. Secondly, they wanted an assurance that no one would show any disrespect to Guru Granth. Bibi Harsharan Kaur, a leading figure of the Jatha categorically stated that "they had nothing to do with politics but they would not give up these two demands" <sup>54</sup>. As a reaction to these murders, tension started building up, which resulted in almost the

closure of the Nirankari Bhavans and their activities all over the State<sup>55</sup>. That the matter assumed the shape of a major issue is clear from the fact that, apart from other organisations, even Professor Taran Singh, Head of the Department of Guru Granth Studies, Punjabi University Patiala, brought out a publication exposing the Nirankaris and their activities<sup>56</sup>

The primary cause, however, of the whole tragedy was the perennially explosive act of religious provocation and explicit tirade of abuse and denunciation of a religion by another cult or group. The tragedy was not circumstantial. It raised certain vital questions which had been simmering before the tragedy and which culminated in the explosion of the Vaisakhi happenings. The Sikh point of view which it represented had been a naked offensive and open denunciation of Sikh tenets by the Nirankaris. This was felt as a dangerous challenge to the socio-political, cultural and religious identity of the Sikhs.

As a result of this event, a wave of anger gripped the Sikhs. The situation took a serious turn and there were apprehensions of clashes between the Nirankaris and the Sikhs. A case was registered against sixty two Nirankaris, including the Nirankari Chief and Niranjani Singh, an I.A.S. officer, for being allegedly involved in murders.<sup>87</sup> But the warrants of the sessions Judge in the murder cases against Baba Gurbachan Singh were not served by the Delhi police. He was later on bailed out and the case transferred to Haryana Court. When the accused were being tried in the Court, the issue created a lot of controversy in Punjab. Passions rose high and some top Hindu leaders of Punjab, backed by the Congress, began to espouse the cause of the Nirankaris and started accusing the Sikhs. Lala Jagat Narain, Chief Editor and proprietor of the Hind Samachar group of publications from Jalandhar, appeared as a witness in the defence of the Nirankaris and did a considerable propaganda in his papers against the Sikhs through his writings.<sup>48</sup> This propaganda became increasingly marked in the vernacular press<sup>59</sup> in the State and it not only vitiated the atmosphere but raised a strong suspicion that it was a subversive attack which had the backing of the Government, otherwise, the support to them both of the Administration and the Congress could not be understood. Virinder in one of the editorials in the 'Vir Partap' wrote : "In the absence of any other support, the Arya Samaj would stand by the Nirankaris."<sup>60</sup> For, it was clear that the Nirankaris were only trying to attack the Sikhs and that being so no Government or political party normally would like to side with such an attack, because of the evidently harmful administrative consequences.

Another factor that inflamed the position was the active association of the Arya Samaj leaders, many of whom were influential Congressmen openly to side with the Nirankaris and indulge in very unfortunate propaganda against the Sikhs. That the Arya Samaj leadership and their influence has been a very major factor in the Hindu-Sikh relations and increasing the gravity of the Punjab situation is also evidenced in the report, 'Hindu-Sikh Conflict In

Punjab : Causes and Cure' by S.M Sathanathan (London), K.T. Lalwani (London), S. Ragbunath lyenger (Lagos), Prof. G. P. Mansukhani (Bombay), Asha Bhatnagar (Jaipur) et. al. These persons belonging to different professions came all the way from far off places to personally study the Punjab situation.

They moved from place to place in the State and met a cross section of the people and concluded as under :

“The present Hindu-Sikh conflict is the saddest tragedy of post-partition Indian History. Its genesis lies in a narrow-minded attitude of certain sections of the community, that totally refutes the traditional Hindu virtues of tolerance and understanding. One also wonders, why the Sikhs are always pushed into agitation for their basic constitutional demands, the kind of which were never denied to other States and communities. , Why was Punjab the last linguistic State to be formed (10 years late)? Why is Punjab the only state in India whose capital Chandigarh is governed by the Central Government ? There are many such unanswered questions which deserve serious probing and full national exposure. Indian news agencies and papers will do well to investigate the reasons for Hindu-Sikh conflict arising from Hindu opposition to Sikh demands, even though their demands were made to the Government (and not to the Hindus of Punjab and Haryana). While most of the Sikh demands are for the welfare of Punjab State, not one demand is anti-Hindu or hurts Hindu sentiments in any way.”<sup>61</sup>

“If you were to trace the background of a reporter or an editor behind a particular anti-Sikh report, you would probably find him to be an Arya-Samajist. Late Lala Jagat Narain’s persistent role in anti-Sikh activities (including that of his support to the Nirankaris) and his staunch communal tendencies were clearly reflected in his popular daily newspaper in Punjab.”\*\*

Sikhs in Punjab and outside became very sore at the approach of the Congress and the repeated propaganda of Jagat Narain and the Congress press. The Sikhs in this country. In Delhi,

a Shahidi Conference was organised on 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 1978, where speeches were made highlighting the anti-Sikh activities of the Nirankaris.<sup>63</sup> Appeals were made to the Central Government to ban ‘Avtar Bani’ and other literature of the Nirankaris, which contained derogatory references to the Sikh Gurus and Sikhism. They gave a memorandum to the Prime Minister to this effect.

The tempo of Sikh anger kept mounting. A big convention of Sikhs was held at the Manji Sahib on 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1978 to take stock of the situation and to adopt measures to defend Sikhism against the onslaught of the Nirankaris.<sup>64</sup> In pursuance of this, a Hukamnama was issued from the Akal Takhat on June 10, 1978 calling for a social boycott of the Nirankaris.<sup>65</sup>

Another Nirankari-Sikh clash took place at Kanpur on September 26, 1978, in which more than a dozen of Sikhs were killed, this time in police firing.<sup>86</sup> The Sikhs felt very sore over this incident. Tempers ran high. There was an Akali-Janta coalition Government in Punjab, headed by Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. The Jana Sangha elements which constituted the JanU Party, because of their communal bias, wanted to withdraw their support to the Badal Government. They had their links and sympathies for the Nirankaris. The Punjab Janta Party threatened to quit, in case the Punjab Government adopted a stiff attitude against the Nirankaris. On October 27, 1978, an all India Akali Conference was held at Ludhiana to discuss the issue of growing Nirankari-Sikh tension. A resolution was



passed, urging upon the Central Government to proscribe the two Nirankari books, 'Avtar Bani' and 'Yug Pursh' and impose a ban on their anti-Sikh propaganda and activities.<sup>87</sup> However, nothing tangible on the Nirankari issue came out of the appeals of the Akali Dal to the Central Government. The Akali Dal was a coalition partner with the Janta Party at the Centre. To protest against the police excesses at Kanpur and Delhi and the partisan attitude of the Central Government, the two Akali Ministers resigned from the Ministry, in keeping with the directive issued by the working Committee of the Party.<sup>88</sup> But due to the political compulsions, the

o the Punjab problem because the masses at large who had great respect for the religious role of the Taksal and Akhand Kirtni Jatha came to have a deep sense of grievance against the Central Government for its felt attack against the Sikh religion and the Gurus, The Sikh mass motivation being basically religious, is also an important factor that slowly led to the growing popularity of Akhand Kirtni Jatha and the Taksal led by Bhindranwale as against some Akali leaders. For, the Sikhs felt that while these religious organisations were reacting strongly to Nirankari influence, the reaction of the Akali leadership appeared comparatively lukewarm to them.

The Nirankari move of the Government, as also the Bhindranwale move, as we shall see later, which were clearly aimed at division in the control of the S.G.P.C. and creation of ideological confusion and dissensions among the Sikhs and distraction of public attention from the real issues in the State, in part became unproductive. Because, instead of creating division among the Sikhs, it accentuated the sense of grievance among the masses against the Government, who are always very sensitive to interference in religious matters by the Government. And this apart from directing public feeling against the Government and, for that reason, lending support to the Sikh leadership, created further cohesion and awareness in the community.

#### **(vii) Government Blunderings and the Phase of Violence :**

It is extremely unfortunate that the more reckless was the criticism of the Arya Samaj press led by Lala Jagat Narain of the Hind Samachar, Jalandhar the greater were the bitterness and injury caused to the feelings of the Sikh sentiments at all levels because of the very sensitive nature of the issue. It is during this charged atmosphere that on September 9, 1981, Lala Jagat Narain was murdered.<sup>75</sup> Next day, a mob of Hindus attacked the Sikh shops and burnt the premises of the Akali Patrika in Jalandhar. Some Sikh passers by also fell victims to the mob. fury.<sup>7\*</sup> This incident, naturally, created a sensation and many of the Hindus started blaming Bhindranwale. The Punjab

necessity of keeping such a big posse of the armed police for necessary provocation. However, the authorities acted other Before his arrest, Bhindranwale gave a sane advice to the peopit who had gathered at the Diwan not to turn violent under an? circumstances, when the police took him away. Here it is important to mention that Jathedar Santokh Singh, the pro-Congrm Akali leader from Delhi gave a very mflamatory speech at tin gathering.<sup>84</sup> However, following the arrest of Bhindranwak there was a disturbance and

the police resorted to firing, in which eighteen Sikhs were killed on the spot and many others were in-jured. There were protest demonstrations all over the State against the arrest of the Sant, including violent reaction in the form of shooting incidents at Jalandhar (20<sup>th</sup> September, 1981), and Tarn Taran (21<sup>st</sup> September, 1981), killing three and **one** Hindus respectively at these places<sup>85</sup> and also the hijacking (29<sup>th</sup> September, 1981) of an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore.” Sant Longowal addressed a Diwan at Manji Sahib and announced that the entire Sikh community supported Bhindranwale. Similar support to the Sant also came from Gurdial Singh Ajnoha,<sup>87</sup> the Jathedar of Akal Takhat and Gurcharan Singh Tohra, president of the S.G.P.C.<sup>88</sup> Bhindranwale was kept under detention for twenty-five days (from September 20 to October 15, 1981) and was taken from place to place for interrogation by the police and the C.B.I, officers from Delhi.<sup>89</sup> However, he was released unconditionally due to lack of evidence against him. Thus his arrest and release both remained an enigma. His arrest under political pressure and release due to lack of evidence did not lend credit to the government’s handling of the situation.

We have given the above narration to show how the Government has, during the course of the • Morcha against the unconstitutional deprivation of the rights of Punjab, instead of constitutionally solving the problems tended to divert public attention towards non-issues by, on the one hand, arousing communal tensions and passions and, on the other hand, raising the bogey of law and order and resorting to avoidable police oppression, firing and creating simple and austere *life and was a staunch vegetarian. Money* flowed to him in lacs but he never amassed any wealth. Even his worst critics did not doubt his integrity in this regard. Bhindranwale had no personal political ambition. He once declared: “I have sworn it at the Akal Takhat and repeat the same at your request. I shall never agree to become the President of the Akali Dal, or the Head of the S.G.P.C., or a Minister, or a Member of the Assembly. I swear that I am prepared to receive any punishment from the Congregation, if I lie. I am only responsible for the cause of Sikhism, preaching the symbols of faith. My responsibility is to see that your beards remain intact, your hair is uncut, and that you do not go after the evil things of life, like alcohol and drugs.”<sup>91</sup> The popularity of the Sant amongst the Sikh youth posed a threat to what were looked as alien influences like Marxism and modernity. Thus, the Arya Samaj and Communist press started attacking the Sant by calling him a ‘fundamentalist’, ‘separatist’ and ‘Indian Khomeni.’<sup>93</sup> However, the Sant was not the person to take things lying down and his reaction was also very violent and vociferous. His grooming in the Sikh religious lore made him not to hide his emotions. His statement that he would weigh the killers of the

Nirankari Chief with gold was his unsophisticated reaction to the sacrilegious and desecrating activities of this group. Similarly, when the police arrested Sant Kartar Singh's wife and mother, he got provoked and threatened retaliatory action.<sup>94</sup> However, both the women were released immediately, as they had been arrested to pressurise Bhai Amrik Singh, son of Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale and President of the All India Sikh Students Federation. Such utterances of the Sant made him very unpopular among the Hindus, who began to look upon all his activities with suspicion. When reports appeared in the press that Sikhs in the other States would be driven out, Bhindranwale threatened that the backlash in Punjab would be much worse. Violence, which was a direct outcome of the decline in democratic politics and blatant abrogation of constitutional norms, added a

new dimension to the Punjab crisis. Both the Sikhs and the Hindus nursed a sense of hurt on this account. Whether the violence was perpetrated by the Sikh or the Hindu militants or by the 'Third Agency' or by the repressive state apparatus in the name of holding the country together and maintenance of law and order, was bound to leave deep scars on the psyche of the common man. While the slogans of espousing national unity found an instant echo in the minds of the Hindus, the Sikhs acquired a feeling of being discriminated against by the shortsighted policies of the Government which provided a breeding ground for militancy. After his preaching tour in Punjab, Sant Bhindranwale visited Delhi (October, 1981) and was received by Santokh Singh, President, D.G.M.C. and other members of his group.<sup>95</sup> His visit to Delhi aroused a lot of controversy, as he freely moved in the city along with his armed men. A very powerful lobby wanted the Sant to be arrested but the Government took no note of it. It caused a lot of embarrassment to Home Minister Zail Singh, who was blamed for having a soft line towards the Sant.<sup>96</sup>

The Sant's next visit to Delhi was on the occasion of the Bhog ceremony of Jathedar Santokh Singh, President of the D. G. M. C., who was assassinated on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1981.<sup>97</sup> The Jathedar was known for his pro-Congress leanings and was said to have close personal links with Indira Gandhi. The curtain is still to be lifted from the circumstances under which he was murdered. Was he murdered to hush up evidence regarding the murder of the Nirankari Chief Baba Gurbachan Singh? Was he an accomplice in the murder of the Baba? A satisfactory answer to these two questions can be found when one finds an access to the secret files of the Government. Jathedar's complicity in the Baba murder case could be traced easily when he got a resolution passed by the D.G.M.C. to give a monthly sum of Rupees two thousand to Ranjit Singh, the alleged massin of Gurbachan Singh. The Government, however, ignored

this prima facie evidence and instead tried to implicate Bhindraa-wale, who had remarked that he would weigh the killers of Baba in gold. Later on Home Minister Zail Singh declared in the Parliament that the Sant was not involved in the murder of the Nirankari Chief. Manjit Singh, son of the late Jathedar Santokh Singh, said that he was intrigued at the manner in which the Government had handled the case regarding the investigation of his father's murder. In an interview with a journalist, he said, "There was something mysterious about my father's death. After his murder the family had specifically requested the Union Home Minister, Giani Zail Singh that the case be handed over to the C.B.J. They did not want a judicial inquiry. They never interrogated a number of people we suspected. We wanted Dhana Singh, his driver to be interrogated. But we were told that he had left for Iran. Later, we brought him for interrogation from Amritsar. Mehr Singh Nihang and several others were also not interrogated."<sup>98</sup>

At the Bhog ceremony of Santokh Singh, both Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi were present. Bhindranwale made insulting remarks about Zail Singh's person. The wily politician took no offence. Somehow the Congress seemed to be in for a much bigger game and did not want to place its cards before the public.<sup>99</sup> In April 1982, when Sant Bhindranwale had gone on a missionary tour to Bombay, the process of sacrilege of Hindu temples and Gurdwaras was set in motion allegedly at the instance of Chief Minister Darbara Singh. Interestingly, the truth of the matter came out when, on March 6, 1983, thirty Congress legislators from Punjab, convened an urgent meeting and submitted to the Prime Minister, a Memorandum, entitled, 'Mis-Rule of Sardar Darbara Singh Government in Punjab : As viewed by Congress Legislators'. Apart from pointing out the various acts of omission and commission of Darbara Singh, the Memorandum furnished complete details of the people, places, time and manner in which the entire sacrilegious operation was conducted. Among the names of the persons involved in the sacrilegious acts was the Chairman of a public Corporation, who is said to have helped in procuring the heads of cows to be placed in the precincts of the Hindu temples. They alleged that the entire trouble was engineered to suit the designs of Darbara Singh. It read as under : "The Chief Minister himself got managed the first act of sacrilege of Hindu Temple at Amritsar..... He arranged to send heads of two calves

from Mohali (where the beheaded bodies of these calves were found) in a trunk by bus and got the same thrown stealthily in or near the Hindu Temple at Amritsar. Thus the first communal fire lit at the instance of the Chief Minister later resulted in a number of similar acts of sacrileges of Hindu temples and Sikh Gurdwaras at Patiala, Ludhiana, Moga, Sangrur, etc. This created a rift between the Hindus and the Sikhs."<sup>100</sup>

The incident led to a lot of uproar and resulted in a chain reaction culminating in similar acts of sacrilege of temples and Gurdwaras at several places. Cigarette butts and tobacco were thrown in the sacred premises of the Gurdwaras. In some places copies of Granth Sahib, the sacred Sikh scripture, were burnt.<sup>101</sup> Reports of the throwing of the heads, tails and ears of cows in the sacred precincts of the Hindu temples also poured in. These blasphemous and sacrilegious acts infuriated both the communities, who seemed to be pitched against each other as never before. These events had serious ramifications on the future of the State and its people. Strangely enough, the media, instead of exposing the nefarious designs of the people in power, seemed to have thrown its weight with them.

However, the Central leadership did not have the will or inclination to mend matters. Thus the seeds of the macabre scenario that was to follow were sown by the Congress. While the Hindu press and the Government controlled media pinned all the blame on Bhindranwale and his followers for the worsening situation in the State, it hesitated from raising the accusing finger at the Congress policies. It suited the Government to convert a political problem into a law and order problem.

Sant Bhindranwale along with his men were accused of the sacrilegious acts both by the press and the Government. Warrants were issued for the arrest of the Sant. As luck would have it, the Sant came to know about his impending arrest and secretly moved from Bombay to reach Guru Nanak Niwas, a rest house attached to the Darbar Sahib complex. Amritsar. The Sant later explained that he sought shelter in the Guru Nanak Niwas in order to avoid harassment and humiliation at the hands of the police. The Sant was rendered helpless and immobile and his activities came to be confined to the Guru Nanak Niwas. His missionary programme of Amrit Parchar received a set back. However, he continued to attract large crowds especially from rural Punjab who looked upon him as a symbol of Sikh resurgence.

Congress Party's nefarious game of propping up militant Hindu organisations also caused unbelievable damage to the state of communal harmony in Punjab. Virinder, an Arya Samaj leader and the editor and proprietor of 'Vir Partap', wrote in one of the articles that the "Hindu Surakhsha Samiti would provide an answer to the Akali Dal in Punjab."<sup>108</sup> He appealed to all the Hindus to get together under the banner of the Samiti. It was founded on 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1978, the birth anniversary of Vir Savarkar, the founder of Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>103</sup> In one of the editorials of his paper he wrote, "It goes to the credit of the Samiti that it has succeeded in bringing Mr. Yash of the Congress and Mr. Yagya Datt Sharma of the B.J.P. on a common platform. Both of them are inspired by the ideals of the Samiti."<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Yash, a Congress leader of Punjab and the editor and proprietor of 'Hindi Milap', wrote five editorials supporting the creation of the Samiti.<sup>10\*</sup> Pawan Kuraar Sharma, an erstwhile member of the Congress emerged as the president of the Hindu Suraksha Samiti, with the blessings of some Congress leaders.<sup>108</sup> He was believed to be a close associate of Amarinder Singh, who was then the Congress M.P. and was aspiring to become the next Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, after Barbara Singh.<sup>10</sup> Pawan Kumar's links with the Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal were also well known.<sup>1\*\*</sup>

There were reports of his involvement in several cases of arson and violence but every time he was bailed out under political pressure. On one occasion a huge stock of arms, explosives and hand grenades was recovered from his possession. But he went scot free.<sup>109</sup> Unruly scenes were witnessed at the Ramnavami procession, organised by him at Patiala on May 2, 1983. Two Sikh passers by were killed and some Sikh shops were looted and burnt.

Bhindraawale often blamed the Government for its double standards in dealing with the Sikhs and the Hindus. Once he thundred, “Take the case of Pawan Kumar, president of the Hindu Suraksha Samiti, Patiala Zilla (district). They found 230 granades in his house and he didn’t go to Jail even for an hour... A Sikh who doesn’t even possess empty cartridges, if there is only suspicion against him, they shoot him to death.”<sup>110</sup>

During this time, another militant Hindu organisation known as the ‘Hindu Shiv Sena’ raised its head in Punjab, with branches springing up in all the important towns. The Shiv Sena armed its members with Trishuls and other weapons. A report published in ‘India Today’ of May 31, 1986 observed : “The *trishul*—Shiva’s trident—has emerged as a militant symbol for these loosely— formed militias of unemployed youth and small shopkeepers in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In Punjab, Shiv Sena is a motley crowd divided into two distinct groups, one led by goldsmith— turned organiser Ramakant Jalota and dominating Jalandhar, Kapurthala and Amritsar, and the other led by Jagdish Tangri, Ludhiana businessman operating in Patiala and Hoshiarpur. Jalota claims that 80,000 youths have been “baptised”. These groups now control major Hindu temples, like the Durgiana mandir in Amritsar, Devi Talab in Jalandhar and the Shiv temple in Ludhiana.” Some Hindu intellectuals and journalists justified these organisations and their aggressive attitude particularly while dealing with the Sikhs. Giri Lal Jain, Editor of the Times of India went to the extent of pleading the case for “one hegemoni-cal community” in India.<sup>111</sup>

The militant Hindu organisations like the B J.P., R.S.S., V.H.P., Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal etc. argue that ‘Hindutva’ alone can be

the basis of India’s unity. This combine claims that its Hinduism

is the other face of Indian nationalism. They also say that Hinduism is not a religion, but a way of life. The erstwhile

R.S.S. Chief, M.S. Golwalkar sought to unify the heterogenous

and diverse people of the country by projecting ‘Hindutva’ as the

only way to maintain unity. In his book, ‘We or Our Nationhood

Defined,’ quoted in the ‘Indian Express’ of December 7, 1991,

Golwalkar says that the Hindu nation is one where “all those not

belonging to the nation i.e. Hindu race, religion, culture and

language, naturally fall out of the pale of real national life. The

foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and

language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu

religion, must entertain no idea except the glorification of the

Hindu religion and cultuie, i.e. the Hindu nation and must lose

their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race or they may

stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation,

claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential

treatment, not even citizens rights.” This is the definition of a nation based on ‘Hindutva’. The theoretical and intellectual exercises of their leaders and the practical slogans given to their followers brought out the diabolical nature of their campaign.

The slogans given at the grass roots and the poisonous communal propaganda had already created a deep sense of insecurity among the minorities.

Ramesh Thapar in an article *The Hindus : A Call To Arms* in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, wrote : “The surprising fact is that the Hindu community, in the grip of various sanghams, senas, marches, and parishads, is trying to destroy the State it has created. The multi-cultural stream, so much a part of India’s continuities, is sought to be transformed into a muddy mainstream of essentially Hindu practice passing as Indianness. The minorities are able to see the attempted transformation, and are determined to confront it. The escalation in its present form is a blatant Hindu creation. Unless, it is possible to project this fact into the debate on fundamentalism, the Hindu leviathan will take over with tremendous destructive power.”<sup>118</sup>

The growing polarisation of the Hindus and the Sikhs became a disturbing phenomenon. The rising upsurge of violence, the decrying of democratic institutions and processes provided the climate for the communal organisations to flourish. In the absence of democratic channels for the redressals of grievances, religion was allowed to become a rallying point to divert people’s attention from the real issues. “Indira Gandhi used Punjab as a Sikh versus Hindu confrontation; Kashmir as a Muslim problem. By this she instantly appealed to the upper castes in North India. The nation is in danger, therefore, the majority community is in danger, Hindu civilisation is in danger.”<sup>118</sup> Trapped in rhetoric, people were often fooled and misled. They forgot that assertions of national unity and integrity were nothing but a deceitful game. The gulf between precept and practice was bound to lower the people in power to the level of tricksters with disastrous consequences for all.

The Asian episode strengthened the feeling of alienation among the Sikhs as a community. It was not difficult for the Delhi Administration to cope with Akali plan of demonstration during the Asian games led by the moderates. But the Government made it the occasion and excuse for harassing and humiliating every Sikh passenger going to Delhi, thereby injuring and inflaming the feelings of the entire Sikh community. Every Sikh travelling to Delhi was stopped, searched, humiliated and insulted in the presence of others by the Haryana police.<sup>119</sup> Cars were checked and trains and buses were detained to get the Sikh passengers down for a “thorough” scrutiny. Even eminent persons like former Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora and Swaran Singh, former Central Minister, were stopped and searched despite their telling the police who they were. Haryana became the scene of some very ugly incidents. *The* Sikhs were made to feel as if they were passing through an enemy territory. The episode led to a lot of uproar in the Sikh esucks, although there were no reports of any retaliatory action in *The* Government controlled media did not report any

Most of the incidents of violence that took place in Punjab were attributed to Bhindranwale. In an interview with a correspondent of Sunday, he stated that the main targets of his attack were the “guilty” policemen, who unleashed regression on the innocent Sikhs. He elaborated his argument by furnishing the following facts: “A Sikh girl was stripped naked and her father was forced to rape her ..... This happened in village Kahtkhurd, Moga Tefasil. The name of the father was Jagmir Singh; he was a scheduled caste. Write on; a Sikh girl was stripped naked and paraded around Dao village by policemen ..... They caught a Sikh *granthi* and a Hindu policeman sat on him, smoked *bidis* and spat in his mouth and pat tobacco in it. The name of the Sikh was Jasbir Singh, village Chukpiti; Tehsil Moga. They caught another Sikh and without finding anything on him, they cut his thigh, tore the flesh out and poured salt into the cut. Name: Jagir Singh, village Ittanwali, he lives in Moga. Is this not wrong? During the Asian Games they drew a line and said that anyone with Singh attached to his name couldn't go to Delhi at all. Did they stop anybody else? Is this not injustice to the Sikhs? ..... There are no restrictions on a Hindu religious symbol, why is there a restriction on our religious symbol? Is this not discrimination? ..... Indira Gandhi was punished in 1977 for what she had done, by the Supreme Court and sent to Tihar Jail and her sympathisers like Pandit hijacked a plane, how much punishment were they given? They have been made M.P.s now, and if the Sat Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs is burnt and some Sikhs hijack a plane, why should they be exiled? ... Gurbax Singh's leg is cut off .. and take the case of Ma-vk Singh alias Museebat Singh, who was shot dead on 20. August, at Rajasanshi airport. Is there a separate law for the Sikhs and a separate law for the Hindus? It is the go; joo to catch the guilty and bring them before a court, it is then upto the court to decide whether to shoot them with bullets while they are still in their custody. Which law gives the government the right to do this? Kulwant Singh Nagokey was killed like this. Jaswant Singh and Sukhdev Singh of Issathan had their stomachs burst open and flesh pulled from their bodies with sticks and their eyes taken out before being shot. Will they tell us what they found on them? What proof do they have against them? ..... But to get a Punjabi Suba. to— speak Punjabi, the Sikhs have had to send 57,000 people to jail, then they say the Sikhs are extremists. .... Now look at your— newspaper\*, in all your newspapers you write about Sikh extremists. Why doesn't anyone write about Hindu extremists? At the same time they write



that the Sikhs are a part of the Hindus. If this is true, and we are not even Sikhs, then why don't they say Hindu extremists, when they are writing about our 'extremism'. If you insist on saying Sikh extremists then you must admit that we are a separate race. When it is extremism then we are different and when we ask for something then we become Hindus. What's the reason for this ? How is ..that whenever the ✓  
/ want they say we are extremists and whenever they want they say we are not Khalsas ? .. There was a Hindu Sammelan (meeting) here and the slogans they shouted were 'Hindu©Hindu bhai bhai', Kacch, Kada, Kirpan, enoo bhejo Pakistan, dukki©tikki Khehan nahin deni, sir tey pagdee rehan nahin denei." You asked me about Khalistan. I neither support Khalistan, nor am I against it (na himayat na virodhata). We want to stay with Hindustan, it is for the Central government to decide whether they want us with them or not. This is the job of the Centre, not mine. Yes, if they give us Khalistan, we will take it. We won't make the mistake of 1947. We are not asking for it but we'll take it if they give it to us. If they want to put it in our ✓

jholi

that's their business. But tell me, am I a Khalistani or is the government ? Why is it that only Sikh houses are set on fire in Punjab ? Has a single Hindu's factory, house or shop been burnt ?.....Balwant Singh was sitting in a rickshaw and he was— in a police encounter. They say that the Sikhs are killing the police in encounters. Apart from Deheru ✓  
Kand,

have the police even been wounded ? Where are the bullets that have been fired by the Sikhs ? Had you heard of these things before ? Tell me.....—

An Amritdhari Singh was caught by Bicchu Ram, ✓

thanedar, f

Sadar

thana, f

Fazilka Tehsil, Ferozepur ✓

Zila.

They shaved his beard and sent him back to me, saying 'go and tell Bhindranwale.....'—

Only the government can tell us ; they can decide. Now suppose that you have rights and I refuse to give them to you and you demand them and I still refuse, what would you do ? Wouldn't you try to get them back ? Now what if I not only denied you your rights but also tried to make that you were in some way to blame. This is what has happened. The government has taken our rights, we are asking for them back and they say we are extre"mists."✓

The above statement of Bhindranwale, apart from being self©explanatory, gives a clear picture of the Government policies towards the Sikhs and the approach of the media in

suppressing the realities of the situation and instead raising the bogey of 'extremism' to camouflage the clear discrimination against the Sikhs. The Government had been carrying out a campaign of illegal oppression and torture without calling to account any of the functionaries who perpetrated those atrocities. Whatever way one may assess the Sant, his statement quoted above is unassailable both on account of its factual realities and the background policies of the Government and the distorted writings and opinions of the media. Our narration makes it clear how gross injustice had been done in relation to the natural wealth of Punjab and the territorial and other demands and how when the Sikhs wanted constitutional settlements, the Centre tended to throttle that voice by forcing them to accept arbitrary, unwarranted, illegal and unjust executive feats. There were charges of police excesses and atrocities and yet never

in any instance probed into and the guilty punished or even declared innocent after the enquiry. In a few lines, Bhindranwale explained the entire story of Sikh agitation. He contends—

killed by Lajwant Singh D.S.P. Gurmit Singh's nails were pulled out and salt was put into the wounds, his hands were held over candles and burnt. Then he was killed and they said he died—that open injustice and discrimination had been done against them and when they asked for redress, they were thrashed and hounded as mad extremists. In order to comprehend the Bhindranwale phenomenon, one must take into account a complex range of socio-political factors which threw him up. Unfortunately, the media maintained a timid silence over the corruption of laws and principles, so forcibly lamented by Bhindranwale with his blunt honesty and in his rude but declamatory eloquence. He lacked the sophisticated oratory of politicians. (yiii) Dharam Yudh Morcha :—

The struggle between the Centre and the Akalis entered a new phase with the launching of the Dharam Yudh Morcha. The causes and background of the Morcha have already been traced. It marked the culmination of the grievances that had kept piling up over the years. Sham negotiations, dismissal of the Akali Governments in the raid, continuous economic erosion of the State and its people, undue support extended by the Government to the Nirankaris, repression, fake encounters and human rights violations were some of the factors that intensified the crisis. The Nehruvian Morcha (April 24, 1982), launched at village Kapuri to prevent the digging of the Satluj Yamuna Link (S.Y.L.) Canal had not yielded any results. The agitation (April 13, 1982) started by Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi, a leader of the break away faction of the Akali Dal demanding more state autonomy, through the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution had also not evoked any response from the Government,—

Among the immediate causes that led Bhindranwale to start an agitation, was the indiscriminate arrest of the members of the Damdami Taksal. On July 17, 1982, the Punjab Police arrested three members of the Taksal, on charge of conspiring to murder a police sub-inspector. On July 19, when Amrik Singh, President of the All India Sikh Students Federation, along with two others went to the district courts of Amritsar in connection with the legal action in respect of three persons already arrested;

on July 17, they too were arrested by the police on the same charge.

Two other prominent members of the Taksal, Baba Tahir Singh—

and Jathedar Ram Singh were also arrested on July 20.√

On July 25, Bhindranwale called a convention of the representatives of the Panth at Manji Sahib Diwan Hall to discuss the Governˆment’s attack on the Dam Dami Taksal. It was decided to start a Morch\* by sending a Jatha (group) of fifty Sikhs daily to court arrest as a mark of protest against the indiscriminate arrests and encroachment on the right of peaceful protest by the Sikhs.√

In view of these developments, the Akali Dal high command called an all World Sikh Convention at Amritsar on July 26, 1982.√

ˆ\* The Convention authorised Sant Harchand Singh Longˆowal, the party president, to launch the ‘Dharam Yudh Morcha’ from August 4, 1982, “ˆ

Dharam Yudh signified a fight for rightˆeousness against injustice and not a holy war as interpreted by many. Bhindranwale and Jathedar Talwandi were also persuaded to carry on the agitation under the banner of Akali Dal and the leadership of Longowal.—

Akali Dal chalked out a charter of economic, social, political and religious demands at the time of the launching of the Morcha. These demands had already been put up during the course of negoˆtiations between the Akali Dal and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi or her nominees. A detailed mention of these demands has already been made.—

In view of the Akali Morcha, the Government imposed a proˆhibitory order, under Section 144, banning the assembly of more than five persons. The response of the people to the Morcha was voluntary and enthusiastic, which eventually assumed the form of a mass upsurge. On an average five hundred people from one part or the other of Punjab would go to the Darbar Sahib and after invoking the blessings of the Sangat would offer themselves for arrest. The entire operation was conducted from the precincts of the Darbar Sahib in a peaceful, nonˆviolent and organised manner, under the supervision of the Akali Dal. More than thirty thousand people courted arrest within a period of two months. The jails started overflowing and the Government had U> set up temporary prisons in schools and other buildings to accommodate all of them. On 11th September, 1982, thirty four agitators were killed, when—

a bus in which they were being taken to jail rammed into a train at a manned railway crossing near Amntsar.\*\*√

The incident led to a lot of uproar in Punjab. The callousness of the authorities came under sharp attack. Chief Minister Darbara Singh expressed no regrets over this incident.—

The Morcha was being conducted peacefully from the preˆcincts of the Darbar Sahib. The authorities could not estimate the zeal with which the volunteers came forward to offer their services for the Morcha. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in keeping with her father’s approach, followed a policy of refusing to solve the issues. In a sudden dramatic move, on October 15, 1982, the Government ordered the release of all the agitators,√

“ probably with a view to taking the wind out of their sails. The Prime Minister did not seem inclined to consider the demands put up by the Akalis. However, the Morcha continued with full vigour, with more and more volunteers coming forward to court arrest. Government’s move failed to dampen their spirits.—

All along, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had followed a policy of evasion and sham negotiations to cover up the gross constitutional injustice to Punjab, especially on the issues of water and territory. As mentioned earlier, the Prime Minister had a series of negotiations with the Akali Dal before the Dharam Yudh but without any positive results. The demands of a constitutional kind which could be tackled and settled through the verdict of the judiciary were sidetracked. Attempts were made to throw the real issues out of the political arena. The idea was to give a bad name to the Morcha and to set the stage for the gory drama that was later to be enacted in the Punjab.—

One has to take a look at the style of functioning of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to draw conclusions. This was revealed by Virinder a pro-Congress journalist-cum-politician and proprietor and editor of 'Partap' in his editorial : "Mrs. Gandhi has her own style. Whenever any problem presents itself before her, she tries to keep it hanging. When it comes to confrontation, she starts—

deliberations and tries to tire out the other party by prolonged negotiations. This has happened in Assam and the same is happening in Punjab. In Assam thousands of people have died and this fact will remain a slur on the fair name of the Government of India. Punjab today is face to face with a similar situation."

These are the observations of a person who has never been sympathetic towards the opinion inside and outside Punjab to support the stand of the Government to serve a triple purpose, firstly to publically humiliate and hurt the Sikhs and their sense of identity; secondly to destroy the Akali Party and thirdly, to assume, directly or indirectly, the control of the Gurdwaras.—

It was being said that the Sikh moderates had lost control over the Morcha and it was slipping into the hands of the militants. But no one ever probed the matter as to why this had happened, Repeated Government statements showed that it desired the moderates to sign on the dotted lines and maintain the status quo or accept the time old method of a Government appointed Committee or Commission just to whitewash the issues. The masses who were now fully conscious of their rights and the trends of the Government policies had started calling the moderates self-seekers or traitors. The result was that the Government policies had alienated and discredited the moderates in the public eye since the Sikh masses would not permit any one to betray their interests and accept what was less than just and fair.—

It was now becoming increasingly obvious that the moderate Akalis were losing their grip over the Morcha. Referring to Longowal's pledge taken at the Akal Takhat to accept nothing less than the fulfilment of all the listed demands of the Akali Dal, Bhindranwale warned : "If any of our leaders accepts anything less than all the Anandpur Sahib demands, I will expose him in front of the

Sangat  
(Congregation)."

It was becoming increasingly clear that the Prime Minister was hell bent upon promoting the economic and political interests of the Hindu neighbouring States at the cost of Punjab. Thus the democratic process stood vitiated by short-term strategies aimed at short term political dividends. The gradual building up of violence, in itself unfortunate,

was doubtless the consequence of the Government, providing no justice and fair play during the two years of sterile negotiations.—

As the police atrocities and fake encounters continued unabated, people started flocking around Bhindranwale in larger—

Akali demands.—

Bhindranwale was against any humiliating compromise on the water issue. The moderate Akalis had lost their patience and were in a dilemma. They knew that failure to deliver goods would lower them in the estimation of the people, who had extended such enthusiastic support to the Morcha. By October, 1982, about sixty thousand people had courted arrest. On the other hand, Bhindranwale was impressing upon them either to take a firm and unambiguous stand or accept a back seat in the struggle. A campaign had already started in the Darbar Sahib complex against the 'weakness of Longowal', the Morcha dictator. The All India Sikh Students Federation, under the presidentship of Amrik Singh, was inclined towards Bhindranwale because of his strong convictions to the cause. The moderate Akalis began to be ridiculed for even thinking of a solution that did not include all the demands in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. They came under attack for lack of conviction and strength and thus betraying the Morcha.—

During the preceding months of the Morcha, the Centre had tried the method of divide and rule and successfully created a schism between the Bhindranwale and the Longowal groups, but to its dismay it found the former sticking religiously to the demands of the Morcha and thus found it too difficult to tackle them. Simultaneously, it tried the pretence of sham negotiations though it never wanted to settle the issues justly which, as explained, could be solved any time if the Government wished to <k> so. To cover up dithering, it used the communal card and the oft repeated charge of secessionism and foreign intervention. The idea was to malign the agitation and create Hindu—

and still larger numbers. The aggrieved started looking upon him as their saviour to avenge the wrongs done to them. Victims of police repression sought refuge with him. It was natural and inevitable for the traditional Sikh ethos to react against injustice, harassment and humiliation. The administration had begun to lose its moral authority by staging the killing of the Sikhs in contrived encounters and the use of third degree methods for torture. With Government dilly dallying and the position of the moderate Akali leadership having become unenviable, more and more people from all walks of life began to pledge their allegiance to the Sant, who had become a visible symbol of Sikh discontent. Very few writers have perceived the Bhindranwale phenomenon in this light. Because most of them are either completely ignorant of the Punjab problem or seek deliberately to suppress the reality of the situation, discrimination and injustice done to Punjab and Sikhs or are too busy to dispassionately study the basic realities. They form their perceptions by hastily gulping the emotional propaganda of the media.—

The tension between Longowal and Bhindranwale camps, that had been brewing for quite some time began to mount. Longowal, whose prestige and following had been dwindling did not have the heart to yield to Bhindranwale. He founded the Youth Akali Dal, as a rival to the A.I.S.S.F. which owed its allegiance to Bhindranwale. Longowal also sought the help of the Babbar Khalsa, who had some differences with Bhindranwale. It was reported that the Babbars had planned to dislodge Bhindranwale from Guru Nanak

Niwas, where he and his men were putting up. The Babbar went on the offensive and forcibly occupied two rooms belonging to Bhindranwale's followers. The atmosphere became very tense and surcharged but a bloody confrontation between the two camps was averted when Bhindranwale along with his followers discretion to shift their headquarters to the Akal Takhat, thinking that retreat was the better part of valour. Bhindranwale told newsmen that he had taken the decision to vacate the Guru Nanak Niwas with a view to—

disobedience to arouse the conscience of the rulers in Delhi. But it left no impact on the Centre. This was the first incident of its kind in free India.—

Longowal and his group of Akalis came under slight criticism for the slow pace of the Morcha. The masses strongly disapproved of their tactics. Longowal issued a directive for one day agitation of Rasta Roko (block the roads) on April 4, 1983. The response for this was very enthusiastic. While the trains were cancelled by Government orders, all other transport in the State was paralysed by the Akali workers by staging peaceful dharnas on the roads and reciting the Bani (sacred hymns). However, the security forces, especially the paramilitary forces resorted to “unprovoked and indiscriminate firing”√

resulting in the death of twenty-four agitators, apart from burning of a number of tractors and shops at Kup Kalan, near Malerkotla.√

A five member fact finding team of national opposition leaders visited the affected places to make an on-the-spot study of the circumstances which led to the police firing there on April 4. The members were A.B.

Vajpayee (B.J.P.), Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Saifuddin (both C.P.M.), Bhgoindra Jha (Q.P.I.) and Harikesh Bahadur (D.S.P.). Vajpayee told the Tribune: “We are shocked by the devastation at Malerkotla and Kup Kalan.”√

Surjeet said that the “excesses committed by the police were heart-rending.”√

“He regretted the “apathetic attitude” of the Central Government towards the Punjab situation.√

After the Rasta Roko, Longowal gave a call for ‘Kam Roko’ (Stop work) on August 29, 1983.√

The work in the government offices and public and private undertakings came to a standstill. Again, the response to this call was spontaneous and voluntary.—

There is no denying the fact that a number of secret agencies of the Centre were operating at this time, which added a dangerous dimension to the atmosphere. On 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1983, D.I.G A.S. Atwal was gunned down, while he was coming out of the Darbar Sahib.√

The officer in charge of the C.I.D. in Amritsar told the B.B.C. correspondent Satish Jacob that “Atwal, who was—

unusually active and independent minded policeman, had planted one of his agents among Bhindranwale's followers."√

The agent is said to have informed Atwal that on the night of 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1983, Bhindranwale and some of his followers were going to Chowk Mehta in a jeep.√

Accordingly, the police put up a blockade on the Mannawala bridge on the G.T. road. The jeep was stopped and a rocket fired at it without any word or warning.√

The weapon used in the attack was a prohibitive one, which is normally used in a war. Obviously, the attack was directed at Bhindranwale but incidently he was not in the jeep, having changed his plan at the eleventh hour. One Hardev Singh travelling in the jeep was killed and another person Gursant Singh was seriously hurt in his right leg.√

- However, Gursant Singh succeeded in driving the jeep along with the dead body and reached Guru Nanak Niwas the same evening. The incident led to a lot of consternation in Bhindranwale's camp. Suspicions were raised that the Government intended to eliminate Bhindranwale through devious means.—

Atwal's murder relates yet another sad story. It is reported that Atwal had arranged the Bhog of Akhand Path (non-stop recitation of Guru Granth Sahib) on the fateful day, at Gurudwara Sukhchain Sahib in his native village Beedpand, about thirty kilometers from Jalandhar.√

On the previous night he was at his village to make arrangements in connection with the Bhog and left for Jalandhar early next morning.√

It is reported that Atwal got a call from some senior officer of the Central Agency to reach Amritser immediately.√

The call, it is suggested, was

neither from the Punjab Government nor from his immediate bosses in the State. Leaving everything behind, he reached the B.S.F. rest house, where he had a prolonged meeting with Brigadier Grewal of the R.A.W. and an I.P.S. officer of the Punjab cadre known to Longowal and Bhindranwale.√

On the previous day, the I.P.S. officer along with Brigadier Grewal had met both the Sant in the Golden Temple Complex. In pursuance of the—

meeting, the I.P.S. officer and Brigadier Grewal went to the Complex and had a meeting with Sant Longowal,√

They also had a meeting with Bhindranwale but the Sant left half way√ as he got engaged in some other meeting.√

Atwal also went to the Darbar Sahib and for a considerable time remained there,, presumably waiting for their message or the next step of their decided plan. At the Rest House, to pursue which they had entered the complex. After waiting inside for about an hour and a half, an abnormally long time for a normal visit in the circumstances, he came out of the Golden Temple Complex and was murdered when he emerged outside. The guards of the D.t.G. and the police officer waiting for him slipped away. Incidently, when the murder took place, the I.P.S. officer was sitting with Sant Longowal.√

It is indeed a mystery as to what was the Central plan in sending the three officers to the Golden Temple, with one of them wanting to have meeting with the two Sants and the other inexplicably waiting for an hour and a half at the Temple. This trip of Atwal becomes all the more intriguing because, according to Chief Minister Darbtra Sinah, "Atwal had been warned not to enter the Golden Temple. The government had apparently received information that he was a marked man."

This clearly shows that Atwal had gone to the Golden Temple not in pursuance of the order of the State Government but of some Central agency. All the facts of the case point to some subtle design of the Third Agency and whatever happened seems to have been done in execution of that design. The Director of C.B.F.J.S. Bawa, who was directed to probe into the murder, did not disclose his findings.

As no clue whatsoever could be found, it added a new dimension to the mystery of Atwal's death. In any case, it appears evident that whatever happened was either in pursuance of a Government plan or because of a design that misfired or backfired. As far as Bhindranwale was concerned, he clearly disowned and condemned the murder in the following words: "I condemn the incident especially as it has taken place just outside the main gate of the temple. We are not in favour of violence at all."

- He further alleged that the—

Punjab Government was behind the killing and "this is a conspiracy of the government to prepare ground for police entry into the temple."

Why was Atwal summoned from his village? Why did the I.P.S. officer, who accompanied him go to meet the two Sants? What was it that kept Atwal waiting for long hours at the Golden Temple? To date there has been no explanation to all these questions. Evidently, the purpose and the plan seemed to have been too secret and subtle to be brought to light.—

The Government's disinclination to find a just and fair solution to the problem during the peaceful phase of the Morcha compounded the situation. A wave of discontent mobilised the Sikh youth to emulate Bhindranwale who had started projecting himself as a saviour and champion of justice. All other issues for those youth got submerged before the grand issue of justice. India Today wrote: "Bhindranwale, more than any other Akali leader, has assumed the proportions of a messiah. To a great extent, it is his outspoken, belligerent views that constantly attract attention; equally, it is his smooth handling of the media for whom he has all the time in the world. But his overall appeal lies in his strident defence of his faith that seems to strike a chord of sympathy in any Sikh with a propensity to turn a leader into a hero, a hero into a saint. Moreover, he has, in his rigid, puritanical way, come to stand for a Sikh revival at a time when the community's insecurities about its identity are at their lowest...Bhindranwale represents the resurgent core of the Sikh religion. On the plain social level, his arrival on the scene has engendered a new interest among younger Sikhs about their religion. An observer in Chandigarh points out that whereas a few years ago it was fashionable for young urban Sikhs to trim their beards, today it is in vogue to keep them long and untrimmed. There also seems to be a noticeable rise in the number of younger Sikhs visiting Gurdwaras and observing ritual."



