

**Punjab Politics 1937-47:  
Role of Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh  
And Baldev Singh**

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*- Oh Parents! Thou made me  
to trek that way  
Boulders, impediments and countless  
dilemma to lay  
Thou words always inspired me  
to express  
what I wished to say*

*My Humble Submission*

# **PUNJAB POLITICS 1937- 47: ROLE OF JOGINDER SINGH, UJJAL SINGH AND BALDEV SINGH**

**ABSTRACT**

For P.hD Degree  
in the Faculty of Social Sciences  
in the Subject of History



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## ABSTRACT

In the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century, a particular section of society in Punjab, owning a lot of land and possessing education, started active involvement in the politics. It was the policy of British Administration to develop a deep understanding with big landlords for imperial purposes. The British government in India richly rewarded these loyalist supporters. We have a long history of devoted and loyal Sikh aristocrats who assisted British Government. After 1920 there is a shift in Sikh politics of Punjab when a very influential section of aristocrats was in high esteem on account of their riches and education. This particular period in India is known for the political activism both at national and provincial level.

Little has been written on how a policy was created by the British Government to maintain control of Punjab, which led to the formation of an aristocratic class. The Sikh aristocracy has been similarly ignored by the historians in spite of the fact that it not only dominated politics in the region from the 1920's until the eve of British departure but also acquired the status of third claimant for Sikhs. The achievement of Provincial Autonomy and response of the Sikh aristocracy has also received only cursory glance, although the Punjab was divided and Pakistan was created. The study makes a humble attempt to examine Sikh aristocracy keeping in mind the role of three Sikhs – Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh (1937-47). The study has potential to examine Punjab's history after provincial autonomy, election and creation of a trio. The three didn't start their political career at one time, one place and one political ideology yet they shared provincial and national platforms to represent their community.

A complex political formation was taking birth in Punjab which was seeded and guided by influential resourceful aristocrats. They were educated, ambitious and rich. They started taking interest in Punjab Politics. It was the Chief Khalsa Diwan which attracted aristocrats like Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh of Attari, Sir Daljit Singh etc. The men attached to Chief Khalsa Diwan were well educated, rich and loyal to British government. They believed in representations and constitutional methods for socio- religious and political upliftment of their community. After the formation of Akali Dal in 1920 the centre of Sikh activities slowly shifted to Akali Dal. The Akali Dal discovered that confrontation with the administration through Nonviolence, Non co-operation or Passive resistance movements was more productive of results than representations to the rulers or resolutions in legislatures. At this time Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh were leading Akali Dal but for political and constitutional negotiations they depended on the aristocrats like Ujjal Singh, Buta Singh and Sampurna Singh. These men of letters

and lands represented the Sikh community at the Second Round Table Conference. After 1937 Sardar Baldev Singh was becoming a mentor of Sikh politics. He was a product of the Akali Dal, shaking hands with the Unionists, hugging the Congress and at times sitting with the British govt.

An effort has been done to study the role of Sir Joginder Singh , Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh in the Punjab politics from 1937-1947 on the basis of contemporary sources . The role of above said aristocrats in various moves of Punjab politics and national struggle has not so far discussed critically. These leaders represented the Sikh Community in the council of State and looked after various departments. Sardar Joginder Singh (1877-1946) was appointed Agricultural Minister of Punjab governemt from 1926-37, founder member of Khalsa National party and one of the architect of the Khalsa Defence League of India. Sardar Ujjal Singh (1895-1966) was an elected member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (1926-36); Parliamentary Secretary (Home) 1936-41, met Cripps Mission in 1942; a member of the constituent Assembly 1946. Sardar Baldev Singh was appointed as Development Minister of Punjab (1942-46), represented Sikh Community in Cripps Mission, Cabinet Minister (1946) and joined Interim government.

The whole study has been divided into six chapters :-

- **Historical Background : Aristocracy and the Punjab Politics.**
- **Election of 1937 and formation of Sikh Trio ( 1937 – 1939 ).**
- **World war – II , Cripps Mission and task of the Trio Sikh Leaders (1939-1942).**
- **The Punjab Politics : Demand for Sikh Homeland (1939-1945).**
- **Transfer of power and the Sikh Leaders (1945-1946).**
- **Whither Punjab : Violence , Partition and Freedom.**
- **Conclusion**

## **PREFACE**

*It is well known in history that the prop up of local elite or aristocracy was of vital importance to the British Government in India. It enabled the British to rule gigantic areas of land and massive populations with their superior diplomatic policies. The administration tried to win them over by providing concessions, benefits and liberal distribution of patronage. The Indian Chiefs responded in both encouraging and unpleasant ways. British occupation of Punjab after two Anglo-Sikh Wars and Revolt of 1857 resulted into British stalk for buddies Positive political strategies resulted into the birth of strong aristocracy in Punjab combining elements from all the communities. While setting their house, the British Government had never neglected the Sikh feudatory Chiefs. They spared no means to secure a dominant position for the Sikhs.*

*Without doubt, the decade of 1937-47 in the Punjab politics witnesses a dramatic change. The Government of India Act 1935 added new dimensions to the political environment in India which led to Provincial Autonomy. A detailed study of the said period from the National Movement point of view in Punjab has been done by many history students but present study focuses on three Sikh leaders, actively taking part in Punjab politics viz. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar*

*Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh. The word 'trio' has been used to signify these three Sikh leaders.*

*Most of the explanations of the Punjab history have been focused on the contribution of the Akalis, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Unionist parties in the Punjab politics. K.C. Gulati in 'The Akali's – Past and Present' has primarily laid stress on the formation and working of the Akalis in the Punjab politics, providing little space to the aristocrats. Dr. K.L. Tuteja in **Sikh Politics (1920-40)** sees communitarian growth and the struggle for separate identity among the Sikhs from 1920-40. His work is an attempt to explain the intricacy and interrelatedness of various factors of Sikh politics. The study does not cover the last seven years i.e.1940-47 which is crucial in the Sikh as well as Punjab history.*

*Ian Talbot's 'Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947', explains the growth of Muslim League in Punjab during the decade which preceded partition. It gives a detailed account of the Unionist Party's activities and importance of Muslim aristocracy's relations with the British Government but provide almost no account of the Sikh aristocracy. Joginder Singh in his work **Sikh Leadership (1999)** brings out the brief biographical sketches of the religious and political Sikh leaders of Punjab.*



*Sukhmani Bal Riar in her study 'the Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47' has attempted to examine the politics that the Sikh leaders pursued during the last seven years before partition and independence. The limited span of study does not provide the actual picture after the enacting of Government of India Act 1935. Hence, present work sets out to analyze the role of the trio leaders in the Punjab politics during the crucial decade (1937-47) and to understand the imperative that made the Sikh leaders to share political platform. It also examines nature of complexities, dynamics and problems that compelled them to join hands with the Congress, the British Government of India, the Akalis, the Unionists and the other contemporary organizations'.*

*The present study has been divided in six chapters and a conclusion. The first Chapter **Historical Background: Aristocracy and Punjab Politics** describes the origin, development and growth of aristocracy in Punjab. Education, industrialization and Canal colonization widened the base of aristocracy in Punjab. In 1862 the British Government introduced the institutions of Sanads, Certificates and Titles which recognized a class of local elite. They in turn readily accepted rather welcomed the opportunity. With the reforms of 1919, these landed elites were inducted into legislative (responsible) politics through a restrictive mechanism lacking any electoral agenda. Very specific, limited and largely docile role was expected of these largely a non political and ideological elite, whose*

*loyalties totally lay with their self interests. This enhanced political role added to their laurels within their constituencies. Thus before the elections of 1937 these local elite became the formidable buddies of British Government and got appreciation as 'Loyalists'*

*The second chapter **Elections of 1937 and Formation of a Sikh Trio (1937-1939)** is about Elections of 1937 which added new dimensions to the political environment due to the introduction of Provincial Autonomy. With the reforms of 1919, these landed elites were inducted into legislative (responsible) politics through a restrictive mechanism lacking any electoral agenda. Even while Sir Fazl i-Husain and Sir Chhottu Ram rallied them together as the Unionist Party, the personal and local loyalties were not ruled out. The three Sikh leaders Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh were actively involved in Punjab politics. Unknowingly a trio was in formation. Sikh leaders viz. Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh were rich and educated, former a Jat agriculturist, with large estates and later an Arora Sikh Agro Industrialist, are considered professed 'loyalists'. Baldev Singh was a rich industrialist and entered politics on Akali ticket but later on proved practicing loyalist. On the basis of their riches, the three came into sight on the political state of affairs of Punjab.*

*Sir Joginder Singh was associated to Chief Khalsa Diwan and a close ally of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. He believed in representations and constitutional methods. From 1937 to 1942 he remained one of chief spokes persons of Sikh community. With his efforts Khalsa National Party was formed in 1935 to protect and promote the interest of the Sikh community. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia became the president of Khalsa National Party and Ujjal Singh was elected its secretary. No doubt Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh often supported Government but whenever communal issues rose they generally joined hands as a body with Akalis. The Akalis were being considered leaders of the Sikh masses and these moderates had neither the courage nor the energy to oppose Akalis but it is wrong to assume those loyalists were not liked by the masses. The three got elected in the election of 1937 from Gujranwala Shahadra (Rural constituency), Western Towns (Urban constituency) and Ambala respectively.*

*The large land owning Sikh families supported the Unionists essentially a common bond of political and economic opportunities. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia who had joined the Cabinet on behalf of the Sikhs as head of the Khalsa National Party said that the policy of his party was not destructive. On the contrary it was prepared to cooperate with any party in the future Government of the province provided it could do so on an honourable understanding.*

*The Unionist party and the Khalsa National party's success in the elections could be attributed to the feudal character of Punjab's political system. The role of the so called 'natural leaders' a term coined by the British to address the Colonial intermediaries, all was important for the success of the Unionist Party. The ministry formed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was rightly described as a Unionist Coalition ministry which was the result of understanding with other political parties.*

*The moderate Sikh leaders became the part of that exercise which appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite sections of society, making the Legislative Assembly that was constituted on the culmination of these elections a widely representative of the elite of Punjab, having little to do with the masses.*

*The three Sikh leaders became the members of Unity Conference to counter communal riots in Punjab. Their chief concern was to appraise Government with Sikh point of view. In the beginning Baldev Singh uttered only those words, which were put into his mouth by Master Tara Singh but he never lost a chance to shake hand with Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh or Ujjal Singh. When Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was passed the three were vocal against this pact. Their parties were different but their approach was no doubt same. The formation of Unionist Ministry in Punjab appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite*

sections of society. The opportunity for this trio to share political platform came in the form of Unity Conference which was designed to remove the communal virus from the Punjab on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1937 at Lahore.

Chapter third *World War-II, Cripps Mission and Task of the Trio Sikh Leaders (1939-1942)* deals with the prevailing political situation in Punjab and response of Punjabi society in general and the three Sikh leaders in particular when World War-II started. It ushered a new era of interrelationship between different parties. Since the nationalist leaders and the British Government could not reach at any agreement whereby the Indian leaders could play an honourable part in the War effort, the Congress Party decided to pursue a policy of non cooperation with the British Government. The Sikhs of Khalsa National Party pressed the Government for the protection of their interests in return for their military services during the war. Sikandar was coming closer to the Akalis's because of the favourable effect it would have on army recruitment. Sir Joginder Singh started criticising the Punjab Government by saying: As you are aware, to the effect Sikhs have been deliberately insulted and should now devote themselves to deal with tyranny for which the Punjab Government is responsible in province. I have spoken to two of the signatories and pointed out to turn that the result use of their declaration may well be fall in Sikh recruitment which would clearly be in the worst interest of the community.

*The Akalis on the other hand hated and feared the prospect of Pakistan, they saw co-operation with the Unionists in the war effort as the best defence against it. Their close links with the Congress had led them to adopt an attitude of non cooperation towards the War but soon they realized that the maintenance of Sikh connection with the army was vital for the presentation of the Sikhs as a separate entity. Although they did not openly support the Khalsa Defence of India League which was formed in January 1941 to promote Sikh army recruitment yet they nevertheless promised to supply 'parcharka' secretly for propaganda works in the villages in its favour. Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh supported War recruitment openly. The three leaders became active members of Khalsa Defence of India League which gave a chance to recruit in the army to the unemployed Sikhs youth and hundreds of graduates got the emergency King's Commission in the Indian Army.*

*The Akalis started exploring new ways to strengthen and consolidate their community against the danger of Muslim rule. The 'Akali sena', a volunteer organization of the Sikhs which was primarily formed to remove the threat of atheism in the community, was working to safeguard the Sikh rights and to oppose the Pakistan proposal. The sudden demise of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia in last week of 1940, forced the Akalis to see, however reluctantly which side the*

*Sikh bread was buttered. Desaunda Singh a man of no political standing and of an average acumen was selected to succeed Sir Sunder Singh in the Cabinet in preference to Ujjal Singh. Baldev Singh then a back bencher in the Congress-Akali Parliamentary Party in the Punjab Assembly availed the opportunity and formed a new party in the Legislature in March 1942 viz. United Sikh Party. The new United Sikh Party attracted some members of Khalsa National Party, some independent Sikhs and some Akalis. The three Sikh leaders remained quite active in the political scenario during this period.*

*The chapter also traces how Sikh delegation comprising Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Sir Joginder Singh and Master Tara Singh met Stafford Cripps on 27 March 1942 to discuss with him the possibility of having some redistribution of provincial power between the Eastern and Western Punjab in order to carve out a province in which the Sikhs would have the decisive voice as a large balancing party between the Hindus and the Muslims. Sir Stafford Cripps responded by issuing a draft declaration on 30th March 1942. It brought a whirl in Sikh politics because it could not offer any permanent solution to the national tangle and tended to create fissiparous communal tendencies. Sardar Baldev Singh was selected as president of Sikh All Parties Committee. He, along with Sir Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh, Tara Singh and Mohan Singh handed over a memorandum to*

*Sir Stafford Cripps on 31 March, 1942, which made clear the Sikh point of view regarding unacceptability of the proposals:*

*Cripps envisaged for loose federation giving provinces the right to opt out the Union. This clause was the first public admission of the possibility of Pakistan. The Sikh community was growing more and more uneasy and there was a feeling that it is the time to move in some direction or the other to ensure its survival' but at the same they were not demoralized. In such a situation the Akali decision to encourage Sikh enlistment in the army on one hand and their support to the Congress on the other hand been dubbed as 'sailing in two boats'. Muslim League's happiness for their 'hopes fulfilment' but Jinnah's rejection that 'Pakistan was not conceded,' was another political move in Punjab politics.*

*The Sikh leadership was particularly worried about the 'unprecedented intensification of bitterness' between the Sikhs and Muslim as well as its adverse effect on the war effort. Akalis in any condition did not want to materialize Pakistan. Sikhs remained reluctant to enlist in the Indian Army. In an endeavour to encourage greater Sikh support for the War efforts, Major Short threw himself into the work of reconciliation with enthusiasm and was soon accepted by leading Sikhs. He worked for a Sikh-Muslim accord, which meant an alliance between the Unionists and the Akalis, most popular as Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact of 1942, was fully supported by Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh.*



*The Pact could ensure only a limited co-operation between the Akalis and the Unionist to mitigate the adverse effect of Muslim domination. The issues covered were meant to remove the existing irritants. Baldev Singh remarked in 1944 that his pact was meant to remove the 'besetting curse of inter-communal bitterness, but could not do the same. Though the pact proved a snare yet it brought a considerable change in the complexion of Punjab Politics. Sardar Baldev Singh's entry in the Punjab cabinet and Sir Joginder Singh's placement in the Viceroy's Executive Council enhanced the political importance of the Sikhs.*

*The fourth chapter **The Punjab Politics : Demand for the Sikh Homeland and the Sikh Trio (1943-1945)** covers the story of Sikh politics of two years 1943-45, when the Punjab politics entered into a critical phase. Akali Dal considered Rajagopalachari's Sporting Offer of 29 August 1940 as unjust, undemocratic, anti-national and detrimental to the rights of the non Muslim communities. Though the Akali Dal did not favour Rajagopalachari's offer yet did not atuned to Khalistan. In August 1944 the Sikhs demanded the same rights in all provinces as had been given to the other minorities. Mohinder Singh moved an amendment seeking creation of an independent Sikh State. It was supported by Giani Kartar Singh. Master Tara Singh set the tone for doing that by declaring that the Sikhs who were a nation, would, see that, if and when India was divided the Sikhs*

*should not be made slaves either of Pakistan or Hindustan. Sardar Ujjal Singh intervened to suggest that Master Tara Singh should appoint a committee to evolve in consultation with all Sikh interests, a scheme for establishment of an independent Sikh State, if India was to be divided.*

*The 'Khalistan' move and the Azad Punjab schemes could not gather strength because of their inherent interests and the mutual conflicts of the Akalis, Congressite and Communist Sikhs. At times Master Tara Singh tried to clarify Azad Punjab scheme by saying it 'far from anti national and intended to be an alternative to the division of the country'. Ujjal Singh, who was one of architects of the building Azad Punjab wished that 'a happier name had been selected for this demand, which was intended to be province with in the Union of India. He said that the Akalis only want the separation of original Punjab from the western districts annexed to it by Maharaja Ranjit Singh just as Sind was separated from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar.*

*The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah in 1944 talks for an agreement, had diverse effect on the political parties and groups in the Punjab. The Akalis felt relieved because of their apprehensions that any agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah on the basis of Rajagopalachari formula would be inimical to the Sikh interest. However, they continued their agitation for creation of a separate political unit*

*dominated by the Sikhs and a hint was even thrown by some of the Akali leader for securing the help of the British for its realization. Baldev Singh and Joginder Singh in different public addresses were criticizing Pakistan scheme. The idea of Pakistan was 'adherent' and 'obnoxious'. The Sikh would not agree to live in the Pakistan of League description. Congress and particularly Mahatma Gandhi wanted Akali-Congress alliance in Punjab.*

*Chapter fifth **Transfer of Power and The Sikh Leaders (1945-1946)** traces the circumstances leading to British Government of India's decision to transfer the power in Indian hands. Towards the end of 1944, a few non-party public men decided to form a conciliation committee to devise ways and means for an agreed constitution. The initiative for the settlement was taken by the liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at the suggestion of Gandhi. He favoured the holding of a representative conference to carry on the dialogue with the League leaders. The Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Harnam Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh, Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh preferred the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications or an irremovable composite executive in place of parliamentary system which had failed.*

*The Sapru Committee recommendations had a mixed reaction in the Punjab. It submitted its report in March 1945. The Hindus welcomed the*

acceptance of principle of the individuality of India and Joint electorates. The Akalis criticized the Sapru Committee proposals because these accepted the principles of parity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Wavell's proposal of a new Executive Council with entirely Indian members except for Viceroy and the Commander in Chief was a step towards full Self Government. Master Tara Singh was invited unwillingly by Wavell to represent the Sikhs in the Shimla Conference where Sardar Baldev Singh was also present. The two Sikh leaders were not cordial with each other but remained in constant touch during conference. Sardar Baldev Singh's association with Congress was disliked by the Akali leader Master Tara Singh. Sir Joginder Singh, one time favourite of British Government, was kept scrupulously out of all negotiations. On the day of 23 June, 1945 Wavell proposed that the Executive Council to have five Hindus, five Muslims, one Sikh, one Scheduled Caste, as suggested by Jinnah.

Election of 1946 in Punjab province brought some new issues especially the matter of Sikh seats. Baldev Singh's close association with the Congress was clear. He was trying to bring Akalis and Congress nearer but the matter of seats broke down all negotiations. With the initiative of Sardar Baldev Singh and his association with Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, a new party viz. Punjab Panthic Board was formed. Sardar Baldev Singh was elected the

*President while Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh were Deputy Leaders.*

*The three leaders were the main members of the Punjab Panthic Board and were successful in the election of 1946. The election results shattered a severe blow to the Unionist Party. On 11 March 1946, Baldev Singh represented Akalis in the Congress-Akali – Unionist coalition ministry. The announcement and the arrival of Cabinet Mission to discuss the granting of independence too furthered the political activity in Sikh circles.*

*The Panthic Pratinidhi Board amplified the demand of 'Sikh State' that included a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their shrines with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property. If the argument of the Muslim League was that Muslims had ruled over India, the argument of the Akalis was that the Sikhs had ousted the Mughals and established their own rule. In fact by creating a 'Sikh State' the British would only return to the Sikhs what they had directly got in trust from them.*

*At the same time the idea of Khalistan with transfer of population and creation of a new state stretching from Jamuna to Chenab in which Sikhs would be able to act as a balancing power between the Hindus and Muslims, was much debated. Sardar Baldev Singh, on 12 May 1946 made a statement 'Between Ravi*

*and Meerut should stretch the Jatstan." Cabinet Mission report of 16th May was a bolt from the blue as it left the Sikhs at the mercy of the Muslims.*

*The Panthic Pratinidhi Board was against the scheme of Cabinet Mission as the position of Sikhs was entirely ignored in the Punjab while the arrangement made for the grouping of provinces made it possible for Muslims to secure all the advantages of Pakistan, without incurring the danger inherent in it. Master Tara Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh wrote to Lord Pethick Lawrence on 25 July, 1946 to clear their position. Lord Lawrence in his reply said, "The estimate of importance of your community would never depend upon the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad in view of anxieties you have expressed on the behalf of your community". Sardar Baldev Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, Master Tara Singh complained against the placement of Punjab in Group B. The transfer of power phase, Gurudwara Elections, formation of Interim Government and to make the best out of critical scenario was eye catch of the period. Baldev Singh's hidden move to be the member of Interim Government on 2 September 1946, to pacify Panthic Board, Akali-Congress cordial relations, is a part of study.*

*Chapter sixth Whither Punjab-Violence Partition and Freedom (1946-1947) peeps into political turmoil after Jinnah's outburst of 16 August, 1946,*

*final good bye to constitution and constitutional methods. The year to follow was of turmoil, chaos, mass killings, and violent turns. Master Tara Singh's slogan of February, 1947 "Kat Ke Denge Apni Jaan, Magar na Denge Pakistan", stirred the Punjabis. S.B. Ujjal Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh in company of Giani Kartar Singh were suggesting more than one alternative and waiting for constitutional machinery to work. The case of Punjab and the Sikh community was pleaded by sending delegation as they were still in hope for betterment.*

*On 18 April 1947 Sardar Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh met Lord Mountbatten and agreed unanimously that Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and bloodshed. Minorities in Punjab were bleeding and the Governor could do little. March 'riots' and April resolutions made it clear that Punjab has to be partitioned. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh's demands were less extreme than those of Tara Singh, Kartar Singh and others. Mountbatten Plan of June 1947, added fuel to fire Sardar Baldev Singh accepted the principle of division on 3rd June after consulting Akali Dal Working Committee's meeting. Sardar Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh continued to plead the case of Sikhs with both hot and cold way. Mountbatten, Jenkins and other British authorities in India were diplomatically succeeded in their policy of 'appeasement' and 'snubbing' the Sikhs. Hence the 'black chapter of partition' was*

written on the very heart land of India i.e. Punjab. Sardar Ujjal Singh lost his valuable properties and lands in this political calamity.

As regards their position in Punjab politics after partition, S. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh secured important positions in the Union Government. The former became the first Defence Minister of Independent India and later was to continue the portfolio of Industries and Civil Supplies.

The last chapter **Conclusion** brings out the findings of this study that The aristocracy was not only imbibed but wedded in Punjab politics during the crucial decade from 1937-1947 A.D. No doubt with the changes in political mechanism, change in the attitude of men of letters and riches was evident. Community, Nationalism, Minority and Identity Crisis made then flickered and knowing their limitations the aristocrats could not follow one line. Before the elections of 1937 these trio leaders (Sir Joginder Singh, S.B. Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh) did not appear on a common platform but after the elections they shared each and every political move, opportunity and even philosophy, without caring of their political parties. The three believed in making the best out of a mole.

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*(Rekha Sood)*

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ARISTOCRACY AND THE PUNJAB POLITICS**

The onset of 20<sup>th</sup> century, perceptible for hectic political bustle both at national and provincial levels, resulted into providing a new political dimension to India. At the same time while recounting the pages of political history, Punjab also witnessed the materialization of an authoritative segment in polity and society. This section, armed with landed resources and later on education, became a much preferred ingredient in political arena. They were traditionally celebrated as 'aristocrats' or 'natural leaders' and with the passage of time due to their educational paraphernalia, they were turned into 'elite'. Before taking up the detailed discussion of aristocracy in Punjab, there is need to comprehend the political and historical setting of the Punjab province.

As it is well known, the part of Hindustan, where the Gurus were born, was first the seat of Indus Valley, iron walled, city civilization of Mohanjadro and Harappa, replaced later by the war like nomadic Aryans (noblemen) from Central Asia, by village culture. Alexander 'the Great' of Macedonia found the resistance to

his march into Punjab (the land of five rivers, the tributaries of the river Indus or Sind). Even defeated king of Western Punjab, Porus answered valiantly "As behaves one king to treat another". Flaming Thunder Bolts were hurled at Alexander by the Punjabi men of armaments and it is the judgment of many scholars that the Gun Powder was invented not in China but in North-West of India. The brief interludes of foreign attacks by the Egyptians, the Persians, the Scythians or the Tartars, followed by Alexander the Great, made Punjab not only the battleground but also opened the civilization to Europeans and Central Asian influences, and to trade and commerce aboard, and the mixing of blood<sup>1</sup>. Mahabharata, the War, was fought at Kurukshetra, the South East of the Punjab. During Chandragupta Maurya's rule his grandson Asoka was the Governor of Taxila before becoming emperor in the third century B.C. and later on Kanishka's headquarters at Peshawar, Chandragupta of Gupta dynasty who took refuge in the Punjab and helped by Punjabi men of arms, became a great empire builder in IVth Century A.D., till the Huns invasions.<sup>2</sup> The rival dynasties with in India through their internecine warfare opened the doors for her conquest by the forces of Islam, is an endless story of Punjab's political woes. Muhammad-Bin-Qasim (an Arab general) incursion

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1 Gopal Singh, *The History of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1979, p. 15.

2 Gopal Singh, *The History of the Sikhs*, p. 16.

in 711, Multan's sway for a very short period, Mahmud Ghaznavid's 17 attacks (997-1027 A.D.), Mohammad Gori, the Slaves (Kutub-ud-din-Aibak, Iltutmish, Balban), the Khalji, the Tuglaqs, the Sayyaid's and the Lodhi's imperialistic designs were shaped in Punjab.

Right from its inception, Sikhism is a happy blend of religion and politics. By religion others understand a relationship between individual and God, whereas the Sikh religion concerns itself with the whole activity of man in context of this world.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was a contemporary of the Lodhi dynasty and of Babar, whose offspring ruled India from Punjab. Much has been written about Muslim violence, tyranny and the bigotry when Sikhism was taking a crack of dawn and was audaciously budding as an alarming political authority. Hence Religion and politics wedded in Sikhism. Guru Nanak and his nine successors had undeviating and meandering involvement in politics. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev has been considered a 'political punishment' by a few historians. The sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind revolted Jahangir and Shahjahan. He wore two emblematic swords *Miri*<sup>1\*</sup> and *Piri*<sup>2\*</sup>. The Akal Takht<sup>3\*</sup> in the city of Amritsar is the highest seat of both religious and political

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3 Teja Singh, 'Religion and Politics', *The Spokesman*, VI, No. 25, June 25, 1956, pp. 11-12.

authority.<sup>4</sup> Guru Hargobind's battles with Mughal emperor Shahjahan and Guru Teg Bahadur's martyrdom furthered the political association with religion. Guru Gobind Singh made the Panth superlative in both religious and political matters. Without political organization and chipping in politics, the Sikh religion cannot continue to exist. If the Sikhs were to give up political activity as a community and as a result, their political organization, the entire Sikh community would be scattered.<sup>5</sup> 'A man's religion' says Carlyle "is the chief fact with regard to him. If you tell me what that is, you tell me to a great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do it".<sup>6</sup> Sikhs plan their political life on the Panth basis. The *Panth* was created on the basis for 'Global Fraternity'. Thus political activity is intrinsic in the Panth.

### **ARISTOCRACY AND ITS NATURE**

The dictionary meanings of aristocracy are; 'the upper crust', 'the lords and ladies', 'the landed gentry' 'the upper classes' and 'the nobility'. It is almost tricky to illustrate the term 'aristocracy', which found its derivation in the Greek word, 'aristos', meant for

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4 Harbans Singh, Future of Sikhs Central Political Organization published in *The Statesman*, April 4, 1948,

1\* *Wordly power*

2\* *Religious authority*

3\* *the throne of timeless one*

5. Master Tara Singh, in a Book forward by Swarup Singh, *The Forgotten Panth*, Amritsar, 1945.

6. K.A. Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India*, Oxford, 2002, p. 10.

*'best'* and keratin *'to rule'* at its spirit aristocracy means rule by the best. Its hypothetical groundwork begins with the political works of Plato and Aristotle, the two central figures in Greek and European Philosophy. Both felt that Greek democracy had been a catastrophe. Their deep-seated dilemma with Democracy was that it put the Government in the hands of populace who were the least accomplished of making sound decisions. For Plato, the general run of humanity was driven by its selfish passions and desires; this was a poor foundation for deliberate, considered and selfless decision making. While Plato and Aristotle were familiar with an infinite variety of possible Governments, they believed that *Government should be moral and selfless; should be highly intelligent and educated, as well as brave and temperate.* This was rule by the best.

The term was first used in Athens to young citizens (the men of the ruling class) who led armies from the facade procession with their swords up. Since military bravery was such a highly regarded desirable quality in ancient Greece, the armies were being led by 'the best'. From the ancient Greeks, the term passed on to the European Middle Ages for a similar hereditary class of military leaders often referred to as the 'nobility'. As in ancient Greece, this

was slave holding class of privileged men whose military role allowed them to present themselves as the most 'noble', or 'best'.

In early modern Europe, the aristocracy consisted of the nobility or ruling classes of society. Membership in the aristocracy was not through achievements, intelligence, or moral growth, but solely hereditary (Sometimes it was given out). With the passage of time, Greek idea of '*rule by the best*' turned into something more that closely resembles to a '*hereditary oligarchy*', or just simple 'upper class'.

The reason for this change can be traced in theories of the monarchy in the middle ages. In order to legitimize an inborn monarchy, the Medieval Europeans, theorized that the virtues which made a monarch suitable for the job were hereditary. This led to a segregation of virtues; the monarch and his noble bureaucrats were by nature and heredity more moral and civilized than the rest of population. They were then, the 'best' morally and intellectually. In this way the notion of 'aristocracy' as 'rule of the best', eventually translated into concept of a 'hereditary aristocracy'. The French Revolution attacked aristocrats as the people who had achieved their status by birth rather than merit. Such unearned status was being considered unjust. The term had



become identical with people who claim 'luxuries and privileges as a birth right.'

In the United Kingdom and other European countries where hereditary titles are still recognized, 'aristocrats' still refers to the descendants of approximately of 7000 families with hereditary titles, usually still in possession of substantial possessions though not necessarily so. So ingrained is this conception in the European world vision that we still take for granted a heritable superiority in the upper classes.

The founders of American democracy turned back to the original, philosophical definition of aristocracy. They wanted to avoid putting the Government into the hands of the worst members of society. They, also, however wanted to avoid the dangers of hereditary aristocracy, for European history proven amply that the hereditary aristocracy is many things but it rarely consists of the 'best' members of society either in moral or intellectual terms. So the framers of American Government created representative democracy, in which the people jointly decide who the 'best' people are to run the Government. In this way a limited democracy was allowed to coexist seamlessly with a Government that was primarily ruled by the most qualified people morally and intellectually. The reality is that the Republicans called, the United States of America,

was founded by Aristocrats. The great distinguishing feature, however, was that those founders were of a very rare breed of aristocrats - individuals with true vision and a curious thing called a consciousness. Gordon S. Wood has written:

*In fact, these 18th century figures were extraordinary men, products of a peculiar moment in our history when the forces of aristocracy and democracy were nicely balanced. Although most of them were men of relatively modest origins, they were unflinching elitists who had contempt for electioneering and popular politics. They rejected blood and family as sources of status, however, and were eager to establish themselves by principles that could be acquired through learning and education. They struggled to internalize the new, enlightened man made standards that had come to define what Jefferson called 'the natural aristocracy' - politeness, sociability, comparison, virtue, disinterestedness and an aversion to corruption and court like behaviour.*

Thus aristocracy refers to a form of a Government where power is held by a small number of individuals from the elite or from noble families. Only the elite have been allowed to compete for power and to hold the most powerful position in state. The transmission of power is often hereditary. Such a Government is

called 'aristocracy' or 'the Government by the best'. It is different from oligarchy.

Plato called such people as 'guardians' and to elevate their character recommended for them a life of hard and rigid discipline. They were the best and chosen people. Similarly Lenin organised a party of the best and the devoted workers whom he named as communist party; only those workers could become its members who were willing to make all kinds of sacrifices for the cause of communism. For the sake of efficient Government, this rule of selection is often applied.<sup>7</sup> This idea has been unambiguously supported by many writers of repute of the modern age such as Thomas Carlyle, Friedrich Nietzsche, D.H. Lawrence and Hegel.

The only fear about aristocracy is that it might not become fascist; that is to be guarded against; the problem is of the selection of the best and choosing a criterion for that some believe in hereditary efficiency of some castes but this is not essential. The efficiency of parents is not necessarily transmitted to the children. Some people consider the rich to be the best administrators but this again is a wrong assumption, for they generally lead a luxurious life that reduces their efficiency. The selection of the best, thus, has always been a problem.

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7. Pritam Singh Gill, *Trinity of Sikhism*, Jullundar, 1973, p. 268.

## **ROOTS OF ARITOCRACY IN PUNJAB**

In India, Rig-Vedic age is known for its under mining tribal character of Sabha. Punjab was the cradle of Rig-Vedic age. It may have a tribal also assembly in the period when there were no developed classes, not much distinction between the rich and the poor and no stability in the office of a king. But as economic inequalities and social classes developed and as king emerged to be the principal factor, his person came to be associated with rich men of position and the elders, whose counsel commanded weight and authority with the community.<sup>8</sup>

Those who possessed cows, horses and chariots constituted the ruling class, standing over dispossessed and impoverished fellow tribesmen who could not sit in Sabha. Evidently power belonged to horse and chariot owning aristocracy whose members made up Sabha. These formed his advisory body; the king came to be dependent on their advice and counsel. The evolution of this body was similar to that of the Council of Chief among the Tautens, to the Senate among the Romans and the Witangemut among the Anglo Saxons.<sup>9</sup> Aristocracy started its journey from Rig-Vedic age and continued with a few changes in its character throughout the ancient Indian and especially Punjab's ruling dynasties. The

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8. N.C. Bandyopadhaya, *Development of Hindu Policy and Political Theories*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 11.

9. K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, Calcutta, 1924, p. 18.

member were generally martial or of Kshatriya caste.<sup>10</sup> Manu created this military caste for specific purpose. All believed that the power of governing the common multitude showed rest in the hands of trained few. The ground for this is that there is natural aristocracy that has value and talent.

India in 11<sup>th</sup> century saw a drastic change in political, social, economic and religious environment with the advent of Muslims in Punjab. The Turkish aristocracy in Punjab was that of men of sword-the fighters, who supplied executive and military personnel. Their military titles thus awarded to class were graded into Khan, Malik, Amir, Siphasalar and Sar-i-Khail.<sup>11</sup> The high dignitaries' of the state, army officers, companions of Sultans and the nobles occupied a position only next to the Sultan in the social life of capital city and the cities of this empire. Their salaries were high and they held high administrative positions as governors of provinces and commanders in the army and tried to emulate the Sultan in every way. In the latter half of the fifteenth century some of the nobles built mansions as would almost rival the Sultan's palace. The accumulation of their wealth introduced into their lives

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10. K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, p. 19.

11. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. III., Allahabad, 1956, p. 578.

all the uses and abuses of luxury, women, wine, songs, chess, and chaugan were there common pastime. <sup>12</sup>

### **EMERGENCE OF SIKH ARISTOCRACY**

In the political sphere, the Governments have been divided into three types – Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs strongly rejected the idea of Monarchy, and for him, Democracy is the best form of Government provided it is free from some defects like illiteracy, corruption and nepotism. The Governments can be efficient if the rulers are without these defects.<sup>13</sup> Such people are generally very few but they could be tapped; and if administration be given in their hands, it would be the best form of Government.

Guru Gobind Singh found a solution for this dilemma, the first step was the abolition of all castes from the society so that there should be provision of opportunity for all and there should be no social hindrance in picking up the efficient people. In Sikh society all members were given equal status. The first principle of selection was willingness to sacrifice life for the common good. Their character was further improved by putting them under a discipline which was harder than the one proposed by Plato for the

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12. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Ferozeshahi*, Calcutta, 1891, pp. 296-97.

13. Pritam Singh Gill, *Trinity of Sikhism*, p. 268.

guardians or Lenin for the communist party.<sup>14</sup> Panj Piaras were prepared, who were supposed to be the best. They had to follow a life where:

- i) The member must always be God conscious and must meditate on him.
- ii) He should get baptised and follow the rules prescribed for membership.
- iii) He should have sense of equality, love for all citizens and an ideal for global fraternity.
- iv) He should serve the fellow Sikhs (Pangat), Panth, and mankind. He should sacrifice all his personal interests for them.
- v) He should resort to arm resistance against a tyrant when all other means of persuasion have failed.<sup>15</sup>

Sikh following these ideals has a right to membership of the Khalsa Panth. Thus the Panth had the foundations of democracy but the ideal of administration was by those who possessed talent and virtue. So the form of Government can be called 'Democratic Aristocracy'. Guru Gobind Singh had created the Khalsa for the real service of the people and not for power. In the times of Guru

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14. Pritam Singh Gill, *Trinity of Sikhism*, p. 269.

Gobind Singh, the society in India had degenerated due to two factors: stratification caused by caste division and the foreign rule. The Khalsa Panth was created to infuse the spirit of equality and abolition of slavery. He wanted to give administration in the hands of those people who had high ideals of life. The best people of this type could be good administrators. The daily worship in the Gurudwaras ends with the following hymn<sup>16</sup>:

*"The Khalsa shall rule and none shall successfully defy them. All shall have to petition for their alliance after frustration. Only those would be saved who take refuge with the Khalsa."*<sup>17</sup>

The ruling class under Ranjit Singh was predominantly Punjabi with the largest proportion of the Sikhs and much smaller number of the Hindus and Muslims among them. From the compendium of Lapel Griffin we have enumerated 250 families who were considered as having 'rank', wealth and local influence' in 1865. Nearly 50 percent of these families were the Sikhs, 25% Hindus and nearly 20% Muslims. It needs also to be pointed out that the proportion of Jats among the Sikhs was highest than any other group among the members of aristocracy.

## **BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION AND THE SIKH ARISTOCRACY**

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16. Pritam Singh Gill, *Trinity of Sikhism*, p. 270.

17. Pritam Singh Gill, *Trinity of Sikhism*, pp. 268-70, 1973.  
ਰਾਜ ਕਰੇਗਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਆਕੀ ਰਹੇ ਨਾ ਕੋਇ



After the suppression of the Maharaja Dalip Singh and his mother, the ruination of the entire aristocracy was taken in hand by the British.<sup>18</sup> As the Colonial rule progressed, socio-economic and socio-political conditions changed so did the fortunes of the aristocracy.<sup>19</sup> Dalhousie was quite determined that "the Chiefs and fief holders of Punjab should be effectively deprived of power of doing mischief." John Lawrence fully agreed with Governor General<sup>20</sup> and first of all took up the case of those chiefs who had fought against the British in two Sikh wars. He confiscated outright of estates of some 25 chiefs<sup>21</sup>, the revenue yield of which had amounted to Rs. 11,31,865 per annum and gave an annual pension of Rs. 42670 per annum in return. Besides, they were deprived of their ranks.<sup>22</sup> Many of them were put under surveillance in their houses while others were exiled from Punjab and kept as closely guarded prisoners at such places as Calcutta and Allahabad.<sup>23</sup> Those who were permitted to live in Punjab were made to live a life of prisoners. Severe restrictions were imposed and they were not allowed to go beyond the boundary of their village without the special written sanction of the Resident. They

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18. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War in India*, I, p. 48.

19. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. VI, New Series, 1999, pp. 95-106.

20. W. W. Hunter, *The Marquis of Dalhousie, Rulers of India Series*, Oxford, p. 99.

21. W. W. Hunter, *The Marquis of Dalhousie, Rulers of India Series*, p. 99.

22. *Foreign Secret Consultations*, No. 68-71, May 26, 1849.

23. *Foreign Secret Consultations*, No. 41-42, Oct. 1850.

were not to keep any arms in their possession on any pretence. John Lawrence was suppressing aristocrats, while his elder brother Henry Lawrence<sup>24</sup> was defending princes and chieftains. He believed that these men could be turned into useful allies if British officers combined respect and kindness with firmness in their dealings with them.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand John Lawrence regarded the princes and chieftains as being “*parasitic Jagirdars and political allies whose worth was dubious*”. They should be, he held, ‘reduced in importance or, better, still, done away with altogether’.<sup>26</sup> He wrote to Henry Elliot, the Secretary to the Governor General in October 1847, that *the existence of Jagirdar is as inconsistent with the civilization and improvement of the country as that of the Baron of the feudal ages would now be in Europe*. They will always, he believed, “*be opposed to our dominion and ready for a change and therefore he added “to get rid of them is a political necessity*”.<sup>27</sup> John Lawrence viewed that “the Jagirdars deserved little”; but maintained that “none should intervene between the people and their alien ruler”. Being a protagonist of utilitarian philosophy, he tightened the grip on the land tax and

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24. *Head of administration, Local Chancellor of Exchequer*

25. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, 1999, p. 96.

26. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. VI, New Series, 1999, p. 96.

27. John Lawrence to Henry Elliot, Secretary to Governor General on 16th October 1847, *Foreign Political Consultations*, No. 2288, December 1847.

prevented any but a small of it going to the coffers of the aristocracy; he clearly stood for their destruction.<sup>28</sup> Henry Lawrence thought it 'most impolitic' and 'dangerous'. He held that it would be politically sensible and morally just to uphold in full and in perpetuity the grants and powers of those Punjabis who had stood by the British. He was of the view, "The jagirdars may think that they had been unfairly deprived of rights which they had been justified in expecting to retain and for the loss of which they would impute the blame to him."<sup>29</sup>

Dalhousie opted for John Lawrence policy of adopting a strategy of abrogating every Jagir gradually and steadily to ensure complete annihilation of every Jagirdar in a course of years.<sup>30</sup> The aristocrats were warned that their conduct was watched collectively and individually and any infringement of the prescribed rules would render them liable to severest punishment. "They would be considered enemies of the British Government and on no account pardoned."<sup>31</sup> The leading Sardars were punished not only by the confiscation of jagirs but of their entire properties. In case of the Sardars of Attari, the jewels worn by the female members were also taken off and sold in auction. So far as the neutral jagirdars were

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28. Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, Delhi, 1960, p. 86.

31. J.J.M., Innes, *Sir Henry Lawrence*, p.126.

30. Correspondence between John Lawrence and Henry Elliot. : *Foreign Secret Consultation*, No. 153, dated 30 October, 1847.

31. *Foreign Secret Consultations*, No. 68-71, May, 26, 1849.

concerned, Governor General sent specific instructions to give them new grants justifying their claim of ownership, under the Board's seal and the Secretary's signature declaring that the grant was a free gift of British Government.<sup>32</sup> The Board acted quite promptly. Holdings were sealed, records were inspected, oral evidence was taken, the limits of holdings were surveyed and applications of the proceeds were tested.<sup>33</sup> Pension cases were also investigated in the same manner. A specific officer under the Board was appointed to investigate army, civil and political pensions.<sup>34</sup> By the end of May 1849, 38 rebel chiefs and their families were stripped off their titles and their jagirs were resumed. They were pensioned off with an average value of 128 rupees per month. In only one case the Board of Administration recommended the maximum pension of 300 rupees. In this case the pensioner namely Chatter Singh Attariwala had no right to spend the money of his own. It has been calculated that on the average there was 92 percent reduction in the annual income of these families within six months of the annexation. Jagirs worth 12, 57,500 rupees were confiscated and worth about 58,300 rupees were given to the dispossessed in pension. These families were thus rendered to support themselves with inadequate

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32. *Calcutta Review*, 1853, Vol. XXI, pp. 269-70.

33. *Calcutta Review*, 1853, Vol. XXI, p. 272.

34. *Foreign Secret Consultations*, No. 140-44.

landed resources and struggled to adopt themselves to their new circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

All this made Henry Lawrence, to tender his resignation, which was accepted by Dalhousie. On Feb. 4, 1853, the Board of Administration was abolished and administration fell in the hands of John Lawrence. He was the first to observe the Sikhs are the bravest and the most chivalrous race in India and they now seemed disposed to submit with manly self restraint to our superior power, if only we used it with equity and toleration.<sup>36</sup> But practically he failed to follow the same. Henry Lawrence wrote a letter to John Lawrence. "It seems to me that you look on almost all questions affecting Jageerdars and Mafeedars... in fact that you consider them a nuisance and as enemies. If anything like this be your feelings, how can you expect to do them justice as between man and man? I think we are doubly bound to treat them kindly, because they are down and because they and their hanger on have still some influence as affecting the public peace and contentment..."<sup>37</sup>

Those who remained loyal to the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars were, however, treated differently. Their treatment was

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35. *Foreign Secret Proceedings*, 28 July, 1849, No. 46-48; *Foreign Political Proceedings*, 27 September, 1850, pp 73-74

36. Smith R. Bosworth, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, London, 1883, p. 287.

37. H.B. Edwardes and H. Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, London, 1873, pp. 483-84; also see Harish C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', in *Journal of Regional History*, p.96-97.

planned in such a manner that their incomes were curtailed but not that drastically as in the case of the 'rebels'. It was obvious that service portion of each Jagir was invalidated automatically. The loyalists were confirmed but only during the life time of existing incumbents. Only a small portion of the jagirs was to go to the heirs and successors of the incumbents. But in those cases the grantees were not allowed to retain any administration or magisterial power. They were not supposed to treat their jagirs as their estates or properties. The policy was designed in a fashion by which nearly 89 percent of Jagir revenue of what was in 1849 was to be recovered by the state within a period of three generations.<sup>38</sup> By the middle of the 1850's the former jagirdars had become a class whose extinction was almost certain. In 1851 the Board of Administration had estimated that the value of grants or the alienation of revenue was nearly 30 lakh of rupees which was nearly 20 percent of the revenue. This percentage was between 35 and 45 percent in the earlier period.<sup>39</sup>

## **THE MUTINY OF 1857 AND SIKH ARISTOCRACY**

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38. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', in *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. VI, New Series, 1999, p. 96.

39. Dolores Domin, *India in 1857-59*, London, pp. 72-73 and also see Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, p. 96.

The Mutiny of 1857 gave the British Government a golden opportunity to establish its credentials as a friendly power to the Sikh community. The Government was of the view that the Sikhs were both anti-Hindustani and anti-Muslim. They were anti-Hindustani because the Hindustan sepoys had fought for the British against the Sikhs in the first and second Anglo-Sikh wars. They were anti-Muslims because the Muslim rule had perpetrated heart-rending atrocities on Sikhs during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the memories of which were still afresh. The British authorities exploited to maximize these inimical feelings of the Sikhs, who in turn, played a very significant role in suppressing the uprising. The British tried to secure the support of the aristocracy in various ways. On June 9, 1857 several leading Sardars were approached for arising horsemen for the British, among them were Sardar Tej Singh, Sham Sher Singh Sandhawalia, Nawab Imamud-ud-din and Ali Raza Khan. All were ready to accept and to become allies to the British Government during the Mutiny. The Risala Maund Hodson's Horse comprised the horseman contributed by the former Jagirdar of the Punjab.<sup>40</sup> The raising of horseman served two purposes; one it added to the

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40. Dolores Domin, *India in 1857-59*, p. 98

military strength of colonial power and two it proved the loyalty of the contributors. They were handsomely rewarded for their services; the princes with grants of territory and palatial residences; the commoners with loot and employment opportunities.<sup>41</sup>

To maintain the Sikh aristocracy as a channel for indirect control of the Sikhs, the British Government framed a policy so that respected families and religious figures were given rent free grants, pensions, recognition in 'Durbars' and privilege of educating their children in an elite institution, Aitcheson College.<sup>42</sup> Sikh aristocrats started responding to the favourable environment. British authorities took a decision to assure the Sikhs who joined the army that the tradition of the Khalsa would not be interfered with the regulation provided:

"The Pahul (Initiation) or religious pledges of Sikh fraternity should on no account be interfered with. The Sikhs should be permitted to wear their beard, and the hair of their head gathered up as enjoined by their religion. Any invasion howsoever slight, of these obligations would be constructed into a desire to subvert his faith, lead to evil consequences, and naturally inspire general

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41. Smith R. Bosworth, *Life of Lord Lawrance*, London, 1883, p. 287.

42. M.A. Mcauliffe, *Sikh and their Literature*, Delhi, 1970, p. XI.



distrust and alarm. Even those, who have assumed the outward conventional characteristics of Sikhs, should not be permitted after entering the British army to drop them.<sup>43</sup> There are number of examples who had earlier fought against the British in 1848-49 and now had been won over to the side of the British. They were induced to make up loses by fighting against 'the insurgents'. Jawahar Singh Nalwa who had fought at Chillianwala and Gujrat and was almost ruined after annexation, was asked to retrieve his position. He joined the army as a Risaldar and fought at Lucknow, Bithur and Kalpi. Sardar Ram Singh was also made a Risaldar, Sher Singh Kamla along with his nephew Buta Singh entered the British army as Naib Risaldar. Wachan Singh Tehtar and his son were made Daffadars in the Hodson's horse. In recognition of their services their jagirs were partially restored and were awarded Sanads, titles and honorary positions. Jawahar Singh was granted a Jagir worth 12,000 rupees per annum. He was appointed Honorary Magistrate of Gujranwala in 1862. Ram Singh's properties confiscated in 1849 were restored back to him. Sher Singh Kamla was awarded the title of Sardar Bahadur and a Jagir worth 3000 rupees a year. Similar treatment was given to others who had fought against the British in 1848-49 but for them in

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43 SC 387 of 28.2.1857, quoted in Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikh*, Vol. II, Delhi, 1999 p. 113.

1857.<sup>44</sup> To appease the Sikhs in a particular way later on, 12 August, 1857, the Governor General also asked the Chief Commissioner of Punjab to explore the possibility of translating into English the Sikh scriptures at Government expense in consultation with the Sikh authorities. The proposal was accepted and subsidized by the Government of India. The job was entrusted to Ernest Trump, a German missionary. At that time, it was now realized that in social and power structure, this section of society could serve the colonial interests well. The gentry and aristocracy now was identified as composed of those individuals who have from their birth or by their position, a natural influence in the country. They will, it was presumed, certainly exercise great influence if they were attached to the state and obtain a share in power and importance. Robert Montgomery and Henry Lawrence were the first to recognize the aristocracy as a great bulwark for the state. It was thus in confirmation of the policy that was believed that this class could be a useful intermediary between the state and the people.<sup>45</sup> The native aristocracy as an instrument visualized colonial instrument for the advancement not only in India but elsewhere also. In 1862, the new line of the British policy towards the Sikh feudal classes had been fully established. The Sikh chiefs were

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44 Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', in *Journal of Regional History*, p. 99

45. Thomas Metcalf, *Aftermath of the Revolt 1857-70*, London, 1965, p.168

made honorary Magistrate "invested with the special powers of Assistant Commissioners. In criminal and revenue cases they were given power to...suits, the cause of which has arisen within their Jagirs, not exceeding the value of 300 rupees."<sup>46</sup> The British administration had already realized that the policy of destroying traditional positions whose occupants seemed no longer to justify their trust had brought about the uprising and therefore, to resurrect the aristocracy was a police necessity. The total deprivation of powers which were sustained by the principal chiefs and natural leaders of the people became a cause of embarrassment for the Government.<sup>47</sup> The state started grooming them with awards of recognition such as Sardars, certificates, titles, seats of honour in the pageantry of Durbars. In addition to this the members of this class were invested with 'noble privileges', such as magisterial privilege which exercised defined judicial power over the people of defined jurisdiction. The institution of Sanads, certificates and titles recognized a class of local elite as privileged group of influential who could exercise social and political power and domination over local peasantry or the lower range of the society in urban areas. This practice of granting titles in acknowledgement of services and good conduct had started during

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46. Thomas Metcalf, *Aftermath of the Revolt 1857-70*, p.169

47. *Foreign Political Proceedings*, 167-176, May 1860.

the tenure of Lord Amherst.<sup>48</sup> Habitual of royalty in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period and living miserable poor economic position in the early British rule in Punjab these people welcomed this opportunity. Thus the Government records speaks that they were ready gratefully to accept a share of power which they might formerly have disdainfully declined. They will now readily fall into subordinate place, in the general administration for which they are qualified and 'superbly a link in the chain which has hitherto been wanting'. So long as their power is properly used people will feel actual pride in the elevation of leaders of their own race and language and will better discern and appreciate the inherent justice of our system than when exclusively administered by foreigners, however, benevolent, however upright.<sup>49</sup>

Still another form aligning the native aristocracy with the British Empire was awarding the country titles like the *Rai*, *Rai Bahadur*, *Sardar Bahadur Khan* and *Khan Bahadur*. Hindu aristocrats were titled as *Rai*, *Rai Bahadur*; Sikh aristocrats were adorned with the titles *Sardar*, *Sardar Bahadur* and Muslim with *Khan* and *Khan Bahadur*. In 1859 Lord Canning recommended the creation of Crown titles of Knighted and Star of India. These titles were awarded directly by the crown and therefore, were more highly

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48. Bruce Knox, *Democracy Aristocracy and Empire, the Provision of Colonial Honours*, Australian Historical Studies, Vol. 25-99, October 1992, pp. 244-264.

