# PART II

CHAPTER FOUR

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

## Introduction

To describe within the confines of a single chapter the five hundred year history of a religion, a community, perhaps even a nation is no easy task. When the particular faith to be described is one as sophisticated as Sikhism, and the people whose story is to be told are as enterprising and complex as the Sikhs, the story becomes more difficult to tell.

The homeland of the Sikhs is the Punjab, that triangular geographical unit in the north western reaches of the Indian subcontinent and the traditional gateway to India for all her invaders. It is bounded in the north by the Himalayas, in the west by the river Indus, and less distinctly in the east by a jagged line from Karnal to the meeting point of Punjab's five rivers at Panchnad in the west. The land slopes gently from the mountain ranges in the north and west toward the Rajasthan desert in the south, and over the land flow six large rivers. Five of these the Chenab, Jhelum, Beas, Ravi and Sutlej are the five rivers that give Punjab its name (Panch = five; ab = river). It is a land meant for cultivation, and sugar cane, mustard, wheat, rice, tobacco and cotton are all grown here. With the extensive network of canals, built in the Doabs (the land between two rivers) agriculture has prospered and Indian Punjab has become the bread-basket of the subcontinent.

The people of the Punjab are diverse and many bloodlines

have mingled here. Punjab was the cradle of the ancient Indian civilization, and human habitation here can be dated to between 3000 and 5000 years ago. The archaeological remains at Mohenjodaro in Sindh and Harappa in Southern Punjab prove the existence of a flourishing civilization, at its peak between 2500 and 1500 BC. It was destroyed by the coming of the pastoral Aryans, with a language (Sanskrit) and a religion (Hinduism) of their own, which then developed further. Other conquering races too have left their mark. The Persians ruled Punjab for near on a hundred years, the Greeks under Alexander the Great (326 BC) conquered her. In 500 AD the Mongoloid Huns invaded. These invasions were interspersed with periods of generally benevolent rule of the Indian dynasties the Mauryas and Guptas. Later, from about 647 AD waves from the regions west of the Hindu Kush poured in - all of whom were Moslem. In 1001 AD, Mahmud of Ghazni invaded. There followed invasions by various Afghan tribes that penetrated further and further inland. The Ghaznis were followed by the Ghoris, Tuglaks, Surs and Lodhis. In between these successive invasions, in 1398 came the Mongol Taimur. One of his descendants, Babar a hundred years later defeated the reigning Afghan, Ibrahim Lodhi, and in 1526 established what was to become India's most powerful and long lived dynasty - the Moghul dynasty.[1]

All India's invaders except the British have entered the country from the north-west, and as all have had to pass through

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[1]Khushwant Singh's two volume, History of the Sikhs published by Princeton University Press in 1966, and updated and reprinted in 1977 by the Oxford University Press (India), is the most recent and comprehensive source on Sikhs, and most writers are dependent on these works for a comprehensive look at the subject. Other works concentrate on specific periods of Sikh history, notably the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign. I must acknowledge my debt to Khushwant Singh at the outset of this chapter.

Punjab. It has become a land of ethnic and cultural variety.[2] Thus the people of Punjab are a mixture of several bloodlines Scythian, Persian, Arab, Afghan and Turk. They brought to India, and Punjab, their languages and their faith Islam. Out of this "mixture of blood and speech"[3] emerged the Punjabi language and the Punjabi people, most of whom were either Hindu or Moslem, until 1469 and the birth of Guru Nanak.

## The Birth of Sikhism

Before a basic outline of Sikhism and its tenets, a brief look at Hinduism of the time, and also at Islam in the form in which it developed during its domicile in India is illuminating. Hinduism is extremely difficult, as perhaps are all religions, to define. It consisted however, of three main aspects - its numerous Gods and Goddesses, with all the legends attached to them, the social organization of the caste system, and the teachings and philosophies of the sanskrit literature. Of these, the first two were a direct result of the interaction between the Aryans and the original inhabitants of the Punjab. The people of Mohenjodaro and Harappa had no clear religion, they were animists, who defied that which terrified them. The Aryans on the other hand were worshippers of the beautiful in nature. Thus, through the amalgamation of these two strands, there came about the multiplicity of deities in Hinduism. The caste system was a direct result of the Aryan wish to maintain their social purity and superior status - by formulating a tiered system of society, based on degrees of racial purity, from which the aboriginal was excluded

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[2]Cole, O. & Sambhi, P.S., The Sikhs - Their Religious Practises and Beliefs, Routledge, Chapman and Hall Ltd., London, 1978, pp 1-2.
[3]Singh, K., Vol 1, op. cit., p 13.

(he was an outcaste - used to perform the lowest of tasks). The philosophy of Hinduism was however its guiding light, and gave it the strength to survive various challenges. The first of these challenges came from Mahavira (5th century BC) and Gautama Buddha (567-487 BC). In fact, at the time of the Birth of Christ, India was predominantly Buddhist. The revival of Hinduism began in the South of India and included a relaxation of the caste system, and the idea of one supreme God. By the time the tide had turned and Hinduism was re-established as the pre-eminent religion along came Islam.

Islam first came to India "not many years after the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632 AD",[4] through Arab traders who landed on the Malabar or west coast. Small settlements of Moslems sprang up in western India, and an Indo-Arabic community came into existence. This peaceful spread of Islam was shattered by the fury of the successive Moslem invasions. With the establishment of Afghan rulers at Delhi, Islamic dominance spread over Northern India. Most Indian Moslems were not settlers from amongst the invaders, but rather a result of a "voluntary accession from Hindu ranks."[5] This massive conversion had been made possible by the work of the Moslem missionaries - the Sufis. These were men who preached the teachings of the prophet Mohammed, and in order to do so prepared themselves well by acquiring an understanding of the lands to which they came through a study of the language, culture and religion of the area. The large scale conversions meant that converts adopted their new faith to suit their existing way of life, and thus Moslems in

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[4]Spear, P., A History of India, Vol. 2, 2nd edition, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970, p 221.
[5]Ibid, p 222.

