

## Chapter 5

### **Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru**

As far as I have studied, observed, and experienced, it is apparently, again apparently, very difficult to be hopeful about the future of the Punjabi language. It is good as well as not good news that the patient will not die soon, but the question is where ultimately a long and protracted illness leads to? But knowing well the reality of appearances, I gather more and more courage whenever hopelessness invades and tries to break my defences. And I move on.

Trying to understand the damage done to Punjabi language by Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs, if my view is correct or even near correct, their leading political parties i.e. Congress and Akali Dal inevitably have to be held responsible. And the most influential two individuals were the leaders of the two parties - Pundit Nehru and Master Tara Singh. Further, Pundit Nehru was the prime minister of India, again representing Hindus of India as well as all others. As of the two, Pundit Nehru was in the commanding position and for so long, therefore whatever happened negative, he must be held more responsible.

As the future of humanity is too demanding, therefore same must be the case of the sub-continent. And as Punjab became the arena of massacres and the biggest uprooting and eviction of humanity, if Punjab ever discovers this and is able to turn it into a right political and civilizational wave, Punjab will determine the future of the sub-continent. Therefore Punjab's future is even more demanding. To that end everything must happen in Punjab whether East or West and therefore Punjab needs a renaissance very desperately. And as it can happen in spite of political and religious boundaries, the opportunity must be grasped by the upcoming youth. Are we not at the threshold of perhaps the biggest civilizational project at least of our age of not only of the sub-continent but of the world as well?

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### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

History has disoriented all Punjabis – Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Muslim Punjabis have yet to discover the heritage of their language. Sikhs since 1947 are in a perpetual quarrel with Delhi and Hindus. And this is not without a background. And Hindu Punjabis, to what extent I am not sure, very unfortunately, have disowned their mother-tongue. And this had happened under the nose of Pundit Nehru. If not before Partition, had he understood the implications and had the capabilities, he would have cornered the Punjabi Hindus on abandoning Punjabi language and forced them back to their ‘homes’. How an enlightened leader can let his people disown their heritage due to some transitory and superficial issues? This was a Himalayan blunder of Punjabi Hindus and they belonged to Congress party! On the other hand, it is impossible to find any wisdom on the part of Sikhs to embark on such political agitation immediately after Partition what ultimately materialized into the Punjabi Suba demand.

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Before we take up Punjab, let us go to South India and see Pundit Nehru’s working there with an eye on the historical process. It will help us in Punjab.

### *Pundit Nehru and Andhra State*

Earlier in 1920, the members of the Indian National Congress had agreed on the linguistic reorganization of the Indian states as one of the party's political goals. In 1927, the Congress declared that it was committed to "the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis", and reaffirmed its stance in the election manifesto of 1945-46. But after independence, there were second thoughts. On 17 June 1948, the Linguistic Provinces Commission (Dar Commission) was set up which in its 10 December 1948 report recommended that "the formation of provinces on exclusively or even mainly linguistic considerations is not in the larger interests of the Indian nation". It recommended the reorganization of the provinces of Madras, Bombay and Central Provinces and Berar primarily on the basis of geographical contiguity, financial self-sufficiency and ease of administration. Soon after the report was published, the Congress, at its Jaipur session, set up the "JVP committee" to study the recommendations of the Dar Commission. The committee, comprised Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, in addition to the Congress president Pattabhi Sitaramayya. In its report

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

dated 1 April 1949, the Committee stated that the time was not suitable for formation of new provinces, but also stated "if public sentiment is insistent and overwhelming, we, as democrats, have to submit to it, but subject to certain limitations in regard to the good of India as a whole". In order to reorganise the states, the Government of India constituted the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) under the chairmanship of Fazl Ali, a former Supreme Court judge. In the report which was tabled in the Lok Sabha on 14 December 1955, the Commission clearly said that "it is neither possible nor desirable to reorganise States on the basis of the single test of either language or culture, but that a balanced approach to the whole problem is necessary in the interest of our national unity." About Punjab, the commission recommended: 'The Punjab:— P E P S U and the Himachal Pradesh are too small to continue by themselves and as there already are economic and administrative links between them and the present Punjab State, the merger of these two States in the Punjab will be justified.' [1&2]

[1&2] [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States\\_Reorganisation\\_Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_Reorganisation_Commission) (taken on 23-3-2015) &

THE ECONOMIC WEEKLY October 15. 1955 Reorganisation of States: The Approach and Arrangements  
[http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1955\\_7/42/reorganisation\\_of\\_statethe\\_approach\\_and\\_arrangements.pdf](http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1955_7/42/reorganisation_of_statethe_approach_and_arrangements.pdf) (taken on 23-3-2015)

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But two years before a very significant incident had happened. In an effort to protect the interests of the Telugu people in Madras Presidency, and to preserve the culture of Andhra people, Potti Sreeramulu attempted to force the government to listen to public demands for the separation of the Andhra region from the Madras Presidency, based on linguistic lines and with Madras as its capital. He went on a lengthy fast, stopping when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru promised to support creation of Andhra State. Despite this concession, little progress was made on the issue, largely due to the Telugu people's insistence on retention of Madras as their future capital. The JVP committee, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, would not accept that proposal. With the Andhra State still not granted, Sreeramulu resumed his hunger strike on 19 October 1952, despite the entreaties of

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

supporters who stated that retention of Madras was a futile cause. Despite strikes and demonstrations by the Andhra people, the government made no clear statement regarding the formation of the new state, and Sreeramulu died during the night of 15 December 1952. In his death procession, people shouted slogans praising his sacrifice, with thousands more joining as the procession reached Mount Road, Madras. The procession broke into a riot and accompanying destruction of public property. As the news spread, disorder broke out in many other cities. Seven people were killed in police firing. The popular agitation continued for three to four days disrupting normal life in Madras and Andhra regions. On 19 December, Prime Minister Nehru announced that a separate Andhra state would be formed. On 1 October 1953, the Telugu speaking Andhra State was established with Kurnool as its capital from Madras Presidency. [3]

[3] [taken on 24-3-2014 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potti\\_Sreeramulu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potti_Sreeramulu)]

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From what has been quoted above, it seems obvious that Nehru as well as the collective leadership of the Congress were lagging behind the emerging realities in the country. This South Indian case aside, I am otherwise more than certain that this was the case. This had already manifested in the partition of the country. But at the same time, I believe, overall, this could not have been otherwise. And it could have been worse also. Moreover, in any given situation, the question of human limitations is always there.