49. *Notification No. 1706-A*, Govt. of India, 7 May, 1860.

regarded than the country titles. These titles were *Companion of Indian Empire, Companion of the Star of India, Knight Commander of Indian Empire, Knight Commander of the Star of India, Knight Star of the India, Officer of the British Empire etc.* These awards and honorary positions were formally instituted in 1862<sup>50</sup>. It was an award of their services in the uprising years.

As a result of this policy, the British could muster the entire local leadership against the Kukas and the Maharaja's associates. The lambardars, ziladars, jagirdars and the leading rulers of native states, who were largely Sikhs, were the supporters of the British Government. They believed that they could prosper only under the British patronage. Comparing their existing condition with that of under the Sikh rule, they were better treated by the British.<sup>51</sup> The attempt was now made to integrate them with the official order. The territories were granted and some of them were given special recognition for their help during the crisis. But the most significant change was psychological in the sense that they were regarded as members of an order and integral part of the Indian Empire; with personal relationship to the monarch. In fact they were considered

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50. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, p. 102.

51. Jagjit Singh, 'Extract from Memorandum of Lahore, 1873-1920 to Viceroy Dufferin', *Singh Sabha*, Ludhiana, 1974, p. 64.

as props of imperialism.<sup>52</sup> Thus the emergence of the Sikh gentry was not accidental but a result of British policy and programme in the post Mutiny period. The official hierarchy began to take administrative measures with a view to consolidate the Raj. One of the resolutions of the Government was to revive the feudal order conciliating and rewarding the princes and landed classes.<sup>53</sup>

The honours were perceived as a means of assuring or reminding the natives that their rights and status as subjects of the crown, were the same of as if they lived in Britain. Edward Bulwer Lytton, the Colonial Secretary while instituting the most Exalted Order of the Star of India noted that this was an attempt to consolidate the Indians with the British Empire, "by infusing European notions and European feeling into the whole mass of our Indian fellow subjects, beginning as all education must begin with the chiefs".<sup>54</sup> Consequently a powerful class of *Rajas, Princes and Sardars* emerged in the Punjab and the influence of the natural leaders was declared to be sanctioned by immemorial traditions of Indian society. This powerful class of natives had their own states in perpetuation of the British rule also. The British, therefore, were

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52. Percival Spear, *A History of India*, Vol. II, Penguin Books, 1977, pp. 149-50.

53. Thomas, R. Metcalf, *The After Math of Revolt in India 1857-70*, New Jersey, 1965, p. 222.

54. Bruce Knox, *Democracy Aristocracy and Empire*, The Provision of Colonial Honours, Australian Historical Studies, Vol. 25-99, October 1992, pp. 244-264.

supporting the landed gentry of natural leaders because of the belief that popular loyalty would be transferred uncritically from one generation to another.<sup>55</sup>

The British introduced the regal institution of holding Darbars and awarding titles and honours. Meticulous procedure was adopted to induct influential persons to the pageantry of the Darbars. The landed aristocracy was one of most important among the Darbars. There was vertical as well as horizontal hierarchy. There were three categories i.e. the Vice Regal Darbaris, Provincial Darbaris, the Divisional and District Darbaris. At the horizontal levels the Darbaris were divided further according the honour, power and prestige of each one of them.<sup>56</sup> It was at the Darbar held by Lord Canning in February 1860 at Lahore, the Governor General made known the intention of his Government to invest understanding with chiefs and jagirdars with 'Judicial revenue and Police jurisdiction' and further to consolidate their jagirs. The ritual of Darbars exemplified another form of political manipulation employing symbolic section as an adjunct to new force." The Darbaris, it has observed, 'tamely obeyed the British but harshly commended the peasantry. The programme of scattering the lands

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55. Fracis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence*, London, pp. 173-74.

56. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, p. 102.

of the Sardars, initiated earlier by John Lawrence was now abandoned. The British rulers adopted a general policy of punishing resistance and rewarding obedience. Accordingly it was decided to grant a Jagir to those who showed active loyalty at the time of the mutiny.

A large number of Princes and Sardars happened to be Sikhs and they began to enjoy solid benefits of British imperialism. The previous policy of bringing all to a dead level which had been strongly advocated by Chief Commissioner, John Lawrence, was finally repudiated and the large land owners were prepared to cooperate closely with the colonial regime in return. The efforts were constantly going on searching for allies amongst the region's rural population. They made great effort to identify every important family in each locality and compiled and recorded their history in the District Gazetteers and Caste Hand books of Indian army. In the Muslim West Punjab, the task of identifying the local social elites did not present any problem but in the more egalitarian Sikh and Hindu societies of the Central and East Punjab, it was not always easy to discover men of influence. The Rohtak District Gazetteer lamented the lack of old established aristocratic families. After the attempt to engineer the creation of landowning elite had



failed,<sup>57</sup> the British contented themselves with patronizing the Jat community as a whole in its efforts to raise its status. They regarded the Jat collaboration as extremely important as it provided the necessary Hindu ingredient for a provincial intercommunal rural alliance. The four most important Sikh landowning families, the Ramgarhias, the Sandhanwalias, the Ahluwalias, and the Majithia, who collaborated closely British<sup>58</sup>, are a good illustration of the point<sup>59</sup>. Sardar Mangal Singh of Ramgarhia was head of one of the most powerful Sikh confederacies at the time of British annexation of Punjab. During the Second Anglo - Sikh War he had sided with the British who amply rewarded him with a Jagir worth Rs, 37,000. His eldest son served as a police inspector from 1859-87 and held the office of Honorary Magistrate, Municipal Commissioner and member of the Provincial Durbar. This tradition of loyalty in return for Government patronage was transmitted through successive generations.<sup>60</sup> Similarly Sandhanwalia and Ahluwalias, who were known for their highest rank in Sikh society during 18th century whose lands were situated in the Jullundar Doab, supported the British during Second Anglo-Sikh war. Sardar

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57. *Rohtak District Gazetteer, 1883-84*, Calcutta, 1889, 69.

58. G.L. Chopra, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab*, Vol. 2, Lahore, 1940, p. 427.

59. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, Delhi, 1998, p. 50.

60. G.L. Chopra, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab*, p. 427.

Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia raised a troop of 125 horsemen which formed a part of the famous 'flamingoes' force of Hudson's Horse.<sup>61</sup> The Sikh Sardar was made an honorary magistrate by the British in reward for this service, though his family did not prosper under their rule. Shamsher Singh finally had to leave the Punjab and settle in Pondicherry to escape his creditors. The Ahluwalia family which had also fought on the British side during the Sikh wars adapted more readily to the social and economic changes brought by colonial rule. Its leading members Pratap Singh Ahluwalia served as a nominated representative of the Punjab Legislative Council during the 1890's and 1907 formed the first loyalist inter communal grouping with in it.<sup>62</sup>

The Majithia differed from the other three leading families in that they initially blotted their copy book when the head of the family, Sardar Surjit Singh, served with the rebel army during the Second Sikh War. By way of punishment, he was exiled to Banaras and had Rs. 22,500 worth of Jagirs confiscated by the British. He eagerly grasped, however, the opportunity afforded by the revolt of 1857, to restore his family's fortunes. At the cost of a flesh wound in the thigh which he had received while fighting for the British, he

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61. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 50.

62. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 50.

not only received permission to return to Punjab but was granted a pension of Rs. 4,800 per annum and a jagir in the Gorakhpur district in U.P.

The organized expression of Sikh chiefs' response in the British Policy of rehabilitation came in 1873 when by way of an unwritten close alliance, the Sikh aristocracy and the priestly class joined hands to create Amritsar Singh Sabha.<sup>63</sup> Some of the prominent founders of this Sabha were Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Gyani Gyan Singh and Bhai Gurmukh Singh. This Sabha aimed at inculcating love for Sikhism and propagation of its principles through editing and publishing historical and religious literature and starting publish newspapers and magazines.<sup>64</sup>

This Sabha also resolved to impart modern education by founding schools and colleges. The educational changes brought about under the British rule attracted the Sikhs completely out of proportion,<sup>65</sup> which affected the Sikhs, in the process of the formation of this distinct identity. The task of propagation and instruction was to be done through the medium of Punjabi language besides, the association aimed at cultivating loyalty to the

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63. Joginder Singh, *A Sikh Leadership*, p. 2.

64. Joginder Singh, *A Sikh Leadership*, p. 16.

65. Ethne, K. Morenco, *The Transformation of the Sikh Society*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 97.

crown. The new institution and leadership emerged among the Sikhs to reform and revitalize their community.<sup>66</sup> A small number of Sikh aristocrats and their family members also took up western education.<sup>67</sup> The educational policy was another factor in securing allies, amongst the Punjab landowners. They often lived in towns but derived strength from their jagirs as absentee landlord. The Sikh aristocracy was deeply loyal to the Government due to their vested interest and class background.<sup>68</sup> The modern educationist with the fresh awareness of identity on the basis of religion<sup>69</sup> emerged into two distinct social groups holding somewhat contradictory positions and different sense of priorities sprang up. One group consisting of landed aristocrats, mahants; pujaris were represented by Bikramjit Singh of Kapurthala. Basically they were interested in maintaining their positions and possession of the Sikh shrines, intact. The other comprised those Sikhs who were enlightened by the western education and belonged to the middle class. The prominent among them were Bhai Gurmit Singh and

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66. K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, Kurukshetra, 1994, p. 1.

67. M Mufar Harul Islam, *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj Punjab, 1857-1947*, Delhi, 1997, p. 15.

68. *The Tribune*, 9 August, 1853.

69. K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, p. 1.

Bhai Jawahar Singh. They were keen to introduce reforms according to the teachings of Guru.<sup>70</sup>

The spread of education brought political consciousness among the Sikhs and together with the particular doctrines disseminated by the Singh Sabha movement, made for demands in the political sphere for the recognition of the Sikhs as a separate community in politics, law and this grant of rights and privileges to them on that basis.<sup>71</sup>

To further the influence of British Raj, Aitchison College was founded in Lahore in 1886, to provide education for the sons of leading land lords. It restricted admission to all but a few of the provinces rural elite. Its ethos and syllabus was similar to that of the English Public Schools and provided its pupils with a sense of pride and emotional attachment to the British Empire. They received an early training as texture officials and legislators through regularly taking part in the college's Council of State, which enabled a considerable number of boys to speak without notes of preparation and to reply the debating points.<sup>72</sup> Most of them started education from this college, which was meant for the 'noble' families in new traditions. Most notable of all was Malik

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70 . Joginder Singh, *The Sikh Resurgence*, 1997, p. 16. p. 17.

71 B.R. Nayyar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, New York, 1966, p. 63.

72 *Annual Report of Atchison College*, 1937-38, Lahore, 1938, p. 6 V/29/944, IOR.

Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana who had been an outstanding pupil at the College.

Members of Singh Sabha were conscious and pledged not to discuss in the meetings anything against the British Government.<sup>73</sup> As mentioned above that natural leaders were opposed not only to the militants but to the agitation politics.<sup>74</sup> They were committed to protect and advance the social, cultural and political interests of the community.<sup>75</sup> During national activities of 1907, the Ghadar Uprising, Gurudwara Reform Movement, Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement, they openly stood with the Government.<sup>76</sup> As they were fulfilling their aim to cultivate and propagate loyalty to the colonial rule,<sup>77</sup> a member could even be removed from Sabha if he was found disloyal to the Government.<sup>78</sup> The main motive behind this loyalty was to secure the Governments support for strengthening their reform movement and for asserting the separate identity of the Sikhs.<sup>79</sup>

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73. Gurdarshan Singh, 'Origin and Development of the Singh Sabha', *The Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. III, Patiala, 1973, p.

74. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, pp. 95-106. p. 311.

75. Joginder Singh, *A Sikh Leadership*, Amritsar, 1999, p. 5.

76. Harish, C. Sharma, 'British Policy towards Aristocracy in the Punjab', *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. VI, New Series, 1999, pp. 95-106.

77. Joginder Singh, *A Sikh Leadership*, p. 5.

78. Singh Sabha Lahore, *Niyam Ate Upniyams*, pp. 2-4.

79. Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism*, Patiala, 1984, p. 129.

Gokul Chand Narang a prominent Hindu leader writes about their loyalty - *"I remember when Queen Victoria died, a Sikh Sardar... took a big pot of curd to a well and invited all the Sikhs to wash their hair as a sign of mourning on the great queen's death whom he described not only his mother but the mother of whole Khalsa".*<sup>80</sup>

Ruchi Ram Sahni, a prominent societal hand of Punjab writes- *"The closing decade of the last century was a period of serious searching of the heart in all communities in the Punjab. The Sikhs were the last to awaken to a self consciousness of their glorious heritage. It was a silent process slowly and almost imperceptibly they felt the new impulse creeping through the younger members of the community. There was a strong stirring of their bones, a tingling sensation in their fibers which they could hardly explain themselves."*<sup>81</sup>

The Sikhs were strongly feeling the need of a central organisation to protect the interests of their community and to control and guide various Singh Sabhas,<sup>82</sup> covering both rural and

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80. G.B. Scott, *Religion and Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 77.

81. Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reforms in Sikh Shrines*, Amritsar, 1965, p. 14.

82. Chiefs Khalsa Diwan, *Fifty Years of Service (1902-1951) in the Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. VII, PC 1 April, 1978, pp. 59-67.

urban areas.<sup>83</sup> Amritsar Singh Sabha (1873) failed to achieve much. It was really given to the son of a servant of Kunwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, a teacher in the Oriental College, Lahore to effectively organise the community and achieve great results.<sup>84</sup> As the Amritsar Singh Sabha with its nostalgic appeal to the Sikh royalty unwittingly got involved in restoration of the Sikh Raj under Maharaja Dalip Singh, Thakur Singh Sandhwalia was the prime mover behind the affair. Kukas also joined the Amritsar party in celebrating the restoration. Several Kukas and old Sikhs believed that "Satgoroo will work wondered for them if they are true to their religion."<sup>85</sup> The Lahore party declared that "the political devotion to the Maharaja in 1886 implied hostility to the British rules and no patriot Sikh could tolerate the spread of such a feeling."<sup>86</sup> The leadership "worked hard to check the spread of this feeling although he incurred thereby the very great displeasure from certain quarters."<sup>87</sup> The loyal leadership continued reminding their brethren that they owed to the British Government their continued existence as a separate religion and

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83. Joginder Singh, *A Sikh Leadership*, p. 3.

84. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Bhagat Lakshmana Singh*, Autobiography, Calcutta, 1965, p. 39.

85. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Extract from Abstract of Political Intelligence*, Punjab Police, No. 12, Dalip Singh Correspondence, p. 401.

86. Bhai Jawahar Singh, Arya Samaj Singh, Sabha, *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. III, April, 1, 1973, p. 87.

87. Bhai Jawahar Singh, Arya Samaj Singh, Sabha, *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. III, April, 1, 1973, p. 87.



something approaching as a separate nationality."<sup>88</sup> During the course and after the two Sabhas (Amritsar and Lahore) merger in 1883 into a bigger organisation as the Khalsa Diwan and again split up and establishment of Khalsa Diwan at Lahore, 1886, the chief aim was the welfare of their community. Education made them much more conscious to remove non Sikh elements from their religion. Establishment of Khalsa Tract Society to promote Sikh religion and education and the establishment of the Khalsa College at Amritsar to spread higher education in the community and to inculcate the teachings of Sikhism among the Students.<sup>89</sup> The new organisation was mainly led by the educated Sikh aristocracy with small member of educated Sikhs from middle class. They claimed to be progressive in outlook. The chief Khalsa Diwan was impeccably loyal to the British. Its memorials to the Punjab Government always began with a recitation of glorious action of friendship of the Government and favours done to the Sikh community and ended with humble prayers for more concessions.<sup>90</sup> In spite of such expressions of loyalty, the Punjab Government's sponsorship of the Singh Sabha ultimately had dangerous consequences. Their activities strengthened growing

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88. Letter from Young to Durand, Correspondence, 27 May, 1886, p. 369.

89. Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism*, pp. 132-33.

90. Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, Delhi, 1978, p. 156.

Sikh religious self awareness, exploding into violence in the movement for Gurudwaras reform in early 1920s. The British authorities were successful in the merging aristocracy and elite<sup>91</sup> and religious leaders. The leadership in turn by propagating education and preaching religion and helping in getting the jobs for the educated Sikhs maintained its influence upon the Sikh masses for at least fifty years. In 1941 in the Punjab, the Sikhs were 17% literate at all ages, the Hindus, 16% and the Muslims 7%. Their high percentage in the Indian Army is connected with their literacy.<sup>92</sup> In 1891 the Sikhs formed a comparatively large proportion of the literate group in the Punjab. For the year 1881-91, If one counts the number of male Sikhs in every 10,000, one finds an increase from 111 in 1881 to 471 in 1891, for the learning group, and an increase from 135 in 1881 to 784 in 1891.<sup>93</sup> In a wave of de-Hinduizing Sikhism, Kahan Singh, a Singh Sabha leader wrote a book entitled 'Hum Hindu Nahin'.<sup>94</sup>

In the meantime the Sikh strongly felt the need of a central organization to protect the interests of their community and to

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91. *Educated middle class*

92. Ethne, K. Morenco, *The Transformation of the Sikh Society*, p. 97.

93. Ethne, K. Morenco, *The Transformation of the Sikh Society*, pp. 101-2.

94. K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, p. 8.

control and guide various Singh Sabhas.<sup>95</sup> Thus on 30th October 1902 Chief Khalsa Diwan was formed at Amritsar. It was with the efforts of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Bhai Arjun Singh Bagarian, Trilochan Singh, Sardar Dharm Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Sadhu Sujjan Singh that a new leadership came into being. The organisation was primarily a social and educational body. In fact it enjoyed the patronage of the British rulers and the financial backing of the ruling princes which made it a handmaiden of the Government. The British, too, helped in their 'enlightened self interest'<sup>96</sup> Sir Charles Rivaz, Lieut- Governor, for instance, organized a campaign for raising funds from Sikh landowners for the educational activities of the Diwan.<sup>97</sup>

## **AGRICULTURE, CANAL-COLONIZATION AND SIKH**

### **ARISTOCRACY**

Punjab comprised around one tenth of British India's area and population, but its agricultural wealth and military importance gave it a political significance disproportionate to its size.<sup>98</sup> The British Government sought to achieve a wide range of objectives through canal construction and colonization programme. It wanted

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95. Chief Khalsa Diwan, Fifty Year of Service, 1902-51, in *The Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. VII, pt. 1, April 1978, pp. 59-67.

96. K.C. Gulati, *Alalis : Past and Present*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 18.

97. K.C. Gulati, *Alalis : Past and Present*, p. 18.

98. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 39.

to promote agricultural development, expand the riverine base, enlist political support and facilitate recruitment in the army.<sup>99</sup> The majority of the Sikh population was centered in rural areas, agriculture being their main occupation. The demography of the Punjab during British rule underwent a dramatic change. The mainspring for these developments was the process of agricultural colonization of a network of perennial canals.<sup>100</sup> Here the British constructed the world's largest irrigation system, leading to twenty six million acres being watered by canals and thus transforming the region from one of the poorest agricultural areas in the subcontinent into its granary.<sup>101</sup> The British, like the Mughals and Sikhs earlier had to take this important factor in consideration while constructing their administrative machinery. But unlike their predecessors they introduced economic changes which led to the growth of new urban educated elite whose outlook and interests were in variance with traditional holders of power.<sup>102</sup>

The landowners of this region exerted far greater power because of their close links with their land buildings. This was in response both to the area's unsettled social conditions and the fact

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99. Imran Ali, *Punjab under Imperialism*, New Delhi, 1989, P. 2.

100. Pritam Singh (ed.), *Globalization and The Region: Exploration in Punjabi Identity*, U.K. 1996, p. 139.

101. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 38.

102. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 14.

that social status derived from the control of land. Land was the major source of an individual's izzat (Honour), Punjabis still refer to their land as today their Patlaj, a word which has a meaning similar to Izzat, that of power, honour, respect.<sup>103</sup> From 1860's onwards there was a massive increase in agricultural prices and land values in the Punjab. This stemmed from the ending of political insecurity in the region and from rest improved communications and irrigation facilities.<sup>104</sup> The total cultivated area of the south eastern region fluctuated over time from 43 lakh acres in 1867-68, it increased to 54 lakh acres by 1886-87 and by the turn of century it further increased to 65 lakh acres.<sup>105</sup>

The cultivated area of south-east region had increased 11.8 percent by 1886-89, by 21.8 percent between 1887 and 1907, by 1.6 percent from 1907-1922.<sup>106</sup> The changes in the cultivated area were accompanied by new patterns of cropping and a shift to 'Commercial Crops' in most parts of the Punjab Province. New cash crops such as tobacco, sugarcane and cotton were introduced. Wheat which has previously rotted whenever a bumper crop had

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103. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 17.

104. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 53.

105. General Report of the Land Revenue Administration of the Punjab for the Agricultural Year ending the 30th September, 1928, Superintendent Government Printing Punjab, 1923, Statement No. II, p. 1-11.

106. Mohinder Singh, *Agriculture in the South East Punjab 1858- 1947*, M. Phil. Dissertation, History Department, P.U. Chandigarh, 2002, p. 65.

occurred was exported in their vast quantities due to the new railway network, agricultural output, because of the vast increase in irrigation, easily outstripped population growth. All this added up to bonanza for Punjab's cultivators who soon ranked up amongst the rich farmers in Asia.<sup>107</sup>

Indeed given the magnitude of progress achieved in this field it will be safe to argue that the dynamism of Punjab agriculture during the foreign rule was mainly due to the development of irrigation infrastructure. Immediately after annexation the British Government repaired, renovated and expanded the old canals and then worked with the help of borrowed funds. Incidentally, Punjab received the lion's share of the Government investment in canal building activities.<sup>108</sup> The perennial canals constructed by the British from 1885 onwards spread over these extensive plains. The 'canal colonies', as these tracts came to be called, became a zone of major economic change in this part of British India.<sup>109</sup> The agricultural communities of reversion tracts lacked the excess of manpower to release to the newly irrigated lands. Indeed these areas began suffering from labour shortages when tenants and labourers tended to leave for new tracts. British officials were also

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107. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 57.

108. M. Mufakharul Islam, *Irrigation Agriculture and the Raj Punjab, 1887-1978*, Delhi, 1997, p. 13.

109. Pritam Singh, Shinder Singh Thandi (ed.), *Globalization and the Region: Exploration in Punjabi Identity*, p. 139.

reluctant to create disruption in the landlord- labour nexus of riverine. Landowners were allocated colony grants to compensate for any disruptions from perennial irrigation.<sup>110</sup> Unlike the traditional oriental despot, the Punjab Government allowed most of the increased agricultural profit to remain in the cultivation of lands. It pitched its revenue demand as low as possible. At first it was set at half a cultivator's assessed profits, but by the 1930's it had fallen to a quarter net assets.'. The farmers not only benefited from this low revenue demand but also from the fact that the land settlement was only reassessed every twenty years or so.<sup>111</sup>

In this Crown (or State) 'Waste Land Colonization Policy' became a vital accompaniment to canal irrigation. One of the considerations to allocate land was the selection of grantees. The British believed that the best source for such endowments was amongst the landowning lineages. Among these beneficiaries, the landholding castes of Central Punjab were perhaps the most important; and a good proportion of these grantees were Sikhs. They belonged to especially to the various subsections of the Jat castes.

The Grantee may be said to have been of the broad categories. Those with service condition and those without any condition these

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110. Pritam Singh, Shinder Singh Thandi (ed.), *Globalization and the Region: Exploration in Punjabi Identity*, p. 139.

111. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)*, p. 54.

two categories may again be divided into three groups: (i) Peasant grantees, (ii) nazrana paying grantees, (iii) military grantees. The nazrana paying grantees included: i) the yeoman and capitalist grantee in the Chenab colony, (ii) civil grantees in the Jhelam and Chenab colonies; (iii) grants to the landed gentry in Lower Bari Canal and (iv) grants to individuals in return for service rendered to the Government.<sup>112</sup> This was done to broaden the base for allies. To appease the Sikh aristocratic class, with regard to production of seeds in the Lyallpur colony the Government let out an area of 500 acres for seed farming. In the Lower Bari Doab Canal 'seed farm' grants were made the grantees- Sir Joginder Singh most popular as Jogindra Singh<sup>113</sup> and H.T. Colville- had to devote stipulate acreages of the production of seed which was then produced by the Governments and other burgees.<sup>114</sup> In the same colony project some of the 'capitalist farmers belonged to the group of large grantees and auction purchases of non agricultural origin. This is clear from the example of the estates of Colonel E.H. Cole and Ujjal Singh.<sup>115</sup> Cole's estate had six tractors, a farm machinery repair

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112. M. MufarHarul Islam, *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj Punjab, 1857-1947*, Delhi, 1997, p. 32.

113. For biographical sketch see Appendix No.1

114. M. Mufar Harul Islam, *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj Punjab 1857-1947*, Delhi, 1997, p. 33.

115. For biographical sketch see Appendix ii.



shop and a stud farm. The estate of Ujjal Singh was situated in the lower Bari Doab Canal had 1,700 acres worked by hired labour.

Elite rural families were catered for in this colony through the allocation of 60,000 acres for landed gentry's grants.<sup>116</sup> Eligible for these grants were families mentioned in Griffin and Massey's 'Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab and other Prominent Divisional and Provincial Darbari Families'.<sup>117</sup>

In alone Suhag Para Colony (Montgomery District) settled in 1886-88 Jat Sikhs obtained 38 percent of allotted area or around 29,000 acres out of 90,000 acres of total land. There were 484 such grantees thirty seven Khatri Sikhs, were allotted 3,500 acres or 45 percent of colony unit. 7800 acres or 10 percent of colony land was grantee to Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, who was also from Rawalpindi. The extent of this grant made it an exceptional case in the entire history of colonization. It highlighted the great political value of land grants, as well as the mechanism through which the Punjabi elite moved towards an accommodation with importance imperialist rule that was to survive the growing claims of nationalism.<sup>118</sup>

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116. *These grantees came from all five administrative divisions of the Punjab, though the majority came from Western Punjab because of the higher incidence of large landholding.*

117. Pritam Singh, Shinder Singh Thandi (ed.), *Globalization and the Region: Exploration in Punjabi Identity*, p.147.

118. Pritam Singh, Shinder Singh Thandi (ed.), *Globalization and the Region : Exploration in Punjabi Identity*, p. 141.

The British attached importance to the well being and views of the martial castes. At the end of the First World War, over 4, 20, 000 acres of colony land were distributed to just over 6,000 commissioned and non commissioned army officers.<sup>119</sup> Although the bulk of the land in the canal colony areas was sold to peasant proprietors, the Punjab Government reserved areas for the large landowners, some of which was sold to them and remains were given in reward for Government services. Seven and half percent of the lower Bari Doab Canal colony was in this way earmarked for the landed aristocracy.<sup>120</sup>

While the colonial Government initiated its far reaching policies like land settlement irrigation schemes, population transfers, military recruitment, expansion of educational institutions and communications, it equally avoided upsetting age old rural set up. Besides strengthening the agrarian sector, it reinvigorated the rural elite with a new leash of life. By bestowing magisterial power and extensive land grants, the families of regional influential were transformed into a strong class of subordinate, faithful allies. These intermediaries guaranteed status quo in their respective areas and proved strong arm during the urgencies and emergencies acting as pillars of stability. With the

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119. Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in the Punjab 1923- 1947*, Delhi, 1979, p. 25.

120. Forbourn, *Final Settlement Report of the Lower Bari Doab, Canal Colony, Settlement, 1927-35*, Lahore, 1935, p. 3.

reforms of 1919, these landed elites were inducted into legislative (responsible) politics through a restrictive mechanism lacking any electoral agenda. Very specific, limited and largely docile role was expected of these largely a political and non ideological elite, whose loyalties totally lay with their self interests. This enhanced political role added to their laurels within their constituencies simultaneous with providing a buffer to organized assertive, supra individual politicking which could have threatened the Raj. Even while Sir Fazl i-Husain and Sir Chhottu Ram rallied them together as the Unionist Party, the personal and local loyalties were not ruled out. The Government had been able to construct a Punjabi Supra communal, Political identity, intrinsically steeped in ruralism and localism, counterbalancing any party- urban or mass based political movements, espousing supra regional or ideological causes as was the case with Indian National Congress (INC), All India Muslim League (AIML) and the Communal Party (CP),<sup>121</sup>

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121. D.A. Low (ed.), *The Punjab and the Retardation of Nationalism the Political Inheritance of Pakistan*, London, 1991.

## **CHAPTER - II**

### **ELECTION OF 1937 AND FORMATION OF A SIKH TRIO (1937-1939)**

The communal cleavage was clear on community basis in the province. The society was also associated with a rural-urban conflict which was fostered and developed by the imperialist Government through a large number of legislative and administrative measures. The introduction of proprietary rights and commercialization in agriculture along with the new judicial system set up by the British in Punjab created conditions which brought about a conflict between agriculturalist and non-agriculturalists.<sup>122</sup> Owing to the land revenue policy of the Governments ever since 1847, the difference between agriculturalists and non-agriculturalists had been vital. It is a well known fact that the agriculture was the main source of livelihood in the Punjab and in 1931 as much as of 89.8% of total population was living in villages' largely depending on agriculture.<sup>123</sup> When the elections for Punjab Legislative Council's was held for the first time in 1921, there was no single group or political party with a specific programme for all

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122 *Punjab History Conference*, XIIIth Session, March, 1979, pp. 271-72.

123 Ahmed Khan, *Census of India, 1931: Punjab*, part I, Lahore, 1933, pp. 1-3.

the people and the candidates who won the elections did so because of their personal influence. Out of seventy one elected members, 35 were Muslims, 15 Sikhs and 21 Hindus and others.<sup>124</sup> The Unionist Party passed a number of Acts such as the Punjab Land Revenue Bill - 1926, Sliding Seals Systems of Land Revenue Act of 1930 and so on and also pressed upon the Government from time to time for liberal remissions in land revenue.<sup>125</sup> The recommendations of the Joint Select Committee led to the decision of the British Government to pass the Indian Act of 1935, introducing some further constitutional reforms. The new Act proposed a federal Government at the Centre and Provincial Government in the eleven provinces in a large measure of autonomy.<sup>126</sup> Before elections there were the prominent parties among Sikhs - the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the later organisation of landed aristocracy but with the advent of provincial autonomy the Diwan changed its table and fought elections as Khalsa National Party.<sup>127</sup>

The membership of the provincial legislatures was enlarged in comparison to earlier arrangements. For example, in the Punjab

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124 *Punjab Gazetteer, Dec. 1923-Jan., 1924.*

125 *Home Department, Political, GOI, File No. 94/7/45, NAI.*

126 Bipan Chandra, Amal Tripathi and Barude (ed.), *Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 189-90.

127 *Home Department, Political GOI, File No. 232/1942, NAI.*

Legislative Assembly, the number was increased from 94 under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to 175 under the Act of 1935.

The Punjab occupied a peculiar position in the colonial India set up. It was a Muslim majority province with Muslims as per the Census Report of 1931, consisting 56.54% of the population.<sup>128</sup> The Hindus and Sikhs though in a majority consisting 26.83 and 12.99% respectively of the population together enjoyed a dominant position in other spheres viz. in voting registers, in public services, in local self Government, in educational institutions and in trades and industry. Already the province in 1920's economic, political and moral crisis<sup>129</sup> made the loyalist element to jump into election fray and entered the Punjab Legislative Council as representative of the masses. The electorate was increased to cover about 11.5% of the Indian population as against the 3.4% prevailing under the diarchy of lowering the franchise qualifications.<sup>130</sup>

The three communities' rich and influential persons started taking active part in politics. The situation on the eve of elections was rather entangled and obscure. The provincial elections gave birth to several new political parties. A jumble of parties and

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128 *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. XVII, Punjab Report- Part-I, p. 29.

129 Azim Hussain, *Fazl-i-Hussain: A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1946, p. 126.

130 *Punjab History Conference Proceedings*, Harmohinder Singh, 'The Congress in the Punjab Politics and the Elections of 1937', Thirteenth Session, Patiala, 1979, p. 275; See also Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 233.

groups put up their candidates in the election fray to gauge their popularity with the masses.<sup>131</sup>

The parties for the elections of 1937 were as following:

- i) The National Unionist Party or the Zamindar Party
- ii) The National Reform Party representing the party of Urban Hindus
- iii) The Sikhs
- iv) The Ahrar
- v) The Congress
- vi) Ittihad-i-Millat, Socialists, Congress, Nationalist and Parliamentary Board.

### **THE NATIONAL UNIONIST PARTY OR THE ZAMINDAR PARTY**

The Unionist party was the largest single party in Legislative Council, but was not sufficiently strong to over note all other non-officials.<sup>132</sup> It was formed by Sir Fazl Hussain and Choudhary Chhottu Ram.<sup>133</sup> It was gaining strength due to its strong agrarian programme of promoting the welfare of the rural classes against the urban.<sup>134</sup> Its leaders continued to create an ever increasing consciousness among the agriculturalists about their merciless

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131 Kailash Chander, *Jinnah and the Communal Problem in India*, Delhi, 1986, p. 139.

11 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, October, 19th 1936; p. 47, Delhi, 2004.

133 *Oral Interview of Ujjal Singh*, Department of Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala; *Jat Gazette*, Urdu, 1.7.1931, Rohtak, p. 2,.

134 *Oral Interview of Ujjal Singh*, Department of Historical Studies.

exploitation by the non agriculturists through their press even if it was limited.<sup>135</sup> With one or two exceptions it was entirely Muslim, though its policy had been predominantly rural, it included its member a number of urban Muslims. It had a party organisation although splits had been threatened from time to time. There were two main causes of instability, first, the ambition and jealousies of younger members regarding office and second personal animosities and partisan factions.<sup>136</sup> Fazl-i-Hussain exercised a very powerful influence over the party and its organization even when he held office outside the Punjab.<sup>137</sup> His death on 9 July 1936 was an important setback to the Punjab and also left the field open for Sikandar Hayat Khan.<sup>138</sup> The Unionist Party before its reorganization in 1935 was not the party of the masses but it was a party of the landed gentry. Fazl-i-Hussain was acutely conscious of this weakness and in 1936, while organizing the party, took pains to make it a mass organisation which would bring forth in time

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135 *Jat Gazette*, Urdu, 1.7.1931, Rohtak, p.2,

136 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, October, 19th 1936; p. 48, Delhi, 2004..

137 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, October, 19th 1936; p. 48.

138 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power, the Punjab under Unionist Party, 1923-1947*, p. 98, Delhi, 1999.

*Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan (1892-1942), belonged to the landed aristocrat family of Punjab. In 1921, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council. In 1937, he assumed the office as the Premier of the Punjab. He helped the British whole-heartedly in the Second World War. He remained loyal to the imperial bureaucrats.*



talent to the top.<sup>139</sup> He was officiating as a member of Executive Council. Some defection were certainly occurring e.g. a few urban minister who belonged either to Jinnah's party or to no party at all. Apart from casual defections, however, the main question was whether other Muslims and especially rural Muslim members could work together. There was a potential line of cleavage between the Tiwanas and the Noons on the one side and the Wah Party on the other. The Noons and the Tiwana belonged mostly to Shahpur district; the later were the cousins of the former. In that district they had for long held the position of feudal lords, but their position was being challenged. They were not a political party, but owing to their family position they had always been able to exert considerable influence on politics. The recognized head of the tribes was Sir Umar Hayat Khan.<sup>140</sup> Sir Umar Hayat Khan had become too old to take a leading part in affairs but he had considerate influence. The most prominent Noons were Nawab Sir Mohammad Hayat Khan, who was a commissioner for India. Among prominent Tiwanas were Nawab Allah Baksh who was a nominated member of

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139 Azim Hussain, *Fazl-i-Hussain: A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1946, p. 127.

140 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.52.

the Legislative Assembly, and Khizr Hayat Khan, Son of Sir Umar Hayat Khan.<sup>141</sup>

So far as leading members of Wah Family were concerned they were Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, his brother Sir Liaquet Hayat Khan, Prime Minister, Patiala state and his cousin Nawab Muzaffar Khan. Their home was at Wah in the Attock district and they belonged to a very good family, but the Tiwanas and Noon were apt to look down on them. For some years there had been a division with in the Unionist party between these two groups based on personal and tribal considerations, and not on political grounds. It had not extended to the whole of the Party. The ill feeling between the groups was increased when the Wah Party helped candidates in assembly election who had the temerity to stand from the Shahpur district against the Tiwanas. The Tiwana group was strongly opposed to the appointment of Nawab Muzaffar Khan as Revenue Member, and although the later and Firoz did their best to work together while they were colleagues there was no genuine reconciliation, and the situation was one of arm neutrality rather than of peace The Noon, influence was increased by the fact that one of the Sir Fazl-i-Husain's daughter was married to one of

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141 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.52.

Firoz's brother. Sir Fazl's death had weakened the Noon influence. Each of the two groups had its recognized supporters in certain districts, and sometimes these represented local factions. For instance the Multan district had for generations been rent by a feud between the leading families of Gilanis and Qureshis. The former belonged to the Noon group and later to the Wah group. At the time of elections the position was that there would be a fight in everyone between either a Qureshi or Gilani candidate or candidates who would have Gilani or Qureshi support respectively. One of the candidates was the Secretary of Unionist party. Khan Bahadur Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana, who was a close personal friend and the Chief Lieutenant of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan the Gilanis were putting up a candidate to fight him.

The same was happening in the Shahpur district one of the important member of the council was Nawab Muhammad Hat Qureshi, a big landowner and a man of good family. He was also one of the staunch chest supporters and a very close and personal friend of Sikandar. The Tiwanas were putting up Nawab Allah Bakhsh to oppose him and intended to use all their influence to defeat him. These matters were at the moment a real cause of anxiety to the Unionist party. Thus writes Emerson to Linlithgow, "Behind the efforts of the Tiwana group is the natural desire to

have sufficient seats in the new assembly to press their claims for a ministership. They were, of course, not alone in this desire. Several of the smaller parties know that their only hope of exercising any effective influence in the future is their power of bargaining after the elections are over. The more the votes they can command in the assembly the greater will be their bargaining power.<sup>142</sup>

The Unionist Party was projected by its ideologies as one which was founded to protect the small as well as the large landowners against the urban commercial and money lending groups. They constantly pleaded that no land revenue should be charged from those who owned either up to 2 acres of canal irrigated land, or 5 acres of irrigated land, or those who paid land revenue up to Rs. 5. Similarly they voiced the demand that the land revenue should be assessed on income basis.<sup>143</sup>

The election manifesto of the Unionist party declared dominion status as its political goal for the country. But its economic programme secured it so overwhelming confidence of the electorate that it won about 25 seats unopposed.<sup>144</sup> The manifesto further declared that the party would (i) ameliorate the lot of the masses, particularly of the down-trodden sections of the society; (ii)

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142 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlighgow, p.54.

143 Bhagwan Josh, *Communal Movement in Punjab 1926-47*, Delhi, 1979, p. 126.

144 *The Tribune*, 21 January, 1937.

lighten the burden of the poorest of the tax payers by diminishing the cost of administration; (iii) boost cottage industries both in the town and villages; (iv) relieve the agricultural and labouring classes of their irksome burden of debt; (v) intensify the campaign against disease, unemployment illiteracy and revamp the preposterous educational pattern so as to make it more practical and job-oriented.<sup>145</sup>

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145 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p. 50.

## **THE NATIONAL REFORM PARTY**

The party primarily consisted of urban Hindus and its main aim was to protect the Hindu interests especially of the professional, business and money classes. The party was bitterly opposed to the Communal Award, the Alienation of Land Act and the Debt legislation.<sup>146</sup> The factors which were responsible for the formation of this are:

Firstly, the realization that the proselytizing activities of the Muslims and the Christian Missionaries would adversely affect the numerical strength of the Hindus and consequently their political power; secondly, more and more aggressive demands put forward by the Muslim League and the support they received in high British quarters; thirdly, the so-called appeasement attitude of the Congress vis-a-vis the League. The Communal Award, which formed the basis of elections to the Legislatures under the 1935 constitution and the neutral attitude adopted by the Congress towards it was a case in point. The Mahasabha contended, not without some justification that the case of the majority community

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146 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.49.

would go by default. So it had flourished on this accidental combination of circumstances.<sup>147</sup>.

In the early years of its formation there was a counter blast to Muslim League.<sup>148</sup> But its fears regarding Muslim Raj became less than what they were earlier.<sup>149</sup> The intelligent among them recognized that even if Muslims succeed in sticking together their majority would not be sufficient to secure stability and they were fairly certain that jealousies and injuries among Muslims will often them the opportunity to exert their influence and power.<sup>150</sup> They were very afraid and suspicious of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain, but became more favourably disposed towards his views and aims Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, whom they rightly regarded as less communal in his view and aims. Sir Gokul Chand Narang, the Minister for Local Self Government was a member of the party. He was a man of culture and scholarship, who was generally respected. He was then getting old and his health was indifferent. Though Mr. Manohar Lal was an able minister and a good speaker yet British did not trust him. The party also contained several prominent members of the Lahore Bar and was strong in debating power. On communal question it could usually depend on the help of rural Hindu (except Chhottu

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147 N.V. Rajkumar, *Indian Political Parties*, New Delhi, 1948, pp. 140-150.

148 N.V. Rajkumar, *Indian Political Parties*, p.113

149 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p. 49

150 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.50.

Ram) and also of most Sikhs. An alliance between Muslim and Sikhs as obviously opposed in its interests, and it was the general complaint of Muslims that members of this party and their supporters lose few opportunities of creating strife between the two communities. They certainly used their influence to prevent any reconciliation in the Shahidganj dispute. During the Civil Disobedience<sup>151</sup> movement many members of the party, like most urban Hindus, were sympathetic towards the Congress. For the moment, however, they were actively opposed to Congress mainly because of the latter's attitude towards the Communal Award.

The 18th session of the All Indian Hindu Mahasabha opened at Lahore on 21st October, 1936 under the Presidentship of Shankracharya and Dr. Kurkorti. Large attendance at the session included Raja Narendranath Nath, Bhai Parmanand, Sir Gokal Chand Narang and delegates from other provinces. Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Das, Chairman of the Reception Committee, in the course of his welcome address claimed that Hindu Mahasabha stood for the protection of the political rights of the Hindus. He stressed upon the Hindus to remain united and be self-reliant.<sup>152</sup>

## **THE AHRAR'S**

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151 *Congress nationalist's launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Sikh leadership joined hands with the forces in ensuring the success of the Congress Call. On 9 March, 1930, the Shiromani Akali Dal offered 5,000 volunteers for the movement.*

152 H.N Mitra and N.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1936, p. 253.



The Ahrars<sup>153</sup> came into prominence about 1931 when they took a leading part in the Muslim agitation against the Maharaja of Kashmir. Their special appeal was to Muslims of the lower classes in the towns and they had considerable following among the riff raff of Lahore, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Sialkot. During the Kashmir agitation they joined hands with the Ahmadis, but a split occurred and the two are now the bitterest enemies.<sup>154</sup> For some years the Ahrars have been carrying on a most virulent campaign against the Ahmedis of Qadian and especially against that time head of the community. In the campaign they had the sympathy of a large number of orthodox Muslims, and for some time the situation was one of grave potential danger. It looked as if there might be a very widespread Muslim movement against the Ahmadis, and that it would be difficult for Government to protect the latter. The Ahrars had found a popular platform, they were entirely unscrupulous in making the best use of it; and by raising the cry of 'Danger to Islam' they were fast moving their strength. Then there occurred the

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153 *A religious body of orthodox Sunnis formed their organisation during the First World War with the avowed purpose of restoring the original purity of the Quran and working for "Muslim revival against the Ahmedis and Shias, many of whom were pro-British Punjab landlords. It was not the Ahrars religious reformism, but rather their political activities, which won them popularity. Until 1930 the Ahrars constituted an independent Congress group led by Punjab intellectuals closely connected with minor Zamindars and small scale manufacturers (owners of Khadi workshops; etc.).*

154 H.N. Mitra and N.N. Mitra, (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, p. 253.

Shahidganj Gurudwara incident. The Ahrar' believed that Ahmedia were at the back of the popular Muslim side. They lost a great deal of their influence and had not at that time fully improved the ground that was lost. But they had recovered a great deal of it, and because of their antagonism to the Ahmedia community, they gained more sympathy and support in that account than their merits deserved. They were anti Government and were flirting with Congress from time to time. They had not been outstanding leaders of position but had several good mob orators and their Party was fairly well organised. For some time they planned to join Mr. Jinnah's party, but ultimately refused to do so since they preferred to remain independent and Jinnah would not endorse their programme of opposition to the Ahmedia. The strength of the party in the Council was only three or four, but they hoped to secure more seats in the new assembly.

They worked actively in the Khilafat movement and favoured mass struggle against the British rule. The most prominent Ahrar leaders were Haibubullah Rahman Ludhianvi, Afzal Khan Choudhary, and Ataullah Shah Bokhari, all Khilafatists, who backed the Congress left wing until the mid-thirties.<sup>155</sup>

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155 Y.V. Gankovsky and L.R. Gordon Polanskaya, *A History of Pakistan*, Moscow, 1964, p. 62.

## **OTHER PARTIES WITH ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY**

Ittihad-i-Millat<sup>156</sup> played no significant role in the elections of 1936-37. The party had no say in the politics of the Punjab as it was officially estimated to number 200 in the Punjab election year of 1937. Its members included those Muslims who had supported the Shahidganj Mosque agitation. Though Ahrar Party and Ittihad-i-Millat had reached an electoral adjustment in May 1936, yet their relations continued to become strained after a conflict at Gujranwala.<sup>157</sup>

## **MUSLIM LEAGUE**

Muslim League joined the election campaign for seats in the provincial legislative assemblies. It set up a Parliament Board with Jinnah as its permanent President and authorized him to appoint 35 other members for the board with a view to contest the provincial elections in an effective way.<sup>158</sup> Jinnah, who had returned from England in 1935 more or less a forgotten leader, was nevertheless elected President of the Muslim League. He found

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156 *Ittihad-i-Millat was formed in February, 1936 under the leadership of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. It grew out of the Shahidganj agitation, a dispute between the Muslims and Sikhs over a religious site, which it continued to support till May, 1938.*

157 Nicholas Mansergh (ed.), *The Transfer of Power, Vol. I*, London, 1970-89, p. 362.

158 Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims: A Political History, 1857-1947*, Bombay, 1959, p. 244; see also Kamlesh Sharma, *Role of Muslims in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 203.

himself the leader of a disunited party without resources, and above all, without purposive programmes to face the elections.<sup>159</sup>

However, Jinnah visited Lahore to bring about a merger of the Muslim League and the Unionist Party. Frustrated in his efforts to gain influence over the Muslim landed interests in the Punjab, Jinnah turned to electoral alliances with the Majlis-I-Ahrar<sup>160</sup> and Ittihad-i-Millat, representing the urban middle classes. These two parties agreed to join the League Parliamentary Board, and out of the eleven in it from the Punjab, four were Ahrar and three from the Millat Party.

Punjab Ahrar Conference held in the beginning of 1936, Mir Abdu Qayyum made a fervent appeal to his party men to support the Congress and criticized the Muslim League as '*a coterie of few Knights, Khan Bahadurs and Nawabs.*'<sup>161</sup> The League in the Punjab had virtually no organisation, and there was no time to built one before the elections.<sup>162</sup>

The manifesto of the League made no reference to the future political development of India. Independence was not demanded,

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.38 Manmath Nath Das, *Partition and Independence of India*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 61.

160 *The Majlis-I-Ahrar was formed in 1930 and cooperated closely with Congress in the Civil Disobedience Movement. It was initially not a communal party, but tended increasingly towards communalism in 1930's. By the early 1940's the Ahrar were in a state of decay, with the more conservative elements joining the Muslim League.*

161 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 5 May, 1936.

162 Imran Ali, *Punjab Politics in the Decade before Partition*, Lahore, 1975, p. 14.

and it was apparent that Muslim League did not desire the severance of the British connection.<sup>163</sup> As a result, during its 1936-37 election campaign, the League failed to conquer the influence it had lost among the middle strata of Muslims after the failure of the Khilafat movement. Neither was it supported by many of the bourgeois- landlord groups in the Punjab.

### **THE SIKHS**

Sikh politics have for years been in a state of confusion, permutations and combination were so frequent that it was always difficult to know 'what the exact position was at a particular time'.<sup>164</sup> Amongst the Sikhs before elections there were only two high-flying parties existed. One party consisted of the known aristocrats was labeled as the Chief Khalsa Diwan but with the initiation of the Provincial Autonomy, the Chief Khalsa Diwan changed its label and fought the election under the name of the Khalsa National Party and the other was a group of middle class and educated Sikhs known as Shiromani Akali Dal.

### **KHALSA NATIONAL PARTY**

Khalsa National Party was formed in 1935, to protect and promote the interests of the Sikh community. Sir Sunder Singh

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163 Anita Inder Singh, *The Origin of the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 8.

164 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.54.

Majithia<sup>165</sup> was the leader of the party. Sir Joginder Singh (most popular as Sir Jogendra Singh) and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia who were the promote of Khalsa National Party, thought that interests of the Sikhs could only be protected if such a party was formed having not only nationalist views on political matters but also protecting the interests of the Sikhs who were in minority.<sup>166</sup> Sir Sunder Singh became the president of the Khalsa National Party and Ujjal Singh<sup>167</sup> was elected its Secretary.<sup>168</sup> Khalsa National Party gathered around themselves all anti Akalis and pro British elements. But for Emerson the Party had been formed with the object of '*getting back the influence which the Sikhs of leading families workout the new constitution and also accept office*'.<sup>169</sup>

The party put no faith in slogans like 'Complete Independence' but adopted the other items of the programme of the Akalis.<sup>170</sup> Sikhs were in want to get rid of the Communal Award and to protect the interests of their community. Sir Joginder Singh a leading member of Chief Khalsa Diwan proposed to form a 'Unity Board' of all political parties for the elections to be held under the

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165 *He was the first Member for Revenue in Punjab and controlled the Khalsa College, Amritsar. He was a man of strong character, loyal to the Government and was generally trusted by the Governments. He had biggest sugar factory in united*

166 *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh* recorded with Department of Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.

167. See Appendix II for detailed biographical study.

168 *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh* recorded with Department of Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.

169 K. C Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, p.72.

170 K. C Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, p.72.

new constitution.<sup>171</sup> He was authorized to issue a detailed manifesto. On 7th August 1936 he declared that the party stood for its attainment by all constitutional means.<sup>172</sup> Party Manifesto declared that the KNP would work for the abolition of the Award and for its replacement by a just and national solution.<sup>173</sup> It would also devote its energies to abolish the Purna Swaraj and work for complete reverence for relations with England. Sir Joginder Singh uttered:

*What is wrong with India's connections with Britain? I am aware of my subordination, economic drain and other limitations but we cannot ignore the fact that England stands sanctioned at the gates of India, on land, sea and air, subsisting peace with in and out of our communal conflicts and learn to govern ourselves.*<sup>174</sup>.

The moderates often supported Government. On the rural versus urban issues the Sikhs were divided; on communal issues they generally joined hands as a body with Hindus. No Sikh member of Legislative Council was a member of Unionist Party, and for elections Unionist Party had no Sikh candidate. The Khalsa National Party stood for safeguarding the interests of the Sikhs by

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171 *The Tribune*, May 5, 1936.