India evolved their own particular culture and way of life, incorporating elements of the Hindu way in matters of language, food, and dress.[6]

The Hindu renaissance, manifested itself in the Bhakti movement, and was a response to Jainism and Buddhism, but also had an impact on Hinduism's reaction to Islam. The Bhakti ('devotion') movement preached that God was one, though he was formless and undescribable, and that the way to him was with the guidance of a guru and through meditation and the chanting of Mantras and singing of hymns (a belief in common with the Sufis). The cult was spread over Northern India by Kabir, amongst others, through songs and poems, about devotion to God. Through his verse, Kabir expounded the view that God was one, indeed his various names included Allah and Rama. He was perhaps the original matchmaker between Hinduism and Islam - a match later-consummated through Sikhism.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith was born into a time of conflict between Hindu and Moslem, when Babar and Ibrahim Lodhi were fighting for the control of India, where in the tumult of invasion and war, the gentle stream of Sufism seemed to have run dry and the songs of Bhakts like Kabir grown dim. He was born on 15th of April, 1469, his village was Talwandi Rai Bhoe and his father the village accountant. The religion of the Sikhs can be said to be truly Punjabi in origin. Nanak was a Punjabi, who preached his gospel in his native tongue. He was also a product of

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[6]This view is not shared by the leader of Indian Moslems and the Father of Pakistan, M.A. Jinnah, who believed that Indian Moslems differed dramatically in every aspect of their lives from Hindus. See Mortimer, E., Faith and Power - the Politics of Islam, Faber and Faber, London, 1982, pp 188-189.

the common history of the Punjab with the various influences on Punjabi life being clear in his teachings.

Nanak was supposed to have had mystic experiences during which God spoke to him and charged him with a mission. He was to devote his life to the praise of the word, charity, ablution, service and prayer (nam, dan, isnan, seva, simran). Though he travelled widely to spread his gospel, his teachings took strong roots in Punjab, where he lived. The main aspects of his teachings and the basic tenets of Sikhism are as follows: Nanak was a monotheist, and disapproved of the idol worship so dear to Hinduism. To him, God was truth and reality and formless (nirankari). Nanak took further the Sufi and Bhakti belief in the need for a guru, making the guru the "pivot of his religious system"[7] - as a guide to God, not God. For himself, he accepted the status of teacher and referred to himself as God's servant. He believed in living a pure and idealistic life, amongst his fellow-men, and disapproved of the tradition of asceticism.[8] Nanak was vehemently opposed to the caste system, and started community kitchens to break caste taboos on people of different castes eating together. Nanak, like the Bhakts believed that the way to God was through song and devotion, and the Guru's role was only to make people aware of the goodness within themselves.

Nanak's followers came from amongst Hindus and Moslems. His most powerful appeal was speaking to people in their own language. To the Hindu who used to uncomprehendingly recite Sanskrit Shlokas (sacred verses) and the Moslem struggling with the

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[7]Singh, K., op. cit., p 41.

[8]By asceticism or 'Sanyas' we refer to the Hindu tradition of acquiring sainthood by giving up all normal life and possessions and retiring to remote jungles or hilltops to concentrate on God.

Arabic Koran, his message was clear and accessible. His community kitchens, and the way of life in the Dharamshala (community gathering place) served to begin to make his followers distinct from their parent Hindu and Moslem communities. Also, Guru Nanak was the first popular leader of the Punjab. His belief that there was no difference between Hindu and Moslem, and his use of the Punjabi language, as well as his association with the Punjab, gave rise to, for the first time a "Punjabi consciousness and Punjabi nationalism."[9]

Before his death, Nanak chose a disciple, who took the name Angad to succeed him. The second Guru created a new alphabet (drawn from various north Indian scripts), called it Gurmukhi (from the mouth of the Guru) and compiled Nanak's hymns in it. This script became the script for all sacred Sikh literature, and created another distinction between Sikhs on the one hand and the Hindus and Moslems on the other. The third and fourth Gurus, Amar Das and Ram Das consolidated the Sikh church, extended the numbers of its parishes, gave the Sikhs distinctive forms of ceremonial for births, deaths and marriages, encouraged intercaste marriages and forbade the practise of sati (self- immolation of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband). These moves took the Sikhs further away from Hindus and Moslems, and aroused the hostility of those two communities

The fifth Guru Arjun was a dynamic and proselytizing force. He increased the number of Sikhs by conversions, laid the foundations for some of Sikhism holiest shrines including the Golden Temple at Amritsar and compiled a definitive Sikh religious text.

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[9]Singh, K., op. cit., p 48.

The Mogul emperor Akbar read this work with admiration and sent gifts to Guru Arjun in appreciation. This benevolence of the Mogul Empire towards the Sikhs changed with the death of Akbar in 1606 and the ascension of Jehangir. Jehangir, not taken with Arjun and wary of his large and still-increasing following began the Mogul persecution of the Sikhs which had a major impact on the very nature of the faith. On the pretext that Arjun had assisted a rebellion led by Jehangir's son Khushrou, Arjun was arrested and tortured. He died in captivity, passing the succession to his eleven year old son Hargobind.

The death of Guru Arjun brought the winds of change to the Sikh religion. Hargobind's main religious contribution was the two sword theory of Sikhism. The two swords worn by him symbolised spiritual power and political authority.[10] He armed his followers and raised a body of soldiers and warfare became the preoccupation of the Sikhs. Through the following years, and with the death of Jehangir, and the ascension of Shah Jahan, the Sikh Guru and the forces of the Mogul Empire had several skirmishes. Hargobind died peacefully leaving behind a somewhat different Sikh faith. "He changed the emphasis from a peaceful propagation of the faith, to the forthright declaration of the right to defend that faith by force of arms."[11] During the period of the seventh, eighth and ninth Gurus, quarrels over succession arose, and there were recurring skirmishes with the Moguls. The ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb, and was succeeded by his nine year old son, Gobind Singh, who became the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs.