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### *Was Punjab beyond Pundit Nehru's capabilities?*

From 15-8-1947, the independence day of India to, let us say, 30-6-2015 (a date I fixed arbitrarily during this work for calculations), we have 24791 days. Of these Congress ruled Punjab for 13457 days, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) for 7857 days, and there were president's rules for 3477 days. First president's rule began on 20-6-1951 during Pundit Nehru's time, then there were 3 president's rules during Indira Gandhi's time, one during Morarji Desai's time, again two during Indira Gandhi's time, and finally so far the last president's rule began on 11-6-1987 during Rajiv Gandhi's time. During Morarji Desai's time the president's rule was the shortest i.e. of 51 days only. Taking out these 51 days

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

and crediting all other president's rules' days to Congress Party's account, Punjab was ruled by the Congress Party, in fact, for 16893 days while SAD was in power for 7857 days.

Nehru died on 27 May 1964, India and Pakistan fought a war in early September, 1965 and the present Punjab came into being on 1 November, 1966. Before that Punjab was a large state which included Haryana and after this date, Punjab was what it is today. So from that date to 30-6-2015 as above, Congress remained in power for 6860 days, SAD for 7857 days, and the State remained under President's rule for 3056 days. And adding up Congress and president's rule become 9916 days.

From these facts one can deduce that by and large for whatever happened in Punjab which should not have happened the answers have to be sought in the performance of the leaders of these two parties. And the first Akali Dal (Sant Fateh Singh Group) government came into power on 8 March 1967. Its chief minister was Gurnam Singh who before Partition practiced law in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad in Pakistan).

That after 4 months and one week of getting Punjabi Suba, Akali Dal came to power for the first time after about 20 years of independence, Akali Dal got what it was agitating for – power even at the cost of a reduced Punjab. Akali Dal being an exclusive Sikh Party, like Muslim League, triumphed in exclusiveness. Jinnah had left behind 33% Muslims, Akalis left behind 9% Sikhs and 18% Punjabis only in Haryana. Separation succeeded. In this separation there were many elements of 1947 Partition. The genuine worries of the majority in India got buried under the 'misdeeds' of their leaders in Delhi. To whom they would have turned to? There was nobody, except the failing Congress leaders in Delhi. If a master fails, to whom should go a disciple? A line of Baba Farid Sahib's *sheir* in Punjabi, I understand, depicts such a situation: *Sain bajhon apne vaidan kahiay kis.*

If Jinnah and his Muslim League had left behind 33% Muslims [3] in India in 1947, Akali Dal left behind 18% Punjabis [4] including 9% Sikhs in 1966. In that sense Jinnah was far ahead of them.

[3] According to the CIA World Factbook July 2014 estimated populations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are 1,236,344,631; 196,174,380; and

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

166,280,712 respectively. The Muslim percentages of the total populations of the three countries are 13.4, 96.4, and 89.5 respectively. The 96.4% Muslim population of Pakistan is 2010 estimated, but we ignore this fact here. Therefore, according to these percentages, the Muslim populations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are 165,670,180; 189,112,102; and 148,821,237 or about 166, 189, and 149 million or about 17, 19, and 15 crore respectively. Considering collectively, the total population of these three countries is 1,598,799,722 while its Muslim component is 503,603,516 or about 32%. The left-behind Muslim population in India is 165,670,180 as mentioned above which is about 33% of the total 503,603,516.

[4] According to Census of India 2001, total population of Punjab is 24,358,999 of which Sikhs are 14,592,387. Therefore they are about 60% in Punjab. The total Sikh population in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh is 15,980,579 of which its left-out populations in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh are 1,170,662, 72,355, and 145,175 respectively. The total is 1,388,192. Therefore the left-out Sikh population is about 9% of the total. The total population of Punjab and Haryana (24,358,999 and 21,144,564) being 45503563 and according to Punjabi Mahasabha [4.1] [Punjabis are](#) (8,034,934) 38 per cent of the total population of Haryana, therefore of the total Punjabis of Punjab and Haryana, considering Punjab as totally Punjabi, 18% Punjabis were left behind in Haryana. [4.2]

[4.1] December 22, 2009

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/-punjabis-discriminated-against-in-haryana-/557648/>

[4.2]

[http://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2001/Census\\_data\\_finder/C\\_Series/Population\\_by\\_religious\\_communities.htm](http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/C_Series/Population_by_religious_communities.htm)

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If we can use the term ‘accident’ for an event damaging a language, I tend to believe that the 1947 was an accident of Punjabi language which was perhaps the biggest that any language ever met in the history of mankind. And the misfortune is that this event lies unknown and buried under the debris of history. So much has been written by so many about 1947, but what happened with Punjabi language has been missed. What is the explanation? Under the British policy of dividing, for me the simple explanation is that practically all Punjabis, whether Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims, were totally disoriented. Their religious pains overrode their all other pains. As 1947 was not a one-time affair, it had

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

long-range consequences. Therefore Punjabi's becoming victim and continue to suffer in silence was a foregone conclusion.

Partition separated Punjabi Muslims from Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs. And Punjabi Muslims were enslaved by the ideology of the Urdu Party. Therefore, Punjabi got lost in Pakistani Punjab. In post-Partition Indian Punjab, Hindus and Sikhs quarrelled and Punjabi Hindus, abandoning Punjabi, tried to adopt Hindi. The trajectory of history after 1947 is such that Punjabi is being perpetually damaged ever since.

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Summing up and saying once more, the answer to the question, as to why Punjabi is in such a state of affairs that nowhere Punjabis are satisfied with, must be sought in history. And from history, the answer is simple: 'Interventions'. And the interventions were: Muslim intervention from 1000 to about 1800, British intervention from about 1850 to 1947 along with Urdu Party and Hindi Party interventions. After Partition, in the new set up, Urdu Party and Hindi Party interventions in Pakistani and Indian Punjab respectively damaged Punjabi. The first or Muslim intervention resulted into Punjabis becoming three communities and their manipulation by the British followed. The Urdu Party which was itself manipulated by the British, in turn, became the manipulators of Punjabi Muslims and others in Pakistan through state policies as well as with all other means available. In fact they themselves were the state.

In India the understanding of Pundit Nehru and therefore the attitudes which developed raise questions. The understanding seems to be academic and superficial in the sense that it does not enter into the process of history. Punjab was not understood. This had to lead to the diminishing moral content in the policies of the Congress government towards Punjab and therefore to manipulation. And then all the three communities Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs themselves committed blunders.