172 K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, p. 93.

173 Durlabh Singh, *The Valiant Fighter: Biographical Study of Master Tara Singh*, Lahore, 1942, p. 123.

174 *The Tribune*, 13 August, 1936.

securing a fixed proportion in recruitment based on an all India settlement.<sup>175</sup> It wanted to organise and unite Sikh community in every village and town.<sup>176</sup> Sir Joginder Singh, the Sikh Minister for Agriculture was looked as he had no party believed him in the council but could generally obtain some votes in favour of the Government. He was much respected because of his personal qualities, but had no political strength and little influence with his community, when big issues were concerned he proved quite ineffective especially in connection with the Shahid Ganj dispute.<sup>177</sup>

### **SHIROMANI AKALI DAL**

The Akalis were exercising a dominating influence among the Sikh because 'Sikhs of good family and moderate views have had neither the courage nor energy to oppose them'.<sup>178</sup> The Akali had great advantage of having control over Gurdwara funds. Akali politics had been controlled to a large extent by non-Zamindar Sikhs, especially Khatri and Arora, and this had given rise to considerable jealousy. There had also been a serious split among Akalis themselves, the two main parties being led by Master Tara Singh and Giani Sher Singh respectively. The Akalis were fighting

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175 K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, p. 73.

176 *The Tribune*, Lahore 20 August, 1936.

177 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.52.

178 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-39*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.55.



most Sikh constituencies but they refused to join 'Unity Board' and declared to fight the forth coming elections separately.<sup>179</sup> They had not allied them with the Congress because they were bitterly opposed to the Communal Award but they professed to follow the Congress creed of Non co-operation.<sup>180</sup> One can understand the Akali disgust towards Congress but why the Akali Dal not joined the Unity Board needs some light?

Firstly, the Akalis were of the opinion that their alliance with the Chief Khalsa Diwanists would turn them away from the Sikh masses, for which they preferred to 'lend support to the Congressite Sikhs'.<sup>181</sup> Secondly, the success of the Akali Dal in the election of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) held recently also turned the Akalis head and made them confident of their victory in the assembly elections.<sup>182</sup>

A meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Khalsa Durbar was held at Amritsar in June 1936 under the presidentship of Mangal Singh, a prominent MLA. About 100 distinguished Sikh cream of the crop attended the meeting. In the meeting, it was decided to set up a Joint Parliamentary Board of the two main

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179 *Home political Dept*, File No. 18/12/36- Poll; also see *the Tribune*, Lahore, 10 June 1936.

180 Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1936-39: The Start of Provincial Autonomy*, Emerson to Linlithgow, p.55.

181 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 10 June, 1936.

182 *Home Political Dept*, File NO. 18/16/1935-Poll.

parties - the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Khalsa Darbar instead of a Joint Election Board of all the Sikh parties.<sup>183</sup> The decision of the Board was to be final in the selection of the candidates. A 19 point election manifesto was drawn up to muster the support of the Sikh masses. The manifesto said:

"The party will fight for complete independence and cooperate with those politically advanced parties whose programme and ideas approximately those of its own; will offer strong opposition to the Communal Award; will oppose the formation of a ministry by those parties which do not agree to amend the Communal Award and replace it by a joint national solution; and will work for the abrogation of the constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, and for its replacement by a new constitution acceptable to the people of India."<sup>184</sup>

### **KHALSA COLLEGE AMRITSAR AFFAIR**

In May 1935, the foremost Sikh establishment in the Punjab, Khalsa College Amritsar was 'rocked by a 21 days students strike.'<sup>185</sup> On account of internal Sikh politics there were two groups i.e. Nationalist and Loyalist. In the controversy the younger brother of Master Tara Singh, Prof. Niranjana Singh, well known

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183 *The Tribune*, Lahore, June 16, 1936.

184 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 20 June, 1936.

185 *The Tribune*, May, 13, 1935.

teacher of chemistry and a reputed nationalist was thrown out of College.<sup>186</sup> During strike which was launched earlier in defence of Prof. Niranjana Singh and was further intensified with the rustication of four students including a nephew of Master Tara Singh.<sup>187</sup> The agitation became a political issue: the students were supporting the nationalists, while the Government, the Punjab Premier Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Sunder Singh Majithia, the president of Khalsa College Committee, other notable Sikhs of the management supported the Principal.<sup>188</sup> However, the agitation ended with the intervention of Kharak Singh but the cleavage between the two Sikh groups widened. Master Tara Singh took it as a personal insult and looked around for friends who could help him in establishing another Sikh Institution of higher learning at Lahore to rehabilitate both his brother and his reputation as the acknowledged leader of the Sikhs.<sup>189</sup>

Above mentioned development brought Baldev Singh<sup>190</sup> close to Master Tara Singh. Being a rich Sikh industrialist of Tata Nagar he agreed to pay full cost of raising the new Sikh institution at

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186 *The Tribune*, May, 13, 1935.

187 *The Tribune*, May, 13, 1935.

188 *The Tribune*, May, 13, 1935.

189 Gopal Singh, *History of the Sikh People*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 681.

190 See Appendix iii for biographical sketch.

Lahore.<sup>191</sup> In the beginning he was a protégé of Master Tara Singh but later on acted as his mentor and master.<sup>192</sup> Sikh political phenomenon had a flavour and compulsion of its own which involved a newly established aristocrat Baldev Singh in Punjab politics.

Sardar Baldev Singh's secret letter to Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Revenue Minister (Punjab), shows that both strived hard to settle the Khalsa College affair. Like the chief characteristics of aristocrats he also followed the conciliatory approach. Partially he was accepting Tara Singh's proposal of starting a new college but being product of Khalsa College, Amritsar he writes, "Everyone who have spent a few years in this magnificent building, naturally feels for this institution. Besides, nobody can overlook the most essential development of which the entire Sikh community without exception has contributed according to its individual capacity."<sup>193</sup> Baldev Singh further writes, "It has no connection whatsoever with the party politics neither I have written these with interior motives indirectly to support the cause of anybody."<sup>194</sup>

1935-1937 Khalsa College affairs helped in making of a future aristocratic trio in Punjab politics particularly in context to Sikh

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191 *The Tribune*, May 21, 1935.

192 Rekha Sud - *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics, 1937-47*, unpublished M. Phil. Dissertations, Punjab University, Chandigarh, p. 3, 1991

193 Sunder Singh Majithia Paper, NMML.

194 *The Tribune*, 2 November, 1937.

politics with the emergence of Baldev Singh. Both Baldev Singh and Sunder Singh Majithia felt that it would be unfortunate if this institution was allowed to be victim of a set back on account of the fault of someone who was at the helm of affairs.<sup>195</sup> It was at the very beginning of his political career, Baldev Singh was diplomatic enough to tackle Master Tara Singh.

Meanwhile Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Sir Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh convened secret meetings with the Unionists which furthered the gap between the Akali Party and Khalsa National Party. This manipulation led to the cases of the embezzlement of Gurdwara funds by the Akalis were filed in the court.<sup>196</sup> The court gave a verdict that the Gurdwara funds had been grossly misused. According to Emerson 'Whatever the results of criminal cases may be, the credit of the Akalis will be shaken.'<sup>197</sup> Master Tara Singh strongly criticized the judgment by saying it would prevent the utilization of the funds of the SGPC. Akalis showed their resentment in June 1938 and introduced a Gurdwara Amendment Bill in Assembly.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand Akalis also gained in reputation and availed every opportunity to describe the

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195 *Sunder Singh Majithia Papers*, NMML.

196 *Home Political Dept, File No. 18/4/1937, NAI.*

197 Emerson to Linlithgow, May 1937, Linlithgow Papers, NMML.

198 K.L.Tuteja, *Sikh Politics, 1920-40*, Kurukshetra, 1984, p.186.

Government lead by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan as 'communal and bias' in favour of the Muslims.<sup>199</sup> The Gurdwara Amendment Bill proposed, that SGPC should be allowed to spend Rs. 15,000 for the development of the Sikh community. The Khalsa National Party with the help of Government voted it down by 76 to 42 votes.<sup>200</sup>

### **CONGRESS AND THE AKALI DAL POLITICS 1936**

In the initial stages of the election campaign, the Akalis were not in a mood to join hands with the Congress but the formation of the Khalsa National Party in its turn forced Master Tara Singh to tilt towards Punjab Provincial Congress. The political circumstances made him to forget his resentment that it did not give a helping hand in the Gurdwara Shahidganj agitation. Till July, 1936 he was opposed to any Sikh candidate fighting elections for the Congress.<sup>201</sup>

Criticizing the Congress he had said on 3rd July 1936, "*The Congress cannot be trusted because it hesitated in supporting on a delicate issue like the Sahid Ganj Gurdwara. Even if the Muslims attack the Durbar Sahib, the Congress would remain neutral and would not condemn the massacre of the Sikhs. I am an opponent of that Congress which is under the influence of the Muslims. Until the*

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199 *The Hindustan Times*, Sept. 18, 1937.

200 *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates*, October 1939, pp. 149-50.

201 *The Tribune*, 25 July 1936.

*Congress is freed from this influence, my struggle against it would continue. Despite all this, if the Congress starts the movement for the freedom of the country I shall be in the forefront of that struggle.*<sup>202</sup>

With in few months before the elections of 1937, to correct the constitution and to work for complete independence, the Akalis under the leadership of Master Tara Singh considered it 'proper and just to join hands with the Congress'.<sup>203</sup> The uncompromising attitude of some Akali leaders towards the Congress resulted in a split in Akali ranks. Mangal Singh, President of Khalsa Durbar, resigned from the Board as he felt that the Board should not oppose Congress candidates since the Congress had declared that it would oppose the Communal Award and protect the legitimate interests of the Sikhs.<sup>204</sup> The Congress continued its efforts in wooing the Akali Party for the Congress drew its strength from this party having the greatest sway over the Sikh masses of the Punjab. The creation of separate wing of Congress Sikhs in the Congress was not deemed adequate. <sup>205</sup>

Master Tara Singh was softened following the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In fact, Nehru appreciated the attitude of the

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202 *The Tribune*, 25 July 1936.

82 *A.I.C.C. Papers, File No. 4\3\1936*, NAI, Delhi.

204 *The Tribune*, 21, October, 1936.

205 *The Tribune*, 5 June, 1936.

Sikhs regarding the Communal Award which gave an impression to the Akalis that Nehru was as much against the Award as they were.<sup>206</sup> Akalis also thought that an alliance with the Congress would help in fighting election against Khalsa National Party.<sup>207</sup> After viewing political situation the Akali Dal ultimately reached an accord with the Congress on 14 November, 1936 for fighting the elections in co-operation.<sup>208</sup> Hence the Akali Party decided to contest fourteen seats and ten were left for Congress Sikhs.<sup>209</sup> This ended the situation of distrust between the two parties. The list included the names of Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh, Partap Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Narrotam Singh and Kapur Singh.<sup>210</sup> As a result of this Congress-Sikh unity, to a certain extent the Sikh's communal adamancy started melting; a national outlook began to emerge in them and they began to feel that service to the country was not possible in the narrow confines of the Akali Dal. An agreement was done that the Akali Party candidates returned to the legislature would form part of Congress Legislation Party and would be amendable to its discipline.<sup>211</sup>

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206 *AICC Committee, File No. G-5 (H.W.) 11, 1936*, pp. 375-76.

207 Niranjan Singh, *Jiwan Vikas*, Delhi, 1970, p. 91.

208 The Akali Parties, 18 November 1936, Also See, A.S. Narang, *Storm Over the Sutlej: the Akali Politics*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 97.

209 *Home Department, Pol. GOI, File No. 232 (1940)*.

210 *AICC Papers, File No. 4.31/1936*.

211 *The Tribune, 27 October, 1936*.



The another reason of understanding between the Congress and Akali Dal was due to Khalsa National Board, which was expected to put up such strong candidates in most of 34 seats as such important Sikh politicians as Santokh Singh, Ujjal Singh, Gurbachan Singh, Bhagwan Singh, Nau Nihal Singh Maan, Uttam Singh Duggal, Amar Singh, Ajit Singh and Jagjit Singh Maan.<sup>212</sup> At the same time the middle classes Sikh interests were similar to those of provincial Congress. Hence it was all suited to both parties to cooperate with the Congress in order to counter the Muslim League which was avowedly stood for Muslim interests only. As the elections approached, the parties stepped up their preparations.

### **THE ELECTIONS OF PUNJAB 1937 AND CREATION OF A TRIO**

By the eve of polling, the province had reached a fever pitch of excitement. The nominations were invited by 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1936 and scrutiny of the nomination paper was done on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1936.<sup>213</sup> Polling began on 18<sup>th</sup> January and continued for the next ten days in some constituencies<sup>214</sup> and finally ended on 3 February 1937.<sup>215</sup> During this period the roads were more crowded than ever as lorries, bullock carts and tongas rushed supporters to the polls.

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212 K.C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab, 1920-1940*, Tokyo, pp. 93-97.

213 K.C. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab, 1920-1940*, p. 84.

214 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, Delhi, 1988, p. 111.

215 Satya M. Rai, *Legislation Politics and the Freedom Struggle in the Punjab, 1897-1949*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 222.

Propagandists plastered walls and lamp posts with slogans and groups of young boys added excitement to election fervour. A few clashes took place, word war was clear, allegations and counter allegations were made amongst the political parties in Punjab. Although much excitement was generated, the turn out was very disappointed as it was expected before the elections that the Congress would sweep the polls in the Hindu dominated areas and the Unionist Party or the Muslim League would win in the Muslim dominated areas. Moreover it was seen that, in the main, parties ran on the communal lines. The expectation was the Unionists and the Congress.<sup>216</sup> As soon as the first results were announced on 1 February, the strength of each party was revealed. The Unionist Party which put candidates in 107 constituencies had secured a great victory. It captured 95 seats in a house of 175, comprising 75 Muslim Reserve Seats, 12 General, 3 Landholders, 1 Non-union labour, 2 Indian Christian, 1 Anglo - Indian and one European Seat.<sup>217</sup> The Unionist Party showed the best results in the rural Muslim Constituencies in which it bagged 71 seats constituting 94.67% out of total 75 Muslim rural seats. But it failed to capture any general urban seat, where social and economic influence played a much smaller part in electioneering, it was unable to beat

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216 *Reform Office; File No. 20/III/36-F, Franchise.*

217 While Talbot gives an account of unionist capturing 99 of A the 175 Seats. See, Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 112.

off the combined challenge of the Muslim League, Congress, Ahrar and Ittihad-i-Millat Parties and disappointedly won only one of nine Muslim seats.<sup>218</sup>

The Akalis won 10 out of the 14 seats, which they had contested. All the 10 seats were won from the Sikh rural constituencies. Baldev Singh was successful and won the election from Ambala North West Constituency on the Akali Ticket by defeating his arch rival an independent Sikh. He secured 626 votes, while his rival got 153. Out of total 19,646 voters only 3.93% was polled.<sup>219</sup> Hence Master Tara Singh got a 'bank' which could serve Akali purposes. The Party faced very bad results in the Urban Sikh constituency as there was no success. The Akali Dal captured 5.71% of the total seats in the House.

**Table 1**  
**Formation of Government After Punjab Legislative Assembly**  
**Election, 1937 (Turnout - 59.3%)**

Party	Muslims			General			Sikhs			Others	Total
	U	R	O	U	R	O	U	R	O		
Unionist	2	71	1		13					8	95
Hindu Election Board				1	8	1				1	11

<sup>218</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 112.

<sup>219</sup> *The Tribune*, March 4, 1937.

Khalsa National Party							2	11	1		14
Formation of Government	2	71	1	1	21	1	2	11	1	9	120

**Table 2**  
**Opposition After Punjab Legislative Assembly Election, 1937**  
**(Turnout - 59.3%)**

Party	Muslims			General			Sikhs			Others	Total
	U	R	O	U	R	O	U	R	O		
INC		2		7	3	1		5*	1*		18
Akali Dal								10			10
Independents	2	2	3		9			3			19
Other Parties	5				1						6
Opposition	7	4	3	7	13	1		18	1	1	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>175</b>

U= Urban, R= Rural, O= Others (landowners and women.) The 'other category refers to functional constituencies such as Labour and University sets. \* Congress Societies (CSP, KKP, OG), Teja Singh Swatantar was returned unopposed from Lahore West (May 1937) after the seat was vacated by a Congress candidates S Majlis-i-Ahrar, Ittihad-i-Millat, Muslim League, Congress Nationalist and Labour.<sup>220</sup>

For the Khalsa National Board, the moderate Sikh Party, 14 candidates were successful out of 24 who stood for election. These 14 seats included 2 Urban Sikh seats, 11 Rural Sikh seats and 1 Landholder's seat. In spite of the Akali Dal and Congress opposition, the Party was successful to make a place in the Punjab Politics of the total seats in the Assembly. It could win 8% seats. It secured 40.62% seats out of the total 32 Sikh seats.<sup>221</sup> In the elections next to Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh was the

220. Adopted from Stephen Oren, *The Sikhs Congress and Unionists in British Punjab 1936-45*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 8(3), 1974.

221 *Reform Office*, File No. 20/III36 - Franchise.

strongest candidate of Khalsa National Board. He won the election from Gujranwala Shahadra (Rural) constituency. He defeated his rebel S. Avtar Singh (Congress Candidates). He got tremendous victory by receiving 11,099 votes out of total polled 15,244. His counter part could get only 4,549 votes.

Another important candidate of KNP was Ujjal Singh. He won the election from Western Towns Urban Constituency It was a neck to neck fight with S. Gopal Singh Quami, a Congress candidate. There were total 32,330 votes to be polled the actual turn up was 64.32%. Ujjal Singh got a narrow victory by getting 10,460 votes while his opponent got 10,342. His victory really enhanced the prestige of the Party. With his victory, the Board won all the 2 urban Sikh seats. The success of moderate Sikhs was welcomed by the British Government. In this connection Emerson wrote to Linlithgow on February 22, 1937-

*This is the first time for some years that moderate Sikhs have come into open and seriously challenged position which the Akalis have. The results are gratifying.*<sup>222</sup>

The Congress Party could secure only 2 Muslim seats in the rural constituencies which constituted 2.32% of the 86 Muslim

seats. In the rural constituencies of the Sikhs, the Congress got 5 seats (15.62%) of the total reserved seats for the Sikhs and in the Urban Sikh constituencies; it suffered a rude shock; for all the two seats were won by Khalsa National Party. Of the total 175 seats in the assembly, it won 18 seats, merely 10.28%. However, the Congress secured 13% of the total votes casted.<sup>223</sup> In the Urban Muslim constituencies it fared very bad as it did not secure even a single seat. But it did well in the General Urban constituencies. All the general urban seats won by the Congress with the exception of one, which went without contest to the Hindu Election Board owing to the rejection of the nomination of the Congress and other candidates. Out of the 9 general urban seats, it captured 8 seats constituting 88.88%. It secured 3 general rural seats (11.12%) of the total 27 seats.<sup>224</sup>

So far as the Hindu Election Board is concerned, it put 22 candidates, out of which 11 were successful, which included 10 general seats and 1 landholder's seats. However the party failed to get any seat from the Sikh and the Muslim Constituencies as it had put up its candidates only on the Hindu constituencies.

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223 *All India Congress Committee*, File No.P-1/1937-38.

224 *Reform Office*, File No. 20/III36 - Franchise.

The Muslim League got badly mauled when it met with an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Unionists. It contested on 7 seats out of 86 Muslim seats in the province, where the Muslims were in majority, tarnished its image. Its inability to put up a sufficient number of Muslim candidates in the province stowed that it lacked a popular base in this Muslim-dominated province.<sup>225</sup> Out of 86 Muslim League ticket, soon it received another setback, when one of its two MLAs, namely, Raja Gazanfar Ali Khan submitted his resignation and came over to the Unionists Party before the first sitting of the Assembly. Thus Malik Barkat Ali was the solitary person entering the Punjab Assembly.<sup>226</sup> Jinnah's claims that the League would come out victorious proved wrong. The election results proved that neither the Muslim League nor the Congress could claim to represent the Muslims.

Ahrar and the Ittihad-i-Millat, who had confined their electioneering to a few Muslim constituencies, emerged from the contest with the membership of two each.<sup>227</sup> Both the parties had bagged these seats from the Urban Muslim seats. In the Rural constituencies, they figured nowhere. Each party secured 2.32% of the total 86 Muslim seats.

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225 Anita Inder Singh, *The Origin of Partition of India*, New Delhi, p. 13.

226. Kailash Chander, *Jinnah and the Communal Problem in India*, p.140.

227 *Reform Office*; File No. 20/1/365-F. K.W.



Hence the elections of 1937 marked a decisive shift from the partially nominated and elected structure established after the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.<sup>228</sup> The constitutional head of the British area was the lieutenant Governor. He was aided and advised in the administration of the province by a Council of Ministers, headed by a Chief Minister, who represented the largest party in Punjab Legislative Assembly of 175 members. Although the franchise was subject to property, income, education, sex, military service and social caste (Scheduled Caste), qualifications, the main category of electors was provided by the agriculturists who paid land revenue of no less than Rs. 5 per annum or proposed immovable property with an annual rental of not more than Rs. 60. Among urban dwellers, the electorate was confined to those who were assessed for income tax or paid professional tax of not less than Rs. 2, or municipal tax of not less than Rs. 50 per annum. Though the total electorate constituted only 11.3 percent population in the British territory, if the non adult population in deducted, it is likely that the actual franchise was 20 percent.<sup>229</sup>

### **FORMATION OF COALITION MINISTRY**

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228 Satya, M. Rai, *Legislative Politics and Freedom Struggle in the Punjab 1879-1947*, 1984, pp. 100-101.

229 *Government of India Act 1935*.

The Unionist party and the Khalsa National party success in elections could best be attributed to the feudal character of Punjab's political system. The role of the so called 'natural leaders' a term coined by the British to address the Colonial intermediaries, was all important in the Unionist Party's success.<sup>230</sup> The ministry formed by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was rightly described as a Unionist Coalition ministry which was the result of understanding with other political parties. The Unionist leader decided to seek cooperation of National Progressive Party, including member elected on the Hindu Election Board ticket, some Hindu independence and the Khalsa National Party.<sup>231</sup> Sir Manohar Lal of National Progressive Party and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia of Khalsa National Party joined the Coalition ministry. Thus the coalition ministry of Unionist Party was enjoying the backing of 112 in a 175 strong Punjab Legislative Assembly.<sup>232</sup> The ministry of Sikandar Hayat could well be called balanced with one rural Sikh in addition to one urban and one rural Hindu and one urban and one rural Muslim a part from Sir Sikandar, himself, a rural landlord.<sup>233</sup> The elite of majority community, the Muslims were almost totally under

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230 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: the Punjab Unionist Party, 1923-1947*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 101.

231 K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, p. 76.

232 Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs, 1940-47*, Chandigarh, 2006, p. 21.

233 Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs, 1940-47*, p. 21.

Unionist influence.<sup>234</sup> Ch. Sir Chhottu Ram held the key position and was chief of the Unionist Party.<sup>235</sup> The policy of the British Government was changed towards Muslims and they decided to support them in Punjab in day to day administration.<sup>236</sup>

The support of third major community in Punjab, the Sikhs was scattered, but the main concentration of Sikh peasantry particularly the Jat Sikh was with the Akalis. The large land owning Sikh families supported the Unionists essentially a common bond of political and economic opportunities.<sup>237</sup> Sir Sunder Singh Majithia who had joined the Cabinet on behalf of the Sikhs as head of the Khalsa National Party<sup>238</sup> said that the policy of his party was 'not destructive'.<sup>239</sup> On the contrary it was prepared to cooperate with any party in the future Government of the province provided it could do so on "an honourable understanding".<sup>240</sup>

Another natural Jat leader, Joginder Singh, who had advised Sir Emerson, the then Governor of Punjab, to ask Sir Sunder Singh Majithia to come to the field and organize the moderate Sikh, had

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234 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: the Unionist Party in Punjab, 1923-1947*, p. 103.

235 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty years of Punjab Politics, 1920-1970*, Chandigarh, 1979, p. 23.

236 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty years of Punjab Politics, 1920-1970*, p. 24.

237 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: the Unionist Party in Punjab, 1923-1947*, p 103.

238 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty years of Punjab Politics, 1920-1970*, p.24.

239 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.76.

240 *The Tribune*, 11 March, 1937.

told the Governor and the Panthic leaders that he had decided to retire and that he would not seek entry in the new ministry of Punjab in 1937 but on the contrary he remained quite active in the Punjab Politics of coming decade.

The whole exercise appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite sections of society, making the legislative Assembly that was constituted on the culmination of these elections a widely representative of the elite of Punjab, having little to do with the masses.<sup>241</sup> Congress and Akalis had absented themselves from the Assembly during the Governor's Address as they led by Sampuran Singh joined the Congress as an opposition party in the Council,<sup>242</sup> but Khalsa National Party joined the government with a pride. The victory of the Unionist Party was greeted with satisfaction by British officials<sup>243</sup> where as the Akalis were reacting and strongly condemning Sunder Singh Majithia and his party joining hand with the Government. The Akalis described them 'traitors and enemies of the Panth'.<sup>244</sup> Their intolerance towards KNP got a drain in Newspapers and there was a phase of allegation and counter allegations. Master Tara Singh alleged that KNP had not only

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241 Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: the Unionist Party in Punjab, 1923-1947*, p. 104.

242 Virender Grover (ed.), *Punjab Yesterday and Today, Vol. I*, New Delhi, 1995, p. 456.

243 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 104.

244 Hira Singh Dardi: *Panth Dharam te Rajniti*, p. 43.

accepted the programme of the Unionist Party also conspired with the Government to crush the growing power of the Akalis.<sup>245</sup>

### **COMMUNAL RIOTS, UNITY CONFERENCE AND THREE SIKH LEADERS**

The new ministry was welcomed by a strong communal tension in the province.<sup>246</sup> The Government administrative reports were speaking against the labeled communal parties like the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Akali party as they played no mean part in spreading the communal venom.<sup>247</sup> Sikandar Hayat Khan made an optimistic note assuring the Sikh leaders that communalism would be banished from the Punjab with in year and Punjabis would be more united than ever before.<sup>248</sup>

Forces of communal fanaticism and of violence were openly or secretly set in motion by some of those who, for one reason or another, wanted to embarrass the new Government. Consequently, there was a series of eight communal riots- most of them traceable to political no less than to communal motives - at Kot Fateh Khan,

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245 Durlabh Singh, *The Valiant Fighter*, p. 123-124.

246 *Punjab Police Administrative Report*, 1938, p. 2.

247 *Punjab History Conference Proceedings, XIII*, Satya M. Rai, *Legislative Politics and Freedom Struggle in the Punjab, 1897-1947*,.

248 *The Tribune*, March 5, 1937.

Ala and Amritsar during the first four months of the Unionist Government's regime. These riots resulted in seven deaths.<sup>249</sup>

The riots took place generally over the question of the slaughter of cows, 'Jhatka' and 'Halal' and music before the mosque<sup>250</sup> and demolition of mosques, co-incidence of Hindu-Muslim, Sikh festivals etc. The year 1936 witnessed a Muslim Sikh riots occurred at Kot Bhai Than Singh in Attock,<sup>251</sup> another at Ala village in Gujarat district, resulting in the death of Bhai Sunder Singh on June, 1937.<sup>252</sup> These riots created uneasiness in the Government quarters, and Sikandar Hayat made all efforts to show that he was anxious to remove the communal virus from the province.<sup>253</sup>

To check the panic being created by the communal riots, Sir Sikandar announced in the Assembly that he would take the earliest opportunity to eradicate communal bitterness. He made ardent endeavours to show that he was anxious to stamp out the communal spite in the province.<sup>254</sup> Besides tightening the law and order machinery a more direct approach to the problem of inter-communal unity was attempted by the Premier of the Punjab when he summoned a Unity Conference of the leaders of different

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249 H.N. Mitra, (ed.), *Indian Annual Register, Vol. II*, 1938, p. 224.

250 K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, 1920-40, p.180.

251 *Home Department, Political*, May 1937, *The Tribune*, March, 1937.

252 *The Tribune*, June 5, 1937, *Punjab Police Administrative Reports*, 1937, p. I.

253 *Home Department Political*, File No. 187/4/193, and 18/7/1937, NAI, Delhi.

254 *Home Department Political*, File No. 18/4/1937.

political as well as religious communities on 26th June, 1937 at Lahore.<sup>255</sup> Firm determination to remove the communal virus from the Punjab was evinced at a meeting of leaders of the Hindus, Muslims and Sikh communities convened and presided over by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan on that day.<sup>256</sup> The inclusion of non Unionist Hindus and Sikhs in the ministry was justified by him as a measure to inspire real confidence in their respective communities.<sup>257</sup> Uttam Singh, Sardar Kartar Singh, Mr. Manohar Lal, Mr. Amar Singh, Mr. Sohan Singh, Malik Barkat Ali, Dr. Mohd. Alam, Mian Abdul Haye, Mr. Mushtaq Gurmani, Begam Shah Nawaz, Mr. Ghulam Mohiuddin, Nawabzada Khurshid Ali Khan, Dr. Kitchlew, Raja Narendranath, Bhai Parmanand, Diwan Chamanlal, Mr. Mazhar, Ali Azhar, Sardar Baldev Singh, Mr. Harcharan Singh, Mr. Tara Singh, Sardar Mangal Singh, Nawab Muzaffar Khan, Sardar Sampuran Singh, Sardar Ujjal Singh, Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargawa, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana and Mr. Maqbol Mahmud, messages were read from Mr. Goswami Ganesh Dutt, Sir Joginder Singh, Mr. M. Murtaza Ahmad,

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255 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register, Vol. II 1938*, p.; 227.

256 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register, Vol. I, 1937*, p. 286.

257 *The Tribune*, March 10, 1937, Responding Sikandar's appeals these members were present in the Unity Conference.

Dr. Satyapal and Sir Gokul Chand Narang. The Premier, in opening the conference, stated:

*I have invited you not as a leader of any political party, but as a citizen of the Punjab, who with other patriotic Punjabis, cannot but feel the poignancy and disgrace of such unfortunate happenings in the province. My similar appeal to you in the past evoked encouraging and generous response from you and for it and I appeal once again to you all, through you, to the people of my province, to get your shoulders together to set up a healthy atmosphere in the province so that Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and others may contribute their best to bring about that national solidarity which is our common ideal. My reason for convening this informal conference is to discuss the recent unfortunate communal incidents in the province and to seek the advice and co-operation of leaders of all important communities and parties to avert a repetition of such incidents in future.*<sup>258</sup>

Communal riots and the formation of Unity Conference provided a space for the three Sikhs Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh to come together. The three leaders became a part of various deputations to appeal Sikandar Hayat Khan with

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258 *The Tribune*, March 10, 1937.



Sikh point of view regarding Jhatka meat in the Government institutions including Jails. When the investigations at Ala were going on, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh explained their grievances. They described the police investigations at Ala, "not properly carried out." Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan assured that the Unity Committee would find a solution of Jhatka meat difficulty and the Government would accept their decision.<sup>259</sup> The Unity Conference also arrived at several decisions; prevent the breakout of any communal dissension over religious issues.<sup>260</sup>

On October 13, 1938, a Hindu Muslim riot broke out in Amritsar. This place had a particular record of communal riots.<sup>261</sup> The riots started taking place during elections due to the Sikh grievances against Muslims or vice versa. The idea of non communalism or neutrality in ordinary affairs of life was mostly considered absurd. The communal riots became a routine feature during early years of Sikandar Hayat Khan's Government. One of the earliest riots took place due to the murder of Bhai Nirmal Singh in Gurdwara Bhai Kot Than Singh, which was situated in Campbellpur district a purely Muslim locality. Sardar Muhammad

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259 *The Tribune*, June 5, 1937.

260 *The Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1937.

261 *Punjab Police Administration Reports*, 1938, p. 3.

Nawaj Khan added fuel to fire, by refusing water to the Sikhs from the stream that flowed near his Bungalow. Master Tara Singh led a huge 'Jatha' and moved an adjournment motion in Punjab Assembly on behalf of the Sikhs. High Court allowed the Sikh to take water from the stream.<sup>262</sup>

During the period 1938-39, it seems as if communalism was seeking for issues. One of the riots which took place between Sikhs and Muslims on 28th December, 1938 at Yallagaon in the Attock District, reason being the playing of music before a mosque by the Sikhs.<sup>263</sup> On 2 March 1939, during Tazia procession at Amritsar, a Hindu Muslim riot broke out. The increasing communal tension led to consider the problem or communal tension from two points of views; first, religious causes of friction, and second, political causes of friction. Among the first were included controversial subjects as 'music before mosques', 'facilities for Jhatka meat by Sikhs in prisons and religious processions'. Among the political causes, there was some doubts whether Communal Award will be included or not.<sup>264</sup>

## **SIKANDAR JINNAH PACT 1937 AND REACTION OF THE SIKH LEADERSHIP**

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262 *The Tribune*, July 5, 1939.

263 *The Punjab Assembly Debates* Vol. 8, October 24 to December 12, 1939, p. 21.

264 Lionel Carter, *Documents for 1936-39, Governors fortnightly Reports*, Emerson to Linlithgow, L- 13, pp. 111-112.

The communal tension, which the Punjab Premier was trying to find out, further accentuated by the apprehensions that 25 Muslims members of the Unionist Party might join the Muslim League.<sup>265</sup> The summer campaign Muslim League of 1937 was successful. Workers were sent into the villages to form primary branches of the League<sup>266</sup> and its membership fee was reduced to only 4 Annas (Rs. 0.25) to encourage as many villagers to join as possible. This membership drive of the Muslim League achieved its desired results. Sir Sikandar was thus afraid of losing a grip over the provincial politics. He tried to check it and finally ended this rift by cementing an entente with Jinnah.<sup>267</sup> Thus a pact was concluded on 13 October, 1937, named as Sikandar- Jinnah Pact at Lukhnow Session of the All India Muslim League, with its terms of Sikandar's agreement to advise all the Muslim members of the Unionist Party to join the Muslim League. They would form a Punjab Muslim League Assembly Party, which would be subject to the rules and regulations of the Central and Provincial Parliamentary Board of All India Muslim League. <sup>268</sup>

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265 Emerson to Linlithgow, September 14, 1937, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

266 G. Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, London, 1978, pp. 97-105, also see Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, pp. 12-24.

267 A.M. Zaidi, (ed.), *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India*, Vol. V, Delhi, 1978, P. 81.

268 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 124.

The Pact made an agreement that the Muslim Unionist members of the Punjab Legislative would have double membership; they would be Unionists in Punjab and Muslim Leaguers on All India's League. Hindus and Sikhs resentment was alarming as they viewed the pact against their community and victory of the Muslim League. The reaction was too sharp from both Hindus and Sikh community leaders. Narender Nath; the leader of the National Progressive Party in Punjab said, "Sir Sikandar became a member of Muslim League when he thought that his followers might otherwise desert him."<sup>269</sup> In his attitude towards the Sikhs Sikandar was always conscious of communal situation prevailing in the province and of the professed non communal character of his ministry, of which Khalsa National Party constituted of his ministry important part. While the Shiromani Akali Dal regarded Sikandar-Jinnah pact as a definite move of the reaction arise to maintain the waning power and influence of the British and to check the growth of nationalism,<sup>270</sup> the KNP was very careful to maintain their political identity as well as community interests. Its leaders Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Ujjal Singh and other moderate Sikhs passed a resolution asking the Premier to clarify

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269 K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics, 1920-40*, Kurukshetra, p. 184.

270 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 77.

his position.<sup>271</sup> Sikandar Hayat Khan responded their resolution and pacified them by saying, "*His adherence to the Muslim League would not effect the position and policy of the Unionist Party in Punjab*".<sup>272</sup> Their summering discontent was not ignored by Sikandar. He strongly opposed a member of Muslim League Punjab, Barkat Ali, who introduced a bill by which Muslims could have claimed the Sahib Ganj Mosque with retrospective effect. He advised the Governor to withhold his consent to it.<sup>273</sup>

No doubt he was trying to keep an honourable agreement between the two communities. His political farsightedness compelled him to say:

*I would earnestly appeal to all my co-religionists to carefully consider the far reaching implications of Malik Barkat Ali's move and not to despair difficulties notwithstanding of an alternative solution, honourable to all concerned, of this vested problem.*<sup>274</sup> So much was the influence of this statement on the leaders and the mouth pieces of Khalsa National Party, Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh they even went to the extent describing Sikandar Hayat

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271 Emerson to Linlithgow, Nov. 12, 1937, Linlithgow Papers, NMML.

272 Lionel Carter, (ed.) , *Punjab Politics, 1936-1939, the Start of Provincial Autonomy*, Emerson to Linlithgow, Dec. 3, 1937.

273 Emerson to Linlithgow, March, 17, 1939, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML

274 Statement of Sikandar Hayat Khan, *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debate*, Vol. V, 1938, p. 806.

*Khan 'as the first ruler of Punjab since Maharaja Ranjit Singh who enjoyed the confidence of Sikhs and Muslims alike.*<sup>275</sup>

The Shiromani Akali Dal continued to show their resentment towards the political card played by Leagues and Unionists. The Dal decided to boycott the Unity Conference convened by the Unionist Party for communal concord and peace in view of repressive policy of the Unionist Government.<sup>276</sup> While Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh were speaking in favour of the Unionist Party, at the same time Sardar Baldev Singh, who had acquired a special place in the Dal's political activities, was speaking in favour of the Congress on behalf of the Akali Dal. The increasing distance, from the Unionists brought Akalis close to the Congress.<sup>277</sup>

In Nov. 1938, the Akalis held an All India Akali Conference at Rawalpindi, under the president ship of Sardar Baldev Singh, who was voluble in praise of the Congress. In his presidential address he said:

*Next to my duty towards God and my great Gurus, I sincerely believe that it is my duty to obey the mandate of the Congress and I hold that the Congress mandate is binding on me. This I do, not*

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275 Craik to Linlithgow, April 25, 1938, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

276 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 77.

277 J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis: a Short History*, Chandigarh, 1996, p. 89.

*because of personal considerations, but as I consider the Congress to be the trustee of our national honour and self respect and the only national organization that has done more for the liberation of our mother country and the emancipation of the poor masses than any other organisation.*<sup>278</sup>

The Akali Dal, in the wake of communitarian nationalist spirits, was neither to ignore community nor their national spirits. Khalsa National Party was not ready to undermine its prestige, in the community. Sunder Singh Majithia was openly saying, "*As a Sikh all my Panthic Gurudwaras are sacred to me and I will not hesitate in doing my humble service by of any sacrifice that is demanded off me by my way community in safeguarding my holy place of worship...*"<sup>279</sup> British documents reveal that the internal politics of two Sikh political parties was at its height. The question of correct tactical delicacy to the Sikhs was one of the considerable delicacy largely because of the bitter feeling between the Khalsa National Party and the Akali, party led by Master Tara Singh. Thus writes Craik, "*Each party is afraid that if it comes with any kind of public settlement involving any sacrifice of the Sikhs of their legal rights, and of courses, any settlement must involve sacrifice- the*

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278 *The Tribune*, 29 November, 1937, Baldev Singh's Presidential Address.

279 Statement of Sunder Singh Majithia on March 30, 1939, *Sunder Singh Majithia Papers*, NMML.

*other party may make capital out of it and denounce their rivals as traitors of community".*<sup>280</sup>

Evident communitarian feelings of moderate Sikhs leadership were pacified when at the special Sahid Ganj Muslim League session held at Calcutta in April, 1938, less than a month before Iqbal's death, an organizing committee was formed under Sikandar Hayat Khan's chairmanship with a task of creating a new Muslim League in the Punjab.<sup>281</sup> The split between the Unionists and old Leaguers became even wider in August 1939.<sup>282</sup> It would be no exaggeration to say that during the period 1937 Sikandar not Jinnah was the most powerful Muslim political leader<sup>283</sup> and Sunder Singh Majithia not Master Tara Singh was the most powerful Sikh political leader. With the tacit support of the Government, the Khalsa National Party worked against the Akalis to reduce their influence in the community.<sup>284</sup>

The elections of 1937 clearly gave impetus to loyalists. The minority community of the province the Sikhs also voted in favour of moderate Sikhs and thus electing Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh. Sardar Baldev Singh was elected from Ambala

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280 Craik to Linlithgow, April, 25, 1938, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

281 Press message from M.A. Jinnah, 19 April, 1938. *Punjab Provincial Muslim League, 1938-39, Vol. 131*, Pt. 4, 32, FMA.

282 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p.130.

283 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 131.

284 K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics, 1920-40*, p. 185.



constituency as an Akali candidate. Though Akali in theory, he was a practicing moderate. The three had occupied a place of prominence in Punjab politics after these elections. The three became the members of Unity Conference to counter communal riots in Punjab. Their chief concern was to appraise Government with Sikh point of view. In the beginning Baldev Singh uttered only those words, which were put into his mouth by Master Tara Singh but he never lost a chance to shake hand with Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh or Ujjal Singh. When Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was passed the three were vocal against this pact. Their parties were different but their approach was no doubt same.

## CHAPTER-3

### WORLD WAR – II, CRIPPS MISSION AND TASK OF THE TRIO SIKH LEADERS (1939-1942)

As already discussed in the previous chapter that Sikandar Hayat Khan formed ministry in Punjab after the elections of 1937, Sunder Singh Majithia, the leader of Khalsa National Party joined the new ministry.<sup>285</sup> While the KNP was lulled to sleep in the lap of the Unionists, the Akali Dal joined the Congress at this time in order to use the Congress Party machinery for its own purpose;<sup>286</sup> the Akalis led by Sampuran Singh joined the Congress as an opposition party in the Council. However, the Akalis had retained their liberty in all religious and social matters affecting their community.<sup>287</sup> The Congress, in order to strengthen the nationalist forces welcomed the Akalis. Unlike the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, the Akali Party was not labeled as a communal organization by the Congress.<sup>288</sup> Akali-Congress unity was clearly visible at All India Akali Conference held at Rawalpindi under the president ship of Baldev Singh, where the Akali and the Congress

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285 *The Tribune*, 3 March 1937.

286 Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, p.79

287 *The Tribune*, 22 February 1937.

288 *Home Political Department*, File No. 18/10/1937, NAI.

flags were flown side by side.<sup>289</sup> The conference expressed lack of confidence in the Unionist Government in Punjab and exhorted the Sikhs to join the Congress which was described by Baldev Singh as *the trustee of our national honour and national self respect.*<sup>290</sup>

By this time the Akali Party had attained political maturity and financial support of Sardar Baldev Singh made the position of Master Tara Singh very stable and secure.<sup>291</sup> Congress-Akali association resulted into Akali functionaries to get exalted offices in the Congress machinery at the provincial and national levels, including Master Tara Singh was taken as a member of the AICC Working Committee. It was this bond of friendship and a strong sense of nationalism<sup>292</sup> which was greatly responsible for the Sikh leadership to be attached to the Congress. So far as Muslims of the province concerned, their most powerful leader was Sikandar not Jinnah<sup>293</sup>, but his ascendancy as to be short lived, as the Second World War brought with it a completely new chapter in the history of Punjab.<sup>294</sup>

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289 *The Tribune*, 29 November 1937.

290 *The Tribune*, 29 November 1937.

291 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, Chandigarh, 1979, p. 24.

292 Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle*, New Delhi, 1988, p.159.

293 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, Delhi, 1988, p. 132.

294 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 132.

Second World War started on September 1, 1939 and on September 3, 1939 Great Britain declared War on Nazi Germany.<sup>295</sup> Political events in India and in the Punjab began to move with a rapid pace when India was declared a belligerent country by the British Government.<sup>296</sup> Lord Linlithgow's declaration that 'India at War' was a challenge to the Congress.<sup>297</sup> The Indian nationalist leaders were indignant at the declaration being made without any consultation with them, and the provincial ministries headed by the Congress party resigned from the office in protest. Since the nationalist leaders and the British Government could not reach at any agreement whereby the Indian leaders could play an honourable part in the War effort, the Congress Party decided to pursue a policy of non cooperation with the British Government.<sup>298</sup> The KNP Sikhs wanted to press the Government for the protection of their interests in return for their military services during the War. The Shiromani Akali Dal viewed the international crisis with deep concern. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan pledged Punjab's unconditional support to the Britain in the event of War. He said, "*When we offered our hand in the War we were still on political*

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295 Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Vol. II, 1839, p. 239.

296 Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*. p.80

297 *Harijan*, September. 1939.

298 Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*. p.80.

*apprentice ship. It is offered again by Punjab which has attained political maturity.*"<sup>299</sup>

### **FORMATION OF KHALSA DEFENCE OF INDIA LEAGUE-1940**

Shiromani Akali Dal's reaction in an All Parties Conference of the Sikhs, 1st October 1939, was that the Sikhs being martial people got an opportunity to impress upon the Government for the protection of their interests in return of their services during the War. It increased the political bargaining opportunity of the Sikhs. The Unionist ministry was loyally serving the British Government. In Nov. 1939, Sikandar Hayat Khan moved another resolution in Assembly declaring people's determination to resist aggression and protect the security and honour of Punjab and India.

Unlike the Akalis, the Congress or the Muslims League, the Unionist Party unconditionally supported the War effort. At the same time Sikandar Hayat Khan asked for an assurance that the constitutional position would be reconsidered after the War for giving India a dominion status with effective protection for minorities. The resolution was carried with 104 votes to 39.<sup>300</sup> He was joined in his expression of loyalty by Sardar Ujjal Singh, a prominent Sikh of the time. Treading the path of the Unionist Party, the Chief Khalsa Diwan promptly offered unconditional

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299 Harijan, September. 1939.

300 K.C. Gulati, *The Akali-Past and Present*, Delhi, 1974, p.79.

support to the Government for the protection of their interests in return of their services during the War. The Chief Khalsa Diwan wanted the Government to guarantee that, "in future any forward steps that may be taken in granting reforms to the country, their (Sikhs) separate entity as an important minority community be recognized by Government and their rights, privileges, culture and religious liberty be fully safeguarded."<sup>301</sup>

Loyalist Sikh leaders who were basically men with letters and riches viz. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ranjit Singh of New Delhi, Bishan Singh, Ex. MLA, Mrs. and Master Sujjan Singh of Sikh Missionary College and Sardar Ujjal Singh and others met the Maharaja of Patiala and appealed him to lead the panth at that critical hour and to impress upon the Sikh masses the desirability of joining the army increasingly in large numbers.<sup>302</sup> Therefore the Sikh leaders established the Khalsa Defence of India League at Lahore, under the presidency of S. Raghbir Singh Rajasansi and Sir Joginder Singh as the Chief Patrons of the League. The League affirmed that the Sikhs *will stand by the British until the enemy is beaten into total submission*. The signatories of the message included Sardar Baldev Singh, former minister Punjab, Kartar

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301 Resolution of Chief Khalsa Diwan in *Sunder Singh Majithia Papers*, NMMI; *The Tribune*, October 2, 1939.

302 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 80.

Singh Diwana, Ranjit Singh and Makhan.<sup>303</sup> With the positive response of Maharaja, Sikh leaders convened an All Parties Sikh Conference at Lahore on 20 January 1941. This organization satisfied the aspirations of moderate Sikhs, who wanted to help the Government in the War efforts.

## **NATIONALIST-COMMUNITARIANISM: AN OPTION**

British diplomacy during War efforts can be seen in private fortnightly letters. The correspondence between Craik and Linlithgow shows how the Government and administration was manipulating the politics for Sikh recruitment to join War Advisory Council. The name of Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, one of Parliamentary Secretary was much talked about to persuade Master Tara Singh to join War Council. But later on his name was withdrawn on the plea that Ujjal Singh, though intelligent and loyal, would be regarded as merely Sir Sunder Singh's under study and would have no influence with Akalis.<sup>304</sup> At this time Shiromani Akali Dal viewed the international crisis with deep concern.<sup>305</sup> Akalis, being allies of the Congress and were dissatisfied with the Government, notwithstanding with Sikhs after their support in First World War and put them under a permanent rule of the Muslims, were confused.<sup>306</sup> While the Congress and the Akali Dal were attuned to press British Government to declare War aims but at the same time keeping in view of the interests of minority community, the Akalis did not want to boycott the War efforts like

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304. Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics: the Start of Provincial Autonomy 1936-1939*, Craik to Linlithgow ( Telegram) August 9<sup>th</sup>,1939.

305 Lionel Carter, (ed.) ,*Punjab Politics. Strains of War, 1940-43* ,New Delhi, 2005, p-170.

306 A Panphlet ' Sikhs and the War' in *Jawahar Lal Nehru Papers* NMML



the Congress. Master Tara Singh's rationale was that if Sikh recruitment to the army suffered at this time, the future political influence of Sikh community decrease.<sup>307</sup> This is how the community was becoming abridging formula between the Akalis and Khalsa National party as both started coming closer. Some biographer of Master Tara Singh wrote that if "*in the intoxication of nationalism,*" he had boycotted Sikh recruitment to the army then, "*the Sikh position today would have been nil.*"<sup>308</sup>

In Oct. 1939 Master Tara Singh met with the British Viceroy of India and after that meeting he resigned from the Congress Party and became an active member of Khalsa Defence of India League. Following the example of the Sikhs, Hindu aristocratic leaders who had left Unionist party to show their resentment against Sikandar - Jinnah Pact met together. Raja Narendra Nath, Bhai Parmanand and Sir Gokal Chand Narang appealed their community to stand by Britain in its hour of trial against Nazism. British Government was well aware of the Communist's anti War propaganda in the villages of Central Punjab.<sup>309</sup> Sikhs in collectivity, particularly KNP and the Akalis were thinking seriously about the problem of recruitment

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307 A Panphlet ' *Sikhs and the War* ' in *Jawahar Lal Nehru Papers* , NMML.

308 Giani Gurbachan Singh, *Ankhi Soorma: Jiwan Master Tara Singh Ji*, The Life of Master Tara Singh, Delhi, 1950, pp.136-31

309. Giani Gurbachan Singh, *Ankhi Soorma: Jiwan Master Tara Singh Ji*, The Life of Master Tara Singh, p. 129.

which was having economic and political importance for the Sikhs as a minority community.

The incident in 1940, refusal of Sikh Squad of Central India Horse to embark at Bombay for the Middle East, this had caused quite a flutter at the army headquarters and there had been talk of disbanding of all Sikh units and stopping further recruitment.<sup>310</sup> The Punjab Government was opposed to such a drastic step and favoured a conciliatory approach.<sup>311</sup> Major Short was posted at Lahore as a liaison officer. A few other like minded officers were posted in the main areas of Sikh recruitment, "to stimulate efforts by the civil and military authorities to allay Sikh disquiet and induce among the Sikhs a healthier attitude towards the War and recruitment."<sup>312</sup> At the instance of Major Billy Short (*a British Army officer who was great admirer of the Sikhs*), an inquiry was ordered into the causes of Sikh unrest in certain army units and in principal Sikh districts. Sardar Ujjal Singh who was a Parliamentarian Secretary provided a detailed account of recruitment in Lahore area which was as follow

<b>Total demand for March 1940</b>
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310 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p.131.

311 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.81.

312 Giani Gurbachan Singh, *Ankhi Soorma: Jiawan Master Tara Singh Ji'*, The Life of Master Tara Singh, pp.129-130.

Jat Sikhs	:	484
Other Sikhs	:	656
Total	:	1030 Sikhs

<b>Actual recruitment on 10th March, 1940</b>		
Jat Sikhs	:	62
Other Sikhs	:	67
Total	:	129

While explaining this poor show in recruitment, Ujjal Singh told Craik that the moderate Sikhs (by which he meant Sikhs of Khalsa National Party) distrusted that League, because they considered that it was too much in the hands of the Akalis, who supplied the paid propagandists and controlled the disbursement of funds supplied by Patiala. "Although there are a certain number of moderate Sikhs in the League executive, including president, these are mere figure heads."<sup>313</sup> Major Sujan Singh and Col. Giani Kartar Singh were deputed at Jullundar to assist Major Short and to find out means and measures to give impetus to War recruitment among the Jat Sikhs.

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313 Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, Delhi, 1979, p.684.