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[10]Cole, O. & Sambhi, P.S., op. cit., p 29.
[11]Singh, K., op. cit., p 66.

Guru Gobind Singh carried much further the changes instituted by the sixth guru Hargobind regarding the defence of the faith. He was a highly educated man who spoke four languages well enough to compose verse in all of them.[12] He militarized the faith, built a series of fortresses, raised and trained an army that fought neighbouring kings and Nawabs as well as the Moguls.

Guru Gobind's most important act as Guru was to dispense with the institution in its existing form. He believed that the teachings of Guru Nanak were now well-established enough to no longer need a 'living mentor' (obviously the quarrels over successors and the formation of rival guruships was a crucial factor in this decision). He named the already well established scripture, the Granth Sahib as the spiritual Guru. The secular functions of the Guru could be performed by the traditional institution of the Panchayat.[13] Thus, the two together, the Granth, and the elder representatives of the community - the panchayat, could become "that mystic entity the Guru Granth Panth."[14] The tenth Guru was also responsible for the creation of the militant 'Khalsa',[15] and the distinctive appearance of the Sikhs as he laid down the five K's that

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[12]Singh, K., op. cit., p 66.

[13]The 'Panchayat' is a traditional Indian village governing unit. It consists of five elders of the village, chosen by the community to settle disputes and discuss issues of relevance. It is still the basic unit of administration in India.

[14]Singh, K., op. cit., p 81. The word 'Panth' is widely used by the Sikhs themselves to describe their community. It means, literally a path or road, but in general usage means a particular system of religious belief. See also Mcleod, H., The Evolution of a Sikh Community, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, p 2.

[15]The story goes that on Baisakhi day (13th April) in 1699, at Anandpur the Guru came before the congregation, sword in hand and demanded five men for sacrifice. The first volunteer was taken into a tent by the Guru. A few minutes later the Guru emerged from the tent with a blood stained sword. This happened five times, with five volunteers. Then the Guru came out of the tent with his five volunteers (he had slaughtered five goats instead), and hailed the five as the 'panj pyare' (five beloved ones) who would be the symbols of the beginning of a new community - the Khalsa. Women were also admitted to the Khalsa, taking the name 'Kaur' (princess) while men took the name 'Singh' (lion).

Sikhs must observe - Kesh (uncut hair), Kanga (comb to signify cleanliness), Kacha (short drawers), Karha (a steel bangle), Kirpan (sword). The intention was to raise an army of soldier-saints, who would wield arms only in a righteous cause, as would saints if they were so compelled. The five emblems are thus saintly or soldierly according to the custom of the time. While Guru Gobind Singh did not alter in any basic way the teachings of the Guru Nanak, nevertheless he transformed the faith. Till then, leaders of the Sikhs had been mostly non-militant Hindus, who often practised Hindu rituals and caste taboos forbidden by Sikhism. These people did not become Khalsa in large numbers. Most Khalsa came from amongst the Jats,[16] and the "rise of militant Sikhism became the rise of Jat power in the Punjab."[17] Sikh Gurus themselves were Hindus of Khatri caste. That they acquired as large a Jat following as they did is partly because Khatris are the traditional teachers of the Jats.[18]

This is the more or less traditional account of the faith. Various more scholarly histories make some important points that seem to challenge this account in places and they are taken into account a little further on. The traditional account has been presented in an unchallenged form for the simple reason that it is this set of beliefs that are accepted by the Sikhs themselves as their own true history and that makes this account more relevant to an understanding of Sikhs today than a more analytical and perhaps

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16The 'Jats' were a particular caste who formed a large part of Punjab's population. They were largely rural people with impressive physiques, known for their considerable energy, straightforwardness, generosity and virility. They are originally a pastoral people who appeared in Punjab in the seventh century and gave up pastoral pursuits to become cultivators.

17Singh, K., op. cit., p 89.

18See Kapur, R.A., Sikh Separatism - the Politics of Faith, Allen & Unwin, London, 1986, p 5.

more factually correct narrative would.

Within this account, three stages of development can clearly be seen. The first obviously begins with Nanak and the founding of the Sikh faith. The second is the military tradition initiated by the sixth Guru Hargobind. Initiated, it should be noted for the defence of the Panth against persecution by the Moslem Moguls. The third stage is the culmination of the line of living Gurus, and the creation of the Khalsa by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. The Khalsa, according to Mcleod, is:

> ". . . best described as an order, as a society possessing a religious foundation and a military discipline, . . . forged first in the mind of Guru Gobind Singh and then within the corporate body of his followers, a community dedicated to the defence of righteousness by the use of the sword . . .".[19]

It has been argued that Sikhism is not so much the synthesis of Islam and Hinduism, as popularly believed - but more an outcome of the Sant tradition in Hinduism, which grew out of the Bhakti movement. This is best described as a tradition of sainthood, with particular people, sants like Kabir who believed and preached the unity of god, and the way to him through song and devotion.[20] Another line of reasoning sees Sikhism as a reform movement within the Hindu fold.[21]

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[19]Mcleod, W.H., op. cit., p 4.

[20]This tradition in Hinduism is closely linked to the Bhakti movement, described earlier. 'Sant' translates as saint, and people who devoted their lives to God and prayer, unfettered by worldly desires were sants. Sants were also the compilers of much of Hindu devotional music, for they believed in song and music as a way to God.

[21]See Kapur, R.A., op. cit., Chapter 1, footnote 1.