There is no doubt that the Punjabi Muslims were the worst offenders. Who was the least offender, my opinion does not remain fixed. But when I look at Sikh community who I believe had been and are the vanguard of Punjabi language and therefore, along with conscientious Hindus, the future teachers of Punjabi language for the left-behind Muslim Punjabis, they must be held more responsible than the Hindu Punjabi community. They should have struggled very hard in not letting Punjabi Hindus go away. If Punjabi Suba demand was to split

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

Punjabis along religious lines, it should not have been made. Was it not repeating ‘Jinnah’ and ‘Muslim League’ in India again? And all this happened when Pundit Nehru was the Prime Minister. As if one partition was not enough, he helped another partition in Indian Punjab by doing what he did and by not doing what he did not.

But has not Punjabi language been finally victorious in the shape of present Indian Punjab which came into being on 1 November, 1966 with Punjabi as its state language? I believe, this being the greatest victory of Punjabi language so far, the final victory has yet to come. The final victory will stop the perpetual damage being inflicted on Punjabi and will establish its sovereignty with its historically truthful Gurmukhi script over all its present and ‘lost territories’ whether in India, Pakistan or elsewhere.

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Sometime during this work in early 2015, it struck me to see as to what were the views of Pundit Nehru about Guru Nanak Sahib and Sikhs. I scanned Nehru’s book ‘The Discovery of India’. In the contents of the book we have two relevant topics: (1) Synthesis and growth of Mixed Culture, Purdah, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Amir Khusrau; (2) Ranjit Singh and Jai Singh. Pundit Nehru wrote [5]:

[5] Jawaharlal Nehru: The Discovery of India: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial fund Edition: 13<sup>th</sup> Print 1993

Page 241: “There was the Hindu Ramanand in the south, in the fifteenth century, and his still more famous disciple Kabir, a Moslem weaver of Benares. Kabir’s poems and songs became, and still are, very popular. In the north there was Guru Nanak, who is considered the founder of Sikhism. The influence of these reformers went far beyond the limits of the particular sects that grew up after them.

276: “The British became then (1818) the unchallenged sovereigns of a great part of India, governing the country directly or through puppet and subsidiary princes. The Punjab and some outlying parts were still beyond their control, but the British Empire in India had become an established fact, and subsequent wars with the Sikhs and Gurkhas and in Burma merely rounded it off on the map.

“They (The British) were defeated on many occasion – by Haider Ali and Tipu, by the Marathas, by the Sikhs, and by the Gurkhas. A little less good fortune and



Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

they might have lost their foothold in India, or at the most held on to certain coastal territories only.

279: “They (the British) won most of their battles before the actual fighting took place. That had been so at Plassey and was repeated again and again right up to the Sikh wars.

281-282: “One of the individuals who was full of curiosity was Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a Jat Sikh, who had built up a kingdom in the Punjab, which subsequently spread to Kashmir and the Frontier Province. He had failings and vices; nevertheless he was a remarkable man. The Frenchman, Jacquermont, calls him ‘extremely brave’ and ‘almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen, but his curiosity makes up for the apathy of the whole nation.’ ‘His conversation is like a nightmare.’ ... Ranjit Singh was not only intellectually curious and inquisitive, he was remarkably humane at a time when India and the world seethed with callousness and inhumanity. He built up a kingdom and a powerful army and yet he disliked bloodshed. ‘Never was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality’, He abolished the death sentence for every crime, however heinous it might be, when in England every petty pilferers had to face death. ‘Except in actual warfare, he has never been known to take life, though his own has been attempted more than once, and his reign will be found freer from any striking acts of cruelty and oppression than those of many more civilized monarchs.’

323: “British dominion was extended to the Punjab by 1850 after two Sikh wars. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who had held and extended the Sikh state in the Punjab, had died in 1839.

324: “The Great Revolt of 1857: The British got the support of the Gurkhas and, what is much more surprising, of the Sikhs also, for the Sikhs had been their enemies and had been defeated by them only a few years before. It is certainly to the credit of the British that they could win over the Sikhs in this way; whether it is to the credit or discredit of the Sikhs of those days depends upon one’s point of view. It is clear, however, that there was a lack of nationalist feeling which might have bound the people of India together. Nationalism of the modern type was yet to come; India had still to go through much sorrow and travail before she learnt the lesson which would give her real freedom. Not by fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order, would freedom come.”

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In this 582 page book 'The Discovery of India', this is all about Guru Nanak Sahib and Sikhs which, as I wrote above, 'seems to be academic and superficial.' Lacking insight, it is more of a general information than a critical examination of the specific part of Punjab's history.

Beginning with Guru Nanak Sahib, the Sikh history is a universe in itself. Understanding this universe, the adverse effects of British imperialism on it and connecting and integrating it with the still larger Hindu universe of India was the task history had placed on the shoulders of Pundit Nehru and his associates. The job has remained unaccomplished so far. 'The Discovery of India' was completed by the end of 1945. Partition, independence and Pundit Nehru's becoming prime minister of India was just two and half years away. And he would remain prime minister of India until 1964.

Pundit Nehru's saying that 'it is certainly to the credit of the British that they could win over the Sikhs in this way; whether it is to the credit or discredit of the Sikhs of those days depends upon one's point of view' gives the impression of his being a detached observer. There was the need to be explicit because it was his own history. Have you not to have a position on your history? Without a position on history, are you not a blind man in politics? His place in history necessitated his owning the Sikhs and himself being owned by them. If British knew why Sikhs went with them, we should know it too.

Can the British be helpful in this regard? 'The reconciliation of the Sikhs to the new regime was due partly to the tactful handling of Henry Lawrence, but more to the political sagacity of the Sikhs themselves, who appeared to have made up their mind to accept their beating as final, and rise in wealth and honour under a race, whose power and worth they had already learned to appreciate.' [6] And 'the stalwart Sikhs who form the population of the Manjha were wholly on our side throughout. Many villages have been almost decimated by the number of recruits who have flocked to form our new regiments in memory of the bygone days when they bravely fought us under the banners of the Khalsa.' [7]

[6] Hugh Kennedy Trevaskis, *An Economic History of Punjab* (1928), Vintage Books, Gurgaon (Haryana), India. p. 209 and as quoted in my book 'The Pakistan Problem' p. 330.