While the process of War recruitment was going on, Jinnah was making every effort to strengthen the position of the Muslims. The Unionist Party was already increasing strength in Punjab which was considered a device to strengthen the Muslim position in the province.<sup>314</sup> The growing strength of the Muslim community in the country and in Punjab certainly upset the Sikhs. Sikh leadership was equally disturbed as they feared that Sikhs would lose their favoured positions in the army. Historically if we see the British reduced the Sikh strength in the army from 20% to 13% after the Akali Movement (1920-25), in spite of the fact that out of 20 military crosses won by India, 15 came to the Sikhs. Gyani Kartar Singh collected young elements in SGPC and Master Ajit Singh Ambalavi, Amar Singh Dosanjh, Gyani Danwant Singh, Amar Singh Ambalavi, Sardar Sarup Singh and Sardar Harcharan Singh Bajwa supported him.<sup>315</sup>

The political environment in Punjab started changing. The year 1940 was marked by individual Satyagraha Movement. It was a technique to carry on War against imperialism in peculiar situation. The Congress started it under the dynamic leadership of Gandhi. Satyagrahis were convicted and sentenced to various

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314 *The Tribune*, Jan. 14, 1941

315 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 29.

terms of imprisonment during this period. The Akalis also participated in two movements but not whole heartedly. 362 Satyagrahis were arrested and convicted under Rule 38 of D.I.R. for having made speeches before they could offer Satyagraha. In addition to these there were 200 detainees in the Punjab jails. The fine imposed on Satyagrahis amounted to Rs. 82, 62,510 out of which Rs. 7, 28,720 could be realized.<sup>316</sup>

In May 1940, Nehru visited Lahore. He was opposed to India helping Britain in the War. At the same time he was against taking advantage of critical position in which the British found themselves in context to War against Fascism in Europe.<sup>317</sup> The Communist wave in Lahore was in torrents.

### **PAKISTAN RESOLUTION AND THE SIKH POLITICS**

At the same time the Muslim League organizational wing strengthened, funds collected and branches opened in almost all the districts and even in some tehsils. While the Sikhs were indulged in internal politics and Congress also facilitated League's moves by resigning from the ministries in seven provinces. The Muslim League was strengthened and a resolution for a separate Muslim State, popularly known as 'Pakistan Resolution' passed in

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316 *The Tribune*, Jan. 14, 1941

317 *Home Department Political*, File No. 18/5/39, NMML, New Delhi.

March 1940. This was taken as a threat to the existence of the Sikhs in Punjab and was denounced by the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Unionists. Large numbers of meetings were organized to condemn Pakistan scheme severely. The Sikh community representative the Khalsa National Party and the Akali Dal were vocal. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar B. Ujjal Singh and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia resolved that Sikhs would never tolerate for a single day rapid communal rule of any community in Punjab which was not only their homeland, but 'holy land'.<sup>318</sup> Master Tara Singh, President of Shiromani Akali Dal declared that if the Muslims tried to establish their rule, they would have to cross an ocean of blood.<sup>319</sup> The uneasiness created by this political move compelled Sikhs to forget their mutual conflicts. Thus Sikh community was united to retain their homeland at any cost.

The advent of Pakistan was first visualized by Shri Rajagopalachari the closest advisor of Gandhi. He told the Congress Working Committee at New Delhi that they could enjoy the freedom of India and the dream of independent India until and unless the Congress prepared to swallow the bitter pill of the creation of Pakistan. So, on August 23, 1940 the Supporting Offer by

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318 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. 1, p.357.

319 *The Tribune*, April 18, 1940.

Rajagopalachari to have Muslim Prime Minister was condemned by Master Tara Singh. Master Ji, dead set against the partition of motherland, vehemently protested against it saying: "*Rajaji's views are not only invitation to civil War but it is as well treachery to the Sikhs. Congress had given solid promises to the Sikhs that it will not accept any decision without consultation of the concurrence of the Sikhs.*"<sup>320</sup>

Eventually, the resentment caused by Gandhi's snub and Rajagopalachari's Offer to the Muslims was accentuated by Maulana Azad's. The All India Congress meeting was held under President, demanded explanation from Master Tara Singh for attending a united Sikh dinner in Simla, which was presided over by the Maharaja of Patiala. Consequently, Master ji resigned from the All India and the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee on the 19th September.<sup>321</sup> The possibility of the Akali Sikhs parting company with the Congress seemed imminent. But this did not happen as some Akalis were in favour of adhering to the Congress.<sup>322</sup> Sensing their sentiments, Master Tara Singh declared that he had resigned on personal ground and had not asked any

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320 *The Sikh Courier*, London, 1985, p.47.

321 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 20 September, 1940; also see *Home Political Dept*, File No.18.9.1944

322 Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the First half of September, 1940, *Home Political*, File No. 18/9/40- Poll (I).

other Akali to resign from the Congress.<sup>323</sup> In fact, this rupture between the Akalis and the Congress developed due to the impact of the War. Before the War they were close to each other. After the declaration of the War, the Akalis wanted to join the army in large numbers whereas the Congress adopted the policy of non-cooperation towards the British war efforts.

In the beginning of the month of October, a Sikh public met under the presidentship of Master Tara Singh in Amritsar, in which they passed a resolution laying down conditions under which the Sikh would help the British: (I) the Sikhs should be given a large share in the army; (ii) a Sikh should be represented on the Viceroy Council; and (iii) in services adequate representation should be given to the Sikhs.<sup>324</sup> Nehru felt dismay at the attitude of the Akalis and asked them to choose either cooperating with the British or working with the Congress. But they were in no state to give a clear answer to this.<sup>325</sup>

Political environment in Punjab was changing as a few Akalis were satisfied with Sikandar's role. Responding Pakistan resolution on 11th March 1941, Sikandar said, *"If that is what Pakistan means, I have nothing to do with it. Let us join hands in order to*

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323 *The Tribune*, Lahore, 20 September, 1940.

324 *Akali Patrika*, Lahore, 2 October, 1940.

325 Kshitish, *Storm in Punjab*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 99.



*preserve and maintain peace and harmony with in the province and unite with the rest of India to face with courage and confidence the danger from without... hands off the Punjab."* Sikandar was determined and could afford to oppose Jinnah's interference generated in the Punjab affairs now. For the protection of their community Akalis started supporting War recruitment with zeal. Gandhi ji complained in a letter to Master Tara Singh about his communitarian approach, *"You have all the time my community in mind. The Congress has no community but the whole nation ... I am quite clear in my mind that being in the Congress you weaken your community and weaken the Congress."* He further writes, *"You have to either fully nationalist or frankly communal ..."*<sup>326</sup> The historic letter which Master Tara Singh had written to Maulana and a copy was sent to Mahatma Gandhi, created a great political stir.

Even Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had the same attitude towards Akalis. When Gujranwala District Congress Committee suggested him not to allow the Akalis - Congress rift to widen, Nehru replied, *"It is not possible anyone or any group at this critical moment to have it both ways and gain the favour both of British Government and the national movement at the same time."*<sup>327</sup> Giving a turn to politics,

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326 Harijan, 29 September, 1940

327 Hindustan Times, October 17, 1940.

KNP enthusiast - Sir Joginder Singh became advisor of Master Tara Singh. With his persuasion Master Ji became flexible politician and stood for the power of panth.

Thus Akalis also started criticizing Individual Satyagrah openly. Master Tara Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh and Sampuran Singh in a joint statement said, "*The Akalis are in favour of Sikh recruitment and were doing Civil Disobedience merely out of a sense of discipline.*"<sup>328</sup> No doubt Master Tara Singh plainly told moderate group that he would not personally offer Individual Satyagraha which was particularly started against War efforts but at the same time he set a paradox by saying, "*he would not openly oppose any important leader of the Akali Party in offering Satyagrah in his individual capacity under the banner of Congress.*"

In the mean time in March 1941 a deputation of the Khalsa Defence League met Craik. Craik reported Linlithgow, "*I think that the Defence League members are stronger in League than they should be, but even the Akalis have come to realize that a decline in the Sikh Military quota must result in a serious setback to the community and it is obvious that any Sikh aspiring to the position of*

*a leader may land himself in difficulties, if he preaches non-operation with Government in the War."*

In the summer of 1941 the War entered a critical phase. Fascist powers invaded Yugoslavia, Moscow and Greece. Germany's General Rommel threatened the Middle East; Arab followers of the Mufti of Jerusalem declared for axis powers.<sup>329</sup> At times British Indian Government encouraged Khalsa Defence League by a larger proportion of the Khalsa National Party as they were aspired to the control the right of controlling the policy of the Sikh community. The proposal of the British Government to extend the League by larger proportion of the Khalsa National Party was not liked by the Akalis. The events were so changed that in June 1941 Linlithgow in the Cabinet decided to prepare a National Defence Council of 30 members. A team was taken as appropriate which would be having representative of the Hindus, the Sikhs as well as the Muslims.

As it was justified by Glancy that all three representatives had to be persons who had won popular approval in the relations and who had proved that they could work together amicably and effectively. Glancy suggested two ideas to include two names one for the Hindu and one Sikh representative, Sir Chhottu Ram's and

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329 Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Princeton, 1966, p. 243.

Sardar Dasaunda Singh's names to be included. In the other he suggested which became the part of British diplomacy and much talked about in the private papers, were the name of the representatives of the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims:

- a) **Hindus:** Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das M.C.S., or his son Rai Bahadur Lala Gopal Das, M.L.A. or Rai Bahadur Lala Sohan Singh, M.L.A. (Chairman of Lahore Electric Supply Co.)
- b) **Sikhs:** S.B. Ujjal Singh, M.L.A., and Sardar Nau Nihal Singh, M.L.A. supporters of the Unionist Government and disappointed candidates for the post of Sikh member of the Cabinet. Of the two Ujjal Singh has made him self more prominent politically but Nau Nihal Singh is, writes glancy, I should say distinctly more attractive. Baldev Singh, an Akali sympathiser, a wealthy industrialist (Tata Nagar): If he should be selected, it would be explained for the benefit of the Khalsa Nationalist Party that has been prominently connected with Munitions work S.B. Mohan Singh- lately Adviser at the India Officer.<sup>330</sup>

When Sikandar Hayat Khan was asked to give names he got a new list of three community's nominations. For Sikhs the names appeared as:

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330 B.J. Glancy to Lord Linlithgow Secret and personal D.C. No. 350, June 26th 1941, *Linlithgow Papers*.

- 1) Sardar Sir Joginder Singh
- 2) Sardar Baldev Singh, M.L.A.
- 3) Master Tara Singh, President, S.G.P.C.
- 4) Lieut Sardar Nau Nihal Singh Man, M.L.A.

After a pondering discussion the right choice for them was Sardar Nau Nihal Singh and the Maharaja of Patiala. As Sikandar was not in favour of Sir Joginder Singh whom he regarded as an unpractical and superficial idealist. He writes that Sir Joginder would be more of nuisance than a help to the Council, and certainly doubt whether he would be of any practical assistance.<sup>331</sup> Though he was soundly pleasant enough but did not command any influence worth the name among the Sikhs.

Ujjal Singh also lost the case being Arora Sikhs who could not promote the recruitment among Jat Sikhs. About Baldev Singh they opined that he had no direct contact with the Sikhs of the Punjab because he lived in Tata Nagar. Sikandar further doubted whether being a contractor his appointment would be appropriate or not.

Sikandar was coming closer to the Alkalis' because of the favourable effect it would have on army recruitment. Sir Joginder

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331 Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, 258.

Singh started criticising the provincial Government for the selection. In a broadcasting statement he said - *As you are aware, to the effects Sikhs have been deliberately insulted and should now devote themselves to deal in with tyranny for which the Punjab Government is responsible in province. I have spoken to two of the signatories and pointed out to turn that the result use of their declaration may well be fall in Sikh recruitment which would clearly be in the worst interest of the community.*<sup>332</sup> The Akalis, because they hated and feared the prospect of Pakistan, saw co-operation with the Unionists and the War effort as the best defence against it. Their close links with the Congress had first led them to adopt an attitude of non-co-operation towards the War. However they soon realized that the maintenance of Sikh connection with the army was vital for the presentation of the Sikhs as a separate entity.<sup>333</sup> Although they did not openly support the Khalsa Defence of India League which was formed in January 1941 to promote Sikh army recruitment, they nevertheless promised to secretly supply parcharka for propaganda works in the villages in its favour.<sup>334</sup> The organizatin of Khalsa Defence of India League gave a constructive

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332 Glancy to Linlithgow, Aug. 2, 1941, p. 2681.

333. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, p. 132.

334 Craik to Linlithgow, 22 Nov. 1941, Linlithgow Paper, File 90, IOR, also see Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, p. 132.

work to the unemployment among the Sikhs and hundreds of graduates got the emergency King's Commission in the Indian Army.

The SGPC leadership provided some of their young eloquent speakers like Sohan Singh Dara, Baldev Singh Balbeer, Jagjit Singh Batalia and Gyani Arur Singh.<sup>335</sup> This organization caught the eye of British politicians and the credit of the success of its activities and recruiting results among the Jat Sikhs of Punjab went to credit of Governor Bertrand Glancy.<sup>336</sup>

The Second World War brought in its wake new opportunities for the Sikhs and the Sikhs were ready to make full use of this situation. The combination of trio Sikhs was cemented as we see Sir Joginder Singh, though a Jat, ambitious politician was already in association of Sardar Ujjal Singh, an Arora Sikh and a Loyalist. Sardar Baldev Singh by his sweetness and social habits was able to carry Sir Joginder Singh. The three worked together for Khalsa Defence of India League while representing their political parties.

## **CRIPPS MISSION AND TRIO SIKH LEADERS**

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335 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 33.

336 Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 33.

The Akalis however were exploring new ways to strengthen and consolidate their community against the danger of Muslim rule. The Akali Sena, a volunteer organisation of the Sikhs which was primarily formed to remove the threat of atheism in the community, was now working to safeguard the Sikh rights and to oppose the Pakistan proposed.<sup>337</sup> The 'Ghallu Ghara day' was celebrated to remind the Sikhs how the Muslim armies of Ahmed Shah Abdali had massacred the Sikhs.<sup>338</sup> Meanwhile there was an evident crisis of leadership in the Khalsa National Party at the sudden demise of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia in last week of 1940, forced the Akalis to see, however reluctantly which side the Sikh bread was buttered.<sup>339</sup> He was the first Sikh to realize that ultimately Pakistan would mean for the Sikhs a parting of the ways with Muslims.<sup>340</sup> With his death, the political importance and influence of the Khalsa National Party and Chief Khalsa Diwan almost came to an end;<sup>341</sup> Dasaunda Singh, a man of no political standing and of an average acumen was selected to succeed Sir Sunder Singh in the Cabinet in preference to Ujjal Singh, a

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337 *File No. 4/1/040, Home Political, NAI.*

338 *File No, 18/6/040., Home Political, NAI.*

339 *K .C. Gulati, The Akalis Past and Present, p. 82.*

340 *Kirpal Singh, The Partition of the Punjab, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 14.*

341 *K .C. Gulati, The Akalis Past and Present, p. 82.*



lieutenant of Sir Sunder Singh and an able parliamentarian. The main reason for ignoring Ujjal Singh was that he was a non Jat.<sup>342</sup>

Baldev Singh then a back bencher in the Congress Akali Parliamentary Party in the Punjab Assembly, formed a new party in the Legislature in March 1942 viz. United Sikh Party.<sup>343</sup> Some members of Khalsa National Party, some independent Sikhs and some Akalis joined the new party.<sup>344</sup>

While Japanese armies were storming forces Asia the political harometer in India continued to register no change. The Viceroy freed the Congress leaders but failed to win them same time British Government felt it difficult to remain indifferent towards the Indian Problem any longer. The idea of sending a mission to India with fresh proposal found favour with the British Cabinet. It was at this time the Prime Minister of England announced the unanimous decision of the War Cabinet about dispatch of Cripps Mission to settle Indian question.<sup>345</sup> Cripps arrived in New Delhi on 23rd March 1942 and immediately commenced serious conversation with Indian Leaders. He was accompanied by Sir John Simmon and Mr. Amery. Before Cripps came to India, Amery in a draft

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342 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.83

343 K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis :Past and Present*, p.83.

344 Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 35.

345 *Harijan* ,June 28, 1942.

declaration had said that representation, allowed to the Indian states in any future constitution making body in India would be in the same proportion of the total population as the average for British India.<sup>346</sup> Recognising Indian right to frame its own constitution after the War, Cripps envisaged for loose federation giving provinces the right to opt out the union.<sup>347</sup> This clause was the first public admission of the possibility of Pakistan.<sup>348</sup> The Sikhs who had already expressing this got a voice in private papers. As Glancy write to Linlithgow "*The Sikh community is growing more and more uneasy and there is a feeling that it must move in... some direction or the other to ensure its survival'. In such a situation the Akali decision to encourage Sikh enlistment in the army on the one hand and their support to the Congress on the other hand been dubbed as sailing in two boats*".<sup>349</sup>

Muslim League's happiness for their hopes fulfillment but Jinnah's rejection that Pakistan was not conceded was another political move in Punjab politics. The draft declaration greatly alarmed the Sikhs in Punjab being a Muslim majority, province, could secede from the course and could acquire the same status as

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346 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol., I, pp. 292-93.

347 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol.VI, D456,, as published on March 8, 1942, p. 565.

348. Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol.VI, .D 456, as published March 8, 1942, p. 565.

349 Glancy to Linlithgow, 22 Nov 1941, *Linlithgow Papers*.

Indian Union. In that case the Sikhs and Hindus were to be under perpetual Muslim domination.<sup>350</sup> Cripps did not understand the complexity of Indian politics and hence did not see the gravity of the situation. There was a panic among the Sikhs that constitution would place power in the hands of majority.

Hence a Sikh delegation comprising Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Sir Joginder Singh and Master Tara Singh met Stafford Cripps on 27 March, 1942. They discussed with him the possibility of having redistribution of provincial power between the Eastern and Western Punjab in order to carve out a province in which the Sikhs would have the decisive voice as a large balancing party between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>351</sup> On 30th March 1942 Sir Stafford Cripps issued a draft declaration with seven tier formula which again brought a whirl in Sikh Politics. On behalf of Sikh community Sardar Baldev Singh was selected as President of Sikh All Parties committee. He, along with Sir Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh, Tara Singh and Mohan Singh handed over a memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps on 31 March, 1942, which made a clear Sikh position regarding unacceptability of the proposals:

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350 Kirpal Singh, "Genesis of Partition of the Punjab", 1947 in *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. II, Oct. 1971, p. 400.

351 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power*, 1942-47, Vol. I London, War Documents No. 386, p. 496.

- 1) Instead of maintaining and strengthening the integrity of India, specific provision has been made for the separation of provinces and constitution of Pakistan and;
- 2) The cause of the Sikh community has been lamentably betrayed ever since the British advent, our community, has fought for England in every battle field of the empire and this is reward that our position in the Punjab which England promised to hold in trust, and in which we occupied a predominant position, has been finally liquidated.

The Sikh leadership further said why should a province that fail to secure a three fifth majority in its legislature, in which a community enjoys a statutory majority be allowed to hold a plebiscite and given the benefit of a bare majority? There was an appealing attitude while pursuing the case of Sikh position. The memorandum contained certain demands to strengthen the Sikh position in the province.

Sikhs of all shades rejected the Cripps Mission took it as the "first public admission of the possibility of Pakistan."<sup>352</sup> Master Tara Singh expressed his firm conviction that since the provincial option was to be exercised by a fare majority, this Punjab would

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352 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Vol.VI, D*, 208, Amery to Hardings, March 2, 1942, p. 283.

"never come into a general Union" and the Sikhs would never tolerate Mohammedan rule open or disguised"<sup>353</sup> ... I may let you know that it is being talked every where amongst Sikhs that they are between two fires. They are to have Japanistan in case of defeat and Pakistan in case of victory.<sup>354</sup>

During April and May various Akali Jathas and Singh Sabhas all over the Punjab categorically opposed the Cripps proposals. The situation was declared 'very critical ' and Sikhs were asked to prepare, if need be for single handed struggle.<sup>355</sup> Baba Kharak Singh of Central Akali Dal also declared that "so long as there was a single Sikh there could be no Pakistan in the Punjab.<sup>356</sup> The procurement views were that the Cripps proposals had been drafted to satisfy the three major elements in Indian Politics viz. the Congress, the Muslim League and the Princes. In order to satisfy Congress they offered 'Dominion Status' after the termination of War. Another offer was the grant of right of cession from commencement. The Muslim League obtained the freedom for the province to accede or not to the future Indian Union. The Princes

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353 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Vol.VI, D*, 208 Glancy to Linlithgow, April 14, 1942, p. 772.

354 March Tara Singh to Sir Stafford Cripps, Khalsa College, Amritsar, SHR, 1815.

355 *The Tribune*, April, 5, 1942.

356 *The Tribune*, April 8, 1942.

got the free options to join Union or they remain outside by forming a new union of Indian status.<sup>357</sup>

Negotiations of Cripps Mission failed and created frustration among the Indians. On 26 April, Gandhi demanded the withdrawal of British power from India. The plea that British could not leave India because of their obligation to the Princes and minorities was ridiculed by Gandhi. He said, "All the treaties with the princes and obligation towards minorities were British creation and designed for the preservation of British rule and the British Interests."<sup>358</sup>

The Cripps proposals were rejected by every section of Indian opinion. The Hindu Mahasabha uttered '*Pakistan through the backdoor*'. Congress rejected the Cripps offer mainly because there was no responsibility of executive to the legislative. The freedom of a province to move out of the Union, the exclusion of states people from the picture and virtual resurrection of defence and War, were doubtless additional material factors but relatively occupied a secondary place.<sup>359</sup>

Rejection of Cripps proposals by one and all relieved the Sikhs of immediate doing but it did not help them overcome their apprehension. The type of Constitution of that the Congress

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357 *Harijan*, June 28, 1942.

358 Penedral Moon, *Divide and Quit*, London, 1961, pp. 33-36.

359 R. Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, London, 1942, p. 11.

favoured could provide little room to the Sikhs in the Government of independent India and joining Pakistan would be suicidal. They knew that the Hindus of Punjab could look elsewhere in India to counter the communal dominance of the Muslims but the Sikh problem and solution to it lay in Punjab only. They were in real tight position. As a way out of their problem the readjustment of provincial boundaries was taken up seriously by the Sikh leaders. Sardar Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh and Sir Joginder Singh advocated redistribution of provincial power between the Eastern and Western Punjab in order to carve out a province in which Sikhs would have a decisive voice and be a balancing force between the Hindus and Muslims. The Sikh press was vocal enough to condemn the Cripps proposals.

On 7th April, 1942 the Sikh congregation at Sialkot unanimously passed a resolution to condemn the Cripps proposals.<sup>360</sup> In Jhelum Sikhs had an argument that if the Muslim League wanted Pakistan on the basis of the right of self determination of the Muslim community then the Sikhs should be permitted to be a part of India on the basis of that very principle.

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360 *Akali*, 11 April, 1942.

Cripps who proved to be a '*poor statesman and a poorer negotiator*,<sup>361</sup> saw the sparks of the fireworks created by him even before his departure. Baba Kharak Singh of Central Akali Dal declared that "*So long as there was a single Sikh there could be no Pakistan in the Punjab*".<sup>362</sup> The political wave in Punjab worried the British as moderate as well as extremist Sikhs had joined hands together. There was no lollypop with the British to make Sikhs satisfy. David Taylor Monteath, the Permanent Under Secretary of State for India and Burma suggested in the Minutes, dated 24 April 1942 that while there was 'no way of putting back the clock in the Punjab means could be found to ease the tension. He suggested that something could be said about the eventual adjustment of provincial boundaries and the provinces be made in Section 290 of Govt. of India Act of 1935<sup>363</sup> Cripps advised the Sikhs leaders to bargain with both the Congress and the Muslims League for a Soviet and join the State that offer them better terms.<sup>364</sup> But any understanding between Jinnah and the Akalis seemed impossible. At this time the British appeared to have prompted Sikandar Hayat

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361 Sapru to Joginder Prasad, 14 April, 1942, Roll 4, p. 252, *Sapru Papers*, NMML.

362 *The Tribune*, April 8, 1947.

363 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, TOP DOC 675., Minutes by Patrick and D. Monteath, 24 April, 1942,

364 Nicholas Mansergh (ed.), *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. I, Document 396, 28 March, p. 396.



Khan 'to have an agreement with the Akalis to diffuse the dangerously strained situation'.<sup>365</sup>

### **FORMATION OF SIKANDAR-BALDEV SINGH PACT**

The failure of Cripps proposals did not demoralize the Sikh Leaders. The general expression of solidarity against the Government on the issue of Pakistan unnerved the provincial authorities. They were particularly worried about the 'unprecedented intensification of bitterness' between the Sikhs and Muslims and its adverse effect on, the War effort.<sup>366</sup> Akalis in any condition did not want to materialize Pakistan. Sikhs remained, reluctant to enlist in the Indian Army. In an endeavour to encourage greater Sikh support for the War efforts.<sup>367</sup> Major Short threw himself into the work of reconciliation with enthusiasm and was soon accepted by leading Sikhs.<sup>368</sup> He became an intimate friend of Sir Sikandar and other influential Punjabi Muslims and even won the confidence of the then Governor Sir Henry Craik. He also viewed the that time Punjab affairs in the wider context of India's future. "Settle the Sikhs" he would say, and "you settle

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365 Mansergh Nicholas and Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. I, p. 321. Churchill to Roosevelt, March 8, 1942.

366 Glancy to Linlithgow, March 4, 1942, Linlithgow papers, Delhi.

367 Ian Talbot, *The Punjab and the Raj*, p. 149,

368 K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 82.

India".<sup>369</sup> Major Short worked for a Sikh-Muslim accord, which meant an alliance between the Unionists and the Akalis.<sup>370</sup> Sikhs of all political shades under the leadership of Sardar Baldev Singh viewed that *it would not be possible to materialize Pakistan without the support of Muslims of Punjab. Even, if later were compelled to translate it into reality... Unionist-Akali alliance was liked to prevent division of the province.*<sup>371</sup>

Seizing opportunity by the forelock Baldev Singh initially a Congress- Akali backbencher and leader of Akali Party in the Assembly held talks with Sir Sikandar and discovered in him a readiness to meet all legitimate Sikh demands.<sup>372</sup> Thus with the triangular (Akali, Unionist and the British Government of India's) efforts on May 27, 1942 Baldev Singh talked Sikandar Hayat Khan, but no final settlement reached between the two. During talks no political issues either Pakistan or anti Pakistan were involved as the talks were mainly intended to improve the communal situation in the province. Political negotiations between the Akalis and the Unionists continued till June 1, 1942. The Tribune wrote, "*The negotiations between the leader of Unionist party Sir Sikandar Hayat*

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369 K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 82.

370 K.C., Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 82

371 Rekha Sud, *Sardar Baldev Singh and Punjab Politics (1935-47)*, unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, PUC, p. 23.

372 Rekha Sud, *Sardar Baldev Singh and Punjab Politics (1935-47)*, p.83.

*Khan, Premier of Punjab and Akalis led by Baldev Singh for a political Pact have, it is authoritatively learnt now reached their final stage".*<sup>373</sup> Baldev Singh on behalf of his party expressed his most grateful appreciation. These draft pronouncements which he made were seen and blessed by Master Tara Singh and his Chief lieutenant, Gyani Kartar Singh, but suggested that the credit for happy results attained was due to Baldev Singh himself rather than to the Akali High Command.<sup>374</sup> On June 11th Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Baldev Singh reached Lahore for the discussion related to 'Jhatka issue'. In a press conference Baldev Singh said, *"My sole object in entering into negotiations with Sir Sikendar Hayat Khan was to arrive at some sort of settlement, which I think may pave the way of communal harmony in the Punjab. The land of five rivers occupies rather a unique position in present day politics of the country. I consider it an urgent need of present crucial times. I have no doubt that once we established communal harmony, some mutual agreement, a settlement of a political issue will not be difficult.*<sup>375</sup> The talks were going on but the Jhatka question rocked the negotiations. Baldev Singh repeatedly said that the terms of the settlement would stand or fall together. It depends totally on

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373 *The Tribune*, May 29, 1942.

374 Glancy to Linlithgow, No. 396, 26 May, 1942, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

375 *The Tribune*, June 12, 1942.

Jhatka question, whether it will be legalized or not.<sup>376</sup> Finally the final draft of formula was sent through a message to the Premier. This was stated as the last word from the side of Sikhs. It was not an easy process to persuade Sikh leaders to agree to the formula because at that time Akalis were busy in 'Tor Mela' conference. Baldev Singh could not discuss the Premier's reply with his friends. On June 15, 1942 the negotiations between the Unionists and the Sikhs represented by Sikandar Hayat Khan and Baldev Singh respectively, ended successfully at about 8 p.m.<sup>377</sup> June 20th 1942 ended all doubts and Baldev Singh entered into an agreement with Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. The agreement was known as Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact.<sup>378</sup> This was mainly concerned with social and religious questions.<sup>379</sup>

### **THE TERMS OF SIKANDAR BALDEV SINGH PACT**

**Issue of Jhatka:** In this connection, the Premier with the approval of the Cabinet made it public that instructions would be given to the Government and semi-Government institutions to allow every community to cook and use meat slaughtered according to its own

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376 *The Tribune*, June, 12, 1942.

377 *The Tribune*, June 21, 1942.

378 *AICC Paper*, vide file No. F 20(i), 1943.

379 Ian Talbot, *The Punjab and the Raj*, p. 149.

rituals and rites. This was done to check the fanning of communal roles in the province.

**Teaching of Gurmukhi:** It was decided that whenever an adequate number of Sikh students sought to study Gurmukhi, Government would make arrangement. The Premier further assured that provision would be made to restore the glory of Punjabi as a second language in the province.

**Legislation Regarding Religious Issues:** Members of the Legislative Assembly would be free to take decision on every religious matter concerning their respective communities in the manner they thought it to be proper but bearing in mind the decorum of the House.

**Recruitment Criterion:** The Premier explained that the Government had already fixed proportions for recruitment of the members of various communities to Government jobs in the province. Under it Sikhs had been allotted 20 per cent share. His Government would try to implement it in letter and spirit. He further added that the Sikhs would not be ignored in matter of promotion.

**Sikh Representation at the Centre:** The Premier further assured that whenever there would be any reshuffle or change in the

Executive Council of the Viceroy, the Sikh claim would have his fully sympathy and support, he would be glad to support the Sikh claim for their due share in the Central services.<sup>380</sup>

As a result of the Pact, on June 26, the Governor of Punjab appointed Baldev Singh a member of his Council of Ministers and allotted him the Portfolio of Development in succession to Sardar Dasaunda Singh. He well protected the interests of peasants and trading community during the War.<sup>381</sup>

In spite of various attempts made by Congress and other interests to wreck the negotiations<sup>382</sup> on one side this Pact resulted into cementing the relations of the Sikhs and the Unionists but on the other hand it was condemned by the Congressite, the Communist, Sikhs and by the Central Akali Dal.<sup>383</sup> Diwan Chaman Lal, for one, characterized the Pact was an attempt to strengthen a weak ministry. He claimed that 20 Unionists had agreed to the formation of a Congress backed ministry that the negotiations to this effect had been going to an end it had been decided to demand a division on some budgetary demand. His claim was well based,

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380 *The Tribune*, June 16, 1942.

381. Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 32.

382 Glancy to Linlithgow, No. 399, June 25th 1942, *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

383 Indu Banga, *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, Delhi, p. 241.

for the Government for stalled the move in abruptly ending the session without assigning reasons.<sup>384</sup>

Master Tara Singh's dubious attitude towards Pact was made clear when he denied Chaman Lal's charge that the Akalis had bolstered a tottering ministry by Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact, which he asserted was a Pact between two individuals and not two parties. He declared that the Akali's would continue to fight as before against the Unionist or any other party on political issues like independence for India and opposition to demand for Pakistan.<sup>385</sup> The Muslim League opposed the Pact because it claimed that it would increase Sikh influence in the political life of the province. There have been many attacks, both on Sikandar and Baldev Singh, in the press and elsewhere and each of them has been roundly accused of selling the fort and gaining nothing for his community.

Master Tara Singh had given out that the Akalis as such are no party to the Pact.<sup>386</sup> Authoritative Unionist circles felt that the Akali leader was trying to have both ways. They pointed out that the Pact has become a 'fait accompli', the Akalis who undoubtedly were party even though not directly but technically should extend

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384 *The Tribune*, 14 June, 1942.

385 *The Tribune*, 25 June, 1942.

386 *Glancy to Linlithgow*, No. 400, 30th June, 1942,

their unflinching support according to the understanding which arrived at earlier between the two unmindful of their political rivals who has risen from dormant stage the quarters friendly towards the Akalis share the surprises expressed from another point of view. These quarters felt that such utterances are bound to embrace the new minister Baldev Singh who deserves and should be given a better start.<sup>387</sup> Baba Kharak Singh demanded Baldev Singh's resignation. Sant Singh referred to the 'absurdity' of the Pact because while Baldev Singh sat with the Government, the Akali party sat in the opposition.<sup>388</sup> The Communist on the other hand regarded the Pact "*a conspiracy between landlords and capitalists to avoid progressive legislation and to tax the poor*".<sup>389</sup> They further alleged that the Akalis were ready to grab '*any crumbs that might come their way*'.<sup>390</sup> The Sikhs soon reaped the first harvest of the Pact when in July 1942 the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council and among the eleven members was a Sikh, Sir Joginder Singh, as Member of Education, Health and Land.<sup>391</sup>

Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh were making distinctly satisfactory speeches at tea parties in favour of the

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387 *The Tribune*, July 6, 1942.

388 Indu Banga, *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, p. 241.

389 *The Tribune*, June 31, 1942.

390 G. Adhikari, *On the Question of Sikh Homeland*, originally published in *People's Age*- Dec. 1945 and see also Indu Banga, *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* p. 241.

391 K.C. Gulati., *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 86.



Government. In a tea party Baldev Singh made a statement; "*Let me again make it clear that while I stand steadfastly to safeguard the interests of my community. I will be failing in my duty if I do it at the expense of any other community or do something which will embitter the communal situation... our community is threatened with evil forces of aggression and it should be duty of every true Punjabi to get ready to make any sacrifice.*"<sup>392</sup>

Commenting on the Pact, Penederal Moon said, "its significance is that predominately Muslim Government should have been able to come to terms, even temporarily, with a party of extreme Sikh nationalists. This is something to the good, and if the truce held good for a few years, it may develop into real understanding between the Unionist Government and the Akalis and bear fruit in the form of a far reaching Sikh-Muslim compromise regarding sharing of power in Punjab. If such a compromise was affected, it would facilitate and perhaps give a due to similar solution of all India problems."<sup>393</sup>

The Pact had deep impact on the Akali's attitude which became evident in July 1942 when the Congress Working Committee passed the historic Quit India Movement resolution

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392 Glancy to Linlithgow, p. 321, dully 26th 1942, , *Linlithgow Papers*, NMML.

393 Pederal Moon, *Divide and Quit*, London, 1961, p. 36.

under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The resolution was endorsed by the AICC. On 8th August, Gandhi addressed the members of AICC. "You have to cultivate this spirit of freedom before it comes physically. The chains of the slave have broken the movement, he considers himself freeman".<sup>394</sup> The movement rapidly grew in Bihar, U.P., Central Province, Madras, Bengal, Delhi and the some parts of Assam and Orissa. In Punjab only a handful of Akalis took part in this Movement.<sup>395</sup>

The growth of Sikh influence in local Government angered the small Muslim Government servant class. It had a wider impact, as man of the newly appointed Sikh officials almost immediately proceeded to discriminate against Muslims. In the Karnaal District, for example, the Sikh Deputy Commissioner, Sardar Kapur Singh reduced the magisterial powers of the Nawab families of Karnal and Kunjpura and cancelled their gun licences. No less than 80 per cent of the Muslim licences in the district were deprived of their right to possess firearms, whilst the Deputy Commissioner indiscriminately, granted fresh licences to the Hindus and Sikhs.<sup>396</sup>

On 27th Nov. 1942 Communal Revision party took place which was hosted by Sardar Baldev Singh. The time and occasion

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394 *The Tribune*, May 10, 1942.

395 *The Tribune*, 10 Sept. 1942.

396 QEAP File 1090/60, NAP, See also, p. 151.

was the anniversary of Guru Nanak's birthday. Here during usual speeches British papers speak, *Baldev Singh, the Sikh member of the Cabinet has shown signs of taking late an independent line. He was indiscreet enough to subscribe, without consulting.* Sardar Baldev Singh at times questionable remarks about the principles of the Land Alienation Act - a subject which was regarded in Unionist circles as altogether too sacred to admit of any expression of 'heretical opinion'. There was in consequence a certain feeling of uneasiness in the Cabinet.<sup>397</sup>

Sikandar agreed to the Pact because of the favourable effect it would have on army recruitment. The Akalis because they hated and feared the prospect of Pakistan, saw co-operation with the Unionists and the War effort as the best defence against it.<sup>398</sup> Baldev Singh's prestige was increased as a minister. The vacuum created by the death of Sunder Singh Majithia was filled, as Khalsa National Party joined the Baldev Singh group in the Legislative Assembly in March 1943.

The Sikandar Baldev Singh Pact could ensure only a limited co-operation between the Akalis and the Leninists to mitigate the adverse effect of Muslim domination. The issues covered were meant to remove the existing irritants. Baldev Singh remarked in

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397 Glancy to Linlithgow, 28th Nov., 1942, *Linlithgow Papers*.

398 Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 150.

1944 that his Pact was meant to remove the 'besetting curse of inter-communal bitterness', but could not do the same.<sup>399</sup>

In Punjab the failure of Cripps Mission led to the birth of Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact and in India the launching of Quit India Movement was connected with the failure of the Cripps Mission and suffering of the attitude of Congress towards the Government.<sup>400</sup>

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399 J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis a Short History*, Chandigarh, 1996, p. 95.

400 Ganeshi Mahajan, *Congress Politics in the Punjab, 1855-1947*, Shimla, 2002, p. 99.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE PUNJAB POLITICS : DEMAND FOR SIKH HOMELAND AND THE SIKH TRIO (1943-1945)**

The Punjab politics from 1943 to 1945 entered into a crucial and critical phase. The Muslim League was demanding the division of Punjab as well as creation of a Muslim state. The Congress on the other hand was in favour of United India. The Sikh leaders were alarmed by the rising prestige of League during the War. Sikandar became increasingly isolated within the League Council and Working Committee. Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact was dying its own death. The Unionist Party crumbled to pieces and in consequence the Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact also met with the same fate. Instead of being a solution of the province contributed to its undoing. Jinnah gained complete ascendancy over Punjabi Muslims crushing all opposition till there was hardly left to resist him. One of the main causes of failure of Sikandar - Baldev Singh Pact, was opposition of Muslim League and as well as of Sikhs. Ironically enough the Pact was designed to bring the Sikh and Muslim communities together was indirectly responsible for this lamentable political arrangement which was bound to drive them apart, for it

was Baldev Singh's association with Khizr as a colleague in the Punjab Ministry that enabled a new coalition to be formed. An alliance between the two was a boon to the province as long as Khizr stood at the head of Unionist Party which commanded the allegiance of most of the Muslims but it could only be a curse when he had become a renegade at the head of a rump. Thus in the end Pact proved a snare.<sup>401</sup> This Pact brought little dividends to the Sikhs except a ridiculous sum of Rs. 20,000.

The demand of Muslim League for an independent separate state for Muslims upset the Sikhs leadership most, as the Punjab, which was the home of the Sikhs and where most of their religious places were located, was the heart land of Pakistan. Consequently the demand for Pakistan posed a serious danger for their religious, social, economic and political interests since its creation would leave them at the mercy of Muslims i.e. whose rule they had suffered persecution in the past.<sup>402</sup> Though endangered yet could not put up a strong and united resistance to the Pakistan movement because of their mutual differences. Though most of the Sikh leaders were opposed to the partition of country yet could not develop a systematic policy and effective strategy to counteract.

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401 Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, 1839-1974*, Delhi, 1977, p. 253.

402 Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 79.

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

### **AZAD PUNJAB SCHEME**

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

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403 *The Indian Year Books*, 1942-45, p. 859.

404 Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242.

405 Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 35.

the Sikhs from the domination of a single community.<sup>406</sup> The failure of Cripps Mission, Sikandar- Baldev Singh Pact and Congress party's conceding the principle involved in the demand for Pakistan<sup>407</sup> perturbed the Akali leaders. The Azad Punjab Scheme was presented as an alternative by Master Tara Singh, Sir Joginder Singh, S.B. Ujjal Singh, and Sardar Baldev Singh. The name was given to a province envisaged in the memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps and Azad Punjab was mentioned in a resolution of the All India Akali Conference at Dahela Kalan on July 24, 1942.<sup>408</sup>

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AZAD PUNJAB SCHEME**

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

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406 Master Tara Singh, a Sikh Conference at Dhhudial ,held on Oct. 3-4, IAR,1947, r. 2, p. 301.

407 Baldev Raj, Nayar , *Minority Politics in Punjab*, 83.

408 Sadhu Singh Hamdard, *Azad Punjab*, Amritsar, 1943, in Urdu 2nd ed., p. 48, quoted by Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242

409 Satya, M. Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, Delhi, 1986, p.36.



First Round Table Conference, November 12, 1930. The two Sikh delegates Sampuran Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh played an important role in placing the Sikh demands. Both the Sikh leaders became the voice of Sikh community and they stated that in case of the Muslims refused to accept anything but a reserved majority on the basis of separate electorate they (the Sikhs) would, then, press for a territorial rearrangement of the province which would consolidate the Sikh population. They demanded therefore the divisions (exclusively Lyallpur and Montgomery districts) which were overwhelming Muslim and were racially akin to the North West Frontier, Province should be taken away from the Punjab. This arrangement, if accepts would leave a Punjab of about sixteen millions people in which no single community would have an absolute majority and each community would be obliged to conciliate to others. <sup>410</sup> Muslims did not accept this proposal.

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

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410 *The Indian Round Table Conference, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, n. 29, pp. 555-6.*

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

### **MASTER TARA SINGH'S CALL 'AZAD PUNJAB'**

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411 *The Indian Round Table Conference*, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, n. 29, p. 1368.

412 *The Indian Round Table Conference*, 2nd session, 1931, Appendix IV, pp. 1403-06.

413 Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242.

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1943 the Akali Dal passed Azad Punjab resolution, thus putting a stamp of approval on Muslim League's demand for Pakistan.<sup>414</sup> Its population was to be so balanced about 40% Muslims, 40% Hindu and 20% Sikhs that the Punjabi would be free from the domination of any single community neither the Sikhs or Hindus nor Muslims. Master Tara Singh emphasized that scheme was conceived to protect the Sikhs from the communal domination of the Muslims. Further explaining he stated that the Hindu and Muslims minorities could always looked upon the provinces where their co religionists were in a majority for security and protection of their rights but Sikhs did not enjoy similar position for they did not have majority anywhere. He therefore insisted upon this form of protection until a better and more practicable form of protection was proposed.<sup>415</sup>

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

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414 S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi, Partition and Punjab*, p. 86.

415 *The Tribune*, 23 July, 1943, article by Master Tara Singh, Azad Punjab Scheme,.

416 *The Tribune*, March 15, 1943 and September 8, 1943.

historical traditions of each of three communities.<sup>417</sup> In case of India being partitioned, Azad Punjab was to be turned into a buffer state between India and Pakistan.<sup>418</sup> Unfortunately at that time even the communist movement went astray and came forward with the slogan of *Sikh Homeland in India*.<sup>419</sup>

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

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417 *The Tribune*, June 6, 1941.

418 Varinder Grover, *The Story of Punjab, Yesterday And Today*, Delhi, 1995, p. 285.

419 Varinder Grover, *The Story of Punjab, Yesterday And Today*, Delhi, 1995, p. 285.

30% which would be even more beneficial for the Sikh community.<sup>420</sup>

In absence of clear strategy to oppose League's move for Pakistan, a few Sikh leaders started negotiations with the League leaders for some political gains. To strengthen his position Jinnah offered Akali leadership to live peacefully in Pakistan. Akalis were even offered some concessions by League leaders in return for strengthening the League against the Unionist ministry.<sup>421</sup> Ajit Singh Sarhadi in his book, *Punjabi Suba*, has made the point that some of the Akali leaders at one stage considered supporting the demand for Pakistan with a guaranteed status for the Sikh. Thus he writes- it was a sad state of affairs, that Master Tara Singh did not at first agree to meet Jinnah.

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

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420 Baldev Raj Nayer, *Minority Politics in Punjab*, p. 84.

421 *The Tribune*, Nov. 23, 1942.

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

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

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

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422 *Home Department Political*, 18.7.1943.

423 Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba, the Story of Struggle*, Delhi 1970, p. 88.

However this movement could not gather strength because of its inherent weakness. It did not have the support of all Sikhs. Strong reactions from various quarters particularly from Congressite and Communist Sikhs with held the movement. The protagonists of the Akhand Hindustan and the Hindu leaders of the Punjab dubbed it communal, anti Hindu, anti national, reactionary and opportunist.<sup>424</sup>

### **SANT SINGH AND BABA KHARAK SINGH'S REACTION**

The Akali scheme to divide Punjab by common consent seemed to have taken into account the possibility of the British conceding Jinnah's demand<sup>425</sup> but it did not appeal all sections of Sikhs even.

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

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424 Indu Banga, *Five Centuries Punjab*, p. 242

425 K.C.Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 94.

426 *The Tribune*, 14 June, 1942.

*India*’ and *‘destruction of Indian unity and integrity’*.<sup>427</sup> The committee resolved to initiate a campaign against the partition of India and to hold Akhand Hindustan Conferences at different places.<sup>428</sup> He also charged the Jinnah and Master Tara Singh were *‘sailing in the same boat’*, *‘agents of British imperialism’* and the Azad Punjab would be *‘suicidal for the Country, the Panth and the Punjab’*.<sup>429</sup>

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

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427 H.N. Mitra, (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, 1943, p. 295.

428 H. N. Mitra, (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, p. 99.

429 H. N. Mitra, (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, p. 300.

430 *The Tribune*, Feb.15, 1943.

431 K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.98.



membership the office bearers of the Shiromani Akali Dal.<sup>432</sup> On 16th August 1943, in a conference at Panja Sahib, Sant Singh said if Hindus and Sikhs were united, 54 percent that the Muslims contribute of total population of existing Punjab could not exploit them.<sup>433</sup>

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

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432 V.N. Datta, Majithia Sunder Singh, 1872-1941' in S.D. Sen (ed.) Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1994, p. 16.

433 H. N. Mitra, (ed.), Indian Annual Register, Vol. II, 1943, p. 300.

434 *The Punj Daraya*, Sept. 1943.

435 *The Tribune*, July 13, 1943.

creation of a machinery to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs in central and provincial services.<sup>436</sup>

### **MASTER TARA SINGH VS SANT SINGH**

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

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436 *The Tribune*, July 14, 1943.

437 *The Tribune*, June 16, 1943.

438 K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 98.

439 K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 98.

the Tribune, Master Tara Singh denied that scheme was the outcome of the demand for Pakistan made by the All India Muslim League, though he asserted, *all that had happened recently was that the arguments in favour of Pakistan accepted the Cripps had "reinforced the reasons justifying the Sikh demands for Azad Punjab.*<sup>440</sup> He further wrote, *"If some people are allowed to go out of India, why should those who wish to remain in India be forced to go out of 10%"*<sup>441</sup>

Unlike the Muslim demand for Pakistan, the Sikh demand for Azad Punjab was not separatist in nature. Perhaps the Sikhs could not demand a Sikh State as they did not form a majority in any considerable area.<sup>442</sup> The press war was at height as Master Tara Singh's arguments were answered point wise in there by Sant Singh. He refused Master Tara Singh's assertion that Azad Punjab was referred to by the Sikh leaders in the seventeen demands at the residence of Sant Singh and then submitted to Gandhi Ji on 30th March, 1931 and that since then no Sikh opposed these seventeen points. The main emphasis in these demands was not on changing the boundaries of the existing Punjab but on the point that no community in Punjab should dominate over others which

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440 *The Tribune* , July23, 1943.

441 *The Tribune*, July 26, 1943.

442. *The Tribune*, July 26, 1943.

in the language of those days meant that the Sikhs be given much representation in the Legislatures (i.e. in the Punjab Legislative Council) that the Muslim majority did not exceed the joint Hindu Sikh members.<sup>443</sup> He asserted that the word 'Azad Punjab' was nowhere mentioned in seventeen demands and emphatically stated that it was wrong to insist as Tara Singh had said, that seventeen demands agreed upon by the Sikhs leaders at his residence in 1931, were never opposed. "It was also wrong to say that the Azad Punjab Scheme proposed by the Sikh delegation to the Cripps in 1942 went unopposed. According to him they actually had rather caused disunity in the Sikh world.<sup>444</sup> Sant Singh was blaming Master Tara Singh and the trio leaders for the internal Sikh politics. He went on to state, "I have four main objections against the scheme proposed by Tara Singh and his supporters:

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

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443 *The Panj Darya*, Sept. 1943.

444 *The Panj Darya*, Sept. 1943.

Tara Singh knew that proposals were afoot to add Ambala Division to Delhi? If that happened the Azad Punjab would fall like a sack without contents. In that case, he felt sure the condition of the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab and the areas outside it would become worse".

2. As per Azad Punjab Scheme, the important Sikh Shrines like Nankana Sahib and Panja Sahib would fall outside the Azad Punjab. To him that would be very "painful".
3. Sikhs being "nearer to Hindu and than Muslims". It would be to their benefit to remain in the mainstream of 'Nationalism'.
4. The Azad Punjab Scheme compelled the Sikhs to concede and recognize Pakistan which they could not afford to do. In asking for Azad Punjab, he insisted, are conceding Pakistan only because something falls to our lot.<sup>445</sup>

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

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445 *The Panj Darya*, Sept. 1943.

446 *The Tribune*, March 15, 1943.

wanted the separation of original Punjab from the western districts annexed to it by Maharaja Ranjit Singh just as Sind was separated from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar.<sup>447</sup>

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

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

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447 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, 1943, VI pp. 288-99.

448 *The Tribune*, March 15, 1943.

449 *Home Political File No. 18/11/43* (I), Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the Second half of November, 1943.

450 *Home Political, File No. 18/11/43* (I), Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the Second half of November, 1943.

Muslim M.L.As. Khizar refused with a reply that this was beyond the object and limit of the committee.

Since, 1944, Jinnah, who felt disgusted and disappointed at the attitude of the Punjab Premier, had started feeling a strong need for bringing the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab under the League's control.<sup>451</sup> To achieve the desired aim in February 1944, Jinnah deputed two further committees to visit Lahore; the real intention of which was to ascertain the chances of forming a Muslim League Ministry. Finally, in March 1944, Jinnah himself arrived in Lahore to conduct negotiations with Khizar Hayat Khan<sup>452</sup> but the differences remained unresolved. At the end of April, both leaders issued statements signifying that the negotiations had broken down.<sup>453</sup>

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

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

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451 D.C. Verma, '*Chhottu Ram - Jinnah Clash: A Pre-Partition Episode*', in *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, 29 November, 1987.

452 Imran Ali, *Punjab Politics in the Decade before Partition*, Lahore, 1975, p. 39.

453 H.N. Mitra(ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol.1, pp. 217-21.

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

- ii) that the present label of the coalition should be dropped, namely, the 'Unionist Party'; and
- iii) that the name of the proposed coalition party should be the Muslim League Coalition Party.<sup>454</sup>

Moreover, Jinnah accused Khizar of making many verbal promises, but putting down nothing in writing, and bluntly refusing to his letters.<sup>455</sup>

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

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

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

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454 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1944, p. 218.

455 Imran Ali, *Punjab Politics in the Decade before Partition*, p. 40.



In an atmosphere when the minority was treated as a privileged class, its thinking was moulded in a particular channel. The minority consciousness had becoming so predominant among the non-Muslims in Punjab particularly Sikhs, that when an agreement was reached among Sir Joginder Singh, Sir Gokul Chand Narang, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Mr. Ahmed Yaar Daultana on the joint electoral basis (subject to the approval of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain who gave his approval provided the Muslims could secure seats in proportion to their population). It was not accepted by the Sikhs. They were enjoying the 6% weightage in the province and they were not prepared to go for it. The Hindu Mahasabha was nervous. The atmosphere was heavy with resentment. The communalism was at its height, while the Sikh leaders underlined the common socio-cultural ties, the Hindus leaders like Raja Narendra Nath and Gokhul Chand Narang were talking about their inherent Oneness of the principles of Sikh and Hindu religion. They called the Sikhs as the "protectors" and the "Sword arm" of the Hindus.<sup>456</sup> In 1945 the Akali Dal passed a resolution condemning the Hindu press of the Punjab, while one Akali member" declared a tirade against the Hindus in general and Arya

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456. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, Vol. I, p. 295.

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

- (i) To retain his political supremacy in Punjab particularly among the Akali Sikhs which was lost due to Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact.
- (ii) To check Jinnah's moves who had started talks with the Akali in July 1943 in North West Frontier Province with a view to dislodge the Congress ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib there. He had prevailed upon Ajit Singh, an Akali believed to be an Akali of Master Tara Singh's hue, to join the Muslim League ministry there on May 1943.

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

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457. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, Vol. I, IAR II, p. 300.

458. *The Tribune*, July 17 and 18, 1943.