Mcleod has also argued that Guru Hargobind's introduction of militancy was as much a result of the influence of Jat culture and a reflection of the increasing preponderance they were gaining within the faith and in Punjab. He would seem to be supported in this argument by the fact that the importance of the military element enhanced by the tenth Guru in the form of the Khalsa, was symbolised by uncut hair (among other things) which had long been a Jat custom. Other influences on Sikhism have come from the hill culture of the Sivalik hills where the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth Gurus spent much of their time, in particular the Devi or Sakti cult.[22]

Mcleod points to another interesting feature about the Khalsa and their role in the Panth. The traditional account would hold that the concept, and its role in the Panth as well as its traditions are the brain-child of Guru Gobind Singh. However, there is evidence to suggest that at least some elements are the result of later developments, arising out of current needs and situations, which were later ascribed to the Guru to make then inviolate.[23]

After the death of the tenth Guru, Sikh leadership passed to Banda Bahadur, who had been chosen by Guru Gobind Singh to lead Sikh warriors against Moslem Nawabs who were exploiting the peasantry, with the acquiescence of the Mogul Emperor Bahadur Shah (himself busy fighting the Rajputs as well as his own family over succession). Banda's war with the Moguls lasted from the death of the Guru in 1708 until 1716 when he was captured and executed

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[22]Mcleod, W.H., op. cit., p 13. The 'Sakti' or 'Devi' cult is a Hindu one which lays emphasis on the powers of the female deity. It exists in various forms around India.

[23]See Mcleod, W.H., op. cit. pp 12-18.

by the Moguls. In a large measure Banda was the leader of an agrarian uprising by Sikh and Hindu peasants against Moslem domination. Even though this uprising was ultimately unsuccessful, there were periods during it when the Moguls held no control over large areas of the Punjab, and it dealt the weakening empire a severe blow.

**The Post-Guru Years and Maharaja Ranjit Singh**

After the defeat and death of Banda Bahadur, there followed a period of persecution and uncertainty for the Sikhs, as the Moguls reimposed their authority over Punjab. But they never regained their earlier dominance, and during this period certain practices and beliefs established themselves in the Sikh Panth, and have remained central to it ever since.

The absence of a living Guru led to the belief that his spirit is present among his believers, through the Granth Sahib, and the book assumed the spiritual aspects of guidance performed by the Guru. Because of Mogul persecution, many Sikhs gave up the easily identifiable symbols of the five K's, and became clean-shaven Sikhs or 'Sahajdhari'. The remaining, the Khalsa who refused to do so had to live the life of outlaws. This was the start of a process that later caused much debate and soul-searching for Sikhs - this practise of members of the faith drifting into the Sahajdhari state and back into the ranks of the Khalsa by growing their hair, readopting other symbols and becoming Kesadhari (unshorn) as political, economic and social situations changed.

Those who remained Khalsa, were organized into bands of

mobile fighters called Jathas under a Jathedar, and would come together on occasions like the festivals of Baisakhi or Diwali in a quasi-parliamentary body - the Sarbat Khalsa. The decisions of this body, which was performing the secular role of the Guru, came to be believed as his decisions. These decisions were more powerful than those taken as a result of mere debate, because the Guru's influence was seen within them. Hence, the spiritual role of the Guru was served by the Granth Sahib, the secular by the Sarbat Khalsa and the Panth was able to maintain, to a large extent, its cohesion as a distinct entity.

These beliefs served the Panth well during the 18th century through the invasions of the Persians. The disarray caused to the Mogul nobility by the Persian invasion provided an opportunity for Jathas and the Khalsa to consolidate themselves and their power grew. During the first of the Afghan invasions, Sikhs strengthened themselves by reorganising themselves into more definite groupings of fighters, called Misls, each associated with a particular though loosely defined territory which they had to protect and over which they had control. Each Misl was free to do as it pleased, except in matters of importance to the entire community, when they were guided by community decisions taken under the influence of the chief of the strongest Misl.

In the subsequent years, the Afghans invaded India nine times, each time crossing and recrossing the Punjab. They were responsible for the shedding of much Sikh blood and destruction, including that of the Golden Temple at Amritsar (which was then rebuilt). The Sikhs, who had developed into mean fighters with specialist hit and run tactics harassed and plundered the moving

armies, while avoiding full confrontation. The death of the Afghan invader, Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1772, caused a situation of flux in northern India. Delhi was under Maratha control, the Mogul emperor lived on in Allahbad, and the British were well into the process of colonization to the area south of the Ganges.

The Misls of the Sikhs had expanded and now controlled territory stretching almost up to Delhi itself. In this period, at the end of the 18th century, Ranjit Singh became head of the most powerful Misl - the Sukerchakias. It was under him, that Punjab had its only Sikh kingdom. Ranjit Singh gained ascendancy through a defeat of the Afghan armies of Shah Abdali's descendants and spread his control over all of Punjab. By 1801 he was the declared 'Maharajah of the Punjab'. The source of his power was seen as the Panth, and he himself as the fulfilment of Sikh destiny.

Ranjit's Punjab though was more than a Sikh kingdom - it was a Punjabi state where "Moslems, Hindus and Sikhs would be equal before the law and have the same rights and duties."[24] His prime minister was a Hindu and his generals included Moslems. He replaced the now degenerating Misl system with a strong and centralized monarchy. His rule resulted in the decline of the Sarbat Khalsa, and the reversal of the trend of Khalsa domination. The Granth Sahib retained its control of the spiritual aspects of the panth.

Ranjit's kingdom, at its peak stretched across the Indus to Peshawar and Dera Ghazikhan in the west, to Leh in the north the Mandi and Bilaspur in the east and across the Sutlej in the south. The kingdom lasted a short time, just forty years but it was, and

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[24]Singh, K., op. cit., p 203.

remains very important in the minds of his people. To members of the Panth, which itself had been in existence only 350 or so years, it was the pinnacle of Sikh achievement and its glories have since passed into legend.

Robin Jeffrey points to the two most significant impacts of Ranjit Singh's rule. Firstly,

> ". . . it made a reality of Guru Gobind Singh's cry 'Raj Karega Khalsa' (the Khalsa shall rule), and even though it was not a purely Sikh kingdom, the idea of a Sikh state branded itself into the minds of the Punjabis."[25]

Secondly, large numbers adopted the five K's of the Khalsa, and it paid to identify with the rulers. So, many Hindus while adopting the five K's retained Hindu practices like cow-worship and caste taboos, which then acquired some place in Sikh life. He claims that this created a problem that remains with Sikhism today - the policies of governments, to a certain extent determine the number of bearded Sikhs. If governments encourage the five K's, many adopt them, while if governments are neutral the number of Sikhs who chose to wear the long hair and beard decline. The religion of the Sikhs is thus subtly and intricately entwined with the question of political rule. His point is borne out in the period of British rule in Punjab.

