

# EMERGENCE OF THE PRESENT PUNJAB

*Purubi Kundu<sup>11</sup>*

## ABSTRACT:

*The origin of the issue of the demand of rebordering and constructing of separate Punjab province dated back in the pre-Independence period. The movement got expedited after emerging Pakistan as an independent country, the touches of the Sikh religion as well as their sentiment of Punjabi language helped quickening the movement. The matter became the main subject of discussion in literature as well as in the works of the most researchers focussing light on the sovereign ethnicity of the Sikhs. In this way the Akali party and other parties supporting regionalism started functioning hard to achieve political power. Though, their efforts got hindered by the anti-roles of many other different political parties and religious sects in the background of world war-II. Consequently violence and the terrorist movements occurred gradually with upward trend under the leadership of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale till the Punjab emerged as a separate state.*

## KEY WORDS:

Regionalism – Punjabi language – Sikh religion & political power – separate state

## INTRODUCTION

The question that became most prominent and crucial in the Punjab after India's independence was the rebordering of the province. The Akalis became most vocal with the issue of reconstructing the Punjab province particularly for the Punjabi - speaking people. Their main demand was to reconstruct the Punjab as a province in such a way that the Sikhs could ascend on political power. That very demand was conceived in the pre - independence period when arrangements were made for erecting /constructing Pakistan. Though the British Government was sympathetic with the demand but the low population density of the Sikhs in the Punjab became the main constraint (problem) for constructing the Punjab province exclusively for the Sikhs. But the situation changed radically after division of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan. The number of Punjabi - speaking people increased higher in Punjab as a huge number of Sikh - refugees infiltrated into Hindustan. The Akalis started movement without delay to secure the Sikh-dominancy in the areas of Punjabi - speaking people. Their movement got synchronization with the other

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<sup>11</sup> Assistant Professor, Katwa College. Burdwan, WB. Email- purubi.kundu@gmail.com

movements based on languages in other provinces in India. The Sikh- leaders stuck to two points - the Sikh religion and the Punjabi language. They tried to get their points strengthened with the historic fact that the Sikhs were the rulers in the region before the British regime started in India. Again, they expressed that the Sikh - religion could only survive in the modern world if they got a separate state. Again they also apprehended that any deviation from their religion to rituals like hair-cut etc, would lead the Sikhs toward Hindu religion. This thought that cropped up out of religion and the politics at the same time, prompted the Sikhs at power. As a result, the Akali and the Congress party came closer and it seemed that the problem was solved. But soon the movement resumed under the leadership of Mr. Tara Singha. In 1960 the movement assumed a violent form and thousands of volunteers were arrested. As a result, the movement misfired and an internal conflict grew in the Akali Party. Arival Akali party was set up by Saint Fate Singha, a faithful assistant of Tara Singh. Fate Singh demanded the setting up of the Punjab province as an integral part of Indian Territory. But Tara Singh stuck to independent Punjab province on the basis of language and religion. At last, in 1966 the state of Punjab and Haryana emerged on the basis of language, and this was due to continual pressure and movement by the Akalis. Language and sectarianism got merged with history and politics. In this way the Sikh -nationalism began getting shape on the base of Sikh - religion and gradually stood on the way of the tradition of Indian nationalism -Unity in Diversities.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Punjab Problem, which became the main subject of discussion in the late 60s and 70s in the past century, -also became a main topic of research in the 80s of twentieth century. As a state Punjab is a land of the rich citizens. But it became a state thorned with political agitations which resulted in a hideous social problem. In order to find out the cause and also the path of solution - we need a theoretical structure.