Scheme.<sup>459</sup> But strong opposition from the leaders like Baba Kharak Singh and Sant Singh continued. The anti Azad Punjab conferences were organized at different places in the Rawalpindi division with these Congressite leaders. The Akali Dal bitterly criticized all those who opposed the Azad Punjab scheme.<sup>460</sup>

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

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

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459. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, Vol. I, pp. 197-98.

460. B.N. Pandey (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. III, Bombay, 1985.

461. K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 100.

with.<sup>462</sup> Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh had joined hands with the Unionists in showing enthusiastic support for war efforts.<sup>463</sup> Some form of compromise on the basis of the demand for Pakistan seemed necessary.<sup>464</sup>

The Formula intended to have support of Muslim League in Congress's demand for independence for India at the end of World War II and the Congress for its part, would agree to the establishment of a commission to demarcate contiguous Muslim majority districts – not Muslim majority provinces which formed the basis of the demand for Pakistan- in north west and north east India as a solution of the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan.<sup>465</sup> The Formula had Mahatma Gandhi's tacit blessing.<sup>466</sup> After obtaining Gandhi's approval of this Formula, he entered into discussion and correspondence with Jinnah, was finally rejected the formula since it gave him only "a shadow and a husk and maimed and mutilated Pakistan."<sup>467</sup> However the Formula caused deep distress among the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab province, which would be divided into two parts, one consisting of Muslim majority districts and the other of Hindu majority districts, but

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462. Baldev Raj, Nayar , *Minority Politics in Punjab*, 85.

463. Sukhmani Bal Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 47.

464. Baldev Raj, Nayar , *Minority Politics in Punjab*, 85.

465. V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Princeton, 1957, p.163.

466. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, IAR 1944, Vol. II, pp. 130-131.

467. D.G.P Tendulkar, *Mahatama*, NewDelhi,1962, Vol. VI, p. 268.).

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

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

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468. K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 100.

469. B.N. Pandey (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. III, p. 619.

470. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, Vol. II, pp. 130-131.

representing all sections of opinion to record their protest.<sup>471</sup> An All Parties Sikh Conference was held at Amritsar on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1944 under the presidentship of Baldev Singh, Development minister. The Conference unanimously resolved that the basis of communal settlement outlined in Rajagopalchari Formula is manifestly unfair and detrimental to the best interests of the country and the Sikh community.<sup>472</sup>

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

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

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

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471. K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 100.

472. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, 1943, Vol. II, p. 210.

473. V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 94.

same rights in all provinces as had been given to the other minorities. Mohinder Singh moved an amendment seeking creation of an Independent Sikh State. It was supported by Giani Kartar Singh. Master Tara Singh set the tone for doing that by declaring that the Sikhs, who were a nation, would see that, if and when India was divided, the Sikhs should not be made slaves either of Pakistan or Hindustan.<sup>474</sup>

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

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

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474 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, p. 212.

475 K. C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 101.

476 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II p. 214.

Gujranwala proclaimed: *Even if the Muslim League promised to build houses of Gold for Sikhs in Pakistan, they would refuse to live in it.* The Sikh Panth had proclaimed its opposition in bitter turns.<sup>477</sup> He further said, "*The Sikhs would have nothing to do with Muslim League so long as it struck to the Pakistan scheme. No Sikh worth name could ever think of co-operating with party which was scheming to divide India. Muslim League leaders had several times appealed to the Sikhs to accept the principle of Pakistan and made promises that Sikhs would have a fair deal from League.*" Commenting on the idea of Pakistan he said, it as '*adherent and obnoxious*'.<sup>478</sup> They would never agree to live in the Pakistan of League description. Baldev Singh said, "*The Sikhs would be ready to shed their last drop of blood to maintain unity and integrity of their homeland, if Pakistan is ever forced upon them.*"<sup>479</sup>

Master Tara Singh wrote a letter to Gandhi on 5 August, 1944 expressing his anguish at Raja ji's scheme as it bypassed the Sikhs. Gandhi assured the Sikh leader in his reply that the interest of Sikh community would receive his equal attention while arriving at any settlement with the League.<sup>480</sup> In his characteristic way, he wrote, "*we shall come to no final terms. The smallest interest will*

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477 *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

478 *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

479 *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

480 *The Tribune*, August, 21, 1944.



*have the same weight as the largest. That is the requirement of my creed. It is a lapse if I do not live up to it. With this assurance I would leave you for the time being. Pray that both of us may have the strength to do what is wholly right and not to tone down the right for the sake of the expedience."*<sup>481</sup>

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

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481 *The Tribune*, October, 7, 1945.

482 Birdwood, *A Continent Experiments*, pp. 70-71, also see K .C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 105.

Congress Sikh leaders and the activities of Nagoke and Niranjjan Singh groups created a swing formula towards the Congress.<sup>483</sup>

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

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

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483 *Home Political Deptt.* 18.8.1944 and also see *The Tribune*, August 21, 1944.

484 *Home Political Deptt.* File No. 18.9.1944.

485 *Home Political Deptt.* File No. 18.9.1944

freedom as it did in the past.<sup>486</sup> The Congress leadership of the province was placed in a difficult situation. Those who had been released recently, were not in a position to take up normal political activity as the movements of some of them were still restricted.

The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks had diverse effect on the political parties and groups in the Punjab. The Akalis felt relieved because of their apprehensions that any agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah on the basis of Rajagopalachari Formula would be inimical to the Sikh interest. However they continued their agitation for creation of a separate political unit dominated by the Sikhs and a hint was even thrown by some of the Akali leaders for securing the help of the British for its realization though it was hastily denied because of the strong criticism of this move by non Akali Sikh leaders.<sup>487</sup> The Sikh Communist leaders tried to pacify their community by arguing that the failure of the talks proved Gandhi's sincerity towards the Sikhs, as it revealed that he wanted to safeguard their interests as well as of all minorities.<sup>488</sup>

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

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486 H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1944, p. 283; *The Tribune*, 27 November, 1944; *Akali Patrika*, 27 November, 1944, Majithia's speech at All India Jubilee Akali Conference at Jandiala.

487 *Home Political Dept*, File No. 18.10.1944.

488 *Home Political Dept*, File No 18.10.1944.

of his rivals with a suitable opportunity for reviving the Sikh Congress Party. Consequently 50 representatives of Sikh nationalists assembled in Lahore on the 5th of October 1944.

The Hindu Sabha, though heaving a sigh of relief, tried to make capital out of the failure of the talks by propagating that the Hindu agitation in the Punjab was partly responsible in making Gandhi feel that C.R. Formula was a mistake.<sup>489</sup> The Muslim League circles of the Punjab though unhappy at the failure of the talks because it destroyed their hopes of gaining political powers in the province through their alliance with the Congress, were, however, satisfied that talks had raised the image of their leaders in all India politics. As a result of which they had acquired an edge over all non League Muslim Political Parties in the country. There was even a persistent rumour that the negotiations were torpedoed by the British by conveying a message to Jinnah through Firoze Khan Noon to the effect that Muslims would get 40 percent in Central Legislature. Even British bureaucracy in the Punjab watched the negotiations with concern. For, they were afraid that the success of the talks would make it difficult for Khizr to carry on his Government. Consequently, the failure of the talks gave a sense

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489 Kshitish, *Storm in Punjab*. 99.

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

Sardar Baldev Singh being head of the Working Committee regarded the Formula as a break of faith on the part of the Congress leaders who had assured the Sikhs at the Lahore Congress in 1929 that no communal settlement would be accepted by the Congress which did not satisfy the Sikh community.<sup>490</sup> Another All Parties Sikh Conference was held at Amritsar on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1944.<sup>491</sup>

As many as 741 invitations were issued. About 561 who attended included individuals and representatives of various Sikh organizations such as the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhadak Committee, Singh Sabhas, Shiromani Akali Dal, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Defence of Indian League, Sikhs MLAs, Sikh Moderates, Nirmalas and Namdharis . The Central Akali Dal declined the invitation and Sikh Communists were not invited but both these absentee groups rejected the C.R. formula separately.<sup>492</sup> In a speech at this Conference, Tara Singh declared that the Sikhs were a nation and if there was going to be a discussion of the country than they should not be made slaves of Pakistan or Hindustan.<sup>493</sup> It declared that no communal settlement, reached

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490. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, p. 210.

491. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, p. 211-12.

492. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, p. 212.

493. H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, p. 203.

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

## **CHAPTER-5**

### **TRANSFER OF POWER AND THE SIKH LEADERS (1945-46)**

Towards the end of 1944, a few non-party public men decided to form a conciliation committee to device ways and means for an agreed constitution.<sup>494</sup> The initiative for the settlement was taken by the liberal leader Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at the suggestion of Gandhi.<sup>495</sup> He favoured the holding of a representative conference to carry on the dialogue with the League leaders. Most famously known as 'Sapru Committee', met at Delhi on 19 Nov. 1944. Primarily a non party Conference issued a questionnaire to various parties soliciting their views on fundamental rights, representation of communities in the services, Pakistan issue, territorial adjustments and alternatives to Pakistan. The committee rejected the demand for the partition of country on the following grounds:

- (i) The Muslims cannot be regarded to represent a separate nation on the basis of race, religion and culture.
- (ii) The scheme of Pakistan put forward by Jinnah is not acceptable to the Hindus of Punjab and Bengal, the Sikhs,

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<sup>494</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register 1945*, Vol. II, p. 33.

<sup>495</sup> *Gandhi Papers*, Vol. 93, letter No. 74-75 from Gandhi to Sapru, Oct. 25, 1944.

the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha and as such neither the Pakistan of Jinnah's conception nor the one contemplated in Rajagopalachari's formula be established without the consent of the parties.

- (iii) The division of the country is dangerous from the point of defence.<sup>496</sup>

## **SAPRU COMMITTEE AND THE SIKH LEADERSHIP'S**

### **MEMORANDUM**

The Sikhs belonging to every school of thought in public, social or religious life presented a lengthy memorandum to the committee reiterating their stand that Punjab was the homeland of the Sikhs not of the Muslims. It was prepared by Ujjal Singh. They submitted facts and figures to justify their claim. The memorandum was signed by thirty prominent Sikh leaders and legislatures, including Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Sampuran Singh Lyallpuri, Surjit Singh Majithaia, Bhai Jodh Singh, Swaran Singh, Ujjal Singh and Isher Singh Majhail. The Central Akali Dal leaders led by Baba Kharak Singh, however, kept aloof.<sup>497</sup> They expressed their resentment with the working of provincial autonomy in Punjab, as it practically meant, Muslim

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<sup>496</sup> Mansergh and Moon (ed.), *The Transfer of Power, Vol. V*, p. 824.

<sup>497</sup> *The Tribune*, February 23, 1945, an article 'Punjab Homeland of Sikhs and not of Muslim'.



rule. Though the Cabinet was formed on the British model, the electorate on the basis of Communal Award, gave the Muslim a majority. As a result the leaders of the statutory Muslim majority group automatically become the leader of the House. So if this was not enough, he was given the power to nominate and dismiss ministers not only of his own community but also those taken from the minority communities. The rules of business of Cabinet were also so framed that no decision could be taken without the consultation and consent of the Premier, with the result, that in each and every case he had the last word.<sup>498</sup>

Another Sikh grievance against the Muslims was that they had almost a monopoly of key posts under provincial autonomy and the Sikhs share was less than 10 percent as against the promised 20 percent. The memorandum said,<sup>499</sup> we have been asked as to whether we have any views to express in case Pakistan Scheme is imposed on us ... In that case, we would insist on the creation of a separate Sikh state. S. Baldev Singh wrote the 'Foreword' of the above memorandum.<sup>500</sup>

*“The Sikhs will, under no circumstances consent to live in a theocratic Muslim state, whether Unionists have done everything in*

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<sup>498</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of Sikhs*, and Civil and Military Gazettee Ltd. Lahore, 1945, p. 60; also see Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 106.

<sup>499</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, p. 70.

<sup>500</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, p. 70.

*their power"* wrote Harnam Singh, the President of Central Sikh League, "to *degrade and demoralize the Sikhs by interfering arbitrarily in the practice of their religion and to make them feel that they are a subject and subjugated people in their homeland.*"<sup>501</sup> He also complained that the Western districts of Punjab, which were inhabited predominantly by the Muslims, generally received a higher percentage of grants-in-aid than the Central districts. Again in Western districts no fee was charged from agricultural scholars, while no such exemption was granted to similar scholars in the Central districts.<sup>502</sup>

Replying to the Sapru Committee's questionnaire, the Sikh memorandum emphasized the right of religious freedom, use of Jhatka meat, carrying of Kirpan, right to employ the mother tongue for social and cultural intercourse and for the conduct of administration business in the region in which it was commonly spoken, freedom of speech, assembly, meeting, procession, press, propaganda, demonstration etc.<sup>503</sup> The memorandum further condemned the Pakistan scheme as 'unnatural', 'reactionary' and 'opposed to the best political and economic interests of the country' as it militated against the lessons of history and

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<sup>501</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 107.

<sup>502</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, p. 70.

<sup>503</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, pp. 74-76.

requirements, of geography and because it signed the 'death warrant of the future of the Sikh community as a whole.'<sup>504</sup> The scheme was based on the presumption that Punjab was the homeland of Muslims only. In case Pakistan was to be created, the Sikhs would insist on creation of a Sikh state which would include a substitute majority of the Sikh population and their important shrines, historic Gurudwaras and places, with provision for transfers and exchange of population and property. In case this was not agreed, to the Sikhs favoured a strong centre with autonomy to the units for cultural and economic development. They preferred the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications an irremovable composite executive in place of parliamentary system which had failed.<sup>505</sup>

Their demand included 30% representation in the Provincial Legislative Assembly and Government services in the Punjab and 70% at the Centre, besides representation in the N.W.F.P at par with Hindus and suitable representation in other provinces. They showed their opposition to Pakistan but demanded a separate Sikh State in case it was conceded.<sup>506</sup> While the Hindus pressed for joint electorates, public services manned by open selection based on

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<sup>504</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, p. 77.

<sup>505</sup> Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Homeland of the Sikhs*, p. 77.

<sup>506</sup> *Home Political Department*, 18.1.1945, 18.2.1945.

merit without any reservation on communal grounds but conceded reservation temporarily for a period of 20 years for minorities and demanded 50% Hindu representation in the public services. They opposed Pakistan and the right of a province to secede. The depressed classes stood for Joint electorates and integrity of India.<sup>507</sup> The Sapru Committee continued to work on the recommendation till Dec. 1945; the Committee's proposals were published.

In the meantime another attempt was made to break the deadlock between the Congress and the league and to form an Interim Government. The initiative for it came from Bhola Bhai Desai the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Central Assembly on the suggestion of Wavell and with the blessings of Gandhi.<sup>508</sup> Soon after the War in Europe came to an end, on June 14, 1945 the British Government issued a White Paper on India. The White Paper repeated the Cripps Offer in its entirety is an interim arrangement, that is pending, the framing of a new constitution by Indian they. It was proposed to reconstitute the organized political opinion.<sup>509</sup> After long discussions between Bhula Bhai Desai and Liaquet Ali Khan (the leader of the Muslim League

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<sup>507</sup> *Home Political Department, 16.2.1945.*

<sup>508</sup> M.C. Setalvad, *Bhula Bhai Desai*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 251-54, 361-66.

<sup>509</sup> B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution*, Vol. I, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1967, p. 136.

Parliamentary Party), an arrangement was arrived which came to be known as Desai - Liaquet Pact. The proposals contained in the Pact were: - the Congress and the League agreed that they would join in forming an Interim Government at the Centre. The composition of such a Government shall be on following lines:

- i) Equal number of persons nominated by the congress and the League in the Central Legislature.
- ii) Representation of Minorities (in particular scheduled castes and the Sikhs).
- iii) All the members of the Executive Council, except the Governor - General and the Commander in Chief, would be Indians.<sup>510</sup>

However, the Pact turned out to be still born child. Liaquet Ali Khan denied that any formal agreement had been reached between him and Desai about these proposals.<sup>511</sup> Desai claimed that these proposals had support of Gandhi. He was confident that Jinnah was aware and had approved of what had passed between him and Liaquet Ali Khan.<sup>512</sup> But later on it was repudiated not only by Jinnah but also by the leaders of Congress; as a result, Desai, like

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<sup>510</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p.176-77.

<sup>511</sup> Pyare Lal, *The Last Phase*, Ahmedabad, 1958, p. 128.

<sup>512</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 182.

Rajagopalachari, had to make an exit from the political stage.<sup>513</sup> After the failure of these negotiations, Wavell proceeded London.<sup>514</sup> He had been in touch with all these development, was keen on taking an invitation or breaking the deadlock between the Congress and the League and forming an Executive Council representing the major organized political opinion in India. After reaching London on 23 March 1945 he began discussions with the Secretary of State, the Indian Committee and the Cabinet.<sup>515</sup> Sapru committee recommendations had a mixed reaction in the Punjab. The Sapru committee submitted its report in March 1945. The Hindus and the Sikhs welcomed the acceptance of principle of the individuality of India and joint electorates. The Akalis criticized the Sapru Committee proposals because it accepted the principles of parity between the Hindus and the Muslims.

### **WAVELL PLAN AND THE SIKH POLITICS 1945-46**

On June 14, 1945, Lord Wavell proposed a new Executive Council to be entirely Indian, except for Viceroy and the Commander in Chief, as a step towards full Self Government His plan was discussed at Simla in June and July.<sup>516</sup> Tara Singh was

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<sup>513</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *The History of India*, Bombay, 1969, p. 715.

<sup>514</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *The History of Freedom Movement in India*, vol. iii, p. 715.

<sup>515</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *The History of Freedom Movement in India*, vol. iii, p. 716.

<sup>516</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akali - A Short History*, p. 98.

invited by Wavell to represent the Sikhs in the conference. Master Tara Singh was neither the president of Shiromani Akali Dal nor of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee when invited to the Simla Conference.<sup>517</sup> He was carrying the recognition that Akalis were the representatives of the Sikh community. During conference, Master Tara Singh kept himself in constant touch with Baldev Singh. On June 27, 1945 Baldev Singh met Wavell. He had two of the Congress ex Premiers Kher of Bombay and Sinha of Bihar, who were staying with him. Baldev Singh told Wavell that Punjab would be quite satisfied if they had Sikh and Punjabi Musalmans in the Executive Council.<sup>518</sup>

Wavell had proposed on 29 June 1945 in these words, "The party leaders should send panel of names to me, and I should try to form an acceptable council from them."<sup>519</sup> It had to have five Hindus, five Muslims, one Sikh and one Scheduled Caste, as suggested by Jinnah. Master Tara Singh met Wavell on 6 July 1945 and agreed to join Interim Government himself much to the dislike of Wavell who felt he "would be a poor member of the

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<sup>517</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 98.

<sup>518</sup> Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 148; see also Gopal Singh, *History of the Sikh People*, p. 692.

<sup>519</sup> Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, Entry dated 29 June, 1945, p. 150.

Council."<sup>520</sup> Master Tara Singh stood with Maulana Azad's pressure that the Akali Dal should send 'an agreed Sikh name' through the Congress.

In the course of discussion, Master Tara Singh presented strong opposition to Pakistan.<sup>521</sup> He stressed on three things in the conference, first he categorically stated that the Sikhs did not identify themselves either with the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League. In the second place, he stated what the Sikhs really wanted as a part of the overall provisions under which they would like the British to transfer power to Indian hands. Lastly he submitted what the Sikhs attitude was to the formation of the provincial Government at the centre in the immediate future. He observed *Pakistan was a greater danger to the Sikhs than to other communities*.<sup>522</sup> Master Tara Singh submitted a panel of three names placing his name at the head of it.<sup>523</sup> Wavell would have liked to have either Sardar Baldev Singh or Datar Singh. When, however, he asked Tara Singh to suggest one of these two names the later did not react favourably.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, Entry dated 6 July, 1945, p. 152.

<sup>521</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis- a short History*, p.99.

<sup>28</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. V, Document, 603, p. 1242.

<sup>523</sup> Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 152.

<sup>524</sup> Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, Entry dated 9 July, 1945.



Already on 15th July, 1945 he pointed out that the Sikhs would not agree to Pakistan unless they were given a separate Sikh State of their own.<sup>525</sup> On the same day, he came forward with his argument that non-acceptance of Sikh state demand on the plea that the Sikhs has no majority in any region of Punjab has no basis, as the Jews having only to 10 percent population in Palestine had got their Homeland. He argued that if population was the basis, the Sikh case is still stronger than that of the Jews.<sup>526</sup> He added that Pakistan was a greater danger to the Sikhs than to the other communities. But he was happy that the Executive Council was to have one Sikh representative.

In August Wavell consulted the Governors of various provinces about the appropriate timings of elections of India, and informed Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, that all the Governors except the Governor of Punjab favoured elections before the end of 1945.<sup>527</sup> In pursuance of the general approval of the Provincial Governors, two important announcements were made on the 21st August by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India that elections to the Central and Provincial assemblies would be held in the cold winter, and that the Viceroy would

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<sup>525</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. V, p. 1262.

<sup>526</sup> Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, Chandigarh, 1979, p. 69.

<sup>527</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VI, pp. 34-37.

shortly go to London for consultations with the British Government.<sup>528</sup> As a result of these announcements, all the important political parties engaged themselves with heart and soul in the electioneering process in order to emerge victorious in large number of constituencies. The election atmosphere pervaded the country.

However, the Simla Conference also ended into failure on 14th July as the Muslim League and the Congress could not reach to any agreement. Choudhary Khaliquzzaman held the Congress responsible for the failure of the Conference.<sup>529</sup> But the fact was otherwise. The immediate cause of the failure of the conference was Jinnah's intransigence about Muslim representation and Muslim safeguards.

The failure of Wavell Plan paved the way for fresh elections. The Labour Government took office on 26 July 1945 and began to expedite matters towards full Self Government. Elections to the Central and Provincial assemblies were announced on 21 August. On 19 September, the Governor General announced his plan of convening a Constituent Assembly and forming Executive Council representing the main Indian political parties. The provincial

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<sup>528</sup> Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 42.

<sup>529</sup> Choudhary Khalizuzzaman, *Pathway of Pakistan*, Lahore, 1961, p. 527.

Legislatures were to elect their representatives to the Constituent Assembly and to consider the Cripps Proposals of 1942.<sup>530</sup>

### **CABINET MISSION PLAN AND THE THREE SIKH LEADERS**

Meanwhile Second World War ended in September 1945 and circumstances were taking a favourable turn for independence of India. The Labour party of England, having independence as one of the issues in its Election Manifesto won the elections.<sup>531</sup> Soon after coming into power, Lord Pathick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, announced the decision of British War Cabinet to send India a Cabinet Mission.<sup>532</sup>

The Home Government decision of sending a mission with the objective - to seek in association with the leaders of Indian opinion on the principles and procedures relating to the constitutional issue, was well received throughout India. Leaders of different political parties were invited to talk on political issues. The aim was to discuss the granting of independence with political group leaders and to resolve the constitutional deadlock.

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<sup>530</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis a Short History*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>531</sup> *Paper relating to Cabinet Mission in India*, p. 61.

<sup>532</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, p. 118.

The members of Mission left England by air on the 19th March and arrived at Karachi on the evening of the 23 March.<sup>533</sup> The members of the British Cabinet Mission were Lord Pethick Lawrence (Secretary of State for India), Sir Stafford Cripps (President of the Board of Trade) and Mr. A.V. Alexander (The First Lord of Admiralty).<sup>534</sup>

Major Short also accompanied the members of the Mission. The Akalis were happy with the presence of Major Short as he was a specialist on Sikh affairs.<sup>535</sup> The Mission started having interviews with Indian Leaders representatives of Indian communities or special interests or groups and Indian administrators immediately after their arrival. Sikhs realized the importance of unity as otherwise there was a danger of Sikh interests being entirely ignored. Master Tara Singh threw his weight to this task and tried to bring different interests together so that a united front may be formed by the Sikhs for protecting their rights and interests.<sup>536</sup> On 9th March, 1946 the SGPC passed a resolution in favour of Sikh State. As already mentioned, so far as the internal politics of the Sikhs in the Punjab concerned, it was thrown in

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<sup>533</sup> K.P. Bhagat, *A Decade of Indo British Relations, 1937-47* Bombay, 1959, p. 340; also Kshitish, *Strom in Punjab*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 103.

<sup>534</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, IAR, Vol. I, 1946, p. 38; also see, Penderel Moon, *Strom in Punjab*, p. 43.

<sup>535</sup> Kshitish, *Strom in Punjab*, p. 103; Penedral Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 43.

<sup>536</sup> *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh*, Punjabi University, Patiala.

utter confusion. The invitation to Sardar Baldev Singh, then a minister in the Punjab Cabinet, to meet the Cabinet Mission came as a complete surprise to the Sikh leadership. Many a Sikh leaders could not digest this. Master Tara Singh was one of them, he asked him pointedly as to whom is he going to represent? Baldev Singh replied shyly, *the other minorities, not the Sikhs,*" No one, however, took the reply seriously. He had secured this invitation through the Punjab Governor and Malik Khizr Hayat Khan who along with Lord Wavell, the then Viceroy of India, did not trust Tara Singh, though they had no choice but to invite him. On the other hand, the Sikh leaders telegraphically informed Sir Joginder Singh, Member of Viceroy's Executive Council was kept scrupulously out of all negotiations, though Patiala was occasionally consulted informally best kept out of inner councils, he being credited with an ambition to take over the leadership of the community which he later indeed tried to do through his Panthic Durbar, but failed.<sup>537</sup>

The Akalis called a meeting, immediately after the announcement of Attlee on March 22, 1946 formulated a committee consisting of Master Tara Singh (Chairman), Baldev Singh and Beant Singh. This committee was constituted in order to

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<sup>537</sup> Gopal Singh, *History of the Sikh People*, p 704.

formulate Sikh demands to be placed before the delegation.<sup>538</sup> The Sikhs first were gone to polls to register their opposition to Pakistan. The Governors of the eleven provinces met the Mission on the 28th March and 29th March and apprised of the situation of their respective provinces.

On 5th April 1946, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Harnam Singh, Advocate, Sardar Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, all the representatives of the Sikh community, appeared before the Cabinet Mission.<sup>539</sup> Though the four were having different political ideology but they were determined and unequivocal in opposing Pakistan during the course of their talks with the British Cabinet.<sup>540</sup> Being in a difficult situation, the Mission had to consider whether power should be transferred to one, or to two bodies or even to more than two. They also wanted to know from the Sikh delegation on (i) whether, if the choice were given, the Sikh community would prefer the transfer of power to a single body or to more than one body (ii) if power were transferred to two bodies which would the Sikh community wish to be part; and (iii) if it were found to be practicable and could be arranged, as to which the

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<sup>538</sup> *The Tribune*, March 23, 1946.

<sup>539</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 6 April, 1946.

<sup>540</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1946, p. 199; also Khushwant Singh, p. 258; also see J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis a Short History*, Chandigarh, p. 100.

Secretary of State had formed no option, would the Sikhs wish to have a separate autonomous state of their own.<sup>541</sup>

Master Tara Singh said that he stood for United India and some sort of Coalition Government of all communities but if India were to be divided the Sikhs would prefer a separate independent state with the right to freedom to be with Hindustan or Pakistan and there was no thinking of 'Sovereignty'. Next to Master Tara Singh, Sardar Harnam Singh said that the question of the areas to be given to the Sikh State must not be considered only on the basis of counting of heads. Master Tara Singh submitted a memorandum on behalf of his community. He also made a proposal on the Sikh representatives in the proposed Constituent Assembly that was envisaged by the Mission. He argued that a divided India would be prey to foreign invasions. His ideas were combination of appeals and threatening.

Giani Kartar Singh preferred for the Sikhs a province of their own. He said that the Sikhs would not feel safe in the case both of United India and of Pakistan. In either case, they would want a province where the Sikhs were in a dominant or almost a dominant position. He mentioned more or less the areas of Azad Punjab. After

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<sup>541</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 138.

these three the ball came in the court of Sardar Baldev Singh who supported the idea of Khalistan but with different boundaries.

The Mission also noted the views of the Muslim League leader of the Punjab, Nawab of Mamdot about Pakistan and its effect on province. In reply to a question about the inclusion of non Muslim areas of the Punjab in Pakistan, he said that once Pakistan was established there could be readjustment of frontiers. But at this moment the Muslim League was thinking only in terms of existing boundaries.<sup>542</sup> To the objection that a large number of Hindus and Sikhs would be left to Pakistan, if the whole of the Punjab was included in Pakistan, he replied that there would also be a substantial numbers of Muslims in Hindustan.<sup>543</sup>

About the attitude of the League towards the Sikhs, he said that his party was prepared to meet the reasonable demands of the Sikhs but unfortunately they did not know what they wanted. They could not clearly define the boundaries of Khalistan. At present they were demanding a state consisting of eight of existing districts but in such a state, though there would be a non Muslim majority of fifty to fifty three percent, the Muslims would out number the

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<sup>542</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 138.

<sup>543</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII p. 97.



Sikhs.<sup>544</sup> However the League's approach to the political problem of India as well as of the Punjab was not endorsed by the all Muslim political elite of the province.

April 1946 was a crucial month as there was a lot of political activity particularly in the Sikhs camp. They placed two alternative demands before the Cabinet Mission. They wanted either independent Khalistan or Khalistan as a Federal limb of India. On 15th April, 1946 Master Tara Singh announced 'The Sikhs want United (Sanjha) Bharta and Joint Government (with Muslim League and Congress)'

The Governor General Wavell who was participating in the Cabinet Mission proceedings almost as a regular member, enquired from Baldev Singh as to what would happen to Sikhs if Jinnah's idea of division was carried out. Baldev Singh clearly followed the line of his community's views and replied that he did not agree with Jinnah that a number of religious communities should indeed live in a Muslim majority province even if they considered forming Pakistan. It was at this stage Sir Stafford Cripps put him a specific question, "How 'Khalistan' could be formed?"

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<sup>544</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, vol. VII, p. 97.

Baldev Singh replied that it would include a part of existing Punjab excluding Multan and Rawalpindi division with an approximate boundary along the Chenab River. He would like Lahore to be in Sikh State. He, however, strongly stated that he favoured a United India and considered the division of India unwise. He was of the view that the small States on the frontier would be at the mercy of the big powers and will always be a source of danger on to India.<sup>545</sup> He considered that the united India with safeguards for minorities in the form of weighted communal proportions in the Legislatures. Regarding classifying safeguards he particularly made a mention of Bombay, where weightage was given to Muslims against the Hindus. He said, *"If in the Punjab Legislature the Muslims could be prevailed to be content with forty five percent of seat instead of fifty one percent and the balance divided between the Hindus and the Sikhs then Sikh interest could be protected."*<sup>546</sup> He argued, *"The present arrangement did not suit the Sikhs."*<sup>547</sup> He emphasized that a Khalistan consisting of Ambala, Jalandhar and Lahore division would be the smallest that could be contemplated.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 14.

<sup>546</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 14.

<sup>547</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 14.

<sup>548</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. II, p. 14.

At the enquiry of the Secretary of State how would Sikhs survive and retain a position of independence and standing on their leaving India's without dividing it, Baldev Singh replied that *the two parties and the Muslim League must agree to adequate safeguards for the minorities before the British agree to leave India, for he was convinced that if power were transferred without their successor agreeing main parties dealt with were the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs.*<sup>549</sup> British to such an agreement the British would be letting down all minorities in the Punjab.

The Sikh leadership contemplated scheme for the protection of their interests i.e. (i) Khalistan with transfer of population, (ii) a new state stretching from Yamuna to Chenab in which the Sikhs would be able to act as a balancing power between the Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>550</sup> Cripps thereafter became more specific and asked Baldev Singh if, the areas in the Punjab in which no community predominate (including the Sikhs States of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Jind and Kapurthala) were constituted into a separate state and this be designated as a "Sikh Homeland" with special privileges for the Sikhs and with a right to join either India or Pakistan, how would he react! To this Baldev Singh replied, *"It is*

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<sup>549</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>550</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi, Punjab and the Partition*, Chandigarh, 1983, p. 145.

*too small for our growth and aspirations. It leaves the canal area out, also our major shrines. My people will not touch it".* The same day the offer was discussed by Baldev Singh with his some of the trusted colleagues, no one took it up, nor took him to task for rejecting it without proper deliberation.<sup>551</sup>

Sir Khizar Hayat Khan, the Premier of the Punjab also met the Cabinet delegation and Lord Wavell on the 5th April and told them about the disastrous inference in the event of the Provincial Coalition ministry is crippled to meet the demand of Jinnah. He added that the success of the Unionist Government had been due to the fact that they were a united party with a single programme and it had been formed on the basis that the constituent parties would co-operate in the provincial sphere but they would act freely in the All India politics alone.<sup>552</sup>

The Cabinet Mission met representative of various Indian political parties and interviewed about 472 Indian leaders in about 182 sittings. However, the main parties dealt with were the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs. On 10th April, 1946 Cripps sent his first memorandum for the consideration of its

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<sup>551</sup> Gopal Singh, *History of the Sikh People*, p. 704.

<sup>552</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 148.

colleagues and the approval of the full Cabinet in London.<sup>553</sup> Cripps memorandum had two alternative suggestions on which Congress and the League might be pursued to agree:

- i) Proposed a Union of all India by units comprising three parts the Hindu majority provinces, the Muslim majority provinces and the Princely States which would unite for a minimum of compulsory subjects including defence, foreign policy and communication. The units within parts might, also subscribe, if they wished to an optional list of Union subjects, or yield the optional subjects for administration by the 'groups' to which they belong, or retain them for exercise at unit level. For the Constitution making, Cripps proposal would proceed by stages. Initially the representatives of the units would meet in their groups to work out the State or Provincial. Finally, the three bodies would meet as equal partners in the grand Constituent Assembly to formulate the Union Constitution.
- ii) It contemplated the partition of India into Pakistan or Hindustan, with the Princely States acceding to one or the other or remaining independent. Pakistan would comprise

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<sup>553</sup> R. Moore, *Escape from Empire; the Attlee Government and the Indian Problem*, Clementon Oxford, 1988, pp. 85-89; also see, Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 102.

Sind, Baluchistan, the N.W.F.P and the Muslim majority areas of Punjab, Bengal and Assam, subject to adjustment by subsequent agreement and arbitration, but with Punjab, Bengal and Assam divided. The common thing between the two alternatives that both envisaged a common defence structure for the entire India.<sup>554</sup>

Cripps memorandum was not shown to any of Indian leaders when they met the Mission between 10th and 13th April. It was done with an intention to discuss the memorandum only with the leaders of the Indian National Congress and All India Muslim League and that too after the memorandum had been examined by the Cabinet of Great Britain.<sup>555</sup>

The memorandum was sent to London by Mission on 11 April 1946 and sent back to the Mission after the Cabinet gave its opinion. The Cabinet agreed that 'scheme A' was preferable but approval of the 'scheme B', if it offered the only change of agreement. The Mission on the lines of the communication from the Cabinet first put forth its proposal to Jinnah and he rejected both 'A' and 'B' scheme. Same environment was visible in the corridors of Congress. Maulana Azad's reaction towards the Mission was 'as

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<sup>554</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 103.

<sup>555</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 32.

negative as of Jinnah.<sup>556</sup> The Cabinet Mission seemed to be failing. The Cripps draft rejected Pakistan, both the larger and maimed version of it.

On 27 April, Wavell and the Mission approved a letter inviting Azad and Jinnah to nominate four representatives to meet the Mission and Wavell at Simla to discuss an agreement on fundamental principles. The Congress and the League met under auspices of Wavell and the Cabinet Mission from 5 May 1946 to 13 May and discussed the proposed outline of the Mission Plan as outlined by Cripps.

After discussions with Indian leaders of different political shades, the Cabinet Mission presented a tentative scheme for discussion at a conference at Simla (5th to 12th May) in an effort to find a basis of agreement between the Congress and the League.<sup>557</sup> The scheme envisaged a Central Government controlling defence, foreign affairs, and communications; and two sets of provinces- one consisting of predominantly Muslim, the other of predominantly non-Muslim areas competent to deal with subjects not to deal with the Centre. The Princely states were to negotiate with the Centre.<sup>558</sup> But when Lord Wavell was convinced that Congress and the League

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<sup>556</sup> Alama Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Madras, 1980, pp. 150-152.

<sup>557</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 259.

<sup>558</sup> Khushwant Singh, *The History of the Sikhs*, p. 259.

were 'poles apart', nothing fresh had come out, and time was being wasted, the Cabinet Mission announced its own proposals on the 16th May 1946.<sup>559</sup> Declaration of the Mission had angered the Sikh leadership. It could understand, perhaps even appreciate the Mission not recommending Khalistan for it had not recommended Pakistan either but the Mission had not suggested any provisions to satisfy the Sikh aspirations.

Whether the Akalis, actually wanted Khalistan or not, it is not clear but because the Congress Sikhs opposed it, they took the cover of Pakistan. They never raised the demand for Khalistan separately, but always linked it with that of Pakistan. They wanted to live in India under the condition that there should be no domination of the majorities of either Hindus or Muslims.

Till 30th April 1946, Baldev Singh had turned a Congress supporter and he introduced a new element at the Rawalpindi Congress. He said on 30th April, *that a Jatstan should be formed comprising areas from Ravi to Meerut, Jalandhar, Ambala, Meerut and Agra division.*<sup>560</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1946 he made a public statement- *"Between Ravi and Meerut should stretch Jatstan."*<sup>561</sup> The Sikhs of all political shades were perplexed. The Cabinet Mission report was

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<sup>559</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, New York, 1964, p. 182.

<sup>560</sup> *The Tribune*, 1 No. 1946.

<sup>561</sup> *The Tribune*, 13 May, 1946



a bolt from the blue as it left the Sikhs at the mercy of the Muslim. On 18th May 1946 the Akali Dal Working Committee Secretary decided to launch a Morcha to forestall formation of Pakistan.<sup>562</sup> In a conference they condemned the 16th May statement of the Cabinet Mission in very strong terms and appointed a 'council of action' under the name of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board with a view to give a tough fight to the British Government in case it were to implement the Cabinet Mission statement of 16 May, 1946.

He invited the Akalis particularly "*to prepare to die in the struggle ahead*" and declared, "*The Sikh history is rich with the blood of our martyrs, who laid down their lives for the honour of the Panth. Let us emulate their example and be ready to die.*"<sup>563</sup> Sardar Isher Singh Majhail said that *the Sikhs were determined to shatter to pieces of the edifice the British wanted to build.*<sup>564</sup>

The main resolution condemning the British Cabinet Mission's proposals was moved by Sardar Ujjal Singh and seconded by Giani Kartar Singh on the 10th June, 1946 the second day of the Conference.<sup>565</sup> The Mission not only announced its statement that the Interim Government would take over on 26 June but also

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<sup>562</sup> Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics, 1920-70*, 1979, Chandigarh, p. 70.

<sup>563</sup> Mirtra, *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1946, p. 202.

<sup>564</sup> Mirtra, *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. I. p. 203.

<sup>565</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p. 183; for the full text of this resolution, see H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, pp. 203-204.

announced the names of its members. The 14 Members Executive Council which it suggested was to be composed of six Congressmen, including a representative of the Scheduled Castes, five of the Muslim League, one Sikh, one Indian Christian and One Parsee. The list included the names of N.P Engineer, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Jawahar Lal Nehru, M.A. Jinnah, Liaquet Ali Khan, H.R.Mehtab, Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan, Nizam-ud-din-Rab Nishter, C. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Baldev Singh and V.B. Patel. Baldev Singh was invited to join the Interim Government.<sup>566</sup>

But the United Sikh Panthic Board, which met at Amritsar on the 22nd June, 1946 unanimously reached a decision that Sardar Baldev Singh should not join the Interim Government. The decision was taken after six hours' deliberations in which about 50 prominent Sikhs, representing all sections of Sikh opinion, participated. The Panthic Board instructed Sardar Baldev Singh to write to the Viceroy, declining the invitation to join the Interim Government.<sup>567</sup>As a result of the correspondence made by Baldev

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<sup>566</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis -a Short History*, p. 102.

<sup>567</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, 1946, p. 205.

Singh, Attlee assured Sardar Baldev Singh that the Constituent Assembly would face its problems in quite a different spirit.<sup>568</sup>

On July 11, 1946, 54 nomination papers were filed for 28 seats of Constituent Assembly allotted to the Punjab. Of these 20 nominations were made for the general seats, of whom seven were Congress, two were Hindu Unionists and five were Independent. The total number of representatives to be elected from the Hindus, Harijan and Christian seats was eight only.<sup>569</sup> Pakistan it must be noted was hardly a reality until 1945. The final Resolution for achieving Pakistan was passed only as late as April 9, 1946. The Resolution now demanded a single 'Sovereign Independent State' instead of two (as in Lahore Resolution of 1940) and the Separate Constituent Assemblies for the Muslim and Hindu Provinces, with safeguards for the minorities in Pakistan and Hindustan.<sup>570</sup> It was after receiving a telegram from Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Congress president; nominations were filed by Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Narotan Singh and Bawa Harkishan Singh from amongst the Akalis, and by Partap Singh Kairon, Kapur Singh, Babu Bachan Singh (MLA) and Shiv Singh (MLA) from amongst the Congress

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<sup>568</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, p. 202.

<sup>569</sup> *The Tribune*, June 12, 1946.

<sup>570</sup> Pirzada Syed Sharifuddin (ed.), *Foundation of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents 1906-1947*, Karachi 1971, Vol. II.

Sikhs,<sup>571</sup> but they had to withdraw because the Board did not change its decision on boycott.<sup>572</sup>

## **ELECTIONS OF 1946 AND THE PUNJAB POLITICS**

While India was busy with the Simla Conference, Britain was busy with its general elections and the elections in July 1945, brought the Labour Party into power. Mr. Atlee formed an all Labour Government on the 27 July.<sup>573</sup>

As the War progressed and it appeared more certain that the British would transfer power jointly to Congress and the Muslim League, the Punjabi landlord's enthusiasm for the Unionist Party waned. However they remained uneasy in its ranks until Khizr's open break with Jinnah in April 1944 ended their ability to 'sail in two boats'. At first only the Tiwanas, the opponents of the Khattars joined the Muslim League, but within a year most other leading landlords and pirs had followed suit. In many cases they did so simply because they wanted to be on the winning side. They had looked to the Unionist Party for patronage and to safeguard their local interests. When it became uncertain whether it would be able

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<sup>571</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis - a Short History*, p. 120.

<sup>572</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis - a Short History*, p. 105.

<sup>573</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VI, pp. 34-37.

to continue to discharge these functions, they deserted, revealing once more their traditional opportunities<sup>574</sup>

On 28th November, 1945 the Unionist Party issued its election manifesto which said that the main aim of the party was to bring improvement in the economic conditions of all classes of Punjab whether rural or urban and agricultural or non agricultural. The principal of secularism was adopted by the party.

It put the party into a direct clash with the Muslim League. Virtually, the elections for all the Muslim constituencies were contested by both the Unionists and the Muslim League, reviving on a much larger scale the rivalry of the 1937 elections. The concord of the intervening years had been firmly set aside.<sup>575</sup>

After scuttling the Simla Conference, Jinnah and Muslim League went to the polls on the plank of Pakistan.<sup>576</sup> Because the vital issue of Pakistan demand was at stake, the League's election campaign was based on unabashed fanaticism, and the unrestrained and irresponsible use of religious symbols.<sup>577</sup>

The Muslim communalists took the elections as a life and death questions for them. They stated openly that if they carried

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<sup>574</sup> M.S. Weinbour, *The March 1977 Election in Pakistan*, Survey 7 (1977), p. 602, See also Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 195.

<sup>575</sup> Imran Ali, *Punjab Politics in the Decade Before Partition*, Lahore, 1975, p. 46.

<sup>576</sup> Khuswant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, Princeton, 1966, p. 256.

<sup>577</sup> Manmath Nath Das, *Partition and Independence of India* New Delhi, 1982, p. 153.

the day in the Punjab, Pakistan was definitely in sight, but if they were defeated, their dream of a Muslim sovereign state was bound to be doomed. They made fervent appeals to their Muslim brothers to cast their vote in favour of the League which was contesting these elections in order to safeguard their interests. In his election campaign, Jinnah mustered massive support from the Muslim students and teachers of the province.<sup>578</sup> Jinnah attached particular importance in Muslim majority provinces.

Khizr himself shared many of Punjabi landlords' anxieties concerning future political development. By the end of 1945, the Muslim League had captured the support of one third of the Unionist Party's Assembly members. This was a major breakthrough. It included in its ranks the leading land lords and Pirs. The Hayats, Noons, and Daultanas, from whom the Unionist party had traditionally drawn its leaders, as had the influential Naru Rajputs of Hoshiarpur, the Pirachas of Bhera, the Dastis of Muzzaffargarh and the Arian Mians of Baghbhanpura, Lahore. Moreover Pirs of Jalalpur, Jahamian Shah, Rajoo and Shah Jiwana, who had represented the Unionist Party in the Legislature since 1923, had also joined along with the Chisti Revivalist Pirs

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<sup>578</sup> V.V. Nagarkar, *Genesis of Pakistan* New Delhi, 1975, p. 394.

and the Gillani Pirs of Multan.<sup>579</sup> Similar developments were occurring in Sikh political elite, which had been divided into five major groups.

- i) The Congress Sikhs i.e. those who owed allegiance exclusively to the Congress. The Congress Party sensed the importance of election of 1945-46 and made an all out bid to persuade the electorate to vote for a free and united India.
- ii) The Akalis, who were further divided into two groups or sub groups;
  - a) Those who were either Congress sympathiser or were both members of the Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal, they tried to keep the Akalis on the side of Congress in any conflict with the Governments and viewed Sikh interest in the light of national interest. However their influences as well as of all Congress Sikhs receded into the background during Quit India Movement.
  - b) Those who viewed Sikh interests entirely from communal angle. This group received greater importance and publicity in the province when Master

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<sup>579</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 200.

Tara Singh came into clash with all Indian Congress leadership over the issue of recruitment to the army and his subsequent resignation from the Congress and the arrest of prominent Congress leaders and Akali leaders in the wake of Quit India Movement.

- iii) The Central Akali Dal, organized under the leadership of Kharak Singh, which dominated Sikh politics since 1920's. It was opposed to Shiromani Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh and was very critical of Akali leaders, policy of hobnobbing with the League or the Unionist Party. Quite often it came close to the Congress because of common stand of both of the parties against the policies of Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh who dominated the Akali Dal.
- iv) The Communist Sikhs who claimed their allegiance to communism. They also tried to acquire hold over the Sikh masses especially in rural areas after the withdrawal of the ban on the Communist Party of India in July 1942 on account of their support to the British and pro War propaganda after the German invasion of Russia. They tried to win over the Akalis by supporting their demand for



self determination. But their pro Muslim League policy, their commitment to non-religious ideology and their attempts to capture the rural base of the Akalis stood in the way of any understanding between them and the Akalis. The Communists began their elections campaign with the slogan "*Freedom for all; food for all and jobs for all*".<sup>580</sup> The party, which was to fight the ensuing elections independently, considered the elections to be of great importance from the point of view of testing their political strength in the province.<sup>581</sup> The party manifesto included freedom to all people and freedom to all parts of India; abolition of landlordism; nationalization of land; redistribution of land to make the economic holdings of the poor peasants into consolidated economic holdings and to make large scale co operative farming possible nationalisation of all key industries; large scale expenditure on social service; and guaranteed living wages to all workers.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> P. C. Joshi, *A Free Happy India: Election Policy of Indian Communists*, Bombay, 1945, p. 17.

<sup>581</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, p. 314.

<sup>582</sup> For full detail see, P.C. Joshi, *A Free Happy India: Election Policy of Indian Communists*, pp. 4-17.

v) The loyalists or the Sikh aristocrats, who, though small in number, were quite influential in the community because of their superior social, economic and political stature in the province. They had received powers from the Government because of their support to its policies. They acquired greater political importance, during this period because of Akali break with the Congress and their (Akali's) support to the war efforts. This alignment between the two groups over the issue of war created confusion and ambivalence in Akali politics since the Akalis had acquired hold over their community by identifying themselves by anti imperialist forces.<sup>583</sup>

By the time Congress was also emerging as the most powerful party among the Hindus of the province. It had vanquished its rival Hindus Sabha in the Punjab. The Santanist Hindus and the President of Arya Padeshak Pratinidhi Sabha offered full support to the Congress.<sup>584</sup> The dominant notes of the Congress election propaganda in the Punjab were the demand for the release of the Indian National Army prisoners and of political prisoners, and to

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<sup>583</sup> *Linlithgow Papers*, No. 41, Sept, 30, 1942; also see Home Political 18.4.1944, 18.6.1944, Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. II, pp. 463-464, Glancy to Linlithgow 26, July, 1942.

<sup>584</sup> *The Tribune*, Nov., 6, 1945; also see Home Political, 18.11.1945.

attack on the British Government.<sup>585</sup> During his second tour of the province in November, 1945, Nehru exhorted the Punjab Congress Workers to permeate into the village where the real India lived and enlighten the people against the nefarious Pakistan demand of the Muslim League.<sup>586</sup>

The important points of the Congress election manifesto for the Provincial Assemblies were : removal of political, social and economic exploitation of the weaker sections of the society through planned development of agriculture and industry; establishment of World Federation of free nations: removal of unemployment, poverty and rural indebtedness; proper integration and balance between rural and urban economy; protection of the culture, language and script of the minorities; protection of the interests of industrial workers; and adequate arrangements for the education of the poor masses.<sup>587</sup> At the end of the manifesto the Congress, therefore, appealed to the voters all over the country to support the Congress candidates in every way at the forthcoming elections, and

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<sup>585</sup> Naresh Inder Singh, *Indian National Congress in the Punjab, 1937-47*(unpublished M.Phil, Dissertation) Punjabi University, Patiala, 1986, pp. 60-61.

<sup>586</sup> *The Tribune*, November 19-21, 1945.

<sup>587</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, Madras, 27 October, 1945, For Full details of the Congress Election manifesto, see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1945, pp. 107-110.

to stand by the Congress at this critical juncture, which was pregnant with future possibilities.<sup>588</sup>

However there was no certainty about the stance of Akalis. As already noted the release of the Congress Sikh leaders had strengthened the ranks of the Congress. Master Tara Singh was taking a middle course as he had already done during Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact; he wanted to avoid a situation which would force pro- Congress among the Sikh to leave Dal.<sup>589</sup> Baldev Singh, who had already occupied a prominent place in the Punjab Politics, during election campaign, started appeals against League. He asked Sikhs ... *not to trust the Muslim League's word as their leader Mr. Jinnah could not tolerate the idea of being driven by a Sikh driver.*<sup>590</sup>

However, all the factions agreed to patch up their differences on the issue of 'Pakistan' as demanded by the Muslim communities.<sup>591</sup> The anti Pakistan feeling of the Sikh leaders can be well judged from the Punjab Governor's letter to Lord Wavell: "If Pakistan becomes an imminent reality, we shall be heading straight for bloodshed on a wide scale; non-Muslims, especially Sikhs are

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<sup>588</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1945, p. 110.

<sup>589</sup> *Home Political Department.*, 18.9.1945.

<sup>590</sup> *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

<sup>591</sup> Gur Rattanpal Singh, *The Illustrated History of the Sikhs*, Chandigarh, 1979, pp. 84-87.

not bluffing, they will not submit peacefully to a Government that is labeled Mohammadan Raj.

## **FORMATION OF THE PANTHIC PARTY AND THE ELECTIONS-**

### **1946**

Meanwhile, the Sikhs who were not in the Congress felt the need of a political party separate from the Akalis Dal which in its origin was a religious body. A Panthic Pratinidhi Board representing all Sikh parties was elected. The Panthic parties carried the Sikh electorates to it. The elected found a Panthic party in the Punjab Assembly. Baldev Singh was elected its leader while Ujjal Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh were elected as Deputy Leader.

The Pratinidhi Board amplified the demand of 'Sikh State' that was to include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their shrines with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property. If the argument of the Muslim League was that Muslims had ruled over India, the argument of the Akalis was that the Sikhs had ousted the Mughals and established their own rule. In fact by creating a 'Sikh State' the British would only return to the Sikhs what they had directly got in trust from them. The idea that Sikhs were a 'nation' and therefore, they were entitled to a

sovereign state ,was also put forth by a few Sikh intellectuals, in March and April 1946, notably by Sadhu Swarup Singh in his pamphlet *'The Sikhs demand their Homeland'* and by Gurbachan Singh and Lal Singh Gyani in their idea of the *'Sikh State'*.<sup>592</sup> The Sikhs demanded complete independence for Hindus as well as Muslims but they also wanted that no other community or class should remain subject merely for reason that its population is comparatively less. Every individual should enjoy full freedom. The Akalis Dal wished that the Central Akali Dal, the representative organization of Nationalist Sikhs, who stood for complete independence.