Within ten years of the death of Ranjit Singh, by 1849, the British had successfully annexed the Punjab. After his death, quarrels over succession broke out amongst his numerous sons, and whatever authority existed in this confused state of affairs, came to rest with the army. After two wars, and with the help of some

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[25]Jeffrey, R., What's Happening to India?, Macmillan, London, 1986.

important Sikh generals and chiefs, the British were able to force the surrender of the army and gain control of Punjab.

## British Rule in the Punjab

The process of the British annexation of Punjab was a bloody and bitter one. Yet, "an understandable respect grew up among the British for the sturdy soldiers able to give and take hard knocks."[26] Thus began, what has been referred to as "the long imperial romance between the Sikhs and the Raj."[27] The British administration first demilitarized Punjab. Opportunities for employment were thrown open to the Punjabis. After reassuring themselves of Sikh loyalty, large numbers were taken into the army (by 1852 they had fought gallantly in the Anglo-Burmese war, and British commanders were encouraged to enlist them).

As power passed from the hands of the Sikhs, those that had adopted the appearance of the faith relapsed gently into Hinduism, as did several Khalsa, with the demilitarisation. The Panth began to disintegrate, and appeared to be ready to merge into the ocean of Hinduism, as was noted by Punjab's British administrators.[28] To a large extent, it was the British who arrested this decline and encouraged Sikhs to maintain their distinctive experience and retain the distinguishing marks of their faith. Jeffrey's explanation for this is that the encouragement of these elements "fostered a martial spirit and kept turbulent men loyal to . . . the state."[29] Others have

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[26]Ibid, p 62.
[27]Ibid, p 62.
[28]A letter of Lord Dalhousie, to this effect is cited in Singh, K., op. cit., Vol. 2, p 96.
[29]Jeffrey, R., op. cit., p62.

interpreted this as part of the British policy of divide-and-rule, which is said to have served them so well in India.

Whatever the reasons, British policy had the effect of arresting the lapse into Hinduism. Other policies in the Punjab had

> ". . . brought peace to a troubled land which had lived through years of chaos and bloodshed; . . . they (the British) ruled with an iron hand, but without offending the racial or religious susceptibilities of the people: they had introduced social reforms, they had laid roads, built schools, hospitals and rest-houses in a land whose only experience of foreigners Turks, Mongols, Pathans, Afghans, and Marathas had been of systematic plundering."[30]

These policies brought dividends for the British. When the Indian mutiny (or First Indian War of Independence) of 1857 took place, led by disaffected Hindus and some Moslems, the Sikhs remained loyal to the Raj, and helped the British regain control, even leading the assault on Delhi. They were amply rewarded for their loyalty. After 1857 there were some administrative changes in the Punjab, as a result of the overall changes in India. Large areas of Punjab were made fertile by the digging of canals assuring a perennial supply of water. Sikhs were allocated lands in these virgin areas, and soon what had once been barren lands became fertile country, producing far in excess of its needs, and the Sikhs became the most prosperous peasantry in India (a position they have regained in the post-independence era).

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[30]Singh, K., op. cit., p 103.

Thus, the policies of the British bought prosperity to the Punjab, and led to a situation where it was once again advantageous to be a Sikh. The imperial Sikh romance continued through the First World War. Sikhs by now constituted large part of the imperial forces, and they saw action on many fronts, and enhanced their reputation as formidable soldiers by winning 14 of the 22 Military Crosses awarded to Indians for gallantry. However, the honeymoon was to end soon after the War.

## The Ghadr Movement

During the period of imperial Sikh romance, the Punjabis became mobile. As Jeffrey says,

> "The army made men mobile . . . (it) sent men overseas, to no less than six theatres of war . . . Partly through the old soldier connection, Sikhs learnt of opportunities throughout the British empire and the world. By the beginning of the 20th century, they were migrating to British Columbia, California, East Africa, South-east Asia and Australia."[31]

He also sees the effect of these migrations and all the subsequent ones as having a profound effect on the Sikhs.

> "From the time of the first World War, until today, the migrant experience has played a key role in encouraging Sikhs to define who they are, to formulate sweeping political goals and to confront established governments in India."[32]

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[31] Jeffrey, R., op. cit., p 63.
[32] Ibid, p 64.

Sikhs had then, been migrating to various parts of the world for some years by the time the First World War began. By the autumn of 1906 for instance, there was a 1500 strong community of Sikh workers in and around Vancouver. These workers faced extreme ill-will from the Canadians, a situation compounded by the fact that Sikhs were British subjects which created legal complications for Canadians trying to deny them admission to Canada.

The British and Canadian governments devised various ways to exclude coloured immigrants without being explicitly racist. One of these was the law that prohibited entry to Canada for travellers unless they came directly from the country of their birth or citizenship to Canada (at that time, no shipping company ran ships directly between Indian ports and Canada). As a result of these and other measures, Sikh immigration to Canada dropped. Some went to the U.S.A. instead, and by 1910, there were nearly 6000 Indians in California. Many were turned away, and for those who did get in, the racial harassment they faced was comparable to that in Canada. However, soon small communities developed in the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Valleys. Most of these Indian immigrants were Sikh, and very soon gurudwaras and around them other societies to represent the interest of the immigrants, like the United India League and the Khalsa Diwan Society emerged.