The focus of Bhindranwale's crusade was the unfulfilled promises and the unconstitutional and high-handed drain of—

Punjab's resources. Stories of a sell out on the water issue started gradually percolating to the peasants in the villages. They felt disturbed at the Akali leadership trying to let them down on this most crucial issue. They veered towards Bhindranwale and increasingly, he became the focus of their socio-economic and religious aspirations. Bhindranwale assured them that he would not allow the Akalis to betray the interests of Punjab, especially in the socio-economic field. Since the Akalis found the ground of representative leadership slipping from under their feet, they too became reluctant to sign on the dotted lines as the Government wanted them to do.—

Had the Government ever been willing to follow the constitutional path of referring all the legal issues to the Supreme Court, the Punjab problem could not have arisen at all. No Akali agitation could be sustained, since no one could defy the verdict of the Supreme Court, for which both the Akalis and Bhindranwale had made a specific demand. Instead of giving up its policy of favouring Rajasthan and Haryana, the Centre raised the bogey of extremism and law and order, and chose to make scape goats out of the police, the Administration or the Chief Minister for pursuing its own political designs and disinclination to solve the issues justly or according to the constitution of the country.—

Slowly but increasingly, under the plea of maintaining law and order, state terrorism in the form of false encounters, tortures and killings in police custody and oppression on the people increased. It is also correct that since about the 1980's when it became known that certain police officials and others had been guilty of high handed excesses or violence, retaliatory steps against individuals were taken. Sometimes even the names and the atrocities committed by those officers were narrated in open meetings by—

Bhindranwale or the concerned victims. But neither the charges ✓

the victims nor such reports to the authorities nor any commitments in that regard ever evoked any response from the administration to rectify the wrongs even for the future, much less for punishing the guilty. It is in this dismal context of official apathy and—

callousness that the belief became current and confirmed among the—

masses that whatever was happening was pursuant to studied direction of the administration. Hence while the Morcha throughout was conducted peacefully in accordance with the set policy of the organisers, individual retaliatory incidents did take place, following studied inaction of the authorities with regard to the excesses of the administrative machinery. Hence the belief became inevitable that state violence was being practised to create schism between the two communities and defame the Sikhs in the rest of the country and partly to sidetrack the real issues, since Government was willing neither to undo the injustice nor follow the constitutional path, as demanded by the Sikhs.—

Here it is important to note that a news magazine, the Week, had given a figure of 220 killings in the first nineteen months of the Dharam Yudh Morcha. Out of these 220 persons, killed between August, 1982 and February, 1984, 190 were Sikhs and 30 were Hindus. ✓

Besides, the Akalis were openly alleging that killings, were being done by agent provocateurs and that committing such violence was against the Akali policy. Reports had appeared that communal incidents, in order to inflame Hindu feelings, were initiated by the Congress. But without a detailed judicial enquiry, the truth could never be revealed and despite emphatic demands for this purpose. Government was unwilling to do so.—

Bhindranwale was very sore about the police atrocities and the murder of scores of Sikhs in the garb of false and contrived police encounters. He was often heard criticising the double standards of the Government in treating Hindu and Sikh victims of violence, citing various incidents like the immediate appointment of an enquiry committee to probe Jagat Narain's murder and none for the killing of the Sikhs.√

He believed that this blatant√

partisan behaviour of the Government was bound to hasten the process of alienation of the Sikhs. Bhindranwale reprimanded the press for suppressing incidents of police atrocities. He stressed that Sikhs were a separate nation within India like the Muslims, the Christians and the Hindus.√

- To many journalists and others who met him and contended that Hindus and Sikhs were of the same tree, his prompt reply used to be that, by their actions, the

Hindus in Punjab and the Government had proved it otherwise.√

During this time, the People's Union of Civil Liberties sponsored a team, with Justice Tarakunde, as the Chairman and an eminent journalist Kuldip Nayar as its member to assess the police excesses against the Sikhs. It reported : "We had no hesitation in saying in our report that the police had behaved like a barbarian force out for revenge. They had even set houses of a few absconders on fire and destroyed utensils, clothes and whatever else they found in them. Relatives of the absconders were harassed and even detained. Even many days after the excesses committed by the police, we could see how fear-stricken the people were. Villagers gave us the names of some of the police sub-inspectors and deputy superintendents involved; some of them, they said, had a reputation of taking the law into their hand."√

Evidently, it cannot be believed that the police officials who were acting illegally in the manner they did were doing it of their own. In the words of Mark Tully and British Jacob, the B.B.C. correspondents, "There was a series of what the Indian police call 'encounters';"

a euphemism for cold-blooded murder by the police. Darbara Singh admitted as much to us."√

When a Chief Minister acts like that, the people well understood the message that securing justice from the Administration had become out of question. In fact, whatever the retention, it was specifically directed against individuals. Instead of giving details about individuals, we are indicating the cases of D.S.P Bachan Singh and Sub-inspector Bichhu Ram.—

The police killings sparked off revenge attacks against them and provoked the desperate rashness of youth. Police officers like D.S.P. Bachan Singh, blamed for inflicting severe tortures on youth; even in police custody, became the victims of retaliatory actions. It was alleged that the police officers had tortured the S.S.K. President Amrik Singh and his accomplices, while they were in police custody and had falsely implicated them in a case of attempt to murder a police sub-inspector. The torturing and—

the killing of one Kulwant Singh of village Nagoke in Amritsar district, was done under the personal supervision of Bachan Singh. He was arrested by the police when he was getting his tractor repaired. “From 27<sup>th</sup> May to 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1982, Kulwant Singh was so brutally tortured that his bones were broken at various places; his body was torn at the hip joint by pulling his legs in opposite direction; his intestines had been taken out and both eyes had been gauged out. His nails had been pulled out. His thigh had been ripped open and salt poured into it. On 9 June ‘82 Kulwant Singh died in custody of the Police. But to cover their deed, the police declared that Kulwant Singh had escaped on the night of 8/9 June. On the night of 9/10 June, a fake encounter was shown to have taken place between the police and Kulwant Singh at Mehta Chowk Road, in which he was said to have been killed by the police firing.”

The torturing and killing of Kulwant Singh was done under the personal orders of no less a person than D.S.P. Bachan Singh. Later it was reported that Bachan Singh suffered retributive action, evidently at the hands of the youth.—

Police Sub-Inspector Bichhu Ram S.H.O., Police Station, Guru Har Sahai arrested one devout Amritdhari Sikh Jasbir Singh of village Chukpiti in Tehsil Moga, on the ‘Rasta Roko’ day.

He cut the Sikh’s beard with a scissor and after chewing tobacco in his mouth, spat it out on his face. He told the youngman to go and report the matter to Bhindranwale. Later it was reported that Bichhu Ram had been shot dead (December 1983).

This shows that the retaliation was specific and non-communal, being directed against those who, the relations of the victims felt, had acted illegally, inhumanly and atrociously.—

While the government did not refrain from contrived or fake police encounters, it was reported that members of the Bhindranwale, Babbar Khalsa, Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Dal Khalsa and other groups reacted against persons who were felt to be instruments of unlawful oppression. There were reports of the members of these groups having owned responsibility for retaliatory acts—

against individuals. Violence, once, it breaks out destroys (moral) values and leaves bitter memories that cast their ugly shadows on the future. Secret agencies of the Centre were also operating under direction from the Congress. ; An incredible story based on exclusive information provided by the officers of the RAW was published by the ‘Surya’ in its issue—

of September, 1984. It revealed the story about a super intelligence agency called the ‘Third Agency’. It noted : “We focus

pre©Blue Star Punjab. The Third Agency's assignment was to mid and abet the murders and killings in Punjab. The Third Agency kept the supply of lethal weapons flowing into the Golden Temple. The Third Agency allowed 47 railway stations ✓

be blown up. The Third Agency incited violence in Punjab. And for their gallant roles, senior officers of the Third Agency have been rewarded with police medals and prize foreign postings.”✓

As revealed by 'Surya', a great part of violence in Punjab was planned and executed by a Government controlled intelligence agency. Whatever may have been the causes or sources of violence, it took a toll of precious human lives and created a—

wedge between the Hindus and the Sikhs. It provided the Government with an excuse to skip the real issues and prevent a legitimate constitutional settlement of Punjab's river waters, territorial, economic and political issues. It suited the Prime Minister to play upon the Hindu fear in the State and thus catch the vote of the majority community in the rest of the country. The Akalis and Bhindranwale often alleged that the Congress was breeding terrorism in Punjab to defame the Sikhs. ✓

many occasions, the Akalis had demanded judicial inquiries i<sub>z</sub> to killings in Punjab but without any response.—

There is no denying the fact that the situation in Punjab—

was compounded due to the lack of objective reporting by the ; media. While Bhindranwale was projected as an aggressor and a villain, no reports of police atrocities and tortures were published. like two sets of perceptions regarding the violence against the—

Sikhs and the Hindus reflected no credit on the media. There was none to speak the truth that democratic process had been undermined, that politics had run its course and the Government was acting according to a plan. By and large, the media preffered to remain silent over the criminal delay on the part of the Government in responding to the constitutional and legitimate demands of the Sikhs. Violence suited the Government to absolve itself of the onus of discharging its moral responsibility and constitutional obligation to provide justice and fair play. Mindlessly twisted news bulletins of A.I.R. and Doordarshan often failed to note that terror tactics of a repressive state machinery were as condemnable as the acts of violence on the part of individuals. The opinions and perceptions of the problem along communal lines were bound to release dangerous signals. All those factors, which contributed to the breakdown of peace in the State, were ignored or under reported. An Editors' Guild of India team, after an enquiry, reported: “Responding to the general climate of sectarian confrontation and polarisation, it is disturbing to note that newspapermen in Punjab, by their own admission, are divided all the way on communal lines. We were repeatedly told this quite candidly in Chandigarh, Jalandhar and Amritsar by a variety ©if journalists, both Hindu and Sikh, This is a sad commentary and a matter for deep professional and social concern. If the press becomes partisan, the images it reflects will be distorted. The reporters who met us preferred to discuss matters individually and separately rather than collectively in an open forum.”✓

Akalis often complained that the press failed to expose the basic issues of their Morcha and frequently misrepresented their cause and the case by dubbing them as

separatists and secessionists and thus escalated communal tension. They often blamed the media by misleading the public opinion with false and exaggerated information in regard to violence in Punjab, whereas the police atrocities especially those during the Asiad, Rasta Roko and the Hindu Surakhsha Samiti Bandh Call (February 14, 1984)—

agitations did not receive the publicity it deserved. The bias of media was reflected in maligning the entire Sikh community by publishing highly volatile and unverified anonymous letters and calls. The official news agency U.N.I, released the news on 11/11/1983, of an anonymous letter supposed to be written by a Sikh, threatening a Hindu temple. The 'Times of India' gave it a wide publicity by publishing it in bold type on the front page on 12/11/1983, with the obvious intention of giving a bad name to the entire Sikh community. The responsible newspaper made no effort to discover the veracity of the anonymous letter.—

Bhindranwale became the focus of attack for any violence that took place in Punjab. Even the routine killings and other crimes were attributed to him. The previous history of crime in Punjab reveals an average of three murders a day. The press made no distinction between these and the killings that took place during that phase of violence. Once Bhindranwale is said to have remarked, 'Even if a fly is killed in Punjab, it is blamed on me'. Some splinter groups could also be held responsible for stray killings. There were occasions, when Bhindranwale was heard reprimanding and warning his followers against indulging in any wrong act whether of violence or otherwise. People found making forcible collections from shopkeepers in his name were punished. As Bhindranwale became the focal point of attack by the press, it created a nation wide outlook against him. While the press raised a tirade against him and dubbed him as a villain and a monster, it had altogether different stance and standards to judge the anti-Sikh violence, the desecration of Gurdwaras and the burning of Sikh scriptures that took place in Haryana, during the Asiad and February 1984 Bandh, with the obvious connivance of the Administration. Bhindranwale stated that the Haryana Government was patted on the back for restoring normalcy in time, whereas in Punjab after the Dhillwan killings of six Hindus in October 1983, the Punjab Ministry was sacked. S. S. Dharam believes that the "cold blooded murder of six Hindus selectively taken out—

of a bus near Dhillwan in Kapurthala district on the night of October 4, 1983 appears to be the handiwork of professional assassins under the orders of the Third Agency."

He believes that the Prime Minister was looking for a pretext to impose President's rule in Punjab, which she did on 6<sup>th</sup> of October. Longowal, more than once, challenged the Government that if a judicial enquiry could be ordered, he would prove that the Dhillwan murders were not done by any Sikh or Akali agitator.—

Longowal gave a call for Punjab Bandh on February 8, 1984

to be peaceful without any untoward incident except the police violence. It reflected great credit on the Akalis that their entire agitation was directed and conducted very peacefully without any ugly incidents of violence or communal disharmony. But the Congress added a new and deadly dimension to the problem by encouraging communal violence. It is well known that a section of the Hindus were provoked to organise a similar Bandh to counter the Akalis. During the Bandh call in Punjab, Haryana and

Himachal Pradesh, on February 14, 1984, given by Hindu Surakshsha Samiti, with the support of the Congress, many incidents of mob violence against the Sikhs took place.√

These included the burning of the Gurdwaras and the shaving of the Sikh beards all over Haryana and some places in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. This was the first time that anti-Sikh violence was witnessed in Himachal Pradesh. Incidentally, this was the day when the tripartite negotiations between the Akalis, the Opposition and the Government were taking place in Delhi. The anti-Sikh violence in Haryana continued for three days.√

Tractor loads of rioters collected at various points in the State. Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal is said to have delivered an inflammatory speech at Faridabad. He said that the Hindu patience was running out and that retaliation was near.√

A report in The Tribune said, "The decision could not have been taken by Bhajan Lal alone."√

The Bandh was an open communal attack on every Sikh passenger passing through the State. Responsible persons had said that such a large scale—

organised attack against every Sikh passenger in the entire Haryana State could not be sustained for four days continuously without the connivance of the Government. In this context, a report in the Sunday is note worthy: "Today, Mrs. Gandhi, as a result of the cynical game for political power and by her personal example of hobnobbing with Hindu religious elements, has desecularised the Congress. Thus, when Hindu mobs were lynching Sikhs and destroying Gurdwaras in Panipat, no Congressman came forward to restrain the crowds. In fact, some Congress leaders, including some ministers, were enjoying the spectacle. Lest the opposition leaders get away with their 'holier-than-thou' attitude, its record both in and out of power, has been no better in containing communalism... Panipat is hardly 40 miles away from Delhi, and all the important opposition leaders present in the capital, had information that trouble was brewing there. But what did they do?... Chandra Shekhar undertook a padyatra from Kanya-kumari to Delhi, but he did not feel confident to undertake a padyatra to Haryana and Punjab for peace and communal harmony."√

This planned violence and communal frenzy against the Sikhs in three States came as a rude shock to the Sikh community and created grave apprehensions regarding the motives, designs and approach of the Congress towards the Punjab problem. Some of the highest Congress leaders, including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, were plainly indicating through their repeated public statements that the Akalis struggle would make the position of the Sikhs outside Punjab very difficult. In pursuance of the Bandh call by the Samiti, on February 14, 1984, mobs gathered at as many

as fifty six places in Amritsar and indulged in sacrilegious activities against the Sikh Gurus, Sikh religion and their religious institutions.√

At the Amritsar railway station, a replica of the Darbar Sahib was broken into pieces. A picture of the fourth Sikh Guru Ram Das, on display for the past several years, was damaged beyond recognition and a lighted cigarette was stuck into it.√

“ The shitting and pissing on the picture was a part of— the highly sacrilegious and provocative act of the mob, led by Harbans Lal Khanna, Ex©MLA and district President of the B.J.P..√

When the local administration apprehended the culprits responsible for these nefarious and sacrilegious activities, Sewa Ram, a Congress MLA approached the Senior Superintendent of Police Amritsar and pressurised him to release them.√

When the SSP refused to oblige him, two senior Congress leaders of the State Gurdial Singh Dhillon and R.L. Bhatia prevailed upon the SSP to desist from further arrests.√

Later on these Congress men got SSP Ajai Pal Singh Mann posted out of Amritsar and subsequently got him removed from service on January 4, 1985 under the provisions of Article 311 (2) © of the Constitution which provides for the removal of a public servant without enquiry and without assigning any reason.√

Some followers of Bhindranwale were reported to have carried the broken pieces of the replica to the Golden Temple and swore revenge.√

On April 2, 1984, Harbans Lal Khanna, responsible for the sacrilege, was gunned down in his shop in Amritsar city.—

The large scale Bandh events in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh attended by numerous incidents of unprovoked communal violence against the Sikhs followed in contrast to the perfectly peaceful Bandh of the Morcha on February 8, 1984. It was this unprovoked and organised violence in three Congress administrations, seemingly with the connivance of the authorities and in apparent association of the local Congressmen, that sent a wave of resentment in Punjab against what they considered to be the inhumanly low designs of Delhi to almost criminalise the administration and politics. This being the situation, it evoked what the Congress had all these years wanted, i.e. incidents of communal violence against the Hindus in Punjab. The communal tension grew in Punjab and killing of the Hindus resulted in alleged wanton killings by the police and para©military forces.—

It was unfortunate that the Government failed to comprehend the gravity of the situation. The Prime Minister's reluctance to rectify the injustice, her style of negotiating and political—

gimmick of one kind or the other led to a feeling of bitterness among the Akalis. Morcha dictator Longowal announced in Amritsar the formation of a volunteer corps of a lakh of Sikhs to be known as Sirjiware (who would sacrifice their lives for the cause) that would be amassed from Punjab's 12,500 villages to carry on the protest. He announced : "I want to tell Mrs. Gandhi that our patience is getting exhausted. She should stop playing with fire. This is not Assam. We will die like soldiers at the hands of the police. We will tolerate no further ruse till she stops playing Holi with our blood."√  
The swearing in started on February 21, 1983. By May 12, nearly one lakh persons were sworn in.√

In order to camouflage the real issues and to make farce of the Akali struggle, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared that she was willing to concede the religious demands of the Akalis. As always, she was out to hoodwink the general Indian opinion to show that she was very sympathetic and considerate to the religious susceptibilities of a minority community, whereas on other hand, she had virtually denuded Punjab of its river waters and hydel power by unconstitutional and high handed means to benefit the non-riparian Hindu States of Haryana and Rajasthan. The aim of the Morcha, as we have seen, was to stop this illegal drain of Punjab's only natural wealth. On February √

1983, Prime Minister went to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib and announced that she had accepted the religious demands of the Sikhs. This was merely an eye wash. This announcement of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was nothing but a publicity stunt and a clever argument to sidetrack the main issues. The announcement regarding the granting of holy city status to Amritsar and the right to wear Kirpan has never been implemented till to-day. These gimmicks could not mislead the Sikh masses, who were very keen to save the economic ruin of the State. The 'Guardian', London made a good analysis of this policy of the Prime Minister in the following words: "All through the tangle in Punjab, the Government has preferred to talk religion instead of economics and politics in its dealings with—the Akali party, which represents the interests of Punjabi peasants and farmers, the majority of whom are Sikhs.. The farmers say, "Give us more of our own river waters to irrigate our fields, or refer the matter to the Supreme Court." The Government replies, "We allow you to broadcast religious music over All India Radio, as for the water we shall appoint a tribunal to give a ruling on the dispute." The Akalis say, "Chandigarh, which happens to be in the heart of Punjab, should not have to be shared as a capital with neighbouring Haryana. The Government retorts, "But how can we persuade the Government of Haryana to agree!".... The Akalis say that Punjab and



other States throughout India should be given greater economic powers and allowed to manage their own affairs. New Delhi retorts, "This is a talk of secession, it must be inspired by a foreign power."√

By such tricks the Govern"ment could hardly sidetrack or conceal the gross injustice. The answer to Punjab crisis did not lie in either evasion or intransigence but ironically the Government gave ample proof of both.— During the Morcha, from April 8, 1982 onwards, Swaran Singh, a former Central Minister and Amarinder Singh, the Congress member of the Parliament from Patiala made attempts as inter"mediaries to bring about a solution of ths Punjab problem by an agreement between the Prime Minister and the Akalis. The net result of these efforts was nil. The general impression that was left was that while the Akalis were willing to have a reasonable and healthy solution of the issues, the Prime Minister was unwill"ing to come to any clear terms with a view to accepting even the bare constitutional demands of the Sikhs. What came out in the press made a clear suggestion that the Prime Minister, even while seeming to make a commitment, would later back out. So much so that Swaran Singh felt so disappointed that he "swore to himself not to get involved in the talks."√

Similarly Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Kuldip Nayar, who were repeatedly asked to bring about a compromise felt that the Centre was hardly serious in solving the problem. In an interview, Surjeet told Mark Tully, "Three times in six months an agreement was reached and three— times the Prime Minister backed out. Each time the interests of the Hindus of Haryana weighed more heavily with her than a settlement with the Sikhs."√

Kuldip Nayar wrote: "In April 1984, H.K.L. Bhagat, Minister for Information and Broadcasting, met me at my residence to find out if I could suggest a formula to settle the Punjab problem. I had a typed copy of the formula which I had prepared... I never heard from Bhagat after that. Apparently, this formula made its way to the Prime Minister, who appointed Narasimha Rao to talk to the Punjabi group (Air Marshal Arjun Singh, Lt. General Aurora, I.K. Gujral, Gurbachan Singh, Pran Chopra and myself). The meeting was held at his residence on 12 May, 1984...Narasimha Rao rang up on 16 May and said that he would be meeting us soon. On 24 May, we reminded him that we were waiting for his call. Little did we realise that we, as well as perhaps Narasimha Rao, had been led up the garden path. Mrs. Gandhi had other intentions."√

A similar statement was made by Dr. Ravi, who was also trying to intervene on behalf of the Prime Minister and had negoti"ations with the Akalis and Bhindranwale towards the end of May, 1984. Bhindranwale agreed to a

reasonable settlement. He also gave Ravi the full discretion to make any compromise that he may consider appropriate provided it was, in his view, in the interest of the Sikhs and the country and not a sell out or detrimental to the interests of the Sikhs, and yet Ravi found hardly any response from the authorities which had earlier asked him to initiate a move for a settlement.√

This also gave a lie to the oft repeated allegation or story of secessionism. In fact, Government even concealed that neither Akalis nor Bhindranwale, nor any Sikh institution ever raised the demands for Khalistan. Here it is necessary to point out that throughout the two year period of the Morcha, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, as a measure of propaganda, was making fake attempts at negotiations through intermediaries.—

The clear inference from the above events and the sterile negotiations is that the Prime Minister was following a consistent— two fold policy. On the one hand, she was making a large scale drain of the natural wealth of Punjab, by unconstitutional methods, a feat accomplished, on the other hand, she was consistently pursuing her violent policy of repression, thereby showing it to the Indian public that she was justified in escalating her violent attacks against the Sikhs and their institutions, who could not be curbed or demolished otherwise. This is specifically clear especially from the statements of Kuldip Nayar and H.S. Surjeet because, while for the previous many months the plan to attack Harmander Sahib had been prepared and finalised for almost immediate execution, these persons were sent by the Centre to the Akalis only a few days before the final assault. Hence, the conclusion is inevitable that the dramatic moves were just for the sake of a show, since when they seemed to fructify, the Centre was reluctant to pursue the effort. And this is graphically borne out by the public statements of these intermediaries.—

In retrospect, it appears that the Prime Minister had a premeditated design to apply a military solution instead of a constitutional solution to the Punjab crisis, but was marking time so that the situation may further deteriorate for justifying that solution. We give below two important observations of the Sunday Times, London in support of our assessment of the situation: “The Indian army drew up its invasion (of Golden Temple) strategy nine months ago. A week ago last Friday, Mrs. Gandhi seized the perfect opportunity to use it.”√

Government had repeatedly declared that it would not send police into the Darbar Sahib. But the fact is the Government had started preparations for the military action months before June 1984, A large model of the Darbar Sahib Complex had been prepared at a camp of the Special Frontier Force at

Chakrata in the foothills of the Himalayas and commandos were trained for this purpose. A British correspondent of the 'Sunday Times', London, noted: "Last week's assault on the Golden Temple took place after months of preparation of the Indian army, which included advice from British experts in counter-insurgency. Sources in—

Delhi say that two officers of the Indian secret service, Gary Saxena and R.N. Kay, of the Research and Analysis Wing made several trips to London to seek expertise. The Indian Government then selected 600 men from different units and sent them to rehearse the assault on a life size replica of the Golden Temple, built at a secret training camp in the Chakrata Hills, about 150 miles north of Delhi. The assault troops were alerted to invade the Temple no fewer than five times during the past three months, but each time Mrs. Gandhi vetoed the invasion. 'A case of nerves', according to a senior aide."

Having made up her mind to apply a military solution to the Punjab crisis, the Prime Minister felt that the situation must be allowed to drift and get worse before she could justify that solution. Rajiv is reported to have told Mark Tully in an interview that he did not approve of such a policy on Punjab and was in favour of sending police into the Temple without the loss of time.

The Government was looking for an opportune time to storm the Darbar Sahib.—

#### (ix) Conclusion :f

The two year old Dharam Yudh Morcha spearheaded by the Akali Dal entered a crucial phase. From its beginning till 1984, it continued getting more and more support from all sections of the Sikh community. From the start of the Morcha till now, about 0/20 million Sikhs i.e. 20 per cent of the total Sikh population had courted arrest and 200 Sikhs had lost their lives, many of them shot dead by the police in fake encounters. The Punjab had been converted into a police state. Paramilitary forces deployed in Punjab till then were over 0.1 million, which worked out to be one policeman for every ten Sikh men, women and children. Many Sikhs had lost their shops and houses, either burnt by the police or in arson. Scores of tractors, buses, trolleys and jeeps had been set on fire by police. As many as six Inspector Generals of Police had been posted in Punjab to crush the Sikh agitation. Previously it used to have only one Inspector General—

of Police. But the Morcha failed to fetch the expected dividends as all norms of justice and fairplay were completely flouted. The political and constitutional processes were completely scuttled. The situation was allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that the people began to lose faith in getting justice through constitutional and legal means. The Government owed it to the people to find a constitutional solution to the problems, but not only it consistently failed to adopt the constitutional method but also barred the judicial process when the Sikhs adopted it. Instead its answer was sheer camouflage and

resort to purely repressive measures which were bound to result in disrespect for authority and loss of its credibility.—

Murky intrigues to misrepresent the situation and a campaign of misinformation and disinformation, hiding the real issues, were characteristics of the politics of destruction and deceit, which spelt nothing but ruin for the State. Oliver Goldsmith had once lamented, “Bold peasantry, a country’s pride, once destroyed can never be supplied.” There is no denying the fact that a bold and patriotic Sikh community, with a glorious tradition of valour, chivalry and martyrdom stood alienated, deprived and shocked. Punjab, the food bowl of the country, was ruthlessly robbed of its resources. Unbridled repression of people clamouring for justice and fairness led to nothing but disillusionment, frustration and anguish. The inflamed passions and anti-Sikh euphoria that had been stirred up in the country was bound to lead to awesome results.—

It is significant to note that both Jawahar Lal Nehru and Indira Gandhi followed a set policy against the Sikhs, Both of them opposed the creation of Punjabi Suba with all the might at their command. To Prime Minister Indira Gandhi it was a matter of acute frustration that the Punjabi Suba came to be accepted in principle because of the historical necessity following the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. This explains why both in framing the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 and her subsequent policies and decisions, the Centre did everything to dwarf and crush

socio-economic growth and entity of Punjab and its people. For—

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## 5

### ATTACK ON THE HEART OF SIKHISM

(i) Climax of the Mounting Plan: After outmanoeuvring the Akali leaders and systematically depriving Punjab both economically and politically the Government now decided to execute the finale of its programme by a direct attack on the heart of Sikhism that gives strength and sustenance to the community. The three fold plan of the Government was aimed at, on the political front destroying the Akali party and its image, economic despoilation of the State and erosion of their nerve centre, the holiest of their holy.—

As already noted, the Akali Dal was the only political party in the country with a strong mass and religious base and organisation which the Congress had not been able to demolish or absorb. Unlike other parties, its leadership was a challenge to the elite-ridden ideology of the Congress and other all India parties. Moreover it was only the Akali party which had given a lead to the country in resisting the oppressive Emergency regime of Indira Gandhi. The unfortunate part is that the Congress since Independence had, either out of bias or indiscretion, come to believe that the socio-religious identity and ethos of the Sikhs was a centrifugal force and should be combated and destroyed, it being a hurdle in the Hindu idea of re-establishing a homogenised nation. Moreover the big bites that the Congress had taken of the economic cake of Punjab could be successfully swallowed only if it could demolish or sap both the Akali party and its strong mass base.—

The Centre had successfully subverted the formation of the Akali ministry from time to time, No Akali ministry, including the Akali-B.J.P. combine, was allowed to complete its full term. All the issues raised by the Dharam Yudh Morcha could be settled according to the law of the land through simple and constitutional measures. Even the much maligned Bhindranwale was prepared to accept a just and constitutional solution to the demands of the Morcha but unfortunately judicious solutions were being persistently denied. The charges of secessionism, foreign intervention and threats to the unity and integrity of the country were nothing but stage managed shows created purely to serve

ignoble communal interests and to camouflage the exploitative and oppressive policies and what we believe to be disintegrating and ruinous plans that were consistently beiae followed by the Centre. The Congress design was aimed at fomenting trouble in Punjab and then fully to exploit it for creating a feeling of insecurity among the Punjab Hindus and arouse natural sympathies for them in the rest of India. Fear of country's disintegration was also instilled in their minds. This makes it clear why the solution of the constitutional demands was sidetracked and state repression and violence were continued.—

We have already emphasised that the Punjab Reorganisation Act (1966) was a calculated measure to thwart all social, economic and political progress of Punjab and its people. The Government had also put the seal of its authority on the economic ruin of the State through unilateral Awards. Withdrawal of the water case from the Supreme Court was a blatant blow eventually leading to ruinous consequences. Thereafter the Government persisted in its one track approach of repression and suppression. After the Prime Minister had delivered a massive blow to the Akalis both economically and politically, her perceived motive was to devise more destructive strategies to hide her sinister plan and to show that the Sikhs were an aggressive lot, and not an aggrieved lot. It seemed to have become a political compulsion for her to put a pretence of negotiations to cover her designs.—

Our narration has brought out, clearly and inevitably, two facts. The first is that all the intermediaries including Kuldip Nayar, Swaran Singh, Amarinder Singh, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Dr. Ravi ✓

et. al. *f*

sent by Prime Minister to negotiate with the Akalis, the last time in May, 1984, had found an acceptable response from them, including the two Sants. The mediators were all intrigued to find their prompters hardly willing to listen to their success story. Dr. Ravi, the last intermediary who met Bhindranwale Morcha but unfortunately judicious solutions were being persistently denied. The charges of secessionism, foreign intervention and threats to the unity and integrity of the country were nothing but stage managed shows created purely to serve ignoble communal interests and to camouflage the exploitative and oppressive policies and what we believe to be disintegrating and ruinous plans that were consistently beiae followed by the Centre. The Congress design was aimed at fomenting trouble in Punjab and then fully to exploit it for creating a feeling of insecurity among the Punjab Hindus and arouse natural sympathies for them in the rest of India. Fear of country's disintegration was also instilled in their minds. This makes it clear why the solution of the constitutional demands was sidetracked and state repression and violence were continued.

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Dr. Ravi reported the result of his conversation to R.L. Bhatia, President of the State unit of the Congress. The matter was passed on to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but she backed out.\* Later Dr. Ravi was told that "we'll talk only after the army action."√

I K. Gujral also accused the Government of bad faith during the negotiations. In a statement, on May 6, 1984 he said, "It is ironical but true that on each time the final approval was denied in the name of the Prime Minister,"√

M. Farooqui, Secretary of the National Council of C.P.I, also accused the Prime Minister of acting with partisan considerations. In an interview with Patriot, he disclosed that in June 1983 the opposition parties (minus B J P) had evolved a formula for a reasonable political solution of the Punjab problem which had the approval of the Akali leadership too. H.N. Bahuguna, on behalf of the opposition, sent a letter to the Prime Minister spelling out the details of the formula. The Prime Minister's response was not only negative but offensive in tone.√

Evidently these seeming moves for mediation by the Centre had an ulterior motive, very different from that of a settlement or the removal of the injustice involved. The pretence of negotiations was distinctly a measure of show to prepare the Indian public outside Punjab for the sinister plan for which preparations were being made for execution.√

The second fact is that for about a year or perhaps for over a larger period, the task of mounting military attack on the Golden Temple, Amritsar had been assigned to the army with a view to its swift execution.—

The most dangerous signal ahead was the alienation of the Sikhs from the country's mainstream, mainly because of the different sets of strategies which the Government applied to Punjab and the rest of the country. According to the Government reports violence in Punjab claimed 410 lives in a period of two years i.e. from August 4, 1982 to June 3, 1984.√

The Government publicised this figure in its White Paper in order to justify the array action. The figure of 410 included routine killings in the State and also 290 Sikhs killed in police firing and fake encounters. It was noticed that while the Sikhs in Punjab were

subjected to a brutal military action, no such action was proposed or planned against the culprits (mostly Hindus) of Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay barely a month earlier (May 1984), which took a toll of more than 300 lives, apart from the loot and arson in which some people were roasted alive. The issue was hushed up, as the Government was making preparations for an assault on Darbar Sahib. In an interview with India Today, soon after the communal holocaust in Bombay and Bhiwandi, Bal Thakheray, Shiv Sena Chief said, "This country must stand for Hinduism. I am sowing the seeds, let me see if we will reap the harvest."

It was amazing that the Government took no notice of such provocative utterances gloating over the Bhiwandi killings and calling them a seed which he had sown. A similar statement from the leader of a minority community would have aroused a chorus of protests and would have been construed, by both the Government and the media, as posing a serious threat to nation's unity and integrity.—

The contemplated attack and its preparations became a subject of expression in the press. Numerous Sikh and non-Sikh organisations and personalities spoke emphatically of the tragic, horrendous and ruinous results of the proposed plan. Chandra Shekhar, President of the Janta Party who met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi some time before the attack, in order to ascertain her views said in a statement to the press : "Mrs. Gandhi told me she would never make the mistake of sending the Army into the Golden Temple and yet she did."

Even as the preparations for storming the Temple were complete, the Prime Minister kept giving assurances that 'the Government would not resort to any such action which would cause more harm than good'. Even upto the last session of Parliament preceding the attack P.C. Sethi, the then Home Minister reiterated that the Government had no intention of invading the Temple,

This is an extremely important and significant fact. It shows that both the Sikh and the non-Sikh opinion were extremely concerned about such a step and the evident consequences of it. Of these the Prime Minister had been clearly and repeatedly warned. This indicates three things. First, that she was fully aware as to how the Sikh world would take such an event. Second, that she was clearly wanting that either among the Sikhs or among their sympathisers outside the community an opinion may not grow to be vocal enough to thwart her plan. Third, that in full awareness of these warnings about the possible reactions and results, she was so, it would seem compulsively, bent upon her project that she went to the extent of even misleading both the people and some of the well meaning public men.—

Here it is necessary to reveal the kind of game Indira Gandhi was playing. In November 1983, she herself had written to Bhindranwale, a personal letter in her own handwriting appreciating his progressive views on social matters. Bhindranwale himself had shown this letter to Devinder Singh Duggal, Head of the Sikh Reference Library in the Darbar Sahib. The letter was kept in the Library but the valuable document was destroyed when the Library was burnt during the army action.

While the public mind was fed on all sorts of lies, half truths, exaggerated and one sided versions of the events, glaring facts such as above were advertently or inadvertently ignored by the media and the writers on Punjab. Rajiv Gandhi who had come to

Chandigarh in the first week of May 1984 had chosen to describe Bhindranwale as a religious leader. Asked specifically by pressmen, "Is Bhindranwale an extremist?" he evaded a reply and said, "This is for you to evaluate." He was further asked, "Do you think he is a political leader?" Rajiv Gandhi responded positively, "He is a religious leader and has not shown any political inclinations so far."

' In an interview, Subhash Kirepaker asked Bhindranwale as to what he thought of Rajiv Gandhi describing him as a religious leader without any political inclinations. He replied, "They call me a religious leader, they also say I am responsible for the slayings. Which version should I believe?"

It was amazing how a few weeks later he had suddenly become a terrorist, who along with his followers had to be flushed out of Darbar Sahib with the aid of the army. Khushwant Singh observed, "what induced Rajiv Gandhi, General Secretary of Congress, to give Bhindranwale a clean chit as a purely religious man and not a political leader at a time when his mother and her advisers were clearly planning to eliminate him?"

Such self-contradictory facts, no historian can fail to note since these are simply covers to hide the underlying reality or a unified policy. It is obvious that the objective in implementing the plan was far more overriding and compulsive for the Centre than to evade or avoid it either because of the willingness of the Akalis to have a settlement or of the warnings of the calamitous results of such an act given by public men and institutions. Here it is relevant to reveal the operative impulse behind the so-called "operation". For this

purpose we would like to acquaint the reader with the significance which the Darbar Sahib has in the Sikh ethos.—

(II) Darbar Sahib : The Core of Sikh Faith :—

The Sikh shrines called Gurdwaras have always played a central role in shaping and governing the life of the Sikhs and their institutions, ethos and traditions. In the words of Bhai Gurdas, "Dharmsal (Gurdwara) is Mansarovar and the Sikhs flock there like swans."

' Built by the fifth Guru Arjan Dev, Darbar Sahib is the epicentre of Sikh faith which has served as the principal place of inspiration, direction and rallying centre of the Sikhs. It is by its construction and placement of the Sikh scripture therein that the fifth Master Guru Arjan openly proclaimed to the world the independent identity of the Sikh faith. Thus it is the Guru who created the place as the capital and core of Sikhism. For, after installing the Scripture in the shrine, the Guru sanctified its sacredness by always sleeping on the ground in its precincts. Hence the meaningful sacredness of Darbar Sahib is the creation of the Guru himself and is not man-made. The Guru created a cohesive Panth by introducing the system of 'Daswandh', which the ruling elite felt to be a tax levied by the Guru on his own people, it was this Guru, called the 'Sachcha Padshah', who created in his own life time 'a state within a state', laying down the foundation of direct confrontation with the Empire by his martyrdom.—

The sixth Guru Hargobind projected this step further by militarising the Panth and building the Akal Takhat as a centre of Sikh empirical life. It was not sheer coincidence

that the day of confrontation with the Mughal Empire (i.e. the day of martyrdom of the Fifth Guru) was also the day on which Prime Minister Jinnah mounted the attack on the Darbar Sahib with Akal Takhat, the nucleus of inalienable MiriPiri combination in Sikh religion, as the special target. Obviously, such a calculated step had loud implications. It was from Akal Takhat that the Gurus had raised the banner of religious and political freedom and denounced the state oppression of the times. The highly cherished twin doctrine of Miri and Piri is visibly symbolised by the Akal Takhat and the Harmandir Sahib built adjacent to each other. Together they represent the unique ideal of spiritual and empirical unity handed down to the Sikhs by Guru Nanak. The ideal that has sustained and nurtured them through the centuries. Throughout the entire span of its eventful history, the Temple has been the centre of freedom and a cradle of martyrs who made supreme sacrifices to defend its sanctity.—

Thus the Guru created the Akal Takhat as the official seat of authority and the venue of all socio-political deliberations of the Panth. During the turbulent period of eighteenth century, the Sikhs assembled at the Akal Takhat to discuss matters of political importance and sought spiritual and temporal blessings. Meetings of Sarbat Khalsa were convened to defend the community against the threats of the State and chalk out plans for military—

operations. Vital problems and dangers to the community were discussed and Gurmattas (decisions in the name of the Guru) were passed. The decisions taken at the Akal Takhat, because of its religious sanctity, were binding on the Sikhs. It was from the Akal Takhat that the Sikhs conducted their long drawn out political struggles against the foreign invaders. It has been the nucleus of crusade against every malevolent rule and a symbol of Sikh struggle for freedom. Realising its significance as the heart and soul of Sikh faith, the shrine was made, several times, the target of attack by the enemies in order to annihilate the Sikhs.—

Ahmed Shah Abdali had attacked the Temple as it had become “in his eyes a rock of offence because of what it represented of the religious and political importance which Sikhism had acquired”,<sup>1</sup>

- The event had stimulated a great cohesion and solidarity in the Sikh community. So bitter was the Sikh reaction against Abdali that on the eve of his last raid, in 1764, an assembly of the Sikhs passed a Gurmatta, proclaiming the independence of the Sikh state and religion. The term Ghallughara, coined during Abdali's invasion, connotes aggression, mass destruction and religious persecution and has become an integral part of the lore of the Sikhs.—

It is very important to understand that the core position of Darbar Sahib is not a myth with the Sikhs but is a reality known even to the enemies of the Panth who have always planned their strategies on the basis of its being the very fount of Sikh spirit and power.—

In the eighteenth century when prices were fixed on the heads of the Sikhs and Amritsar was made out of bounds for them and pickets were posted on all roads leading to the city, the Sikhs refused to be cowed down and vowed to protect the sanctity of the holy place. It was learnt that the Shrine was desecrated by Massa Rangar, a Lambardar of Jandiala, who indulged in orgies of drink, smoke, obscene music and dance within the holy precincts. Two Sikhs, Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh, braving all hardships of their visit to

Darbar Sahib, came in disguise and chopped off Massa's head. Retributive action by the Government followed. Bhai Tarn's scalp was scrapped. Bota Singh, Subegh Singh, Shahba/ Singh and other Sikhs were killed in cold blood. But no persecution could extinguish the light which the Gurus had lit in their hearts. Gordon writes, "Bands of Sikh horsemen were to be seen riding at full gallop towards Amritsar, running the gauntlet of Mohammadan troops. The message would be sent round the distant villages, "who will ride to night?" Death was martyr's crown on such occasions."

There were numerous instances of Sikh devotees who risked their lives in visiting Amritsar to take a dip in the holy tank. Some of them must have had their heads chopped by the soldiers on the vigilance duty. "Some might be slain and some might be captured but none were ever known to abjure their creed, when thus taken on their way to the sacred place."

The Sikhs pay homage to these martyrs in their daily Ardas.—

Sikh annals record how Baba Deep Singh, the first Head of the Dam Dami Taksal had made the supreme sacrifice of his life in defence of the shrine. Severely wounded in the battlefield, the Baba is said to have pushed forward through the enemy lines and supporting his almost severed head reached the precincts of Darbar Sahib. Bhindranwale was often heard saying that he belonged to the Taksal of Baba Deep Singh and would never shun from any sacrifice for the cause of Sikhism.—

Ahmed Shah Abdali carried out his seventh invasion in December 1764. He rushed to Amritsar to make the Golden Temple his first target for the demoralisation of the Khalsa. As it happened, only about thirty Sikhs led by Baba Gurbax Singh were present in the Akal Bunga. They were ready to spill their blood for the honour of their sacred shrine. They were men of grim determination "who didn't have a grain of fear in them ; they were unmindful of slaughter and the dread of death."

Instead of evading the surprise attack of the mighty hordes of Abdali instinctively they came out and confronted their onslaught before they could enter the precincts of Darbar Sahib. In the brave struggle they checked the entry of the Afghan invaders into the Temple area till they died fighting to the last man.—

The Shrine was plated with gold by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and came to be known as the Golden Temple. Many great martyrdoms and triumphs have been associated with this historic shrine. In the words of Rattan Singh Bhangu, an eighteenth century Sikh chronicler, "no better death is conceivable for a Sikh than that which overtakes him while defending the great cause of Sikhism at this Centre of Sikh faith."

Intertwined around the Shrine are the hallowed memories of their Gurus/ saints and martyrs, their hopes and fears, their songs and tales of heroism, their struggles and triumphs. It reminds them of their great heritage, eventful history and tradition and of so many legends that have become attached to it through the centuries. It mirrors the entire panorama of Sikh history. It is a living monument of the spiritual yearnings and the socio-political objectives that have shaped the dynamic Sikh people and animated them over the years. The history of the Darbar Sahib is, in a way, the capsuled history of the Sikhs. The Temple is not merely a structure of brick and mortar, but its every inch is soaked with the sacrifice of Sikh blood against social and state tyranny.—

The Sikhs have never compromised their right to assemble at the Darbar Sahib in complete freedom. It has been a centre of resistance against the tyranny of rulers. The socio-political struggle of the Sikhs started first with the liberation of Darbar Sahib from the control of the Government-Mahant combine and continued thereafter, from its premises, for the liberation of their motherland. Forces emanating from here have caused not just ripples but great tides in the political ocean of the region. Both Gandhi and Nehru supported the Sikhs in their fight against British imperialism, conducted from its precincts. During the struggle against the British rule, the Congress leaders never objected to the combination of religious, social and political objectives of the Akali Dal and the executing of their plans from the precincts of the Gurdwaras. In fact, when the Sikhs gained the control of the Darbar Sahib, Gandhi sent them a complimentary telegram "First battle of India's freedom won. Congratulations." Rather the Akalis were projected in such flattering terms as 'the only living wing of the national movement', and 'the strongest community in India.'<sup>28</sup> In their statements, the Congress leadership supported the Akali Dal and the S.G.P.C. in all their programmes and activities. On one occasion, it described the official attitude towards the Akali Dal as "a direct challenge to the right of free association of all Indians and a blow aimed at all movements for freedom!"<sup>11</sup> In September 1923, the Congress held a special session in Delhi and passed a resolution supporting the Akali agitation in Nabha State.<sup>4</sup> Nehru personally visited Nabha and was put behind the bars for supporting the Akalis.<sup>2</sup> In a long written statement, full of emotion and highly appreciative of the Akalis, Nehru attacked the high-handedness of the British bureaucracy and the arbitrary nature of justice in the State. He condemned the British for their 'unscrupulous' and 'crooked ways and praised the Sikhs for their sufferings and sacrifice. In Akali agitations, including the Jaitu and other Morchas, the centre of organisation and movement of the Jathas was the Darbar Sahib.