The Sikhs demand for a separate state had been officially blessed on March 9, 1946 by the SGPC. The resolution was supported by several sections of Sikh community and was passed unanimously.<sup>593</sup> Therefore, the Panthic party was formed just before the 1946 elections consisting of all those elements who opposed the Congress for political reasons. Its candidates opposed the Congress in Sikh constituencies.<sup>594</sup>

The All India Akali Conference held at Gujranwala in September 1945 had rejected the Wavell plan because it was based

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<sup>592</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis -a Short History*, p. 101.

<sup>593</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register 1945*, Vol. I, 1946, p. 203.

<sup>594</sup> N.V. Raj Kumar, *Indian Political Parties*, New Delhi, 1948, p. 127.

on the discredited Cripps proposals, but decided to fight the elections because the formation of the Constituent Assembly depended upon the results.

On the other hand, in an interview with Lord Wavell on 5th July, 1946 Jinnah went off into lengthy allegations against the Punjab Government using their officials for intimidating and manipulating voters, and making use of land grants and War-Front funds in their election campaign. The provincial League also passed a resolution demanding the dismissal of the ministry and the liquidation of bureaucratic machinery.<sup>595</sup>

During the election campaign Baldev Singh and Ujjal Singh were attuned in appealing the Sikhs" not to trust the Muslim League's word: as their leader Mr. Jinnah could not even tolerate the idea of being driven by a Sikh driver." Baldev Singh further said, "Let me make it absolutely clear that we wish to live in Punjab, our homeland and not as a sub national group".<sup>596</sup> The appeals were made to the Sikhs many a times, "*Any vote cast for communist would be a vote for Pakistan and Muslim League. Sikhs should have determined groups of members in Punjab Assembly united by common purpose and ideology so that they could*

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<sup>595</sup> Anita Inder Singh, *The Origin of the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 129.

<sup>596</sup> *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

*effectively serve both the country and community.*<sup>597</sup> Meanwhile the Sikhs and Congress were coming on terms. There was a general desire in all quarters that conflict was to be avoided as far as possible.

The Congress fought the elections on the basis of independence and of an undivided India. The election campaign in the Punjab was launched by the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru during the last week of August, 1945. He delivered speeches at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Amritsar, Muree and Tehri Kalan (in modern Haryana).<sup>598</sup> The public response was so enormous about his two meetings, held in Lahore on the 25th and 26th August 1945, Nehru himself observed that those were the biggest public gatherings ever addressed by him. In his addresses, he appealed to the Punjabis to harness their unbound enthusiasm and energy for the freedom of the country. While criticising the factionalism in the Provincial Congress leaders, he asked them to sink their personal differences keeping in mind the importance of the elections.<sup>599</sup>

However, as far as the electoral alliance with the Akalis was concerned, the Congress was divided on the issue. While Nehru and Azad frequently expressed their opinion against any

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<sup>597</sup> *The Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1945.

<sup>598</sup> *The Tribune*, August 23-28, 1945.

<sup>599</sup> *The Tribune*, August 23-28, 1945



compromise with the Akalis, Sardar Patel and Dr. Gopi Chand pleaded strongly for an alliance with them. Patel also advocated the necessity of concluding a triple alliance with the Akalis and the Unionists in order to stem the ever rising tide of the Muslim League. Both he and Sardar Baldev Singh made energetic endeavour for such an alliance. An agreement was almost insight between the two. A certain number of seats were allotted to Congress and the Akalis respectively and on certain other a friendly contest was agreed upon with a view of giving the electorate choice to give its decisions. Unfortunately the negotiations failed down. The main cause of the break down of the electoral negotiations was that the Akalis were claiming to be the sole representatives of the Sikhs and had stated their claim to all Sikh seats, but it was unacceptable to the Congress, as a result the Congress and the Akalis stood poles apart.<sup>600</sup>

Baldev Singh was grieved over the turn of events. He said, *"Let me make it clear that the Sikhs do not want conflict with the Congress. The attitude of AICC leader as a matter of fact was more heartening to the Sikhs throughout the province."*<sup>601</sup> The chief concern of the Sikhs was not to tolerate the representative

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<sup>600</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 113.

<sup>601</sup> *The Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1945.

character of anyone regarding the Sikh seats unless "they were satisfied that the Sikh interests could be protected with the same zeal as the larger national interests."<sup>602</sup>

When Unionists were losing their charm and League influence increased, the Sikhs changed their domains. There was a shift in the political scenario. Sir Joginder Singh who was elected on Khalsa National Board ticket in 1935, for the elections in 1946 he was given Panthic ticket of Sheikhpura (Gujranwala) Sardar. B. Ujjal Singh, who was the Secretary of Khalsa National Party and held the seat of South West Punjab for nine years, in the elections of 1946 was fighting on Panthic seat from the Urban Western towns and was opposed by a strong Congress candidate Gopal Singh Quami.<sup>603</sup> Ambala North was left to Baldev Singh. The grudges between the Akalis and the Congress increased. The Akalis tried to disturb the Congress meeting. Several allegations were made on Baldev Singh by Congress leaders' viz. Amar Singh and Kharak Singh. In spite of all odds, Baldev Singh won with 8236 votes as a Panthic candidate against the Congress candidate Sardar Gurbachan Singh who got 7237 votes.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> *The Tribune*, Feb. 22, 1946.

<sup>603</sup> *The Tribune*, June 17 and 23, 1946; V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 29.

<sup>604</sup> *The Tribune*, Feb. 22, 1946.

The election results showed significant shifts in the party affiliations and position since 1937.<sup>605</sup> To the utmost surprise of the Congress, National Muslims and the Unionist Party, the Muslim League emerged as the largest single party with 73 members out of the total of 175 seats constituting 41.72%. Out of 86 Muhammadan reserved constituencies, it secured 73 seats, including all the 9 urban 62 rural and 2 women Muhammadan seats, forming 84.8% as against 2.2% in 1937.<sup>606</sup> The party position in the assembly was as follows, the massive victory for the League strengthened the hands of Jinnah. He had campaigned to secure a mandate for Pakistan, and in this he was successful.<sup>607</sup>

The performance of the Unionist Party was an unpleasant surprise to all except the League. Fifty seven Unionist Muslims were unseated. The Ahrars and the Nationalist Muslims drew a blank. However, the Congress made a notable gain. It had 18 members when it first entered the Assembly in 1937. Now it won 51 seats which included 34 casts Hindus, 6 Harijans, 10 Sikhs and

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<sup>605</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Bombay, 1957, p. 230; also see Satya M. Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, Delhi, 1986, p. 60.

<sup>606</sup> Reform Office, File No. 944/4/45-H..

<sup>607</sup> S.N. Sen, *History of the Freedom Movement of India, 1857-1947*, New Delhi, 1989, p 133.

one Muslim which included 37 general seats, 28 rural, 8 urban and 1 women seat, constituting 86.04%.<sup>608</sup>

The Unionist Party's notable defeats were those of the Finance Minister Sir Manohar Lal, the Revenue Minister Ch. Tika Ram and the Ahrar leader, Maulvi Mazhar Ali Azhar. Among the prominent successful candidates included the Nawab of Mamdot (Muslim League); Begum Shah Nawaz (Muslim League), Sir Muzaffar Ali Qizilbash (Unionist); Raja Ghazanfar Ali (Muslim League); Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan (Muslim League); Mian Mumtaz Mohd. Daultana (Muslim League); Malik Barkat Ali (Muslim League); Sir Allah Bakshsh Tiwana (Unionist); Sir Feroze Khan Noon (Muslim League); Sir Jamal Khan Leghari (Unionist); Major Ashiq Hussain (Unionist); the Hon'ble Sardar Baldev Singh (Panthic Akali) and Sardar Ujjal Singh (Panthic Akali) and Sir Joginder Singh (Panthic Akali). Hon'ble Malik Khizr Hayat Khan had the unique distinction of being returned from three constituencies one Muhammadan constituency and two Landholders' constituencies.<sup>609</sup>

## **FORMATION OF CONGRESS-UNIONIST-AKALI COALITION MINISTRY-1946**

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<sup>608</sup> K.G. Yadav, *Elections in Punjab 1920-47*, Tokyo, 1981, pp. 106-121.

<sup>609</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Vol. VI*, p. 1231.

Immediately after declaration of results, negotiations commenced for the formation of a Coalition Government as no party had secured absolute majority.<sup>610</sup> The Muslim League was short by at least ten seats to form a ministry on its own and could have formed a stable ministry only by coming to an understanding with at least one of the three parties - The Unionist, the Congress or the Panthic Party.<sup>611</sup> The League initiated negotiations with the Congress and the Akalis simultaneously. The Akalis were divided on the issue as Giani Kartar Singh negotiated with the Nawab of Mamdot while Baldev Singh held talks with Maulana Azad, Congress President and Bhim Sen Sachar, leader of the Congress party in the legislature.<sup>612</sup> The Congress-League alliance could not be possible because of the insistence of the Congress to the following three conditions:<sup>613</sup>

- i) It should have freedom to nominate ministers from any community.
- ii) Extra provincial subjects like Pakistan should not be brought before the Assembly.

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<sup>610</sup> S. L. Malhotra, *Gandhi, Punjab and Partition*, p. 127.

<sup>611</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 87.

<sup>612</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present.*, p. 114.

<sup>613</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 252.

iii) The Congress cum Akali party should be allowed to nominate half of the strength of the Ministry. However according to Khizr the talks broke down because the Congress leaders moved the idea of an all parties conditions indulging the Unionist Party which was not acceptable to League.<sup>614</sup>

Sardar Patel and Sardar Baldev Singh had free and frank discussions regarding 'settlement of Akali-Congress dispute during election.<sup>615</sup> Official and unofficial efforts continued. Seth Sudarshan and Mr. Gilani intermediated between the Congress and the Akalis. They prepared a proposal intending to have a better understanding between the Congress and Unionist Party. The Tribune wrote "There is prevailing much greater optimism today regarding the possibilities of Congress-Akali- Unionist Coalition being formed. It is most likely that the stage finally in connection with it would be reaching by tomorrow evening.

The things were not easy as Baldev Singh himself, till 5th March was not sure of final decision. But he made it quite clear in an interview, *"we have made... that unless a solution of Pakistan problem is found, there does not seem any possibilities of our*

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<sup>614</sup> *The Tribune*, March 17, 1946.

<sup>615</sup> V. Shanker, *Selected Correspondence of Sardar Patel (1945-50)*, Vol. 4/ No.

*cooperation with Muslim League which has Pakistan as its goal.*<sup>616</sup> Immediately after 6th March, it became almost certain of a triangular alliance Congress –Akali- Unionist. On 11th March 1946, a Coalition ministry of Congress- Akali and the Unionist was founded under the leadership of Malik Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana, and it was officially announced by the Congress President Maulana Azad.<sup>617</sup> It had 1 Akali, 2 Congress and 2 Unionist Ministers. Sir Bertrand Glancy, the Governor of Punjab invited Sir Khizr Hayat Khan, Bhim Sen Sachar, Baldev Singh and Nawab Muzzaffar Ali Khan, leaders of three parties respectively. Negotiations carried out and resulted into a Coalition ministry.

The four appointments were out of the six ministers, who were to be appointed under the arrangements arrived at between the three parties which had joined the Coalition other two appointments were to be made from representatives of the Jat Hindus of Ambala Division and one Muslim.<sup>618</sup> About portfolios it was decided that Premier was to continue to be in charge of Law and Order, Bhim Sen Sachar was given the Finance and Jails, Baldev Singh was already having the portfolio of Development ever since his appointment as a minister, under the Sikandar - Baldev

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<sup>616</sup> *The Tribune*, March 8, 1946.

<sup>617</sup> *The Tribune*, March 12, 1946.

<sup>618</sup> *The Tribune*, March 2, 1946.

Singh Pact, was to continue holding that portfolio though Baldev Singh liked to had Industries and Forest Department, the department, was held by late Sir Chhottu Ram, with whom Baldev Singh had friendly relations.

After negotiations, Mohd. Ebrahim Barque and Niwab Sir Muzaffar Ali Qizibash, both of Unionist Party, were given the portfolio of Education and Revenue respectively. The portfolios of Development, Finance and Public Works were entrusted to Sardar Baldev Singh (Panthic Akali), Lala Bhim Sen Sachar (Congress) and Chaudhri Lahri Singh (Congress) respectively.<sup>619</sup>

However, the formation of new ministry could not make happy the Congress and the Akalis in general but League in particular. The Unionist party remained in power under the Provincial Autonomy for a little over nine years and after joining coalition with the Congress and the Akali, they became full partners in the Government of the province.<sup>620</sup> In the formula coalition it was decided that the contingent group would retain their individual entity outside the Legislative Assembly. Besides it, each group was entitled to have complete freedom of opinion in

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<sup>619</sup> N. Mansergh Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. VIII, p. 373; also IAR Vol. I, 1946, pp. 5 and 42, also selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol. XV, New Delhi, 1982, p. 23 fn.

<sup>620</sup> *The Tribune*, March 12, 1946.



regard to the future constitution of India. The coalition was formed primarily to administer the province on the basis of an agreed economic programme, the scope of which did not extend beyond the provincial sphere.<sup>621</sup>

Patel and Azad succeeded in forming a Coalition ministry in the province but this step landed Azad in a soup in the All India Congress leaders especially Nehru against the Unionist Party. According to Azad, Nehru opposed the alliance of the Congress in the Punjab with the Unionist Party on the ground that it had been achieved by sacrificing certain principles that the Congress had already upheld.

### **COALITION MINISTRY 1946 AND SIKH POLITICS**

With the election results out, there arose the question of the formation of Government in the Punjab. The Muslim League emerged as the largest single party in the new Punjab Assembly, naturally expected that it would be invited to form the ministry. But the Governor did not invite it because it was still far from having an absolute majority in a House of 175 and was unable to install a Government of its own.<sup>622</sup> It needed the support of 10 more members to obtain a majority in the legislature. Therefore, it was

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<sup>621</sup> *Home Political* wide file no.51/2/46 Subject wise.

<sup>622</sup> S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 282.

not possible for the League to form a ministry unless it could secure support from another party or parties.<sup>623</sup> The position was really difficult in the Punjab because no political party had a clear majority in the new legislature.<sup>624</sup>

Among the Sikhs, Congress also improved its position substantially. Out of the total 32 Sikh seats, it won 10 which included 8 rural, 1 urban and 1 women Sikh seats and secured 31.25% of the total. Besides, it bagged 1 each in the special constituencies of Commerce and Industries, Landholders, Labour and University.<sup>625</sup> There was a keen contest between the Congress Sikhs and Panthic (Akali) Sikhs. The former bagged 10 seats for the Congress as stated earlier and the latter secured 20 seats which included 1 urban and 19 rural Sikh seats. The remaining 2 seats of the total 32 Sikh seats were won by independent candidates. In this way, the Panthic (Akali) Sikhs secured 65.25% seats of the total 29 rural Sikh seats.<sup>626</sup> This success was mainly due to the fear entertained by Sikhs that the Congress policy of appeasement of the Muslim League necessarily meant the sacrifice of Sikh interests in the Punjab. Sir Joginder Singh, Baldev Singh and

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<sup>623</sup> A.S. Narang, *Storm over the Sutlej: The Akali Politics*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 67; also see, N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, VI, pp. 1077-78.

<sup>624</sup> V.V. Nagarkar, *Genesis of Pakistan*, p. 137.

<sup>625</sup> Imran Ali, *Punjab Politics in the Decade Before Partition*, p.48.

<sup>626</sup> Reform Office File No. 94/4/45-46.

Sardar Ujjal Singh once again were successful under the banner of Panthic party. The communists were almost routed as Teja Singh Swatantra and Sohan Singh Josh were unseated. So was the case of Hindu Mahasabha. A total of 227 candidates forfeited their security deposits in all constituencies.<sup>627</sup>

For some time, it seemed that the Governor would temporarily take over the administration of the province into his hands under the section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935. But this did not happen because the negotiations amongst the various political parties for making a Coalition Government took place at a hectic pace between the 25th February and the 6th of March 1946.<sup>628</sup> An Inter-communal coalition was inevitable, and the four possibilities were a Congress-League, an Akali-Congress-Unionist, a League-Akali Coalition, and a League-Congress-Akali Coalition.<sup>629</sup>

So for as Sikh politics is concerned, it is on 7 March 1946, when Baldev Singh was quite optimistic of a Congress-Akali-Unionist Coalition, there was utter confusion with in the Akali Party. It was particularly among the 32 members of the Punjab Assembly. Ten of them under the leadership of Kairon were for complete transfer of power in the Centre to the Congress

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<sup>627</sup> *Reform Office File No. 94/4/45-46.*

<sup>628</sup> *The Tribune, Lahore, 25 February to 8 March, 1946.*

<sup>629</sup> *Imran Ali, Panjab Politics in the Decade Before Partition, p. 48.*

independently of whether the leaders of the Congress entered into an understanding with the All India Muslim League or not, but not so the Panthic leadership. Those under the leadership of Ujjal Singh were primarily interested in continuing full support to Coalition ministry. They were not concerned with the all India moves of the Congress or the League; but not so the second section of the Panthic members who were now described as the Majhail group. The latter were for backing the Coalition and not because it meant strengthening Baldev Singh as a minister but also because it meant that the Panth would continue to have the support of the Congress in opposing Muslim League's aggressiveness in the Punjab against the Sikhs after the formation of the latest ministry headed by Khizr Hayat Khan.<sup>630</sup> It was Baldev Singh who induced Khizr to head the Coalition ministry.

Khizr was branded as a 'traitor' and 'Malik Sir Gaddhar Hayat Khan'.<sup>631</sup> The Muslim League became very sore and concentrated its energies towards overthrowing the Coalition ministry of Khizar Hayat Khan.<sup>632</sup> Jinnah quickly on 7 March, 1946 organized a Muslim mass movement against the Coalition Government in order

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<sup>630</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p.89.

<sup>631</sup> Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates. Vol. XXV, Lahore, 1946, pp. 43-44.

<sup>632</sup> S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi*, p. 282.

to prevent his enemies from consolidating their power.<sup>633</sup> 9th March was celebrated as 'Traitor's Day.'<sup>634</sup>

The first trial of strength between the Muslim League and the Coalition Government led by Khizr took place on the 21st March 1946, over the election of the Speaker of the House. In this tug-of-war, Coalition candidates Diwan Bahadur S.P. Singh defeated Barkat Ali, the nominee of the League, by 91 votes to 79.<sup>635</sup> But the formation of the non-League Coalition Ministry raised communal tension in the province to the highest pitch. As a result of the indignation and frustration felt in the League circles for having deprived of political power in the province in spite of their spectacular performance at the hustings. There was wild talk for a direct action by the League. The situation worsened to such an extent that it appeared as if the province was on the brink of a civil war.<sup>636</sup>

### **CABINET MISSION REPORT VS THE PUNJAB PANTHIC BOARD**

The Muslim League, after having carefully considered the statement issued by the Cabinet Mission and His Excellency the Viceroy on the 16 May, accepted the plan half-heartedly on 6th

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<sup>633</sup> Manmath Nath Das, *Partition and Independence of India*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 157.

<sup>634</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Legislative Struggle and the Freedom Struggle in the Punjab 1897-1945*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 318.

<sup>635</sup> *The Tribune*, March 22, 1946.

<sup>636</sup> *Home Political*, 18.4.1946, 18.5.1946.

June in the meeting of the Council of the All India Muslim League, while reiterating its demand for Pakistan.<sup>637</sup> The sense of injury and anxiety of the Sikhs found expression in a scathing speech in the Panthic Conference at Amritsar held on the 9th and 10th June, 1946. More than 800 Sikh representatives drawn from all over the Punjab, N.W.F.P., Delhi and the United Provinces participated in the Conference.<sup>638</sup>

The Board was against the scheme of Cabinet Mission as the position of Sikhs was entirely ignored in the Punjab while the arrangement made for the grouping of provinces made it possible for Muslims to secure all the advantages of Pakistan, without incurring the danger inherent in it.<sup>639</sup> Master Tara Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh wrote to Lord Pethick Lawrence on 25 July, 1946 to clear their position. Lord Lawrence in his reply said, "*The estimate of importance of your community would never depend upon the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad in view of anxieties you have expressed on the behalf of your community*".

Master Tara Singh announced- *Either we finish the Britishers in India or we shall be finished.* The proposals were found to be

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<sup>637</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1946, p. 60.

<sup>638</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1946, p. 202.

<sup>639</sup> *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh.*

wholly unacceptable.<sup>640</sup> Most pungent and eloquent critic of the Cabinet Mission report was Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, who said that their enemy was neither Jinnah nor the Muslims but the British who had badly let them down.<sup>641</sup> While the Akali leader, Master Tara Singh, in a brief speech, appealed to the Sikhs "to stand united in this grave hour for the Sikh Panth".

On a note by his private Secretary, Abell, Wavell replied, "*Yes, I suppose we made a mistake in not giving communal safeguards to Sikhs. I think we discussed it once but did not put in it for some reasons.*" However Abell warned that any attempt to modify the statement of 16 May, to conciliate the Sikhs at this state would create two major difficulties. Firstly, it would lead to an immediate clamor to modify it in other directions also. Secondly, the grant of communal safeguards within section B to the Sikhs would mean a certainty of a deadlock because they and the Hindus would not accept representations of 25 percent or less each in Punjab Legislature and if they insisted on more, the Muslims would be converted into a minority. Further he was doubtful about the power of the Mission to put out a statement that representation in

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<sup>640</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis - A Short History*, p. 103.

<sup>641</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p. 183.

Government services would presumably be on the basis of existing arrangements and not on population basis. This, in his view, had to be left to the new Government and the legislature. However, he wanted the mission to approach the Congress and the League for an assurance to relieve the anxieties of the Sikhs.<sup>642</sup>

Meanwhile Master Tara Singh and Baldev Singh sent letters to British Government of India which were considered at a meeting of Cabinet delegation and Governor General on 31 May, 1946.<sup>643</sup> The meeting decided that it was not practicable to alter the 'Delegation Statement' but the matter might be discussed with the two major parties to see whether they would agree to the suggestion made to them. The Mission also sought the advice of Major Short of 5/11 Sikhs of the Indian Army and the personal assistant to Cripps during the Cabinet Mission. On this question, he not only rejected the demand for special favours to the Sikhs but wanted the Government to check the present mood of the Sikhs at once with conciliation, but also with a finishing touch of sharp fairness as it would irritate Jinnah and thereby make it most difficult, if not possible for the British to stabilize Muslim-Sikh

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<sup>642</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, pp. 724-25; also *Home Department Political*, 18/5/1946.

<sup>643</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, Document 415, pp.745-46.



relation in Group B. He did not agree with the opinion of the Punjab Government that the agitation of the Sikhs would create a dangerous situation in the Punjab as in his view the Sikhs in the Armed forces was not touched by this agitations.<sup>644</sup>

On the other hand at the advice of Menon, the Cabinet rescheduled a meeting with Master Tara Singh and Baldev Singh to remove the fears of their community. On 6 June 1946, the Viceroy and the delegation assured the Sikh leaders that it was not possible for any of the parties in India to overlook an important minority like the Sikhs, warned them that any agitation by their community at this time would be harmful to them as they would lose the sympathy of the British Government besides alienating the Muslims. They rejected their demand that no communal issues affecting their community be decided in the Union Constituent Assembly without a majority of Sikhs voting in its favour on the round that the Mission would have to extend the same right to other communities too.<sup>645</sup> Even Billy Short asked Master Tara Singh to leave the case of the Sikhs to the good sense of the Cabinet Mission when Tara Singh went to present his case to the

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<sup>644</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 831-22.

<sup>645</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, p. 827.

Mission.<sup>646</sup> The diplomatic attitude of British Government made Sikhs agitating.

On 6 June 1946, Baldev Singh met the Governor of the Punjab. After his meeting with the Governor, he wrote to the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Clement Attlee on 7 July, 1946, seeking his personal attention for remedying the wrongs that had been done to the Sikhs by the Cabinet Mission. He listed these wrong in detail. The most important of them was the grouping system in sections proposed in the 16 May statement. Baldev Singh complained that the group system placed the Punjab in Group B and that had subjected the Sikhs to what must in the end amount to a perpetual Muslim communal rule, since the League had made it clear that it had accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals with the object of establishing Pakistan.<sup>647</sup> On the other hand, he complained that no provision had been made for the resolving of major communal issues in the Constituent Assembly for the Hindus and the Muslims, but the Sikhs who were one of three major communities of India, had been ignored. Baldev Singh urged

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<sup>646</sup> Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikhs People*, New Delhi, p. 701.

<sup>647</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII, Document 74, pp. 116-17.

that the same provision, in fairness, be extended to the Sikh community as well in Group B.<sup>648</sup>

Attlee made a reply to Baldev Singh in which he mentioned that Congress had won all except 9 of general seats and the Muslim League the 5 seats of the Muslim constituencies.<sup>649</sup> But no elections to the four Sikh seats, all located in Section B took place because no Sikh had contested the four seats allotted to them in proposed Constituent Assembly. Attlee's letter did not receive a favourable consideration from the Punjab Panthic Board.

In a meeting on 11 July, 1946, the Panthic Board decided once again to boycott the elections to the Constituent Assembly in keeping with its decision to reject the Cabinet Mission Plan. It decided that in case something positive not being done in the immediate future to meet the Sikh demands, the Sikhs would wade through a sea flood to prevent functioning of the section B proposed to be set up in terms of the 16 June statement of the Cabinet Mission.<sup>650</sup> Not knowing exactly what to do the Sikh leaders also entered upon negotiations with the League and the Congress leaders for the protection of their political interests.

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<sup>648</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII, Document 74, pp. 116-17.

<sup>649</sup> Saras field, *Betrayal of Sikhs*, 1946, p. 132.

<sup>650</sup> *The Tribune*, July 12, 1946.

In the meeting, the Viceroy and the delegation while assuring the Sikh leaders said that it was not possible for any one of parties in India to overlook an important minority like the Sikhs and warned them that any agitation by their community at this time would be harmful to them as they would lose the sympathy of British Government besides alienating the Muslims. They rejected their demand that no communal issue affecting their community be decided in its favour on the ground that the Mission would have to extend the same right to other communities too.<sup>651</sup>

While on the contrary, rejecting the plan of Interim Government, the Congress Working Committee decided on the 25th June to join the proposed Constituent Assembly with a view to framing the Constitution of free India.<sup>652</sup> The Cabinet Mission left for England on the 29th June because both the main parties - the Congress and the Muslim had agreed to accept the long term plan.<sup>653</sup> On 6th August 1946, Wavell invited Nehru to help him form the national (Interim) Government.<sup>654</sup> On 9th August, 1946, the Congress Working Committee reconsidered the decision and expressed their willingness to take part in Constituent Assembly.

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<sup>651</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII, p. 827.

<sup>652</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, p. 64; also see V.P. Menon, op. cit., pp. 263-, 269-270.

<sup>653</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. II, 1946, p. 66.

<sup>654</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 262; See also N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, pp. 177-180.

Meanwhile displeased Jinnah passed a resolution on the 29th June, 1946 at Bombay withdrawing its acceptance to the Cabinet Mission plan and calling upon the Muslims to observe the "Direct Action Day" on the 16th August to achieve its goal of Pakistan.<sup>655</sup>

The Congress Working Committee also assured the Punjab Panthic Board that the Congress will give them all possible support in removing their legitimate grievances and in securing adequate safeguard for their just interests in the Punjab.<sup>656</sup> After assurance from the Congress Working Committee the Board revised its decision on 14th August 1946.<sup>657</sup> The Board also advised the Sikhs to select their representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Hence a committee of three members was elected to the Constituent Assembly i.e. Giani Kartar Singh, Advocate Harnam Singh and S. Ujjal Singh by the members of the Punjab Council.<sup>658</sup>

On 24th August Nehru announced 14 names of the National Government and took over as the head of the Government on 2nd September 1946. It is interesting to note that in the prevailing environment when there was no love between the Akalis and the Congress, why Baldev Singh's name was included in Interim

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<sup>655</sup> B.W. Pandey (ed), *The Indian Nationalist Movement 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1979, p. 156.

<sup>656</sup> *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh.*

<sup>657</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis -a Short History.*

<sup>658</sup> *Oral Interview Ujjal Singh.*

Government? Baldev Singh had seen in the activities of the Congress and League leading to a new situation, a chance of advancing not only the cause of the Sikhs but also his own as a person. Already while meeting the Governor General on 28 June, 1946 he spoke to Wavell the excited state of affairs among the Sikhs despite his endeavoring to press a moderate view on them. He told the Governor General that he had been found himself in a minority of one. Baldev Singh told the Governor General that he had been carrying on negotiations with the Congress for guaranteeing the Sikhs the status provided in section B of the provinces in which the Cabinet Mission had placed Punjab in its statement of 16 May and that the Congress would be writing to the Governor General to that effect quite soon.

Replying a question of Governor General regarding guarantees to the Sikhs, he made a clarity, in Section B by the Congress could not be used by him or any other Sikh leader for getting some offer from the Muslim League, Baldev Singh said, *"Jinnah's price is too high for the Sikhs to pay."* He said that the price which Jinnah wanted his community to pay was the support of the Sikhs towards weakening the Centre by making it dependent on the

*contribution from the groups and depriving it of any power of taxation".*<sup>659</sup>

Power struggle among the Akalis added to the confusion. At the time of the election of the office bearers of the SGPC or of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the contestants made exaggerated claim of the Sikh rights and interests in order to catch votes. The Governor of the Punjab observed in a letter to Viceroy Lord Wavell that it was difficult to know the mind of the Sikh community as they were riddled with factions and feuds and all sections became truculent because of Gurudwaras elections. <sup>660</sup> Same was the case of the Sikhs aristocrats. They were acting in a similar manner at the time of political moves for their benefits.

The time of transfer of power made them to make the best. Hence Baldev Singh appeared to have been keen to join the Interim Government after Wavell told him that this name was being negotiated Nehru who was to consider it. As already mentioned that after the crucial meeting of the Punjab Panthic Board on 9th and 10th June it was decided "the Interim Panthic Board cannot advise any Sikh to serve in the interim Government, on the present basis."

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<sup>659</sup> R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-40*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 155-156.  
<sup>660</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII, p. 180.

<sup>661</sup> Baldev Singh was made to reject Wavell's suggestion on 28th June. He could not pacify himself with the that time terms. He started hidden moves after this meeting with Governor General to persuade the Sikh leader to amend their decision on 16 May statement. He met Governor of the Punjab on 4th June 1946 and handed over two letter dated 2nd and 3rd July 1946. The first letter dated 2 July recommended for consideration a scheme propounded in an article Published on the Hindustan Times, New Delhi for amalgamation of Punjab. Sikh states in a single group. The proposed scheme included that a new group to be formed comprising Patiala, Nabha Jind, Malerkotla (with Muslim ruler) and Faridkot. He excluded Kapurthala state as it was separated from new group by British territories.

Baldev Singh's suggestion carried the enlargement of the group by including Kapurthala and Kalsia but the difficulty lay in the British territory lying between the States proposed to be amalgamated. <sup>662</sup> He further suggested that the British territory be so exchanged with some territories in the Kalsia state as to bring

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<sup>661</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I pp. 205-206.

<sup>662</sup> E. Jenkins to Masrshal Viscount Wavell, 4 July 1946, N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII Document 5, pp. 5-11.



Moga tehsil of Ferozepur in the group constituted by the Princely States.<sup>663</sup>

The second letter dated 3 July, 1946 addressed to Congress put forth alternative suggestions in any review in the parliament of the work of the Cabinet delegation it should be made clear that the Sikhs would be given in section B the same safeguards as had been given to the Muslims in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>664</sup> The Governor did not discuss the second letter with Baldev Singh. The Governor General got circulated the letter among the members of the delegation. He even warned the Government that if Sikhs were singled out for more favours, they would become the object of the hatred of both the major political parties who would be constantly tempted to pull them down.<sup>665</sup>

In the top secret reports Governor of the Punjab wrote that the Sikhs had been extremely uneasy since it became clear that the British decided to transfer power to Indian hands they threatened a militant agitation during the summer of 1946, on the ground that they had been unfairly treated by the Cabinet Mission and said that they were entitled in Section 'B' of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>666</sup> The report further said that the Sikhs had decided their representatives elected and they were placated by the election

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<sup>663</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VIII Document 5, pp. 5-11.

<sup>664</sup> A.C. Kapur, *Panjab Census*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 111.

<sup>665</sup> N. Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. VII, pp.821-22.

<sup>666</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 37.

of Sardar Baldev Singh for the appointment of Defence Member.<sup>667</sup> Congress Working Committee policy of appeasement towards Sikhs was partially successful. As it can be seen that elections to the Constituent Assembly held in the month of July (without the Sikh members). But when on 2nd September the Interim Government took office and Baldev Singh joined the Interim Government and took over the portfolio of Defence,<sup>668</sup> who was the hitherto the leader of the Akali Legislative Party. His place was taken by Swaran Singh who entered into a pact with the leader of the Congress as Legislative Party, Bhim Sen Sacher<sup>669</sup>

The Sikh politics continued to be marked by ambivalence though the Sikh elite as a whole moved closer to the Congress on account of their realization has that they could neither arrive at any understanding with the League nor could they depend upon the British for the protection of their interest.<sup>670</sup> Sardar Baldev Singh had a smooth sailing as an important member of the Interim Government for a little more than a month till 26th October, 1946 with no Muslim League representatives to cause him any trouble Baldev Singh earned this smooth sailing of one month and thirteen day for not only bringing the Panthic Party and the Congress together but also for having strengthened earlier the hands of Khizr

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<sup>667</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 38.

<sup>668</sup> Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, p. 93.

<sup>669</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akali's -a Short History*, p. 103.

<sup>670</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi And the Punjab*, p. 155.

Hayat Khan, was the head of was Coalition Government, since it was formed on March 1946. He had contributed substantially to keep Khizr Ministry intact and face the onslaught of the Muslim League in the Punjab, the most important part of the Pakistan that the League demanded.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 123.

## CHAPTER 6

### WHITHER PUNJAB-VIOLENCE, PARTITION AND FREEDOM (1946-1947)

The political see-saw game between the Congress - Akali - Unionist and the League had deep effects on the communal relations in the province. The rejection of the Interim Government plan by the League and their decision to resort to Direct Action for the attainment of their goal intensified communal tension all over the country but especially in the Muslim majority areas as the Interim Government was formed without the League. The Working Committee of the League called upon the Muslim throughout India to observe 16 August as 'Direct Action Day' by holding meetings to explain the object of the resolution. Jinnah's outburst immediately caught by the provincial League leaders which created a grave communal situation at several places in the country. He said, "*We have taken a most historic decision. Never before in the whole life history of the Muslims did we do anything except by constitutional methods and by constitutional talks. We are today forced into this position by a move in which both the Congress and Britain have participated. We have been attacked on two fronts- the British and the Hindu front. Today we have said good bye to constitution and*

*constitutional methods.*<sup>672</sup> Recalling his experience of negotiations for transfer of power, he said, "... throughout the painful negotiations the two parties with whom we bargained held a pistol at us , one with power and machine guns behind it, and the other with non co-operation and the threat to launch Mass Civil Disobedience. This situation must be met. We also have a pistol."<sup>673</sup>

Consequently, in Bengal where the League ministry under the leadership of Suhrawardy was in power, the Direct Action Day resulted in Hindu/Muslim riot on an unprecedented scale. In Calcutta, a large number of lives were lost and a property worth millions was looted or burnt which could be prevented if the League ministry had taken precautionary measures.<sup>674</sup> The Provincial League becomes more intransigent. There was an increasing threat of Jihad. The defection of Daud Ghaznavi who until was its President, to Muslim League, eroded the faith of non - Muslims in the Nationalist Muslims. On the other hand, it raised the morale of the League leadership of the province who acclaimed his advent to the league as a good omen for the future intentions of Nationalist Muslims.<sup>675</sup> The League's move were calculated for an unprecedented holocaust that began in Calcutta. On 16 August

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<sup>672</sup> Pirzada, Syed Sharifuddin (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan*, New Delhi, 1982, Vol. II, p. 560.

<sup>673</sup> Pirzada, Syed Sharifuddin (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan*, p.560.

<sup>674</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and the Punjab*, p. 157.

<sup>675</sup> *Home Department Political*, 18.7.1946.

only took 5,000 lives, injuring 15,000 persons are rendering about 1,00,000 people homeless.<sup>676</sup> Circumstances became grave while the number of National Guards a para military body of the League multiplied by leaps and bounds. The provincial intelligence reports said that the number of National Guards rose to 22,000 and that of R.S.S. to 45,000 by the end of December, 1946.<sup>677</sup> The agitation caused a serious concern not only to Khizr but also to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State who felt that further escalation of the situation in the Punjab would create more complications in the all India politics. On 11th September, 1946 Jinnah offered to the Hindus the choice between Pakistan or Civil War. On 15<sup>th</sup> October the Muslim League decided to join the Interim Government, not on the basis of an understanding with the Congress but to form a rival bloc. The Muslim League's five representatives joined the Interim Government. It was not liked by either the Congress or the Unionist. Their anger was of course directed primarily against Wavell who had engineered the Muslim League's entry in the Interim Government.

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<sup>676</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis- a Short History*, p. 104.

<sup>677</sup> *Home Department Political*, 16.12.1946.

The circumstances suggested immediate exchange of population to avoid communal riots.<sup>678</sup> Administration broke down throughout the country. Lord Wavell failed to master the situation. Jinnah's slogan 'Pakistan or Civil War' gave impetus to Pakistan movement and it started in Punjab on 26th January 1947.<sup>679</sup> Trouble kept simmering in Punjab. The existence of a Coalition Government in the province, regarded by the League as the cornerstone of Pakistan, was an eye sore to it. During this phase the Sikhs and Hindus were coming closer with emotional slogan Roti - Bete ka Nata. They were considering the Muslims as foreign race. The Sikhs were perplexed and not having answer to many of their queries. They became much and more dependent on a few so called Sikh leaders for legal arguments.

Meanwhile, Sir Joginder Singh one of the senior most trio leaders died on 3rd December, 1946. The British Government always made statements in their private papers that the Sikhs could not make clear their views. Frustrations and the phase of confusion made them suspicious. When the proposals came up in Nov. 1946, the British Government supported the Muslims League's interpretation that the provinces must enter the groups

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<sup>678</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis- a Short History*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>679</sup> Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 71.

and do so on the basis of a simple majority vote. The Congress felt constrained to accept this interpretation. This angered the Akalis who were cooperating with the Congress at that time. Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh were furious because the Sikhs would now have to go into Muslim majority groups. Mangal Singh Gill remarked that the Congress had made another dangerous slip towards Pakistan. The worst fears of the Akalis had come true. The Sikh interests were going to be sacrificed at the alter of appeasement for the Muslim League.<sup>680</sup>

The League on the other hand was becoming a major problem for Khizr and its Coalition ministry. The League leaders were itching for a fight and were on the look out for an opportunity to make the functioning of the Coalition Government difficult through some extra constitutional action they had failed to force the fall of Khizr Government on the floor of the house. The agitation caused a serious concern not only to Khizr but also to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State who felt that further escalation of the situation into the Punjab would create more complications in the all India Politics. The later even gave credence to the suspicion that the action was deliberately designed to inflame Muslim feeling in order

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<sup>680</sup> J.S. Grewal, *The Akalis- a Short History*, p. 104.



to prevent the League from entering the Constituent Assembly.<sup>681</sup> The involvement of the All India League leaders and the members of the Interim Government, in the agitation against the Khizr Government, strengthen this impression. The inaugural meeting of the Constituent Assembly began on 9 December, 1946. By January 1947 political unrest was clearly visible in Punjab politics. As directed by Jinnah, none of the Muslim League members attended the inaugural meeting of the Assembly. Baldev Singh pointed out to Jawaharlal Nehru that the Akalis might withdraw from the Constituent Assembly.<sup>682</sup> The Governor and the Premier were under pressure from all sides to defuse the situation.<sup>683</sup> After the riot's news in Punjab, Khizr consulted the situation, with his colleagues. To pacify the League, Khizr withdrew the ban on both the organizations i.e. the Leagues and RSS on 28th January 1947 which was imposed by the Punjab Government on 25 January 1947, though ban on procession and meetings continued. It was only after the statement of Jinnah on 26 January 1947, 'to launch an agitation ostensibly for safeguarding civil liberties in Punjab,'

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<sup>681</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 573.

<sup>682</sup> J.S.Grewal, *The Akali's-a Short History*, p. 104.

<sup>683</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition*, p. 160.

but actually to force the Government to resign, sixteen League MLA's courted arrest.<sup>684</sup>

The agitation spread and became more and more violent. The lifting of ban was taken as League's victory and they demanded the resignation of Coalition ministry. Everyday processions were taken out; veiled Muslim women also took out processions daily in Lahore and raised the Secretariat. Shaukat was reported to have said, "Khizr ministry must be made to go no matter what cost to Muslim League. They would put out 15 million Muslims to break law." As a result the programme of Direct Action was taken up with greater zeal which led to communal and political disturbances all over the province.

The police which was preponderantly Muslim, remained a silent spectator. The League's venom was vented on Premier Khizr Hayat Khan and his Muslim colleagues in the Cabinet. Important League leaders including Nawab of Mamdot, Mumtaz Daultana and Iftikhar were arrested under ordinance. The police seized 1,000 hatches, swords, pistols and daggers.<sup>685</sup> All India League Working Committee passed a resolution in its meeting at Karachi on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1947 condemning the action of Khizr declaring the

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<sup>684</sup> *The Tribune*, January 26, 1947.

<sup>685</sup> Pyare Lal, *The Last Phase*, Vol. II, Ahmadabad, 1958, p. 9.

Muslim National Guards as an unlawful association.<sup>686</sup> The agitation now spread to different parts of the province.

The League leaders were vocal to make claims of non violent, disciplined, firm and dignified attitude in their protest against repression. They adopted the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. Hartals, unlawful processions, and meetings were the main programmes of the agitation. Processions were taken out in the main streets of the cities especially Lahore and Amritsar, led by volunteers offering themselves for arrest. After the middle of February 1947, the agitation took a more violent turn. There were several train holdups at Ludhiana, Gujranwala and other places. The Governor of the Punjab reported to the Secretary of State on 25 February 1947 that the celebration of marking completion of the month of agitation by the demonstrators of 24 February was to be accompanied by violence in several districts, especially, Amritsar where situation was controlled with great difficulty.<sup>687</sup>

On 26th February, the Panthic Assembly Party appealed the League to stop these unlawful activities which were bound to have serious repercussions if continued any further and asked the Punjab Government to be firm in dealings with the menace to the

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<sup>686</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.IX, p. 532.

<sup>687</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 814.

peace of the province." The Sikh leader S. Baldev Singh complained in a letter to the Viceroy that during demonstrations, the police and the administrations stood aside and things were allowed to drift to force and collapse of the ministry.<sup>688</sup> At times he had appealed the Viceroy to take steps to see that the Punjab Government was not embarrassed by the members of Interim Government.<sup>689</sup> So far as the Sikhs in particular concerned they never wanted a partition of the country as they were spreaded in the whole of India. Particularly, in the western districts of Punjab where they not only owned fertile canal lands developed with their hard labour but had also set up lucrative business in urban areas. Subsequently when Lord Mountbatten was sent to India after the return of Cabinet Mission to work out the partition of India, the Sikhs did not realize that the division of India was almost a settled fact and Lord Mountbatten was negotiating with the Congress and the Muslim League for a smooth settlement of Partition.<sup>690</sup>

It was after the announcement of Prime Minister of Great Britain, Clement Attlee on 20th February, 1947, to hand over power to Indians by June, 1948, the Western districts of the Punjab witnessed a scene of brutal violence, murdered and arson.

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<sup>688</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 914.

<sup>689</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, p. 627.

<sup>690</sup> *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh* (Who was then a member of Constituent Assembly)

This scenario resulted to make many Sikhs of rural area homeless. They had a refuge in East Punjab.<sup>691</sup> According to Sardar Ujjal Singh, who was then a member of the Constituent Assembly "*The Governor of Punjab admitted that Khizr was pushed towards the Muslim League as a result of the statement of 20th February by Attlee*".<sup>692</sup>

On 21 February, 1947 Baldev Singh told Wavell that in case League was to stick to its decision of continuing the Constituent Assembly even now and boycott after Attlee's declaration he would request the Congress, not to demand the removal of the Muslim League nominees from the Interim Government and to request the Congress to demand the division of the Punjab on the lines suggested and asked in its Memorandum to the Punjab Assembly sent to Cabinet Mission, ten months earlier on 5 April, 1946, which amounted to ask for carrying out of existing Punjab or an additional provincial unit in the United India of the future in such a way that all important Sikhs Gurudwaras and shrines may be

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<sup>691</sup> *Oral Interview of Sardar Ujjal Singh.*

<sup>692</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, p. 831.

included in it as also a substantial majority of Sikh population in the existing province of the Punjab.<sup>693</sup>

While the Congress and a few Sikh leaders including Sardar Baldev Singh welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement, on the other hand was criticized by the Panthic Party in Punjab. The question of formation of Sikh state became the central point for Panthic Sikhs during negotiations. Sikhs were worried about their share and Unionist Khizr Hayat Khan felt thoroughly unnerved,<sup>694</sup> for he could no longer depend upon the support of the British for carrying on fight against the League which had established its hold over Muslims of the province.<sup>695</sup> Jinnah had now a little more than a year to consolidate his position in Punjab and North-West Frontier Province as the League leader decided to celebrate 2nd March as Victory Day.<sup>696</sup>

In the speeches delivered on the occasion, *'the agitation was described as a first step in the struggle for achievement of Pakistan'*. Khizr Hayat Khan could not look forward to the continued support of his Hindu and Sikh colleagues as events were widening the gulf between the Muslims and non Muslims. Realizing that he could not

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<sup>693</sup> Sikh Memorandum to the Cabinet Congress Working Committee the Resolution, 8 March, 1947 in *Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, New Delhi, 1981, Vol. 13, C.W.C. Resolution, 8 March, 1947.

<sup>694</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 227.

<sup>695</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition*, p. 162.

<sup>696</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 133.

exercise influence on the course of events, Khizr Hayat Khan resigned on 2 March.

On 3 March, 1947, the Governor Evan Jenkins invited League to form a ministry as it was the largest party in the Assembly. The Nawab of Mamdot, the leader of the Punjab Muslim League Legislative party accepted the offer.<sup>697</sup> With this change of Government the situation in Punjab changed completely. The Muslim League rent the air with Pakistan slogans in every street, every town and in every village.<sup>698</sup> A wave of resentment spread through the Akali and the Congress circles. The turmoil was due to fact of Coalition Ministry, as Khizr Hayat Khan resigned without consulting any of his colleagues which included Bhim Sen Sachar and Swaran Singh of Indian National Congress and the Panthic Party respectively<sup>699</sup>. On the same day a joint meeting of Congress and Akali Dal was being held in the Assembly Chamber in Lahore<sup>700</sup> to discuss the situation. Outside, a large Muslim crowd kept up a continuous barrage of provocative slogans like: "*We will take Pakistan by force.*"<sup>701</sup> These provocative slogans could not stop Master Tara Singh. He appeared outside the Assembly brandishing

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<sup>697</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 133.

<sup>698</sup> Ksatish, *Storm in Punjab*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 106.

<sup>699</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition*, p. 162.

<sup>700</sup> Ksatish, *Storm in Punjab*, p.162.

<sup>701</sup> Le Ke Rahenge Pakistan.

a sword and shouted "*Kat Ke Denge Apni Jaan, Magar Na Denge Pakistan*" (We may be cut to pieces but we will never concede Pakistan) and '*Pakistan Murdabad*'.

If the police had not intervened Master ji could not have escaped alive that day. The same evening a big public meeting was held in Lahore in which Congress and Akali leaders delivered powerful speeches. This incident brought the Panthic leaders and Congress leaders closer though with different political perspective. While the Congress leaders laid stress on peace and non-violence and the speeches of Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh made the blood of the audience boiled Master Tara Singh roared: *Hindus and Sikhs! Get ready to drink the peg of martyrdom. The motherland is demanding our blood... I have sounded a bugle, destroy Muslim League.*

Giani Kartar Singh said, -*"The saffron flag had been flying on the Lahore fort and it will fly there again."*<sup>702</sup> On the following day an anti Pakistan demonstration by non-Muslim students especially Sikhs in the Anarkali Bazaar, Lahore sparked off.<sup>703</sup> In the clash of Police and processionists, firing was resorted to in which 13

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<sup>702</sup> *The Tribune*, March 4, 1947.

<sup>703</sup> *Civil and Military Gazette*, 16 March, 1947, also see Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 227.



processionists were killed and 108 injured.<sup>704</sup> The riots spread to Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Jalandhar, Sialkot, and Multan and threatened to engulf the whole province in an orgy of violence, bloodshed and arson. Governor had to assume the direct charge of the province and he dismissed the League Government on 5th March, under Section 93. Muslim raids on larger centers of Hindu and Sikh population such as of Murree were organized and in some instances led by retired army officers.<sup>705</sup>

The League leaders delivered inflammatory speeches thus provoking even those Muslims who used to sit and eat with Hindus and Sikhs, sang the Heer (a folk song) till late at night and performed Bhangra (folk dance). The low morale of the predominantly Muslim police force and the unreliability of some of the officers and men of Indian 7th Division ,which had been sent to the disturbed region, hampered British efforts to halt the attacks. They claimed nearly 3000 Hindus and Sikhs victims. Another 40,000 mainly Sikhs had to take refuge in hurriedly established refugee camps, rehabilitation soon started in eastern districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana and Sikh Princely States. The vicious circle set the entire province ablaze.

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<sup>704</sup> *The Tribune*, March 5, 1947.

<sup>705</sup> Jenkins to Wavell, 17 March 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.

Meanwhile S.B. Ujjal Singh and Giani Kartar Singh met Jenkins on 6th March. Ujjal Singh suggested Jenkins to mediate and provide general views about a settlement. Sir Jenkins agreed to S.B. Ujjal Singh that civil war and partition both were unthinkable, and that they should go in for a United Punjab under some Government acceptable to a large proportion of Punjabis.<sup>706</sup> At the suggestion of the Ujjal Singh, E, Jenkins prepared a draft about the terms of a possible settlement on the basis of Punjab population Census of 1941. The draft suggested two peaceful solutions while rejecting civil war:

- i) an agreed partition of the Punjab between Muslims and non-Muslims; or
- ii) a United Punjab with its present boundaries under a constitution and a Government that all communities will accept<sup>707</sup>

When Punjab was burning in communal violence, Sardar Baldev Singh joined Nehru in going to London and returned back with him. At the same time he was hoping for an alternative for Sikhs. He told Abell that in his view, His Majesty's Government ought to tell both parties that they insert on group B, but will

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<sup>706</sup> Sir E. Jenkins to Lord Wavell, 7 March, 1947, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, R/3/1/89.

<sup>707</sup> Further details see. E. Jenkins *Draft on the Punjab Problem*, 7th March 1947, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR.

divide the Punjab into two provinces one predominantly Muslim and one predominantly non-Muslim.

After six weeks of communal riots, the Punjab situation was becoming serious for all and sundry. Sardar Baldev Singh was still hoping for constitutional machinery to work and he wanted to draw the special attention of the Government regarding certain members of the Interim Government who actively participated in the Punjab agitation and encouraged the attempts to upset the Coalition Government there.<sup>708</sup> To check the communal problem in Punjab the Government imposed the Punjab Disturbed Areas act, 1947, and the Punjab Disturbed Areas Act (Special Powers of Armed Forces) Ordinance, 1947. The two Acts gave authority to the Magistrates, the Police and its officers of the Armed Forces respectively to use extreme force, with or without warning, against persons who in a disturbed area disobey orders, prohibiting gatherings of five or more persons or carrying weapons or articles capable of being used as weapons.

The Rawalpindi Division and the Multan District were seriously disturbed. The Muslims of this division were dead set against the Sikhs and the Sikh leaders were prepared for

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<sup>708</sup> Pandit Nehru to Wavell on 9th March, 1947, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR 127.

retaliation. The strained relations between the Muslims and non Muslims in the Punjab were furthered by the tragic happenings in North -Western Punjab and the confidence of the Hindus and the Sikh minorities was rudely shaken.<sup>709</sup> There was a wave of resentment in the Congress and Akali circles. Both parties held a joint meeting in the Assembly chamber to discuss the situation. Mac Donald, Home Secretary to the Punjab Government, reported on that by midday of 19 March 1947, the campaign launched by the Muslim League had resulted in 2,049 Hindus and Sikhs killed or seriously wounded. These figures were considered as under estimated.<sup>710</sup> The Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh standing on the stairs of the Legislative Assembly building, dramatically unsheathed his sword and shouted- *The time has come when the might of the sword alone shall rule, The Sikhs are ready, we have to bring the Muslims to their senses.*<sup>711</sup>

Similar statement was made by Giani Kartar Singh on 15th March, 1947. He said, *"This day crusade starts"*.<sup>712</sup> The draft of the resolution to divide the Punjab, prepared by Nehru, on 8 March, 1947, was taken up the Congress Working Committee. On 11

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<sup>709</sup> Representation from Punjab MLA's, IOR MB 124 in Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>710</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 135.