## A RESEARCHER'S LOOK

Many researchers conducted and convened in England, Canada and USA show a clear and distinct view about the history of sovereign ethnicity of the Sikhs from late 19th century upto sixtieth of twentieth century till. Jones Kenneth, in his book titled 'Arya Dharmi Hindu Consciousness in 19th century Punjab', held up the theory that in Punjab, there is no common cultural connective in between Sikh and Hindu. They are in opposite poles. Western researchers reveal the sovereign ethnicity of the Sikhs who urged for a separate territory which will be a completely free dominion of their own where their voice will be the last word. But it may be dangerous to think that all Sikhs are fundamentalists or revivalists. Because SGPC itself rejects the "Two - Nation

– Theory” of the Muslim League. Rather, the opportunists portion the Sikh society explains 'Guru GranthaShaeb ' to match their evil design.

### A DISCUSSION REGARDING THEORETICAL STRUCTURE

Here, the theoretical base is founded on regionalism. So many thinkers have explained in so many ways to interpret regionalism. Rajani Kothari has viewed regionalism as a new kind of social problem and also as a social movement. In his book, 'The state Against Democracy', he has explained the pertinent point of regionalism as a social anti - biotic. The book 'The Government and Politics of India', Morris Jones has expressed his opinion regarding the difference between the traditional and modern superstructure in a beautiful way. It is also giving birth to a lot of social conflicts those results in regional disturbances concerning regionalism.

### BACKGROUND

Not in 1967, but in 1960 when the Akali Party started ruling in the Punjab, a decision - making sub-party emerged within the main Party (Akali ) with the objective of attaining ruling power and chief-Ministership. The ShiromoniGurdwaraPravandhak Committee became the prime object to control and authorize the Akali Party as the Pravandhak committee possessed immense riches. This Committee not only imparted religious teachings but also tried to make people (Sikh) conscious politically (Singh, 1983).

The following table that illustrates the annual expenditure of the SGPC in 1980 - 81 in their strives to make people conscious politically and socially apart from its religious activities.

Sl. No.	Head of Expenditure	Allocated Amount In Rupees
1.	Salaries.	25,64,200.00
2.	Education.	9,47,000.00
3.	Printing and Stationary.	15,06,000.00
4.	Propagation of the faith.	25,82,000.00
5.	Research	99,000.00
6.	Public Welfare and charity.	85,000.00
	Total	77,83,200.00

Source: SGPC Sri Amritsar Budget 1980-81, Amritsar 1980 (Singh, 1983).

So, it is clear that the SGPC was a big Centre to control the political power in the newly setup Punjab State.

In 1977 the Akali Party in association with the Janata Dal got ruling power in Punjab, and the internal clashes within the Akali Party were under their control. In 1978 the Akali Party coped up aptly with the Nirankari clash, but an offshoot generated at that time - Dal Khalsa, a youth Sikh terrorist - organization, with the only objective to

organize and form an independent sovereign Sikh - nation under the leadership of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala. The Akali Dal could cope up with it aptly too. However, during 1978 - 1984 Akali agitation, in the name of Nehru - Roka - Morcha with the issue of people habitation, the Akali Movement got three Centres of power one by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, the second by SGPC president Gurucharan Singh Tohra and the third by Prakash Singh Badal, the ex - chief minister of the state. Of then Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala became more powerful whereas Tohra was in two minds about the fundamentalists and the generous. The fundamentalists were enthused at driving the Akalis towards them and to the extremists (Singh, 1987).

The Akalis themselves were inspired by it and the extremists took advantage of it. They channelised their efforts so that they can come into political power. By this time, the sub - groups under the leadership of Talwandi and Sukhbinder Singh who were dissatisfied with many matters added fuel to fire of the extremist's movements. Setting instances of political murders and violence, they insisted Sant Harchand Singh Langowal, a soft - hearted Akali leader, to come to them and tread on the paths of the extremists unless and until the extreme fundamentalists came into political power. The situation turned so grim that it appeared to be impossible to come to a negotiation in order to solve the problems like Chandigarh - problem or management and distribution of river - water or hydro - electricity or border - problems. It became clearer when some followers of Sant Harchand Singh Langowal were arrested. Vindranwala occupied the Gurudwara Manji - Shaeb Manch and started his own association (alignment) on 4th July 1982. Langowal then could read the trend of the movement and joined the Vindranwala's and tried to come back the dis-satisfied Akalis to them. Thus the Akali - movement turned to Sikh - movement. Now they could exert violences in different forms. This was the background that compelled Srimati Indira Gandhi, the ex-prime minister of India, to set on Operation Blue Star in 1984.