The Gurdwara Reform Movement and a number of other Morchas such as Guru Ka Bagh, keys of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takhat, Bhai Pheru Gurdwara and Gurdwara Gangs which played a significant role in keeping the socio-religious liberties of the Sikhs intact were all launched from the A

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Takhat. Even after Independence, all Sikh agitations, Morchas and the creation of Punjabi Suba and the 'Save Democracy Campaign against the imposition of Emergency (1975) were conducted from the premises of the Akal Takhat. No objection was ever raised about the use of the Golden Temple Complex for the socio-political purposes. It was only after the launching of the Dharam Yodha Morcha (1982) that the use of Darbar Sahib for political purposes became the subject of an unsavoury controversy.

Assault on Darbar Sahib marked the climax of a consistent Government policy to weaken the Sikhs religiously. It aimed at undermining the foundations of Sikhism and depriving the Sikhs of all those glories that rendered them respectable in the eyes of the world. The news was tailored to reflect only the Government point of view.

As stated already, the attack on the Golden Temple was the last heavy stroke of a policy which had systematically accomplished socio-political and economic erosion of the Sikhs and the Punjab. It is evident that it was part of a pre-determined and consistent plan that aimed at hitting the very religious and moral source, strength and inspiration of the Sikhs.



As the Sikh history shows, every ruler of the times knew full well of the fundamental importance of the Darbar Sahib in the Sikh life and struggle. It was thus not accidental that practically all of them made Darbar Sahib a priority target of [their attack on the Sikhs and that also on a holy day when Sikhs assemble there as pilgrims to pray and to pay their homage and obeisance. Let us have a look at the chain of events. On the one hand are the facts that the Punjab problem was not only a creation of the Punjab Reorganisation Act but it could easily and without repercussions be solved constitutionally. Second, that more than once whenever the mediators were sent to negotiate with Akalis by the Centre, they always had a good and positive response from them and brought viable proposals for a solution, which the Centre was always later disinterested even to look upon. The fate of the water dispute, the cardinal issue of the Punjab problem in the courts and its withdrawal from the Supreme Court clearly indicates that settlement with the Akalis was hardly the objective in view. This happened till the end of May, 1984, as evidenced by the reports of Kuldip Nayar, Ravi and others. This showed that Prime Minister's interest was not in a settlement but in making a show of her seeming earnestness to come to an agreement.

Further, the Centre had been repeatedly warned by responsible Sikhs and public men of the far reaching and horrendous conse-

quences of such a step. In an article in the Indian Express (Ap 23, 1984), a prominent journalist Pran Chopra sounded a note warning : "What is needed anyhow is not change of the tools law and order but a change of methods and intentions at t political level... There are rumours in New Delhi that the an might be brought in. That would be the gravest blunder politica and severely harmful to the army itself. It would be the woi form of changing tools. The army cannot do more, and in t given circumstances can probably do much less, than the prese four agencies after the initial shot of confidence artificially indue by an army show runs out. The third temptation to be avoid is to make a rush upon the Golden Temple. There is nothing be gained by it and much to be lost." The historical context the earlier rulers and invaders, their choice of target including tl day of attack were well known to the Centre. While all the tin preparations were being made for the attack, continuous assuranc were being given in and outside the Parliament that such a st was far from their contemplation. On the other hand, anoth chain of events political, socio-economic and religious which int connected and uni-directional as they were unmistakably point out that the last step would be on the bastion of Sikh strengt In fact to an outsider who studies the two chains of even: contrasted as they were, it is evident that the policy, process ai plan which had started with the rehablitation of the Sikhs, tl merger of PEPSU in Punjab and rejection of the Punjabi Suba the North could inevitably end only in the holocaust at the Gold\* Temple Amritsar and that the logic of this series of events cou neither be interrupted nor have a different finale,

### (iii) Blue Star Holocaust :

As already noted\* a cold blooded plan to attack the Darb Sahib had been conceived and its preparations too had been completed. Only the date of its final execution had to be conveyed\* by the Prime Minister. Even after having given the order for its execution she only tried to keep the facade of her willingness to solve the problem, despite her consistent and calculated refusal to

do so. While the iron hand had been raised to strike, to the Indian masses, it was the kid glove thereon that was being shown and publicised.

The evaluation of facts reveals that the orders to implement the covertly planned assault were given on the night of May 27, 1984.\* A highly placed police officer, who pleaded anonymity said that the army had taken positions in some high rise buildings around the Temple on May 29. As a part of the strategy jointly formulated and executed by top brass Generals, almost all the battalions of the Sikh and Punjab regiments, as also the artillery and armoured units, which had a large number of Sikhs in them, had already been moved out gradually from Punjab and neighbouring states to far off Central, Southern and North-Eastern States.\*<sup>8</sup> This showed that either the Government did not trust the Sikh soldiers to impartially carry out the orders or the Government wanted the operation to be undertaken by soldiers who could be thoroughly biased against the Sikhs, subjected as they had been to an intense propaganda of Government controlled media.

On the issue of the code word 'Operation Blue Star' on 27<sup>th</sup> May, the army units were rushed to Punjab by road, rail and air. The commandos, who were especially trained at Chakrata for the purpose, were moved to Amritsar. There is enough evidence that a week before the attack, some army officers had been masquerading in CRPF uniforms for reconnaissance. One of Bhindranwale's men had spotted Col. Fernandes, who was on such a mission.<sup>29</sup> On June 1, Maj. General K. S. Brar, dressed in civilian clothes, is said to have visited the Temple in order to have an assessment of the fortifications inside.<sup>80</sup> He was recognised by some of the devotees. "He must have seen that the Temple and the hostel complexes were unusually crowded because pilgrims had already arrived to celebrate the martyrdom of Guru Arjan ... General Brar must have also realised that the unusually large number of pilgrims in the two complexes would make his task of getting Bhindranwale out of the Temple without killing or injuring innocent very much harder. But the operation went ahead."<sup>81</sup>

Whereas most of the official versions maintain a meaningful silence about the happenings of June 1, there is plenty of evidence to prove that the security forces tried on the Harmandir Sahib on June 1 itself to give a foretaste of their firepower. Military experts believe that it was a deliberate attempt to provoke Bhindranwale to tire back so that he could reveal his dispositions and his firepower. It could also be an attempt to frighten Bhindranwale into submission. But they failed to note that Bhindranwale had the blood of martyrs in his veins. There was no response from inside. The firing was earned out by the B.S.F. and the C.R.P.F. on orders from Maj. General Kuldip Singh Brar.<sup>3</sup> "There is no doubt that security forces (C.R.P.F.) fired on the Harmandir Sahib on June

1 itself and the news over the A.I.R. that there was unprovoked firing from inside was a blatant lie. However, most of the official versions do not deal with the happenings of June 1. For them, the story begins on June 2.<sup>8</sup> The news over the A.I.R. that there was unprovoked firing from inside the Temple was a known mis-statement. An organisation, Citizens for Democracy (here after referred to as C.F.D.) which took great pains to gather inside information made some startling exposures to counter-act the campaign of misinformation launched by the Government. After examining various eye witness accounts they revealed that there was no firing from inside the Golden Temple. According to these accounts the security forces resorted to wanton firing resulting in the death of eight persons, including a woman and a child inside the complex.<sup>4</sup> In the 'Khabarnama' of June 3, the Pakistan T. V. showed bullet marks on the entrance of the Golden Temple Complex. The marks were encircled red and carried June 1, as the date of firing. There were as many as thirty four big bullet holes on all sides of the Harmandir Sahib which completely belied the Government version that the security forces had shown extreme restraint and did not fire a single shot to initiate the attack.<sup>8\*</sup>

Longowal, leader of the Dharam Yudh Morcha seemed to be at his wits end. He is said to have made desperate lightning calls to President Zail Singh seeking his intervention to get the firing at the Darbar Sahib stopped. But the President's secretary put him off by evasive answers. B.S. Ramoowalia, who had been making calls on behalf of Longowal told him that the President seemed to be avoiding him.<sup>3</sup> Later on, Longowal is said to have contacted B.D. Pande, the Punjab Governor, who told him very candidly that the situation was beyond his control and that the decisions were coming straight from New Delhi.<sup>17</sup> In a statement issued to the press, Longowal said : "By opening fire on the Golden Temple the government has begun a new fight with the Sikh nation. With this the Government's facade of secularism has been unveiled. Every bullet fired on the Golden Temple has pierced through the heart of every Sikh."<sup>88</sup> The desperate Akali leader was making a futile bid to thwart the attack which had been launched in all seriousness.

The White Paper issued by the Government begins the story on June 2 with the Government of India deciding to call in the army in aid of civil authorities in Punjab with the object "to check and control extremist, terrorist and communal violence in the State of Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh, provide security to the people and restore normalcy."<sup>9</sup> According to Devinder Singh Duggal, who was one of the persons to give an eye witness account revealed that, on June 2, a team of the B.B.C. including Mark Tully was taken around the Darbar Sahib and shown thirty four holes, some of them as big as three inches in diameter, caused by the bullets on all sides of the Temple.<sup>10</sup> Tully noted, "The CRP firing took place four days before the army actually entered the Temple ... I believe that the Central Reserve Police (evidently under orders of the Generals, who were incharge of the assault since the end of May, 1984) firing was the

start of an attempt to frighten Bhindranwale into surrendering, an attempt which lasted almost to the hour that the army did eventually go in four days later.”<sup>41</sup>

The tragic and the momentous character of the contemplated attack is evidenced by the Prime Minister’s nervous behaviour at a

meeting of the party workers from all over India, on June 2, 1984. The meeting was meant to be held behind closed doors but three journalists managed to walk in. One of them Anand Sahay observed: “When Mrs. Gandhi walked upto the platform she appeared to be limping. Her shoulders were hunched. She looked dishevelled. Her face was drawn. She choked as she spoke. I was so surprised that I thought someone in her family must have died.”<sup>42</sup> Sahay concluded that normally immaculate Mrs. Gandhi’s downtrodden and dishevelled appearance must mean that “something big had been decided.”<sup>43</sup>

Even when it was difficult to hide the onset of the attack from the onlookers and gun shots were being fired heralding the horrendous event, the Prime Minister resorted to the most immoral and disgraceful act of hiding the truth. Till the end she played a gimmick after another to prove her credibility to the outside world. On the evening of June 2, 1984, she appeared on the national radio to make an unscheduled broadcast to the nation about the Punjab crisis. It was an exercise in duplicity as she had no intention of matching her words with deeds. She told a lie to the nation that the Government had accepted most of the demands of the Akalis and that a settlement had not been possible only because they (Akalis) kept raising fresh demands. The speech marked the culmination of a long series of hypocritical exercises aimed at running down the Akalis. She could not shun the pretence of negotiations even when she had already launched the military attack. She said, “Even at this late hour, I appeal to the Akali leaders to call off their threatened agitation and accept the framework of peaceful settlement which we have offered.”<sup>44</sup> It was rhetoric that lacked substance. She said all this while she was fully aware that her ordered attack was in progress and irreversible, thousands of troops had already converged on the State and surrounded the Gurdwaras, which were being unprovokingly fired at. People in Amritsar as well as every where else in Punjab could sense that the Army was poised for a big drastic action. Kuldip Nayar observed: “How could she first order military operation and then suggest

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negotiations.’ And even if Akalis were ready to talk, how could they contact her; all their telephones had been cut off.”<sup>45</sup>

Towards the end of her broadcast, the Prime Minister trying to sound very genuine, made an appeal, “let us join hands together to heal wounds. The best memorial to those who have lost their lives is to restore normalcy and harmony in Punjab which they loved and served. To all sections of Punjabis, I appeal, don’t shed blood, shed hatred.”<sup>46</sup> The decision to shed

more blood and more hatred had already been taken. The Prime Minister's consistently calculated policy now led her into the suicidal step which would generate only hostility and destruction instead of peace and harmony, hatred instead of love, chaos instead of normalcy, more suffering instead of solace and disunity instead of unity and integrity. Ian Jack and Mary Anne Weaver, correspondents of Sunday Times, London observed : "The cracks in the integrity of the Indian State—what the Indian press likes to describe as fissiparous tendencies widened dramatically, when the Golden Temple was invaded; and they will take a considerable time, if ever, to close again."<sup>7</sup>

Lt. General Ranjit Singh Dayal, Chief of Staff, Western Command had taken over as Adviser Security to the Governor of Punjab on June 2.<sup>48</sup> The whole administration of the State along with the railways and other transportation services including the postal and telecommunications were carried on or suspended, to suit the needs of the armed forces. The State police service virtually ceased to exist as massive purge operation went on and its various functions were taken over by the army personnel i.e. such functions as frisking, searching and arresting people, performing security duties, regulating movement of transport and men, guarding railway tracks, canals etc. and other installations of public utility. Thus on June 2, the army took over the administration, and whatever vestiges of a civilised government had remained vanished.

3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1984, the day chosen for mounting the attack was

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the martyrdom day of the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan Dev, the architect and builder of the Darbar Sahib. A large number of people, approximately estimated at ten to fifteen thousand had come from the towns and villages to commemorate the occasion. It was felt that the day was deliberately selected to cause maximum loss of life and suffering to the Sikhs. Besides thousands of the pilgrims, there were hundreds of Akali workers, who had gone there peacefully to court arrest in connection with the Dharam Yudh Morcha. The priests and Sewadars of the Temple and employees of S.G.P.C. were also in the Complex. No body had any inkling or warning of the sudden curfew and the imminent Army attack. As observed in the report of the Citizens for Democracy, "No one inside the Golden Temple had yet realised the sinister plan of the authorities. Punjab had been sealed. Amritsar had been sealed. The Golden Temple had been sealed. Thousands of pilgrims and hundreds of Akali workers had been allowed to collect inside the Temple complex. They had been given no inkling or warning either of the sudden curfew or of the imminent Army attack. It was to be a black Hole-type of tragedy, not out of forgetfulness but out of deliberate planning and design."<sup>49</sup>

Bhan Singh, Secretary of the S.G.P.C. who was trapped inside and was one of the survivors said, "Had the array given a warning, at least those pilgrims who had come for the Gurburb could go out and then those persons who were simply here to participate in the Dharam Yudh Morcha could go out. But no warning was given to the people. The firing was started from all around the complex with vengeance, as if they were attacking an alien, enemy country."<sup>80</sup> Gurdev Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar at that time, sought the help of the army authorities to get the pilgrims out but no body paid any heed to his suggestion. A shake up in the Amritsar administration was immediately ordered and Gurdev Singh proceeded on leave.

Two centuries earlier, Darbar Sahib Amritsar had been the target of attack on the Diwali of 1736 by the Mughal army. It was

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a massacre of such great magnitude that people remembered it for a long time as the "bloody Diwali."<sup>81</sup> When Ahmed Shah Abdali had raided Darbar Sahib, he too had chosen the Baisakhi day to launch his attack in order to inflict the maximum casualties on the Sikhs who gather there in large numbers to commemorate the birth of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi. It is well known that the historical Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar also took place on the Baisakhi day i.e. 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1919. Invasion of Darbar Sahib on a holy day brought back to people's minds the gory accounts of the turbulent periods of Sikh community found in the books of history. The "Operation" was the first of its kind in the history of India, in fact of the world, when troops were ordered to storm a community's most sacred shrine involving large scale massacre of its own people— men, women and children.

As the troops launched the attack on the Darbar Sahib, the entire State of Punjab was virtually isolated from the rest of the world. All postal services and tele-communications were snapped. A thirty six hour curfew, later extended by another thirty hours, of the most savage kind, was clamped over the length and breadth of the State, including the countryside. So much so that no one could walk on a public way or cross even a lane. No curfew passes were issued and army vehicles with machine guns mounted on their roofs and, in some cases, tanks loaded with tank carriers, were seen in the streets to give the impression that the military was in control.<sup>62</sup> Residents living in the immediate precincts outside the Golden Temple were given only five minutes to vacate their houses and shops on the day the curfew was clamped. As some of the residents found it impossible to vacate their premises within the stipulated time, some of them were said to have panicked and leapt out from the second and third floor and died. Some old men, women and children who could not escape had to undergo life and death struggle, since the water and electricity supply were stopped.<sup>63</sup> It was a virtual martial law, though without any declaration to that effect. All rail and bus services were cut off. All non-military vehicles including the bullockcarts were banned from the roads. "Even the dogs were not allowed to bark", said an eye witness.

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News censorship was ordered for a period of two months, the foreign journalists were rounded up and expelled from the State under military escort. So much so that all the leading newspaper of the State had to suspend publication for three days. All wartime emergency measures were brought into force. Life came to a standstill. The telephone connections of the Complex were disconnected on June 2 and the water and electricity supply were cut off on June 3.

The firing which had started on June 1 continued intermittently for the next two days, this being an attempt to provoke cross-firing to enable the army to locate the points of resistance. But as already stated, no retaliatory firing took place.

Subash Kirpekar one of the journalists, who met Bhindranwale on June 3 after the army had surrounded the Temple complex, asked him if he feared death. Bhindranwale replied, "One who fears death is not a Sikh."<sup>54</sup> He insisted that he was not responsible for the murders which had brought the army to the gates of the Golden Temple. When Kirpekar asked what could be done to stop the violence he replied, 'Ask those who are responsible for it.'<sup>55</sup> He asked the Sant, 'Is it your contention that Sikhs cannot live in India?' The Sant replied, 'Yes, they can neither live in nor with India. If treated as equals it may be possible. But frankly speaking I don't think that is possible.'<sup>56</sup> This was the last interview which the Sant had with a journalist.

Eye witness accounts disclosed that Bhindranwale had issued strict instructions not to fire a single shot unless or until the security forces entered the Darbar Sahib.<sup>57</sup> They had put up fortifications in the Temple only as a measure of defence and not offence. The eye witness account of Duggal disclosed that Bhindranwale's men resorted to firing only when the army entered the Golden Temple.<sup>58</sup> Despite their unprecedented courage and commitment, they were no match for the army either in terms of number of men or in amount of arms and ammunition.

As the army entered the Complex, the men inside under the command of Maj. General Shahbeg Singh retaliated and a vigorous battle ensued. The armed forces which had been firing intermittently since June 1, resorted to heavy firing from the morning of June 4, without any let up. Apart from heavy firing from LMG's and MMG's, the army troops also threw mortar shells and poisonous gas cannisters inside the Akal Takhat and other buildings in the Complex. The army commanders had thought that the whole 'Operation' would not last more than a few hours but due to the determined fight put up by the Sikh youth, the battle lasted almost four days. Mary Anne Weaver, a Correspondent of Sunday Times, London observed : "The army expected they could clear the temple of Sikh extremists in 48 hours. Instead it took four days. Resistance was as fierce as the death defying hyperbole that Bhindranwale had promised : "If the authorities enter the temple, we will teach them such a lesson that the throne of Indira will crumble."<sup>59</sup> They were determined to fight to the last man and to the last bullet. On the first two days the army had brought into operation machine guns, mortars and rockets, but they could make no headway despite its heavy loss. Subash Kirpekar who was watching the scene from his hotel room observed : "For the first time, I sense that my friends are wondering whether the Army has not taken too long to complete the task. A mere Sant has held them at bay for three days. Some of the markets around the Temple

complex have caught fire. I can see huge flames leaping up and dancing devilishly in the air. I wonder whether the entire city will be engulfed in flames if the fire spreads.”<sup>60</sup>

There were hurried consultations and evidently it appeared that orders were obtained to launch an attack with heavy artillery and tanks. This was the first action of its kind in which seven divisions of the army were deployed and all the three wings of the armed forces—Army, Navy and Air Force were brought into operation to tackle a domestic situation. Perhaps the planners were under the impression that the demonstration of a mighty show of fire and thunder of the three wings of the

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army would frighten Bhindranwale and his men into submission. But they were mistaken as the rattle of gun fire and the rumble of the armoured vehicles could not subdue the defenders. Mary Anne Weaver a British correspondent in her report to Sunday Times, London (June 17, 1984) observed : “Not since independence had the army been used in such numbers—about 15,000 troops took part in the assault, with another 35,000 standing by—to put down an internal rebellion. Not even in the more ruthless days of empire had the army been used to storm such an important religious shrine.” Bhindranwale’s men had withstood the Indian infantry for two days but the tank barrage was too overwhelming to be resisted with their limited means. As some eye witnesses revealed, the number of defending men was between fifty to one hundred. As many as 13 tanks were used in the attack. Out of these seven were deployed for attack on the Akal Takhat. One of them was reportedly destroyed by a young boy of 16 years, who tied explosives around his body and jumped under the moving tank.<sup>61</sup> Due to damage, the tank got bogged down in front of the Samadhi of Baba Deep Singh in the Parikarma. Later it was removed by the army with great difficulty. Brahma Chellaney reported : “At about 9 p.m. on 6 June, entire city of 700,000 was plunged into darkness by a power outage. Half an hour later, Amritsar was shaken by powerful shelling, mortar explosion and machine-gun fire. The big battle had begun. Half the city was up on rooftops watching the battle. Tracer bullets and flares lit up the crescent moonsky. The explosions at the Golden Temple rattled doors and windows miles away. While the battle was raging, the state-run radio claimed that the city was ‘calm’. Between 10.30 p.m. and midnight, we heard slogans from city outskirts of villagers trying to march to the Golden Temple from three different directions. The slogans—‘Long live the Sikh religion’ and ‘Bhindranwale is our leader’—were heard briefly on each occasion and were followed by rapid army machine gun fire and screams.”<sup>62</sup>

Gas cannisters and “stun” bombs (meant to stun the opponent) were lobbed at the Akal Takhat to support the First

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Para Commandos and ten Guards who went into the attack. However, due to strong breeze and close brick-lining of the rooms, the stun bombs and the gas cannisters did not have the desired effect and the commandos kept asking for more and more fire support, which was promptly coming. In spite of all this, the commandos suffered heavily.



As the news of the bloody attack on Darbar Sahib was heard, tension built up in Punjab and there was a mass upsurge in the countryside. Army helicopters spotted groups of angry Sikhs gathering in many different places in their bid to march to the Shrine in order to defend it. At Gohalwar, a village about twenty kilometers from Amritsar, a crowd of over 30,000 persons gathered to start a protest march against the army invasion. At Raja Sansi and Heir villages in Amritsar district, thousands of Sikhs were seen planning to march towards the Temple. Reports were also received of angry villagers gathering in Batala in Gurdaspur district trying to rush to the Shrine. The army concluded that 'resort to deadly firing was the only effective way to disperse the ever swelling rebellious crowds.'<sup>83</sup> Accordingly Sikhs marching to Darbar Sahib were subjected to bombing and machine gunning from the air, resulting in the killing of hundreds of unarmed protesters.

The curfew that was initially imposed for thirty six hours was extended by another thirty hours.<sup>64</sup> On the night of 5-6 June, the battle increased in ferocity. According to General K.S. Brar, on June 6, around 4-30 a.m., thirty soldiers managed to get into the Akal Takhat: "The battle continued for another two hours and the extremists fought to the last man."<sup>8</sup> Due to repeated explosions, the Akal Takhat was reduced to a rubble, Bhindranwale and his men died defending the Temple and became as was the subsequent reaction of the community, martyrs in the Sikh tradition. People believed that they sealed the pledge of their sincerity with their blood. Martial tradition of the Sikhs gives the pride of place to martyrdom and battle against overwhelming odds. 'Whatever one says of them, their fight to the last not only made

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them martyrs in the eyes of many Sikhs but invested the concept of martyrdom with a contemporary relevance,'<sup>66</sup>

Bhindranwale and his defence of the Akal Takhat became a part of everyday folklore. Songs and ballads eulogising the brave fight put up by him and his men became very popular in the villages and cities. The folk song named 'Saka,' sung by famous Nabha ladies, who were arrested later on, became very popular. The song took up the theme of atrocities committed by the Indian army on the Sikhs, who had made the maximum sacrifices for the freedom of the country. It exhorted them to put up a brave fight if they wanted to save their turbans and beards.

Bhindranwale was cremated on the evening of June 7, A crowd of about ten thousand people had gathered near the Temple but the army held them back. Many policemen present at the cremation were reported to have given him a tearful farewell.\*<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Hindus, who had looked upon him as a villain heaved a sigh of relief and were seen laughing and distributing sweets to the army jawans. Curfew order seemed to have been relaxed for them as it was done when the array entered the city and was poised for the attack.

Here it is necessary to give details about General Shahbeg Singh, who had because of the reported impending attack, organised the defence of Darbar Sahib. Like Bhindranwale, he was also the worst victim of the AIR and Doordarshan propaganda machinery. Umpteen times references were made to him as some one who had been 'cashiered,' 'dismissed' and 'court marshalled' from the army. No one referred to him as the hero of Bangla Desh War. He was caught alive and tortured to death,<sup>68</sup> There are photo-graphs which show

that ropes had been tied around his arms and he was dragged before he died.<sup>69</sup> The Government did not allow the General's son Prabpal Singh to attend his cremation. When he asked whether he could have his father's ashes, he was told that Government would immerse them in one of India's sacred rivers.<sup>70</sup>

'I am a patriot of a finer mould than the Prime Minister herself,' said Shahbeg Singh during the course of an interview with Tavleen Singh before the array action.<sup>71</sup> The General was dismissed from the army only a day before he was due to retire under a special clause which did not even entitle him to a trial. This special clause had never been invoked in the case of any other officer in the history of the Indian army. Afterwards the matter was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation, who levelled two charges against him—one that he took a truck in somebody else's name and thereby misused army transport and another saying that he built a house costing Rupees nine lacs.<sup>78</sup> Shahbeg Singh won both the cases.<sup>78</sup> He wanted to get his name cleared of the 'false' charges, either through a court martial or a civil trial. He even approached Home Minister Zail Singh for this purpose.<sup>74</sup> When nothing was done Shahbeg Singh developed a firm conviction that he had been discriminated against only because he was a Sikh. "The aim was to deny me any promotion because I was a Sikh. This is how Sikhs are being persecuted in the army."<sup>75</sup> The relevant facts pertaining to his acquittal, by a special court, of the charges framed against him were deliberately suppressed. To have reported these facts about Shahbeg Singh's life in proper perspective, would have meant reducing the intensity of communal hatred against him among the Hindus. This did not obviously suit the media's policy. Since a large number of the Sikhs knew these facts about Shahbeg Singh's life, they resented this one sided presentation.<sup>78</sup>

The army claimed to have acted with much restraint. But the damage to the Akal Takhat showed that restraint was just thrown to the winds. The effect of the tank barrage on the building was devastating. The entire front of the sacred Shrine was destroyed leaving hardly a pillar standing. The gold plated dome of the building also came under heavy fire and was badly damaged. The Timeless Throne of the Sikh religion was in shambles. David Graves, the first foreign correspondent of Telegraph, London, allowed to visit the Darbar Sahib Complex reported; 'The Akal

Takhat looks like it has been bombed. It looks like a building Berlin after the War. Every building in the Complex had been riddled with bullets and there was still a stench of death in the air."<sup>77</sup> Even the Golden Temple bore more than three hundred bullet marks, in addition to the shooting of one priest Avtar Singh Purewal and the passing of bullets through the holy Guru Granth Sahib. In an interview with Surya, Giani Puran Singh, the Head Granthi Harmandar Sahib told that he showed the bullet marks Harmandar Sahib, to Indira Gandhi, when she visited the Shrine June 23. He also told her that 700 copies of Guru Granth Sahib had been burnt. "Avtar Singh, one of the members of the R. Jatha, died right in Harmandar Sahib and yet they say that not even a bullet was fired at Harmandar Sahib."<sup>79</sup>

Even the most moderate accounts put the number of slain in the Complex at three thousand.<sup>80</sup> According to some other estimates the number was eight thousand and even more.<sup>81</sup> The Government White Paper put the number of dead at 493 and number of injured at 86 in the Golden Temple Complex.<sup>8\*</sup> In addition, it put the number of dead at 59 and injured at 35 in the

Gurdwaras during this “operation.”<sup>83</sup> The military experts believe that the ratio of dead and injured in almost every warfare is one five. This casts serious doubts on the figures given by Government. But till this day the Government has not released the list of people killed in the action. Among the victims were not only the young men who had put up resistance against army but also hundreds of innocent pilgrims and priests, men and women, newly wed couples and young mothers \ babes in their arms. The promiscuous carnage was executed without discrimination of innocence or guilt, age or According to Ram Narayan Kumar and Georg Sieberer, “ army which had suffered a heavy toll in three days of battle went berserk and killed every Sikh to be found inside the ten complex. They were hauled out of the rooms, brought corridors in the circumference of the Temple, and with hands tied to their back were shot in cold blood. Among the victims were many old men, women and children.”<sup>81</sup>

The White Paper issued by the Government put the number of army men killed at 84 and the injured at 249.<sup>86</sup> Whereas according to Brahma Challeney, the army lost about two hundred soldiers.<sup>88</sup> Three months later Rajiv Gandhi, while addressing the Nagpur session of the National Students Union in September, 1984 said that 700 soldiers and officers were killed in the ‘operation’.<sup>87</sup> An army communication newsletter No. 152 also admitted that “the troops had to pay high price and suffered heavy casualties.”<sup>88</sup> The soldiers who lost their lives in the action were paid one lac Rupees each and other pensionary benefits to the next of their kin. Soldiers who had lost their lives in the Wars of 1962, 1965 and 1971 were not given these benefits. Some of the soldiers and officers were given promotions and were decorated with gallantry awards for their “heroic feats.” Generals R.S. Dayal and T.S. Oberoi were elevated to the rank of Lt. Governors after their retirement. Brahma Challeney of the Associated Press (AP) of U.S.A., the only foreign correspondent

who managed to stay in Amritsar during the storming of the Darbar Sahib, revealed on the basis of interviews with affected persons, including the doctors and the police officials, that many of the Sikhs killed during the attack were shot at point-blank range, with their hands tied at the back with their turbans.<sup>69</sup> The entire ‘operation’ became a by-word for army brutalities.

Even though the Akal Takhat had turned into a rubble with the tank shells and army had established its control over the entire Complex, the soldiers still took out their wrath on the unarmed and innocent pilgrims who had been trapped inside. The army men were seen at their worst behaving like a

communal and grossly insensitive force slaughtering people like rat; Communal passions had been aroused due to repeated pronouncements made by the Government media and the national press that the and was posing a threat to the country's integrity, which they had all sworn to uphold.<sup>5</sup> But even as the entire state apparatus had been communalised, it was even more dangerous to politicise and communalise the army, The communal frenzy which gripped the army destroyed its image beyond repair. The army, though consisting of heterogeneous elements had a name for fighting as a united force against a common alien enemy. The atrocities and sacrilege committed by the soldiers in the Darbar Sahib horrified the Sikhs, who had given their sons to the array with so much love and pride. Even when the resistance from the defenders of the Temple had been overcome, they killed with vengeance hundreds of pilgrims, who could not go out due to the sudden imposition of the curfew,

Grenades and poisonous gas shells were thrown at the men, women and children, who had locked themselves in the rooms, bathrooms and toilets of Guru Nanak Niwas, Guru Ram Das serai and Taja Singh Samundri Hall. Those who tried to come out were pierced with bayonets and shot dead. Some soldiers out of vengeance caught hold of small babies and children by their feet, lifted them up in the air and then smashed them against the walls and<sup>1</sup> thus breaking their skulls.<sup>91</sup> The eye witness accounts collected by the CFD expose the army's claim of using restraint. According to the Report, on June 7, twenty eight persons were pushed inside a strong room without any ventilation and locked. When the room was opened 14 of them were dead. Bodies were left to rot inside the room and then burnt. "This was free India's Jallianwala Bag leaving the old Jallianwala Bagh of the British days far behind in the number of killed and the manner of killing,"<sup>91</sup> observe the Report. There are several independent human rights organisations in India, including the Citizens For Democracy. On 1 September, 1985, the CFD released a booklet, 'Report to the Nation : Oppression in Punjab.' This document was banned the very next day after its release.

A Naik of Kumaon Regiment who participated in Blue Star narrated the events of the fateful night of June 5 and 6 to 'Pro Sikhs were asking for Khalistan. Before launching the 'operation', the army Generals had drilled into the heads of the rank and file that the 'enemy' wanted an independent Sikh state India.' Relieved to be returning home safely, he recounted the gory details while sitting in the compartment of the Amritsar-Hawraw Mail: 'On the morning of June 6, the Golden Temple complex was like a graveyard. Bodies lay all around in buildings, on the Parikarma and in the Sarovar. The

sun was shining and the stench from the bodies was becoming unbearable. Bodies of Jawans were identified and handed over to their respective regiments. I, myself carried the bodies of three soldiers on my shoulders. Each regiment conducted the funeral rites of their various jawans. The civilians who died, about 1500 of them, were piled in trollies and carried away. A lot of them were thrown into the rivers. The battle was a tragic one. I couldn't eat anything. Food made me sick. I used to just drink lots of rum and go to sleep. I am glad now to be relieved of my duty in Amritsar.”<sup>9</sup> Mary Anne Weaver, a correspondent of Sunday Times, London reported, “The army may be operating under ‘take-no-prisoners’ orders and wanted few militants to survive.”<sup>94</sup> She made this observation on the basis of diplomatic sources in Delhi.

It was reported that a woman who pleaded with a soldier to get some water for her child dying of thirst was told, “Why should we serve you water ? Have we come here to kill you or serve you water ?” Addressing another one who made a similar request, he retorted, “Not long ago they were saying that we won't give any water to Haryana or to Rajasthan. You bastards, now, none of you will get water even to drink.”<sup>93</sup>

On the basis of information gathered from reliable sources, Simaranjit Singh Mann wrote a letter to President Zail Singh. “The Indian armed forces I have now learnt had orders not to take any prisoners, a fact which I have mentioned in my resignation letter. After the operation into the Golden Temple was completed, a hundred children within the age group of eight to twelve years, who were students of the Damdama Sahib Taksal (Order), (Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala was the Jathedar of this Taksal), were lined upon the Parkarma (Circumambulation) of the Golden Temple and asked individually by an army officer whether they “still wanted Khalistan.” Each looked up towards heaven as if to seek some divine inspiration and as each received it he uttered the Sikh slogan ‘Jo Bole So Nehal.’ One by one as each Sikh child took this pledge he was shot dead by the jawans of the Indian Army. None amongst them asked for mercy or for a moment faltered in giving a courageous reply to their evil captors. They died to the last upholding the glory and traditions of the Sikh faith.”<sup>8\*</sup>

We are giving below some eye witness accounts of the happenings inside the Darbar Sahib Complex.

Duggal records : “At about 4 a.m. in the early hours of the morning of June 4, the regular Army attack on the temple started with a 25-pounder which fell in the ramparts of the Deori to the left of Akal Takhat Sahib with such a thunder that for a few moments I thought that the whole complex had collapsed. I along with my wife were then sitting in the verandah of my

house adjacent to the Sikh Reference Library. Recovering from the initial shock, we moved into the room and took shelter in one of its corners. Thereafter, every second the ferocity of firing increased and it continued unabated till the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

As we were on the first floor and our quarter was open on all sides, our position was very vulnerable. The bullets hit our quarters on all sides and some of them pierced through the doors and landed inside the room. To add to our miseries, the power and water supplies had been cut. Through a slit in the shutter of a window we saw a large number of dead bodies in the Parikarma of the Golden Temple. They included women and children. We could not leave our room. Coming out in the open would have exposed us to sure death.”<sup>97</sup>

“The helicopters hovered above and continued to fire from above. Some of these helicopters also guided the firing squads of the Army by making a circle of light around the targets. Immediately after these circles, the cannon balls would land

on the targets causing havoc. We saw a large number of boys blown to pieces.”<sup>98</sup>

Citizens for Democracy group records the evidence of one young College going girl in the following words : “They continued the firing till the evening of June 5 and then it was about 8.30 p.m. It was completely dark when they entered accompanied by very heavy firing. The blasting was so severe that I thought that I had reached some other world.”<sup>99</sup>

She said, “We were 40-50 persons huddled together in the room, including women and children, also a child of six months. In the next room were the pilgrims who had come on June 3 to celebrate Gurpurb but they had been trapped.”<sup>100</sup>

She continued,”The upper portion of the Akal Takhat had been fired at by the Army and completely destroyed. Pieces of the Guru Granth Sahib were flying in the air and littering the ground. The place seemed to have been transformed into a haunted house...There were some among us who were frantic for some water, they came out in the open. In the morning I saw the dead bodies lying in the Parikarma. This was the worst kind of treachery.”<sup>101</sup>

Giani Puran Singh, a priest at the Harmandir Sahib and also an eye-witness remembers : “At 7.30 p.m. on 5<sup>th</sup>, I went to Sri Akal Takhat where I met Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale with whom I had a long satisfying talk while shots were ringing outside. At 10.00 p.m. the tanks started entering the complex and the barrage of shooting from without became more intense as heavy armour began to be used. At this stage an armoured carrier entered and stood beside the Sarovar. The lights on this carrier, when switched on, bathed the whole complex in bright light. We were viewing all this perched in the main dome of Harmandir Sahib and thought that probably the fire brigade had come to get water for extinguishing fires raging throughout the city. But we were proved wrong when this vehicle came down to the Parikarma and started firing. From both sides the

tanks started closing in, from clock tower to the Brahm Buta the tanks set fire to all rooms, while desperate people collected water from the Sarovar to extinguish the fires. Loud cries and wails of both women and children rent the air. A vigorous battle ensued and the Darshani Deoris of Clock Tower and Atta Mandi along the Serais (rest houses) were in Army control by 10 o'clock, the next day (June 6). The 40-50 youth who had been holding the forces fought bravely till either they were killed or the ammunition was exhausted. From about 10 in the night till 4.30 the next morning we were on the roof of Darbar Sahib.”<sup>102</sup>

“At 2 a.m. on June 6”, said Pirthipal Singh, Sewadar at the Akal Rest House, “the Army people came to the Rest House. They tore off all my clothes, stripped me naked, my kirpan was snatched, my head gear (patka) was untied to tie up my hands behind my back. They caught me by my hair and took me along with five others—who were all pilgrims—to the ruins of the water tank; there we were made to stand in a line all naked for an hour or so; we were told, “Don’t move or you’ll be shot.” They kept hitting us with the rifle butts. Then a Major came and ordered a soldier, shoot them, then shouted at us, “You must be Bhindran-wale’s Chelas ? You want Khalistan ? I said, “I am here to do my duty. I have nothing to do with all this.” “Six of us were in a line facing the Major, when a Pahari soldier started shooting from one end, killing four of us (with 3 bullets each). As my turn was coming, suddenly a Sikh officer turned up and ordered, ‘Stop shooting.’ Thus I was saved. The Sikh officer was told, “these people have ammunitions “ At that he ordered them to lock us in a room. Two of us were locked up in a room in Guru Ram Das Serai, but we did not talk nor did I ask the other man’s name. On 7<sup>th</sup> June the door was opened at about 8 or 9 in the morning. We had gone without water. The floor was covered with blood. I was allowed to leave.”<sup>103</sup>

According to Bhan Singh, on June 6 at 4 a.m., he was arrested along with Longowal and Tohra. He says, “We were encircled by the Army people, throughout the day from 4 a.m. till 5 a.m. when Sant Longowal and Jathedar Tohra were taken to the Army Camp, but I, along with many others, was kept inside the compound of Guru Ram Das Serai. We were taken away to the Army Camp at about 9.30 p.m.”<sup>104</sup>

On the morning of June 6, a girl student, daughter of a S.G.P.C. employee, staying in the Complex, opened her room and came to fetch water. She said, “I saw nothing but piles of dead bodies, all stacked one over the other. At first I instinctively felt that I wouldn’t manage to go out. All I could see was a ceaseless mound of dead bodies. It seemed that out of all the persons who were staying in the Parikarma, not one had survived.”<sup>105</sup>

The narrations of Bhan Singh, Harcharan Singh Ragi, Giani Puran Singh and the girl student tear apart the Government issued “White Paper” that the Army had been instructed ‘to treat all apprehended persons with dignity and consideration’ and also that “no women and children were killed in the action by the troops.”<sup>106</sup>

Bhan Singh remembers : “On the 6<sup>th</sup> morning when hundreds of people were killed or wounded, everywhere there were cries of those people who were wounded and injured but there was no provision for their dressings and there were no Red Cross people within the Complex... Many young people aged between 18 and 22 years were killed and so were some ladies. A lady carrying a child of only a few months saw her husband lying before her. The child was also killed on account of the firing. It was a very touching

scene when she placed the dead body of the child alongside her husband's body. Many people were crying for drinking water but they were not provided any. Some had to take water out of the drains where dead bodies were lying and the water was red with blood. The way the injured were quenching their thirst was an awful sight which could not be tolerated. The Army people were there, moving about mercilessly without showing any sign of sympathy with those injured or wounded. Those who were under arrest were not provided any facility of water or food or any other

thing of that sort. The clothes of those who were arrested were removed and they were only left with shorts. Their turbans, shirts, etc. were all removed and heaped together. Such a brutal treatment was given to them, as if they were aliens and not the citizens of the country to which the forces belonged.”<sup>107</sup>

“There were about 27-28 persons with us, 5 of them ladies, some elderly men, the rest young boys...Out of the remaining male youths, they picked up four and took off their turbans with which they tied their hands behind their backs. Then the Army men beat these 4 Sikh boys with the butts of their rifles till they fell on the ground and started bleeding. They kept telling the boys all along, “you are terrorists. You will be shot.” These boys were shot dead right in front of me. They looked completely innocent. Neither they seemed to know how to use a rifle, nor did they seem to know the meaning of ‘terrorism’. They were shot before my eyes. Their age was between 18 and 20 years. I did not know who they were—circumstances had brought us together. Whenever I recollect that scene; I seem to lose my bearings,”<sup>108</sup> says the girl student.

She says, “Then they (the Army people) surrounded me and started questioning me. I told my grand-mother not to speak a word to them as they were speaking only with bullets. I asked them whether they had come to protect us or to finish us. I said my grandfather was a Colonel in the Army...The Army man incharge then asked his colleagues to leave me and my family members, He told me to go away quickly. And so we were saved.”<sup>109</sup>

Giani Puran Singh narrates : “At 4.30 a.m. on June 6, Guru Granth Sahib was brought down, Parkash done and the Hukamnama taken, the Kirtan of Asa-di-Vaar started. This Kirtan was not done by the appointed Ragi Jatha (Hymn Singers) but by members of Bhai Randhir Singh Jatha, one member of which Avtar Singh of Purewal was later martyred inside the Darbar Sahib. The official Jatha of Bhai Amrik Singh had been martyred at the Darshani Deori the previous day. Bhai Avtar Singh was hit by a bullet which tore through the southern door, one of which is still embedded in the Guru Granth Sahib which is there since Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time. Time passed and at 4.00 p.m. on June 6, some poisonous gas was spread and the Akal Takhat was captured. Without this gas the forces could not have been able to gain the Akal Takhat. At 4.30 the Commandant Brar spoke from a speaker on the Southern Deori that all living people should surrender. All those who had come face to face with the forces had been eliminated. We (I and Giani Mohan Singh) asked all the 22 within the Darbar Sahib to surrender and told the Commanding Officer that two priests had stayed behind and, if need be, he could send his men for them. He did not agree with them and called aloud on the speaker that we should come with raised hands. We decided against this because if we were shot on the way it would merely be a waste. We were in the Darbar Sahib till 7.30 when two soldiers and a sewadar were sent to fetch us. While on our way out I stopped to pour a handful of water in the mouth of the wounded member of the Jatba, who asked us to send for help. I



promised to do so provided I remained alive. General Brar told us that he too was a Sikh and then enquired as to what we proposed to do. We told him that we wanted to go to the urinal. Then we were questioned of the whereabouts of Santji and were told that he would not be harmed. We told them that they knew better as they were in command. We were questioned; whether any machine gunnists were operating from Darbar Sahib to which we said that they were welcome to inspect the premises themselves. Five persons accompanied us to the Har Mandar, one Sikh officer and 3-4 others. When we started the Sikh officer insisted that we should lead because if firing started from within, we would face it because we would be shot if someone shot from within. When we reached the Harmandar, a search was carried out by them, picking and searching below every carpet but no sign of firing was traced. Meanwhile, the wounded member left behind had passed away. His body was placed in a white sheet, brought out and placed along with various others lying outside.”<sup>110</sup>

Apart from the wanton killings, the army set the Sikh Reference Library and Archives, Toshakhana and Museum on fire in a fit of revengeful vandalism. Hundreds of copies of the Holy Graoth, Hukarnamas (edicts) bearing the signatures of the Sikh Gurus and extremely valuable rare manuscripts dating back to the times of the Gurus were destroyed. This took place when the army had taken control of the Complex and the announcement to this effect had been made by the All India Radio. The buildings of Guru Ram Das Serai, Guru Nanak Niwas and the S.G.P.C. office in the Teja Singh Samundri Hill were also set on fire. According to Bhan Singh, the army had removed all the records of the S.G.P.C. and the building was set on fire subsequently so as to provide an alibi that all the records had been burnt. Ramesh Inder Singh who had taken charge as the new Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar is said to have contacted the army authorities and wanted to send fire tenders to extinguish the fire but he was not given permission to do so.