<sup>711</sup> Mohammad Raza Khan, *What price Freedom*, Madras, 1969, p. 222.

<sup>712</sup> *The Dawn*, 16 March, 1947.

March, Sardar Baldev Singh wrote a strong worded letter to Viceroy Wavell informing him about the widespread feeling in Punjab that the administration and police have shown a marked discrimination against Hindus and Sikh demonstrators... non Muslims have well nigh lost all faith in the administration and fear that the worst may yet happen. The British in Punjab were well aware of this widespread feeling. In fact, Governor Jenkins himself noted how non Muslim 'is vehemently bitter against particularly in the Police.<sup>713</sup> A delegation led by Sardar Ujjal Singh comprising Rai Bahadur Janaki Das and Capt. A.N. Bali met the Inspector General of Punjab Police and apprised him of the difficulty being faced by Hindu and Sikh youth in Police recruitments.<sup>714</sup> In a meeting with Mountbatten, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh also raised the same issue. They said "The Punjab Government was planning to add 6,000 more people to Punjab police's existing strength of 32,000. The three Sikh leaders wanted all these 6,000 positions to be filled by non-Muslims.<sup>715</sup>

To make their views more clear, the non-Muslim delegates under the leadership of Ujjal Singh included in memorandum that

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<sup>713</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, 521, 1947, p. 968.

<sup>714</sup> *Civil and Military Gazette*, 15 April 1947.

<sup>715</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, (173), Record of Meeting with Mountbatten, 18 April, 1947, p. 320.

another fact which had to be borne in mind is that Punjab is the province of peasant proprietors. The economy of the province is mainly agricultural and in any scheme of partition of the Punjab, the main economy of the provinces has to be preserved in intact. He made a mention of Coupland's observation, "The Sikh form about 15 percent of aggregate population of the province and the state and there is not a single district of the province in which the Sikhs are in a clear majority. But the peasant proprietor of the Central Punjab where he owns most of the best land his energy...."<sup>716</sup>

Events in the Punjab accelerated. Lord Mountbatten became Viceroy of India and to overtook the constitutional deliberations in New Delhi, he reached Delhi on 24 March, 1947 with the Mandate to try first to bring round all the parties to the plan of Cabinet Mission of creating a United India through the medium of Constituent Assembly.

Inter Communal conflict, was at its height and Mountbatten was meeting with Indian leaders to understand his new task in depth. The riots left a legacy of hatred and distrust. The Muslim police claimed 3,000 Hindu and Sikh victim. One of the important

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<sup>716</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 60.

problems that confronted ordinary citizens in Punjab in the months leading to its partition was the dearth of reliable news. On 23 March, the day when Delhi witnessed much fan fare in the course of the conference's inauguration. The Tribune had carried a story of 4,000 Hindus and Sikhs killed in the March disturbances.<sup>717</sup>

Master Tara Singh, in particular, raised the issue of police partiality. Addressing a press conference in Delhi, he said, that *while Hindus and Sikhs looted Muslim property only when the police was not present, the Muslims looted even in presence of the police. He also referred the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi's complaint that in one case even policeman raised Pakistan Zindabad' slogans.*<sup>718</sup>

The events in March 1947, when the scattered Sikh communities of West Punjab were attacked by Muslim tribes men, the British found them hopelessly isolated. By the times they rushed in troop, it was too late to prevent a massacre which set off a chain reaction of retaliatory killings, wrenching the region out of British control.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Reporting the Partition of Punjab 1947, Press, and the other Opines*, Delhi, 2006, p. 147.

<sup>718</sup> Hindustan Times, 22 March, 1947.

<sup>719</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 229.

But by 1st October, he felt that there was no prospect of reaching settlement between the two major parties on the basis of unitary Government; he was to report to the British Government on the steps he considered should be taken for handing over of power on the due date.<sup>720</sup> After his departure from India<sup>721</sup> Viceroy Lord Mountbatten worked out a compromise, after long discussion with the leaders of Congress and Muslim League.

Sardar Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh in company of many other Sikh leaders attended the meetings. Sardar Baldev Singh, in the capacity of member of Council, at a conference in Lahore, on April 3, 1947, in company of Sikh leaders and other legislators, unanimously declared that the division was the only solution of this problem. Viceroy also viewed that the only alternative to a Union Government is partition of the Punjab, this is recommended by Congress but could, in Jenkins view probably only be imposed by force, which would require a lot of troops, and spell economic ruin for the province."<sup>722</sup> After Jenkins recommendations, he asked Sardar Baldev Singh to invite Master

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<sup>720</sup> Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 972-73; also see Alan Campbell, *Johnson Mission with Mountbatten*, London, Robert Hall Ltd., 1952, p. 30.

<sup>721</sup> Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 972-73

<sup>722</sup> Viceroy's Personal Report No. 2 stated 9th April, 1947 L/P/0/6/23; L/Pol 433 (i) and also see Kirpal Singh, *Partition of Punjab*, 1988, Chandigarh p. 41..



Tara Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh in Delhi.<sup>723</sup> Sardar Baldev Singh started pursuing the two and invited them Delhi. Meanwhile the Shiromani Akali Dal on 16th April 1947, adopted a resolution which said- "Shiromani Akali Dal demands that before the transfer of Power to the Indian hands in June, 1948, the Punjab should be divided into two provinces and for redistribution of the provincial boundaries a Boundary Commission should be set up." The resolution further stressed, to demonstrate the provincial boundaries keeping in view:

- a) Population
- b) Landed Property
- c) Land Revenue, and
- d) Historical Places and Traditions of the various communities.<sup>724</sup>

Nationalist Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab had fully agreed to the partition of the Punjab. Almost without exception, leaders cutting across political lines, both in Punjab and in Delhi appeared tired and exhausted, in a hurry to get on no matter what the price. Viceroy Mountbatten had six meetings, with Jinnah till 17 April 1947. He made it totally clear that the Muslim League, would not in

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<sup>723</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p.41.

<sup>724</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 42.

any circumstances, reconsider the Cabinet Plan, and he was intended on having Pakistan. For him Jinnah was a *'Psychopathic case; and 'a man with... complete lack of administrative knowledge or a sense of responsibility'...* or hold down so powerful a position.<sup>725</sup>

On 18th April 1947 after the initiative of Sardar Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh held an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten. The three leaders were ready to give up their insistence on partition... they obtained adequate safeguards from being dominated by Muslims. The three asked for the choice of joining either Pakistan or Hindustan, so that they might have some bargaining power to gain the best terms. They told the viceroy that Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and blood shed.<sup>726</sup> Sardar Baldev Singh and the other two Sikhs leaders, handed over the Viceroy, the papers entitled "Notes for the talk with H.E. 18.4.1947". Viceroy discussed their suggestions:

- i) ... early announcement of the creation of two separate ministries for the Eastern and Western parts of the Punjab to carry on with Interim period.
- (ii) The question of police recruitment.

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<sup>725</sup> Viceroy's Personal Report No. 3, Dated 17th April, 14, 1947, Top Secret, *IOR/L/PO/23: 26/PO/433.*

<sup>726</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register, 1920-47*, p. 244.

The British authorities were also convinced that the issue of partition of the Punjab mostly rested with the attitude of the Sikhs. The Viceroy stated in his personal reports on 24 April, 1947 that any hopes that he entertained of being able to avoid the partition of the Punjab if Pakistan was forced on them, was shattered after the meeting of 18 April 1947, with the Sikh leaders Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh, as all of them made it quite clear that they would fight to the last man if put under the Muslim domination.<sup>727</sup> The Secretary of the State Lord Pethick Lawrence had observed earlier that partition would become necessary as Sikhs could not otherwise be satisfied.<sup>728</sup>

On 19th April 1947, S. Ujjal Singh met Lord Ismay and Mr. Mievalle along with Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh. On 22nd April 1947, S. B. Ujjal Singh sent a copy of proposals to Lord Ismay. The Sikhs considered the proposals of May 16th injurious to their interests. S. Ujjal Singh suggested three provisions to be included in the scheme of May 16, 1946.<sup>729</sup> If, May 16th scheme is abandoned, the Sikhs along with the Hindus would demand a division of the Punjab into two independent autonomous units. In such a division, besides the population strength of various communities, S. Ujjal Singh was asking for 'economic position and

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<sup>727</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol X, p. 405.

<sup>728</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, p. 872.

<sup>729</sup> for Details see Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab* p. 47.

vital interests of the respective communities to facilitate exchange of population and property'. On the other hand, same day G.E.B. Abell informed Lord Ismay that the same proposals were made by S. Baldev Singh regarding the partition of Punjab. He said while deciding on the boundary line, account must be taken of property as well as population, which meant that ... in which they have not got a majority of population but have got a large amount of land.<sup>730</sup>

The complex tangle, in which the political situation of Punjab had fallen, was explained by Jenkins, in a meeting on 14 April with Lord Ismay. Jenkins noted the Muslims aim in Punjab was to dominate the whole province; the Sikhs were committed even more vehemently to ensure that Muslims could not achieve their desired goal. Another important point which Jenkins noted was that the problem in Punjab would require outside troops as Punjab troops would not carry out the task. He also had no doubt the Sikhs would fight at stage. Jenkins said that 'he doubted whether there was any possibility of an announcement of partition without it being followed by an immediate blow up.<sup>731</sup> As the Muslim - Sikh entangle got further strained, Baldev Singh wrote a letter to Mountbatten stating why the Sikhs could have no truck with the

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<sup>730</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, Abell to Ismay, p. 40.

<sup>731</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, p. 141. Record of Meeting Lord Ismay with Jenkins and Others, 14 April, 1947, in Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 231.

Muslim League and that the percentage of the Muslim population had been grossly exaggerated by the Census of 1941. Also, of the total revenue of Rs. 4, 38, 13,977, the non Muslims were contributing Rs. 2, 18, 44,193. The letter also dealt with the contribution of the Sikhs in setting the Canal Colonies.<sup>732</sup> Mountbatten showed this letter to Jenkins. Two days after Jenkins had minute comments on Baldev Singh's letter to Mountbatten; he once again, re-emphasized the complex and unsolvable nature of the Punjab situation. In the same letter Baldev Singh informed Mountbatten that Daultana was going around spreading the word in the Attock region that all the officers who had acted against the rioters will soon not only be transferred but given a 'hot time.' Once again Jenkins noted how he thought the Sikhs were preparing for Civil War, adding that possibly they would wait to British to leave and would act only after July 1948.<sup>733</sup> Both Jenkins and Mountbatten, of course, took the Akali leaders seriously.<sup>734</sup>

While the minorities in Punjab were bleeding, the Governor could do little. Even the helplessness of the Central Government was clearly evident. The Muslim League policy in the Interim

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<sup>732</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.X, Sardar Baldev Singh to Mountbatten, 27 April, 1947, p. 466.

<sup>733</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.X, p. 240

<sup>734</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, 173.

Government was one of vowed obstruction. It openly maintained that League had joined the Government merely fight for Pakistan.<sup>735</sup>

Sardar Baldev Singh, being a Punjabi, was intimately connected with provincial politics. Naturally he was more affected by these developments. He many a times shared his views with Pt. Nehru, Lord Wavell and Jenkins regarding irresponsible attitude of League towards Interim Government. The Interim Government lacked unity of purpose and cohesion with its departments subject to conflicting pulls and pressures. The result was country wide unrest and lawlessness.<sup>736</sup> March 'riots' and April 'resolutions' made it clear that Punjab has to be partitioned. On 30th April, Giani Kartar Singh, Harnam Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh had a meeting with Lord Ismay. The three were in high state of excitement about the partition of Punjab. They pleaded for that partition should not be done merely on basis of counting of heads, landed property and particularly ancient shrines were factors which must be borne in mind.<sup>737</sup>

The three Sikh leaders admitted that the Muslims were in majority but it was a matter of life and death for the Sikhs, that the

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<sup>735</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 136.

<sup>736</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.136.

<sup>737</sup> Lord Ismay to Mountbatten, Kirpal Singh, IOR M.B.121 30th April, 1947.

Lahore division should not be handed over to them, even as an interim arrangement. They would far sooner all die fighting.<sup>738</sup> Their proposal to Lord Ismay regarding partition was; Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions to go to the Muslims; Ambala and Jullundur Divisions to go to the non Muslims; the Lahore Division to be under a joint Council until such time as Boundary Commission had been able to report on frontiers and transfer of populations.<sup>739</sup>

Being members of the Constituent Assembly for Punjab, Harnam Singh, Tek Chand, Ujjal Singh, Prithvi Singh Azad, Kartar Singh, Harbhaj Ram (MLA), Partap Singh, (MLA) Suraj Mal (MLA), Siri Ram and Diwan Chaman Lal, they prepared a Memorandum on behalf of the Sikhs and the Hindus. On 1st May 1947 they submitted the memorandum to Lord Ismay to place it before the Viceroy and the Government. The members pleaded the case of non Muslims or minorities on the basis of demographical, language and urban immovable features of Punjab owned by non Muslims in the Punjab. The total area of the British Punjab inclusive of what are present 'partially exclusive areas in Kangra district and Dera Ghazi Khan district, was 99089 square miles.'<sup>740</sup> The suggestion was made to divide the province in such a way that each part comprised

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<sup>738</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p.40.

<sup>739</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 40.

<sup>740</sup> *Census Report of India of 1941*, Vide Page 2, Vol. VI, Punjab.

nearly one half of the area and the dividing line to be along the river Chenab where it entered British territory in Sialkot district. The part of the East and South of the proposed dividing line would comprise the Ambala, Jullundar and Lahore divisions with one of the Colony districts of Lyallpur or Montgomery.<sup>741</sup>

The phase of Correspondence, Suggestion, Memorandum and Resolution became a routine matter in the days of turmoil i.e. four months before partition in Punjab. The idea of 'notional division' fetched the attraction of Punjab politics. Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh (Defence Member) Ujjal Singh, MLA, Lahore, Swaran Singh, Development Minister, Punjab, Master Sujan Singh, Harnam Singh, Advocate, Lahore, Giani Kartar Singh, MLA, Lyallpur, Prithvi Singh Azad, MLA, Ambala, Sardar Partap Singh, MLA, Amritsar, Sardar Harbans Singh Advocate, Rawalpindi, were to plead the case of Sikh community at times. For the Government partition business of Punjab seemed 'out of control'. E.M. Jenkins wrote to Rear Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma on 3 May, 1947. "... In the Punjab we are going to be faced with a complete refusal of the communities to cooperate on any basis at all. It would be clearly futile to announce a partition of Punjab which no

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<sup>741</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 54.



community would accept... I think we must begin to reconsider very seriously what adhoc arrangement can be made for the transfer of power.<sup>742</sup> Maharaja of Patiala was totally against the 'notional division' of Punjab for voting purposes by Muslim majority districts and non Muslim majority districts. In an interview with Viceroy he also pleaded for the several district division should be added to the eastern Punjab in order to provide 'a compact homeland for Sikhs,'<sup>743</sup> which was cast off by Mountbatten. Congress had already honored the principle of partition on 1st May, 1947 through a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru. Viceroy started pursuing Sikh leader for the same. The Muslim League made little efforts to improve relations with the Sikhs.<sup>744</sup>

Mountbatten advised the League leader Ghazanfar Ali Khan to seek the support of the Sikhs if the League wanted to have the whole of the Punjab in Pakistan.<sup>745</sup> Viceroy's meeting with Jinnah during negotiation period made it clear that Jinnah was very adamant and Viceroy told Liaquat Ali that their leader (Jinnah) was 'completely impractical'.<sup>746</sup> Ismay recorded in his Memoirs, "No one liked the idea of partition but no one could suggest how it could be

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<sup>742</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>743</sup> Mounbatten papers, I.O.R. MB 121, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>744</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 228.

<sup>745</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. X, p. 621.

<sup>746</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 332.

avoided."<sup>747</sup> Baba Kharak Singh said, "I am a staunch advocate of Akhand Hindustan (United India), should, however partition become inevitable and be unfortunately thrust upon us, I would plead for adequate safeguards for non-Muslim minorities."<sup>748</sup>

On 22 April, Bhimsen Sachar and Swaran Singh, the leaders of the Congress and Panthic parties in the Punjab Assembly, stated in their representation to Nehru, Vice President of the Interim Government, that as an Interim and transitional arrangement, the Governor General should install immediately two or three regional administrations with separate ministries under one Governor for the two or three zones of Punjab. Even Gandhi had not lost hope of preventing the partition. He started showing his resentment. He viewed the Partition Plan *"would ultimately lead to conflict and the disintegration of India for which generations to come would have to pay a price."*<sup>749</sup> When Mr. Jinnah saw there was no way out for him or his party (in spite of all the killings his League had committed to terrify the Hindus and Sikhs) he accepted 'the maimed and vivisected' Punjab and Bengal which he had resisted for so long with all his might. Only a month before, on April 30, 1947, Jinnah

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<sup>747</sup> Lord Ismay, *The Memoirs*, London, Heinemann, 1960, p. 420; also quoted in S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition* p. 186.

<sup>748</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p.138.

<sup>749</sup> Pyare Lal, *The Last Phase*, pp. 156-157.

accepted the partition of the Punjab. He had warned, "The proposal for partition of Bengal and Punjab was a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness... If Punjab and Bengal were partitioned, all the other provinces would have to be cut up in similar way."<sup>750</sup>

Pressure from the Sikhs leaders especially Tara Singh was increasing on British authorities in Punjab. Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, had always been against the partition of the province. While replying a letter, he writes to Mountbatten on 5 May, 1947, "*Baldev Singh like other Sikhs seems quite unable to understand that the Sikhs are not only people to be considered. ... It is very well to say that we must exclude from Muslim areas as large a percentage of Sikhs population as possible... Baldev Singh's demands are rather less extreme than those of Tara Singh, Kartar Singh and some others.*"<sup>751</sup> He further writes, "*Partition is Justifiable as a means of reconciling irreconcilable people. It will destroy the work of a century and ruin the Punjab.*"<sup>752</sup> The Sikhs, on the other hand, were perturbed by the proposal to formulate only twelve eastern districts as homeland for Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus. Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh and Swaran Singh sent cables to Mr. Attlee, Sir S. Cripps and Mr. Woodrow Wyatt to show their

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<sup>750</sup> V.P Menon, *Transfer of Power*, pp. 360-61.

<sup>751</sup> Sir E. Jenkins, to Ardmiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma,

<sup>752</sup> *Mountbatten Paper*, 121, IOR, NMML, New Delhi.

resentment and considered the plan 'a heaviest blow to the Sikhs'.<sup>753</sup> On 7th May, 1947 Sardar Baldev Singh wrote a letter to British Cabinet Committee emphasizing on two alternatives:

- a) To take the basis of landed property into account held respectively non Muslims and Muslims in the Punjab as a whole.
- b) To take the basis of the population strength to latest available statistics.<sup>754</sup>

The Secretary of State for India, S. Cripps was not happy with the Sikhs. He was of the view that the Sikhs had an exaggerated idea of their proper status. His antagonism was sound and clear towards Sikhs in the private correspondence. Cripps responded the plea of the three Sikhs leaders on 7th May and wrote to Mountbatten." ... their historical position as rulers of the Punjab partly to the rather flattering treatment they have received from us as one of the great martial races of India and partly to the fact they consider that they have contributed out of proportion to their numbers to the economic wealth of the Punjab." Cripps outwardly rejected the proposals made by three and at the same time warned the Governor, "That the Sikhs are a very dangerous element in the

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<sup>753</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*. pp. 72-73.

<sup>754</sup> Sardar Baldev Singh's letter in British Cabinet Committees, 7th May, 1947, IOR, *Mountbatten Paper*. p. 152.

situation." "But if you are satisfied that a Boundary Commission will help to keep the Sikhs quiet until the transfer of power, can be set up without provoking the hostility of the two major communities...."<sup>755</sup>

Meanwhile the political situation deteriorated and its gravity was reflected in the communal frenzy and bitterness that attaining increasing proportions. The administrative machinery itself was affected by the canker and it looked on as a mere spectator.<sup>756</sup> Baldev Singh continued to plead the case of the Sikh community. The attitude of the British Government was also becoming harsh towards him. At times Mountbatten spoke strongly to Baldev Singh.<sup>757</sup> On 18 May, 1947, the Governor General left for London with a draft approved by the Indian leaders. Through out May (1947), there was hectic activity in London on the 'question of early transfer of power.

A telegram dated 12 May even suggests that Attlee was keen for 3rd June plan to be announced on 17 May, that is, before British Parliament went into recess.<sup>758</sup> Mountbatten answered that

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<sup>755</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>756</sup> K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 139.

<sup>757</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 84.

<sup>758</sup> IOR/POL/0/12(i)

it was impossible.<sup>759</sup> In the meantime Maharaja of Patiala met the Viceroy. The minutes of this meeting were recorded by Mountbatten in 'Top Secret' personal report No. 8 on 23rd May. Patiala was rather worried, for he said, "in that case I greatly fear the Sikhs will 'fight.'" I replied, If they do, Maharaja Sahib, they will have to fight the Central Government, for I and My Government are determined, to put down any attempt at communal war with a ruthless Iron hand: they will be oppressed not only by tanks and armored cars and artillery, but they will be bombed and machine gunned from the air. You can tell your Sikhs that if they start a war they will not be fighting the Muslim League, but the whole might of the armed forces." The Maharaja was visibly shaken.<sup>760</sup>

Mountbatten started pressurize Sikhs. Next day in the Cabinet he emphatically looked across at the Defence Member, Baldev Singh, for a reply to a question," In case of further aggression by Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus in any part of India, to the hilt in putting down the first signs of communal war ... should also bomb and machine guns from air?" He asked Baldev Singh, if he

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<sup>759</sup> IOR/POL/0/12(i)

<sup>760</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, Viceroy's Personal Report, No. 8, 23 May, 1947, pp. 87-88.

was with him in that policy, Baldev Singh replied most emphatically," Yes." <sup>761</sup>

The Muslim League and the Sikhs made little efforts to improve their relations. Jinnah issued a statement on 21 May saying that the demand for Punjab's partition had come from a 'section of vocal Sikhs' and went on to say that not only would it have disastrous results, but that the idea was thoughtless and reckless' and was bound to 'weaken Pakistan'.<sup>762</sup> Mountbatten was successful in getting the consent of both Attlee and Winston Churchill to his plan by the end of the third week of May 1947.<sup>763</sup> He flew back to Delhi from London on 1 June bringing with him his Government's plan to transfer by 15 August, 1947.<sup>764</sup> The Viceroy had, already shown the draft to the leaders of major political parties and sought their consent before going to London for securing the approval. As he believed that in the circumstances the best policy was to secure the all India leadership agreement to partition. A copy of the plan was given to Sardar Baldev Singh on 2nd June,<sup>765</sup> where a conference of Indian leaders was convened by

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<sup>761</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 88.

<sup>762</sup> *Dawn*, 22 May, 1947.

<sup>763</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol X, p. 517.

<sup>764</sup> IOR 1/POL/6 120- (i) and (ii) *Transfer of Power*, Viceroy's Plans, Proceedings of Meetings, IB 21, 23, 24, of 5,8,14 May, 1947.

<sup>765</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, S. Baldev Singh to Lord Mountbatten, Top Secret, V.C. p. 66, p. 89.

the Viceroy. It was attended by seven leaders Nehru, Patel and Kriplani, represented the Congress and Baldev Singh represented the Sikhs, to discuss the Mountbatten Plan. The Viceroy pleaded the plan for voting on partition.<sup>766</sup> Sikh leaders were in constant consultation with each other.

The Akali Dal working committee met in Delhi on June 2, 1947. The meeting was attended by Gyani Kartar Singh (President), Master Tara Singh, Amar Singh Dosanjh, Pritam Singh Gojran, Mangal Singh Gill, Swaran Singh, Ujjal Singh and Baldev Singh. Baldev Singh reported Mountbatten that he had discussed the plan with his friends.<sup>767</sup> The Sikh leaders resolve to press for a partition of the Punjab but to maintain integrity of the community by demanding that boundary be drawn at Chenab.<sup>768</sup> In the same evening of 2nd June Baldev Singh wrote a 'historical' and much 'controversial' letter to Mountbatten in which he writes... Finally, my Sikhs friends and I accept the principle of division as laid down in the plan with the hope that in order to make it fully acceptable to my community..." he further writes... care will be taken to meet the views expressed in the letter when framing the terms of

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<sup>766</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 274.

<sup>767</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, F.N. p. 275.

<sup>768</sup> *Hindustan Times*, June 3, 1947.



reference for the Boundary Commission." He brought a few matters in that connection -

- i) Para 9 of the last sentence of which reads," Until the report of a Boundary Commission has been put into effect, the provisional boundaries indicated in the appendix will be used." It is not clear what this refers to and in what respect this boundary is to be used. In this connection you will remember that in my previous letters, I have insisted that nothing should be done to prejudice our case before the Boundary Commission. My fear was that the proposed notional division would prejudice the final partition of the province. I, now see, it has been made clear that the notional division is purely a temporary arrangement. If, however, it is used for setting up of Interim ministries, functioning at the time when the Boundary commission is also making its enquiries will make a fair examination of our case impossible...
- ii) ... Boundary commission will take 'other factors' into consideration when making the enquiries. This is far too vague. It should be made clear that these other factors include exchange of population with property and on the

basis of land revenue paid by non-Muslims. Special note should also be taken of the religious and cultural institutions of the Sikhs and the historic role played by them in the Punjab.

- iii) As the partition of the province had been necessitated to meet the demand clear instructions should be given to boundary commission to ensure that as large percentage of Sikh population as possible is included in the Eastern Punjab.

There is no doubt that Baldev Singh accepted the Mountbatten Plan but the entire letter was based on 'if', not with fully 'yes'. He tried to make it empathetically clear that his community had accepted the Cabinet Delegation Plan of May 16, 1946, on some conditions and joined the Constitution Assembly. He further cleared Mountbatten, if the major parties now revert to this plan; the Sikhs will be prepared to accept it only if they are given the same right in communal matters as has been accorded to other community's.<sup>769</sup> The Sikh leaders and S. Baldev Singh generally joined hands with the Congress at meeting of the leaders

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<sup>769</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 90.

for the transfer of power, as they had faith in the Congress as leadership.

Leonard Mosley had made some uncharitable remarks about the role played by him as the representative of Sikhs during these meetings. He writes:

'The only delegate who might possibly have had something of genuine moment to say at the meeting of 2nd June - other than the words, I agree, was Baldev Singh the Sikh. For in the plan the partition was implicit. Baldev Singh, was never one of the most brilliant minds produced by the people, did not seem to realize what this was to mean. The Sikhs were spread all over the Punjab. They had been there for generations. They owned and tilled the land. They had built the great system of canals. Their shines and places of pilgrimage were in western rather than in eastern Punjab. It might have seemed likely that any far reaching Sikh realizing the situation which would probably result from the partition, would have cut his throat or gone to war rather than accept it.'

Baldev Singh was acting under the instructions from his community, who were obviously astigmatic as he was. But he kept silent during the all important meeting, except to agree to the plan

that would cut the Jugular vein of his people.<sup>770</sup> Mosley forgot the so called proverb... *only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches*. Evident picture of events was different from but was happening behind the scene. The Sikhs were compelled to demand the partition of Punjab by the circumstances. Baldev Singh, as Mosley himself admits, had a mandate from his community to this effect, which forced the British to yield to it, leaving Jinnah fretting and funning.

As already noted, the Sikh leadership prepared several schemes earlier from the protection of their rights and claims but all these fell through because of their inherent weakness and lack of support either from the British, Muslim or the Hindus. Historically, they were closer to the Congress and so they decided to cast their lot with it. This was the best course for them in the situation in which they were placed. It is true that partition would leave some of their holy shrines in Pakistan, but they, totally relied on Boundary Commission, to protect their religious interest, at the time of delimitation of boundaries. At this juncture Baldev Singh and his community leaders wanted instructions to the Boundary Commission included in the printed plan to take Sikh interests

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<sup>770</sup> Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, London, 1960, pp. 132-133.

more fully into consideration. But the Viceroy rejected it.<sup>771</sup> Mosley himself does not suggest as to what was other course open to the Sikhs at that time.

The main provisions were added in the revised plan which was popularly known as Mountbatten Plan. The plan made following provisions:<sup>772</sup>

- i) It provided a procedure to ascertain the will of people living in those areas claimed for Pakistan in Punjab, Bengal and Sind. The decision was to be taken by the Legislative Assembly of each province. The procedure clearly envisaged the division of two provinces. For, it was provided that the Legislative Assemblies of these two provinces would divide into two sections, one for the members belonging to the Muslim majority and the other for the rest of province. If they opted for the partition of the province, each section would join the Constituent Assembly of its choice.
- ii) The Legislative Assembly of Sind would decide which Constituent Assembly the province would join. In the

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<sup>771</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition*, p. 192.

<sup>772</sup> Tara Chand, Vol IV, pp. 576-77, also see *Indian Annual Register, Vol. I*, pp. 145-146.

N.W.F. P. and in the Sylhet district of Assam the decision was to be taken through referendum.

- iii) The Governor General was to prescribe the method of ascertaining the will of people of Blauchistan.
- iv) There would be election in the parts of the Punjab and Bengal and in Sylhet for choosing the representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Initially, there was a proposal of deciding the fate of the Punjab through referendum. But it was abandoned because of the opposition of Mievellé, the Principal Secretary to the Viceroy, and the Governor of Punjab. Some of the objections raised by Mievellé were:<sup>773</sup>
  - i) A referendum to electors required a simple straight forward issue like that in N.W.F.P., where the question is of joining Pakistan or Hindustan. But in the Punjab the issue of partition would first have to be decided.
  - ii) If the whole Punjab is asked to vote on partition without defining the areas, nearly all Muslims will vote against it, and nearly all Hindus and Sikhs for it.
  - iii) If the two half provinces of the Punjab are asked to vote on partition according to the District wise division adopted in

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<sup>773</sup> S.L. Malhotra, *Gandhi and Partition* , p. 189.

the present plan, Muslims and the rest are both likely to vote against it, because neither will like the demarcation, Hindus and Sikhs may boycott the referendum.

- iv) A referendum in the Punjab would create a dangerous situation in the prevailing political atmosphere.

Already in May, 1947, Sardar Baldev Singh raised questions on this proposed plan in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, he wrote, "Paragraph seventh of the revised draft announcement implied that on the demand even from a single member of Punjab Legislature, the entire Legislative Assembly would meet and decide, whether Punjab would remain united and which Constituent Assembly, the province would join as a whole. This amounted to give a veto to the Muslim majority in the legislature. On 21st May, 1947, Mievil admitted the ambiguity and claimed the paragraph (6) provide a safeguard where by the members of the two parties of the Legislative Assembly sitting separately are to vote on whether or not. The province should be permitted, if a simple majority of either party voted for partition, then division will take place." Sardar Baldev Singh's doubts were that the Muslim majority in the Punjab Legislative in pursuance of the provision in Paragraph "may refuse to sit in any partitioned house as provided for in paragraph (6).

Mievelle without captivating time telegraphed Baldev Singh's letter to Mountbatten, who was at that time in London. On 26th May, 1947 Mievelle informed Nehru about the action taken by him. Mountbatten replied that Paragraph in question is being redrafted so as to remain any possible apprehension as to what is meant." The plan worked out that the country was to be free but not united. India was to be partitioned and a new state of Pakistan was to be created along with a free India. Mountbatten believed that in these circumstances the best policy was to secure the all Indian leadership agreement to partition. This was finally obtained on 3 June 1947 and the formation of the two dominions was decided i.e. India and Pakistan, on August 15, 1947. Nehru and Patel had accepted the proposals on behalf of the Congress because they did not want the Pakistan issue to delay independence any further.

Gandhi agreed with a heavy heart to the vivisection' of the subcontinent, as it repudiated his life time works and aims. He called partition a 'wooden loaf', Jinnah was also unhappy. He had been claiming the whole of Bengal and the Punjab for Pakistan, but all received from the 3rd June plan was a 'moth eaten' Pakistan. Both regions were to be partitioned the exact lines of demarcation



to be drawn by a Boundary Commission under the chairmanship of the British legal experts, Sir Cyril Radcliffe.

A Punjab Boundary Force was also to be established to maintain law and order during partition. In his broadcast on the night of June 3, the Viceroy also spoke feelingly of the fate that awaited the Sikhs. He said, "We have given careful consideration to the position of the Sikhs. The valiant community forms about one eighth of the population of the Punjab, but they are so distributed that any partition of this province will inevitably divide them. All of us, who have good of the Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that the partition of Punjab, which they themselves desire, cannot avoid, splitting them to a greater or lesser extent. The exact degree of spoils will be left to the Boundary Commission, which they will, of course, be representing."<sup>774</sup>

The statement of 3rd June was greeted in the province with brooding fatalism... It did nothing to improve communal relations. Within a day of its acceptance, on the behalf of Sikh community by Baldev Singh, local Sikh leaders were urging him to repudiate it, as it increasingly drawn on them that partition could leave the Sikh's

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<sup>774</sup> Lord Mountbatten's Broadcast at All India Radio, June 3, 1947, See for details, *The Tribune*, June 4, 1947.

Canal Colony holdings and major shrines stood in Pakistan.<sup>775</sup> Apparently, the Akali Dal had been unsuccessful in getting a separate dominion for the Sikh,<sup>776</sup> on the other hand, they were so divided, and that the British did not take them seriously.<sup>777</sup>

On 4 June, 1947, Mountbatten, in a press conference, was being asked a question -how to keep the integrity of the Sikh community intact? What is the provision that you have made in the plan to keep the integrity of the Sikh people intact? In a reply, he said, *"I must point out the people who asked for the partition were the Sikhs. The Congress took up their request and framed the resolution in the form they wanted. They wanted the Punjab to be divided into predominantly Muslim and non Muslim areas. I have done exactly what the Sikhs requested me to do through Congress. The request came to me as a tremendous shock as I like the Sikhs, I am fond of them and I wish them well. I started thinking out a formula to them but I am not a magician. I am an ordinary human being. I believe that it the Indians who have got to find out a solution. You cannot expect the British to solve all your problems. I can only help you to arrive at the correct solution. A lot can be done by a Chairman but he cannot impose a decision on anyone. It is up to the*

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<sup>775</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 232.

<sup>776</sup> B.R.. Nayyar, *Minority Politics in Punjab*, p. 93.

<sup>777</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p.232.

*Sikhs who are represented on the committee to take up the case. It is not I who is responsible for asking for partition.*<sup>778</sup>

The Mountbatten was cleverly getting out of whole deal after the acceptance of Plan by various political parties. The Sikh leader of West Punjab viz. Kartar Singh, urged Baldev Singh to publish the letter in which he had accepted the plan of 3rd June and made it clear that although the Sikhs agreed to the principle of Partition, they would not accept a decision arrived at strictly on population basis.<sup>779</sup> The Akali Party under Master Tara Singh's leadership criticized the Mountbatten plan and described it as 'unsatisfactory' and 'disappointing'. They criticized the plan on the ground that there was no positive provision for giving the Sikhs a 'homeland' and their 'deserved status' or 'political power,' nor they had been armed with means to safeguard their rights in constitution making.

Akali Dal in a joint conference of Shiromani Akali Dal and Panthic Pratinidhi Board on June 12, 1947 disapproved of the scheme for division of India into two sovereign states.<sup>780</sup> While the provincial Government machinery was busy in consultation with leaders and making arrangement and modifications for the

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<sup>778</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 101.

<sup>779</sup> Jenkins to Mountbatten, 10 July, 1947, Report of an Interview with Giani Kartar Singh, R/3/1/176, IOR., *Mountbatten Paper*.

<sup>780</sup> *The Tribune*, June 13, 1947.

successful implementations of plan, the Sikhs were becoming more vocal, aggressive and united than before.

On 26 June 1947, at a Joint preliminary meeting of Punjab Assembly, 91 voted to join the new Constituent Assembly, while 77 voted to stay in the existing Constituent Assembly.<sup>781</sup> The members from the non-Muslim majority areas of East Punjab decided by 50 votes to 22 that the province should be partitioned and the East Punjab should join the existing Indian Constituent Assembly.<sup>782</sup> The Sikhs were between the 'devil and the deep sea'.<sup>783</sup> On 27th June, Mountbatten called a meeting with Nehru, Jinnah, Liaquet Ali Khan and Baldev Singh.

Boundary Commission was appointed with Sir Cyril Radcliffe as Chairman. Each commission included four judges, two Muslims and two others. The Sikh member of the Punjab Commission was Teja Singh, a Judge of the Punjab High Court. The terms of reference of the commissions were to demarcate contiguous Muslim majority areas and in so doing to take into account other factors.<sup>784</sup> The other three members were Justice Din Muhammad, Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan and Justice Munir Muhammad. The

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<sup>781</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, p. 395.

<sup>782</sup> Mansergh and Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, p. 395.

<sup>783</sup> Fortnightly Report for Punjab for the First Half of June 1947 *Home Political*, File No. 16/6/47, Pol. I.

<sup>784</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 277.

appointment of Boundary Commission shook the west Punjab and the colonists of Lyallpur and Montgomery, whose hearts and homes were in danger.<sup>785</sup>

West Punjab Sikh leaders' viz. Sampuran Singh, Kartar Singh Dewana and Buta Singh had never asked for partition as enthusiastically as Tara Singh and Baldev Singh. When the partition plan was in being, many schemes and formulas were put forth before the British Government by all party Sikh leaders and national leadership to find a solution of the Sikh problem but had been unsuccessful in getting a separate Sikh state and they accepted the partition of Punjab as a lesser evil than the Muslim domination of the whole community in Pakistan. Now the eyes of all Sikhs leaders were set on Boundary Award. On 21 June 1947, a group of Akali Dal met in Lahore and rejected the partition plan. Meanwhile, Sir Penedral Moon tried to find out a solution of the Sikh problem. He wrote to Lord Ismay, the Chief of Viceroy's staff, "without a Sikh-Muslim pact there will be chaos in the northern India."<sup>786</sup> Due to his initiative the leaders of two communities met. Throughout the discussion with the Muslim League leaders, the

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<sup>785</sup> Harcharan Singh Bajwa, *Fifty Years of Punjab Politics*, p. 65.

<sup>786</sup> V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 692; also see Kirpal Singh, Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 123..

Sikh leaders insisted on some constitutional rights, which Mr. Jinnah did not acknowledge.

Master Tara Singh and other Akali's insisted on the proposed 'Sikh State' in Pakistan having the 'right to opt out Pakistan after some years.'<sup>787</sup> The talks were a futile after the denial of Mr. Jinnah. Baldev Singh was very right when he said, "*The attitude of Mr. Jinnah is that of a salesman who wanted to sell his horse without convincing the customer of its good quality by trail and always asserted that the horse was a good one.*"<sup>788</sup> While Kartar Singh was emotionally pointing out to Jenkins that the Sikhs would be obliged to fight if the Boundary Award went against them<sup>789</sup> and Kharak Singh was calling the Sikhs to '*muster strong under the banner of the Guru' and organize themselves and get ready for the fight to defend their legitimate rights.*'<sup>790</sup>

Punjab started smoldering- Lahore, Amritsar and Gurgaon were dangerously disturbed.<sup>791</sup> The violent behavior and hubbub in Gurgaon alarmed all. Nehru, Baldev Singh and Patel on 3rd June 1947 appealed against Brendon, the Deputy Commissioner of

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<sup>787</sup> Kirpal Singh, *Sikhs and the 1947, Transfer of Power*, Journal of Sikh Review, P. 31.

<sup>788</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 32.

<sup>789</sup> Jenkins to Mountbatten, 10 July 1947, Report of an Interview with Giani Kartar Singh, R/3/1/176, IOR

<sup>790</sup> *Dawn*, 6 June, 1947.

<sup>791</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, New Delhi, 2007, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13 1947, p. 73.

Gurgaon, to Governor but was not taken seriously.<sup>792</sup> Mountbatten in his covering letter of 11 June 1947 told Jenkins that the question of Gurgaon come up in the Indian Cabinet the previous week. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Baldev Singh and others spoke with vehemence against the incompetence, rudeness and uselessness of Mr. Brendon and even the League members complained the district was out of hand.<sup>793</sup>

Sikhs in the western part of the Punjab where large scale massacre of non Muslims was still going, on knew that they could do nothing but plan that the Punjab Boundary Commission fix the dividing line as far as West possible. They knew that only Radcliffe could do so. On 1 July, 1947, Sardar Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh met the Governor General. Radcliffe reached India on 7 July 1947. The four members committee representing each community did preliminary work to fix the exact boundaries of the two dominions between 27 June and 7 July.

The 'other factors' gave some mental relief to the minorities of Punjab; Sikhs knew that on the basis of population alone their case could not be strong. They, therefore, based their case for including most of the areas which could remain on the Eastern side on the

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<sup>792</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13 1947, p. 73.

<sup>793</sup> R/3/1/90: ff. 150, 154.

strength of the valuable properties both urban and rural owned by the Sikhs and Hindus as well as their shrines, as they thought that these could be the 'other factors' which in the terms of reference to the Boundary Commission could have considered.

In the meantime, on 5th July, Baldev Singh wrote to Major J.M. Short to 'engage an eminent King's Counsel to represent their case before the Boundary Commission.'<sup>794</sup> After Baldev Singh's and Sant Singh's telegraphic invitations to J.M. Short; British authorities diplomatically tried to placate the Sikhs. Lord Ismay secretly wrote to Lord Mountbatten, "*My strong hunch is that of he (Mr. Major Short) might be of help in keeping Sikhs quiet and my idea is that he should be attached to my staff as a temporary measure for 2 months ... Cripps entirely agrees with his and Prime Ministers approved subject to your content.*"<sup>795</sup>

Baldev Singh had also asked Major Short to engage a K.C. to represent Sikh case before Boundary Commission and Cripps recommended Holmes."<sup>796</sup> On 12 July, Lord Mountbatten refused Ismay's proposal to attach Major Short to Ismay's staff. He writes, "why not let him come out as Baldev Singh's guest since he invited

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<sup>794</sup> Sardar Baldev Singh to Major J.M. Short, IOR, MSS EUR F./189/18-19; also see Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 143.

<sup>795</sup> IOR, R/2/1/163.

<sup>796</sup> Lord Ismay to Lord Mountbatten 10 July, 1947, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, R/2/1/163.



him. You could give him a lift in York and maintain formal contact.<sup>797</sup>

In the period between, no agreement could be reached between the Akali Dal and the Muslim League, for "If the Sikhs were lukewarm about a settlement, the Muslims were icy cold, Moon found however, Jinnah was unwilling to make any concessions to the Sikhs."<sup>798</sup>

In Lahore, there were several poisoning scores. The first had occurred in Supplies Department near the Secretariat, where water was being poisoned. There was a wide spread panic. Looting was going in Gurgaon. Meo raid on village Tikli became the centre of reports and press. Allegations were that a platoon of the Punjab additional Police stationed in village sided with the raiders, fired on villagers and took part in burning and looting of the village. Baldev Singh visited Tikli to pacify the situation. Jenkins reported Mountbatten."... Baldev Singh sponsored some rather aggressive communal propaganda about the raiding. I have appointed an enquiry committee consisting of Eustace, the Commissioner of Ambala, Sant Parkash Singh, the D.I.G. of Police, Ambala Range, and Lieut. Col. Isaac, the Commanding officer of 2nd/6th

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<sup>797</sup>

Mountbatten to Ismay 12 July, 1947, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR/2/1/163, Telegram Grade,

<sup>798</sup>

Harbans Singh, *Sikh Political Parties*, New Delhi, p. 11.

Rajputana Rifles...<sup>799</sup> "These arrangement on the part of Lord Ismay were just to pacify Sikhs, not to find a solution to their problem. By July communal feeling was unbelievably bad.<sup>800</sup> In the Ambala Division, outside Gurgaon, the Muslim resigned to this fate, and same was true of non Muslims in the Rawalpindi Division and in Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Multan and Jhang. Tension was at its height in the Lyallpur, Montgomery (districts), Lahore and Jullundar (Division).

As Jenkins apprehensions were, "Partition goes very slowly indeed, meetings of Partition committee resembles a peace conference. With a new war in sight ... If the Commission does report by 15 August, there will in all possibility be a row because the Sikhs do not like the "notional boundary."<sup>801</sup> Giani Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh were frank about the intention of the Sikhs. Baldev Singh was publicly 'taking the same line'<sup>802</sup>which seem odd in view of his acceptance of Plan."<sup>803</sup> It was in the fury against Muslim League and the Congress not making any concessions to Sikhs, Baldev Singh in company with Kartar Singh

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<sup>799</sup> Lionel Carter., 1st June, 1947- 14 August, 1947, p. 133.

<sup>800</sup> Viceroy Conference Papers, 128, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, 127, Annexure I, Document No. 91.

<sup>801</sup> Viceroy Conference Papers, 128, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, 127, Annexure I, Document No. 91

<sup>802</sup> Jenkins to Mountbatten, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, 127.

<sup>803</sup> Jenkins to Mountbatten, *Mountbatten Paper*, IOR, 127

started to pursue for a suitable boundary between the East and West Punjab.

While addressing a large gathering at Gurudwara Sishgunj, Sardar Baldev Singh said that the Sikhs had accepted the 3 June plan only in principle and the proposed division was not acceptable. He pointed out that the Sikhs had in fact sought Sikh province, even in 1942, but then 'the Congress and the Lahore newspapers had opposed it.' If they had not opposed the Sikh demand, there would have no Pakistan today.

Sardar Baldev Singh asked the Sikh leaders to ensure peace but if the Award went against them, they were to be prepared to vindicate their honour with all sacrifice."<sup>804</sup> Baldev Singh's speech at Gurudwara attracted attention in high quarters of New Delhi, and under Government's pressure, on 11 July he issued another statement that he had not said the Sikhs should fight for their rights or resist if the Award was not in their favour.<sup>805</sup> The Sikhs, it was said, should not acquiesce in decision which threatened their very existence. Giani Kartar Singh asked the Sikhs to pledge on 8 July, to make all sacrifices for a suitable boundary line between the East and west Punjab.

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<sup>804</sup> *The Tribune*, 10 July, 1942, also see *Civil and Military Gazettee*, 10 July, 1947.

<sup>805</sup> *Hindustan Times*, 12 July, 1947.

On 10 July 1947, in the capacity of President, the Akali Dal, Giani Kartar Singh met E. Jenkins and on 15 July, he issued a public statement, *"The Sikhs will not rest contended till the boundary line is demarcated in such a way that it leaves at least 8.5 percent Sikhs in India, was observed all over the province"*. He described the Muslim League demand ... *"The Sutlej be made the dividing line in the Punjab, "which is unreasonable... He strongly argued that the district Sheikhpur, Lyallpur and Gujranwala had large non-Muslim majority tract..."*<sup>806</sup>

During this critical phase, J.M. Short reached Delhi on 22 July, 1947 to work as his personal assistant.<sup>807</sup> Major Short lived at the residence of Sardar Baldev Singh. He observed that Sikhs did not like the Plan, they had only agreed to it to meet them more than half way and to make easier for them to go out their way to meet their wish for some sort of Sikhistan. J.M. Short reported the matter to authority in Delhi.<sup>808</sup> His efforts to facilitate a deal were fizzled out because of Rawalpindi massacres.

On 23 July, Giani Kartar Singh publicly announced that Sikh political Conference would be held on 27 July at Nankana Sahib in Sheikhpura district. Giani Kartar Singh was the chief organizer of

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<sup>806</sup> Governor of Punjab to Lord Mountbatten, Governor General of India in Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 164.

<sup>807</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, Patiala, 1989, p. 51.

<sup>808</sup> Kirpal Singh, *The Partition of Punjab*, p. 52.

the Conference. He announced that the large Jatha should cover on Nankana from Lyallpur and Sheikhupura villages in their protest would follow and if the Punjab Government were to take repressive action to prevent the holding of the Conference and Morcha ...was to be started at Nankana.<sup>809</sup> V.P. Menon suggested that Mr. Jinnah should be approached and persuaded to declare Nankana Sahib, 'a sort of Vatican.'<sup>810</sup>

The formation of the Punjab Boundary Force was announced in a joint declaration on 24 July. The announcement also said that with effect from 1st August 1947, twelve districts - seven of west and five of east Punjab - would be placed under the overall command of Major General Rees, who was to report directly to joint Defence Council<sup>811</sup> Punjab Governor declared the Panthic Conference of 27 July, 1947 at Nankana Sahib as "illegal", Intelligence reports were that "the Sikhs intended to start trouble on a big scale if Nankana Sahib was not included by the Award of the Boundary Commission in East Punjab."<sup>812</sup>

The Governor felt on 27 July, when this meeting was successfully held that "we were in for a civil war." Giani Kartar

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<sup>809</sup> E. Jenkins to Lord Mountbatten 23 July, 1947 *I.O.R. M.B.* 123 published in Partition Proceedings, pp. 275-76.

<sup>810</sup> Michael Edwards, *Last Years of British India*, London, 1963, p. 212.

<sup>811</sup> *The Tribune*, 26 July, 1947.

<sup>812</sup> E. Jenkins to Lord Mountbatten 23 July, 1947 *I.O.R. M.B.* 123 published in Partition Proceedings, pp. 284-88.

Singh along with 150 Sikhs was arrested.<sup>813</sup> The Governor considered it 'ridiculous' on the part of Sikhs as 'that having agreed to commission and Baldev Singh having further agreed on their behalf to accept Award. Jenkins advised Swaran Singh to get in touch with Baldev Singh. He even suggested Mountbatten to ask Baldev Singh to put all possible pressure on Giani Kartar Singh to make statement accepting Award.<sup>814</sup> Nankana Sahib demonstration fizzled out. On 30th July, 1947, Giani Kartar Singh met Jenkins and handed him a copy of the Sikh Memorandum to the Boundary Commission and a copy of document entitled '*The Hindu- Sikh case for Nankana Sahib Tract*' and a map.

During meeting Giani Kartar Singh emphasized that Sardar Baldev Singh had no authority to make any statement as he had not consulted the party before doing so. The Viceroy had simply sent for him to get his thumb impression and Sardar Baldev Singh would soon find out that he had made a mistake.<sup>815</sup> Sikh demonstrations were proving futile. The Government and public eyes were set on 5th August, which was a proposed hartal (strike)

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<sup>813</sup> Telegram Jenkins to Mountbatten, July 27th 1947, published in Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13 1947, p. 174.

<sup>814</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13 1947, p. 176.

<sup>815</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13 1947, p. 182.

day. A civil war ambiance was at this stage developing throughout Punjab, and all communities were arming for a struggle.