It was within these movements, after complete disillusionment with the British refusal to do anything about the abominable treatment they had received at the hands of the Canadians, that the Ghadr (revolution) movement was born. It developed out of the organisation 'The Hindustani Workers of the Pacific Coast', and

came to be called the Ghadr. It published a paper called Ghadr, in whose first issue the aims of the movement were set out:

> "Today there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's language, a war against the British Raj . . . what is our name? Ghadr. What is our work? Ghadr. Where will Ghadr break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood take the place of pen and ink."[33]

The incident of the 'Komagata Maru'[34] occurred soon after the establishment of the Ghadr party and succeeded in bringing more people under their banner and highlighting the situation of Indian (mostly Sikh) immigrants in Canada, and the U.S. .

The leaders of the Ghadr movement made several serious attempts to incite armed rebellion in India. From 1914 onwards, they also had help from the Germans, in arms and money, for the task. Ships loaded with revolvers and other war materials were sent to India. Several hundreds of the members of the immigrant community themselves volunteered for 'terrorist' activity and set off for India. Most of these attempts came to nothing. Ships with weapons were searched and seized before they could unload their cargoes at their destination, and volunteers were arrested, tried and many executed. When the United States entered the War, the Ghadrites lost their base of operations and several were also

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[33]Cited in Singh, K., op. cit., pp 176-77.

[34]The Komagata Maru was a Japanese ship, chartered by a Singapore based Sikh businessman. He filled it with Sikhs who wished to emigrate to Canada and set sail from India. When the ship arrived in Canada, the immigrants were refused entry. The ship stayed in Canadian waters for two months, while the case was fought in the Canadian Supreme Court. Ultimately it left with all its passengers (except those who already had Canadian domicile) on board. See Johnston, H., The Voyage of the Komagata-Maru - the Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar, Oxford University Press, New York, 1979.

arrested. But, probably the biggest blow to the movement was that those of its members who succeeded in reaching India, found that the atmosphere there was not conducive to revolution. Most Indians, including the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi and B.G. Tilak, and the Sikh organisation the Chief Khalsa Diwan had all come out in favour of supporting the British. Sikh soldiers were going to the front in droves. In spite of all the efforts of the Ghadrites, the time was not right for the growth of their revolutionary seed.

The Ghadrites had other problems that hindered them. They were not united amongst themselves. They were an association of Indians, most of whom were Sikhs - but their leadership was in the hands of Bengalis or Punjabi Hindus, while the Sikhs formed the rank and file. This led to problems, as did the actions of some leaders who expropriated the organization's funds for their own use. British intelligence also proved more than a match for the Ghadrites.

After the war, the Ghadrites turned to Moscow, and many went there for education and training. They joined hands with the 'Kirti Kisan' (Workers and Peasants Party) in Punjab, which was the Punjab branch of the Communist Party, affiliated to the third International. This communist connection caused friction amongst members, particularly those based in North America. The Ghadr chapter closed in 1948, after the independence of India, when the party handed over its assets to the Indian Ambassador to the United States.

This movement is an interesting one, particularly from the view point of the overall aims of this thesis. It has been described as

"the first secular movement which aimed to liberate India through the use of arms."[35] It certainly broke the hitherto established tradition of Sikh loyalty to the British Raj. Also, it was a movement initiated, funded, and planned from outside India. Its main impetus was external, and interestingly, it was almost completely out of touch with attitudes and sympathies in India itself. The other point that needs to be noted about the Ghadr movement, is that while its membership was mainly Sikh, it was a secular movement, attracting both Hindus and Moslems as well, and it was in no way a Sikh-nationalist or religious revivalist movement.

## Modern Political Development of the Sikhs

The late nineteenth century was time of revivalism and reform for all India's religions. This is mostly seen as a result of the impact of the British on Indian society, the response of Indians to the western education they had begun to receive, and to the activities of Christian missionaries. The precise reasons for the birth of these movements varied according to the particular circumstances of each community. The Hindu revival and reform was led by men such as Swami Dayanand of the Arya Samaj and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and the Bhramo Samaj. The Moslem movement was led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Aligarh Moslem University.

For the Sikh community too, such an organisation - the Singh Sabha - came into being in Amritsar in 1873. The movement was organized for the purposes of

". . . the revival of the teachings of the Gurus,

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[35]Singh, K., op. cit., p 190.

> production of religious literature in Punjabi, and a campaign against illiteracy. The founders also sought to interest high-placed Englishmen in, and assure their association with the educational programme."[36]

It was supported by educated men of the middle class, as well as by orthodox Sikhs and rich landowners. The Singh Sabha, like Sir Syed's Moslem Association, advocated loyalty to the British Raj. The most important functions of the organisation were educational. Funds were collected, schools built, the Khalsa college established at Amritsar. Impetus was given to the teaching of Gurmukhi and the Sikh scriptures, and it stimulated the publication of books, magazines and newspapers in Punjabi.

The Hindu Arya Samaj (a fairly fundamentalist organization that advocated a move back to pure Vedic Hinduism, whose leader was clever but acerbic and intolerant) had been increasing its influence amongst Punjabi Hindus. It had claimed Sikhism as a not-too-illustrious sect of Hinduism - and there was fierce resistance by Sikhs, led by the Sabha to any such label. The attitude to the Samaj led to the publication of a booklet - Hum Hindu Nahin Hai (we are NOT Hindus), and there was much debate and furore over the issue, with Sikhs vociferously denying that they were Hindus.

The Singh Sabha succeeded in establishing itself as the defender of the Panth against Hindu attempts to absorb it, as well as the promoter of education and the progress of Sikhs. Out of the Singh Sabha grew the first modern Sikh political organization the Chief Khalsa Diwan, which was pledged to "cultivate loyalty to the

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[36]Ibid, pp 141-2.

crown, to safeguard Sikh rights vis-a-vis other communities and to fight for representation of Sikhs in the services, particularly the army."[37] But this never gained too much importance, because it was left behind by events and seen as a group of yes-men (toadies) to the British.