An eye witness account of Devinder Singh Duggal is worth recording. He told a team of the CFD that as he had left the Complex on 6<sup>th</sup> June all those buildings were in good shape in spite of the army attack. On 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1984, Duggal was arrested by the army and taken inside the Darbar Sahib to take charge of the Library. When he told the army authorities that the Library was nowhere, he was told that he had no option but to sign a typed receipt to the effect that he had taken over the charge of the Library.<sup>111</sup> Duggal, who was in a state of shock, refused to take charge of the ashes of the Library.<sup>11\*</sup> According to the official version, the Library caught fire accidentally due to the heavy machine gun fire released by Bhindranwale's men, who had taken positions in the Library. According to the eye witnesses the Library was in control of Brigadier A.K. Dewan and his men. According to Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, 'The Garhwals did manage to establish a position on the roof of the Temple library. Their commanding officer reported this to his Brigadier, A.K. Dewan.'<sup>1</sup> Both Duggal and Bhan Singh reported that the Library was intact

on the afternoon of June 6.<sup>114</sup> This belies the official version. Evidently, army deliberately set the Library on fire. In an interview with Mark Tully, Bhai Ashok Singh said, "Any army which wants to destroy a nation destroys its culture. That is why the Indian army burnt the library."<sup>116</sup>

Giani Kirpal Singh, Jathedar Akat Takhat told Surya : “The Government wanted to destroy Sikh history. Otherwise, how do you explain the fire in the Sikh Reference Library ? The archives were set on fire two days after the army action. It was a historical collection of ancient books, Khardas (manuscripts), handwritten historical beads (Holy books), some of them were even written by the Gurus, Janam Sakhis (biographical sketches of Gurus), Hukumnamas (commandments of Akal Takht) which were of the greatest importance as the Sikhs regularly referred to them for their research.”<sup>11</sup>”

Later in an interview with the Tribune, Dugga! pointed out that there were about 20;000 books in the Library, “not even one book has survived the ‘holocaust’. There were over 500 hand written manuscripts related to the Sikh tenets, scripture and history. There was also a library of 250 odd wooden blocks related to historic events, personalities and saints.”<sup>118</sup>

Lt. General J.S. Aurora, who visited the Temple, a month after the bloody attack observed: “I went to Amritsar on 6 July, visited the Golden Temple and talked to the Army authorities and others who were there during Army operation. The damage to the entire complex was much beyond what was reported in the media news or the press. It was difficult not to feel hurt and to control one’s anguish.”<sup>19</sup>

Eye witness accounts reveal that the Red Cross was not allowed to enter the Complex in aid of the wounded. Many people died of thirst as they were not allowed to drink water. Pool of nectar (Sarowar) was converted into a pool of blood with the throwing of dead bodies into it. Many people were said to have quenched their thirst with the water from the

No warnings had been given. no warrants had been issued. The sinister plan was clearly aimed at destroying the religious base of the Sikhs en masse. The British too wanted to use Gurdwaras as channels for indirect control of the Sikhs. But on no occasion did they attempt to desecrate or destroy the Gurdwaras. It was an undeclared but a full fledged war against. the Sikhs by the Government of free India.

No news was released regarding the sacrilege and the atrocities committed in these Gurdwaras or the number of people killed during the so called ‘Operation’. According to army sources 20 people were killed at Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran at Patiala but the doctors at Patiala hospital put the number at 56.<sup>12</sup> Many of the young boys were captured by the army jawans and asked “if they still wanted Khalistan.” Later they were shot at the point blank range through their temples.<sup>1\*8</sup> The pattern of atrocities committed by the army was astonishingly the same all over Punjab. A 16 year old boy Bir Singh who survived and escaped from Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran narrated the horrifying and spine chilling account of the brutal killings in the Gurdwara.<sup>128</sup>

The siege of Mukatsar Gurdwara and town by the army troops continued for about a month under total curfew conditions. Hundreds of innocent pilgrim\* were caught unaware in the Shrine. The army resorted to indiscriminate firing. In the mopping up operation, the jawans caught hold of the priests, the young men and the old men, tied their hands and legs with their turbans, kicked them and hit them with rifle butts. Some of them were made to lie down on the burning hot floors in the scorching heat with their hands tied.<sup>1\*0</sup> In spite of the fact that officers of the army were told by the priests that Baba Harbans Singh was a revered saint of Bangla Sahib Gurdwara of New Delhi and

had come there only to carry out Kar Seva, no heed was paid to this request. The Sikh saint and his followers were searched, harassed and humiliated.<sup>171</sup> Some people were not allowed to quench their thirst. Instead of giving any first aid to the wounded, they were shot dead.<sup>182</sup> No records whatsoever were kept of the people who were killed by the

troops. The dead bodies were put in trailers and trollies, ca outside the town, dumped there and set on fire by pouring kero oil on them. The army jawans ran amuck and looted money only from the pilgrims but also from the Golaks. They entered the Gurdwaras with shoes on their feet, insulted the holy Gnan and freely smoked in the precincts of the shrines.

The people in the countryside were in a state of anguish. They felt humiliated but did not know how to react to reconcile with the situation. Indian Express wrote: "People are scared of the army... There was more resentment at Chaamk Sahib, the way a 70 year old sewadar Jagdish Singh was shot down in the early morning on June 7. He had gone to answer the call of nature and the toilets are just outside the bound wall of the Gurdwara. People said he was shot dead without any warning. Another incident took place the next night when shots were fired on the Gurdwara. The bullet marks are there. No arms were seized from this Gurdwara though 12 persons were rounded up."<sup>188</sup> At Fatehgarh Sahib also army officers and jawans searched the Gurdwara but no arms were seized from there.

The feelings of the Sikhs were characterised by both anguish and anger. They looked upon the army as an aggressor. Sui Sethi who visited a number of Gurdwaras, including Gurdarsh; Parkash Gurdwara at Chowk Mehta to assess the anguish of the Sikhs in the aftermath of the bloody attack on the Gurdwara; observed: "In Bhindranwale's own gurdwara at Chowk Mehta about forty kilometres outside Amritsar, the gloom is pervasive. The gurdwara is empty save for a few villagers including a plumber and an eccentric-looking, stooping character called Sukha Singh who has bicycled for two days from a village a hundred kilometres away to check things out at Chowk Mehta. 'My friends and family in the village warned me: 'Don't go, they said, the Army will definitely get you.' But I said to them, 'Let the Army get me. What is a Sikh worth these days, anyway I must go and find out what happened to the Sant.' Under standing nods of approval from everyone in the mourning group including the vocal plumber Ajit Singh, who says: 'Would you have believed such a day would come that the army would attack our gurdwaras and us? They have broken our backs. Brother, you are from the city, and you should go back and write that in the Punjab every man who wears a turban and keeps a beard is called a terrorist. They have dragged men from their homes here and flogged them and kept them in jail without any explanation. They have taken our cash offerings from our gurdwaras and ransacked our stores.

The very same Army that was proud of its Sikh soldiers has begun to commit atrocities upon them.”<sup>13\*</sup>

A rigid press censorship did not allow the black deeds, committed by the army under the innocuous label of ‘Blue Star’, to reach the people. By all recognised tests—number of killings, manner of killings, numbers rendered homeless, number of buildings raised to the ground, the Blue Star holocaust was worse than any other event known to recent history of mankind. What added to the anguish of the Sikhs was the glorification of the brutal act as an act of patriotism. A brave and patriotic community was pushed to the wall. After the Jallianawala Bagh massacre, though much smaller in magnitude, the British Government had the discretion to admit that it was a savage, brutal and coldblooded act. Winston Churchill, the British Secretary of War said, “It is an extra-ordinary step which stands in singular and sinister isolation.” The British regime had bowed to the demand to appoint a commission of enquiry, known as the Hunter Commission, to go into the event. The Government of India’s refusal to appoint a commission to explain as to -what happened before, during and after the Blue Star in all its ramifications, was an abject confession of failure. In a true democratic set up norms of decent administration require the appointment of an enquiry commission even into the ordinary cases of police firing, resulting in casualties.

An issue of Surya unearthed some startling facts and revealed the most abnoxious features of the Government policy.

It was discovered that ‘the whole Punjab operation was initiated\* conducted and concluded by a super intelligence organisation code named Third Agency.’ On the basis of exclusive information provided by some officers of the RAW, Surya wrote : “The thunder of cannon and roll of caterpillar tracks has stopped. The demolished Akal Takhat is being repaired. The demon has been exorcised from the Temple. Mrs. Gandhi, it appears, has done what she had to do.”<sup>185</sup>

We have made it clear that the attack on the Golden Temple cannot be even seemingly justified by any method of rational justification, as the problem of Bhindranwale was far from being a ground for a massive army attack on the holiest place of the Sikhs. It is now well established that there were far simpler ways of dealing with Bhindranwale, if at all he was a problem of the size which was sought to be depicted. Yet we do not find any rationale for the deployment of lacs of soldiers in the Punjab for brutal and unwarranted attacks on 72 other Gurdwaras where merciless police entries were made, the holy places desecrated, property looted and men butchered by scores without any resistance from the inmates. Hence the conclusion became inevitable that the Blue Star attack was simply unrelated to the problem of law and order

but was a direct attack on what the Sikhs consider to be the dearest to their hearts.

The reason given for ordering the army to mount an attack on the Darbar Sahib and the other Gurdwaras was flushing out the 'terrorists' but after the attack the rationale was re-defined retrospectively. The threat from the 'terrorist' was viewed not only as a threat to the law and order but was also deliberately magnified into a threat to the country's unity and integrity. On June 2, 1984, the Government decided to call in the army in aid of civil authority in Punjab. The task assigned to the army was 'to check and control extremist, terrorist and communal violence in the State of Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh, provide security to the people and restore normalcy; to augment the Border Security Force presence on the India—Pakistan border lying within the territorial jurisdiction of Punjab in order to stop smuggling and unauthorised cross-border traffic.'<sup>86</sup> Soon after the Army action, the Union Home Secretary M.M.K. Wall published his note entitled 'the Army action at the Golden Temple.' It said explicitly that the obvious direction and thrust of the movement was towards an independent Khalistan—fully supported by neighbouring and foreign powers. The terrorists led by Bhindranwale were perhaps only cogs in the wheel. If the army action had not been resolute and determined, the movement would have moved towards full scale insurgency which would have crippled the armed forces in any future confrontation across the border.<sup>137</sup> It was argued that the damage to the Akal Takhat could be repaired but if the military action had not been conducted now, loss would have been of a far greater depth and magnitude than that suffered now by the Akal Takhat. The Government thus claimed to have saved the nation from a great calamity.<sup>1\*</sup>

It is well known that the Akalis never preached secessionism nor was the demand for Khalistan ever found on their manifesto. Even Bhindranwale had not asked for Khalistan, though he is on record to have declared that the entry of the armed forces into Darbar Sahib would mean laying down the foundation of Khalistan. Here it is significant to quote a statement made by Longowal, after his release on March 11, 1985, in which he revealed that the Government of India was playing a nefarious game through its intelligence agencies to malign the Sikh struggle. He said, "The truth is that two persons I did not know came to me and said that they had gone to Bhindranwale and asked him to announce the birth of Khalistan over the loudspeaker and that they had been directed to me. I said I would not announce that, adding that my policy was the same as that of the Akali Dal. Later, those persons came to us again and asked us to announce the birth of 'Khalistan'. They told us

that they had been to Bhindranwale. We asked them to tell us what the Sant (Bhindranwale)

had told them. They said the Sant had told them that if Longowal were to announce it, he would support it. 'If you want this to be done, go to the Akali Dal Chief. He is the only one who can do it. If he says, I shall do so,' The fact is that these persons were not Sant Bhindranwale's emissaries nor did he (Bhindranwale) have any link with Pakistan. The Government of India had planted some RAW men who indulged in such dirty tricks to malign the Akalis who were conducting a peaceful agitation for the realisation of their rights as enshrined in our Constitution."13" The charge of secessionism against the Sikhs was nothing but a clever ploy to crush them and cover up the enormous injustice done to them.

(iv) Spontaneous Reaction and Revolt in the Army :

Among the tragic outcome of the Blue Star holocaust was the reaction and revolt of Sikh troops. Over four thousand Sikh soldiers were reported to have spontaneously deserted their regiments in a bid to get to Amritsar, when they heard the news of the array assault on the Darbar Sahib. The provocation and shock caused by the attack on their holiest shrine was too intense to bear. They took to arms at about ten cantonments in various parts of India.110 On June 7, nearly six hundred soldiers of the 9th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment broke into the regimental armoury in their cantonment on the outskirts of Ganganagar, near the Pakistan border. They drove through the streets of Ganganagar shouting, 'Long live Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale'1" and dashed towards Amritsar to save Darbar Sahib from the attacking Indian army, unmindful of the consequences of desertion to their lives and careers. The Rajputana Rifles were sent to chase the Sikh soldiers. Most of them were rounded up and brought back to their cantonment in open lorries covered with barbed wire. However, some of the mutineers were said to have escaped across the border into Pakistan.

The maximum desertions (1200) took place in the Sikh Regimental Centre at Ramgarh in Bihar.142 Here the soldiers killed their Commanding Officer Brigadier S.C. Puri, hijacked civilian trucks and dashed towards Amritsar. However, road blocks were set up on their way and they were rounded up before they could reach Amritsar. The reports of mutiny were also heard from the Sikh regiment in the Jammu region and the Punjab regiment at Pune.

This was the first time after Independence that the Indian army faced such a grim situation in which the relations between the Sikh soldiers and the Hindu soldiers in the army were put under so much of strain. The Indian army which had been a proud, disciplined and united body of soldiers received a severe blow. These soldiers knew full

well that they had no chance of reaching Amritsar, that they would be caught, tortured and even put to death, as under the Indian Arms Act, mutinying is punishable

with death, but the trauma experienced by them was so intense that they could not sit back and see their holiest shrine desecrated and destroyed. In most of the cases when people take to revolt, they are lured by temporal or other gains, but in this case, the soldiers had no such motives. Their reactions were not premeditated, planned or organised but purely spontaneous, prompted

a sincere desire to save the honour of what was dearest to

them. It is on record that they did not kill any Hindu civilian or soldier in revenge of what was being done to the Sikh

The only exception during the whole episode of the revolt by Sikh soldiers was the killing of Brigadier Pugh, who it reported had refused to sanction leave to the soldiers who

perished for it. Except for this solitary incident there was no

in which a Hindu soldier or officer was killed by a report of Mary Anne Weaver of the Sunday Times, London, "Sikh mutinies which erupted in the Indian army last desertions" as government spokesmen still insist on them—have dealt an unprecedented blow to one of most cherished beliefs, since the country gained independence 17 years ago. At that time, India had come to esteem its armed forces as one of the few national institutions which transcended religious and regional divisions and had consistently stood well back from political involvement... More than 17 years ago, a British Officer, Brigadier Hodgson, warned of the military consequences of any infringement of the Sikh faith. "Sikh troops", Hodgson wrote, "would construe it as a desire to subvert Sikhism; it would lead to evil consequences and naturally inspire general distrust and alarm." Hodgson's warning still forms an important part of Indian army's conventional wisdom. According to senior army sources, Mrs. Gandhi's decision to invade the Golden Temple did not have the unanimous approval of her Generals." 14\*

Four Sikh retired Lt. Generals appealed to the Government of India and the army authorities not to take disciplinary action against the soldiers and that they should be allowed to rejoin their units without punishment. 14\* They believed that it was the failure of the command which could not foresee that Sikh soldiers who swore their very loyalty by an oath before Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Scripture) would naturally react after an attack on the Golden Temple, the primary seat of Sikh scripture. But in spite of the appeals, the Government and the army authorities decided to punish the soldiers. It is very significant to note that whereas the British Commanders after the Mutiny learnt a signal lesson never to take social, administrative or political steps that should provoke religious sentiments of the soldiers, the Indian Command and Administration remain blind to it and continued to pursue the siege of the Golden Temple and the Woodrose plan of hunting out Sikhs in

genei and Amritdhari in particular on grounds of their alleged terrorism. And it is on record that during that operation even ex-soldiers and soldiers on leave were tortured and humiliated.

(v) Wood Rose : Mass Oppression :

Unfortunately Blue Star did not mark the end of a tragic chapter in the history of Punjab. The phase of oppression was continued with great virulence because the motives which prompted it were no different from those that had staged the bloody attack on the Golden Temple. What needs stress is that both Blue Star and Wood Rose assaults were part of the single process, which was the product of a planned thinking to which we have referred earlier, with clear instructions to destroy the Sikhs and their moral strength that had sustained their Morchas.

Sikh sentiments which were already deeply hurt received another jolt when the Government launched the second phase of the military action under the ironic name of 'Operation Wood Rose.' This exercise was conducted in the immediate wake of 'Blue Star', when the army unleashed a reign of terror on the Sikh populace in the countryside with instructions to torture, humiliate and destroy them. When soldiers asked the Officers who was to be considered the enemy, they were apparently told that all Amritdhari Sikhs (baptised Sikhs) were terrorists. The result, needless to say, was havoc and led to the first wave of able-bodied youths fleeing across the border for their survival. Indian Express reported : "Some divisions are engaged in stemming the militants in Punjab and most districts, in fact, have a brigadier commander at the helm of the law and order machinery. A drive down the highways into the countryside in Punjab shows that heavier weapons, including some armour, have been marshalled for support."148

Ruthless repression was let loose in the State in the name of mopping up 'terrorists'. Thousands of Sikh men, women and children were rounded up on the suspicion of being 'terrorists'. Sikhs of all hues and shades were looked upon with suspicion. The wrath of the army was especially directed against the Amritdhari Sikhs (baptised Sikhs) who were described as dangerous people. A Circular (No. 153) was issued in the July issue of 'Batchit', an official magazine circulated throughout the army, directing the army personnel to keep track of all Amritdhari Sikhs who were to be treated as suspects. It read as under: "Although the majority of the terrorists have been dealt with and bulk of the arms and ammunition recovered, yet a large

Bhajan Partap Singh of village Tarseka, Amritsar District, who was in the lock-up next to the room where Sohan Singh had been put told us what had happened there, "I could hear him cry and ask for water, I think an employee perhaps was going to give him some water when I heard someone abusing him, 'Is he your ✓

?" Others who were in that camp used to hear him shriek and one day everything was quiet. We came to know that Sohan Singh's eyes had been gouged out and every joint of his body had been broken with the steel rods. Later when his body was handed over to his widow and his elder brother Baldev Singh, they found that the eyes were not there, the body was just pulp without joints and it had become unusually long; the Army had handed it over to the S.H.O., Jandiala, District Amritsar, who had entered the case as one of suicide, and before giving the body to them, the police made the widow sign a statement that it was a case of suicide; there was no post-mortem report to prove that the



man had died of torture; Sohan Singh's body was brought to his village Longowal and cremated there. “√

There had been cases where Amritdhari Sikh soldiers were asked to remove their Kirpaas. When they refused to do so they were harassed, ill-treated, charge-sheeted and produced before the officers to punish them for disobedience of orders. The contents of the circular spread alarm in the Sikh community. A petition was filed in the Punjab and Haryana High Court by some prominent Sikhs to get a directive issued to the army authorities to withdraw the Batchit Circular in question as suggestions given therein were not only detrimental to the Sikh religion but were also responsible for inflaming communal passions among the Hindu soldiers to kill the Sikhs in Punjab. The High Court examined the case and issued an order asking the army authorities to withdraw the Circular.√

Evidently the order of the High Court for the withdrawal of the Circular could hardly undo the impression indelibly registered in the minds of the soldiers who had received the earlier instructions and acted on them. For months after the assault on Darbar Sahib, it was undeclared martial law in Punjab, the wrath of which fell only on the Sikhs. Any Sikh youth who wore a yellow or blue turban or had a kirpan on his person was captured, humiliated and harassed. Flag marches by the army were carried on to strike terror in the Sikh populace. Terror was let loose on unarmed citizens in the name of curbing 'terrorism'. Invariably, the entire male population of a village was ordered to come out with hands up and made to stand in the scorching heat of the sun for hours at a stretch, without allowing them to answer the call of nature. Public flogging of Sikh youth was done on the slightest suspicion. The extreme humiliation of youngsters in and out of police custody produced a deep-seated revulsion against authority. The stark brutalities inflicted on them forced them to leave their houses and live underground, it was reported that more than 8000 people were either missing from their houses or were detained during the Army action in Punjab.√

The CFD reported : “It was an undeclared, unilateral ruthless war against hundreds of innocent defenceless men and women in far-away tiny villages of Punjab from where their voices do not reach the rest of India. Though many of these villagers were on bail and some had come out of jail only a couple of days before they met us, they showed amazing self-control and fearlessness and without any hesitation told us their story mentioning the names of police officers who had tortured them and had demanded and in several instances accepted huge bribes, if they wanted their women not to be molested or their sons and brothers not to be killed in encounters’. In the name of curbing terrorism, unabashed state terrorism has been unleashed on the Sikhs branding them as criminals. Arbitrary arrests and Me Carthy style witch hunt, sadistic torture of Amritdhari Sikhs and cold-blooded shooting down of youngmen in false encounters, are common occurrences; even village women are not spared, they are being harassed and beaten up, dishonoured and taken away to Police Stations or to unknown destinations and kept—

there, sometime for more than a month. It is all male-police ;”

there is no sign of women-police in the villages. The demand is that the women must produce their missing or absconding husbands and sons; women after women came to meet us from different villages to tell us what they had been facing for the last one and a

half year; fields are not cultivated, the police whisk away the servants, cattle is not fed, crops cannot be harvested; a woman saddled with children with no man in the house to help and all the time the police's fear haunting her is a common story in the villages...Swinging between hope and hopelessness, afraid of the police, in many villages women have locked up their houses and have disappeared; in Verka village, for instance, houses were not even locked;

they were lying empty, deserted...For months the civil authorities had almost ceased to function. It is only under a military dictatorship that army officers could drag a Sarpanch to the Army Camp and order him to produce some weapons which he was suspected to possess and when he could not he was made to stand in a deep pit and earth piled inside till it reached his neck. We found that the Army was hated not only by the common villager but by their own retired Havaldars and Captains, for in several cases they, hein, Amritdhari, were the targets. Today the image of the Army is of a communal, corrupt, cruel and a grossly insensitive force."

The Christian Science Monitor, Boston, which made a coverage of Government actions in Punjab reported : "The pattern in each village appears to be the same. The army moves in during the early evening, cordons a village and announces over loudspeakers that everyone must come out. All males between the age group of 15 and 35 are trussed and blind folded, then taken away. Thousands have disappeared in the Punjab since the Army operation began. The government has provided no lists of names ; families don't know if sons and husbands are arrested, underground, or dead."

The CFD reported : "The President of India had given—

awards to our brave army in appreciation of their dangerous mopping up operation. Buildings once tall and imposing stand like so many haunted houses, eerie and empty with bombed walls, mangled girders and gaping wounds;

mute witnesses wanton destruction. Though we had been told in Delhi that the Army had been withdrawn, the Army was there in Amritsar, even 8 months after the Operation Blue Star. The convoys still rumble along. Big Brother stands fully armed, using constant vigil on all who enter or leave the Temple Complex, himself almost invisible."

The C.F.D. further noted : "Before evening falls every passing vehicle is searched, passengers are hauled out, luggage is examined, creating an artificial atmosphere of danger impeding normal life. Sikhs, in particular are insulted;

Professor Virk of Guru Nanak University was slapped during checking."

How sheer living had become hazardous and insecure in Punjab during those days was explained to the CFD by Narinder Singh, Sarpanch of Kala Sangha : "If anybody objects to the illegal actions of the Police, he is at once arrested and falsely implicated in an Arms Act case. Innocent persons are tortured We cannot describe the extent of lawlessness of the police. For two months the wife and aunt of Tarsem Singh were taken away; by the police. They want money;

as much money as they can extort."

CFD recorded the comments of one Kirpal Singh, who said ; "When General Dyer killed people in Jallianwala Bagh the bodies had been given back to their relatives but strangely

our own Army killed our own people and did not return their bodies to their relatives. Thereafter a reign of terror was let loose in this area. Any Sikh youth who wore a yellow or blue turban or had a kirpan was captured, humiliated and shot. I had given a memorandum to Major General Jamwal, who was the Army Commander at that time here. Those Army men are the same who had been served by the Punjabis”

especially by the— village people”  
in the battle fields, with  
las si f  
paranthas f  
which they carried on their heads.”

The CFD heard a frightening story from Gurmeet Singh of Khanna Chamara village, how Army Officers interfered in people’s private lives.

reported : ‘ ‘A Christian girl was getting married and there was a party in the village. Being falsely informed that there were terrorists, the army came in the village in three vans, surrounded the village and a drunken Major entered the house of the bride with a few of his men; he ordered all male guests to come out with hands up and the women guests to dance. The ladies were made to dance all night under threat; we men were blindfolded, vilely abused and taken to the military camp and kept there for two nights, then we were handed over to the police. At the police station we were insulted, humiliated, beaten, without any charge sheet; it was only after the Panchayat came with the villagers to the police station and pleaded with the authorities about our innocence that we were released.”

Sixty year old Boota Singh of village Pagthana Baardwala said, “My son Ajit Singh (20) is untraceable since Army action in June; my house has been raided 10 times during the last eight and a half months and my three other sons and myself have been arrested five times, taken to a CIA staff, kept there, tortured for one month, then released for a couple of weeks, then again taken, again interrogated, again tortured, then released again for a few days. Time and again it is because of the intervention of the Panchayat that we are released; I was released only yesterday (May 5, 1985). My son Pritam Singh is still in custody. We are very much harassed. We are never produced before a

magistrate but continuously ordered to produce my missing son Ajit Singh.”

Boota Singh said in anguish, “We have no desire to live. 100 Army men suddenly raid our houses in the night, upon our sleeping sisters and ladies and small children, not even allowed to harvest. Death is better than this life.”

Young Rajwant Kaur of Shahpur Guraiya was alone in her house with two of her small nephews

her brother had gone to Golden Temple and had not returned since June Army action; her old sick father, who could not even sit up had been taken away at least ten times since December. On May 4, at night my sister-in-law and her one year old baby were taken away, I do not know where. For the last six months our crop is not being allowed to be harvested. The labourers were threatened and they have all left; there is none to look after the land or the cattle.”

CFD was critical of the Government for acting in a partisan manner. The report said that “soon after the Operation Blue Star the Government inducted a number of CRPF and BSF officers from outside Punjab to deal with the terrorists. The Sarpanch of village Haruwal bitterly complained that the D.I.G., S.P., A.S.P., even the S.H.O. are all Hindus and everyday they are arresting only Sikhs. Recently Inspector Kirpal Singh of the B.S.F. came on leave to my village and he was arrested. When I went to the police station for his release, the S.H.O. threatened to arrest me. It was only after badly insulting Kirpal Singh that they released him. I feel so harassed that I have no desire to live. Daily I have to go to the Police Station for the release of innocent persons from 7 a.m. in the morning till late at night; death is better than this sort of situation and constant harassment.”√

For months after the Blue Star holocaust it was undeclared army rule in Punjab. That the civil authorities had ceased to function will be clear from the following incident reported by the C.F.D, : ‘An accused with eyes tightly bandaged was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Shri Cheema. The Court ordered the bandage to be removed. The orders were obeyed; after hearing the case the Court ordered that the accused should be sent to jail and not returned to Army custody; at once a Junior Commissioned Officer in the Army entered and clearly told the Magistrate in Hindi, “Goli Khayega or remand dega” in the retiring room the order of the court sending the accused to jail was torn up and replaced by a remand order. Cheema complained to the Sessions Judge and the District Magistrate who brought the matter to the notice of the Brigadier, who expressed regret but the matter remained there.”√

The above narration is based on the disinterested evidence and conclusions of singularly public spirited and prominent Indians from outside Punjab. It reveals unmistakably the objectives of the masters who planned and ordered the genocide and the officials and men who faithfully executed it without any abatement in their sadistic, malignant course of military duty. It gives a peep into the feelings and sentiments of the people who suffered the genocidal oppression. Such has been the fate of the Sikh masses at the hands of their own ‘democratically elected masters’ who are supposed to protect their human rights and their “national army” which is supposed to secure their safety against external aggression. One cannot help noticing the contrast between the approach and thinking of those who not only systematically planned these operations and supervised their malevolent execution and, on the other hand, the reaction and the feelings of men, women and children in the rural areas who had not just heard the stories from a partisan press or a communal demagogue but whose bleeding limbs had either suffered the tortures or witnessed with tearful eyes the death, destruction and molestation of their near and dear ones. The sophisticated understanding, planning and approach of those who over a long period planned the process, present a sharp contrast to the reactions, feelings, perceptions and thinking of the mass of the Sikhs who became the human objects of that policy and process.—

The reaction of the two communities to the attack on the Golden Temple presents another note worthy contrast. On the one hand was the entire Hindu community supporting the action either through the press or their representatives in democratic institutions or spokesmen of Government or Administration or aim chair academicians and on the other hand was the mass of the Sikh community, literate or illiterate, sophisticated or unsophisticated, urban or ruralite condemning the action with one voice. Still another

contrast is between the thinking of those persons who issued instructions about the considered criminality of Amritdhari Sikhs as the targets of their plan of persecution and elimination and the heroic resurgence of the Sikh youth since it invoked in them the glorious memories of the Sikh tradition created by the Sikh Gurus and the unprecedented valour shown by the Sikhs in struggling to supplant the Mughal administration that had repeatedly issued orders for the elimination of every Sikh. It is the same contrast of outlook that it would seem never contemplated the spontaneous revolt or reaction of the Sikh soldiers in the Indian army at what they thought to be a deeply immoral stab at their faith.—

Those who conceived and planned the bloody attack seem to have an assessment and understanding of Sikh history and ethos and yet it seemed they never visualised the full consequences of the action. The feeling of the Sikhs and even some non-Sikhs was that memories of Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh had been revived and the chances of a serious threat of retribution against the visible authors of the stroke had been raised. What we seek to emphasise is the unpardonable bankruptcy of understanding and thinking of those who contemplated the attack. They failed to see that they were creating serious dissensions in the Defence forces, jeopardising the very life of the Prime Minister and what is worse invoking the entire community to fall back and fight on the basis of its religion, ethos and history towards a line of action which could be increasingly destructive for the country as such. In the context of realities and the events that have happened, no cool historian can avoid the inference that those in charge of the destinies of the nation created a problem which no rabid Sikh could create much less an enemy of the country. It is true that a historian of current history can have no access to Government plans and papers that led to this bloc attack but in case those assessments failed to take into account the risks of the step envisaged, the judgement of the historian would be evidently uncomplimentary for the suicidal decision, the adverse results of which are still unmeasured and far from being at a close. Revolts in the army are very major events especially when they take place during peace time in a national army. These invariably signify the folly of those who are at the helm of affairs and yet we are not aware of any commission or enquiry committee appointed to make an assessment of the debacle and suggest remedial steps.—

Drastic steps in history have often been the result of miscalculation at the highest level i.e. those who are inexcusably ignorant of the realities of the context. Such steps have been seen to have jeopardised the fate of empires. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre ordered by Dyer was a grievous blunder which shook the very foundations of the Empire but the men at the top tried to retrieve the position by cashiering Dyer and O'Dwyer and appointing the

Hunter Commission. But in this case, though the event v/as of a much greater magnitude than the Jallianwala Bagh episode, the executors were decorated and rewarded, only to add fuel to the fire.—

(yi) Black Laws : Assault on Darbar Sahib was preceded and followed by the enactment of black laws, reminiscent of the repressive enactments which during the British rule used to be condemned as charters of slavery by the Indian leaders. The draconian laws passed by the Indian Government in relation to Punjab in many ways are far more oppressive than the brutal piece of the British Rowlatt Act of 1919, so violative of the fundamental principles of liberty, justice and human rights.—

The Government of free India passed the National Security Act, 1950; the Punjab Disturbed Areas Ordinance, 1953; the Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, 1953 and the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1954. These Acts give sweeping powers to the Government and the police to curtail even the right to life. Under the National Security Act, a person is liable to be jailed without charge and without trial for two years in Punjab. His detention can be extended from time to time for an indefinite period. After the army action, more draconian amendments were made to the NSA. Further the procedure for submission of the case of a detenu was amended in such a way that he could be kept in jail for a period of six months without his detention being recommended for approval by the Advisory Board. Thus a person was liable to be in jail for two years simply because the executive believed he was likely to act in a prejudicial manner. Another important amendment brought about by an Ordinance, Section 14 (2) of the National Security Act, laid down that on the revocation or expiry of a detention order, a fresh detention order can be made even if no fresh facts have arisen. The amendment had very serious implications. It provided in effect that if a detention order was held invalid by a court of law the detaining authority could revoke the said order and could make another detention order.—

The Terrorist Affected Areas Act (TADA), also known as the Special Courts Act (1984), was passed in the form of Presidential Ordinance on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1984. Trials under the Act are held in camera. The identities of the prosecution witnesses are not disclosed to the accused. Even the special court cannot disclose the identity of a prosecution witness in its judgement. Hence the antecedents or veracity of the witness could hardly be questioned or examined. Anyone who discloses the identity of a prosecution witness is liable to be punished under the Act. The prosecution witness can be examined in the absence of the accused. The accused supposedly has the right to recall him for cross-examination, but as he does not know who he

is, this “right” becomes meaningless. Appeals from the decisions and orders of the Special Court could be only to the Supreme Court and not to the High Court even though the punishing court is normally of the status of a district judge. The Special Court may hold its proceedings at any place other than the ordinary place of its sitting. Usually such courts hold their sittings inside the jails or outside the state of Punjab, even in a distant state or linguistic area, where the accused could hardly conduct his defence meaningfully. How is he to defend himself in such a far-off place without access to friends and relatives? In the absence of contacts and the handicap of being able to employ a lawyer from Punjab in distant states, it virtually means almost a denial of the right of defence. It is as good as telling him: “Plead guilty and be done with it!”

In violation of the entire history of British jurisprudence in India, confession before a police officer became admissible. Such a law becomes more inhuman with the addition of the clause that the need for disclosing the identity of the witness is not there. Justice Krishna lyer, a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, has stated:

“Prima facie

the anatomy of the Special Courts Act is incredibly terrorist in operation.

The trial is by summary procedure.”

He stated at another place: “Our judicial process itself is on trial in Punjab. Justice in Punjab has been crucified on the cross of law and if the nation does not demand resurrection of the right to justice, constitutional guarantees may degenerate into printed rhetoric and human rights die a natural death.”

The most drastic change which the Act (TADA) brought about in the Criminal law was the amendment of the Evidence Act. The cardinal principle of Criminal law that an accused is innocent unless proved guilty has been done away with. According to the amended version, the onus to prove his or her innocence is on the accused. The right of anticipatory bail has also been denied to him. Commenting on the administration of justice under this Act, Soli Sorabjee, a leading jurist of India says that “this law completely deprives an accused person of any semblance of a fair and a just trial.” Justice V. M. Tarkunde former President of the People’s Union For Civil liberties describes the law as a ‘savage law which no civilised country would tolerate.’

The repressive legislation, unprecedented in its ferocity, was fraught with danger because it could treat as terrorists all those who would normally come under the category of dissenters. The law could be easily misused by the ruling party for narrow political

ends. The definition of the term 'terrorist' was vague and wide and could easily be applied to various forms of dissent, of which it made a mockery. Any kind of protest or demonstration could be easily construed as an act of terrorism and could land one in the authorities' net and then in the Special Court. The police could present a challan in a period upto one year. Thus as an under trial one remained without the possibility of bail. All forms of democratic protests were crushed. A number of Special Courts came up and more than 3/4<sup>th</sup> work of the regular courts was transferred to these Special Courts. These came to be over worked as even ordinary offences without any element of terrorism began to be tried by them. A report of the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) wrote : "19,286 persons were accused under TADA, including 7,969 in Punjab alone... The Government introduced TADA by citing the transistor bomb blasts in May, 1985, in Delh and the five accused under the act—K.S. Narang, Mohinder Singh Khalsa, Mohinderpal Singh, Jagdish Singh Narela and Dalji Singh—were tortured to death. In Delhi, during elections to th< Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, the Act was used to detail Akali Dal Secretary Bir Bahadur Singh in order to force the 6< year old leader to support the then Congress (I)—backed Barnali group in the DGPC elections. Soon after when President's ruli was imposed in Punjab in May, 1987, Prem Singh Chandumajra, ; Cabinet Minister in the Barnala Government, became a victim o the Act."166

After acquiring arbitrary powers, the army swept through th Punjab countryside throwing over eighteen thousand "suspecto terrorists" into jails, without the right of bail.197 For the firs three months no one was put up for trial, A group of 39 children between the ages of two and twelve were picked from Darbar Sahi complex and lodged in Ludhiana jail and graded under thre categories of 'terrorists': very dangerous, dangerous and potentiall dangerous.198 All this was being done in the name of wiping 01 terrorism. The children faced the charge of breach of peace an violating of prohibitory orders under Section 144. They were

It would be interesting to compare the tactics employed by the Government of India in Punjab and Kashmir with the complete equanimity and pacifism displayed by it towards the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The ULFA even professed secession from the Union. The Government of India is also well aware of the fact that ULFA's secessionists is there only to hoodwink oppressed ethnic groups in Assam which have lost all confidence in the Government and that ULFA is only the representative of the upper caste elite that under another name, the AGP (Assam Gana Prashid), is their ally. This group has already killed hundreds of people who have politically opposed it and also many others on a communal basis. According to the ULFA, it is necessary to "liquidate colonisers and exploiters" and liberate



Assam from the clutches of the Indian state. The ULFA has, infact, been preaching Assamese nationalism quite openly. One of its recurring statements is that Assam was never a part of the Indian mainstream.<sup>175</sup> It has extorted billions of rupees and it has kidnapped for ransom hundreds of people, including high Central Government functionaries. And yet, there is no TADA, no NSA, no NSG, no curfews, no blasting of villages, no torture—not a single extra-ordinary step from our Central Government. When upper caste Hindus do it against the Muslims, it seems things are quite different. The same attitude is reflected by the other all India parties, whether right or left. D.R. Goyal summed up this policy in a leading article in the Tribune. He wrote, “It is only the political Hinduism of the RSS that discriminates between religions on geographical basis which tantamounts to cultural imperialism, a sure prescription for separatism. And here too they have a hierarchy. Kashmir, with a Muslim majority, is to be tackled differently from Punjab with a Sikh majority. In the former, people have to be fought with the help of armed “RSS workers” whereas in the latter case it is enough to prevent “outside interference” by handing over the State to the Army. None of these suggestions have been mooted in regard to Assam where ULFA and AASU have been indulging in identical rhetorical and military extremism. Is it because the Assam militants are Hindus and are trying to drive away Muslims ?

composition of these people. Out of these, 119 are Muslims, Sikhs and a mere 13 Hindus. The Muslims and the Hindus were arrested after communal violence in Jaipur and Kota but administration—and it is important to remember that we then had a secular Congress—government—seemed to feel that the Muslims were guiltier than the Hindus. As is usual with our communal riot it was the Muslims who lost more property and it was the Muslims who got killed but nevertheless it was more Muslims (many, many more) whom the police seemed to think were guilty. Among the 119 Muslims detained in Rajasthan, three are below the age of 16 and some are old men over eighty years age.”<sup>179</sup>

Similarly, there are more than 13,500 persons at present detained\* in Punjab under the TADA<sup>180</sup> and similar draconian laws. They are amongst the “luckier” ones, who have not been “dealt” with so far. It is ironical that a state which claims to be the votary of peace, professes to abide by the Gandhian ideal of non-violence and calls Gandhi the Father of the Nation, should enact laws so repressive as those of South Africa against which Gandhi had started his non-cooperation movement. Through these enactments, the ruling elite is acquiring more and more arbitrary powers to curtail the fundamental rights and liberties of the people enshrined in the Constitution of India.

(viii) White Paper : Government Justification for the Blue Sta Attack :

The preamble to the Government White Paper gives two grounds for the attack on the Darbar Sahib. It says that (a) 'the consequences of this determined assault on society cannot be measured simply in terms of the number of people killed and injured' and that (b) 'the whole thrust of extremist violence was to fragment the people of Punjab and destroy their common culture.'<sup>182</sup>

We shall examine the rationale or validity of both these grounds separately. It is essential not only to ascertain the composition of these people. Out of these, 119 are Muslims, Sikhs and a mere 13 Hindus. The Muslims and the Hindus were arrested after communal violence in Jaipur and Kota but administration—and it is important to remember that we then had a secular Congress—government-seemed to feel that the Muslims were guiltier than the Hindus. As is usual with our communal riots it was the Muslims who lost more property and it was the Muslims who got killed but nevertheless it was more Muslims (many, many more) whom the police seemed to think were guilty. Among the 119 Muslims detained in Rajasthan, three are so under the age of 16 and some are old men over eighty years age."<sup>179</sup>

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We shall examine the rationale or validity of both these grounds separately. It is essential not only to ascertain the constitutional and logical and the Centre's policy discriminate: the Government found no other way to justify its illegal and indefensible stand except by creating the communal rift so as to win the feelings and sympathies of the rest of Hindu India.

The ill conceived policies of the Government have had direct bearing on the crisis in Punjab and the resultant tensions and conflicts. A Government which dragged its feet in hammering out a fair and equitable solution to an essentially political problem has much to answer for.

Instead of referring the water and hydro power issue to the Supreme Court, it withdrew the case from there and then attacked the Golden Temple, intensifying the crisis still further. Responsible public leaders had openly stated that an attack on the Golden Temple would be no solution and instead would be ruinous to communal relations. This was what Rajiv Gandhi spoke of as late as March 23, 1984, "I think we should not enter the Golden Temple. The police can enter the temples, but it is a question of what is a good balance. Today as we see it, it is not as if Sikhs are against the Hindus, and we should do nothing that separates them."<sup>183</sup> Thus, the Government was not unconscious of the fact that an attack on the Golden Temple would create a communal divide. Yet two months later it was not the police but the army that

entered the Temple leading to communal divide of the worst kind. It was not a handful Sikhs who were affected as claimed by the Government. It was the entire mass of the Sikh community which felt hurt, humiliated and alienated. Participating in the discussion in the Parliament on the White Paper, Inderjit Gupta of the C.P.I, said, "In response of all those Sikh masses to-day, I regret to say that there is a misuse saying here, 'No, no. Only a handful of people have been affected'. It is not the truth, let us be objective. We are living in India, we are not living in some other country, in a vacuum. We are living in a country, in a society where religion and religious sentiments and religious feelings and prejudices are most powerful and potent factor. Now I am speaking I say that we have already dealt with the Nirankari issue, which was considered to have been created by the Government as a part of its diversionary tactics so as to hide its denial of justice to Punjab on the economic issues. And, as to the conflict between the Akhand Kirtani Jatha-cum-Bhindranwale group and the Nirankaris on the Baisakhi day at Amritsar when the latter paraded a procession involving derogatory references to the Guru Granth Sahib the fact is that two Nirankaris were killed and thirteen of the other group were shot dead. Later when Bhindranwale was arrested in connection with the murder of Lala Jagjit Narain, an offshoot of the Nirankari tangle, he was profusely interrogated

and found unconcerned with any violence or murder

Calendar of violence given in the White Paper takes no note of the routine crimes and killings in the State. The State Government at one time circulated among the journalists a document making a comparative study of the crime figures in different states. The document stated that 'Violence is endemic to UP, Bihar and West Bengal and even such states as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, not to speak of north-eastern states where insurgency defies solution, and in comparison Punjab is still one of the most peaceful states of India.'<sup>189</sup> The document said that there were 5,422 murders in 1980 and 5,068 in 1981 in UP while in Punjab there were 620 murders, in 1980 and 544 in 1981.'<sup>191</sup> According to Kuldip Nayar, "between 20 March, 1981 and 2 June 1984, incidents of violence had taken a toll of 386 lives in Punjab.'<sup>191</sup> However the White Paper states that 410 persons were killed in Punjab in the phase of violence from August 4, 1982, when the Akali Morcha was started up to June 3, 1984.<sup>19</sup> As to the marshalling of long lists of violence in the White Paper Government figures do not identify separately as to how many Sikhs or Hindus were killed. Finance Minister Parnab Mukerjee's figure given for the period from 1982 to 1984 are more specific saying that out of nearly 300 persons killed in Punjab, the majority were of the same community (Sikhs)."<sup>8</sup> Our calculations from the White

Paper reveal that 181 Sikhs and 127 Hindus were killed.<sup>194</sup> The White Paper takes no note of the acts of state violence. According to Akali Da! sources more than 250 Sikhs had been killed in firing or in fake encounters by police or security forces before the army action.<sup>195</sup> Clubbing together every kind of violence under one heading in the White Paper is unfair. The Paper is guilty of misrepresentation as it includes as many as ten incidents of violence that took place in Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan just to inflate the number of violent incidents without showing how these were linked with the alleged extremist activities. It is well known that in all these acts of engineered violence the victims were Sikhs. The Government justified its attack on the Golden Temple by publicising the figure of 410 persons killed in a period of two years, whereas in the Bombay-Bhiwandi violence of May 1984, more than 300 Muslims were killed within a few days.<sup>198</sup> The Government's ambivalent attitude on the issue is no secret. The burden of the Government White Paper is to prove that the attack on the Golden Temple was necessary to curb the violence created by the Akalis. We have quoted figures from the White Paper and public statements to find that before the Blue Star attack 127 Hindus were alleged to have been killed by the extremists. It is evident that so as to curb this violence, the Administration killed first 181 Sikhs and later attacked the Golden Temple

killing more than 5000 Sikhs during the Blue Star and Wood Rose operations, as stated by Kuldip Nayar.<sup>197</sup> These included pilgrims, SGPC employees, including the Ragis and Granthis and peaceful Akali agitators who had collected to court arrest in the Dharam Yudh Morcha. In addition, Sikhs were killed while they were marching to protest against the attack on the Darbar Sahib. A number of Sikhs were killed during the course of attack on other Gurdwaras. The subsequent killings of thousands of Sikhs in different parts of the country in November 1984 violence is also the consequence of the Hindu-Sikh tension and rift that had been created following the ironic statement of the Government White Paper that the attack on the Golden Temple was necessary to remove the cultural divide which the extremist Sikhs were creating in Punjab.<sup>198</sup> It appears the Government was conscious that it was using a sledge hammer to kill a fly. That is why it wrote : “The consequences of this determined assault on society cannot be measured simply in terms of the number of people killed or injured.”<sup>199</sup> The arithmetic of killings of the Sikhs by the state was far too much weighed against the rationale which has sought to justify it on the basis of violence by the extremist Akalis.

The narration of events of violence in the White Paper highlights all such incidents in which the victims of violence are Hindus or Nirankaris, whereas

it tries to minimise and suppress information regarding violence against the Sikhs. Blatant acts of state repression and unwarranted police atrocities are justified in the name of restoring law and order. For example at the time of the Sikh gathering at Chowk Mehta when Bhindranwale was arrested (September 20, 1981) eighteen Sikhs were killed by police firing as per newspaper reports.<sup>200</sup> But the White Paper gives the number of Sikhs killed in this incident as eleven.<sup>201</sup> No official was reported as killed or seriously injured. Similarly, Government's own narration in the White Paper regarding the peaceful Rasta Roko agitation on April 4, 1983 mentions that the police used lathi charge, tear gas shells and firing with the result that "21 persons died,"<sup>208</sup> though the number given by the press was 24.<sup>209</sup> On the official side no one died or received grievous injury. In the subsequent attack by Congressmen at Panipat, Jind, Jagadhari, Karnal, Kaithal and elsewhere in February 1984, eleven Sikhs were killed, Gurdwaras desecrated and burnt and women molested. This happened inspite of the forewarning given to the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a member of the Politburo of the C.P.I. (M) that much trouble would erupt in Haryana towns on February 1984.<sup>10\*</sup> No follow up action was taken by the Government as it was "not interested in restoring peace in the two strife-torn States."<sup>205</sup> In addition scores of Sikh youths were eliminated in the so-



called police 'encounters' and

during the police custody, including thirty four Sikhs in one incident.