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

[7] Robert Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner, Punjab as quoted in my book 'The Pakistan Problem' p. 295

The British, naturally, had felt the danger of a Sikh rising: 'In Bengal there was no danger; in the Punjab the situation was saved by the iron nerve of Sir John Lawrence and his picked team of enterprising officers. Here there was the triple danger of Afghan interference, of a Sikh rising, and sepoy mutiny. Dost Muhammad remained loyal to his treaties, a delayed effect of his respect for British arms acquired in the first Afghan war. The Sikhs remained quiet and indeed actively helped in the operations. They had nothing to gain from Aurangzeb's successors. The measures of the new government had also contended many more than it had alienated. The sepoy danger was met by prompt disarming and the way cleared for the organization of a mobile column under the redoubtable John Nicholson.' [8]

[8] Vincent A. Smith: The Oxford History of India. First Edition 1958 (1967 Reprint) pp. 438-441 as quoted in my book 'The Pakistan Problem' p. 220

But the mutiny happened after about a decade of British occupation (1845-49) of Punjab. This was the time for Sikhs to make up their minds and determine their attitudes towards the British. Overall, they became willing to work with them. But this could not have happened without a 'right' British approach. Again, the British handling of them alone could not have done that had their wisdom failed them at that crucial moment of Punjab's history. After 1947, considering Pundit Nehru had taken the place of the British and Master Tara Singh represented Sikh wisdom, neither proved to be qualified to handle the challenge of integrating Sikhs into India without accidents. It should have been safe landing and for that all the necessary elements or components existed. I do not like saying that Pundit Nehru and Master Tara Singh made mistakes which of course they made. But the fact behind mistakes was that the chemistry of both of them was not compatible with the requirements of the job. And behind such developments lay the historical process where British dominated and of which they were the products. One likes to imagine that even one of them with the right state of mind could have turned history's direction that Sikhs and India could have avoided catastrophes they had to endure.

Coming back to Sikhs, this could not have been one man's decision. It was the decision of the community. This was how they felt collectively. Unlike Jinnah and his Muslim League later, who having their own prior agenda created the

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

circumstances that Muslims were made to move in the desired direction, it was their natural and collective judgement in a new situation they were facing. Therefore, I believe, their decision was historically in the right direction.

In fact Pundit Nehru concedes that the mutiny was a 'lost cause' in the same paragraph above: 'Nationalism of the modern type was yet to come; India had still to go through much sorrow and travail before she learnt the lesson which would give her real freedom. Not by fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order, would freedom come.' Apparently one can say that the Sikhs did not go with the lost cause, although the matter, I believe, was not that simple.

When the 'Mutiny' of 1857 as the British called it or 'the Great Revolt of 1857' as Pundit Nehru called it, is christened as the 'First War of Independence' and has become sacrosanct in India and Pakistan, how anyone can justify the Sikhs going with the British? I should mention here that Muslim Punjab also went with the British. This cannot be understood if seen only from Delhi's side and not from the Punjab's side also. I have answered this question in detail in my above referred book 'The Pakistan Problem'.

It should be noted that Sikhs were sent to fight the mutineers who were Muslims, in the Punjab itself. In his Mutiny Report Robert Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner Punjab, wrote which is dated Lahore 24<sup>th</sup> March 1858:

'The stalwart Sikhs who form the population of the Manjha were wholly on our side throughout. Many villages have been almost decimated by the number of recruits who have flocked to form our new regiments in memory of the bygone days when they bravely fought against us under the banner of the Khalsa. ... On September 11<sup>th</sup> it was reported that an insurrection had broken out in the Gogaira district among the Khurruls ... Within six hours from the arrival at Lahore of the intelligence of this outbreak the Chief Commissioner dispatched to Gogaira, which was threatened by the rebels, a force of Europeans and Sikh Infantry and guns. This force marched 83 miles in three days, and arrived an hour before the rebels attacked the station.' [9]

[9] As quoted in my book 'The Pakistan Problem' pp. 295 & 290

While, John Lawrence Chief Commissioner Punjab, wrote on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1858: 'Artillerymen being greatly wanted in the camp, the Artillerymen of the old Sikh army who were then out of employ were enlisted in the British service, to the number of about 300 men, and dispatched to Delhi. To the same destination was sent a strong corps of Muzhubee Sikhs, numbering, 1200 men, to serve as Pioneers. ... By the 17<sup>th</sup>

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

of May, [10] however, it became apparent that the Punjab did not sympathize with the movement in Hindoostan, and that a good spirit prevailed in the Punjabee troops, It was therefore at once resolved to augment them.’ [11]

[10] Mutiny began on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1857 in Meerut.

[11] As quoted in my book ‘The Pakistan Problem’ p. 299 & 302

And in the same above report is mentioned, for example, that among 47,356 men of different backgrounds of Punjab Force which went to capture Delhi from the rebels, 13,344 or 28% were Sikhs [12] being only about 1.5% of the total population, while 24,027 or 51% were Muslims. [as quoted in my book ‘The Pakistan Problem’ p. 304] This means there was no sympathy in Punjab, as the British claimed, for the revolt in Hindustan and that means Punjab was united politically even after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Moreover, in 1930 Sikhs were about 16% in Indian Army’s Infantry (excluding Gurkhas) and about 24% in Cavalry. [13]

[12] According to CIA World Factbook, populations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (July 2014 est.) are 1,236,344,631, 196,174,380, 166,280,712, and the total is 1,598,799,723. Sikhs are 1.9% of Indian population and are 23,490,547 or about 1.5% of the total population of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

[13] As quoted in my book ‘The Pakistan Problem’ p. 326

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### ***The Disoriented Sikhs***

If as early as the ‘early 1949’ whatever the immediate reason, had ‘initiated some rethinking of the policies and programmes by the Sikh leadership, as to their position in the future set-up of the country’ and at a Sikh convention in April the demand for ‘the creation of a linguist State for Punjabis’ was adopted [14] or if ‘The struggle for Punjabi Suba had started as early as 1951 when the Akali Party asked for a cultural and linguistic state.’, [15] one is led to look for the reasons into the era before 1947.

Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

[14] Approaches to History: Essays in Indian Historiography edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

[15] Social, Cultural, and Economic History of Himachal Pradesh: By Manjit Singh Ahluwalia

### 1. Khushwant Singh writes:

Seeds of Hindu-Sikh separatism were sown by the British after they annexed Punjab in 1849 AD. They made reservations for Khalsa Sikhs in the Army, Civil Services and legislatures. Thus an economic incentive was given to Khalsa separateness. The feeling was eagerly nurtured by leaders of both communities. The lead was taken by Swami Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj. He visited Punjab and in his intemperate speeches described Guru Nanak as a semi-literate imposter (Dambhi). Sikhs picked up the gauntlet and made Swamiji or mahasha a synonym for a bigoted Hindu. Sikh separatism was boosted by the Singh Sabha movement started in the 1880s. It found expression in a booklet by Sikh scholar Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha entitled "Hum Hindu Naheen Hain" — we are not Hindus. Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs started treading different paths. The Hindus opened DAV (Dayanand Anglo-Vedic - mam) and Sanatan Dharm [16] schools and colleges. The Sikhs opened Khalsa schools and colleges. They closed ranks to face Muslim dominance and later against the demand for Pakistan.

[16] In current-day usage, the term *Sanatana Dharma* is used to emphasize an "orthodox" or *sanatani* ("eternalist") outlook in contrast to the socio-political Hinduism embraced by movements such as the Arya Samaj. – mam

Independence brought about a radical change in Hindu-Sikh equations. Sikhs were the worst sufferers of Partition. From being the biggest land-owners in West Punjab, they were levelled to comparative poverty; they became an aggrieved people: "With Partition, Hindus got Hindustan, Muslims got Pakistan, we Sikhs got nothing." The notion of a Sikh State gained credence. Their last Guru had promised them Raj Kareyga Khalsa — the Khalsa shall rule. They felt it was time to change the promise into a reality. In the exchange of populations the Sikhs found themselves in majority in a few districts of Punjab. If Haryana and Himachal could be separated they could have a Punjab in which they could form a majority of 60 per cent against the Hindus being 40 per cent. The Hindus sensed what the Sikhs had in mind. They, supported by the Hindu newspapers from Jalandhar, exhorted Punjabi Hindus to declare Hindi as their "mother tongue" instead of Punjabi in the censuses that took place, so that the Sikhs could be deprived of the argument that they were only asking for a Punjabi-

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

speaking Suba. The Boundary Commission, which granted states to all regional languages listed in the Constitution, denied it to only one, Punjabi. This gross injustice gave the demand for a Punjabi Suba its rationale. After a prolonged agitation in which thousands were jailed, Indira Gandhi conceded the demand in 1966 but only after the Sikhs had proved their loyalty to their country by actively assisting the Indian Army in the Indo-Pak war of 1965. The Punjabi Suba was where all the Sikhs would legitimately expect a state of their own in a democratic India. It did not turn out that way. [17]

[17 Hindu-Sikh relations: Independence changed equations: The Tribune Chandigarh Nov. 3, 2003

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Without feeling any necessity to say as to what the Sikhs should have done, what they did was wrong. And when one contemplates that it was immediately after Partition, the mistakes become magnified. It is always better to do nothing instead of doing something and committing mistakes. When pre-Partition Sikh mind was not right, how it could have been right immediately after Partition? Such are the facts of our history. We have to recognise many hard facts and unlearn many wrong notions we carry with us.

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## **2. About Master Tara Singh**

Master Tara Singh (1885-1967) was born in a Punjabi Hindu Malhotra family of Rawalpindi. It is indeed remarkable that from humble origins he arose to the top of Sikh leadership, culminating with the creation of Punjabi State in Independent India. He initiated into Khalsa when he was ten or twelve years old. A fierce sewadar and helpful to all Sikhs he was among those cream of crop who strive to become a perfect Soldiers of their community. Tara Singh Malhotra is remembered for two things, one steering Sikhs towards opting for India in 1947 and other to campaign for the state of Punjab in Independent India. [18]

[18] <http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/personalities/sewadars/tarasingh.html>

Master Tara Singh along with other Sikh leaders met with the leader of Muslim League Mohammad Ali Jinnah at the house of Hardit Singh Malik. Here is a quote from the book "Heritage of the Sikhs" by Harbans Singh:

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

Mr Jinnah, who outwardly maintained an attitude of sullen and studious disregard towards the Sikhs, tried to cajole them privately. He knew in his heart of hearts that Sikh opposition to Pakistan was one real obstacle in his way and made several secret overtures to the leaders of the community. He chided them for being too subservient to Congress influence and held out all kinds of allurements, including the formation of an autonomous Sikh area within Pakistan. Some British officers also conveyed similar offers to Sikh leaders "to enable them to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into the current of world history." Plans were made to have Master Tara Singh and Jinnah talk together. A meeting took place in Delhi on April 2, 1946, at the house of Sir Teja Singh Malik, a retired chief engineer who had also been minister in the princely states of Jaipur and Patiala.

Besides Master Tara Singh and Jinnah, Maharaja Yadavinder Singh of Patiala, his prime minister, Sardar Hardit Singh Malik who was the host's brother, and Giani Kartar Singh joined the meeting. Malik Hardit Singh was assigned to presenting the Sikh viewpoint as the principal spokesman. Jinnah's one overriding concern was to have the Sikhs rescind their opposition to Pakistan and lend his demand their support instead. He was prodigal of assurances, and told the Sikh leaders that the Sikhs would have a position of honour in the new State. But he refrained from elaborating. Malik Hardit Singh tried to extract from him a more specific enunciation and raised some concrete issues. He said that in Pakistan there would presumably be a parliament, a cabinet, armed services, and so on. He wished Jinnah to say what exactly would be the Sikhs' position in these and other instruments of State. Jinnah dodged by inviting the Sikhs to set forth their demands in writing and by citing the instance of Zaghlul Pasha of Egypt. Zaghlul Pasha, he said, asked the Copts, the Christian minority, to give him their charter of demands. Without having a look at what was written in document, Zaghlul Pasha signed, "I agree." "That is how I shall treat the Sikhs," said Jinnah. Hardit Singh continued his thrusts and said, "You are being very generous, Mr Jinnah, but how about your successors? What is the guarantee that they would implement the assurance given by you?" "My friend, in Pakistan my word will be like the word of God. No one dare go back on it," replied Jinnah. [19]

[19] <http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/personalities/sewadars/tarasingh.html>



The Sikh mind was not understanding history. It was not understanding their own history. And what their own history could mean without overall Indian context? The British had brought them to this state of mind. And they were not understanding this. Without the anchor of Indian National Congress and Freedom Movement, how could they have thought to formulate their own agenda? Where was the space? It was sheer absurdity. There was too big a gap between reality and Sikh mind. Obviously the British had spoiled them.