### **ANTI - ROLE OF THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES AND RELIGIOUS SECTS**

After the Jalianwalabagh massacre in 1919, the Non-cooperation Movement against the British Rulers under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi aimed to restore integrity among the Hindus, the Muslim and Sikh. It was the first and also the last Unified Movement in the Punjab. At this time the Akali Party and the Unionist Party emerged. Though the Congress Party and others were able to some extent to strengthen their party - bases but they all failed to gather the people of the Punjab to bring under their flags. This was only due to the religious bends of mind of the Punjabi people. This was why the civil disobedience Movement of the Congress in 1930 failed in Punjab to gain people's all out support (Chand, 1936). This was also repeated in the Quit India Movement (Chand, 1946). The main characteristic of the Punjab politics till the mid - forties was to support the British Rulers in their efforts for Constitutional Reforms during the period between 1919 and 1935. The Unionist

Party was one among the dominant parties in the Punjab. This Party was formed in the rural Punjab with the interests of the land -owners in 1923. Though it was a political platform of the farmers and land -owners of rural Punjab, it aimed only to improve the condition of the land - owners as well as to keep their interests and benefits but not of the common people. However, this Party was the Centre of power of the political life in the district (Hussain,). The Hindus were chief source of power of the Party in urban Punjab. But they kept the Congress at arm's length. The Muslims were also in the same line as of the Hindus though a good number of influential Muslims were associated with the Party. The Sikhs regarded the Akali Dal and the Unionist Party as their chief political platform.

The scenario changed during the period of the world -war II. All the existing Parties inclined to get unified. The freshly raised slogan by "Muslim League for a separate Muslim nation called Pakistan" became so popular among the Muslim community. The Hindus and the Sikhs joined the Akali Dal. A polarization happened between the Muslim and the Non - Muslims with the basis of religious beliefs and religious communities. A good number of Muslims migrated to Pakisland and the Hindus of that land migrated in to India just after Independence. This also brought a great impact on the division of people based on religion. At present the state is mainly inhabited by the Hindus and the Sikh people. The state is divided into two - the Punjabi - speaking people and the Hindi -speaking people in regard to educational, administrative and governmental activities. On the whole the Sikhs and the Hindus constitute the Panjabi -speaking people with 55% and 42.5% respectively. Of course, both the communities differ in many matters of considerations like - rural and urban, Higher caste and Lower caste, Reformist and Non - Reformists, Refugees and Non - Refugees, Old Sect and New Sect, and so on. The division that exists in the Sikhs based on caste is called the classes. The Higher class owns the land and Jaths are the main constituent part of it. The Higher Class of the urban people constitutes with the Kshatriyas and the Aroras who were generally engaged in business and other occupations. The Lower Class people, constituted with the Schedule Castes and Other Back ward Classes, were landless farmers.

The Political activities in the Punjab state are conducted by both the positive and negative political institutions that are not indigenous of the state. The political ideals that promise of the All India Congress Party are associated with those institutions. The Congress Party always gives importance on national integrity, secularism and secular state and above all democracy which are opposed in the Punjab State unless the ideal of the major political parties of the state are not preserved and reflected in the Public life. In addition to that, apart from Congress the three other major parties in the state of the Punjab always oppose to the ideals and promises of the Congress Party. In this context, the Akali Dal should be taken first for consideration. That very party always claims that they represent the Sikhs, and therefore it is regional party.