Reckless killings by the police became a key factor in the creation of crisis in Punjab.

If one goes to the essence of the crisis in Punjab with equa-nanimity and objectivity, one comes to the inevitable conclusion that violence in the State raised its head under grave provocation. The Government failed to realise that 'when political problems are allowed to fester, government's monopoly of violence is bound to be challenged by counter-violence.'<sup>208</sup> Bullets, cannonballs and rockets are not the answers to the political problems.<sup>207</sup> Demands that are politically and judiciously irresistible cannot forever be allowed to be converted into law and order issues. By and large, media maintained a guilty silence over the enormity of injustice done to Punjab. Rather it provided legitimacy to the Government policies, justified repression and demanded even more stringent policy, para-military and military actions.

As to the Dhillwan killings, which was the start of communal angle, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal repeatedly asserted that a judicial enquiry should be held and he would provide documentary evidence to prove the connivance of Congress leaders, including a Centre Minister and a State

Minister in these killings and even later incidents of violence.<sup>208</sup> And yet the Government never held an enquiry into such a serious affair. The burden of Longowal's assertion was that Hindu killings were the result of Government policy to malign the Akali agitation for Punjab's rights as a communal agitation. In fact the real assertion was that Punjab was being discriminated against because it was a Sikh majority area and there was no Hindu-Sikh tension or problem in the State.

There are several misrepresentations and distortions of facts in the calendar of events of violence in the White Paper. The Punjabi Tribune brought to light three concrete cases where contradiction is glaringly obvious and the White Paper is so palpably guilty of misrepresentation.

(1) The Calendar in the White Paper describes an incident on February 23, 1984 ; "Shri Rameshwar Rishi Dev, his son and a child aged 18 months were murdered in village Khandoli, P.S. Rajpura. One woman was seriously injured."<sup>20\*</sup> But the Senior Superintendent of Police stated, on February 28, that SuJti Dev Rishi of Purnea (Bihar) was arrested in connection with the crime and had confessed having committed it.<sup>210</sup>

(2) Another incident of May 13, 1984 is described in the Calendar as follows : "Shri Pawan Kumar, a cloth merchant of Adalat Bazar, Patiala, was shot at and injured."<sup>111</sup> But the Patiala SSP said on May 14 that Pawan Kumar's death was caused by some unsharpened weapon and not by a bullet, according to the medical report.\*"

(3) The Calendar describes another incident of May 29, 1984 : "Jewellery worth some lakhs of rupees was looted at pistol point from the shop of Shri Basu Dev, a goldsmith at Patiala."<sup>81\*</sup> The SSP of Patiala revealed that the alleged theft had occurred at 2 or 3 a.m. and the case was registered with the police by the owner at 10 a.m. After inquiry, the SSP found that the case was a fake one.\*<sup>14</sup>

Thus the Government attributed every outrage, explosion, theft, dacoity, robbery or routine criminal acts to the Sikh extremists. The way these incidents began to be projected by the Government and the media fitted well with the Government design to set the stage for the gory drama. The policy of the Government was to malign the Sikhs and

to frustrate their peaceful movement in its efforts to get socio-economic justice for Punjab.

In fact, as the realities are, the White Paper and the subsequent unfortunate and eventful years to which the Government policies and violence have led, hardly justify the attack on the Golden Temple on any rational or even administratively sensible basis. There is no ground whatsoever why the Government failed to solve the economic and even constitutional demands of the State for two scores of years. That the entire gory exercise was undertaken only to sidetrack the issues by creating a communal opinion in the country that should cloud its vision to see the

truth, is evident enough. But, in retrospect, the tragic consequences of those tactics and policies have been too destructive to be justified on any plea of the interests of the country or its people.

Later when the kid glove was removed and Mr. Ribeiro was appointed as Director General of Police and Secretary for internal security and was given a “free hand”<sup>18</sup> in Punjab to pursue a policy of repression, he was blunt enough to announce that he would follow a policy of ‘bullet for bullet’ and would destroy those whom he considered to be guilty because the courts failed to convict them.<sup>18</sup> On May 25, 1987, Ribeiro told a newspaper that there were only 100 armed terrorists left in Punjab. Three weeks later, on June 16, he stated: “In Punjab, the police has killed or captured 3, 318 terrorists in the last 14 months. In one month since President’s rule, we have killed or captured 404 terrorists.”<sup>21</sup> How 100 terrorists increased to 404 reveals the killing of innocents in fake and contrived police encounters. In a candid interview given to the Times of India in Bombay Ribeiro expressed the view that “fighting terrorists was only a part of fighting terrorism and that in the hurry to root out terrorism the biggest effort to win the hearts and minds of the Sikhs had gone by default.”<sup>18</sup> Ribeiro’s unabashed disregard of the law and the courts was worse than medieval in its approach and tactics. He also admitted that he had introduced his men to do spying and killing and justified it on grounds of its being an accepted norm of state policies. And yet, after three years of his unbridled pursuit of state violence and the existence of the TADA which eliminates the right to life, he virtually threw up his hands with the observations that the problem could not be solved by the bullet and repression since the issues were basically political and could be dealt with as such alone. The reading of the events clearly shows that the real reason was a persistent reluctance to solve the economic and political issues constitutionally, justly or fairly and instead to camouflage them and mislead the public into believing that the problems related to the law and order or the so called violence of a few hot heads. The distinguished policeman K.F. Rustamji also emphasised the same thing when he wrote : ‘Our policy has been based on political imperatives which urge that terrorism is a scourge that must be wiped out at once, with any measures that would speed up the end—and that without dynamic political initiatives. A few innocent persons may suffer in the process. A few cases of injustice may occur. But in the wider interest of the nation that would have to be the price we pay for saving the republic from disintegration. The end, it would appear, justifies the means. We have heard this type of nonsense time and again, and now it seems to have become the accepted policy of a forceful political group like the B.J.P. What it wants is a surge of violence, even if there is no danger at all of disintegration. A fact that they will not accept is that the extremists may try their tactics for 100 years and yet there would be no break-up.’<sup>21</sup>

The above is the story of state violence used to curb the violence of the Sikh extremists with the result of mounting escalation of violence and the political issues becoming increasingly tangled and unresolved. Who can deny that when the Government publicly accused the alleged extremists of a community for killing some Hindus and in reply attacked the holiest shrine of the Sikhs, killing in the process thousands of them there and all over the State and thereafter without a word of regret in Parliament or elsewhere decorated those who had committed the excesses, the mobs of the majority community interpreted this as a clear message to them. No wonder they translated it into revengeful massacres of thousands of Sikhs at the capital and all over the country in the same year at the very first opportunity. And it is not a coincidence that the violence was the greatest from where the message had emanated.

(viii) Seizure of the Golden Temple : After the carnage, it would seem that the Government itself started feeling the repulsive horror of the gory drama it had staged. For days, no one other than the occupation Army was allowed to enter the sacred premises which lay splattered with blood, dead bodies and destruction.

The stink of decaying flesh and blood did not disappear for the corpses were too many to be cleared, disposed of and cremated in just a few days. The only visitors allowed were the President, on June 8, 1984, and the Prime Minister on June 23, 1984. Both of them, it is reported, were moved by the ghastly tragedy they had ordered. According to the Times<sup>^</sup>London, "The President of India, Giani Zail Singh, himself a Sikh, went to the anguished city to see for himself the extent of the mayhem committed during the battle for control of its principal ornament, while Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, made a personal expression of thanks to the men of the security forces who accomplished it."<sup>20</sup> Just as one lie leads to more lies to cover it, the Government's anxiety increased to hide the truth of the plan they had executed. Accordingly they refused to vacate the premises and thought of clearing the place and reconstructing the demolished part of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takhat, so that the tragic scene and its evidence should not remain permanently recorded in public memory.

Accordingly, the Golden Temple, the heart of Sikh religious life which gave solace and peace to millions of Sikh souls was kept in military occupation. While it would seem that the Government felt the inevitable necessity of continuing the tragedy, few people realised the enormity of the pain and injury it was continuing to cause to the lacerated hearts of the entire Sikh community, especially when there was not a word of regret or protest from any notable public man of the other community. In fact, there were visible rejoicings, justification, approbation and the decoration of those who had staged the tragedy. It is during these months that every Sikh felt the contrast in the approach of the Indian Government and that of the British colonial Government after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. Even some Sikhs, who were later rewarded, were brought on the public platform to justify the attack. Subsequently, the Government brought one Santa Singh<sup>21</sup> on the sacred premises and associated him with the reconstruction of the demolished building which the Government sought hurriedly to do through a Government contractor Tejwant

Singh and Buta Singh were ex-communicated and declared Tankhaiyas (religious offenders) by the Sarbat Khalsa.<sup>118</sup> The Jathedars with the approval of the Sangat decided to undertake a people's March on October 1, in order to liberate the sacred

Shrine from the control and possession of the Government<sup>1</sup>” and the torment which it was causing to the mind of every Sikh. On September 25, just six days before the proposed Sikh march, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the withdrawal of the Army and handed over the control of the Shrine to the SGPC.<sup>110</sup>

In human affairs and affinities, the depth of the emotional wound is proportionate to the vengeful contempt and callousness with which injury is inflicted. For persons outside the community it is not easy to understand the almost irreversible gap between the communities and the injured alienation and deep disillusionment which the Blue Star, the Wood Rose and the subsequent events connected with the possession of Darbar Sahib have caused.

(ix) Conclusion : The bloody assault on Darbar Sahib lacerated the deepest chord of the Sikh psyche. It was an attack on their faith and their identity, in fact their very being. An entire community felt deeply stabbed, shaken, humiliated and alienated. The sentiments of each Sikh were epitomised by an uneducated lady from Faridkot while talking to a journalist, “It is like making me naked in public and assaulting me.” It was indeed a rape of the community.

Consider the reaction of a relatively westernised Delhi based Sikh, not at all deeply religious, but with a strong attachment to Sikh tradition and beliefs and with a sense of pride in Sikh history. She wrote : “It is now four days ago that the news broke of the entry of the Army into the Golden Temple. It still seems like a nightmare, too incredible to be a reality. Yet the visuals keep returning to my mind—the tranquility, the calm, the beauty of the Harmandir Sahib, the pristine purity of the expanse of the white marble parkarma the extra-ordinary feeling of reverence which invariably overwhelmed me, almost in spite of myself, born out of a sense of history, a strange personal

identification. Now superimposed on these images are the scenes of battle of blood on the white marble, of the agony of violent death, of hatred, of peace shattered. Instead of the sound of kirtan of the beautiful verses of the Guru Granth Sahib, the dreadful burst of machine guns, the shrill deadly spatter of rifles, the crumbling of bricks and mortar, which were far more than mere buildings, which represented for us the highest authority of the spirit and, above all, the voice of human pain in what was a place of solace and compassion.”<sup>231</sup>

We give the reaction of a lucidly intellectual and a non-believer Sikh Dr. Nazar Singh, a co-researcher of Dr. Khurana the Nobel-laureate in England, a distinguished and brilliant Chemist Head, Department of Chemistry, Punjabi University, Patiala, who had since his student days been an agnostic and a known Marxist ideologue. He, who had never been to a Gurdwara, even though it was next to his house in his village stated : “Well I don’t know, what has happened to me, the attack has shaken me completely. I have not been able to sleep for the last two nights.”<sup>2</sup>”

Another educated lady expressed her emotional outburst after the Blue Star in the following lines. This was probably the first and the last poem which she ever wrote :

“Every Sikh heart bleeds,  
To think of your heinous deeds  
It is time you die of shame

And give up all your claim  
To be a champion of minority  
Hindu nation is your top priority.  
Do you search your conscience,  
When you preach non-violence' ?  
You are a terrorist of the worst kind  
Blind to the values of mankind  
Nastiest tyrant of the present time,  
Minister prime of war and crime  
You clamour for Nobel Peace prize  
When your own country is cut to size  
Just another breed of your kind  
Can spell disaster for mankind.  
This is the cry of each Sikh soul  
You can fool the world no more.”\*1

We also record an emotional but perceptive wail of an old Punjabi Hindu, who on hearing the attack on the Golden Temple cried : “O God, what has happened. This gap is not going to be bridged.”\*\*

The event led to an unprecedented religious resurgence in the Sikh community, witnessed in the form of saffron turbans and flowing beards—visible symbols of their resolve to preserve their distinct identity and to keep the torch of their heritage burning at any cost. Alienation of the Sikhs was bound to lead to disastrous consequences. The emotional bonds that linked the Sikh community with the country were visibly shaken, if not severed. The shells that tore holes in the Sikh shrine also ruptured the natural ties of the Sikhs with the nation and its people. The moral prestige of the Government was shattered.

The Sikhs who took pride in playing the role of brave and unflinching soldiers in guarding the country's frontiers felt betrayed. The Sikh women who braving all hazards of their visit to the front lines of the battle during the Indo-Pakistan War, gave ample proof of their boundless patriotism by carrying bundles of food and pots of milk and curd on their heads to serve the army jawans felt grievously hurt when they became victims of the wrath of the same army, of a fate contrived by human hands. It was an irony that the most patriotic community which had undergone untold sufferings and persecutions to save the freedom and Honour of the country was thrown into the crucible of fire on a charge of lack of patriotism. For nothing can be more destructive to human bond than to accuse a person of disloyalty and betrayal when he feels emotionally linked by cords of friendship and love. The task of recording full implications of this suicidal Keph is left to the future historian, as the events still continue to unfold themselves.

The sense of personal identification felt by almost every Sikh explains the intensity of pain and depth of the hurt. But it is not that simple. For the Sikhs, the Golden Temple is more than a place of pilgrimage. It is a symbol of Sikhism itself, destroyed

Bagh was necessary. The wisest believed that in the process General Dyer was reckless and overdid it. Few saw it as a setback to the British rule. The British never recovered from the effects of that mistake till the end. But has that taught any lesson ? Operation Woodrose was an exercise that seemed to be based on that sort of thinking.”\*36

Both in its manner and magnitude, the Blue Star massacre was far more callous and bloodier than the Jallianwala Bagh killings. The intense gravity of the event was also much deeper and far more extensive than that of Dyer's attack. While the latter shook only the freedom loving community of Punjab where there had been a ferment and literate and urbanite community in the rest of India which had started a confrontation with the colonial rule, the Blue Star attack caused the severest anguish in every Sikh heart, young or old, sophisticated or unsophisticated, rich or poor, wherever he was in India or abroad. And the pain was doubly deep because apart from the sudden and rude realisation that they were a community virtually enslaved; the intensity of bitterness was unparalleled because the blow had been inflicted not by an alien government but by that of their own country for the freedom of which they had suffered and shed blood for centuries on end.

In the case of Blue Star holocaust, the motive would appear to be not the much publicised object of restoring the law and order but to cripple the Sikhs into submission. There is no denying the fact that the event led to far-reaching consequences which were quite contrary to what the Government had expected. Those acquainted with the Sikh history know that the Sikh religion thrives on persecution and the blood of the martyrs prove\* to be the cement of the Church. Out of the ashes of martyrs, like, "they rise into higher splendour from every crash them."7

Even a cursory glance at Sikh history reveals that, it\* cost in terms of human sacrifice and suffering, the act brook any encroachment on their sanctum in eighteenth century, the Temple was thrice destroyed

invaders but each time, the Sikhs reconstructed it with their own hands, thus making it a symbol of their dauntless spirit and their unyielding determination to survive against all odds. What added to the anguish of the Sikhs was that this time the attack on the Temple was mounted by their own Government, by their own army, by their own country to which they had been loyal with their blood. This was the first instance of its kind in the history of the civilised world. It was tragic that a full scale attack was mounted by the Indian army against the spiritual fount of a community which since its creation by the Gurus had made the largest contribution towards the country's freedom.

The attack on Darbar Sahib gave a big jolt to the Sikhs and held out ominous political and religious portents. It became a festering sore in the body politic of the country. In the pre-Independence days it was the painful memory of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which disillusioned the Sikhs. After the Blue Star attack, the Indian Government has found it difficult to suppress or deal with the moral and mental revolt against its actions which it has created and the problem has acquired new dimensions. The Sikhs find it difficult to erase from their collective psyche the bitter memories of the bloody assault on Darbar Sahib. The emotive scars on their hearts cannot be healed so easily. In over 12000 villages of Punjab the Sikh anger was being further stoked by the whipped up repression carried out by the army in the name of "crushing terrorism". No amount of rhetoric on national integration or national unity could unite the hearts torn asunder by the brutal action. While every Hindu thought that Government's action was right and justified, the Sikhs of all hues and shades felt outraged. The images that flashed across the bruised Sikh psyche were that of sacrilege, the martyrdom of Bhindranwale and the brutalities of the horrendous act against the Sikhs.

If you ask scholars of world history whether they can think of any suitable analogy, however remote, to the attack upon and desecration of a minority community's most Holy place, some

will naturally think of the desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem, which took place in 70 A.D. This third bloody desecration was carried out by the Roman Central Government to bring Jews into line. Oxford scholar Cecil Roth has described this episode of Jewish history in the following words : "Contrary to what is generally imagined, the fall of Jerusalem was an episode in the history of Jewish people, rather than the close of an epoch...It is true that Jerusalem and the Temple, lay in ruins and their rebuilding was forbidden...It is true that the people as a whole sat in mourning for those who had fallen in the war) and for the glory that was gone from Israel...A harrow was drawn over the site of Jerusalem, and a new city erected, under the name Aelia Cappitolina, into which no Jew was allowed to set foot save once a year, when they were suffered to 'bay their tears' (in the words of Church Father) at the Temple site. The rest of Judaea lay desolate, its population almost annihilated by the war and the wholesale enslavement which followed."-38

Desecration and loot of sacred places by invaders like Mohammad Gnuri, Changez Khan, Abdali and others is known but history records nn peace time parallel of a gruesome event involving the destruction of the holiest place of a minority by its own government. The destruction of the Jewish Temple by the Roman authorities is no doubt an event which, on account of the anguish and pain, it caused to the minority community has a parallel. But the Roman attack was by a colonial empire and followed a military rebellion by the Jews. Hence as the subsequent implications, reactions and ramifications have revealed, the understandings and assessments or the measures suggested or adopted in connection with this unprecedented holocaust have, as we shall explain in the subsequent chapter, been very variant and even contrasted.

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## 6

### VARIANT PERCEPTIONS OF THE BLUE STAR ATTACK

The Blue Star attack had been staged. It was a gory scene of death and destruction. The foul smell of blood and death still lingered in the air. The debris had yet to be cleared from the city of Amritsar. The shadow of grief was still dark and heavy on the Sikh hearts. The Government and the majority community felt a sense of triumph. At this hour let us record the reactions and perceptions of different parties, individuals, institutions and bodies regarding the wisdom or otherwise of this enormous step the Government of India had taken.

We have already indicated that the reaction of the 16 million Sikhs, living in India and abroad, to the attack on the Durbar Sahib and other Gurdwaras was that of deep anguish and anger. There were protest demonstrations not only in India but also in other countries.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of agitated Sikhs from all over England, gathered at Hyde Park in London, to express their anguish at what they called the 'invasion\*' of the Golden Temple by the Indian army. Giani Amolak Singh, President of Shiro-mani Akali Dal, Southall, so far counted among the moderates, sounded very angry and told the *Indian Express* that the Sikhs abroad had taken Mrs Gandhi's military action in the Golden Temple as a war against the entire Sikh community. He said that Sikh religion and Sikh identity were not

safe in India.<sup>1</sup> On July 29, 1984, a World Sikh Convention was held at Madison Square Garden, New York. The participants observed that the army action had snapped the ties between Punjab and the rest of India.\*

Two Congress Sikh members of Parliament, Amarinder Singh of Patiala and Devinder Singh Garcha resigned from the Parliament and the party.<sup>4</sup> The octogenarian Bhagat Puran Singh, the greatest Indian philanthropist and Dr. Ganda Singh, a renowned historian returned their Padma Bhushan awards as a protest. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, the editor of the daily 'Ajit' and Dr. Khushdeva Singh, a philanthropist from Patiala also returned their Fadani Siiree awards.<sup>5</sup> Simranjit Singh Mann, an I.P.S. officer and Harinder Smt'h Khaisa of the Indian Foreign Service, Charge d'Affairs in the Indian Embassy at Oslo in Norway resigned their jobs.<sup>6</sup> Gurcharan Singh, a Congressman from Jalandhar, made a desperate bid to immolate himself to mark his protest against the army action in the Golden Temple and was admitted in the Civil Hospital in a precarious condition.<sup>7</sup> Four Administrative Secretaries of Punjab, Hardyal Singh, Rajinder Singh, S.S. Boparai and Gurpartap Singh Sahi expressed their anguish over the Blue Star attack and proceeded on fifteen days leave to perform "kar seva" at the Golden Temple.<sup>8</sup> Even an agnostic like Khtishwant Singh who was bitterly critical of Bhindranwale returned his Padma Bhushan.<sup>9</sup> In an interview soon after the Blue Star, with the Times, London, he expressed his anguish in the following words: "What happened in the Golden Temple is a turning point in India's modern history. It is the first time in the history of the Golden Temple that the prayers have not been heard. No Sikh of any credibility will dare to negotiate with Mrs. Gandhi now. Those like myself who were so bitterly opposed to this mad notion of Khalistan are having second thoughts."<sup>10</sup> The Guardian, London in its issue of June 28, 1984 also published the comments of Khushwant Singh on the visit of Indira Gandhi to the Golden Temple: "If she went as an inspector to see what the army had done then I have no comment. If she went as a pilgrim, however, to atone for her sins, then I am pleased she did it."

We shall now give the reactions of non-Hindus and non-Sikhs and later of the Hindus to the massacres at Amritsar and other shrines.

R.H. Greenfield of the Sunday Telegraph, London (June 10, 1984) wrote: "Mughal emperors and British governors alike tried military solutions to the Sikh problems and succeeded only in adding to the roll of martyrs cherished by the proud and prickly people. Sikhs also have long memories. They have never forgotten or forgiven the day in 1919 when General Dyer ordered his troops to open fire in the sacred city of Amritsar and Mrs. Gandhi may well have cause to rue the day she did the same."

An editorial of the Sunday Times, London (June 10, 1984) noted: "Historical parallels may be dangerous, but last week's killings in the Golden Temple and the Amritsar massacre of 1919 have some remarkable similarities. Only a few hundred yards separate the sites. The official number of dead is (so far) roughly the same. In 1919, the poet Tagore handed back his knighthood to the British. In 1984 many prominent and outraged Sikhs have turned over Indian honours to India's President (who happens to be a Sikh). In 1919 Gandhi said, "Plassey laid foundations of the British Empire, Amritsar has shaken it." One can only hope, for India's sake, that last week's slaughter, however inevitable, does not mark another beginning of another end."

Daily Telegraph, London (June 15, 1984) wrote, "The Government is now energetically insisting that the Sikh insurrection in the Panjab was a deep-seated conspiracy of a certain foreign power or when pressed, claims that some of the terrorists were trained in Pakistan. This is the first time that such a claim has been made, and it smacks of Mrs Gandhi's playing the familiar old Pakistan card for all it is worth. After all, there is an election looming on the horizon and a touch of war fever may not do any harm. But in the long run this sort of propaganda will not solve the Panjab's underlying problems."

Michael Hamlyn in the issue of June 9, 1984 of Times, London wrote ; "While the impact of Indira Gandhi's action cannot yet be measured, she can be sure of a heart-felt vote of thanks from Hindus in the north-east."

R.H. Greenfield in the issue of June 10, 1984 of the Sunday Telegraph, London wrote : "The violation of the Temple precincts and the death of their co-religionists has inflamed even the most moderate. The risk is that many of those who have so far sought no more than a fairer deal from Central Government and a modest degree of autonomy for the Panjab will feel compelled to join the radical followers of Bhindranwale in demanding a totally independent Sikh state of Khalistan."

The Guardian, London, in its issue of June 26, 1984 wrote : "In Amritsar, people have yet to recover from the trauma of the three day battle between the troops and the Sikh extremists inside the temple. Residents particularly of the area adjoining the temple, talk of nights of terror when mortar shells whined over their heads and sharpnels struck their houses. Hundreds of houses and shops surrounding the temple, the hub of the city, were reduced to rubble in the crossfire. At a conservative estimate more than 500 buildings have been destroyed. Many of those who died are believed to have been indoors when the ancient buildings collapsed under fire. Bodies are still being dug from the debris. All the bodies cannot be recovered till the area is demolished. The destruction has left nearly 30,000 people home less. Thousands gather at the site every day to survey the remains of what were their homes and shops."

The Times, London (June 21, 1984) in its editorial wrote "Future historians will almost certainly look back upon June ( 1984 as a turning point in the long and turbulent political life of Mrs Indira Gandhi. The short term gain is almost undeniable. With elections in the offing, she has already split the opposition and won the general acclaim of Hindus as Mother India, imposing a parental discipline upon those who transgress in the interests of keeping the family together. In the long-term, however, this could still be her political epitaph. The gravest outcome could be a backlash by discontented Sikhs against the Hindus in Panja which could make the analogies with Ulster look more convincing than they do at present."

The Guardian, London (June 7, 1984) in its editorial wrote "The final total of fatal casualties appeared last night seems

surpass the death toll on the last occasion when Amritsar was the scene of a mass protest against the hamfistedness of authority. General Dyer's massacre in 1919 cost 379 lives and became a milestone in Indian history. It was said that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. While it is true that Indian troops rather than British imperialism who are doing the shooting (a fact which makes the present

situation all the more tragic) it is also true that official bungling led to both confrontations and that the result of each is disastrously similar.”

Ross Benson of the Daily Express, London in the issue of June 19, 1984 wrote : “No prayers stir the silence under the golden dome of the Golden Temple. There are no priests left to intone them. They are all dead or missing. The musical instruments which at all times drummed out the tones and rhythms of worship are quiet for the first time in centuries. There are no visitors, only soldiers. The Sikhs Holy Bible is closed, covered by a blue cloth. There is no one to read its scriptures. It is like the Vatican without a Pope. At the other end of the causeway that links the Temple to the Akal Takhat, the second most sacred shrine in Sikhdom, the quiet is more permanent. Mrs Gandhi has sown the seeds for a bitter future by ordering the desecration.”

Financial Times, London in its issue of June 28, 1984 wrote ; “Government ministers are admitting that they grossly underestimated the breadth and depth of Sikh opposition and resentment that would build up after the massive army action three weeks ago. The dramatic damage to the Temple’s Akal Takhat building, the Sikhs’ second most sacred edifice is a vivid symbol of hurt Sikh pride.”

R.H. GreenSeld of the Sunday Telegraph, London, in the issue of June 10, 1984, wrote: “As the latest in along line of Sikh martyrs, the uncompromising fundamentalist who died last week in a hail of bullets may well prove a far greater threat to India’s autocratic leader than ever he did when he was alive.”

Robin Lusting in Delhi and Shyam Bhatia in Chandigarh, in a joint report to the Observer, London (June 17, 1984) noted :

“The 1984 Battle of the Golden Temple, like the 1919 Amritsar massacre (Jallianwala Bagh) marks the beginning of a new and potentially turbulent chapter in the Indian history. The chapter which opened with the 1919 massacre ended with the departure of the British. The new one is only ten days old, and no one can say how it will end.”

In another joint report Ian Jack and Mary Anne Weaver, two correspondents of the Sunday Times, London (June 10, 1984), observed, “Mrs. Gandhi has played straight into the hands of militant Sikhism. She has made Bhindranwale and his men what they always wanted to be—martyrs—and legitimised their cause among many millions of Sikhs who, hitherto, regarded Bhindranwale as a simple rural preacher “

Another British correspondent, David Graves who visited Amritsar in the third week of June reported to the Telegraph, London (June 20, 1984). “Although the golden dome of the Temple remained in tact, little else had escaped the ruinous devastation of modern warfare. In the Akai Takhat built by Hargobind and the supreme seal of the Sikhs, the stench of death still lingered. It seemed inconceivable that this was the holiest shrine of a major religion—the equivalent to the Sikhs of the Vatican and Canterbury Cathedral.”

Ian Jack and Mary Anne Weaver sent the following report to the Sunday Times, London (June 10, 1984), “The cracks in the integrity of the Indian state—what the Indian press likes to describe as fissiparous tendencies widened dramatically when the Golden Temple was invaded; and they will take a considerable time, if ever, to close again.”

Telegraph London (June 15, 1984) received the following report from David Graves, who was the first correspondent allowed to visit the Durbar Sahib after the army action : “The

Akal Takhat looks like it has been bombed. It looks like a building in Berlin after the War. Every building in the complex had been riddled with bullets and there was still a stench of death in the air.”

Michael Hamlyn in the columns of the Times, London (June 12, 1984) wrote : “Brahma Chellany of the Associated Press reported from Amritsar that dead bodies were carried away on rubbish lorries and burnt 30 at a time because of the shortage of wood. He also reported that during the week-long curfew inflicted on the city by the authorities, which was tightly enforced, six people starved to death because they were not able to get out to buy food.”

The Observer, London (June 9, 1984) wrote: “Outside the Golden Temple scores of buildings have been reduced to rubble. Flies outnumber people who stand around in mournful groups outside their damaged homes. Foreign reporters have not been allowed inside the inner walled city which has been badly damaged by shell-fire. Four of the seven bazars have been hit by shells and partially destroyed.”

John Elliot in the columns of Guardian, London (June 14, 1984) wrote : “All newspapers in Panjab and Chandigarh had to suspend operations for a period ranging from 7 to 10 days as the authorities had refused curfew passes to journalists and printing workers and withdrew those already issued.”

Our narrative has tried to highlight four aspects of the Blue Star attack. Here we shall give the details of the first aspect of the problem and shall take the other three aspects afterwards. Firstly it was the clear and triumphant culmination of a studied and planned policy to seek to give a direct death blow at the spiritual heart of the Sikhs that imparted them their entire moral strength and vigour. The supportive, related but a subsequent fact is that there was not a word of regret for the massacre enacted, by any person in the Indian Parliament or at any other public platform. This is obvious from the open appreciation of what the Sikhs considered to be the most ghastly and vicious attack. While parties pitting in the discussion on the White Paper in the Lok Sabha. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said, I am exceedingly happy that the people have praised the role of the army, the courage of the army. The army had a very difficult task to do and they did it bravely. Similar views were expressed by Rajiv Gandhi, “The army must come in for praise. The restraint and valour they have shown must be put on record.”<sup>11</sup> Home Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao defended the army action on the floor of the Lok Sabha : “Army action in the Golden Temple complex was the right action at the right time and in the right manner. There could not be a greater hour of glory for the Indian polity, democracy and secularism.”<sup>1\*</sup>

For some time a national euphoria prevailed, with the opposition parties joining the chorus of lauding the role of the army. Former Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Lok Dal Chief Chaudhary Charan Singh and other prominent Janta Party leaders like Madhu Dandvate, Ram Krishan Hegde, Raj Narain and Ravinder Verma were among those who endorsed the action of the Government in sending the army to the Golden Temple.<sup>14</sup> However Janta Party President Chandra Shekhar, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and Janta Party leader Subramaniam Swamy did not approve of the Government action.<sup>15</sup> Lok Dal President Chaudhary Charan Singh complimented the Army for its “swift yet restrained operation in flushing out terrorists from the Golden

Temple Complex.”<sup>16</sup> The Working Committee of the BJP passed a resolution hailing the army action but noted that relief was ‘not unmixed with sorrow.’<sup>17</sup> The C.P.I, and C.P.I. (M) both welcomed the army action. In fact, both the parties toed the line of Moscow which declared that there was a U. S. inspired conspiracy in the whole affair.<sup>18</sup> Madhu Dandvate expressed the view that this was the only option left with the Government.<sup>19</sup> Former Deputy Prime Minister Y. B. Chavan said, ‘I don’t think the Government had any choice other than this.’<sup>20</sup> The R.S.S. Chief Balasaheb Deoras also defended the action.<sup>21</sup> The Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal congratulated the Army for its ‘courageous and neat operation.’<sup>22</sup> The Sankaracharya of Puri Math, Shri Niraja Dev Terath Swamy also expressed satisfaction over the action.<sup>23</sup>

The Indian media became a willing ally of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to support her policy against the Sikhs.

In this context it would be important to record the findings of the Hindu authors of a book entitled ‘Army Action in Punjab’. It noted : “In order to mount an army operation against a section of our own people and to reap full electoral gains out of it, it was necessary for the Congress (I) Government to jaintain full control over, and to solicit the cooperation of, various means of mass communication. Doordarshan and Akashvani were already under the direct control of the Government and were turned into Indira Darshan and Indira Vani. The press was also handled through an indirect control. The Information and Broadcasting Minister Shri H.K.L. Bhagat had called all editors of Delhi newspapers individually one month prior to the Army action to seek assurance if they would support the Government if a ‘strong action’ was taken. And support came overwhelmingly. The Army action was hailed by almost every important newspaper in India. Many of them wrote front page editorials congratulating the Prime Minister and saluting the Indian Army for its ‘successful’ operation. For the first time newspaper organizations and forums such as the All India Newspapers\* Conference and the Press Club of India, which generally keep their concern limited to the issues related to the press, came “»ut with statements supporting the Government action. None of them bothered to question the wisdom and necessity of the Army action and to ponder over the serious repercussions it will have for the future of the nation,..It has also come as a revelation during the Punjab episode that the secularism of the press people in India is only skin deep. What was being paraded as secularism by the high priests of the media was an undisguised Hindu communal attitude, which saw a Khalistani in every Sikh and a Pakistani in every Muslim. It projected an India in which the Hindus appeared as the custodians of nationalism, and the rest of the people were either suspects or down right traitors. In fact it is the self-righteousness of the Hindu press, which projects all its communal biases as national interest, which is undermining the foundation of our nation.” All India Small and Medium Newspapers Association noted that the action against the extremists in the Golden Temple was ‘right and timely.’<sup>24</sup> Giri Lal Jain, Editor of the Times of India said that the army did a ‘superb job.’<sup>25</sup> Prem Bhatia, Editor-in-Chief of the Tribune Group of Newspapers called it ‘a neat operation.’<sup>26</sup> Bhatia went whole hog to support Indira Gandhi. When a newspaper columnist told him that Punjab had “shattered” Indira Gandhi, just as her father had been shattered by his experience of China. Bhatia wrote that this assessment was a long way from the truth. He recalled his meeting with her in her South Block Office after the army action and wrote, “She looked five years younger.”<sup>27</sup> Bhatia praised the role of Lt. Gen. R.S. Dayal in the army action and recommended him for promotion.<sup>28</sup> The Tribune office is said to have

received thousands of letters from Sikh readers criticising the editor for his anti-Sikh stance.<sup>30</sup> About 30,000 readers in sheer exasperation stopped purchasing the newspaper.”

The media could be blamed not only for maintaining a silence over the wanton killing and desecration in the Golden Temple but also for indulging in malicious propaganda and distortions regarding the incidents that took place during the army action. People were made to swallow a number of lies and half-truths. The constantly changing stance of the media left the Sikhs bewildered and shocked. According to a report Bhindranwale had committed suicide. Another report in big headlines quoting “intelligence sources” said that he had been killed by the Babbar Khalsa group.<sup>32</sup> There was still another version that he had fallen in battle. Another news regarding the recovery of hashish, opium and heroin from the Temple Complex was circulated by the Press Trust of India (PTI). A week later it was denied, saying that only a small quantity of narcotics were found from a private house near the Complex. The first news item appeared in bold headlines on the front pages of the newspapers whereas the denial was published at an insignificant place as a small news on one of the inside pages. Another news was circulated that women of low character were forced to stay in the Temple Complex. In spite of the clarification made

by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar that the women who had been taken into custody were wives, daughters and relatives of the S.G.P.C. employees living inside the Temple Complex, the insinuation was kept afloat.<sup>33</sup> When the D.G. of Punjab Police during the army action was asked about the reports given by the army that women were being forcibly kept in the Golden Temple, he said, “I haven’t met any woman who has complained. Wasn’t it the army who said that hashish and heroin were discovered? And now the report is being denied.”<sup>34</sup> The D.G.P. clarified that these reports were cooked up ones.

The Sikhs were further hurt when their holiest Shrine was depicted as a den of smugglers, thieves and rapists. The Sikhs felt that the official media was only rubbing salt on their wounds. The tragic episode was projected and celebrated as if the Indian army had achieved a great victory against an enemy. All this only led to the anguish and alienation of the Sikhs. The Hindus were encouraged to justify and even glorify the army action. In an editorial in the Tribune, Prem Bhatia wrote, “Both the Sikhs and the Hindus are still caught up in their separate group responses. The response of the former—by and large—ranges from resentment to anger and even an itch for revenge amounting to spectacular murder. The Hindu feelings—again by and large—extend from relief to rejoicing, which is gradually tapering off into a desire that the Army should not let go off its vigilance against terrorists existing or in the making. Between these two

- response extremes there does not seem to be a meeting ground at
- ‘this moment.’<sup>85</sup> Bhatia’s observations sum up the cleavage of
- perceptions between the two communities.

Those who protested against the army action were made the object of ridicule by the media and were abused and labelled as

- ‘traitors.’ For example, a cartoon in the Hindustan Times referring to the news of an Indian diplomat Harinder Singh

### •:i. who had resigned in protest against the army assault on

- Sahib, seeking asylum in Norway showed a Norway official
- another one, “He says any asylum will do—political or mental.”<sup>36</sup> This showed that there was no place of dissent in the Indian media and every newspaper had become a mouthpiece of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Even known false reports were published. The Times of India headlined on the front page a P.T.I, news saying, “Terrorists made a desperate attempt to blow up the Akal Takhat, killed a number of men, women and children, and unsuccessfully tried to escape with huge amounts of cash, jewellery and other valuables after their leaders were killed in the action on June 5. The Akal Takhat was not damaged in the Army action.”<sup>17</sup>

In an atmosphere vitiated by communal passions, a few farsighted individuals, however, could foresee the dangers facing the country. One such person was Ram Jethmalani, the Vice-President of the B.J.P. who took the lead in riling a Habeas Corpus petition on behalf of the Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal. When the party members criticised him on this account, he resigned from his post in the party as well as membership of the Lok Sabha. In his resignation letter addressed to the party President Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said, “I believe that the B.J.P. must take a lead in winning over the Sikhs and establishing Hindu-Sikh unity, whatever be the price. With me, it is a basic conviction which I cannot give up. I am quite willing to go into complete political wilderness and resign from the party.”<sup>38</sup> He said he had moved the court for Sant Longowal’s release to demonstrate that “sensible Hindus cannot forget the deep debt of gratitude which the country owes to the Sikhs of Punjab.”<sup>9</sup> In a press statement at Bombay he explained his stand saying that the situation in Punjab was “the result of criminal folly of the Government and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.”<sup>40</sup> He said that she had no genuine interest in solving the problem. He alleged that her talk of the healing touch was a mere pretence.<sup>41</sup>

Another person who demonstrated his courage and capacity to look dispassionately at the highly publicised ‘successful operation’ was Balraj Puri. He said, “Success of ‘Operation Blue Star’ covered monumental failures, failure of the state administration, failure of intelligence services, failure of the police and paramilitary forces. In reality it is a national failure in a more comprehensive sense. Failure of statesmanship. Failure of the Indian nationalism. Failure of contemporary ideologies, theories and parties. And failure of tools of analysis... The emotional boundaries of Indian nationalism have definitely shrunk after the Amritsar operation. The number of Sikhs seeking a homeland separate from India has sharply multiplied since then.”<sup>42</sup>

It will not be out of place to record the perceptions of a few army officers who examined, without fear or favour, the political and military fall out of the army action in Punjab.’ They believed that it was not advisable to apply military solution to a political problem. Making a survey of the sordid state of affairs in the context of politico-military equations in the country, Brigadier Grant observed : “Since Independence, there have been three such major failures of the political-military equation, but which still remain shrouded in secrecy. The first was the 1962 Chinese debacle in Pandit Nenu’s time; the second was the launching of Operation Blue Star in Indira Gandhi’s era; and the last was the Sri Lanka disaster during the Rajiv rule. In all the three cases, they were political fiascos of



the worst order; the military debacle was the military's acceptance of that fiasco and in its lack of moral courage to oppose it. Now that all the three Nehru family PMs directly connected with these catastrophies are no more, public enquiries should be instituted as to why these happened. Pakistan did just that after its defeat in Bangladesh in 1971, and the US Government after its withdrawal from Vietnam. If we do not do this, the military will always be blamed for any failure of operations, which may be entirely of a political make.”<sup>43</sup>

Maj. General S. N. Antia also warned against the deployment of armed forces, in aid of civil administration. He said that this 'dangerous trend may ultimately rebound on the nation.

Making an analysis of the situation prevailing in Punjab in the aftermath of the army action, he observed: “The army has so far remained apolitical as well as free from regional, communal, linguistic or religious considerations. Unfortunately, the events in Punjab have already sown the seeds of political and religious partisanship. Besides, the Punjab situation has some features which merit special notice. The State is virtually under the army's control, with the Governor and other bureaucratic functionaries looking on as formal symbols of authority. The entire police force is under the army's operational control. It has at its beck and call the provisions of the Disturbed Area Act and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, draconian laws under any democratic set-up, now buttressed by the more recent ordinances. These are most unchallengeable enactments, and the army is bound to have a major say in their implementation in Punjab and elsewhere...The army is like a tiger which is happy in its natural habitat—that of encountering aggression across our borders. But once you give the tiger an environment other than its natural one, however exciting this may be at first, it tends to become dangerous. Perhaps the crunch of the army jackboot is now being heard from a long distance and that too faintly. It is in the nation's interest, as well as the army's, that this sound is muted soon.”<sup>44</sup>

We have stated above how the Hindus by and large including the Indian media reacted to the attack. The second aspect was the depth of torturous pain which the tragedy caused to every Sikh heart, big or small, adult or child. The third aspect was the perception of public men and bodies in U.K., U.S.A. and elsewhere, many of whom had knowledge of Sikh past. Their assessment of the ominous implications of the event and the ugly shadow it would cast on the Indian polity and Hindu-Sikh relations was entirely different from the euphoria Hindu public men almost unanimously expressed over the event. Many of them, while comparing it with the far less potent event of Jallianwala Bagh, predicted its destructive results for the Indian state. They considered it to be a blunderous failure of the policies of Indira Gandhi, since they took into account the Sikh

ethos and the traditional Sikh reactions to such attacks. They seriously feared that the event could be very disturbing for the stability of the Indian state.

The fourth aspect is the contrived success of the Indian Government and the Hindu media to hide from the Indian public the truth of the Punjab problem and of the likely tragic results of the Government policies. A serious failure was represented as a great triumph of the Government, thereby completely clouding the vision of every one outside the Sikh

community to have a glimpse of the reality and the destructive results that it could create for them and the country. It is a classic case of “how in modern times a media controlled by only one community or class can create a dark curtain of disinformation to cover and conceal the truth from the public, however literate and aware it may be. It shows how, irrespective of dictatorship or democracy, a modern national state can make the public swallow any kind of Goeblian truth.

In the above context we might refer to a tragic incident. An Air India Plane (Kanishka) (Flight—182) was blown up on June 23, 1985 killing 329 people off the coast of Ireland.<sup>45</sup> The Government of India gave out that the tragedy was the handiwork of Sikh terrorists. The object of this version was that the sympathy which the Sikh cause was having abroad should be dispelled and changed into hatred for them because of their alleged callous terrorism. It is over five years since the incident happened and yet the Canadian police has not yet found any Sikh to be guilty of the heinous crime. A book called ‘Soft Target’ researched by Brian Me Andrew and Zuhair Kashmiri reporters of the two prestigious Canadian papers ‘Toronto Star’ and ‘Globe and Mail’ appeared, which has concluded that the air crash was enacted by agents of the Indian Government to “destabilise the Canadian Sikh Community” with the primary objective of discouraging them in their support for the Sikh cause in Punjab.<sup>48</sup> The entry of the book in India has been banned. In the absence of the book, it is not easy to give any judgement on the investigating work of the authors of the ‘Soft Target’. The Indian High Commissioner of Canada had described the book to be the work of a sick mind.<sup>\*7</sup> He has not given any reason whatsoever why two working journalists of two important Canadian newspapers in a free country with a free press should turn sick in their psyche. However, the events preceding Blue Star and the subsequent actions and reactions of both the Government and the media, which are in complete contrast with the reactions of experienced public men outside the country do appear to indicate that there is something quite akin to morbidity in the Indian Administrative thinking which planned the Blue Star and its cover. They celebrated their victory without realising, as many others discerned, how destructive or suicidal its results could be. Does it not indicate a sadistic or sick state of mind of the planners that the day selectively chosen for the attack was the known martyrdom day of the fifth Guru, when thousands of pilgrims flock to the Temple with devotion, who actually became the innocent victims of the massacre.

The episode, instead of curbing the Sikh political demands and the Sikh morale, invoked the consciousness of the community to be more assertive about its identity and rights. K.S. Duggal a well known Punjabi author wrote : ‘ The Operation Blue Star has carried the Golden Temple to every Sikh home the world over with its paintings and replicas.’<sup>J\*</sup> It was the late Rajinder Kaur, the parliamentarian daughter of Master Tara Singh, who is said to have remarked, “We have more and better Sikhs to-day than ever.”<sup>49</sup> She was referring to the aftermath of the Blue Star attack. “The way peasants and workers—both men and women— in Punjab flaunt their orange coloured turbans and dupattas despite the obvious association of this colour with the militants, is a clear proof of this. To-day, a large number of Sikhs who were never unduly conscious of their identity in a composite society in India are very conscious of it. This subtle shift is the doing of Blue Star and Wood Rose.”<sup>50</sup>

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## THE MASSACRE OF SIKHS

After the attack on the Golden Temple, the ferocity of the Wood Rose 'operation' in the rural Punjab continued unabated for several months. A reign of terror was let loose in the name of curbing terrorism. The army which had so far remained apolitical and aloof from regional, linguistic and communal considerations was assigned a task which really lay outside its area of operation.

As noted already, the real aim of the Government in staging the Blue Star attack and then giving a free hand to the armed forces to torture and harass simple village folks was to crush the sense of Sikh identity and to sap its source of strength. For, it helped the Government to shift the focus of public attention from the real issues to the question of law and order and thereby to camouflage its discriminatory policy against the Sikhs. But it was not realized that, in the long run, this policy was bound to prove self-defeating for the Indian state. For, the opinion openly expressed by most of the public men outside India was that the attack would ultimately rebound on the nation.