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### 3. The “Spokesman” Weekly of 10 October 1951

It published in its ‘Letters to the Editor’ SIKHS’ GRIEVANCES, an open letter written to Pandit Nehru on the occasion of his visit to Ludhiana on 30 September 1951 by “few leading Sikhs of Ludhiana” who were Ajmer Singh Advocate, Dasaundha Singh Advocate, Gopal Singh Khalsa, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, and Bhan Singh, Genl. Sec., All India Sikh Students Federation. Some of what they wrote:

“The Sikhs genuinely feel that there is a great danger to their very existence from the present set-up of affairs in the Punjab and elsewhere. ... The Sikhs are ruled by a permanent communal majority in the Punjab from which they have no hope to escape under the present circumstances. The only democratic solution of it is a Punjabee-Speaking Province. Punjabee language and Punjabee culture are given a step-motherly treatment everywhere. Nay, there are plans afoot to finish them. To quote an instance, during the last census, practically the whole Hindu Community in the Punjab gave their mother-tongue as Hindi! What a shameful, white lie it was! What fairness and justice can be expected from such a majority unless there are strong and well defined safeguards for the protection of the minority community and their culture and language?” [20]

[20] Source: Panjab Digital Library

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### 4. Cripps Mission 1942 and Cabinet Mission 1946: Sikh Response

The draft proposal of Cripps Mission of 1942 gave the right to the provinces of British India to secede from the centre and acquire the same full status as the Indian Union.

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

This was ‘opening the door to separation’. “This greatly alarmed the Sikhs, because Punjab being a Muslim majority province, could secede from the centre, subjecting the Sikhs and Hindus to perpetual Muslim domination. Sikh leaders, Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh and Sir Jogindra Singh, met Sir Stafford Cripps on the 27th March, 1942, to express their apprehension, and later submitted a memorandum on 31st March, 1942, suggesting redistribution of Punjab into two provinces with river Ravi forming the boundary between them.”

In a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission 1946, Master Tara Singh argued: “Before the Mission arrives at a decision on the question (constitution making) we would emphasise that the Sikhs have as good a claim for creation of a separate sovereign state as Muslims for Pakistan, and the Mission would not concede the claim for Pakistan without conceding at the same time the claim for separate state made on behalf of the Sikhs.” [21]

[21] The Sikhs and Transfer of Power (1942-47) An Abstract by Kharak Singh, Author : Dr Kirpal, Singh Publisher : Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala [http://sikhinstitute.org/apr\\_2007/14-kharsi.html](http://sikhinstitute.org/apr_2007/14-kharsi.html)

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### 5. *Azad Punjab* and “Sikhs are also a nation”

First the Akalis, countered the Muslim league’s demand for Pakistan by demanding an *azad* (independent)

Punjab, proposing its boundaries to be redrawn by detaching Muslim majority areas. Then, reacting to the “Rajagopalachari formula” in July 1944, they asserted, “Sikhs are also a nation”. Tara Singh, the Akali leader, declared Sikhs would not become “slaves of Pakistan or Hindustan”. To the Cabinet Mission in 1946, the Akali Dal presented a memorandum arguing Sikhs’ claim on the Punjab:

Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bond of holy shrines, property, language, traditions, and history claim it as their homeland and holy land which the British took over as a ‘trust’ from the last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the entity of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of [*sic*] Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and of the danger of absorption by the Hindus on the other, the Executive Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal demands for the preservation and protection of the religious, cultural and economic and political rights of the Sikh nation, the creation of a Sikh state which would include

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their sacred shrines and historical gurdwara with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property. [22]

[22] The Sikh Diaspora: The Search For Statehood By Darsham Singh Tatla: p. 19

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## 6. Akalis away from the Congress

The governor was continually complaining of the shortage of Jat Sikh recruits and impressing on all his Sikh visitors the necessity for stimulating recruitment. He believed that this was due to the “anti-government propaganda carried on for so many years by Akalis on the one side and the Communists on the other”. The Akalis under Master Tara Singh had already moved away from the Congress on the question of Sikh enlistment in the army (refusing to accept the Congress position of “hands-off the war”). They were now wooed by the government to do their bit for encouraging enlistment. While they were understandably reluctant to publically come in support of recruitment, they did supply six or seven *parcharaks* or paid propagandists to the Khalsa Defence of India League, an organization set up in January 1941 by an All-Parties Sikh Conference with the support of the Maharaja of Patiala and Sir Jogendra Singh and the covert support of the Akalis. ... That the task of the Khalsa Defence League of India and other similar organizations that tried to encourage recruitment among Sikhs was not easy is evident from the fact that they dared not openly give a call for support to the British War effort and had to clothe their message in the garb of an appeal to defend the motherland, promote Indianization of the Army and maintain the Sikh position in the Army. Master Tara Singh, too, was soon embarrassed by the public knowledge of his support to the Khalsa Defence of India League and tried to divert public attention to other populist issues. [23]

[23] Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution: Practice and Theory: By Mridula Mukherjee: Pp. 201-2

## 7. Gandhi Ji, Nehru and Master Tara Singh

In the beginning of the month of October (1940 – mam), a Sikh public met under the presidentship of Master Tara Singh in Amritsar, in which they passed a resolution

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

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. 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. 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 your 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 ... ." Even Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had the same attitude towards Akalis. When Gujranwala District Congress Committee suggested to him not to allow the Akalis - Congress rift to widen, Nehru replied, "It is not possible for 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> <sup>327</sup> Hindustan Times, October 17, 1940. [24]

[24] Punjab Politics 1937-47: Role of Joginder Singh, Ujjal Singh And Baldev Singh by Rekha Sood 2010: <http://www.apnaorg.com/research-papers-pdf/thesis-6.pdf>

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### **8. The Tribune Editorial of July 25 2015 has this to say:**

From the Deputy Chief Minister's stress on development ahead of the 2012 Assembly elections to the repeated references to 'communal harmony' by Parkash Singh Badal now, the public discourse in Punjab has changed drastically. There are two reasons. The state's economy, which has been unable to find youth the jobs they need, and national politics, which too has rewarded a party that is seen to identify with a particular community. On one hand, there is little development to show for eight years of Akali rule in Punjab. On the other, the BJP too is seeking a slice in the politics of religion in the state. Both are reasons for the SAD to feel insecure.

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**9. In the FRONTLINE of Jan. 28-Feb. 10, 2012 AJOY ASHIRWAD**

**MAHAPRASHASTA writes under the title ‘Shift in Strategy’ about  
Shiromani Akali Dal:**

The party, in response to the changing socio-economic scene, has consciously stayed away from identity politics and has stuck to the core of “Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiya”, a secular tradition adopted in the Moga declaration of 1996.