It is interesting to note here that the Singh Sabha, while being a particular Sikh response to the activities of the Arya Samaj, Hindu Punjabis and Christian missionary influence which was particularly strong in Punjab, can be usefully compared with the Moslem association. Both had similar aims, both were fighting to retain the place of their community in a Hindu dominated society, both emphasized education as part of that fight and both enlisted British help. Also ultimately both resulted in the formation of explicitly political organizations, distinct from the Congress, which had always attempted to be the voice of all Indians. This perhaps tells us about the effect that the presence of an overwhelming majority can have on small minorities, as well as something about the Congress - which was so unsuccessful in its aim to represent 'India'. Moreover, the existence of each the Sabha and the Moslem association, served to strengthen the case for the existence of the other.

The Singh Sabha movement petered out by the 1920's but not before it had begun to spread Western education and literacy among the Sikhs, laying the foundation for a Western educated Sikh elite, and was replaced by two organizations that arose as a result of one of the reforms the Sabha attempted, and which are still the dominant factor in Punjab politics - the Akali Dal and the Shiromani

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[37] Ibid, p 145.

Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC).

The Singh Sabha had, along with its other efforts, taken up the cause of the reform of Gurudwaras and their management. Gurudwaras are Sikh temples, but they are also community centres, where the religious ceremonies of birth, betrothal, and marriage are conducted, a school where children learn prayer and the Sikh alphabet, and include a free kitchen (Guru-Da-Langar), where Sikhs eat together. The Gurudwara has also functioned as a panchayat-ghar where community elders meet to settle disputes, or hold discussions on matters affecting the community. To enable gurudwaras to meet all these obligations, most have some lands attached to them, and the income from these lands as well as from collections amount to considerable sums. In the days of Mogul persecution of Sikhs, many gurudwara priests (Mahants or Granthis), were sahajdhari Sikhs who could easily deny being Sikhs if the need arose. The position of Granthi passed from father to son, and by the 1920s many of them had relapsed into Hinduism, brought Hindu idols into Gurudwaras, would not allow lower caste or Mazhabi Sikhs to worship, and abused the trust of their positions. Some of them had even had land records changed and the shrines put down as their own property. (The granthi is in the same position, essentially as a vicar and as such has no ownership rights over his shrine).

The Sabha had tried to rid gurudwaras of corrupt priests and it carried on civil litigation against some for several years. The establishment, however, was on the side of the priests, based on 'legal' evidence. The long process through the courts and the lack of success for the Sabha made the masses impatient, and they soon chose to support the newly formed Akali party who advocated methods of

non-cooperation and passive resistance.

On the 15th of November 1920, a proclamation was issued from the Golden Temple, to the effect that a committee of 175 members, the SGPC had been established for the management of all Sikh shrines. At the same time, in answer to a call, several "thousands of Sikhs came forward as volunteers to oppose the government and occupy the Gurudwaras."[38] The agitations lasted over four years, and clearly set the Sikhs, led by the Akalis against the British government as well as the Hindus, who felt that the shrines which until then were sacred to and used by both communities were being expropriated by extremists with the purpose of widening the gulf between the two communities. In those agitations, 400 Akalis or supporters were killed, 2000 wounded and 30,000 arrested.[39] The Akalis were successful, the management of shrines was handed over to the SGPC, and the agitations had served to firmly establish the Akalis as the political organization for the Sikhs. The SGPC and Akali Dal have controlled Sikh politics right up to the present day.

## The SGPC

The SGPC was set up in 1925, and is a 'body corporate' consisting of 160 members of whom 140 are elected. These 140 members are elected through general elections held every five years, in constituencies established by the Punjab government and the SGPC. Only Sikhs above 21 years of age who are not apostates can

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[38]Nayar, B.R., Minority Politics in the Punjab, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1966, p 67.
[39]Singh, K., op. cit., p 213.

vote and only Sikhs above the age of 25, literate in Gurmukhi can be elected. The members of the SGPC annually elect an executive committee of between 9 and 15 members, and a president. A bureaucracy of about 100 persons assists the executive committee from offices within the Golden Temple complex. There is also a judicial commission for the SGPC, of 3 Sikh members, appointed by the government, on recommendations from the SGPC. The SGPC controls all gurudwaras in the Punjab. Each gurudwara has a management committee answerable to the SGPC except the ten most important which are run directly by the SGPC. The SGPC has control over extremely large financial resources through two sources (l) regular contributions from all Gurudwara committees and (2) the ten Gurudwaras it controls itself.

The SGPC is understandably a tremendous power in the Panth. Khushwant Singh writes:

> "The SGPC became a sort of parliament of the Sikhs. It's decisions acquired the sanctity of the ancient Gurumatta and the Akali Dal became its army, and the income from the Gurudwara . . . gave it financial sustenance. Disbursement of this income in the management of shrines, patronage in the appointment of granthis and Sevadars (temple servants), teachers and professors for schools and colleges which were built, arrangements for the training of granthis and for missionary activity outside Punjab all made the SGPC a government within a government. Its control became the focal point of Sikh politics. The Akalis automatically took control, and have never relinquished

it. The struggle for power has been between different factions of the same party."[40]

## The Akali Dal

The Akali Dal emerged as the Sikh political party after the gurudwara reform movement. Its objective is "the protection of Sikh rights and ensuring the Sikhs continued existence as an independent entity."[41] The existence of the Akali Dal is based on the idea that the Sikhs are a separate political unit and that Sikh politics is separate from the politics of Punjab or the rest of India.