We have already stated that, till 1984, there was no problem of either subversion or separatism. Even Bhindranwale, the so-called extremist never demanded anything beyond the autonomy as envisaged in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which had been promised by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru as far back as 1946 and which the Sikhs had unanimously demanded in 1949. In May 1984, Bhindranwale's talk with Dr. Ravi, an emissary sent by the Prime Minister, showed that he was out for a compromise which would be in the interest of both India and the Sikhs. Kuldip Nayar wrote, "When the agitation began nearly two years ago, it was led by reasonable men seeking a reasonable settlement of reasonable demands, and at least three times there were prospects of agreement at a negotiating table but each time Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sabotaged

the 'agreement'."1 In his mediatory role Nayar had put forward a formula (May 1984), which according to Home Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao could form a viable basis for settlement' but at the last minute Indira Gandhi dragged her feet as she had other intentions.\* His statements clearly indicated that the Government was never inclined for a solution of the problem. Its object was certainly different from the so-called suppression of alleged subversion which had never existed. Even, the statement of the Director General of Police, Punjab, made in January, 1985, says that "there was no definite organisation behind it (Khalistan). The number of persons apprehended by police in this connection is not substantial. No definite evidence has been found so far to establish whether there is any foreign hand behind extremist activities in Punjab. Most of the arms and ammunition seized from the extremists are country made. Though there is a lot of hue and cry about training camps of extremists being held in Pakistan but there is no 'authoritative information' available with the government."8 He called extremism "only an expression of anger of some misguided persons."\* This clearly means that the aim of combating alleged subversion and separatism, the avowed object of the Blue Star and the Wood Rose 'operations' was merely a slogan, a myth. On the one hand, it misled the Indian public opinion and, on the other hand, it was used to pursue unabated the policy of repression which even the Government knew would create frustration and angry reaction. But this did enable the Government to pursue undeterred its policies of continuously draining Punjab of its natural wealth. As most outsiders apprehended, the Government policies of attack and seizure of the Golden Temple were bound to create problems of law and order and extremism instead of solving them. Hence, the question before us is whether the aim of the Government policy was ever to curb extremism under the cover of maintaining law and order or to enfeeble Punjab economically, socially and politically and to destroy the morale of the Sikhs in their struggle for constitutional and legitimate rights. It is in the above context that we shall try to assess the future course of events in the Punjab and the country.

The ugly turn of happenings proved beyond doubt that the army action instead of solving the problem, deepened the crisis still further. A patriotic community with a unique record of service and sacrifice for the nation stood alienated. What was just a domestic problem only some time back, became the focus of national and international attention. The community started becoming more and more receptive to slogans of extremism or Khalistan.

Army could never be a harbinger of peace. There were numerous instances of Sikh youth entering the camp of militants or going to Pakistan either to save their skin or to seek revenge for the death and disgrace of their near and dear ones. Summing up the Sikh mood, the Probe India observed : "Punjab seethes, it still simmers 'with anger, which frequently erupts via violence. Many Sikhs in their agony and anguish over the defiling of the temple no longer consider themselves Indians and are boiling for revenge against the Indian Government's oppression."3 After the Blue Star a large number of young Sikhs were reported to have taken a vow to avenge the desecration of the Darbar Sahib and the atrocities committed on the community during the mopping up operations, called Wood Rose. F.I.R.. No. 241, lodged at the Tughlaq Road police station after Indira Gandhi's assassination states that, 'as a result of this operation (Blue Star) religious feelings of the members of the Sikh community were greatly offended.'8 It further states that the four accused persons (Beant Singh, Satwant Singh, Kehar Singh and Balbir Singh) were

provoked to 'retaliatory action against the decision of the Government to take army action in the Golden Temple Complex.' It was after the army action that the Bhakra Canal was breached twice, in order to stop the waters from going to the non-riparian areas, and twice the planes were hijacked to Pakistan. State terrorism increased centre's problems manifold, including violence by the disgruntled youth who had been harassed by the army on mere suspicion of their being terrorists. Criticising the Government policy in the Lok Sabha, the BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee observed : "Terrorism has acquired a new dimension. The Bhakra canal has been breached twice. A plane has been hijacked even after the army action. I cannot say whether terrorism has increased or decreased in Punjab."<sup>8</sup> Similar views were expressed by Khushwant Singh. while discussing the Punjab problem on the floor of the Rajya Sabha :

"Could any action which alienated the feelings of 14 million fellow citizens who form the backbone of our defence forces, provide more than half the food for the country and live on the sensitive border facing Pakistan be ever justified ?...It is evident that despite what you have done, you have not broken the back of terrorism. It continues. There is hijacking, breaching of canal banks and looting of banks. It is also evident from the fact of the enormous security precautions that in this free country you have to provide for our President and the Prime Minister. We are living in the midst of fear. You also know that you cannot keep the army in Punjab for ever. You cannot keep a people down with bayonets for too long."<sup>9</sup> Dipankar Gupta also observed that the Blue Star attack aggravated the crisis still further : "If Operation Blue Star was designed to smash communal extremism, nothing could have been a greater failure. Secular and regional issues went into the shade and Sikh opinion consolidated as never before behind its religious ramparts."<sup>10</sup>

In August 1985, the Citizens For Democracy published, after on the spot enquiry, a report on the police atrocities in Punjab after the army action. According to its findings, "it was a terrible tale of sadistic torture, ruthless killings, fake encounters, calculated ill-treatment of women and children, and corruption and graft on a large scale. It is also a story of the bravery of a people, particularly of the women-folk, A large number of Sarpanches of village Panchyats distinguished themselves by openly siding with people against the lawless police and the army. The story also shows that although the relations between the Hindus and the Sikhs in Punjab are not as cordial as before, the basic unity between the two communities has not been disrupted. Despite all the oppression of the Sikh community^ there was no incident of a communal riot even in villages where the Hindus were in a hopeless minority. The story also shows that the Sikhs of Punjab are hardly affected by the slogan of Khalistan."<sup>11</sup> V.M. Tarakunde pointed out that, as a result of police atrocities, a form of state terrorism had developed in Punjab and that it had been counter productive as it had led to the growth of terrorist activity.<sup>11</sup>

We have mentioned that the unrest and violence, including mob attacks on public places and police stations in Punjab before the Jallianwala Bagh incident, were far greater than before the Blue Star attack and the Wood Rose, and yet the colonial Government, on the one hand, punished both General Dyer and Lt. Governor O' Dwyer, and, on the other hand, appointed the Hunter Committee associated with Indian public men, to enquire into and reveal the facts of the tragedy. But the policy of the Indian Government despite Indira Gandhi's repeated talk of 'healing touch' was that the Wood Rose was ordered and

continued, without even caring to know the truth of the killings of innocent pilgrims and wanton desecration and destruction done at the Golden Temple. Instead, the army officers in charge of the attack were rewarded and decorated. Euphemism apart, since there were lacs of people in the State who had experienced the official reaction to the massacres, in Jallianwala Bagh in 1919 and at the Golden Temple in 1984, the contrast of Government policies, approaches and motives in the two cases could not fail to register itself deep down the nerves, emotions and sensibilities of the people, especially the Sikhs. The striking irony was that the Sikhs had contributed the largest in blood for India's independence and in that struggle had suffered the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and,

- Mr. in their agitation for securing constitutional rights for Punjab, were subjected to another massacre at the Golden Temple by their own

Government. The contrast between the approach of a callous Government to the massacre and that of the Delhi Administration to a much more gruesome event in 1984 became to every Sikh and every perceptive viewer.

But it is so that, the Administration that planned the attack in 1984 and later exhibited studied callousness completely failed to anticipate what the inevitable reaction of the commonest Sikh and the community would be to the ghastly event. It is indeed unpardonable that even after the above event the men in Delhi remained blind to the feared and tragic course of future events for the country that was plain to every seasoned public man outside India and to every farsighted person in the State.

Just as the Jallianwala Bagh event became a milestone in Indian history, the June 1984 episode, too, became a milestone in the history of modern India.

The most tragic fall out of this episode was the assassination of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and its violent aftermath which became yet another blood-spattered milestone along a self-destructive path.

The attitude of suspicion and hostility against the Sikhs generated by the policies and propaganda of the Congress and the Press, especially over the past one decade had built up an anti-Sikh wave across the country. The anti-Sikh violence of February, 1984, organised in Haryana and elsewhere was simply a curtain-raiser which provided a glimpse of the plans and mind of the ruling party that had conducted a rehearsal for the bigger drama that was yet to be enacted.

Following the unfortunate assassination of the Prime Minister on October 31, 1984, the carnage in Delhi and the other parts of the country, especially in the Congress ruled states, was unprecedented both in its calculated manner and magnitude. It was illustrative of the enormous extent upto which the vendetta of the majority community could go even after the army action in the Golden Temple and the Wood Rose operation. It has been established beyond doubt that attacks on the Sikh community in Delhi and elsewhere were far from being a spontaneous expression of 'madness' and of popular 'grief and anger' at Indira Gandhi's assassination. Some very prominent Congress leaders played a decisive role in planning, instigating and executing the heinous deeds of murder, loot, rape and arson. No doubt, there was shock and grief but the large scale violence that followed was the handiwork of a determined group which was organised and inspired by



altogether different motives.

The role of the media also became a factor in inciting violence. It tried to project the assassination as that of a Hindu Prime Minister killed by two Sikh assassins. The Times of India chose to give the front page provocative headline : 'Indira Gandhi shot dead : Sikh security men pump bullets in chest, abdomen.'<sup>1</sup> Again, The Times of India in a front page editorial on November 2, 1984 wrote : "India is ablaze with hate and anger. The situation is too grim to admit of evasion and euphemism. It would be dishonest to say that the hatred is directed only or even mainly against the Akalis, the secessionists and the extremists. The exercise would also be futile. In city after city from one corner of the country to the other enraged mobs have gone and are going about systematically burning and looting Sikh properties and assaulting Sikhs without discrimination. The people know the truth. They do not depend on newspapers to tell them the facts. It will be equally dishonest to say that only anti-social elements are engaged in these activities. These elements are doubtless active but others have also joined them. Those who shouted "blood for blood" on Thursday in front of Teen Murti House New Delhi where Mrs Gandhi's body lay in state were mostly educated people and not denizens of the underworld. The anger against the Sikh community is sweeping large sections of the Indian community."

Another calculated move was to float provocative rumours that drinking water in Delhi had been poisoned by the Sikhs, that armed Sikhs were moving in the streets to attack the Hindus and that train loads of dead bodies of Hindus had arrived at the old Delhi station from Punjab. Yet another rumour was that the Sikhs were expressing jubilation over the Prime Minister's death by distributing sweets. To make the matters still worse Doordarshun allowed the broadcast of highly inflammatory slogans like Khoon-Ka-Badla-Knoon (Blood for blood), Indira Gandhi Zindabad and Hindu Hindu bhai bhai—by members from the mourning crowd at Teen Murti where the Prime Minister's dead body was kept for 'daishan'.

Two Delhi based human rights organisations, People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL) headed by Rajni Xothari, an internationally known political scientist and People's Union For Democratic Rights (PUDR) headed by Gobinda Mukhoty, a leading human rights activist, took the lead in investigating the massacres in Delhi and brought out an investigative report entitled 'Who Are The Guilty ?' The report held the important ruling party men responsible for the anti-Sikh violence. It was revealed that whereas violence broke out only in those areas which were under Congress administration, the non-Congress areas remained comparatively undisturbed.<sup>14</sup>

The Report of the PUCL pointed out that “the attacks on the members of the Sikh community in Delhi...far from being spontaneous expressions of “madness” and of popular “grief and anger’ at Mrs. Gandhi’s assassination, as made out by the authorities, were the outcome of a well-organized plan marked by acts of both deliberate commission and omission by important politicians of the Congress...and by authorities in the administration.”<sup>15</sup> The Report further claimed that ‘the police all over the city uniformly betrayed a common behavioural pattern marked by (i) a total absence from the scene, or (ii) a role of passive spectators, or (iii) direct participation or abetment in the orgy of violence against the Sikhs.’<sup>16</sup>

Another commission of inquiry known as the Citizens’ Commission headed by S. M. Sikri, the former Chief Justice of India also prepared an investigative report, ‘Delhi : 31 October to 4 November 1984—Report of the Citizens’ Commission.’ This report is based on the first hand information regarding the planned and organised anti-Sikh violence in Delhi. The other members of the Commission included Govind Narain, a former Governor, Rajeshwar Dayal, a former Foreign Secretary, Badrudin Tayabji, a former Commonwealth Secretary and T.C.A. Srinivasvardhan, a former Union Home Secretary. The findings of this report tallied with the conclusions drawn from the first report. It was stated that “the heinous act of the Prime

Minister's

assassination was seized upon as an opportune psychological pretext by those bent on exploiting the tension for political and material gains, to trigger off a massive, deliberate, planned onslaught on the life, property and honour of a comparative!" small, but easily identifiable, minority community. The violence was particularly heavy in Delhi but occurred in other parts of the country as well."17

Another report entitled 'Truth About Delhi Violence', prepared and published on behalf of the C.F.D. confirmed what the other two reports had already revealed. It came to the following four conclusions :

“(i) The violence was not spontaneous but was organised by members of Congress-I.

(ii) It was not a communal riot although it has endangered communal amity as its aftermath.

(iii) It was primarily meant to arouse passions of the majority community—Hindu Chauvinism—in order to consolidate Hindu votes in the coming election.

(iv) It was the old colonial 'divide and rule' policy setting one religion against another. The State had forgotten its role of the protector. Instead, it became the collaborator of violence against a minority."18

In the absence of an authoritative statement giving the official version of the violence, one cannot blame historians of the future, if they draw liberally on these reports for reconstructing the bloody events of 1984. P. R. Rajyopal, a retired Director-General of CRPF observed : “The contents of these documents (three reports) cannot be just wished away. Some of the citizens who have associated with these three different and independent efforts had not just been ordinary administrators of rules and laws. Some of them have been the custodians and interpreters of the nation's ideals, its hopes and aspirations. Their painstaking efforts at research and their verdict on the said events would therefore, stand on a pedestal of their own eminence and would not suffer detraction simply because they have ceased to be the pre-eminent government functionaries, they once had been. The facts that these three groups have assembled

the analysis that they would have subjected the facts to and the considered comments and conclusions they have arrived at understandably carry with them their maturity and experience. What these groups have put out in the form of reports have already become household documents of citizens generally and Sikhs in particular.”<sup>19</sup>

The attacks started simultaneously and the pattern and method of violence were identical. It has been revealed that the ruling party played a direct and decisive role in planning and organising the orgy of violence. The report, ‘Who Are The Guilty ‘!’ mentioned Minister of State (Information and Broadcasting) H.K.L. Bhagat and four Congress men Members of Parliament, Sajjan Kumar, Lalit Mohan Shastri, Dharam Das Shastri and Jagdish Tytler as having been involved in instigating and protecting the alleged criminals. The report also mentioned the names of a number of Metropolitan Councillors, members of Municipal Corporation and some police officers for abetment or participation in violence. Although, on October 31, an anxious crowd had gathered outside the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where the doctors made a desperate bid to save the Prime Minister’s life, yet there was no tension. There were a number of Sikhs in the crowd, their faces showed no fear or apprehension, although everyone knew that a Sikh had assassinated the Prime Minister. It seemed that the Sikhs nursed no suspicions against the Hindus. They did not show any traces of nervousness of any kind. The non-Sikhs in the crowd did not seem even to notice the presence of the Sikhs and took their presence there as normal.<sup>20</sup> It was reported that at about 2 P.M., two truck loads of men were brought to the AIIMS from the neighbouring villages. The trucks were followed by a tempo full of lathis and iron rods. As men dismounted from the trucks, they were instigated to raise the fiery slogan ‘Khun Ka badla Khun se lenge’ (we will

avenge blood with blood) by a Congress Corporator from the trans-Yamuna area, who was one of those who had masterminded violence in his area. The gang soon went towards Naraji Nagar, INA market, Yusuf Sarai and South Extension and began to stop all vehicles driven by the Sikhs. Even President Zail Singh’s motorcade was stoned by the unruly crowd despite security. Every Sikh who came in their way was beaten and burnt to death. Sikh shops in these areas were first looted and then burnt. Vichitra Sharma, who visited the AIIMS wrote : “It was at 6 P.M. that I learnt from the hospital staff arriving for the evening shift duty that the vehicles driven by Sikhs were being stopped at the main traffic junction outside the hospital, that they were being dragged out from buses too and beaten severely. I ran across the emergency unit of the hospital to find it packed with Sikhs with bleeding skulls and clothes torn in shreds.”<sup>21</sup>

The first organised attacks in residential areas began between 9 A.M. and 10 A.M. on November 1. Almost everywhere the attackers came with lathis, iron rods, knives, trishuls, swords, gun powder, petrol and kerosene. A few instances of the use of revolvers were also reported. ‘A fairly standard’ method of killing was adopted all over the city and in fact, in almost all the towns where violence took place. The victim would be stunned, immobilised into helplessness with lathi blows or stabbed. Kerosene, petrol or diesel would then be poured over him and he would be set on fire while he was still alive. There was hardly any case of the burn victims to have survived. One particularly heinous form of torture which was extensively and

uniformly used in Delhi was what the fiendish crowds styled as 'the bear dance.' The victims were made to wear old car or truck tyres soaked in petrol, and then subjected to burning torches. The killings were brutal. "One Sikh was pushed in a car, which was then set ablaze. Others were hit, thrown on the ground doused with kerosene and set on fire. A pregnant woman was stabbed by the rioters and some women were reported to have been raped. The reports revealed that Jats, Gujjars and other hired hoodlums came from the populous resettlement colonies and from U.P. and Haryana villages around Delhi which had been cultivated as vote banks and political bases by the Congress over the last decade or so. People from these areas were habituated to hiring out their services to the ruling party for its rallies and processions. Their gang leaders were said to be on the regular pay roll of the party. That was how the Congress leaders could, in a matter of hours, mobilise thousands of hoodlums for the orgy of violence which they had planned and executed.

It was alleged that Congress leaders were fully equipped with voters lists and ration-shop records to supply to the attackers the addresses of Sikh families in each locality. The attackers though outsiders had a clear knowledge as to which houses and shops belonged to the Sikhs. They also knew which Sikh house owners had Hindu tenants and which Hindu house owners had Sikh tenants. In such cases, instead of burning the whole house, only the Sikhs were killed and their property looted, so that no harm could come to the Hindus.

The violence indulged in by the mobs was marked by brutal atrocities of the worst kind. Women survivors told the investigative teams how their children were ripped apart, their husbands and sons made to cut off their hair, beaten up with iron rods and then burnt alive. In some areas the women were abducted. Congress leaders and their followers were seen moving in jeeps and other vehicles personally supervising the arson, looting, murders and rapes, instructing the mobs, providing kerosene and pointing out Sikh homes and shops. 'Standing on roof tops it looked as if Nadir Shah was again on rampage,'<sup>21</sup> said an eye witness. Brutalities of this kind were unworthy of a civilised nation. Sikhs were pulled out of cars, buses and trains and burnt-alive. Organised violence of this nature and on this scale had no place in free India.

Non-official investigations into the incidents have revealed that the entire state and government machinery, the Delhi administration and the police took no action to prevent violence. There is sufficient evidence that policemen and police officers "stood by and watched arson, rape, looting and murder, without making any attempt to intervene to protect citizens belonging to the Sikh minority, without attempting to dissuade the attackers to call for reinforcements or other support, or even to inform the fire brigade."<sup>24</sup>

An I.P.S. officer told a member of the investigative team that the orgy of violence had been allowed 'to teach the Sikhs a lesson.'<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's own statement on this occasion made at a Boat Club rally on November 19 was an implicit justification of violence : 'When a big tree is uprooted, the earth is bound to shake'. Years of vicious propaganda in media and otherwise had generated among the Hindus a feeling of suspicion and hostility against the Sikhs. Though the assaults on the Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere could not be described as a spontaneous mass upsurge against the Sikhs, 'the Hindu public, by and large, appeared to be in a mood to sanction such

assaults.<sup>26</sup> However, there were a few instances of Hindu neighbours coming to the rescue of the Sikhs, even after facing grave risks to their own lives.

On October 31, when tension had just started building up with the crowd of miscreants shouting inflammatory slogans and brandishing weapons, Delhi Administration was warned of the impending trouble but it failed to take up the necessary steps. On November 1, when almost the entire Delhi was aflame, an opposition member of the Parliament rang up Shiv Shankar, a Minister in Rajiv Gandhi's new cabinet and the Home Minister P. V. Narsimha Rao to inform them about the situation in the city and the need for army action. He was reportedly assured by the Ministers that the army was about to be called and that curfew would be imposed soon.<sup>87</sup> But, despite the city being aflame, there were no signs of either curfew or army. On the afternoon of November 1, when several citizens including some retired senior Government officers approached President Zail

the massacre of sikhs

Singh and apprised him of the situation, he was reported to have said that the Government was still considering whether to call out the army, Here it is significant to note that placed in an identical situation President R. Venkaramau, who hails from Tamil Nadu did not allow any harm to come to a single Tamilian, following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination by the LTTE on May 21, 1991.

It was unfortunate that acts of arson, loot and murder were taking place right in front of the police pickets. There were instances of the police coming to disarm Sikhs who tried to resist attackers, using whatever arms they had. The police deprived them of their right to self-defence. More Sikhs died as a consequence of this type of police intervention than they would have, had the police just kept away. There were reports of Sikhs having gone to seek help from the police but instead of help they were handed over to the mobs. An eyewitness account revealed that a Sikh who was being pursued by a mob attempted to save his life by climbing into a police jeep but was thrown by the police to the attacking mob and was killed on the spot.<sup>88</sup> On November 2, crowds of hooligans which had reportedly multiplied in numbers and looked more defiant, were seen roaming all over, killing, burning, looting and raping at will. Although the newspapers that day announced three official measures namely, the clamping of an indefinite curfew, shoot-at-sight orders, and the deployment of army from the afternoon (2 P.M.) of the previous day, the Sikhs were intrigued to find that the reports were misleading. Even the opposition parties failed to rise to the occasion. On November 3, when following the cai-nage at Trilokpuri, some concerned people approached the Janata Parly leader Chandra Shekhar to lead them in a deputation to Teen Murti and appeal to the Piime Minister for help, he is reported to have expressed his inability to do so : 'I cannot do it. I don't want to be accused of ruining the late Prime Minister's funeral.'<sup>9</sup>

Orgy of loot and plunder, murder and mayhem let loose on the Sikhs continued with full fury with the connivance of the

Administration till November 4. Even M. J. Akbar, known for his close links with the Congress observed : "Sikhs were sought out and burned to death. Children were killed, shops looted, cars burnt, markets destroyed, houses gutted. Trains were

stopped and Sikhs were picked out and murdered.”<sup>30</sup> Later some policemen were said to have told the miscreants, ‘We gave you 36 hours. Had we given the Sikhs that amount of time they would have killed every Hindu’. November 2 and 3 were the bloodiest days in the history of Delhi. The Sikh population of whole colonies was wiped out. Thousands were killed in the senseless massacre. There was no count. Even the Sikhs with Congress affiliations were not spared. Charanjit Singh, a Congress M.P. from Delhi suffered a loss of Rupees ten crores when his Pure Drinks factories were burnt down. Narrating his experience he said, “I telephoned the Lt. Governor and the police several times, telling them that mobs were burning our factories. I was told that the force would be arriving but it never happened.”<sup>31</sup> Even when orders were issued to send in the army “there seems to have been a deliberate plan to keep the army ineffective until the murderers and arsonists had done their job.”<sup>32</sup> Even though the army jawans had moved into most parts of Delhi by the evening of November 3, yet the deployment reached full strength only after the troops and vehicles reserved for the funeral were made available for controlling the communal violence.

The myth that the army was ‘above politics’ was shattered. Around 300 Sikh officers and men in uniform were done to death in the presence of non-Sikh soldiers, who stood as silent spectators.<sup>33</sup> A decision was taken to shift or transfer all Sikh personnel employed at sensitive posts. All Sikh police officials from the rank of D.I.G. downwards were ordered either not to come on duty or disarmed soon after the assassination. They were not trusted or permitted to take part either in the funeral rituals or the post-assassination restoration of peace. As a result of the withdrawal of the Sikh policemen and army jawans and officers from duty, murderers, looters and arsonists could act with impunity and greater assurance that no one would check them.

According to a report 117 Sikhs died in U.P. at Ghaziabad and Lucknow, while 60 died in Haryana at Panipat, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Rewari and Sonapat. Two hundred deaths were reported from Bihar at Bokaro, Bhagalpur, Daltaganj, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Muzzafarpur, Patna, Ranchi and Jamshedpur. Eighty seven Sikhs were killed in Madhya Pradesh at Ratlam, Rewa, Sagar, Satna, Sahore, Seoni, Shandol, Shajapur, Shivpuri, Sidhi, Surguja, Tikagarh, Ujjain, Vidisha, West Nimar, Balaghat, Bestal, Betul, Bhind, Bhopal, Bilaspur, Chhatarpur, Chindwara, Demoh, Dewas, Dhar, Rajgarh and Rajnandgaon.<sup>31</sup> While the Government admitted only 65 deaths in anti-Sikh violence at Kanpur, PUCL report gave the names and addresses of more than double this number.<sup>85</sup> According to official figures in Haryana 19 Gurdwaras were burnt and 115 houses destroyed. In addition, 134 shops and 42 factories were burnt. Fifty nine vehicles were also set on fire. The total loss, according to the State Government’s estimate, has been Rs. 132 crores, while the police recovered property worth Rs. 43.51 lacs from the rioters. However, according to unofficial sources— ‘certain intelligence agencies confirmed it—the number of Sikhs killed in Haryana was more than 100.’<sup>8</sup>

The striking similarities in the manner in which violence was pursued against the Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere was a clear indication of the co-ordination carried out at the highest levels of the ruling party. India To-day wrote: “Three days of violence and loot and murder left the national capital dazed, reeling from an unprecedented holocaust. The pattern was nauseatingly repeated everywhere : spontaneous arson and



destruction at first taken over by criminally led hoodlums who killed Sikhs, looted or burnt their homes and properties while the police twiddled their thumbs.”<sup>87</sup>

However, it was not possible for individuals to count the number of persons killed, as the span of the area was too large and it was an organised violence by the Congress from the highest levels. Most conservative estimate of the Sikhs killed is some where between ten to twenty thousand and those wounded nearly one lac.<sup>88</sup> Property of thousands of crores of the Sikhs

was either burnt or looted. An obnoxious feature of this occasion was that “for the first time in the history of mob violence in India, a systematic attack was made on places of worship. Of about 450 Gurdwaras in Delhi, some three quarters were reported to have been damaged or destroyed.”<sup>39</sup> Nearly 100 schools of Sikhs were burnt down or badly damaged. More than 60,000 Sikhs were rendered homeless in Delhi alone and became refugees in their own country. They had to seek shelter in the Gurdwaras or refugee camps, mostly run by some volunteer organisations. For some the stigma of being a refugee was used for a second time in their life. The scene of the refugee camps was reminiscent of the Partition days. “We started from the foot paths after 1947, now we get back to it in our old age,” wept an old couple; they had been deprived of all their belongings and also a young son.<sup>40</sup> There were some reports of assaults on the volunteers who started to help the victims long before the government did. There were reports that some Congress politicians even filed police reports against a few such volunteers.<sup>41</sup>

Following large scale violence in Delhi, the Union Government, in a swift and sudden move announced the appointment of M.M.K. Wali, till then the Secretary in the Home Ministry, as the Lt. Governor of Delhi, in place of P. G. Gvai who proceeded on leave. The Administration started a massive cover up operation. Official refugee camps were closed down prematurely. From most of them inmates were dispersed forcibly. When a member of the Citizens’ Commission asked the refugees how the camps were ‘forcibly closed, they replied that water supply had been cut off.’<sup>42</sup> The army had clear instructions not to allow any one to photograph the camps.<sup>43</sup> Ramesh Thapar observed : “The evidence of the holocaust was sought to be scattered. A battered people were sent back despite their fears and traumas. And the new Lt. Governor of Delhi M.M.K. Wali, the same who presided over a paralysed Union Home Ministry, spent his active hours minimising what had happened and criticising ‘exaggerated accounts’.<sup>44</sup> George Mathew noted, “Wali’s attitude to the victims and those sections of the society which responded to the miserable

plight of the victims was one of indifference if not hostility.”<sup>45</sup> It was reported that hundreds of Sikh children rendered orphans in the violence were sent to Christian missionary orphanage in Calcutta run by Mother Teresa, The step was a part of the cover up operation to destroy all evidence of the bloody carnage. Jathedar Rachhpal Singh, chief of the so-called Master Tara Singh Akali Dal, known for his pro-Congress stance was called to execute the plan. The Sikhs living abroad sent large quantities of food, clothing and medical aid for the afflicted people but on account of the apathy and callousness of the Administration, these could not be delivered in time.

The situation called for imagination and sympathy but unfortunately the Administration tried to minimise the gravity of the situation. Even President Zail Singh, in his presidential address, instead of indicting the Administration for its dereliction of duty, said, 'stern and effective action was taken to control the situation within the shortest possible time'.<sup>46</sup> The remarks evoked strong protest from Knushwant Singh, who himself had to leave his home and seek shelter elsewhere in order to save his life.<sup>47</sup> As a result of the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi about 6000 families comprising 28000 members migrated to Punjab in the month of November, 1984. Many Sikhs from other parts of India also left their hearths and homes in search of safety and migrated to Punjab. It is estimated that a total of about 50,000 Sikhs migrated to Punjab following the anti-Sikh violence all over the country. The relief centres set up by the SGPC provided assistance to over 1800 families in Amritsar and over 5460 families in Ludhiana,<sup>48</sup>

The Sikhs were bitterly disappointed when they heard that the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was still raising the accusing finger at the Sikhs and talking of subversion by the outside forces. For, as the facts were, the real danger was from his own policy and from his own Administration. On November 7, when a deputation of Namdharis met him to condole Indira Gandhi's death, Rajiv Gandhi was reported to have told them that "subversive

forces, after having failed in Punjab, made Delhi their target and organised violence in which people belonging to various communities had suffered. We have to be extra cautious about such elements and the Sikh community particularly will have to take a bold stand to crush such forces."<sup>49</sup> According to another report (UNI) Rajiv Gandhi said that extremist elements had assassinated Indira Gandhi and then attempted widespread communal violence to create disorder and division in the country.<sup>50</sup> This explanation is, indeed, so irrelevant and unconvincing that it is almost a reluctant admission of Government's own responsibility. With the national elections looming large on the horizon, it also suited Rajiv Gandhi to appeal to the communal sentiments of the Hindu voters. Obviously, his statements failed to carry conviction with anyone, much less inspire confidence among the Sikhs. The impartial observers did not fail to note that the anti-Sikh violence was manipulated by the Congress as a part of its political functioning. P.L. Mehta, a former Inspector General of Police in Delhi observed : "The inactivity of the police during the holocaust in Delhi following the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi could not have taken place without political signals... The very fact that a judicial enquiry has not been ordered is a pointer."<sup>51</sup> Ramesh Thapar's comments in this context are worth noting : "Even those who are cynically unconcerned about that ghastly event should be, for, as one experienced observer of the collapse of the police force put it, "To-day it is the Sikhs. To-morrow, it will be looting irrespective of community."<sup>52</sup>

While the authorities turned a blind eye to the massacres of the Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere, a news black out was imposed so that reports about atrocities perpetrated on the Sikhs may not reach Punjab. The press in Chandigarh had been put under strict censorship for three days. Night curfew was clamped in Amritsar and Jalandhar. Police continued intensive patrolling and picketing not only in the cities of Punjab but also in the rural areas. Ironically, the situation in Delhi, which required prompt action,

was allowed to go from bad to worse, with no curfew and no police patrolling for three days. Bine Star attack on Darbar Sahib too

was undertaken in the midst of a strict news black out. It is well known that on both the occasions, violence was not allowed to erupt in Punjab due to heavy presence of troops and strict vigilance \* of the authorities. Obviously, the Government had two different sets of policies, one to deal with the Sikhs and the other to deal with the rest of the Indians. No wonder, the Sikhs began to ask themselves : 'Do Indians still regard us as one of them ? No Congress leader condemned the carnage in Delhi and other parts of the country. Nor did the Parliament care to express its regret over the massacre or sympathy with the victims. Even a demand for an enquiry into the violence was turned down by Rajiv Gandhi on the plea that 'it would not be in the interests of the Sikhs'. In December, 1984, the then Additional Commissioner of Police, Ved Marwah, was asked to hold an independent enquiry into the conduct of the police. But before he could complete his investigation, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, Chander Parkash, obtained a stay from the Delhi High Court on the same ground on which the Jain—Banerjee Committee had been negated. Thus, due to the sabotage by the Congress, the men guilty of the anti-Sikh massacres could not be punished. Credible reports published by PUCL, PU DR, CFD and Citizens' Commission were also dismissed by the Government as these exposed the role of the Administration and the ruling party in instigating, aiding and abetting terrorism against the Sikhs.

The Organisations which conducted investigations into the mindless violence consisted of former judges, senior advocates, journalists and former civil servants with impeccable record of service. Their aim was not any political gain. All of them were men of high personal integrity, great competence and unquestionable reputation. As responsible citizens, they reflected genuine concern with the mindless terrorism perpetrated on a minority community. P.R. Rajgopri, a retired Director General of CRPF observed : "The most generous interpretation that can be put on the government's reluctance to move the matter of a judicial probe into the sad events, after a lapse of nearly four months, may be that it had already come to the conclusion that with regard to these

riots, the Delhi administration has been guilty of something infinitely worse than mere incompetence and that a fresh judicial probe is not likely to say anything more than restating the conclusions already arrived at the government level. Even such a stand would amount to a smooth evasion of a harsh reality. What is worse and far more injurious to the health of the nation in the long run is the suspicion and distrust with which an average Sikh citizen views the motives of the government in not ordering a judicial probe. Going through the reports (PUCL, PUDR, CFD and Citizens' Commission) it is difficult to resist the conclusion that during those fateful days, murder had become meaningless, deaths were reduced to mere statistics, and the mind could not have grasped the enormity of the cruelty indulged in by a section of the people."5' It was a ruthless massacre, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived and no human tongue can adequately tell. Report of the Citizens' Commission gave a detailed account of the brutalities inflicted on the innocent victims. Thousands were roasted alive. Before being burnt, some had their eyes

gouged out. Sometimes, when a burning man asked for water, a man urinated on his mouth

The Government dragged its feet in regard to the appointment of an enquiry as it was a clear case in which its culpability could not possibly remain uncensured. As A.G. Noorani noted, "The Government of India's wilful refusal to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the Delhi pogroms for six months despite the fact that specific charges had been levelled against leading members of the ruling party was a breach of an established tradition and an abject confession of failure (or guilt ?) by the Government of India."<sup>54</sup> The Government was no doubt caught in a dilemma of its own creation and followed a policy of alibis and evasion. But the issue continued to pose a big challenge to the Government's moral authority. Opposition leaders, social organisations, human rights groups and important public men and citizens of Delhi, time and again, demanded that the Government should prove its bona fides and justify its stand in regard to the charges of political and administrative collusion in the ghastly violence.

The press, by and large, toed the line of the Government and was reluctant to take up the demand for a judicial probe. Even a local newspaper like the Tribune could not feel the pulse of the people. Prem Bhatia gave his tacit support to the line chosen by the Prime Minister in regard to the appointment of a judicial Commission. However, he welcomed the timely institution of a judicial enquiry into the assassination of Indira Gandhi and praised Rajiv Gandhi for not wasting any time in appointing a commission for this purpose. In regard to the ordering of an enquiry into the anti-Sikh violence his ambivalent attitude was reflected in an editorial: "The Prime Minister had to take a decision after balancing the advantages and disadvantages of ordering an enquiry which would have to be at the level of a High Court or a Supreme Court Judge, serving or retired. The course he had chosen shows that he would rather let sleeping dogs lie than take the risk of stoking up communal hatred and arousing afresh the anger against the Sikh community that followed the killing of Indira Gandhi."<sup>55</sup> The Tribune did not, for eight full days, say a word about the "innocence" of victims. It wrote between November 1 and November 7 editorials daily, focussing on the assassination and its aftermath but not once did the newspaper say that the victims were innocent. On the other hand, Prem Bhatia, in his writings emphasised the "naturalness" of the anti-Sikh violence. He wrote: "That the people of India should be gravely upset over the loss of a national leader is not difficult to understand. The public sense of outrage was only to be expected."<sup>56</sup> In yet another editorial Bhatia observed: "The mourning over Indira Gandhi's death, especially because of the circumstances in which her life was ended, represents the deep sorrow of the people of India. The popular reactions over the tragedy are, therefore, understandable."<sup>57</sup> A disaster of this magnitude should have evoked from the paper a more rational response or an appeal in the form of fund raising for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims and forceful pleas for the punishment of the guilty.

It is significant to note that whereas the Thakkar Commission to go into the assassination of Indira Gandhi was instituted swiftly on November 5, 1984, it was only on April 25, 1985, six months after the tragic events, that the Rajiv Gandhi government announced its

decision to set up a one-member Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of Inquiry. It was the mounting public pressure that ultimately compelled the Government to take the decision. The terms of reference of the Mishra Commission were as follows : “To enquire into the allegations in regard to incidents of organised violence which took place in Delhi following the assassination of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and to recommend measures which may be adopted for preventing the recurrence of such incidents.”<sup>59</sup>

These terms of reference were unlike the terms of reference given to similar commissions of enquiry. In all those cases, the accent was on trying to unearth the facts, to enquire into “the causes and course of the disturbance which took place.”<sup>80</sup> The terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry to go into Indira Gandhi’s assassination explicitly required Mr. Justice M.M.P. Thakkar to answer the query ‘whether any person or persons were planning the assassination and whether there was any conspiracy

- this behalf and if so, all its ramifications’. Why did not the Government set up a Commission to secure a clear verdict on the conspiracy theory as regards the massacres of the Sikhs, in spite of a clear evidence in this regard collected by highly responsible investigating bodies?

The Mishra Commission’s efforts were severely handicapped by the terms of reference set for it. In a departure from the precedent set by similar inquiries in the past, the Commission was asked to probe the causes and course of the events, the adequacy of measures to control them and the identity of those responsible «- perpetrating the crimes. In other words, he who alleges anything, would have to prove his case. The job of the judge would be to enquire but to arbitrate. Thus the terms of reference of the Commission were curtailed and changed in so far as the burden of the proof lay upon the individual, who deposed in contrast to other commissions which were directed to inquire into the causes and course of events. Originally the Mishra inquiry was to be limited to Delhi. However, as a result of the Rajiv-Longowal Accord (1985), the Commission’s jurisdiction was extended to Kanpur and Bokaro.<sup>61</sup> For the probe in Kanpur, the terms of reference were amended so as not to inquire into allegations, but to inquire into the disturbances as such.<sup>82</sup> It was rather strange that the same Commission should have been given different guidelines to inquire into the same problem in two different cities. Such an obfuscating approach by the Government gave the public reason to doubt whether the authorities were trying to facilitate the Commission’s work or to cloud and to confuse Justice Mishra’s efforts.

It was reported that out of a total of about 3000 affidavits which were filed, only 600—700 were from those who were directly affected by the violence.”<sup>3</sup> A number of affidavits filed by the Sikhs carried allegations against two Central Ministers H.K.L. Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler and many other Congress leaders. Many affidavits were also filed by non-Sikhs in defence of these leaders. The job of the Commission was only to cross-check the evidence coming in through affidavits and not to go out in search of fresh, hitherto unreported, clues and evidence. There were reports that the police tried to pressurise the complainants not to file affidavits against erring officers and politicians who had aided and abetted the killings. Those who lodged their complaints with the Commission were also harassed and intimidated. Justice Mishra found himself on the horns of a dilemma: should he cave in to partisan considerations for political expediency in the “national interest”<sup>6\*</sup> or go ahead in search of truth, however unpalatable it might

be. Thus the task of the Commission was foredoomed to failure. Its outcome was not going to be anything that could carry conviction or inspire confidence.

The Mishra Commission report was submitted on February 23, 1987. It indicted the Delhi police. But, as was the objective

of the doctored terms of reference of the Commission, it failed to pronounce any positive finding about organisation of the hoodlums. Obviously, the victims of the violence could only describe their plight and could have no clue as to how the groups had been organised to attack them. Circumstances and the uniform manner of attack could only be the base for inferring organisation of the attacks. Hence the negative findings of the Commission, even though it could not avoid saying that “19 Congress workers were involved in the attacks.”<sup>65</sup> It noted that there was abundant evidence before the Commission that the police on the whole did not behave properly and failed to act as a professional force. Even the emergency telephone number 100, which should result in immediate police assistance, did not respond at all during the period. It deplored the behaviour of most policemen in the sense that they allowed people to be killed, houses to be burnt, property to be looted, ladies to be dragged and molested. It made critical references to several police officers including the then Commissioner of police, Subhash Tandon, former additional Commissioner of Delhi range, Hukam Chand Jatav, former DCP of East Delhi Sewa Dass and the former South Delhi DCP Chander Parkash. The Commission blamed the Lt. Governor for delaying the decision to call out the army.

The Commission recommended the setting up of two more committees—one committee to investigate the role of the police, and another to inquire whether the cases registered after the violence had been properly investigated. The Delhi Administration appointed Dilip Kapoor - Kusum Lata Mittal Committee to probe the role of the police. The two members radically differed in their approach which caused dissensions at the very outset.

Kapoor did not begin the work in the right earnest and could not accomplish the allotted task. He submitted a lop sided report giving a historical perspective of major riots the world over. He could not expressly investigate the police role in the 1984 violence. Kusum Lata Mittal, a retired Secretary to the Government of India submitted a more detailed report

She indicted 72 police officials and recommended their dismissal, without an inquiry, under Article 311 (2) of the Constitution. It was felt that despite its apparent authenticity, there was a glaring omission in the Mittal report—the then Commissioner of Police Subash Tandon was not indicted, although he was the man in charge then. People felt that “this could be deliberate omission, for indicting him would lead the inquiry upwards to the role of the politicians themselves.”<sup>86</sup> Mittal completed her report, but it was returned by the Delhi Administration which asked for a joint report. However, this Committee was again revived during the V. P. Singh Government on January 23, 1990. The Committee submitted its report in November, 1990, but no action was taken on it. According to a report, of the seven senior officers indicted by the Mittal report four were already promoted. Heading the list was H. C. Jatav, the erstwhile Additional Commissioner (Delhi range) during the violence, in charge of east, north and central Delhi. He was transferred to Tripura on promotion as Inspector General in 1985. Five years later, in December 1990, he was again promoted, this time to Commandant General—Home Guards.<sup>87</sup> Subash Tandoa who totally

escaped all wind of blame enjoyed a six year extension and subsequently served in the Rajasthan Public Service Commission. Even the indicted officials knew that they would in all probability escape punishment. An indicted official was reported to have said, "The Government is anxious to serve charge sheets—with serving them they will be able to wash their hands of the episode. Their concern is publicity, not what happens later."<sup>68</sup> This belief was borne out by the fact that three Inspectors charge—sheeted by the disciplinary police authority were able to obtain stay orders from the Central Administrative Tribunal within a day after they were issued. A senior police officer remarked, "Every day we dismiss constables on grounds of corruption and other petty offences, here they are getting stays for watching people burn in front of them."<sup>69</sup> Thus the police officials directly or indirectly involved in the carnage were allowed to go scot free. Paradoxically, many were promoted rather than punished.

An anti-Sikh bias also crept into the functioning and recruitment of the Delhi police. It was reported that the percentage of Sikhs in the Delhi police, which was earlier 10 per cent was now reduced to less than 3 per cent.<sup>70</sup> The downward trend was most noticeable in 1987, when just nine Sikh constables were recruited in a batch of 2000.<sup>71</sup> A senior police officer is said to have remarked, "You are always told that there is danger to VIP security from subversion within the force. So if you can't post Sikhs anywhere, it is pointless to recruit them." Delhi police's unspoken anti-Sikh bias is aggravating matters in perpetrating more and more injustice to the community. As one police officer remarked, "After Natburam Qjrodse's assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, were all Marathas condemned? Why should the Sikh community carry the collective burden of guilt? On those grounds, Tamils too should be distrusted. That will break up the whole of India."<sup>71</sup> Sunil Sethi observed that the results of the carnage were also visible in more mundane matters like the difficulties of a Sikh family seeking temporary accommodation in Delhi. Those who are unwilling to welcome Sikh tenants may not be anti-Sikh but 'just fearful that their houses may not be burnt down in some dreadful new burst of politically organised violence.'<sup>73</sup>

The Government's ambivalent attitude in punishing one set of people and absolving the other could be seen in its true colours, when on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1985, bomb blasts took place in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and (J.P., resulting in 82 deaths.<sup>74</sup> It was presumed that the blasts were the handiwork of the Sikh militants as a part of the retaliation to the November 1984 carnage. On mere suspicion, without ascertaining the facts and without identifying the culprits, the police arrested hundreds of Sikh youth and subjected them to extreme tortures, leading to death in many cases. A. G. Noorani observed that 'amongst other things, one lesson that they (police) wanted to drive home was that any one who dared to depose against them (due to their role in November violence) would have to face the consequences.'<sup>75</sup>

A repressive piece of legislation known as the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Bill was the direct offshoot of the May incidents. The bureaucrats in Punjab recommended that the Akali leaders should be re-arrested.<sup>78</sup> Many dispassionate observers took note of this ambivalence. Ramesh Thapar noted: "When hundreds of Sikh youth are rounded up on suspicion of being terrorists, what prevents an organised effort to get at the hoodlums of 1984? They still flourish in the mohallahs with police and political protection. Ask the widows and children who survived."<sup>79</sup>

The savage violence against the Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of India was a culmination of the policy of terror to cow-down the minorities into submission. It was tragic that politics of the Congress descended to the lowest level of hooliganism. The year 1984 marked the point of no return for the Sikhs.

Conclusion : The November massacres of the Sikhs rendered a fatal blow to the secular and democratic professions of the Congress. The party burnt all bridges with the Sikhs. As the massacres took place mostly in the Congress ruled states, the party stood exposed in its true colours. The reports of the investigative Committee headed by the former Chief Justice of India and other committees clearly revealed the connivance of party leaders in organising violence. Communal polarisation reached its peak. M.J. Akbar observed : “Another chapter in the history of Punjab had come to an end. But the question was, what twist would the story now take ? The relationship between the Sikhs and the Hindus had been fundamentally altered : the brotherhood was over.”<sup>78</sup> The carnage was without any parallel in the history of post-Independence India. It is noteworthy that at the time of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Maharashtrians were not attacked nor were the Tamilians killed after the murder of Rajiv Gandhi.