Some statistics could be useful in studying the election scene in Punjab. The vote shares of both the Congress and the SAD have been more or less the same. In the 2002 and 2007 Assembly elections, the margins of difference in the vote shares have not been more than 3 percentage points. The same holds true for the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Similarly, the margin of winning have been unnaturally small in the majority of constituencies. The SAD relies a lot on the BJP's vote share. Since 2002, the BJP has been contesting in 23 constituencies and the SAD in 94.

The Congress contested the 2007 elections on its own. In 2002, independents won nine seats and the BJP could manage to win only three. The Congress, with 62 seats, formed the government then. In 2007, the BJP performed spectacularly, winning 19 seats. The Congress and the SAD won 44 and 49 seats respectively. The SAD-BJP formed the government. The 2007 elections saw a drastic reduction in the vote share of independents and a complete erosion in the votes of all the other parties. This means that the performance of the BJP, which is once again contesting 23 seats, is crucial to the victory of the SAD (Badal).

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**10. Under ‘Changing face of SAD’, Prabhjit Singh writes in the Hindustan Times of January 11, 2012:**

Eager to consolidate its base, the SAD is reaching out to include more non-Sikh candidates. Besides fielding the highest number of Hindu candidates (11 of the 94 seats the party is contesting) ever, the SAD is also counting on Sikh candidates with trimmed beards. They are hockey legend Pargat Singh, former Punjab DGP Paramjit Singh Gill, former IAS officer Darbara Singh Guru and trade unionist Malkit Singh Keetu, who cannot even vote in the SGPC elections for not following Sikh tenets. The trend of non-Sikh MLAs in the SAD began with the victory of

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

Chiranji Lal Garg from Bathinda in the 1997 polls following the historic 1995 Moga declaration, in which the SAD declared itself as a party of all Punjabis and not just of Sikhs. The number of Hindu candidates later increased to six, of whom three won in the 2007 assembly polls.

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### **11. Ashutosh Kumar in ‘The 2007 Punjab Elections: Exploring the Verdict’ which was available on the website [25] and retrieved sometime before July, 2015 writes:**

In a significant move, the reminiscent of the ongoing federalization of the party system in India, the state unit of Congress, without any approval of the high command, had got the assembly to pass unanimously the Termination of Water Agreement Act, 2004 on 11 July, 2004. As a result, Punjab annulled the river water sharing agreement signed by it with the states of Haryana and Rajasthan in 1981. The Congress underlined the fact that that the Akalis, despite projecting themselves as strong advocates of regional politico-economics interests could not even contemplate such a move despite being in power for full five years.

A reading of the election manifestos and the public utterances once again confirmed the shift in the electoral agenda of Punjab that has witnessed three distinct phases, since its reorganization in 1966. The first years of post-partition two-community state were dominated by the panthic agenda, expressed first in the form of the demand for communal electorate followed by the Punjabi Suba movement and then in the form of Anandpur Sahib resolution that ‘inaugurated the center-state conflict in the late 1970’s, and which gave an initial boost to militancy’. Cessation of militancy in the early 1990’s witnessed the revival of the formal democratic processes after a long period of President’s Rule. The return to ‘normal politics’ was marked by the decline of identity politics. With the people yearning for peace, the agenda of the political parties, struggling to recapture their relevance in the political domain, underlined the need to achieve peace and Hindu-Sikh unity. The Akalis since then have moved from the politics of confrontation towards center to a party that ‘believed in the sanctity of the Indian constitution and the parliamentary system of democracy.’ In the historic Moga declaration in February 1996, the SAD firmly committed itself to a more secular politics based on ‘*Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiat*’. Accused of being regional, sectarian, and at times even communal by its detractors, the party, founded on December 14, 1920, now takes pain to underline its adherence to Gur Nanak Dev’s principles of ‘sarbat da bhala’[welfare of all] and universality and equality of mankind. As mentioned above, what was significant about this election was the attempt on the

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

part of SAD to become more inclusive by putting up the Hindus and Dalits as the party candidates but also drafting them at the party's organizational level.

Pages 271-274 [25] [http://www.global.ucsb.edu/punjab/journal\\_14\\_2/kumar.pdf](http://www.global.ucsb.edu/punjab/journal_14_2/kumar.pdf)

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### **12. The Tribune of 6-3-2012 reported:**

In 2002, Congress won 62 seats, SAD 41, and BJP 3. In 2007, the Congress had polled 40.90 per cent votes (44 seats) and the SAD (49 seats) 37.09 per cent, BJP won 19 seats. In 2012, the congress polled 40.11 per cent (44 seats), SAD 34.75 per cent (56 seats) and BJP 7.13 per cent votes (12 seats).

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### **13. In 'The Tribune' of July 14, 2015, Jupinderjit Singh reports about the views of KPS Gill:**

Former Director General of Police KPS Gill, who is credited with Punjab's victory over terrorism, has opposed any move to release ex-militants and their transfer to state jails on "humanitarian grounds". ... "BJP leaders gave tacit support to the issue by attending Bhog of militants and meeting those who were on fast seeking their release," he said. The ex-DGP, who was termed "super cop" for his role in combating terrorism during his seven-year tenure in the state, said he did not see any major game plan in the Akalis' move of shifting ex-militants to the state jails and demand for their subsequent release on parole or otherwise. ... There should be no wrong notion of clemency in such matters," he said, adding that militants' transfer to state jails would not make much difference as people of Punjab never supported terrorism. "I see it as a mistaken gesture on the part of Akalis. They are being wrongly told that Sikhs are upset with ex-militants languishing in jails and that hardliners will get support if militants are not released," he said. ... While the Akalis are being accused of following a "panthic agenda" by pushing for "humane treatment" to militants, Gill doesn't read the issue in the same way. "There may be misplaced sympathies on the issue but the Akalis won't support terrorism. They were the victims of terrorism," he said. He said the government should take care of the youth who needed employment. Jupinderjit Singh, The Tribune, Jul 14 2015

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Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

**14. Ramachandra Guha wrote (The Punjab Crisis) in 'The Hindu' of March 27, 2005:**

In October 1973 the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal met at the great Gurdwara in Anantpur Sahib, and asked the Government of India to hand over Chandigarh to Punjab; to also hand over other Punjabi-speaking areas presently with other states; and to increase the proportion of Sikhs in the Army. It criticised the "foreign policy of India framed by the Congress Party" as "worthless, hopeless and highly detrimental to the interests of the Country, the Nation and the Mankind at large". Asking for a recasting of the Indian Constitution on "real federal principles", it said that "in this new Punjab and in other States the Centre's interference would be restricted to defence, foreign relations, currency, and general administration; all other departments would be in the jurisdiction of Punjab (and other states) which would be fully entitled to frame own laws on these subjects for administration".