The Punjab Public Safety Ordinance which was promulgated in November 1946 was altogether proving a failure. A number of incidents regarding incendiaries, stabbing, bombing, village raiding were at rise during the communal war, which high deemed as 'War of Succession,' Amritsar, Lahore, Ferozepur, Jullundar, Hoshiarpur and Gurgaon were the worst affected areas. The casualties on Government records were reported till 2nd August, 1947 were:

<b>a)</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Seriously Injured</b>
	Lahore	382	823
	Amritsar	315	666
	Multan	131	133
	Rawalpindi	99	230
	Other Cities	117	171
<b>B)</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Seriously Injured</b>
	Rawalpindi	2164	167
	Attock	620	30
	Jhelum	210	2
	Multan	58	50
	Gurgaon	284	125
	Amritsar	110	70

Hoshiarpur	51	19
Jullundhar	47	51
Other districts	44	36
	<b>3588</b>	<b>550</b>

<b>A) Urban</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Seriously Killed</b>
Muslim	522	1011
Non Muslims	522	1012
<b>B) Rural</b>		
Muslim	357	201
Non Muslims	3231	349
<b>C) Total</b>		
Muslim	879	1212
Non Muslims	3753	1361
	<b>4632</b>	<b>2573</b>

C) Total Urban and Rural Killed and Injured respectively 4,632 and 2,573.<sup>816</sup>

Jenkins reported that the figures are clearly incomplete, especially for Gurgaon, where the dead and wounded are usually removed by their own party. In my opinion not less than 5,000 (and

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<sup>816</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June, 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten, June 13, 1947, p. 182; Jenkins to Mountbatten, Memorandum August 4, 1947, pp. 198-211.



probably not more than 5,200) people have been killed in all and not more than 3,000 seriously injured."<sup>817</sup>

In 1942, attacks were concentrated on the Government property and Government servants, in other words on points that were largely known. In 1947 little attention was paid to Government property and Government servants - the 'two nations' fought one another in the streets, in the markets, in the fields, and in the villages. When it was found that rioting could be checked, the fighting took the form of mass terrorism.<sup>818</sup> Congress Government was successful in suppressing disturbances which occurred in:

*Bombay under a Congress Government.*

*Calcutta and Naokhali under a Muslim League Government.*

*Bihar under a Congress Government.*

*The N.W.F.P. under a Congress Government.*

*The United provinces under a Congress Government.*<sup>819</sup>

The worst provinces of all had been the Punjab which was still under British rule, British rule in law and order ceased in 1947, and was not restored same, in a very technical sense by a

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<sup>817</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June 1947-14 August 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten, June 13, 1947, p. 203

<sup>818</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June, 1947-14 August, 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13, 1947, p. 203

<sup>819</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June, 1947-14 August, 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13, 1947, p. 206.

transient section 93 administration. It was perturbed Jenkins view that what remains of "British rule"... "Is now ending".<sup>820</sup> The upgraded intelligence reports were in fact filtering through to the Punjab Governor linking the neighbouring Princely States with plans for a terror campaign in East Punjab.<sup>821</sup> The Muslims were more violent and well organized during attacks. The numbers of casualties were approximately as follow:

<b>A)</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Seriously Killed</b>
	Muslim	522	1011
	Non Muslims	522	1012
<b>B)</b>	<b>Rural</b>		
	Muslim	357	201
	Non Muslims	3231	349
<b>C)</b>	<b>Total</b>		
	Muslims	879	1212
	Non Muslims	3753	1361
		<b>4632</b>	<b>2573</b>

In the cities of Muslims and non Muslims casualties were approximately equal. Almost all the casualties in rural areas of Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelam and Multan were non Muslims.<sup>822</sup> By

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<sup>820</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June, 1947-14 August, 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13, 1947, p. 206.

<sup>821</sup> Abell to Brockman, ungraded, Intelligence Reports, R/3/1/145, IOR, also see Ian Talbot, Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj.*, p. 233.

<sup>822</sup> Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics 1 June, 1947-14 August, 1947 Tragedy Governors Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Jenkins to Mountbatten June 13, 1947, p. 206.

June 1947, the RSS had over 58,000 members, the Muslims League National Guards 39,000 and Sikh Akali Fauj 8,000 member. Large Sikh Jathas were also formed in the country side. Under the Act Central Provinces Legislation, Baldev Singh succeeded to create a force known as Home guards.

Baldev Singh in the capacity of Defenec Member of India was successful enough to provide Home Guards, arms and ammunition to bring peace in different parts of country. He exercised moderating influence whenever political agitations disturbed any state. Baldev Singh led many discussions with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, V.B. Patel, Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and British Officers, viz. Lord Wavell, Lord Mountbatten, Panthic Lawrence, Attlee, Jenkins, Abell, etc. <sup>823</sup> With the assistance and guidance of Indian leaders and British Officers, he was able to manage above said provinces.

These Home guards were well trained and well armed and were supplied to U.P., East Punjab, Kashmir and Jammu. They were trained by drills, drills with Rifles, with Bayonets and Frogs as

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<sup>823</sup> Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 95.

well as with service rifles.<sup>824</sup> The British politician became very active and made hasty preparations to divide India and quit India.

Mr. Radcliffe, did not participate in the commission's proceedings and remained at Delhi under a heavy guard and day to day proceedings were sent to him by post.<sup>825</sup> He prepared the Award on 9th August. The point of views of the Muslim and non Muslim judges on the location of the line of partition were completely at variance; the decision was in fact, solely that of Sir Radcliffe.<sup>826</sup> Trust and goodwill were conspicuously lacking at all levels of Punjabi society as the British rule drew to a close. While Muslims got arms from the tribal areas of North West Frontier Province and Bahawalpur, Sikhs obtained them from the Sikh states, chiefly Patiala, Kapurthala and Faridkot. The real build up of Sikh militarisms was the formation of Jathas in villages armed with the traditional kirpan and spear.<sup>827</sup>

A partition committee at the provincial level was set up in Lahore under the chairmanship of Sir Evan Jenkins. Its task was to ensure smooth transfer of power by determining the division of assets, personal and liabilities before partition. A Boundary Force

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<sup>824</sup> The Tribune, Oct. 23, 1947; also see Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 98.

<sup>825</sup> The Tribune, Oct. 23, 1947; also see Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 65.

<sup>826</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 277.

<sup>827</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 279.

under Major General Rees assisted by Brigadier Digamber Singh Brar(India) and Colonel Ayub Khan (later President of Pakistan) consisting of two and a half divisions was entrusted with the control of movements of population in districts of Sialkot, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jullunder, Ferozepur, and Ludhiana.<sup>828</sup>

Sir Cyril Radcliff's partition line between the two Punjabs, as spelled out in his Award dated 12 August, move from the point, where the west point of the Ujh river left Kashmir and entered Punjab to the point where it entered Ravi as latter's tributary. While doing that his partition line separated three of the four thesis of the then districts- Batala, Gurdaspur, and Pathankot from the fourth, Shakarganj which laid along the right bank of Ujh river. From the point where Ujh became a part of Ravi river to the point where the latter met the river Sutlej it ran along the course followed by it. Radcliff's partition line excluded the whole of the Canal Colony of Montgomery districts from East Punjab which Mahajan in his report and suggested be better given to the East Punjab.<sup>829</sup>

Mountbatten followed his decision announced in his 69th council meeting on 9 August... Instead he sent his men to Radcliff

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<sup>828</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 279-81.

<sup>829</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 167.

that the later do so on the 13<sup>th</sup>, by which date, he would be proceedings to Karachi to participate in the celebrations of establishment of Pakistan in forenoon of 14<sup>th</sup> and return in time at Delhi to accept the offer already conveyed to him to become the Governor General of India in the midnight of 14-15 August of an independent state as a dominion of British Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>830</sup>

Sardar Ujjal Singh reached Karachi on 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, to attend a meeting of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly after the Pakistan Independence celebrations on the 14<sup>th</sup>. As Ujjal Singh puts, "It may be recalled that I was elected to the Indian Constituent Assembly along with Giani Kartar Singh and S. Harnam Singh but on the partition of Punjab, Giani Kartar Singh and myself were automatically considered to be members of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly as both of us came from the Western districts."<sup>831</sup> Mountbatten's delay of five days in publishing the Radcliff Award resulted into in continuation, if not increase in the inter communal Hindus and the Sikhs riots on the other of dividing line proposed by Radcliff in his award still not known to

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<sup>830</sup> Lord Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 248-53.

<sup>831</sup> Sardar Ujjal Singh, *Oral Interview*, p. 20, Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.

the public and the leaders of any political party.<sup>832</sup> On 13 August, radio news created panic when a passenger train was attacked, which was going from western side to east and "most of them killed at the Lahore railway station."<sup>833</sup> Ujjal Singh could not attend the Karachi procession for the celebration of Independence of Pakistan as he says, "I did not move out of the hotel..."

The British divided and quit India on 15 August, 1947. Independence was inaugurated at midnight 14-15 August, 1947. While celebrations were going in Delhi, all the defence of Punjab had been put out of gear and division migrants were migrating Punjab in millions of numbers<sup>834</sup>. As a result of Boundary settlement, Sikhs felt themselves frustrated, betrayed and truncated as they found their community, some four millions in Punjab, neatly divided down at middle. No where the Sikhs were in majority and they spilled almost in equal proportions on both sides of the lines.<sup>835</sup>

The Sikhs had already been in conflict with the Muslims. With this effect, riots started in the Punjab, killings were widespread, in Punjab, only Calcutta remained silent because

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<sup>832</sup> Sukhmani Bal, Riar, *The Politics of the Sikhs 1940-47*, p. 170.

<sup>833</sup> Sardar Ujjal Singh, *Oral Interview*, p. 20, Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.

<sup>834</sup> Hari Ram Gupta, (ed.), *Abinandan Granth*, 1966, p. 70.

<sup>835</sup> Percinal Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India*, Delhi, 1979, p. 404.

Gandhi Ji was present there, Punjab did not remain silent.<sup>836</sup> Police and armed forces which were mainly manned by Muslims had given to Pakistan. Due to chaos in the province murders, looting rape and dacoities were ruling everywhere.<sup>837</sup> It was difficult to reorganise the armed forces, Punjab was left almost ruined.<sup>838</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru regarded Baldev Singh an able, organised and an influential personality not only of Punjab but also of Indians. The Congress High Command felt that Baldev Singh could organize military as he had rich political understanding and has remained Indian defence Member in 1946-47.<sup>839</sup> Hence he was declared 1st Defence Minister of Independent India. Sardar Ujjal Singh had lost all his factories and landed estates which were in Pakistan. He had already joined Congress and was close to Pandit Nehru. With the change in Government, a new type of political scenario came into being but the politics of loyalism remained the powerful weapon of the Indian Government.

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<sup>836</sup> Dory Collin and Dominique Lapiere, *Mountbatten and Independent India*, Delhi, 1984, p. 185.

<sup>837</sup> Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 96.

<sup>838</sup> Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 96

<sup>839</sup> Rekha Sood, *Sardar Baldev Singh and the Punjab Politics 1937-47*, p. 95.



## **CONCLUSION**

The discussion in foregoing study makes it quite clear that aristocracy was not only imbibed but wedded in Punjab politics even before the inception of Sikh religion. Though conceptualized in ancient Greece or 'rule by the best' by Plato and Aristotle yet aristocracy found its roots in ancient, medieval and modern India as well as Punjab. When Guru Gobind Singh found the Khalsa, he wished to give administration in the hands of those people who had high ideas of life. Hence aristocracy became the part and parcel of Sikh politics.

John Lawrence and Lord Dalhausie had disliked and labeled the chiefs of Punjab as being 'parasitic Jagirdars' and political allies whose worth was dubious', but they had to be compromising with them. Ill-will of Board of Administration and mutual conflict of Lawrence brothers waned after the Mutiny of 1857. The gentry and aristocracy was identified as composed of those individuals who had from their birth or their position, a natural influence. Education, industrialization and Canal Colonization widened the base of aristocracy in Punjab.

In 1862 a new line of the British policy was established towards the Sikh feudal classes. The institutions of Sanads, Certificates and Titles recognized a class of local elite, which in turn readily accepted rather welcomed the opportunity. Thus before the elections of 1937 these local elite became the formidable allies of British Government and got recognition as 'Loyalists'.

It may easily be deduced that the politics in Punjab during 1937-47, particularly among the Sikhs, underwent a dramatic change. The Government of India Act 1935 added new dimensions to the political environment in India which led to Provincial Autonomy. The history of Punjab witnessed the formation of a group of three Sikh leaders, actively taking part in Punjab politics. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh emerged as the prominent leaders of the said period.

The word 'trio' has been used to signify these three Sikh leaders. Sir Joginder Singh, was one of the pioneer of modern Sikh politics, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh was trying to preserve the right of minority Sikh community through his political acumen and constitutional wits, Sardar Baldev Singh a Young ambitious, well wisher of his community, socially sweet Sikh, unknowingly

destroyed the hopes of better bargaining opportunity by accepting Mountbatten Plan on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug. 1947.

The three Sikh leaders started their political career at different times but the election of 1937, formation of Provincial Government, World War – II, Struggle for Sikh Identity, Wave of Nationalism, Phase of Transfer of Power provided many common platforms to share their political ideology. Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh were rich and educated, former was a jat agriculturist, with large estates and later an Arora Sikh Agro-Industrialist, are considered professed 'loyalists'. Baldev Singh was a rich industrialist and entered politics on Akali ticket but later on became flexible to opt loyalty. On the basis of their riches, the three appeared on the political scenario of Punjab. The prevailing circumstances persuaded the trio Sikh leaders to take the leadership. The three availed every opportunity, loyalty towards British rule was not an in born quality among them but a compulsion to maintain their political status. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh tried to establish their political career making their best but at the same time remained loyal to their community throughout their political career. The three helped their community with financial assistance

and they filled that very space when there was urge of Sikh leaders.

Sir Joginder Singh was associated to Chief Khalsa Diwan and a close ally of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. He believed in representations and constitutional methods. From 1937 to 1942 he remained one of chief spokes person of Sikh community. He had advised Sir Emerson, the then Governor of Punjab to ask Sir Sunder Singh Majithia to come to the field and organize the moderate Sikhs. Hence Khalsa National Party was formed in 1935 to protect and promote the interest of the Sikh community. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia became the president of Khalsa National Party and Ujjal Singh was elected its secretary. The three became the outstanding spokesmen of the Sikhs.

The higher British authorities took it otherwise, they viewed the party had formed with the object of getting back the influence which the Sikhs of leading families in the province have lost. No doubt Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh often supported Government but whenever communal issues raised they generally joined hands as a body with the Akalis or the Hindus. The Akalis were being considered leaders of the masses and these moderates had neither the courage nor the energy to oppose Akalis

but it is wrong to assume that loyalist were not liked by the masses. Sir Joginder Singh appeared the strongest candidate of Khalsa National Party. He won the elections of 1937 from Gujranwala Shahdra (Rural) constituency by getting 11099 votes out of total polled 15244. Ujjal Singh was also a successful contestant from Western Towns, Urban Constituency. They dared to come in open and seriously challenged that position which the Akali had. It was Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh on whom men like Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh depended on for the task of political and constitutional negotiations. Sardar Baldev Singh entered into politics after Gurudwara Reform Movement. The Akalis were having financial problem and there was an urge for a strong leader with strong economic ground. Khalsa College, Amritsar affair 1935-37 provided a chance to enter politics much against the wishes of his father S. Inder Singh. He contested elections of 1937 on Akali ticket from Ambala. He was never a professed Akali rather practically moderate and theoretically a nationalist. Sardar Baldev Singh became an outstanding spokesman of the Sikhs after 1937. Sir Joginder Singh reigned Punjab Politics actively till 1937-42, Sardar Ujjal Singh 1937-46 and Sardar Baldev Singh 1942-47.

The formation of Unionist Ministry in Punjab appeared to give boost to the privileged and elite sections of society. The opportunity for this trio to share political platform came in the form of Unity Conference which was designed to remove the communal virus from the Punjab on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1937 at Lahore. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan issued a list of members of Unity Conference including the names of these three Sikh leaders. Sir Joginder Singh read messages on behalf of the Sikhs. They became part of various deputations to appeal Sikandar Hayat Khan with Sikh point of view regarding use 'Jhatka Meet' in the Government institutions including jails. They explained the grievances of the Sikhs. Sikandar-Jinnah Pact made Akali Dal to boycott the Unity Conference. Sir Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh after having assurance from Sikandar Hayat Khan, were satisfied and speaking in favour of the Unionist Party. Sardar Baldev Singh was speaking in favour of the Congress on behalf of the Akali Dal. Moderate Sikh leadership was pacified when at the special Sahid Ganj-Muslim League Session Calcutta, April 1938, an organizing committee was formed under the chairmanship of Sikandar Hayat Khan. In the beginning Baldev Singh uttered only those words which were put into his mouth by Master Tara Singh but he never lost a chance to

shake hands with Sunder Singh Majithia, Joginder Singh and Ujjal Singh. Akali-Congress unity was clearly visible at all India Akali Conference held at Rawalpindi under the Presidentship of Baldev Singh where the Akali and Congress flags were flown side by side.

With the starting of World War II in 1939 the KNP Sikhs pressed the Government for the protection of their interests in return for their military services during the War. Shiromani Akali Dal also reacted in the same tone. Loyalist Sikh leaders viz. Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ranjit Singh of New Delhi. Bishan Singh, Ex. MLA Mrs. And Master Sujjan Singh of Sikh Missionary College, Sardar Ujjal Singh and others met the Maharaja of Patiala to lead the Panth. Therefore, in January 1941, Khalsa Defence of India League was formed at Lahore under the President S.Ragubir Singh Rajasansi and Sir Joginder Singh, as the chief patrons of the League and affirmed Sikhs will stand by the British until the enemy is beaten into total suppression.

British diplomacy during war efforts also influenced Punjab politics. The names of Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh were much debated. Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh made every effort to bring Master Tara Singh and the Akalis in the defence programme. It is under

their influence Master Tara Singh met the British Viceroy and then resigned from the Congress party and became an active member of Khalsa Defence of India League. Following the example of the Sikhs, Hindu aristocratic leaders who had left Unionist Party to show their resentment against Sikandar-Jinnah pact, met with the unionists again. Raja Narendra Nath, Bhai Parmanand and Sir Gokal Chand Narang appealed their community to stand by British in its hour of trial against Nazism. Major Billy Short, a British Army officer, the great admirer of the Sikhs was appointed to handle the ticklish situation of 1940 at Bombay "to disband all Sikh units" created unrest among the Sikhs. Sardar Ujjal Singh was entrusted with the job to help Major Short in enquiry.

Interestingly Arora/Jat card was being well played in British diplomacy which added flavour to Punjab politics. Joginder Singh and Baldev Singh were easily been considered for portfolios but Sardar Ujjal Singh though intelligent and conscious politician being Arora could not be able to fetch a suitable portfolio of his abilities. Akalis under the influence of these aristocrats also started criticizing Individual Satyagraha.

The words of Sardar Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh and Sampuran Singh, 'the Akalis are in favour of Sikh recruitment and



were doing Civil Disobedience merely out of sense of nationalism' are clear and sound. Politics made Sikandar's tone changed towards his allies. He regarded Sir Joginder Singh as 'an unpractical and superficial idealist'. For him Sir Joginder would more of nuisance than a help to the Council and certainly doubted whether he would be of any political assistance. Sir Joginder Singh was also criticizing Sikandar publically.

Though mutual jealousies of each political group or party among the Sikh continued, yet they showed their considerable unity at tough time. The 'Lahore Resolution of 1940's alarmed all shades of the sikhs and made them to stand united in criticizing the Lahore Resolution.

Sardar Baldev Singh by his natural sweetness and social habits was able to carry Joginder Singh. After the demise of Sunder Singh Majithia political importance and influence of Khalsa National Party and Chief Khalsa Diwan almost came to an end. Baldev Singh though a back bencher in Congress – Akali Parliamentary Party in Punjab Assembly and formed a new party in March 1942 viz. United Sikh Party. Hence exactly in March 1942 the trio Sikh leaders became common political Sikh allies.

Cripps Mission on 23 March 1942, arrived India with its proposal without knowing the intricacies of Indian Politics. The Sikh community as a whole was growing more and more uneasy as there was a panic among the Sikhs that constitution would place power in the hands of majority. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1942, Sir Joginder Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, Baldev Singh and Master Tara Singh met Stafford Cripps and discussed possibility to carve out a province in which the Sikhs would have the decisive role as a large balancing party between Hindus and Muslims. The draft declaration of Sir Stafford Cripps with seven tier formula on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1942 brought whirl in Punjab politics particularly among Sikhs.

In all parties Sikh Conference under the Presidentship of Sardar Baldev Singh, prepared a memorandum and the trio Sikh leaders Master Tara Singh and Mohan Singh handed over that memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1942. Sikhs of all political shades rejected the Cripps proposals as they took it as the “first public admission of the possibility of Pakistan”. Sikh press attuned Indian Press to condemn the Cripps proposals. The failure of Cripps proposals did not demoralize the Sikh leaders and

they expressed their solidarity against the Government by showing their reluctance to enlist Sikhs in the Indian army in War days.

Major Short had to say “Settle the Sikhs, and you settle India.” Baldev Singh after taking Master Tara Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh into confidence and with the efforts of Major Short, on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1942, entered into an agreement with Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, popularly known as Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact much to the dislike of Congressite, Communist Sikhs and Central Akali Dal. Baldev Singh got the portfolio of Development. Punjab politics had its own flavours, compulsions, agreements, associations and alienations.

The issues covered in the Pact were meant to remove the existing irritants containing term related to Jhatka, ‘Teaching of Gurmukhi’, ‘Legislation regarding religious issues’, ‘Recruitment Criterion’ and ‘Sikh representation at the Centre’. The Sikhs soon reaped first crop of the Pact, when in July 1942 the Viceroy expended his Executive Council and among the eleven members was a Sikh. One of the trio leaders Sir Joginder Singh was given the portfolio of Health, Education and Land. Both leaders started making distinctly satisfactory speeches in favour of the Government.

No doubt the Pact enhanced the prestige of Baldev Singh much to the dislike of Master Tara Singh as Khalsa National Party joined the Baldev Singh group in the Legislative Assembly in March 1943. The Pact died its own death and could not bring any dividend to the Sikhs or the Unionists. Baldev Singh himself remarked in 1944 that his pact was meant to remove the besetting curse of intercommunal bitterness, but could not do the same. The failure of Cripps Mission resulted into launching Quit India Movement in India; in Punjab it led to the birth of Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact.

The failure of Cripps Mission, Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact and Congress's conceding the principle involved in the demand for Pakistan, perturbed the Akali leaders. They presented 'Azad Punjab Scheme' as an alternative on June 7, 1943. Scheme was an 'old candy wrapped in a new wrapper', based on the proposal prepared and submitted to the Round Table Conference in 1930-31 by Sikh leaders, Sardar Sampuran Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh.

Ujjal Singh who was one of the architects of the building Azad Punjab wished that "a happier name had been selected for this demand, which was intended to be Province within the Union of India. He said that the Akalis only want the separation of original Punjab from the Western districts annexed to it by Maharaja Ranjit

Singh just as Sind was separated from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar.

The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks in 1944 for an agreement had diverse effect on the political parties and groups in the Punjab. The Akalis felt relieved because of their apprehensions that any agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah on the basis of Rajagopalachari formula would be inimical to the Sikh interest. However, they continued their agitation for creation of a separate political unit dominated by the Sikhs and a hint was even thrown by some of the Akali leaders for securing the help of the British for its realization. Baldev Singh and Joginder Singh, in different public addresses, were criticizing Pakistan Schemes. The emphasis was that Sikh would not agree to live in the Pakistan of League description. Congress and particularly Mahatma Gandhi wanted Akali-Congress alliance in Punjab.

The circumstances led the British Government of India's decision to transfer power in Indian hands towards the end of 1944. A few non-party public men form a conciliation committee to devise ways and means for an agreed constitution. The initiative for the settlement was taken by the liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, at the suggestion of Gandhi. He favoured the holding of a

representative conference to carry on the dialogue with the League leaders. The Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Harnam Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh, Jodinder Singh and Ujjal Singh preferred the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications.

The Sapru Committee recommendations had a mixed reaction in the Punjab. It submitted its report in March 1945. The Hindus and the Sikhs welcomed the acceptance of principle of the individuality of India and Joint electorates. The Akalis criticized the Sapru Committee proposals because it had given acceptance to the principle of parity between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Wavell's proposal of a new Executive Council with entirely Indian members, except for Viceroy and the Commander in Chief, was a step towards full Self-Government. His plan was discussed at Shimla in June and July. Tara Singh was invited unwillingly by Wavell to represent the Sikhs in the Conference where Sardar Baldev Singh was also present. The two Sikh leaders were not cordial with each other but remained in constant touch during conference.

Sardar Baldev Singh's association with Congress was disliked by the Akali leader Master Tara Singh. Sir Joginder Singh, one time favourite of British Government, was kept scrupulously out of all

negotiations. 23 June, 1945 was the day when Wavell proposed that the Executive Council to have five Hindus, five Muslims, one Sikh, one Scheduled Caste, as suggested by Jinnah.

Election of 1946 in Punjab province brought some new issues especially the matter of Sikh seats. Baldev Singh's close association with the Congress was clear. He was trying to bring Akalis and Congress nearer but the matter of seats broke down all negotiations. Forgetting their mutual conflicts, Baldev Singh after being associated with Sir Joginder Singh and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh founded a new party viz. Punjab Panthic Board. They elected the members of *Panthic Pratinidhi Board* of all Sikh Parties, under the leadership of Sardar Baldev Singh and Deputy leadership of Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh.

The three leaders were the main members of the Punjab Panthic Board and were successful in having a new party which was not too extreme and fought Punjab Assembly elections of 1946. The election result shattered a severe blow to the Unionist Party. In Congress-Akali-Unionist Coalition ministry 11 March, 1946 Baldev Singh represented PPB. After announcement and the arrival of Cabinet Mission to discuss the granting of independence furthered the political activity in Sikh circles also.

The Pratinidhi Board amplified the demand of 'Sikh State' which included a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their shrines with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property. If the argument of the Muslim League was that Muslims had ruled over India, the argument of the Akalis was that the Sikhs had ousted the Mughals and established their own rule. In fact by creating a 'Sikh State' the British would only return to the Sikhs what they had directly got in trust from them.

At the same time the idea of Khalistan with transfer of population and a new state stretching from Jamuna to Chenab in which Sikhs would be able to act as a balancing power between the Hindus and Muslims was much debated. Sardar Baldev Singh, on 12 May 1946 made a statement "Between Ravi and Meerut should stretch the Jatstan" 16th May Cabinet Mission report was a bolt from the blue as it left the Sikhs at the mercy of the Muslims.

The Panthic Board was against the scheme of Cabinet Mission as the position of Sikhs was entirely ignored in the Punjab while the arrangement made for the grouping of provinces made it possible for muslims to secure all the advantages of Pakistan, without incurring the danger inherent in it. Master Tara Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh wrote to Lord Pethick Lawrence on 25 July,



1946 to clear their position. Lord Lawrence in his reply said, "The estimate of importance of your community would never depend upon the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad in view of anxieties you have expressed on the behalf of your community".

Sardar Baldev Singh, Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, Master Tara Singh complained against the placement of Punjab in Group B. The transfer of power phase, Gurudwara Elections, formation of Interim Government and to make the best out of critical scenario was eye catch of the period. Baldev Singh's hidden moves to be the member of Interim Government on 2 September 1946, to pacify Panthic Board, Akali-Congress cordial relations are a part of study. Jinnah's outburst of 16 August, 1946, paved final good bye to constitution and constitutional methods. Sir Joginder Singh's death on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1946 ended with the trio.

The year to follow was of turmoil, chaos, mass killings, and violent turns. Master Tara Singh slogan of February, 1947 'Kat Ke Denge Apni Jaan, Magar na Denge Pakistan' stirred the Punjabis. S.B. Ujjal Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh in company of Giani Kartar Singh were suggesting more than one alternative and waiting for constitutional machinery to work. The case of Punjab and the Sikh community was pleaded by sending delegation as they were still in

hope for betterment. 18 April, 1947 Sardar Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh met Lord Mountbatten and agreed unanimously Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and bloodshed police atrocities, Pakistan movement, chain reaction of retaliatory killings etc were out of British control. Minorities in Punjab were bleeding, the Governor could do little. March 'riots' and April resolutions made it clear that Punjab has to be partitioned.

S. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh were less extreme in demands than these of Tara Singh, Kartar Singh and others. Mountbatten plan of June 1947 added fuel to fire. Sardar Baldev Singh accepted the principle of division on 3rd June after consulting Akali Dal Working Committee. Though Sardar Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh continued to plead the case of Sikhs in both hot and cold way yet could not bring fruit. Mountbatten, Jenkins and other British authorities in India were diplomatically successful in their policy of 'appeasement' and 'snubbing' the Sikhs. Hence the 'black chapter of partition' was written on the very heart land of India i.e. Punjab. Sardar Ujjal Singh lost his valuable properties and lands in this political calamity.

After independence, S. Baldev Singh and Sardar Ujjal Singh were secured with important positions in the Union Government. The former became the first Defence Minister of Independent India and later was given the portfolio of Industries and Civil Supplies,

East Punjab Government in 1946. The Sikhs were almost in a sort of wilderness. They had lost their kingdom a hundred years before but still had an important and influential position in Punjab besides their semi independent Governments in the four Sikh States. 1947 partition of Punjab absolutely deprived of all ruling power.

Thus the study reveals that they were able to share many ventures. The three leaders were aristocrat as well Nationalist-Communitarians. They many a times tried to bring Hindu-Muslim-Sikhs together. They tried to make the Government happy but not at the cost of their community. Their hidden Nationalist-Communitarian approach sets a paradox. In this way by their unique eloquency, practical approach, strenuous efforts, opportunism, knowing and reacting according to limitations added a brilliant decade in the politics of Punjab.

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## **APPENDIX-I**

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SIR JOGINDER SINGH (MOST POPULAR AS JOGENDRA SINGH)**

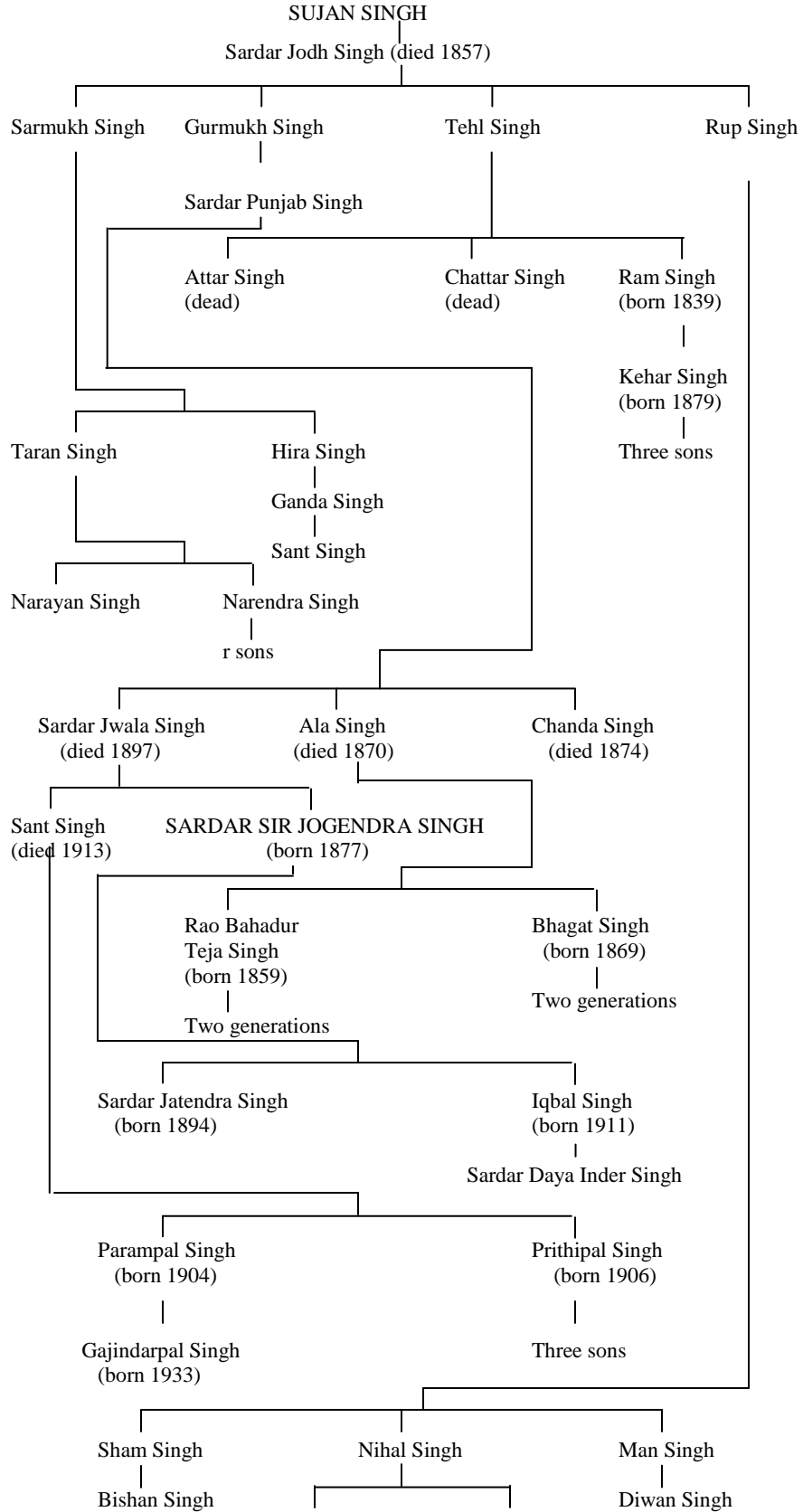
*He was born at Aira Estate in Kheri District in the United Provinces on May 25, 1877; son of Sardar Jawala Singh of Rasulpur, Tarn Taran, Distt. Amritsar and grandson of a distinguished ghorchara in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's service and a grantee of land squares (12000 acres) in Distt Kheri in Oudh and Rakhi Sukarchak, Taran Taran. Distt. Amritsar in lieu of his loyal services rendered to the British during the Uprising of 1857; imparted education at home connected with the Attariwala Sardars; greatly influenced by the writings of Tolstoy and inspired by the association of Harbans Singh, Sunder Singh Majithia, Bhai Teja Singh and Bhai Dit Singh; believed and responded to the programme of the Chief Khalsa Diwan contributed articles to the Civil-and Military Gazette and Pioneer, protagonist of the Punjabi language and the Sikh University; wrote some of the following works: Nur Jahan, Kamla Kamni, Thus Spoke Guru Nanak and Sikh Ceremonies; edited the East and West, a member of Theosophical Society; closely associated with the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Khalsa College Managing Council and the Sikh Educational Conference and presided over its*

*four annual sessions: 1909, Lahore, 1912 Sailkot, 1927 Rawalpindi and 1933 Peshawar.*

*He represented the Sikh community in the Council of State and looked after the Departments of Education, Health and Lands; was appointed Home Minister of the Patiala State in 1910; Prime Minister and the President of Regency of this State; played a very important role in resolving differences between the Akalis and the British Govt., and the settlement between them over the final draft of the Gurdwara Bill (1925); the Agriculture Minister of the Punjab Govt. from January, 1936 to March 1937; awarded with title of 'Sir' and appointed Taulakdar of the Fera State; conceived and implemented the scheme of Mandi Hydro-Electric and the town Joginder Nagar was named after him; allotted 2000 acres in Montgomery District on condition that he will produce seeds and experiment in agricultural machinery. Founder-member of the Khalsa National Party; served on several committees including Indian Sugar Committee and Indian Taxation Committee; one of the architectures of the Khalsa Defence League of India which aimed at helping the Government in the Defence of India and advancing the interests of the Sikhs in the Indian Army; nominated member of Viceroy's Executive, 1942; Pro-Chancellor of University of Delhi and a Fellow*

*of the Punjab University. He died on December 3, 1946 at Iqbal Nagar, Distt.  
Mintgomery.*

# PEDIGREE OF JOGINDER SINGH





Parsa Singh                      Harsa Singh                      (dead)  
|    (born 1886)  
Three generations

Source : Chopra, G.L., Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab, Lahore, 1940.

## **APPENDIX - II**

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SARDAR BAHADUR UJJAL SINGH**

*He was born at the village Hadal in Distt. Shahpur on 27 December 1895; son of Sujjan Singh, a rich man and Arora by caste; admitted to the village Dharmsala and Madrassa; joined the Khalsa High School, Amritsar and the Central Model School, Lahore and passed his Matriculation; did his M.A. in History from Government College, Lahore in 1916; settled at Multan District and contributed articles to the Khalsa Advocate, weekly organ of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and became its an active member; went to England as a member of the Sikh Deputation in connection with Sikh demands (Minto-Morley Reforms); Founder Member of SGPC, taken on the Managing Committee and Council of the Khalsa College for 30 years Amritsar, member of the Indian Central Cotton Committee from 1925-30 and 1943 to 1947; member of Textile Control Board, 1944 to 1947; an elected member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly 1926 and continually elected to it till 1956; its Parliamentary Secretary (Home from 1937 to 1942 resigned during Quit India Movement SGPC in 1930; elected delegate to First and Second R.T.C's 1930 and 31; appointed member consultative committee,*

1932, resigned in protest against Communal Award, attended All India Unity Conference in Allahabad, 1932, Honorary Secretary of the Punjab Reforms Committee presided over the Non-Government Punjab Schools Conference in 1928; a member of the Federal Structure Committee; President of the Punjab Sikh Political Conference 1932; President of the Sikh Youth's Conference 1933; presided over the convocation of the Khalsa College, Amritsar 1935; a member of the Sikh Deputation which met Cripps Mission in 1942; as member of Sikh deputation President of the All India Sikh Youth League, 1942 member Central Advisory Board of Education and All India Council of Technical Education 1945-49; a member of the Constituent Assembly 1946; a member of the Legislative Council of the East Punjab; Minister for Industries and Civil Supplies, East Punjab Environment, 1949; for Finance and Industries, 1952-56, Second Finance Committee, June 1956- September 57, member of the several committees and commissions, Governor of the Punjab Government, 1965 and of Madras 1966.

## **APPENDIX – III**

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SARDAR BALDEV SINGH**

*Baldev Singh, an important leader of Sikh community, played very significant role in the Punjab politics. He was a prominent leader of the province during 1937 to 1957. Baldev Singh was born on July 11, 1902 in Ambala. His father, Inder Singh was a leading industrial magnate from the village Dumna of the Ropar District in the Punjab. He was first educated at Ambala and then at Khalsa College, Amritsar. After finishing his studies, he joined his father's business in Tata Nagar and took active part in it till 1937. His political career was basically influenced by many prominent Sikh leaders like Master Tara Singh, Sunder Singh Majithia, Sir Joginder Singh, Chottu Ram etc. He belonged to rich family. So his riches helped him to enter into politics and his achievements were due to his riches and political negotiation. He remained the Development Minister of Punjab was Chief Architect of Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact (1942), United Sikh Party (1942), Punjab Panthic Board (1946), Defence Member and First Defence Minister of Independent India. Baldev Singh's activities were not confined to Punjab but he became an Indian leader. As a Defence Minister of India, Baldev Singh strived hard for the rehabilitation of refugees of the west Punjab. He also was a good constructor and introduced new technique of defence*

*on scientific basis. Due to his strategy and ability to tackle the army, he was able to win the 1<sup>st</sup> Indo-Pak war over the question of Kashmir.*

#### **APPENDIX - IV**

*Ref. N/895/37  
Inder Singh and Sons Ltd.  
Tata Nagar; Nov. 2, 1937.  
Registered Office  
Lindlie Chamber, 6, Hasting Street  
Calcutta*

*My dear Sardar Sahib*

*I have been thinking of writing to you for the last two months. On few occasions I did actually write but later on I thought of not posting it as some doubts came in my mind as I was lead to believe that my letter will not even be given ordinary cursory glance. But after very careful consideration, I have afterall decided to write a few lines to you with this hope that you will kindly go through them and give consideration it deserves.*

*I do not claim to possess an extra ordinary knowledge about the intricate problems about the Sikh community but whatever little I have, leads me to believe that the Sikh community is deteriorating every day in every sphere of life i.e., politically, socially, economically and in religion also. There are always some honest differences of opinion amongst the leaders of a community but what is going on in Sikh community is really deplorable. I do not think there is any hope*

*of a re-conciliation but nevertheless I would certainly welcome any approach that may be made in this connection. It is not my desire to take more of your valuable time and I now come to the real issue i.e. The Khalsa College Affair.*

*Certain deplorable combination of unfortunate circumstances that have risen in this connection is really lamentable and infact I have been extremely grieved to note press in which various attacks have been made on party organization. Rightly or wrongly the professors have been discharged and you will appreciate that this has led to a very strong resentment amongst the popular sections of the Sikh community in particular and others in general. Probably you may be aware that a move has been made to start Khalsa College in Lahore. I honesty and without any prejudice feel that this move will have a definitely bad effect on the premier Sikh institution. Everyone who have spent a few years in that magnificent building, naturally feels for this institution. Besides nobody can over look the most essential fact that this is the only institution towards the development of which the entire Sikh Community without any exception has contributed according to it's individual capacity. It will be most unfortunate if this institution is allowed to be victim of a set back on account of the fault of someone who is at the helm of affairs. Not only this the proposed starting of the new college at Lahore will cost an additional expense and burden on this small community and at the same time a great loss to the community and I wonder whether it is possible to save the community from this enormous loss. I am*

*personally of the opinion that any compromise can be affected. It will be certainly worthwhile to try it notwithstanding the great difficulty involved. If any compromise is affected the credit will go to you and thus be proof of your generous heart.*

*I have stated my views in unequivocal terms clearly and independently. It has no connection whatsoever with the party politics neither I have written these with interior motives indirectly to support the cause of anybody. This is a matter which I trust that every fair minded sikh who has got an atom of sincerity for the betterment of the sikh community at heart, will feel a lot if there be any chance of reapproach in this matter. I am personally of the opinion that the money which is being proposed to be spent on the new college of Lahore should be contributed towards this great institution at Amritsar. This would certainly add to the glory of the college at Amritsar and go to a great extent to enhance the prestige of the Sikh community in the eyes of Public. It is my considered opinion that propitious time has not yet come not it is an intelligent anticipation to expect it in the immediate future when we can avoid the automatic growth of division amongst ranks and division amongst castes etc. But as a nation we all put together and it is most significant duty of all of us individually and collectively to uphold traditions of the Sikh community and nothing would be left and one to create a happy and pleasant atmosphere between the various groups and have grown up in our community.*

*In the end I would honestly and sincerely appeal to you to consider it very carefully act if it is worth-while so.*

*With greatest respects,*

*Yours very sincerely,  
Baldev Singh  
Nov. 2, 1937*

*Sardar Bahadur Dr. Sunder Singh Majithia  
Revenue Minister, Punjab Government, Lahore.*

## APPENDIX V

*Bromehead Road, Lahore  
8th Nov., 1937*

*My dear Sardar Baldev Singh,*

*I am very glad to receive your kind letter No. 895/37 of the 2nd Nov. 1937 and have noted its content who does not feel the present condition of the community and steps that are necessary to be taken to put things right. I am pained to read that you thought that your letter would not receive the courtesy that was due to you and that on account of this misapprehension you did not post your letter earlier. Such has not been my habit throughout life to show any discourtesy to anybody, what to say to my friends like yourself is unthinkable. I shall always be happy to take over matters with a view to explore ways and means to bring about feeling of brotherly regard between different members of community. I feel personalities are, unnecessarily being dragged in communal matters to run town people in certain quarters and the use of harsh and abusive language is being indulged in somewhat more frequently which does good to nobody but lowers us in the eyes of public. If you are coming to the Punjab one of these days, I shall be happy to discuss things with you with a view to explore ways to bring about happy results. It will further give me an opportunity of*



*exhausting views on the subject matter of your letter and misunderstanding that might have been created in your mind regarding the Khalsa College affair would no doubt, be removed. When you come to know the other side of picture for you to judge things in their true perspective.*

*The Khalsa College is an institution belonging to the community and it must have a ward corner in every Sikh heart. So any attempt made from any quarter to harm this Panthic Institution, I know, could not have support from any Sikh who has the best interests of the community at heart. I am afraid Panthic activity which is being misdirected may not bring about bad results but more of this when we have any opportunity of talking together. I can assure you that you would not find me and my friend co-workers unmindful of the interests of the community which we all zealously guard and there could be no juncture is most desirable and is bound to lead to good results. It is a pity that things are not being looked in their true perspective and that party spirits are allowed to play a greater party in our present day politics which do not tend to unite the community. Which we all desire but lead to ill will and disruption. Nobody realizes more than myself at any rate you would not find me lacking in that spirit that in unity lies the strength and that communal interests at present juncture requires that we must close our ranks and introduce improvements in the*

*management of Panthic institutions both religious, social and communal. I shall therefore be glad if you will find an early opportunity for coming to the Punjab. So that we may have an occasion to talk over the matters together.*

*Please remember me to your father and with kindest regards.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*SUNDER SINGH MAJITHIA*

*Sardar Baldev Singh (M.L.A.)  
Inder Singh and Sons Ltd.  
Tata Nagar (B.N. Railways).*

**APPENDIX - VI**  
**THE PUNJAB LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMPOSITION**

*Total Strength = 175*

<i>General (including 8 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and 1 for women)</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Muhammadan (including 2 seats reserved for women)</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Sikhs (including 1 seats reserved for women)</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Anglo-Indians</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>European</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Indian Christians</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Commerce etc.</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Landholders</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Labour</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>University</i>	<i>1</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>175</i></b>

*Source : Reform Office, Franchise, File No. 20/1936/F, Part - I*

**APPENDIX - VII**  
**STATEMENT SHOWING THE PARTY-WISE POSITION**  
**AFTER THE ELECTIONS OF 1936-37**

<i>Unionist Party</i>	95
<i>Congress</i>	18
<i>Khalsa National Party</i>	14
<i>Hindu Election Board</i>	11
<i>Akali Dal</i>	10
<i>Independent</i>	19 <i>(These 19 independents included 7 Hindus, 5 Muslims, 3 Sikhs and 4 Scheduled castes.)</i>
<i>Ahrar Party</i>	02
<i>Ittehad-i-Millat</i>	02
<i>Muslim League</i>	01**
<i>Socialist</i>	01
<i>Parliamentary Board</i>	01
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>175</b>

\* *The Unionist Party had won 88 seats on the first election results. But just within a week, 6 independents and 1 Muslim Leaguer had joined the Unionist Party raising its strength to 95 seats in the Assembly.*

\*\* *Only two League candidates emerged victorious in the elections, but one of whom joined the Unionist Party immediately after the results were announced; lowering the strength of the League to one seat only in the Assembly.*

**Source :** *Reform Office, File No. 20/1936/F, Part, Franchise*

**APPENDIX - VIII**

**THE DIVISION OF THE SEATS WON BY THE POLITICAL  
PARTIES IN THE ELECTIONS OF 1936-37**

<i>(A)</i>	<b><i>Unionist Party</i></b>	<i>Seats</i>
	<i>Muslim Reserved</i>	<i>75</i>
	<i>General</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>Landholders'</i>	<i>03</i>
	<i>Indian Christian</i>	<i>02</i>
	<i>Non-Union Labour</i>	<i>01</i>
	<i>Anglo-Indian</i>	<i>01</i>
	<i>European</i>	<i>01</i>
	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>95</i></b>
<i>(B)</i>	<b><i>Congress Party</i></b>	
	<i>General</i>	<i>11</i>
	<i>Muslim Reserved</i>	<i>02</i>
	<i>Sikh Reserved</i>	<i>05</i>
	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>18</i></b>
<i>(C)</i>	<b><i>Hindu Election Board</i></b>	
	<i>General</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Landholders'</i>	<i>01</i>
<i>(D)</i>	<b><i>Akali Dal</i></b>	
	<i>Sikh Reserved</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Others</i>	<i>--</i>
	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>10</i></b>

(E)	<b><u>Khalsa National Party</u></b>	
	<i>Sikh Reserved</i>	13
	<i>Landholders'</i>	01
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>
(F)	<i>Muslim League</i>	
	<b><u>Muslim Reserved</u></b>	01 ( <i>Muslim League had won two seats. But a winner Leaguer joined the Unionist Party soon after the election results were out</i> )
(G)	<b><u>Ahrrar</u></b>	
	<i>Muslim Reserved</i>	02
	<i>Others</i>	--
	<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>
(H)	<b><u>Socialist Party</u></b>	
	<i>Sikh Reserved</i>	01
	<i>Others</i>	--
	<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>
(I)	<b><u>Ittehad-i-Millat</u></b>	
	<i>Muslim Reserved</i>	02
	<i>Others</i>	--
	<b>Total</b>	<b>01</b>
(J)	<b><u>Parliamentary Labour Board</u></b>	
	<i>Labour</i>	01
	<i>Others</i>	--

	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>01</i></b>
<b><i>(K)</i></b>	<b><i>Congress National Party</i></b>	
	<i>General</i>	<i>01</i>
	<i>Others</i>	--
	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>01</i></b>
<b><i>(L)</i></b>	<b><i>Independent</i></b>	
	<i>General</i>	<i>09</i>
	<i>Muslim Reserved</i>	<i>04</i>
	<i>Sikh Reserved</i>	<i>03</i>
	<i>Labour</i>	<i>01</i>
	<i>University</i>	<i>01</i>
	<i>Commerce etc.</i>	<i>01</i>
	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>19</i></b>

**Source :** Reform Office, File No. 20/III/1936-F, Franchise.

## APPENDIX-IX

### STATEMENT SHOWING THE PARTY POSITION AFTER THE ELECTION RESULTS OF 1936-37 REGARDING THE URBAN AND RURAL SEATS

#### *A. General Urban and Rural Seats:*

<i>Urban Seats</i>	
<i>Congress</i>	<i>08</i>
<i>Hindi Election Board</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>09</i>
<i>Rural Seats</i>	
<i>Unionist Party</i>	<i>08</i>
<i>Hindu Election Board</i>	<i>08</i>
<i>Congress</i>	<i>03</i>
<i>Congress Nationalist</i>	<i>01</i>
<i>Independent</i>	<i>07</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>27</i>



**B. Muslim Urban and Rural Seats:**

<b>Urban Seats</b>	
<i>Unionist Party</i>	<i>04 (including 2 Muslim urban seats for women)</i>
<i>Ahrar</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>Ittehad-i-Millat</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>Muslim League</i>	<i>01</i>
<i>Independent</i>	<i>02</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Rural Seats</b>	
<i>Unionist Party</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Congress</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>Independent</i>	<i>01</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>

**C. Sikh Urban and Rural Seats:**

<b>Urban Seats</b>	
<i>Khalsa National Party</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>Congress</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>Akali Dal</i>	<i>--</i>

<i>Total</i>	<b>02</b>
<i>Rural Seats</i>	
<i>Khalsa National Party</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Akali Dal</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Congress</i>	<i>5*</i>
<i>Socialist</i>	<i>01</i>
<i>Independent</i>	<i>03</i>
<i>Total</i>	<b>30</b>

*\*Including one women rural seat*

*Source: This data has been derived from the Reform Office, File No. 20/III/36-F, Franchise.*

## **APPENDIX-X**

### **SIKH MEMORANDUM TO THE CABINET MISSION (1946)**

*The following is the text of the memorandum submitted by Master Tara Singh to the Cabinet Mission:*

*The position of the minorities has changed since to Cripps Mission. As conceded by Mr. Attlee, Indians cannot be made responsible for governing themselves and at the same time power retained in the hands of an authority outside Indian for intervention on behalf of such minorities for ensuring their proper treatment by the majority. This makes it all the more necessary for the Sikhs to safeguard in the constitution itself their political status in the future policy of the country.*

*The draft declaration provides for the right of non-accession of provinces. The Sikhs make it plain that they are opposed to any possible partition of India as envisaged in the draft declaration. The Sikhs form a compact cultural nationality of about six millions. They further maintain that, judged by any definition or test, the Punjab is not only their homeland, but also holy land. They were the last rulers of the Punjab and before the advent of the British they enjoyed in the Punjab independent economic and political status.*

*They wish, however, to point out, that with the inauguration of provincial autonomy on the basis of the Communal Award, they have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness. If the existing provincial political set-up is continued, the transference of power to the people would perpetuate the coercion of the Sikhs under what in practice has come to be the Muslim rule. That set-up is unjust to the Sikhs. Its working has mean : Muslim communal rule in the Punjab which has almost exasperated the Sikhs to the point of revolutionary protest. The intervention of war conditions has been responsible for the Sikhs acquiescing in this communal tyranny. They cannot be expected to submit to it as a permanent arrangement in any new scheme of Indian polity.*

### ***Akali Demands:***

*The statutory Muslim majority in the legislature of the province must go and the position of the Sikhs must be strengthened by increased representation therein so as to ensure to the Sikhs an effective voice in the administration of the country.*

*In the alternative, out of the existing province of the Punjab a new province may be carved out as an additional provincial unit in the united India of the future in such a way that all important Sikh Gurdwaras and shrines may be*

*included in it as also a substantial majority of the Sikh population in the existing province of the Punjab.*

*The Sikhs cannot, however, blind themselves to the fact that the Muslims have declared that they are a separate nation as distinct from the Sikhs, the Hindus and others, and that on that basis they are entitled to Pakistan. We have already expressed unequivocally our opposition to the establishment of such a state. In view of the rumours that are current, we are obliged to take note of the possibility of the Cabinet Mission giving serious consideration to the Muslim League claim.*

*Before the Mission arrives at the decision on this question we would emphasize that the Sikhs have as good a claim for the establishment of separate sovereign Sikh state as the Muslims for Pakistan and that the Mission should not concede the claim for Pakistan without conceding at the same time the claim for a separate state made on behalf of the Sikhs. The Sikhs are in favour of a single constitution-making body in which they should be represented as already indicated above.*

*In case the Mission should of taking into serious consideration the proposal that has been made for two constitution-making bodies, one for Pakistan and the other for the rest of India, we wish, in the light of what has been said by*

*us above, to make our position clear that there should also be a separate constitution-making body for a Sikh State.*

**Source:** Indian Annual Register. Vol. I, 1946, pp. 200-201.