As explained earlier, the Centre continued to discriminate against the Sikhs, who naturally protested and even conducted peaceful agitations for giving them rights which had been granted to other regions and states. The Centre backed by the media continued to misrepresent these demands as separatist, even though they were just, legitimate and constitutional. So much so that each time the Akali Dal pressed for its demands, Indira Gandhi could not conceal her bias and would say, time and again, as to what would happen to the Sikhs in the rest of the country. Such warnings were not issued when other linguistic or regional states were demanded or when Rajmannar Report was adopted by the Tamil Nadu Assembly. The foregoing analysis proves that just as there was hardly any excuse for the army attack on the Darbar Sahib on the martyrdom day of the fifth Guru and the killing of thousands of innocent pilgrims, there were even lesser grounds for the massacre of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere in the wake of the Prime Minister’s assassination.

Nothing could be more preposterous but revelatory of the mind of the majority community than the reluctance of the Administration to condemn or regret it in Parliament or even to hold an enquiry. It is indeed shocking that, during the preceding eight years, four successive Governments have made no efforts to bring to book the guilty who had planned and executed the brutal massacre of thousands of peaceful and innocent citizens. unprecedented in the history of the civilised world. A dispassionate observer cannot fail to see what is at the back of the current turmoil in Punjab. The tragic twists and turns given to the problem on account of the suicidal policies of the Government leave no doubt that, like the attack on the Golden Temple, the carnage in Delhi and elsewhere was aimed at breaking the spirits of the Sikhs and thereby to stop them from struggling for their constitutional rights. Such an attitude forebodes nothing but grave risk for the country’s destiny. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer has rightly said that the crying need of the hour is justice, social, economic and political and ‘not blood, toil, tears and sweat.’<sup>79</sup>

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## A DEED OF SURRENDER

The year 1984 will go down in the history of post-Independence India as one of the most eventful years, when because of the narrowmindedness of its leaders, the country suffered two major self-inflicted wounds. The traumatic events of the year created deep feelings of hurt, humiliation and alienation in the Sikh community. Indira Gandhi's son and successor Rajiv Gandhi seemed to be interested only in keeping the pot of communal hysteria boiling. The repression against the Sikhs continued. Court martial proceedings against the Sikh soldiers who had reacted against the Blue Star attack were started and special Acts and procedures which denied elementary human rights of fair trial were introduced to harass and arrest the Sikhs on the suspicion of their being the sympathisers of militants. Thousands of Sikhs, reduced to destitution in the anti-Sikh violence, found no succour and continued to migrate to Punjab.

The Blue Star and the Wood Rose shifted almost completely the loyalty and sympathy of the Sikh masses to the youth and the members of the Bhindranwale group. The view was confirmed that the Longowal group was never serious to pursue Sikh demands. The Akali leaders, although they were no longer the sole leaders of the Sikh masses, continued to be in jails. The All India Sikh Students Federation (A.I.S.S.F.) was declared illegal. An atmosphere of confrontation, killings and counter-killings, offensive against the militants, including fake encounters, continued without any let up. Hundreds of Sikhs arrested indiscriminately during the course of the Blue Star attack continued to languish in jails without any specific charges against them. Three hundred and sixty Sikhs were taken to Jodhpur jail and were held as hostages. The Congress leaders and the media continued to indulge in propaganda against the Sikhs to justify the attack.

The Blue Star and the Wood Rose were wanton steps of oppression and terrorisation of the Sikh masses in Punjab. The November carnage, involving the persecution and penury of

thousands of homeless, unsheltered Sikh families, sought to demoralise the community as a whole, especially those living outside Punjab. Whereas the Sikhs in Punjab stood in constant fear of the bayonet and the bullet of the police, the Sikhs outside the State remained under constant threat of being made the victims of communal attacks, murder and loot. Consequently, innumerable young members of the community incapable of shifting their hearths and homes, their jobs or place of work, shaved off their beards and hair, the visible symbols of their identity. Still the leaders of the community and all those who could speak either for the Sikh constitutional rights or for those in jail were kept in detention. The attempt was to create the peace of the grave. Although the surface activity for the rights of Punjab for which the Dharam Yudh Morcha had been launched became virtually impossible, yet there was no lull in the underground activity of the militants. India To-day observed : "A Government which naively believed that Operation Blue Star had broken the back of Sikh extremism, now realises it is still as potent a threat."<sup>1</sup> Union Home Secretary R. D. Pradhan admitted that "terrorism is here to stay as a serious problem and we have to learn to live with it. They are now better trained, better equipped and better motivated."<sup>2</sup> Some new militant organisations appeared on the scene.<sup>3</sup> The

demand for Khalistan became increasingly voiced. Viewed in this light, alienation of the Sikhs was virtually complete.

In December, 1984, Rajiv Gandhi announced elections to the parliament and the state legislatures, while Punjab, as before, continued to be governed directly by the Centre. Firmness in dealing with Punjab was publicised as a major achievement of the Congress party. In fact, Punjab problem was the chief issue around which the entire propaganda machinery of the party was geared. An unabashed campaign was launched to malign and dub the Sikhs as unpatriotic. Rajiv Gandhi's electoral rhetoric was focussed on the threat to the nation's unity and integrity posed by the Sikhs, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in particular. He condemned the Resolution as a religiously inspired secessionist document.<sup>4</sup> He won a landslide victory, bagging 402 out of the

SIS contested seats.<sup>5</sup> The Sikh community stood isolated and thrown out. In fact, the national mainstream was reduced to nothing but a Hindu mainstream.

As the sympathy wave and the Sikh card had yielded an unprecedented electoral success, the young Prime Minister did not choose to deviate from the anti-Punjab path followed by his mother. He himself had been a votary of the army action. The November massacre and his refusal to hold an enquiry into it too had been links in the same chain.

In the wake of a leadership vacuum that followed the death of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who had captured the centre-stage of Sikh politics, a fluid situation prevailed in the State. Bhindranwale had won popular support because of what the masses considered to be his courage, commitment and sincerity. He had won appreciation for his determination to defend the Darbar Sahib and die in the process. In fact, it was the failure of persons like Longowal to live upto their valourous claims that the Army would enter the Darbar Sahib over their dead bodies<sup>8</sup> that punctured the bubble of their integrity and leadership. In the absence of a representative leadership, resentment and anger kept simmering among the Sikhs without finding any coherent and articulate expression. At this stage all moves and manoeuvres of the Government were aimed at devising ways and means to defuse and divert the deep frustration and a sense of anger or revolt against the Government.

Behind-the-scene efforts were made to revive the Akali leadership which had lost its ground and had failed to prove its bonafides during the army action.<sup>7</sup> Longowal and other leaders were accused of breaking their vows taken at the Akal Takhat to die for the cause of the Dharam Yudh Morcha. Tohra and Badal also sailed in the same boat. They faced the stigma of having shirked from making sacrifices at the time of the Army action. All of them came to be regarded as unequal to the new challenges before community. After the Blue Star attack, it was just out of question for the Congress to gain political power in Punjab. Nor could Delhi allow power in the State to go into the hands of a committed leadership, which would not barter away the socio-political interests of the State. It, thus, suited the Congress to raise these scared and discredited leaders to seats of power and make them sign on the dotted line in regard to the vital socio-economic issues raised by the Dharam Yudh Morcha. Presumably, parleys had taken place while these leaders were still in jails.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the old Akali leaders conscious of their discreditable role, felt quite safe in the security of the jails, for they were too scared to

face the wrath of the masses outside. At this time any prop, howsoever illusory, that could save their sinking ship appeared a boon to them.

A close aide of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Arjan Singh, a former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was installed Governor of the trouble-torn state to undertake the tricky job. N. K. Singh, the principal correspondent of India To-day, noted: "Suave, sophisticated and soft-spoken, Singh is famous for his politics of culture, courtesy and conspiracy."<sup>9</sup> Apparently, he grieved with the common man over the grim events in the State. He tried to put up an understanding pose. Arjan Singh had been deputed to hold secret parleys with the Akali leaders while they were still in jail following the army attack.<sup>10</sup> He knew full well of their weaknesses, limitations, rivalries and rifts. Following the earlier parleys, his first outward step was a seeming gesture of 'goodwill' to release the Akali leaders, turn by turn, the priority being given to those who were most willing to toe the Government line. The plan was to give a promise of the reins of power to the discredited Akali leadership, who had died a political death and who were conscious that the ground had slipped from under their feet. Arjan Singh's efforts were to provide them with political feet so that they could, out of their compulsion and gratitude, play a second fiddle to the party at the Centre. The move also sought to undermine the unity and solidarity forged in the Sikh ranks in the aftermath of the Blue Star and Wood Rose actions.

The names of Harchand Singh Longowal, Surjit Singh Barnala and Balwant Singh were among those who had suffered a grievous blow to their credibility with the Sikh masses owing to the wide gap in their words and deeds. On being released from jail, Longowal, was allowed to assume militant postures, deliver fiery speeches and even to praise Bhindranwale in a bid to rebuild his lost image. India To-day wrote, "The Rajiv—Longowal accord on Punjab, signed on July 24 in the capital, was preceded by four weeks of behind-the-scenes negotiations. Few records were maintained of the unfolding events except for a slender bunch of letters, business like and bereft of emotion...Arjan Singh is known to be peripatetic. So no one took notice when, in the weeks following Rajiv Gandhi's return from the U.S. visit on June 18, Singh flew in and out of the capital every few days. There was speculation about fresh initiative on the vexing Punjab problem but Singh gave nothing away, he met only the Prime Minister and scrupulously avoided the Punjab Government's officials based in Delhi\*. Longowal continued to play his cards close to his chest. His tour of Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the following days was, therefore, a delicate blend of caution and aggression."<sup>11</sup> Longowal was called upon to blunt the militancy of Sikh youth, who had already gained an upper hand. Left to himself, Longowal might have chosen to withdraw from the political scene over which he no longer had any hold. At one stage he simply disappeared from the scene and found a retreat in Rishikesh. But the Government would not allow this to happen. Longowal played into the hands of Arjan Singh and was infused with a desire to re-emerge as a leader of the Sikhs.

The Government and the private media projected Longowal as a man of peace, a champion of Hindu-Sikh unity, a messiah, who had come to show the way out of the tragic impasse. The man who had been earlier arrested on charges of treason was now described as the Gandhi of Punjab. The illiterate leader, whose fortunes were at the

lowest ebb, and who had lost his self-confidence, was too willing to be brought back into the limelight. He forgot

that the Government had shown him a cold shoulder during the Dharam Youdh Morcha. He forgot that it was owing to the designed policy of the Government that the issues had assumed such grim and terryfying proportions. There is reason to believe that Longowal's troubled conscience had landed him in an unenviable situation where the only choice before him was to look upon the Government for support and survival.<sup>12</sup>

Surjit Singh Barnala, a lack-lustre leader, and Balwant Singh, known to be a wily politician, were both political adventurists. They ignored the trauma and turmoil, the community had undergone in its struggle for justice. They along with Harchand Singh Longowal held secret negotiations with the Government.<sup>13</sup> It was clear that the Akali trio did not take two of their senior colleagues— Parkash Singh Badal, the former Chief Minister of Punjab and Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President of the SGPC into confidence.” Badal and Tohra wanted that before arriving at an agreement with the Government their demands of clemency towards the Sikh mutineers and release of the Jodhpur detenus should be conceded. Soon after his release, Longowal had laid down a charter of seven demands as a pre-condition for holding negotiations with the Government. These were : appointment of an enquiry commission into the anti-Sikh violence of November 1984; full compensation to the victims of violence; arrest of all these suspected of involvement in that violence; lenient treatment to the army deserters; stern action against all those army officers whose hamhandedness during the Blue Star attack had resulted in the killing of innocent men, women and children and the setting on fire of the Sikh Reference Library and the SGPC office; the lifting of ban on the AISSF and the abolition of the Special Courts. But this, as the subsequent events proved, was only a ploy to establish his credibility.

The entire Akali leadership stood discredited and demolished. In this state of their isolation and exposure their only hope was the Government which could rehabilitate them. In this race of opportunism Barnala and Balwant Singh outmanoeuvred Badal and Tohra and took Longowal with them to Delhi to conclude an agreement known as the Memorandum of Punjab Settlement, signed by him and the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on July 24, 1985. The Memorandum also called the Rajiv—Longowal Accord ran into the following 11 clauses :

### **“1, Compensation to innocent persons killed**

Along with ex-gratia payment to those innocent killed in agitation or any action after 1.8.82, compensation for property damaged will also be paid.

### **2. Army Recruitment**

All citizens of the country have the right to enroll in the Army and merit will remain the criterion for selection.

### **3. Enquiry into November incidents**

The jurisdiction of Shri Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission enquiring into the November riots of Delhi would be extended to cover the disturbances at Bokaro and Kanpur also.

#### 4. Rehabilitation of those discharged from the Army

For all those discharged, efforts will be made to rehabilitate and provide gainful employment.

#### 5. All India Gurdwara Act

The Government of India agrees to consider the formulation of an All India Gurdwara Bill. Legislation will be brought forward for this purpose in consultation with Shiromani Akali Dal, others concerned and after fulfilling all relevant constitutional requirements.

#### 6. Disposal of Pending Cases

6.1 The notifications applying the Armed Forces Special Powers Act to Punjab will be withdrawn. Existing Special Courts will try only cases relating to the following type of offences :

- (a) Waging War
- (b) Hijacking

6.2 All other cases will be transferred to ordinary courts and enabling legislation, if needed, will be brought forward in this Session of Parliament.

#### 7. Territorial Claims

7.1 The Capital Project Area of Chandigarh will go to Punjab, Some adjoining areas which were previously part of Hindi or the Punjabi regions were included in the Union Territory. With the capital region going to Punjab the areas which were added to the Union Territory from the Punjabi region of the erstwhile State of Punjab will be transferred to Punjab and those front Hindi region to Haryana. The entire Sukhna Lake will be kept as part of Chandigarh and will thus go to Punjab.

7.2 It had always been maintained by Smt. Tndira Gandhi that when Chandigarh is to go to Punjab some Hindi speaking territories in Punjab will go to Haryana. A commission will be constituted to determine the specific Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab which should goto Haryana, in lieu of Chandigarh. The principle of contiguity and linguistic affinity with a village as a unit will be the basis of such determination. The Commission will be required to give its findings by 31<sup>st</sup> December 1985 and these will be binding on both sides. The work of the Commission will be limited to this aspect and will be distinct from the ( general boundary claims which the other Commission referred to in Para 7.4 will handle.

7.3 The actual transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and areas in lieu thereof to Haryana will take place simultaneously on 76 January, 1986.

7 4 There are other claims and counter-claims for adjustment of the existing Punjab-Haryana boundaries. The Government will appoint another commission to consider these matters and give its findings. Such findings will be binding on the concerned States. The terms of reference will be based on a village as a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity.

#### 8. Centre State Relations

- 8.1 Shiromani Akali Dal states that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution is entirely within the framework of the Indian constitution; that it attempts to define the concept of Centre-State relations in a manner which may bring out the true federal characteristics of our Unitary Constitution; and that the purpose of the Resolution is to provide greater autonomy to the State with a view to strengthening the unity and integrity of the country, since unity in diversity forms corner-stone of our national entity.
- 8.2 In view of the above, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in so far as it deals with Centre-State relations, stands referred to the Sarkaria Commission.

## 9. Sharing of River Waters

- 9.1 The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan will continue to get water not less than what they are using from the Ravi-Beas system as on 1.7.1985. Waters used for consumptive purposes will also remain unaffected. Quantum of usage claimed shall be verified by the Tribunal referred to in Para 9.2 below.
- 9-2 The claim of Punjab and Haryana regarding the shares in their remaining waters will be referred for adjudication to a Tribunal to be presided over by a Supreme Court Judge. The decision of this Tribunal will be rendered within six months and would be binding on both parties. All legal and constitutional steps required in this respect be taken expeditiously.
- 9.3 The construction of the SYL canal shall continue. The canal shall be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1986.

## 10. Representation of Minorities

Existing instructions regarding protection of interests of minorities will be recirculated to the State Chief Ministers, (PM will write to all Chief Ministers).

## 11. Promotion of Punjabi Language

The Central Government may take some steps for the promotion of the Punjabi language.”<sup>15</sup>

## **The Government and the media acclaimed the Accord as a**

concrete step forward. After the Accord, the Akali Dal Working Committee met at Anandpur Sahib on July 26, to approve the Accord. After a long discussion, some of which was reported to be not open to the press, the Accord was approved by the Akali party. Though there was no open dissent, it was reported that during their internal discussion, Tohra and Badal had called the Accord a sell out.<sup>16</sup> Among the youth there was evident displeasure and dissatisfaction over the Accord and negotiations with the Government. So much so that when Longowal went to the Darbar Sahib, a group of angry Sikh youth raised slogans : ‘*Sikh quom de tin gaddar*, Balwant, Barnala, Longowal’ (Three traitors of Sikh community, Balwant, Barnala and Longowal) ‘Congress *da dalal* Longowal’ (Longowal is an agent of the Congress), ‘*Morcha jari rahega*’ (The Morcha will continue) and ‘*Ih sauda nuhin chalegcf*’ (We do not accept this sellout).<sup>17</sup> This was Longowal’s last visit to the Darbar Sahib.



The chief demand and the basis of the Dharam Yudh Morcha was that river waters belonged to Punjab and that the issue should be referred to the Supreme Court, since any sharing with or transfer of Punjab waters to non-riparian states was unconstitutional and S.Y.L. Canal, being in violation of the riparian rights of Punjab, should be stopped. The Accord completely rejected both the basic demands. For, the very title of Clause 9 stated that the issue was 'Sharing of River Waters.' This statement by itself rejected the constitutional stand of Punjab because the issue of constitutional rights had to go to the Supreme Court for its decision and not to a tribunal. Only sharing or distribution of waters between two riparian states or inter-state waters, which the Punjab rivers are not, could be referred to a tribunal. Hence the acceptance of a reference to a Government appointed tribunal was a complete rejection of the two-decade-old demand of Punjab. The Akali leaders voluntarily accepted to enter the trap against which they had started the Morcha. Equally ironic was the fact that the Dharam Yudh Morcha which had been started to stop the digging of the SYL Canal, ended in an Accord under which the Akalis committed themselves to the completion of the SYL Canal by the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1986.

Similarly clause 2 regarding Army recruitment was too brief and the population formula of recruitment to the Defence Forces was not to be put to the Supreme Court for its constitutional verdict, instead it was just vaguely stated that the recruitment would be done on merit, which was entirely irrelevant to and evasive of the constitutional point in dispute. On the territorial issue all that was desired was the implementation of the Sachar and the Regional Formulae and non-disturbance of the accepted status quo before 1966. Here again, as has been the Government's usual method of having its way, a Commission was agreed to.

Regarding Chandigarh, Indira Gandhi's controversial Award (1971) was virtually endorsed by saying that 'in compensation of Chandigarh, some Hindi speaking areas will go to Haryana and a Commission would be appointed to determine the territories'. No other state in the country had paid any compensation to the separated state, at the time of reorganisation. And yet the issue of compensation for Chandigarh was unnecessarily raised in the Accord. During the reorganisation of states many capitals, much larger in size, population and development remained the exclusive capitals of the states in whose geographical jurisdiction they belonged. No compensation, either in the form of territory or any other, was given to the adjoining states after demarcation. This is how Maharashtra got Bombay and Tamil Nadu got Madras, The example of Himachal Pradesh is especially pertinent. For Simla and many Punjabi speaking areas viz. Kangra district, Una Tehsil of Hoshiarpur, Dalhousie Tehsil of Gurdaspur and parts of Solan district were transferred to Himachal Pradesh without any compensation to Punjab.

In regard to the other territorial adjustments between the two states, the Akalis agreed to refer the matter to another Government appointed Commission knowing full well that such Commissions had in practice been just the mouth pieces of the Government.

### **So far as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was concerned, it**

was virtually thrown into the waste paper basket of the Sarkaria Commission. The demands embodied in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution were virtually given up by the Akalis. The Sarkaria Commission had already been enquiring into the Centre-State

relations and under the agreement it was left to its sweet will to consider it the way it liked. In a way, it was a withdrawal of the Resolution by the Akalis themselves.

The Accord stated that the jurisdiction of Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of enquiry into the November violence of Delhi would be extended to cover the disturbances at Bokaro and Kanpur also. The statement deliberately ignored the demand to ascertain the 'causes and course of the violence and to identify the persons or organisations who were responsible for it'. The Sikh Forum and human rights organisations had demanded that the unprecedented narrow terms of reference of the Commission be widened so as to accord with those of all such Commissions of enquiry in the past. The terms of reference mentioned in the Rajiv—Longowal Accord departed from all precedents. It was obvious that the Government was not serious about identifying and punishing the culprits.

In response to the demand for an All India Gurdwaras Act, Clause 5 of the Accord stated that the Government 'agrees to consider' such a Bill and would consult the Akali Dal and others concerned. It was a vague assurance that has not been substantiated so far.

Regarding the rehabilitation of soldiers who left their barracks in the wake of the Blue Star attack, the Accord (Clause 4) stated that 'for all those discharged efforts will be made to rehabilitate and provide gainful employment'. Clauses relating to the compensation for property damaged (Clause 1) during the November massacres; to assurances of protection of minorities and to promotion of Punjabi language were all vague that suggested no concrete steps.

The stark surrender was that the Accord made no mention of the Blue Star attack and the Wood Rose operation which had caused a grievous hurt to the Sikhs. The C.FJD. report named 'Oppression in Punjab' expressed the view that the Accord would not be able to bring back normalcy in Punjab. It observed : "The Accord has seemingly forgotten, (1) The thousands of so-called Army deserters, (2) and thousands of Sikh youth languishing in different jails of the country, (3) and also the families of those—again running into thousands—who have allegedly gone to Pakistan but actually have been killed by the police and the Army, (4) the problem of absconders who are underground, and who have fled under duress; (5) Rajiv—Longowal accord has not said one word about the Police lawlessness or the repeal of most of the Black laws; nor has it dealt with the withdrawal of the Army from Punjab. (6) The Accord is silent about adequate compensation for the November, 84 victims. Will the Accord bring solace to those hundreds of men and women who have lost their peace of mind because of the constant terror of police they have been living in ? As a poor village woman told us in Dera Baba Nanak—it is the poor who suffer when big people fight for their 'Kursi.'"18

Let us try to see the Accord in its true perspective of the Akali agitation of the two decades. The Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966 had reduced Punjab to a sub-state. It had not only narrowed its boundaries and virtually usurped its constitutional rights of water and hydel power but also had put a permanent ceiling on the economic and political development of the State. It was this situation that had led to the Akali demands, including the essential demand for autonomy, getting embodied in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The facts of the Accord leave little doubt that the Akalis dropped, on the one hand, all demands of autonomy or even of being at level with the other states and, on the

other hand, withdrew their claims for their constitutional rights as against the non-riparian states and as against the population formula of recruitment to the Defence forces, and their territorial rights to Chandigarh and Punjabi speaking areas on the basis of the demarcation under Sachar and Regional Formulae. ]t iVas

ignored that instead of trying to solve the problems the Government had staged the Blue Star attack to camouflage and sidetrack the real issues. By projecting the Akalis as secessionists and separatists, they had, on the one hand, created a public opinion in the country against them, and, on the other hand, had in a way tried to demoralise the Sikhs.

Three features of the Accord are very clear. First, there is no reference at all to the thoughtless brutality involved in the Blue Star and the Wood Rose attacks which had actually shocked the entire community to its roots and created a divide between the two communities. Hence the Accord, by its complete silence on the issue, not only justified it but also in a way laid the guilt for it at the door of the Akalis. Second, every demand for which the Punjab, the Sikhs and the Akalis had been struggling was virtually rejected, either straight away or through the forum of a proposed Government commission. The third and the worst part of it was that gross unconstitutional injustices which were too glaring to be directly rejected by the Government, were made a fait accompli partly by the concurrence of the Akalis and partly through the proposed Government appointed tribunal whose verdict, could be sought only about sharing of water and not on the unconstitutionality of the Reorganisation Act (1966). And the final blow was that through the forum of the water tribunal, the door of constitutional justice to Punjab by the Supreme Court was permanently sealed.

It is plain that the Accord was for the Government a treaty of victory, since it gave them everything they had tried to secure in the earlier decades, and was a complete surrender of every demand and every right the Sikhs had struggled for since 1966. Elections were considered an inevitable corollary to the Accord as the Centre thought it the most befitting to employ the old Akali leadership as willing tools and prop them up politically to fight the emerging leadership of the youth. The dummy moderates, restored in the seats of the Government, were to serve as a smoke screen between the ruthless steamroller of the state and, to some extent, the leaderless youth. They were overtly and covertly seeking government assistance to enable them to regain some semblance of credibility and following of the people. This was the situation which the government fully exploited. In view of the helplessness and isolation of the Akalis, it was easy for the government to manipulate them which they did. The government could not afford to allow the situation to slip away from its control.

The Centre was also playing a subtle game to provide legitimacy to the Accord through an elected Government and thus drain away Punjab's water through the construction of the SYL Canal. Accordingly, elections were announced and there was presumably a Congress—Akali collusion. The Centre wanted a Government in Punjab which should, on behalf of the Sikhs, agree to refer the water and hydel power issue to a tribunal, so that its decision should become a constitutional verdict and the State Government should inter alia concede that Punjab rivers were inter—state and not state waters. To avoid the chance of any subsequent revolt, under public pressure, by the Akalis against making a reference to the tribunal, the Government insisted on a very unusual measure. The Longowal group was made to ensure that everyone wanting to get the Akali ticket would

have to sign a statement accepting the Accord. This made it plain that only opportunists would come forward to have the ticket. The very fact that each Akali candidate was made to pledge his support to the Accord, showed the convergence of interests of the Congress and discredited Akali leadership. Rahul Singh, editor of the Indian Express observed : “The Akali Dal and the Congress (I), bitter adversaries in the past, are now discovering common bonds ...The Akalis have launched a whispering campaign that the Centre wants the Akalis to rule the State. The fielding of “weak” candidates, by the Congress (I) in several constituencies has helped the Akalis to spread this impression in the villages, with the result that many ruling party workers belonging to the Sikh community are defecting to the Akali Dal (L). In responsible government circles, it is being said that an Akali government in Punjab would be the strongest bulwark against terrorism.” Longowal was assassinated on August 20, 1985 at village Sherpur in the district of Sangrur. Only a few days before, a newspaper cartoon had shown Rajiv Gandhi handing over his bullet proof jacket to Longowal. The assassination of Longowal was considered a setback by the protagonists of the Accord but government decided to go ahead with the poll exercise as the installation of an elected government was essential if the Accord was to be salvaged. Badal and Tohra also joined the power game/0

The greatest opposition to the Accord came from the breakaway United Akali Dal, which came to be led by Bhindranwale’s father Baba Joginder Singh, who till then had also enjoyed the support of the youth. Baba announced the poll boycott as a mark of protest against the Accord. The Longowal group was jubilant over this announcement as they did not have to face any opposition from the youth. Had they been in the fray, the Sikh masses might have preferred them to the so-called dummy moderates who had signed on the dotted line in order to avoid elimination from the political arena..

The elections to the Punjab Assembly were held on September 25, 1985. There was a secret understanding between the Congress and the Akalis in regard to the seat adjustments in the election. The Longowal Akalis were elected because the youth had boycotted the elections and the Sikh masses had hardly any option. They were in desperate need of a breathing time from the unabated repression to which they were being continuously subjected since June, 1984. Obviously, they would not vote for the Congress. The Longowal group won a majority of 73 seats in a house of 117. The Congress got 32 seats, the BJP got 4; the CPI and the Janta Party got one each.<sup>21</sup>

Very soon doubts began to be cast on the bona fides of Baba Joginder Singh, who had ‘tricked’ the youth into staying away from the elections. The victory of the old Akalis was not a vote for the Accord or the Akali policies. It was just a negative vote

against the party which had conducted the Blue Star, the Wood Rose and the November massacres of the Sikhs and was responsible for their agony and humiliation.

The Akali Ministry came into power with Surjit Singh Barnala as Chief Minister, on September 29, 1985. Balwant Singh got the finance portfolio and was given the second position in the cabinet. Badal and Tohra were in a predicament. In the matter of policy they were a part and parcel of the old Longowal group whose opportunism became quite apparent. But in the race for loaves and fishes Barnala and Balwant Singh had manoeuvred them by prevailing upon Longowal to go with them to sign the Accord. So while they, to some extent, were sullen about having been left behind, they

had neither the inclination nor the initiative and capacity to lead the Panth and the youth by giving it a new and cohesive policy. For obvious reasons, the Akali leadership could not give any creditable performance. Their foremost aim was their own political survival. In the absence of any political programme, they could not provide a positive lead to the Sikhs. India To-day observed : “Despite several promises, the Centre gave nothing to Barnala—not Chandigarh, not the Jodhpur detenus, not the water—in order to strengthen his hands.”<sup>22</sup> For all outward appearances it was a popular government, but in reality the Centre was ruling Punjab by proxy. Both state repression and killings by the youth continued. Contrived encounters as before remained a regular feature. The Sikh youth became more and more restive and alienated. They looked upon Barnala and Balwant Singh with hatred and anger. As a matter of fact Barnala was a captive Chief Minister, a captive of the circumstances which were mainly his own creation. It was clear that the Congress used the Akalis as mere show boys to vindicate its unjust policies and repressive measures. Barnala government came to be looked upon as a mere extension of the Central rule in the Punjab. It became obvious that Rajiv Gandhi had continued the old Congress policy in Punjab. The result was that the State was driven from one disaster to another. v

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had accomplished a great feat in which he had surpassed even his mother. However, he seemed to be oblivious of its grave implications for the future. The Akali trio, responsible for the Accord, became proverbial for their dereliction of duty towards their own people and for turning a blind eye to the agony and anguish which the community had undergone. The betrayal by Longowal had become so proverbial that when Rajiv Gandhi contacted the militant LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam) leader Prabhakaran to append his signatures to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord as a token of his endorsement, he is said to have remarked, “I will not become a Longowal.” Barnala too became notorious for being a puppet Chief Minister and his example began to be quoted in political circles. An Indian Express news service report from Kashmir stated that National Front workers were viewing with suspicion any move to isolate Dr. Farooq Abdullah and make him a Kashmiri Barnala.<sup>23</sup>

Barnala government failed to grapple with the manifold problems facing the state. The Sikh youth continued to be on the receiving end. The government faced a crisis when on April 29, 1986, a live member Panthic Committee, headed by Gurbachan Singh Manochal, made a declaration for the establishment of Khalistan from the precincts of the Darbar Sahib. The Resolution read : “We do not demand anything different than what the Jews in Soviet Russia, Blacks and Browns in South Africa, Chileans in Chile and many more oppressed human beings all over the world demand. We seek freedom of worship, freedom to move, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and most of all, freedom to determine our own destiny. Our forty years experience with the so-called Indian democracy has proved that if we wish to preserve our heritage, culture, religion and social

Sikh homeland,

structure, we have to have an independent Khalistan.<sup>14</sup>

Without taking his council of ministers into confidence, Barnala, under the direction of Delhi, planned and ordered a the Amritsar district and conducted arbitrary house-to-house searches for Sikh youth. While seeking out these so-called secessionists, the Indian Government has set in motion a suppressive force by which many innocent people will be endangered “t5

On December 29, 1986, the Washington Post quoted one unidentified police official admitting that “many times we depend on torture in interrogations, do doubt about it.”

As the police fought a war against the militants, the line between what was legally right and wrong got obliterated. People viewed with increasing scepticism and cynicism, the frequent reports of “encounters” in which the police claimed to have killed wanted militants. In fact the word “encounter” became a flexible term which covered deaths caused by security forces, in a variety of ways and circumstances. India To-day brought to light two such cases :

- (1) CRPF jawans shot dead Sukhwinder Singh of Amritsar’s Khyali village on November 21, 1986 his wedding day—because the taxi he was travelling in did not immediately respond when asked to stop. According to the driver, Sukhwinder Singh and his 18-year-old friend, Ajeet Singh, were gunned down as they alighted from the taxi a hundred yards from a CRPF picket. The police tried to pass it off as an encounter until angry villagers organised demonstrations and road blockades. Sukhwinder’s father Avtar Singh —whose written complaints to Ray and Rajiv Gandhi had gone unheeded—finally settled for a grant of Rs. 10,000. Sukhwinder’s widow paid a similar amount and his elder brother, Lakhbir Singh, was given a job as a peon in a government school.<sup>26</sup>
  - (2) On August 23 last year (1987), in the very heart of Amritsar, Sardool Singh, a 35-year-old contractor travelling on a scooter, hit an old woman and failed to stop—it later turned out that she suffered no major injury. Unfortunately for him, Superintendent of Police Baldev Singh’s car happened to be passing by. The officer’s escort jeep overtook and overpowered the scooterist. According to eyewitnesses, CRPF jawans. beat up Sardool Singh with their rifle butts. In the melee a jawan accidentally pressed the trigger of his sten gun, killing a colleague. The enraged policeman vented his frustration by spraying Sardool Singh with a burst of gun-fire,<sup>z?</sup>
- The police claimed that Sardool Singh was a wanted terrorist who was carrying a country-made pistol and that he had killed the CRPF jawan. But this has been refuted in an inquiry headed by Sub-Divisional Magistrate, S. P. Mahajan, who found the contractor

innocent.\*8 Mahajan, recommended that the widow of Sardool Singh, Kulwant Kaur, be compensated monetarily with an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 20,000 and that a member of the family be given a government job to enable the family to survive. S.P. Mahajan was, however, transferred from Amritsar after this report.\*9

The Anti-Repression Coordination Committee (ARCC) headed by Justice Ajit Singh Bains investigated the human rights violations in Punjab. It inquired into the shootings at Nakodar, (March 19, 1986), in which four young Sikh students were killed and the shooting of nine persons in police firing on the eve of the Hola Mohalla celebrations on March 29, 1986.<sup>3°</sup> Its findings were that the shootings at both the places were unjustified. The ARCC also inquired into the killings of the Sikh youth in an alleged encounter by the B.S.F. on August 30, 1986 in Dera Baba Nanak Sector of Gurdaspur district.\*1 It was the biggest killing of the so-called terrorists in any single action during the Barnala Government and since J.F. Ribeiro had taken charge of the combined forces of the BSF and the CRPF deployed in Punjab, It was asserted that the 'encounter' took place when ten persons were trying to enter India from Pakistan crossing over the Ravi in Dera Baba Nanak. ARCC after an on-the-spot investigation rejected the official version of the incident and came to the conclusion that the ten Sikh youths were already in the custody of the security forces when they were murdered by the BSF. Justice Bains believed that ninety nine percent of the police encounter cases

territorial price (including Punjabi speaking areas) for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, that even a puppet Akali government could not agree to it. Similarly, the Barnala government found it impossible to accept the verdict of the Eradi Tribunal on water and hydel power because it was very damaging to the interests of Punjab in so far as it was reported that the implementation of the decision of the Tribunal would involve the reduction of canal irrigated area in Punjab by another ten lac acres." Hence instead of Ravi and Beas waters benefiting the irrigation of Punjab lands the area currently irrigated was found to be very adversely affected. As such Barnala government had hardly any option but to reject the Eradi Tribunal report. India To-day wrote that Barnala government's dismissal came "when Barnala had refused to give into Central blandishments for accepting the report of the Eradi Tribunal on sharing the Ravi-Beas waters with Haryana and Rajasthan. The report apparently favours Haryana."\*8 In an interview with India To-day immediately after his dismissal Barnala said, "We cannot give in where the state's interests are concerned. There can be no deviation from the terms of the accord, which were very clear. One Commission asks us to part with Punjabi-speaking areas when the accord says only Hindi-Speaking areas can be transferred. Agreeing to this would have violated the accord. On waters too, the accord clearly safeguards the water that Punjab was using in June 1985. It is difficult for us to accept anything else."3'

On the other hand, Ribeiro became increasingly aggressive and demanded further liberties to handle the Punjab situation. The Home Minister wrote to Barnala expressing concern about the deteriorating law and order situation in Punjab. He stated : "The 'Amrit Parchar', campaign has also led to the deepening of communal and separatist feelings."\*8"0

Having achieved four of its objectives, namely, entry of police in the Darbar Sahib to justify the Blue Star Operation, securing the verdict of the Eradi Tribunal after obtaining

a reference from the Barnala government to it, a virtual rejection of the proposal to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab and creating a police Administration in the State which took its order from the Centre and not from the Ministry, the Centre no longer found the utility of the Barnala Ministry and dismissed it unceremoniously on May 12, 1987 and imposed Governor Ray's rule.

### **Ray—Ribeiro Regime**

One of the first tasks assigned to Governor Ray was “to speed up construction of the Satluj—Yamuna Link Canal for the supply of water to Haryana”.<sup>40</sup> Punjab came under the direct control of Ray-Ribeiro combine. “I feel confident we will get results. More officers will join battle. Those who don't will be replaced. It would have been quicker if President's rule had come earlier,”<sup>41</sup> said Ribeiro.

We have stated that the pleas of law and order and separatism are created problems to avoid the solution of the real Punjab problem and to divert public attention and sentiment to what the Government calls terrorism. We have indicated that false encounters and state terrorism have been a part of Government policies to convey an impression to the public that there is serious terrorism which they have to tackle. We have stated two things clearly. First, that till June 1984 neither Bhindranwale nor any other person had ever conceived of a demand outside the framework of the Indian Constitution. Second, that no less a person than the DGP Punjab had stated in 1985 that “there was no definite organisation behind it (Khalistan)...Though there is a lot of hue and cry about training camps of extremists being held in Pakistan but there is no ‘authoritative information’ available with the government”.<sup>42</sup> Actually the Blue Star and the Wood Rose had created a state of oppression and even terror in the Punjab. After it the question of any group leading Khalistan could not arise especially when the entire Sikh leadership, moderate or extremist, had been put behind the bars. Even small children were kept in jails and not released except by the intervention of the Supreme Court. Hence, the question of any terrorism which objectives of this system were three fold. The first objective was to create public opinion against the extremists and brand them as the perpetrators of crimes. Second, it was to create in the rural areas individuals and families that should, apart from becoming unsympathetic to the cause of the militants, become hostile to them, thereby creating at the village level factional divisions, leading to further crime. The third objective was to create at the village level informers who, out of a feeling of revenge, should supply information to the Administration partly also serving their factional interests thereby. The chief object, as we have stated, was to break the barrier that had come to exist between the rural masses and the Administration. Since truth came to be known gradually to the public, many persons, including officials objected to this illegal and unworthy activity of the Administration which, they felt, would be counter-productive. Organisations like ‘Alam Sena’, were created and criminals like Dalbir Singh and Kala were made to operate in the garb of police. Initially the Government continued to deny the existence of these sinister organisations. Vipul Mudgal, a correspondent of India To-day, who gave a lead story on these under covers, said that Government was “recruiting the policemen with criminal tendencies for a special task force to be constituted along the lines of the Dirty Dozen ... And now, inquiries are pending against at least a dozen police-backed vigilantes, bounty hunters, undercover operatives and spotters over serious charges of corruption, the exclusive use of an unbridled police



option in Punjab has succeeded, finally, it seems in creating Frankenstein monsters for which a terrible price may have to be paid.”<sup>43</sup>

Ribeiro set upon a reign of terror both by direct killings and introduction of criminal groups to commit murders, loot and crime. The Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO) revealed that 73 Sikh youths were killed in fake encounters between May 12 and August 22, 1987.<sup>44</sup> Ribeiro declared that in Punjab ‘police accountability is to itself.’ Among the counter-terrorist tactics used by Ribeiro was the floating of a ‘vigilante group’, also known as ‘Alam Sena.’<sup>45</sup> Earlier Mohammad Izhar Alam, Senior Superintendent of Police, Amritsar had vehemently denied the existence of such a force when reports of it had appeared in the press in 1986, since some police supported vigilantes were identified as being involved in a dacoity and murder in the Chowk Mehta area of Amritsar district.<sup>48</sup> Police backed vigilantes consisted of “a band of dismissed policemen and terrorists-turned approvers. Their squads were let loose, no questions asked, fully armed with arms and ammunition to match those of the terrorists. They started their own loot and plunder. The more they killed, the more they were hailed, never mind whom they were killing. The cat came out of the bag when one of the dismissed policemen (Dalbir Singh) who had been given double promotion and free hand to do as he pleased was found raiding banks and looting money. He was summoned by the area SP and was presumably being asked either to declare or share his exploits when he picked up a revolver lying on the table and shot the SP (Baldev Singh Brar). The senior SP (Sital Das) came running from the next door office. The man (Dalbir Singh) shot him too and then shot himself.”<sup>47</sup>

After his dismissal from police, Dalbir Singh had been re-employed. He was known to have committed numerous crimes, including bank robberies, dacoities, murders, etc. He became a favourite of Ribeiro, when he helped the police in nabbing some militants. He shot into prominence when he gunned down “A” grade militant Surinder Singh alias K.C. Sharma in Chandigarh.<sup>48</sup> When hotly pursued by the Chandigarh police, who mistook him for a militant, he slipped into Ribeiro’s house and sought shelter with him.<sup>49</sup> Dalbir had been given two out-of-turn promotions, a jeep and two guards armed with stenguns. Unofficially a Maruti and a Fiat were also given to him. Posted in Patiala with no official daily routine, his secret jurisdiction extended to the whole of Punjab and even nearby states. By his criminal activities he had amassed wealth and properties in Patiala, Chandigarh and Mohali. “I would kill myself rather than letting the police find out everything about me”, he had reportedly told an associate.<sup>60</sup> Another notorious member of the vigilante outfit was Santokh Singh Kala, who mainly operated in Jalandhar area.<sup>51</sup>

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and shot the SP (Baldev Singh Brar). The senior SP (Sital Das) came running from the next door office. The man (Dalbir Singh) shot him too and then shot himself.”\*<sup>7</sup>

After his dismissal from police, Dalbir Singh had been re-employed. He was known to have committed numerous crimes, including bank robberies, dacoities, murders, etc. He became a favourite of Ribeiro, when he helped the police in nabbing some militants. He shot into prominence when he gunned down “A” grade militant Surinder Singh alias K.C. Sharma in Chandigarh.<sup>48</sup> When hotly pursued by the Chandigarh police, who mistook him for a militant, he slipped into Ribeiro’s house and sought shelter with him.<sup>49</sup> Dalbir had been given two out-of-turn promotions, a jeep and two guards armed with stenguns. Unofficially a Maruti and a Fiat were also given to him. Posted in Patiala with no official daily routine, his secret jurisdiction extended to the whole of Punjab and even nearby states. By his criminal activities he had amassed wealth and properties in Patiala, Chandigarh and Mohali. “I would kill myself rather than letting the police find out everything about me”, he had reportedly told an associate.<sup>60</sup> Another notorious member of the vigilante outfit was Santokh Singh Kala, who mainly operated in Jalandhar area.<sup>51</sup>

case, another vigilante man who had helped the police took away a truck abandoned by alleged terrorists and sold it in another town.”

A further embarrassment to Ribeiro was that “Dalbir Singh’s vigilante activities in Jammu and Kashmir had resulted in Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah’s imposing a blanket ban on Punjab Police’s entry into his state.”<sup>87</sup> It was only after this, that Ribeiro came to realise the futility of his ‘bullet for bullet’ policy. He admitted that there could be no decisive battle against terrorism in a law and order context, bereft of a political solution. Kuldip Nayar’s observations in this context are worth noting : “Brutality, which got embedded in the police set-up at that time (Emergency), knows no bounds now. The trend of arresting or releasing persons on political considerations has continued. The illegal use of power, to which the police has got used, is hard to defeat now. What is seen in Kashmir, Punjab, Assam or elsewhere in the country is a cumulative effect of unbridled authority given to the force. It does not know, much less care, about normal, acceptable methods to deal with a situation. On the other hand, employing the police to the advantage of any political party, started by Indira Gandhi, has now been a source of subverting the rule of law.”<sup>58</sup> Even at the time of the Emergency, S. S. Ray had subverted the rule of law and defended ‘the right of legislatures to correct the judiciary.’<sup>59</sup>

Governor Ray brought swashbuckling K.P.S. Gill in place of Ribeiro, who was made the Adviser to the Governor. Janardan Thakur noted that with the arrival of Gill, “the state terror got a shot in the arm. The logic of Gill was that the police were dealing with people who did not believe in any laws and so unless the police too was lawless it could not really fight them.”<sup>60</sup> Gill justified the policy of creating under cover squads. He said, “The security forces in Punjab can do nothing without special spotters’ parties and there is no question of doing away with them.”<sup>61</sup>

When a team of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO), which had a long interview with Sumedh Singh. Saini, Senior Superintendent of Police, Bhatinda, asked him to comment on the armed vigilante groups created in many districts of Punjab, he is reported to have said, “What was wrong if they were organised to assist the State to

neutralize terrorists ?”<sup>65</sup> Besides the vigilante squad there were other squads also who were responsible for deadly intrigues and murders. In a revealing letter written to the Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray, Simranjit Singh Mann, while submitting his resignation from the Indian Parliament, drew attention to the other hit squads, called the “Black Cats” and “Indian Lions” who were operating in the State in a clandestine manner and were responsible for murdering and pillaging.<sup>65</sup> Mann complained that three members of the executive of his party, including Jagdev Singh Khudian M.P. were done to death by the “Indian Lions” outfit.<sup>66</sup> Mann regretted that even though the Justice Harbansingh Rai Commission appointed by the Government had indicted the Punjab DGP, K.P.S. Gill, in connection with the Khudian murder, yet no action was taken against him.<sup>69</sup> “The State is actively involved in killing and murdering Sikh leaders and I have been threatened by the “Indian Lions” which has several other names—“Vaidya Commando Force” (VCF) and “Lala Jagat Narain Tiger Force” (LJNTF),”<sup>66</sup> said Mann. The Tribune reported the formation of a secret militant organization called the “Indian National Army” which recruited commandos to fight terrorists in Punjab. The report said, “Mr. Dayal Singh, Chief General of the army said to-day that the commandos were drawn from the Army, the BSF, the CRPF and the Punjab Police. He also introduced a commando to newsmen, who, he claimed belonged to the BSF.”<sup>67</sup>

This lent credence to the repeated charges made by the civil rights activists in Punjab that the Government had, in fact, created “death squads in an attempt to neutralise terrorism”<sup>68</sup> and that state terrorism had been in full swing. Referring to the Punjab problem, Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal said, “Terrorists deserve to be shot dead. They did not deserve to be arrested and tried by courts of law. Only a tough posture against such elements could help resolve the Punjab problem.” Thus the Indian government instead of adopting positive measures to deal judiciously and constitutionally with the situation, set in motion a suppressive force and adopted measures that could not be justified against the civil population even in a war. It was not realised that violence and vengeance could be counter-productive and that the induction of criminal elements in the law enforcing authority would

only make the matters worse. Chandigarh Police was reported to have arrested one Gurinder Singh, involved in a shoot out in Sector 38 in May 1985.<sup>70</sup> Before he agreed to surrender in response to calls put out through public address system by the police, Gurinder reportedly wanted to meet the top Congress leaders of the Punjab. “The mention of the names of Congress (I) men by Gurinder was evidently intended to ensure that the police did not kill him in an ‘encounter’.”<sup>71</sup> The policemen who staged an encounter with Gurinder were really on the look out for one Surjit Singh alias Sita who had escaped from the police custody a few days ago. Sita had been arrested in connection with the murder of Hardyal Singh, President of D.C.C. (I), rural Jalandhar.<sup>72</sup> This gang is said to have been responsible for a murderous attack on R.L. Bhatia, General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. in Amritsar. Summing up the whole episode, the Dignity wrote : “But is the matter so simple ? It is now well known that Gurinder was protected by Santokh Singh Randhawa, his son Inderjit Singh Randhawa, former Chief Minister Barbara Singh, and a Congress (T) legislator, Gopal Krishan Chatrath. Gurinder is known to have led a gang of armed men to evict tenants and other poor people from Darbara Singh’s family land at Kharar.”<sup>73</sup> Further the Dignity wrote : “Let Punjab Congress (I) leaders also reply to a few more questions. Is it a fact or not that the involvement

of a top aide of Darbara Singh in the Hardyal Singh murder case was alleged and an enquiry was held some time ago ? Is it also a fact or not that the wife of Mr. R. L. Bhatia, a General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. (I) complained to the Centre against the alleged involvement of certain Congress (I) men of Punjab in the attempt to murder her husband ? Is it also a fact or not that Bhatia himself recognises his alleged assailants ?' Such activities added an ominously new dimension to the tragic scenario and led to an atmosphere of terror and insecurity. The Washington Post reported that the Indian security forces conducted a highly realistic mock hijacking of an airliner that fooled many people into thinking that it was a genuine terrorist action by Sikh militants. The purported hijackers issued a number of demands in the name of a Sikh extremist group. The exercise ended peacefully at an airport in West Central India but not without spreading alarm throughout the country.<sup>75</sup> Such obnoxious tactics were used to blame and defame the Sikh community and to stoke up communal fires, in order to divert attention from the real issues.