The Akalis always take the Sikh religion and the politics, as the same and one thing. They discard state's secularism their taking it in this way opposed to national integrity in other words it inclined to separation. The BJP caters Hinduism. It is also stands in the way of secularism. The thinkings of the Left parties in this regard are to the contrary to the served values of the Congress Party. It should be noted here that the Punjab was a very little politically state which was governed and ruled by a regional party till II World War (Hussain, 1946). The Sikhs demand that the promises that were made to them before 1947 were not kept at all. They also allege that what were said in the draft Preamble of the Constitution of India was altogether shunned later in the Lower Legislative Assembly of the state. Naturally, all the Sikhs of the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab opposed to it. All the Sikh members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly opined that the Congress Party was earlier with a view that India would be a Union of States with self - dominion and each state could flourish in her own way. But what was executed in 1950 that India became a union of states with one Centre that stood in the way of the views and ideals of the Sikhs (Paul, 1991) and that was why the Akali Dal refused to sign under the draft of the Constitution. What they said that the 1973 resolutions in the AnandapurShaeb repeated what Nehru promised in 1946 convention of the GanaParisad. The Sikhs and the Akalis allege that what the Centre (Government) and the Congress Party promised from time to time was not kept at all. It should be noted in the context that the very adversely Government in the Punjab before I World War created an adversely public opinion, and that stands in the way of all kinds of reformation including constitutional amendment (Paul, 1991).

Violence and the terrorist's movements occurred gradually with upward trend in Punjab during the period of 1981 - 1984, and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala was of course the central figure behind it to enthuse these terrorist activities, though many differ. Many are of the view that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, basically a religious preacher, turned out to be a politician when the Congress Party used him tactfully to divide the Akali Dal and establish their authority over the Party (Akali Dal).But he made up his mind in his own way to set gradually on his political movement with force as supports from public life surged to him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala in real life was a believer of religious resurrectionist. He believed strongly in the observance of religious rituals. He wanted to observe the rituals of Guru GranthaShaeb in every step of his life and living. He was an orthodox in preserving the religious rituals of the Sikhs with keeping hairs. His target was the Sikh- students, community and the rural Youths. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala and his close associate Amrik Singh became the chief of All India Youth Students Federation. Both of them wanted that the Sikhs who keep hair as a part of religious

rituals should follow their religious dictum strictly, so that secularism and Marxism thoughts could not vitiate the Sikh religion. In this way the Sikh -fundamentalists emerged to preach and propagate their religion which resulted immediately to a clash and violence with the Sikh - Hindu - Nirankari. The Sikhs with hair (kesh) regarded the Nirankaris as strongly opponent as the latter worshipped one who was not included with the ten religious teachers as recommended by them. As a result, the Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala's community, the Nirankari community and as another terrorist community jointly engaged in violence and clash with the entire KirtoniaJath community.

At last it can be said that as Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, the sole keep of the Sikh Panths, grew brighter image the soft - liners Akalis loses spirits to criticize him. In 1983 Tohra, the SGPC president, also praised Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala highly for his contribution to make Sikhism as a revolutionary. In March 1984, the minority Akali Dal led by Talwandi inclined to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala as the former availed of the advantages to set on the struggle against the dominant Akali Dal, led by Langowal. Langowal, in fact, wanted to keep hold on the Sikh community by preserving their years - old - demands by movements in the non - violence way. But the central adopted delay - dealing tactic and the principle of Tit -for -tat against the violent movement. Thus the Harcharn Singh Longowal failed to procure any notable advantages for the Sikhs and this facilitated Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala grew gradually politically stronger. Later, they demanded the AnandapurShaeb Proposal which the central governed turned down outright by defining it a separatist movement (Bomb, 1986).

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This has been perceptibly noted by K.R. Bomb wall in 'Sikh Identity', Akali Dal and Federal Polity, 'Economic and Political weekly (May 17, 1986 )pp - 880 – 890.