Some of these claims were new; but their substance went back several decades, to the division of India by religion in 1947. In this division the Sikhs had suffered most of all. They lost millions of lives, millions of acres of land they had made fertile in the "Canal Colonies", and some very sacred shrines, left behind in what was now Pakistan. Through the 1950s, the intrepid Master Tara Singh led the Akalis in the struggle for a Punjab *suba*, a separate, Punjabi-speaking and Sikh-dominated state that could compensate for the traumas of Partition. The State was finally granted in 1966, but its extent was not what was hoped for; nor, indeed, were its powers. Thus the Anantpur Sahib resolution, which sought to make real the promise of states' autonomy merely hinted at by the Indian Constitution.

These demands, for a deeper and more genuine federalism, were unexceptionable. But at other places the Anantpur Sahib Resolution was amendable to more radical, and perhaps more dangerous, interpretations. The preamble spoke of the Akali Dal as "the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation". The "political goal of the *panth*" was defined as "the pre-eminence of the Khalsa", with the "fundamental policy" of the Akali Dal being the "realisation of this birth-right of the Khalsa through creation of congenial environmental and a political set-up".

1973 was not perhaps the best time to make these demands, with Mrs. Indira Gandhi riding high on the wave of a war recently won, and the Centre more powerful than ever before. Its powers were increased still further with the Emergency, when the movers of the Anantpur Sahib Resolution were put in jail. But in 1977 the Emergency was lifted, elections called, and Congress party comprehensively trounced. In this new political environment the claims of the Akalis were renewed, and indeed intensified. An Akali conference of October 1978 compared the 30 years of Congress rule to the



bad old days of Mughal imperialism. But now that the Congress was out of power, said the Akalis, it was time for a "progressive decentralisation of powers". The demands of the Anantpur Sahib Resolution were revived, and new ones added; such as a redistribution of river waters to favour Punjab, an international airport at Amritsar, and a broadcasting station at the Golden Temple itself.

Towards the end of 1978 the Akalis launched an agitation to fulfil the demands of the Anantpur Sahib Resolution. However, outside their fold there were radicals who thought that nothing less than true independence, as in a separate "Sikh Nation", would satisfy the panth. The call from Khalistan was issued from outside India by the likes of Ganga Singh Dhillon in Washington and Jagajit Singh Chauhan in London. But it also found some takers within Punjab, notably a hitherto obscure preacher named Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale. With his entry into the fray commenced some very troubled times indeed.

Troubles, of course, were not new to Punjab or the Punjabis. There were the religious wars of the 18th Century; then the Anglo-Sikh wars of the 19th Century. Early in the 20th Century the province was an epicentre of the anti-colonial struggle. Then came the 1940s, with Partition and the communal conflagration that accompanied it. Several decades of relative peace ensued, to be broken now by the decade of the 1980s, when much blood was spilt, some of it innocent, and all of it bad.

#### 'The Punjab crisis'

What was called the "Punjab crisis" spawned much excellent reportage and several good books. Older readers will be familiar with it all, but for the benefit of those born after 1980, let me flag the most basic facts. What started as a political rivalry between the Congress and the Akalis soon degenerated into conflict between a section of the Hindus and a section of Sikhs. This led, on the one hand, to a series of communal killings; and, on the other, to an increasing alienation of Sikhs from the Government of India. Among the many low points of a dishonest decade three in particular must be mentioned: the storming of the Golden Temple by the Indian Army in June 1984; the murder of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her bodyguards on the last day of October 1984; and the revenge killings of innocent Sikhs which followed.

The first and last of these events recruited many fresh recruits to the separatist cause. The latter part of the 1980s, therefore, saw a reign of terror in the Punjab countryside: jointly imposed by the Khalistanis, who intimidated and sometimes killed those who did not fall in line; and by the police, who in their search for the insurgents cared little for legal procedure or for the rights of ordinary citizens.

### Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

For close on 15 years, the news from Punjab was unredeemingly grim. It seemed that the war between state and citizen would never end; or, if it would, only after the creation of a separate Sikh Nation of Khalistan. But finally the violence dimmed and, in time, stopped. The Punjabi set aside his sectarian grievances, and sought instead to better his economic lot.

In the first week of March, I revisited Punjab after a gap of 32 years. Travelling through the State, and talking to a wide cross-section of people, it was hard to fathom that this was the same place from which one would get news only of killings, and more killings. Khalistan was forgotten; why, even the demand for Chandigarh to be transferred to Punjab was not being made anymore. Identity was still important; but not so much a religious identity as a regional, cross-national one. ... Meanwhile, a spate of fresh investments suggested that things were very stable indeed. There were signs everywhere of new schools, colleges, factories, even a spanking new "heritage village" on the highway that sought to recreate, in museumised form, the "traditional" culture of the Punjabi. ... The crucial thing is that in political terms Punjab is at peace with itself and with India. That is more, much more, than one dared hope for in 1985 or 1995. [26]

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mag/2005/03/27/stories/2005032700160300.htm>

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Having gone through all this, it leaves very bad taste. This is 'Sarab Punjabi Manifesto' and whatever I say is on behalf of 'Sarab' or all Punjab. It seems to me as if Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs were competing with each other in disconnecting themselves from Hindus and therefore disowning India. But what to talk about Sikhs, even Muslims can never disconnect from Hindus and India. Like everything, the denial of a mid-day shining sun has a limit. This or that way, it has to end.

My struggle is that Punjabis should learn from the lapses and turn their 'victimhood' into a positive moral force for the future. As there are many deceptions in the world in such matters, we should remember here that the Zionists played fake 'victimhood' card. Moreover, their project was a project of occupation. And from civilizational point of view, their enterprise was an enterprise of evil.

As it has been understood as to what happened and why it happened and the evil hurricane of history has already lost its fury, let us aspire passionately and work for a very great collective future of our peoples and countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) who have already been trying

Damaging Punjabi: 1947 and After  
Master Tara Singh and Pundit Nehru

but failing again and again to connect with each other through SAARC. But central to all this are Pakistan and India. And central to India and Pakistan is Punjab. ■