The above is only one aspect of state terrorism. The system of false encounters was another method. There are numerous reports giving instances of the kind, where encounters and cross-shooting were alleged to have taken place but the only person dead or injured was the so-called

terrorist, who was found with ammunition and weapons. Sometimes the injured or the escaped person was the one who had been in the hand cuff of the police. Stories of killing of “unidentified” terrorists are also quite common.

Another method of terrorising the people was wholesale arrests and humiliation of an entire village including molestation of women. Instances of the village Sarpanches protesting to the authorities, including the Governor have also been reported. The reports of the human rights organisations contain innumerable cases of torture of innocent persons. Such incredible stories and explanations are advanced as are too ridiculous or irrational to believe. We give below one instance. The police reported that 9 militants had been killed during an encounter. A correspondent of the Tribune, who visited the spot found the story quite baseless. Actually it was found by him that innocent persons were used as human shields and 7 of them had been killed. We give below verbatim the report given by the police, along with the result of the investigation by the correspondent of the Tribune and the editorial assessment of the incident. This will enable the reader to form an opinion as to how far the stories put forward by the Administration in the media are true and how far is the credibility of the Administration with the

people.

“9 BTFK militants killed (The Tribune, June 10,1992)

Behla (Amritsar), June 9-Nine top militants, including deputy chief of the Bbindranwale Tigers Force of Khalistan (Manochahal), “Lieut. General” Surjit Singh Behla and three security forces personnel were killed and three CRPF jawans were seriously injured in an encounter, which lasted about 28 hours here today. Behla carried a reward of Rs. 10 lakh on his head. One militant succumbed to his injuries.

The militants were entrenched in a concrete bunker built in the sprawling double-storeyed house of Mr. Manjinder Singh Behla, a former parliamentary secretary in the Parkash Singh Badal ministry. The front portion of the house was completely shattered.

The encounter started at about 10.45 a.m. yesterday and was over at 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

Besides Surjit Singh Behla, other killed militants were identified as Madan Singh, alias Maddi, Sikatar Singh Behla, area commander and Niranjan Singh, father of Sikatar Singh and a think tank of the BTFK. Three others were not identified so far.

The police officials killed are : Head Constable Jarnail Singh and Constable Harjit Singh, The SSP of Tarn Taran police district, Mr Ajit Singh Sandhu, told newsmen that the police had “definite” information that top militants belonging to the BTFK (Manochahal) were holding a meeting in the house of Mr. Manj’nder Singh Behla. The police and the CRPF cardoned off the house. After posting several jawans near the bunker, about 27 others, including Mr, Sandhu himself and senior officers of the police and the CRPF went to the roof. The militants fired from the bunker killing two police officials. Three CRPF constables, including Mr. Kailash Chand, Mr. Som Dutt and Mr. Pargat Singh, were injured. The militants attempted thrice to rush to the roof, but were prevented by security forces. The exchange of fire continued the entire night. The Army was called in the morning to rescue the trapped police and CRPF officers from the roof. After the militants stopped firing around 2.30p.m. today, eight bodies of the militants were found. One general purpose machine (GPM), one AK-47 Chinese assault rifle, one SLR, one Mauser and large quantity of ammunition were seized.

Mr. Sandhu said Behla was wanted in more than 1,000 cases of killing, kidnapping, extortion and rape.

Mr. Sandhu refuted that one army jawan was killed in the operation, whereas Army jawans confirmed it. An Army Brigadier, who preferred anonymity, said the police officers showed bravery. The Army rescued the police officials, including the SSP from the roof.

The Brigadier said Behla in the past had given a slip to security forces thrice. No civilian was killed in the cross firing he said.

Behla is situated near Rataul village, where one DIG was killed in an encounter last year.

About 900 security forces personnel, including 400 from Army and 300 from the CRPF were engaged in the encounter.

Elsewhere in Punjab, three militants, including Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwar) Lt. General and one of the most dreaded extortionists Sukhwinderpal Singh alias Bhappi were among seven persons killed during the past 24 hours.

An unidentified bullet-riddled body was found near Kake Kandiala village in Tarn Taran police district today. Police said it was a case of inter-gang rivalry.”

“Police bullets pierced 7 human shields (The Tribune, June 12, 1992)

Behla (Amritsar), June 11—Only two, not nine top militants belonging to the Bhindranwale Tigers Force of Khalistan (Manochahal), were killed in the 28 hour-long encounter in this village on Tuesday. Seven civilians, who were used as shields by the security forces while searching the house of Mr Manjinder Singh Behla, an Akali leader were killed in the cross-firing.

There is neither a “bunker”, as claimed by the police, nor a small store between the kitchen and the drawing room in the “haveli” where militants were hiding.

Only Surjit Singh Behla, deputy chief of the BTFK (M) and Madan Singh Maddi, alias Chhota Behla were militants. They gave a fight to about 1600 security personnel, including one battalion of the Army, for about 28 hours. A helicopter was also used to rescue the trapped security personnel, including the SSP of Tarn Taran police district, Mr. Ajit Singh Sandhu and two deputy commandants of the CRPF.

The civilians were picked from a tubewell and near the gurdwara and used as shields. They were : Mr. Niranjana Singh Dodhi, a milk vendor, his son, Mr. Sikatar Singh, Mr. Ajit Singh, owner of a bullock-cart, Mr. Kartar Singh, Mr. Lakhwinder Singh, both farmers and one mason. The identity of the seventh person could not be established. Mr. Sukhchain Singh, another son of Mr. Niranjana Singh, was seriously injured and is under treatment at Tarn Taran.

Three other persons, who were also used as shields, but survived unhurt, are : Mr. Gurdeep Singh (65) his grandson, Mr. Bhupinder Singh (17) and father-in-law of the “granthi”.

Mr. Gurdeep Singh told TNS that Mr. Niranjana Singh and his two sons Mr. Sikatar Singh and Mr. Sukhchain Singh were constructing a small room at their tubewell just outside the village on Monday morning. His brother, Mr. Ajit Singh was carrying bricks in his bullock-cart and had just arrived at the tubewell. Police and CRPF personnel picked them and the mason. His grandson was picked on way to the “haveli”. They forced the father-in-law of the “granthi” to join them. All of them were directed to accompany them for carrying a search of the “haveli”.

The security forces, he said, directed them to open the locks of every room and ascertain that no militant was hiding there. After search of almost all rooms, they directed them to stand near the stairs along with few police and CRPF men. The police and There is neither a “bunker”, as claimed by the police, nor a small store between the kitchen and the drawing room in the “haveli” where militants were hiding.



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The security forces, he said, directed them to open the locks of every room and ascertain that no militant was hiding there. After search of almost all rooms, they directed them to stand near the stairs along with few police and CRPF men. The police and CRPF officers went upstairs. All of a sudden there were bullet bursts in which five or six persons including one constable, were killed.

Mr. Chanan Singh, a cousin of Mr. Niranjana Singh Dodhi, who was working at his tubewell located at a short distance from Mr. Niranjana Singh's tubewell, confirmed that his cousin, two nephews, one mason and Mr. Ajit Singh were taken away by the police from the tubewell. He also confirmed that his cousin was a milk vendor and Mr. Sikatar Singh was working as a registered medical practitioner with Dr. Joginder Singh at Daburji, about four km. from here, on the Amritsar-Tarn Taran highway. Mr. Sikatar Singh had brought a bag of cement from Messrs. Sardar Warehouse, Daburji. These facts were corroborated by the residents of the village and the owner of the warehouse. They said that neither Mr. Niranjana Singh nor his sons had links with militants.

At Daburji, Dr. Joginder Singh, while confirming that Sikatar Singh had been working at his clinic for the past two years as his assistant, testified that the latter had nothing to do with militants.

Mrs. Jasbir Kaur, whose brother-in-law, Mr. Lakhwinder Singh, alias Lakh a was also killed, disclosed that Lakha was taken away from his farm along with his 'spade' and was used as "cover" by the security forces.

Mrs. Chhindo (60), a sister of Mr. Ajit Singh said that her brother had been earning his livelihood by pulling his cart. "He is survived by seven children." Her another elder brother, Mr. Tara Singh died on hearing the death Mr. Ajit Singh.

At 12.30 p.m. today the Army, CRPF and police officers were busy making a video film on "Operation Rakshak-Behla encounter." This correspondent saw a truck, loaded with wheat bags and other valuables taken from the house of Mr. Behla, parked on the roadside.

Each and every outer wall and roof of a few rooms of the "haveli" were completely damaged. There are 15 rooms on the Minister, Mr. Beant Singh has taken many salutary steps to reverse the alienation of the rural people of Punjab. But his government's efforts are nullified by one major drawback. The Congress government has somehow given the impression that it sees the Punjab crisis as a law and order problem with its resolution lying in the liquidation of so-called militants. In the process, the Beant Singh government seems to exercise even less control on the police force than what a few Governors did. The Chief Minister says that the battle against the militants is going in favour of the security forces and the militants, on the run, are choosing soft targets to emphasise their power and presence. The government's overemphasis on personal security of an enlarging section of society called the VIPs has resulted in substantially increasing the soft targets in Punjab. Worse still, the entire people of the state have become soft targets of two mighty forces with killer weapons and no perceptible cause—the police and the terrorists."

What happens in Punjab is the result of a policy of complete cynicism, callousness and allowing the police to let loose a reign of oppression as stated above. It would seem that in frustration even an editor of the Tribune had to comment as follows: "They (police) act as if they owe no obligations to the people, they are not answerable to anyone and they are above the law. So, they use innocent persons as shields to attack terrorists and post facto describe the dead persons as militants killed in encounter; they impound citizens' cars under a law which was struck down by the highest court in the country almost 20 years ago ; they detain academics without warrants, handcuff former judges ; and horror of horrors, force brilliant students to appear in technical college entrance examinations as proxies to the wards of senior police officers. All in the name of fighting the nation's battle against militancy.-, Punjab is swamped by uniformed forces—army, 450 companies of paramilitary forces, 60,000 policemen, 12,000 special officers, 20,000 home guards—contributing to the psyche of societal insecurity, testifying to the awesome power of the invisible militant to destroy you and the arrogant helplessness of the visible police force to protect your life and limbs ... What sustains militancy to-day is not so much Pakistan-inspired violence or the separatist cause as the total absence of governmental interest in Punjab and the unchecked power of the police vis-a-vis common people.""

Our only difference with V.N. Narayanan, the Editor-in-Chief of the Tribune, as brought out by our narration, is that it is not just lack of interest on the part of the Central government that has driven the State from disaster to disaster. What we want to emphasise is that the Centre has consistently followed a policy in line with the Blue Star attack and the Wood Rose operation.

The latest case of police outrage is the murder of two persons and a small child of four years. While they were going in a car and were chased by the police in plain clothes in the presence of the co-villagers, who vainly protested about these cold-blooded murders. The following is the news item published in the Tribune and the editorial of the paper.

“Cops kill three in cold blood (The Tribune, July 13, 1992 wrote)

Ambala, July 12—Trigger-happy cops shot dead two young men and a child at Dhulkot village, adjoining the Air Force station, here this after-noon.

The killings evoked a spontaneous protest by villagers, who blocked the G.T. road near the King Fisher tourism complex to demand the arrest and prosecution of the “guilty” policemen. The blockage was continuing till 7 p.m. when the report was filed.

According to the SP, Ambala, Mr. K.P. Singh, one sub-inspector of the Haryana police and four policemen of Punjab had been arrested in this connection.

According to villagers, Mr. Jaswinder Singh (28) had gone to see off his father-in-law at Ambala cantonment bus stand in his white Maruti (HNF 3223). He was accompanied by his son, Harvinder Singh (4), his brother-in-law (wife’s brother), Mr. Jasbir Singh (24) and Jasbir’s son Gaurav Singh (5).

It seems a raiding party of the police (which later on was identified as that of the Punjab police) started chasing Jaswinder’s car on way to his Dhulkot village where his family had been living for generations.

Mr. Jaswinder mistook the policemen, who were in civil dress and carried sophisticated weapons, as militants, and did not stop the vehicle.

Reaching Dhulkot, Jaswinder and his brother-in-law stopped the car and tried to take shelter behind heaps of cow dung. The policemen opened fire, killing Jaswinder Singh and his son, Harvinder on the spot. Jasbir breathed his last in the Ambala city civil hospital. The incident took place around 2.15 p.m.

The villagers alleged that the policemen, who were in three vehicles, after killing the “innocents” waved their arms in the air and danced, shouting that they had killed “Lali” who was responsible for 500 killings and carried a reward of Rs. 10 lakh on

his head.

They also alleged that a policeman lifted Harvinder in his arm and shot the child in the head.

No one was allowed by the police, the villagers alleged, to help Jasbir, who was gasping for breath. It was only after the arrival of the SP, who resides nearby, on the scene that the bodies of the injured were taken to the hospital alongwith Gaurav Singh.

Hundreds of villagers, mostly members of the majority community, blocked the GT road in protest against the killings. They did not end the blockage even after Mr. K.P. Singh announced that five policemen, including sub-inspector Dhian Singh of the Ambala CIA staff, had been arrested under Section 302 (murder) of the IPC.

The villagers were demanding that Gaurav should be brought there from the police station and the arrested policemen produced before them. The SP and the DC Mr. T.R.

Sharma, after consultations between them agreed to bring the arrested policemen to the scene provided the protestors agreed to sit at a safe distance. The CRPF was deployed to keep the mob under control. The arrested policemen, in handcuffs, were shown to the mob in a slow-moving truck. But the mob was not satisfied and continued the blockage.

Mr. K.P. Singh told newsmen that a raiding party of the Punjab police had come to Ambala along with a ucat". The Ambala police provided them with two guides. The "cat" identified Jasbir Singh as dreaded militant Nirvair Singh Nindi. The mistaken identity led to the tragic incident. Unfortunately, Jasbir had a striking resemblance with Nirvair Singh, he said

The SP said though Dhian Singh was not accompanying the Punjab police and had reached the scene after the incident, he had been arrested because the villagers had named him in the FIR. Jaswinder Singh was a businessman and son of an advocate of the area, the late Mr. Prem Singh."

"From Behia to Ambala (The editorial of the Tribune July 14, 1992)

Policemen in Punjab have evolved their own version of the American saying : "Give the dog a bad name and hang him." Shoot anyone you like and then call him a terrorist. Such is their arrogant disregard for law and citizen's rights that policemen do not even feel the need to slap the terrorist label on persons they kill. On Sunday a raiding party of policemen from Punjab chased a Maruti car right up to Dhulkot in Ambala district and killed two young men and a five-year-old child and, true to style, after killing them the policemen danced gleefully, claiming that they had killed a notorious terrorist "responsible for 500 killings and carrying a reward of Rs. 10 lakh on his head". If promotion of terrorism needed any strong spurs, the Punjab policemen's action in Ambala could be the ideal answer to the separatists' prayers. But such savagery is no isolated incident. Only the other day, a few personnel of the CRPF allegedly raped the wife of a gardener in Mohali and when the man retaliated in shock and outrage, he was promptly branded a terrorist and a harbourer of criminals. Weeks earlier, at Behia village in Amritsar district, the security forces used innocent villagers as shields to fight hiding militants and, at the end of the encounter, the killed villagers were promptly branded as terrorists. There is a perverse police law in operation here : if you die of police bullets you are a terrorist; if you are shot by others, you are a terrorist victim to enable the police to shoot somebody else and claim a reward for having solved your murder. Between the militants and the police, the right to life of a citizen in Punjab seems to have been suspended indefinitely.

From Behla to Ambala, there seems to be a distressing pattern in the police behaviour. The attitude seems to be that, since they are fighting the battle of the nation against separatism, terrorism, anti-nationalism and a whole horde of other isms, they should not be questioned for indulging in naked barbarism. Punjab's policemen have no inhibitions about crossing into another state and engaging themselves in a shooting spree. Mr. Beant Singh, who wants to solve the Punjab problem in a manner which would take it away from the security syndrome and into a process of political understanding and debate, ought to be seriously concerned about what is happening in the state. The Chief Minister has been saying that at one important level the problem is one of law and order. He must be worried that the men in uniform carrying deadly weapons are responsible for violation

of law and breakdown of order. The spontaneous anger of the people of Ambala over the action of the policemen ought to be an eyeopener. They do not view the crime through coloured communal glasses. The perpetrators of the gruesome outrage in Ambala deserve as stringent a punishment as the generous rewards that the government gives them for killing “dreaded terrorists”.

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## 9

### CONCLUSION

We have presented the- story and the events of" the struggle between the Centre and the Sikhs since 1947. We have also traced the background of the policies and the factors that have contributed to the grim tragedy of Punjab that is casting its shadow all around. We crave the indulgence of the reader for our giving a brief recapitulation of the facts to enable the reader to see the rationale of our conclusion.

The first part of the background is the basic ideological difference between Sikhism and other Indian religions. Sikhism represents a whole-life world view and a full-blooded combination between the spiritual and the empirical life of man. This is in sharp contrast to the ideals of mystic quietism, monasticism, other-worldliness, withdrawal from empirical life, Ahimsa and personal Mokhsa (salvation) preached by the dichotomous religious systems.

The significance of Guru Nanak's message lies in emphasizing the essential role of religion as an instrument of liberation, personal as well as social. In the integrated vision of the Guru\* social responsibility forms a necessary part of the spiritual attributes of the ideal man. It is this element that constitutes an essential tenet of the Sikh faith. This imparts to Sikhism its distinctive and historic character, role and personality. Again it is this element that gives social vitality to a Sikh and inspires him to lead with honour a vigorous and valorous life. He draws his entire moral strength and social ethos from his religious base and faith which is universal in its approach. In the daily Sikh prayer, the stress is laid on Sarbat da bhala (welfare of all). The history of the Sikhs reveals that while they are strongly opposed to a hierarchical system of caste and inequality, they are willing to cooperate with sister groups and other communities for a universal and laudable cause. They resist to the utmost any onslaught on their identity s liberty and faith. CONCLUSION

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To raise the lowest strata of society from the level assigned to them by the caste ideology and to make them masters of the land is the third achievement of the revolutionary Sikh Movement. It was a great social landmark of the Sikh ethos and culture that a person like Jassa Singh Kalal, a 'Sudra' in the caste hierarchy became the uncrowned leader of the Sikhs and had no social inhibitions when he struck the coin with the inscription of JassaN Kalal on it. The success of the Sikh movement depended on the strength it derived from the masses. Abdali's greatest lieutenant, Najib-ud-daulah, 'openly admitted himself beaten at the hands of an entire national arms and in jubilant spirits and nascent energy, increasing like ants and locusts''\*

Fourth, the Sikhs, though in a microscopic minority in the country, were in the forefront of India's struggle for freedom. In all, more than two—thirds of the total number of freedom fighters shot, hanged and exiled to the Andamans by the British, were the Sikhs. It was on the ashes of the martyrdom of Sikh freedom fighters that India built its citadel of freedom.

Further, while the Sikhs had been engaged in a protracted struggle with the Government over the creation of the PunJLibi Suba for over a decade, when the call came to defend the country, the Sikh soldiers as well as the average rural folk in the Punjab made an admirable contribution towards the 1965 War. And again, during the Emergency (1975), in the all prevailing darkness when all candles of liberty had been blown off, the Sikhs led the 'Save Democracy' campaign in the country and spurned all offers of a secret compromise from the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The above makes it clear that the Sikh cultural ethos, which has an identity of its own, has never been exclusive or parochial in its approach. In fact, on the other hand, it has invariably maintained and struggled for universal and human goals.

Let us also record the second part of the background, namely, the pseudo-nationalism of the Congress and the hierarchical caste system of the Hindus which continued to hold its



sway over the minds of its leaders. In spite of its secular professions, the Congress, by and large, identified itself with Hindu communalism which derived its ideas and inspiration from its religious past. This past was closely linked with the ideology of caste which over the centuries had been the foundation of a religiously ordained social fabric. The Maratha - Peshwa rule, a period of Hindu revival, was known for the rigid perpetuation of the Brahmanical caste system. In that rule some lower castes could not enter the city of Pune before 9 A.M. and after 3 P.M. because their long shadows could defile the higher castes, especially the Brahmins.

Mahatma Gandhi also identified himself with the caste oriented Hindu religious system. Even his call for Ram Rajya aimed at the revival of the Hindu cultural past, including the perpetuation of the caste system. A noteworthy event was the Mahatma's fast against reservations for the Scheduled castes. He went on a fast even after he had told Ambedkar and the Round Table Committee appointed in this regard that he would not oppose it if all other parties approved of it. Later, his support for the entry of untouchables to the Hindu temples was quite lukewarm since he stated that Hindu religious injunctions did not permit it. Scheduled castes, therefore, felt that Mahatma's fast was primarily aimed at keeping the untouchables as a subservient wing of the Hindu caste hierarchy subject to all its humiliating religious injunctions. Hence the alienation of the Sudras of the lower castes.

In the 1937 elections, the unwillingness of the Congress to share power with the Muslim League, as understood earlier convinced the Muslims that once in power the Congress would be disinclined to protect the legitimate Muslim interests. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote, "The basis of Pakistan is the fear of interference by the Centre in Muslim majority areas as the Hindus will be in a majority in the Centre... The situation in India is such that all attempts to establish a centralised and unitary government are bound to fail,"

It is well known that Jinnah stuck to the demand of Pakistan only after Nehru had put a different interpretation on the Cabinet Mission Formula from the one given by the Mission and accepted by all earlier. The Khud-i-Khidmatgars of the Frontier Province felt betrayed by the Congress, when in contradiction to Mahatma Gandhi's earlier statement that partition of India would take place on his dead body, he himself supported the resolution for the partition. Similarly, another minority, the Parsees, also felt betrayed in regard to the Nariman affair, when Nariman was excluded from the leadership of Bombay Province and a Hindu was selected instead.

The Sikhs were the only minority who had fully trusted the words of Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders. Their contribution to the freedom struggle was the largest and they suffered the most in loss of men and property in the forced migration of 1947. The story of Sikh disillusionment and woes started soon after 1947. For, the Congress, which enjoyed the monopoly of power in the country, began to play, in the name of secularism and nationalism, a very deceptive role. The pro-Hindu trend of the party was crystallised when it decided to adopt Hindi, instead of Hindustani, as the lingua franca of the country. It was made plain that the party identified itself with the Hindu cultural past. Except in name, the ideals of integration and pluralism were given up.

The greatest disillusionment to the Sikhs came when the Congress backed out from its undertakings and assurances and proposed a centralised constitution in stead of a federal

one. The Sikh members of the Assembly protested and reminded the Congress of its declared policies and promises. As the protest carried no weight, the Sikh representatives refused to append their signatures to the new constitution. The new Congress approach towards the Sikhs became clear when Patel bluntly turned down the demand for a Punjabi Suba and told Master Tara Singh, "I am ready to concede it. But you will have only that much land as falls to your share on the grounds of population. So Punjab area would be halved. And you will have to take back all the Sikhs from the rest of India. Now you form 17% of the army. They will have to be dismissed. Are you prepared for it?"\* It became plain that though a majority in the Punjab, the Sikhs would not be allowed ever to gain power in the state. When the linguistic states were formed in the country, Punjab was deprived of its due, obviously because the Sikhs would be in a majority in it. Even the area of PEPSU in which the Sikhs were in majority was not allowed to exist. The failure to apply the linguistic principle to Punjab, even though Punjabi was one of the fourteen languages accepted in the Constitution, was another betrayal. When Jinnah made tempting offers to the Sikhs, Nehru had made a solemn promise of creating an area for the Sikhs where they could enjoy the 'glow of freedom.' But after 1947, the promise was cynically repudiated. Refusal to create a linguistic state in Punjab was nothing but open discrimination against the Sikhs. Nehru once told a correspondent of the Times, London, in an exclusive interview, that he would rather face civil war on the issue of the Punjabi speaking state than concede it.<sup>5</sup> This rigid posture clearly revealed his communal and short-sighted approach. The Congress thus set the pattern for a calculated and discriminatory policy against the Sikhs. Such a policy, the Sikhs felt, was aimed at depriving them of their freedom and participation as equal partners in the destiny of the country. They felt that 'the high sounding modern democratic postulates and platitudes would facilitate their gradual submergence and annihilation as a political entity and cultural minority.'<sup>6</sup> Therefore the Sikh struggle for Punjabi Suba, the only hope for their socio-political salvation, continued.

The core of the Congress policy was the suspicion of the Sikhs. But the suspicion was unfounded as the Sikhs, who had fought for the freedom and honour of the country for the last five centuries, gave ample proof of their patriotism during the three border wars in the post-Independence period. So much so that during the Indo—Pakistan War (1965), they suspended their agitation for Punjabi Suba and overwhelmingly participated in the war. It was after this war that the creation of a Punjabi speaking state was agreed to, in the short interlude of Shastri era. But with the coming of Indira Gandhi at the helm of affairs, the discriminatory policies of the Congress became more naked and aggressive. It was ensured that the political status of the new Punjabi speaking state was completely crippled. All progress, industrial or agricultural, in a state depends on hydel power and water. But in the case of Punjab, irrigation, hydel power and their development have been kept in Central hands, even though these are exclusively state subjects in the Constitution. The demand of Anandpur Sahib Resolution was only an attempt to have a release from the tight Central grip over the development of the Punjab, Hence from 1966 to date, the Sikh struggle has continued.

Since 1947, the facts of the Congress policies and approach towards the

Sikhs have been openly hostile. They can mislead no one, much less a

disinterested historian. That policy very clearly falls into the three pronged pattern of Machiavelli laid down by him for controlling a liberty loving area, acquired by the Prince as a colony. It is Machiavelli's dictum that has all along governed the Congress policy towards the Sikhs. First, since 1947, Punjab has mostly been ruled by the Centre through a Congress ministry which has invariably looked to Delhi for survival and guidance. Till 1966, the Sikhs were kept as a minority and the Centre ruled the State. After 1966, whenever an Akali ministry was formed in this sub-state, grounds were found to demolish or dismiss it within a year or so. No Akali ministry was allowed to complete its full term. In no other state in India has, since 1966, the President's rule been imposed for a longer period and for a larger number of times than in Punjab. Thus, the two principles of Machiavelli to govern a liberty loving people through stooge government and by the local residents of the Prince (President's rule in this case) have been literally implemented. The third destructive aspect of Machiavelli's dictum relates to the despoilation of the area. Hence the Central decisions in this regard have been sinister and ruinous. The Sikhs have had a tradition for service in the army. By the unconstitutional imposition of the population formula, the employment scope of the Punjab peasantry has been drastically reduced, thereby creating considerable economic distress. Thus the tradition,

the strength and the morale of the rural Punjab, as the sword arm of the country, has been seriously sought to be eroded.

The greatest strength of the Sikhs and their masses was the economic health of the rural Punjab and its peasantry, dependent largely on agriculture. We have noted that the Punjab migrants left 22 lac acres perennially irrigated land in Pakistan but they got only 4 lac acres instead. It is the spirit of enterprise of these small peasants that, undismayed, they have brought about 55 lac acres of their Barani land under irrigation by sinking over 8 lac private tube wells at a cost of over Rupees 1200 crores. It is they who were the first to bring about in Asia the Green Revolution and today contribute annually about 73% of the wheat reserves and 48% of the rice reserves of India for distribution in the deficit areas, But the Centre has tried to hit them as hard as it could. Unconstitutionally over 75% of the available river waters have been diverted to non-riparian Hindu states, even though every drop of those waters is badly needed in Punjab and it was emphatically advised by the experts of the World Bank that the diversion of those waters to distant desert areas would be unjustified, especially because those could be more economically and productively used in Punjab itself.

The shadow of despoliation of Punjab is dark enough when we see that about 40 to 50 lac acres of the tubewell and the other irrigated area would

become 'barani' (un-irrigated) because of the diversion of Punjab waters to non-riparian states and because of the three fourth of shallow tubjwells becoming non-functional following the deep fall of the water table in the State. The Punjab's agricultural progress has only been arrested but it is going to suffer a major man-made calamity causing serious despoilation and distress in the State. decisions in this regard have been sinister and ruinous. The Sikhs have had a tradition for service in the army. By the unconstitutional imposition of the population formula, the employment scope of the Punjab peasantry has been drastically reduced, thereb} creating considerable economic distress. Thus the tradition, the strength and the morale of the rural Punjab, as the sword arm of the country, has been seriously sought to be eroded.

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exercise in hypocrisy, as the Army had already taken positions around the Golden Temple and the firing had begun. Major General Antia observed :  
“The situation was reminiscent of the one prevailing in Assam in 1980.

When the Prime Minister was continuing her political talks with all shades

of public opinion, the Home Minister and the Governor were negotiating to bring about an amicable settlement, the Central Government secretly deployed the army in full strength. The Prime Minister's June 2 appeal cannot therefore have been genuine and the conclusion must be that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead,"<sup>11</sup>

The above narration makes it clear that after following studiously and clearly the three fold strategy of Machiavelli, the Government devised still harsher strategies to weaken the Sikh community. Unlike the Hindu society, the Community has had an internal cohesion. It has always been willing to stand up, struggle and sacrifice when a call for a public purpose is given by its leadership. The greatest strength of the community are its masses who have the capacity both to work and suffer for a socio-religious or a universal goal. Their capacity to serve, suffer and sacrifice has been unsurpassed in the country. This small community has suffered death of thousands, imprisonment of lacs and loss of crores in their fight against discrimination by the Centre. In all their struggles the Sikhs have derived their moral strength and inspiration from their religion and their Gurdwaras. The Government found that though it had blocked all roads for a constitutional or a negotiated solution, the Sikh morale was high and the struggle against the Centre was going on unabated. It, therefore, decided on

a final but a new line of assault. The Indian army was asked to go ahead with the long-planned attack on the Darbar Sahib on the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the builder of the shrine, on the pretext of 'flushing out terrorists.' Government's reluctance to solve the problem, the manner and the magnitude of the attack raise questions to which there are no satisfactory answers except that it was a total attack on the heart of the community so as to teach the Sikhs a lesson.

Many questions arise. How did the Government determine that the persons inside the Golden Temple were terrorists ? Their names were not given and no warrants were ever issued for their arrest. What criterion did the Indian army adopt to make distinction between the pilgrims and the militants ?

Why was it essential for the Government to attack the Temple on the holy day when thousands of pilgrims had assembled there to pay their obeisance ?

Was it necessary to enact the gory scene of blood, brutality and destruction at the Golden Temple ? Why was the Sikh Reference Library and archives, which had a collection of rare manuscripts and Hukamnamas bearing the signatures or marks of the Gurus, set on fire, after the attack had come to an end ? How was it that a large number of Sikhs whose dead bodies were brought for post-mortem had their hands tied at the back and had been shot in the chest or the head ? Why has the Government not released a list of



casualties to this day ? No healthy rationale can answer these intriguing questions.

Along with Darbar Sahib, seventy two other Gurdwaras all over Punjab and even outside the state were simultaneously attacked, although there was no resistance from inside them. The Sikhs felt that it was a calculated move to destroy their faith, culture and identity. The vengeance the Indian army wreaked on the non-combating Sikh population during the subsequent Wood Rose oppression, created a climate of hatred and revolt against the authorities. In its drive to combat and curb extremism, the Government has in fact, swollen the ranks of the extremists. It has created a permanent divide between the Sikhs and the Hindus. For the first time it created, after 1947, a revolt in a section of the Army. It has led to the assassination of the Prime Minister and the Chief of the Army staff. Instead of solving any problem, it has only invited disaster, discord and disunity.

When a patient suffers from a malady and the doctor administers a medicine, judgement about the competence and intention of the doctor can only be formed by the results of the treatment prescribed. The attack has neither solved the Punjab problem, nor restored peace in the State. In fact, both the patient and the malady have grown worse. We have quoted numerous foreign observers, who immediately after the Blue Star assault predicted its

ominous results. They believed that just as the Jallianwala Bagh was a point of decline of British rule in India, a similar fate awaited Indira Gandhi. Not many persons believe that the Blue Star attack was not a blunder. But the attitude of the Centre after the 1984 attack is extremely revealing. Normally, the ill-effects of a treatment would involve a change of the physician or the medicine. Here a very strange thing has happened. The physician in Delhi instead of changing his medicine has heavily increased its dose. After 1984, the Sikhs, by and large, believe that the Blue Star attack, the Wood Rose oppression, the November 1984 massacres of thousands of innocent Sikhs and subsequent repression in the Punjab and elsewhere have been calculated acts. An evident question for a rational man arises why this has happened. The answer would reinforce our conclusion that the Blue Star attack was not intended to solve any problem of Punjab, including that of law and order, but was a heavy stroke to destroy the morale of the Sikhs. For, the subsequent conduct of Delhi in persisting with the same policy only shows that the objective was not to heal but vigorously to pursue with the Machiavellian formula.

Though the community remained sullen and alienated, the discredited Akali leadership was brought to its knees and made to sign on the dotted line of the Accord, under which a major diversion of Punjab waters to the non-riparian

states was later secured through the Tribunal. The Accord was a betrayal by the Akalis led by Harchand Singh Longowal. For, the verdict against which the Morcha had been started in 1982 was accepted.

We now come to the caption 'India Commits Suicide' of our book. It was naive for any one to ignore that a community in whom for two hundred years, the ten Masters had worked to create a universal ideology, ethos and culture, would resist and react to discrimination and suppression with its grit and might. The world does not know of such a long period of training and motivation of a people by their prophets. Their history of 500 years shows that they have the capacity to work, suffer and fight for life, liberty and justice. The community has developed remarkable assets as undaunted soldiers, as hard working producers and as a cohesive group, willing to struggle for righteousness

The story given by us makes it plain that since the very time of Independence of India, the Centre had decided that the Sikhs as a community should be weakened, their identity eroded and never allowed to gain power in an area where, as a majority, they could stand with pride on their own feet and develop their personality. It is this background decision which, as the facts have unmistakably explained, led to the Machiavellian policy of despoliation, rule through stooge ministry or through the

President's administration. On no other rationale can the diametric change of approach of the Centre towards the Sikhs be explained, especially the studied and vindictive manner in which Punjab's river waters and hydel power, the sap of a community's life in the modern world have been drained to enervate, demoralise and destroy the economic base of a people.

In the above context, two points have to be assessed and answered. The first, has it been wise to seek to destroy the assets in the country that have been created over the centuries? Here three further questions arise. First, will it be possible for the Centre to erode the strength and cohesion of the community by the methods it has employed? Second, supposing that it is possible to do so, would it not be self-destructive, both for the ethical health and future of the country? Third, assuming that the existing assets could be discarded and undone without any damage to the country, have we created or will it be possible to create alternative native assets for the well-being of the State?;

The second and a related issue is the moral health of the country and its capacity to forge ahead in the socio-political and material climate which is prevalent in the country and outside it. Three facts about the present Indian life are undisputed. First, is a clear fall in the moral health of the leadership and the Administration virtually in all walks of life. The second is the

increasing evidence of fissiparous tendencies and like problems in many areas of the country, indicating a downward trend in social and national cohesion. Third is the economic factor. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening very fast, with a mounting population of the poor.

Equally evident is the vulgar exhibition of glamorous living of the elite. The poverty line is rapidly going up, touching almost the 50 percent mark. No serious attempt is being made to control the rising population. In fact, socio-political will to do so is absent. In view of these adverse factors and having alienated the Muslims and the Sikhs have we still the capacity to secure national cohesion and achieve socio-political growth ? We wonder, if many would give optimistic answers to the questions raised by us.

It is significant that the mighty Soviet Union has crumbled mainly because of the lack of its internal cohesion, discipline and value system. Who can say that we as a people are richer in qualities and assets than the Russians? It is equally undeniable that the centuries old caste system has vitiated the growth of any social cohesion, not to speak of a national cohesion. The violent clash of sentiments after the suggestion for implementing the recommendations of the Mandal Commission indicates that the gulf between the higher and the lower castes is still wide and acute. A recent historian A. C. Bannerjee emphasizes, "There could be no social revolution in India without a frontal

attack on the caste system which crippled human dignity and formed a dyke against spiritual regeneration through direct approach to God. In Hindu society religion and caste have been inseparable for ages.”<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, it is the parochial policies of the Congress since the 1920's & that have led to the present rise and influence of the BJP. Its coming into power, the Blue Star attack, and the Ram Janam Bhumi—Babri Masjid affair are a logical result of a policy of looking back, practiced first by Mahatma Gandhi; Nehru and Patel and later by Indira Gandhi, who on that account earned for herself the image of 'Durga' from Hindu India. The approach of re-emphasising and reviving the past has only militated against the growth of a universal ethics. The attack on the Golden Temple, not only clearly crystallised the Centre's approach towards the Sikhs, but also made the divide between the Hindus and the Sikhs complete. In the majority community there was universal satisfaction at the event. In Parliament it was hailed by the Home Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao, in these words : “Army action in the Golden Temple Complex was the right action at the right time and in the right manner. There could not be a greater hour of glory for the Indian polity, democracy and secularism.”<sup>18</sup> The Sikhs felt it to be a vengeful attack by an alien government. The November massacres of the Sikhs and Centre's reaction thereafter, are also the logical results of the

thinking that has governed Central policies since 1947.

Viewed in this light, the struggle between the Sikhs and the Centre extending over the previous four decades looks doubly suicidal. Today there is a general realisation that the consistently iniquitous and untenable policies of the Centre in dealing with the Punjab have brought the State to a point where it faces a serious threat of large scale despoliation of its land. The events suggest that it was a tragic miscalculation to follow its discriminatory policies and finally to apply the military solution to the Sikh problem. Our anticipation is that given the historical background, training and' ethos of the Sikhs, the Centre would not be able to restore real normalcy in the State. So far peace in Punjab has no where been in sight. Nor do we see the least sign of any change in the Central policy. Refuting the Union Home Minister S, B. Chavan's repeated announcement about a likely package on Punjab, Prime Minister P V. Narsimha Rao categorically stated that "there was no question of any "package" on Punjab and that the Rajiv—Longowal accord was the only "package" he had in mind".<sup>14</sup> It was unfortunate that the only solution the Prime Minister contemplated for Punjab was the Deed of Surrender of 1985 signed by Longowal, euphemistically called the 'Accord'. As explained, the 'Accord' had no content whatsoever for the Punjab except for what it had accomplished for the Centre and the other states.

The above is the clear position in the Punjab. The alienation of the people of Kashmir is no less, if not worse. The BJP openly declares that it has a mandate to construct the Temple • it Ayodhya and that courts have nothing to do with the matter of faith. The Central Government, advertently or inadvertently, is unwilling to do anything to rectify the situation. The Golden Temple could be attacked on a Gurburb day involving the murder of thousands of innocent pilgrims. But persons defiantly violating court orders have not been touched, much less a military method applied. We do not recommend it but one cannot help taking note of the ambivalent attitude of the authorities who had been quick in applying military solutions in Nagaland, Mizoram, Punjab, Kashmir and Sri Lanka. But no one thinks of it in relation to Ayodhya. This deceives no one. It exposes the divisive and destructive trends of the present policies.

The unfortunate part is that these realities of the situation are well known to the masses in the State, who apart from being alienated have become hostile because of the brutalised Administration with which they have had to deal with during the preceding almost a decade. The problem is not of a few hundred or a few thousand extremists. The real problem is the sullen hostility generated in a determined people with a specific history for struggle as mentioned by us. The position in the neighbouring Kashmir, so far as the



hostility of the people is concerned, is not different.

Evidently the people in the two border States stand alienated. With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism over the last decades, there is little possibility of the reversal of self-defeating policies pursued by Delhi, especially when all policies, apart from being divisive and discriminatory, are over dependent on the use of naked force against one's own people. Mightier states like Soviet Union have been unable to retain Eastern European states or even some of the old Czarist provinces with separate ethnic or religious affinities. The question has to be answered whether we can do it ?

The story given above leads to five inevitable inferences. It is important to emphasize that whatever be the jargon of propaganda of the media and the sophistry of some scholars, the conclusions that follow relate to the perceptions of the Sikh masses. For, no understanding of the struggle in Punjab can be possible, or even relevant, unless these realities of the situation are recognised and grasped. First, they feel that since Independence the Centre has a consistent policy of demolishing Sikh identity. There are five major realities, they feel, which cannot be explained or understood in any other manner.

First, is the Centre's going out of the way to denude Punjab of its waters and hydel power which form the very base of the sustenance and strength of the

Sikh masses who form the backbone of the community. This is a direct blow aimed at the peasantry which affects them and about which they cannot remain unconcerned whatever be the reaction of the well to do Sikhs in the Punjab or outside. Second is the attack on the Golden Temple. The intellectualised community and the Administration that planned the attack showed their complete inefficiency, nay bankruptcy when they did not anticipate that the attack would irretrievably alienate a community that had been a regular asset in the past and that it would create a serious mutiny in one of the best sections of their defence forces and further that it would involve a risk to the high ups in Delhi. Thirdly, the brunt of state terrorism has been felt not so much by the classes among the Sikhs as by innumerable peasant families, almost in each village in the rural Punjab. Visual impressions and stories of oppression travel faster and deep down than the propaganda of any media.

The fourth reality is that the Centre has lost complete credibility about its honesty and motives in relation to the Sikhs, flibeiro and other administrators in Punjab have been bluntly, though foolishly, conveying that they had let loose agent provocateurs in the form of vigilante groups who, they know, had been continuing all kinds of crimes including murders, rape and »orture against innocent persons. True, states organise such

activities in the form of spying generally in foreign lands. The mass of people in a country are unaware of such activities and maintain a healthy respect and loyalty for their government and patriotism for their country. But both the numerous activities of the security forces and the declared object and policy behind them have created a conviction in the villages of vengeful hostility of the Centre against them. And convictions grown at the grass roots cannot be undone by any high sounding rationale or Government propaganda.

The fifth point intimately connected with the other four is that for the rural peasants, the youth are martyrs who are, they feel, only struggling for their religion and a righteous cause. For them, as A.T. Embree emphasises, they are heroes, “The fact that they are gangsters in the eyes of the law does not prevent them from being defenders of the faith in their own eyes and, more important, in the eyes of many members of the Sikh community. Long ago it was decided in the Christian Church that the validity of the sacraments did not depend upon the personal morality of the performing priest. In the same way the violence -even the gangsterism—of the terrorist Sikhs does not invalidate their acts in defence of truth. Pacifism is no more a virtue among Sikhs of Bhindranwale’s persuasion than it was among the ancient Israelites as they drove out the Canaanites. We have grown accustomed to the idea

that warfare is the monopoly of the state, and we forget that for a believing community, whether the Sikhs or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the highest duty is to preserve itself by whatever means it can. In the late 1930's a young Sikh, Bhagat Singh, was hanged by the government of India for crimes not unlike those in which Sikhs are now engaging in Punjab, and he was praised by Indian nationalists, including Mahatma Gandhi, for his courage and patriotism in acting against the British.”<sup>5</sup> It is obvious, that the struggle in Punjab cannot be described either as extremism or terrorism or fundamentalism. It is a fight for survival and identity. For, no movement with spontaneous and vigorous involvement of the youth could last for almost a decade

unless it had the inspiration of Sikh ethos, history and the active though silent sympathy and support of the people at large.

We have explained the realities as perceived and understood by the mass of people in the Punjab at the level where movements are founded and from where they gain their strength. The Central policies as revealed by the events, especially of the last decade, have led to a conviction that Muslims and Sikhs in India are hostages. The Centre has developed a notion that Punjab and Kashmir can be ruled by the sheer force of arms which local communities cannot for long defy. It has failed to realize that the alienation

of the Sikhs and the Muslims is fraught with dangerous signals. To believe that it will be possible to subdue the Sikh struggle in Punjab is to ignore the Sikh history and ethos. Second, we have an unfriendly neighbour with a part of Kashmir in its possession, who cannot for its sake remain neutral regarding Kashmir.

The danger appears to be real. Because as the events have unmistakably revealed, Central policies in Punjab have, by all measures, been on a course of suicide. This reminds us of the warning given by Swami Dharma Tiratha decades back that “some of the national foibles which have kept us in tutelage of other nations and cultures for many centuries in the past and which are, even to-day, the main sources of our inefficiency as a nation, suggest that if at any time Indian nation ceases to live it will undoubtedly be a case of suicide and not of murder.”

**“ India Committs Suicide “**

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