> "According to this doctrine Sikhism is not a religion like others. By religion we understand a relationship between the individual and God whereas the Sikh religion concerns itself with the whole activity of man in the context of this world. Religion and politics are said to be combined in Sikhism."[42]

These statements are founded on the history of the faith and the teachings of the Gurus. We are reminded that the sixth Guru Hargobind took power wearing the two swords of Miri (worldly power) and Piri (spiritual power) and that the last Guru Gobind Singh made the Panth supreme in religious and political matters. Political activity by the Sikhs as a community came to be believed to be necessary for the survival of the faith and the Panth. It was argued that "if the Sikhs were to give up political activity as a community and as a result this political organization, the entire Sikh

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[40]Singh, K., op.cit., pp 214-215.
[41]Nayar, B.R., op. cit., p 169.
[42]Ibid, p 68.

community would be scattered."[43] The argument has been taken further; participation in politics, by the Sikhs as a community is seen as part of the Sikh religious ideology. The Panth was created for bringing about global fraternity, and because it is dedicated to this cause political activity is inherent to it and,

> ". . . it is in this context that the litany which is repeated in every Sikh congregation . . . every morning and evening (Raj Karega Khalsa) to the effect that the Khalsa shall rule, is to be understood. The Order of the Khalsa, as divorced from political activity . . . has no intelligible connotation."[44]

The Akali Dal, is thus the political representative of the Panth. Nayar writes, "not only does the Akali Dal proclaim itself as the only representative body of the Panth, but it goes further and equates itself with the Panth, considers itself to be the Panth."[45] Moreover, the loyalty of the Sikh to the Panth has to be total, thus those Sikhs who are members of any other political organization are not merely anti-Akali, but anti-Panth. This identification of the Dal with the Panth is of immense political value to the Dal, for it makes them the heirs to the organization of the Khalsa started by Guru Gobind Singh.

From seeing the Panth as the exclusive political and religious organization of the Sikhs, it is to take the analysis a single step further to proclaim it a nation, as has indeed been done.

"It is emphasized that the ideology of the Panth brings a

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[43] Ibid, p 69.
[44] Ibid, p 69.
[45] Ibid, p 170.

> transformation in its converts, welds them together in a kinship which transcends distance, territory, caste, and social barriers and even race, and through this process of conversion, the Sikhs have become a nation."[46]

This, then is the interpretation of Sikhism that the Akalis have adopted, and their policy of seeking some territory, (within or without the Indian Union) in which Sikhs hold political power is determined by it. As master Tara Singh (dominant force of the Akali party for the first forty years of its existence) has written, "The Khalsa Panth will be either ruler or rebel. It has no third role to play."[47] The links between the SGPC and Akali Dal are extremely strong. The headquarters of the Akalis are within the walls of the Golden Temple complex, and all their branches and local offices are also located inside gurudwaras. The Akalis have always won most of the seats to the SGPC, and thus controlled it since inception. This has allowed them to wield tremendous power in the Punjab, and given them access to the large revenues of the SGPC.

It must be noted that while the Akali Party has been identified as the leading Sikh political party, Sikhs have been prominent in other parties as well. The Congress party has always been able to attract the vote of certain sections of the Sikhs, as well as prominent figures to its leadership. The Punjab Communist party is largely a Sikh party which draws its support from small farmers in rural areas. Both these, unlike the Akalis, are secular parties and it is the fact that the Akalis stand for a synthesis of religion and politics that has led to them acquiring the label of 'a Sikh Political Party'.

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[46] Ibid, p 70.
[47] Ibid, p 70.

## Pre-Independence History

The good relations between Sikhs and the Empire deteriorated after the first World War. Various events like the creation of the Indent system,[48] the tax increases and the passage of the Rowlatt Bills were unpopular. On Baisakhi Day, April 13, 1919, a meeting had been called by the Congress in Amritsar, at Jalianwalla Bagh. Due to serious disturbances in Punjab over the previous few days, public meetings were banned. But people were gathering for the festival too, and when the British Army arrived to disband the crowd General Dyer's troops closed off the only exit from the grounds of Jalianwalla, and opened fire, killing 379 people, leaving 2000 wounded. The action caused outrage, but received the approval of Punjab's lieutenant-governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer.[49] This act alienated the most loyal supporters of the Raj, and could be said to mark the end of the close relationship.

By this time, the methods of governing India had changed. In 1909, the elective principal was introduced, to choose representatives for provincial and other legislative bodies by the Minto-Morley reforms. These granted separate electorates to Moslems and Hindus in provinces like the Punjab. No such communal-based electorate was awarded to the Sikhs, in spite of demands for them. Then, in 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms extended the principle to the Sikhs.

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[48]The system by which every village had to provide a certain number of recruits. See Singh, K., op. cit., p 161.

[49]General Dyer was later dismissed after an enquiry. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was assassinated by a Sikh in London, 21 years later.

After the success of the Gurudwara reform movement, and in spite of the friction caused by it between Hindus and Sikhs, the Congress and the Akalis developed a reciprocal relationship. The Akali Dal was strongly opposed to the Moslem League, and lent its support to the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements of the Congress, in its fight against the British. At the same time the Akali Dal also functioned as a pressure group, acting to protect and safeguard the interests of the Sikh community, vis-a-vis both the Congress and the Moslem League. For its part, the Congress party, "aggregated and channelled Sikh demands as part of nationalist demands."[50] This period of close collaboration between the Akalis and the Congressmen lasted until the beginning of World War II. When India was declared to be at war with Germany by the British, Congress leaders who had not been consulted about any such announcement, resigned from all the provincial ministries and adopted the policy on non-cooperation with the British war effort. At this time, the Akali leader, Master Tara Singh was on the working committee of the Punjab Congress Party, and on the All-lndia Congress Committee. He resigned his posts, and in spite of the Congress policy of non-cooperation, met with the Viceroy and began actively recruiting Sikhs for the British Army. Other members of the Akali Dal continued to work with the Congress. However, Tara Singh's actions resulted in the drifting apart of the two parties. In 1942 the Congress party launched the Quit India movement, and the Akali Dal were divided in their support of it.

It was in this period that the notion of Pakistan was developing and taking root in the minds of India's moslems. The Akali Dal

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[50]Nayar, B.R., op. cit., p 77.

entered into dealings with the Moslem League, as well as with the Unionist Party that was in power in the Punjab, to see if it could secure an advantageous position for the Sikhs from them. This effort did not do much other than to alienate Congressmen who saw such dealings as a betrayal.

In 1940, the Moslem League Conference adopted the historic Pakistan Resolution, and the idea of Pakistan began to look as if it might become reality. Since this could have a direct bearing on the Sikh Panth, because of the geographical distribution of Moslems, Sikhs and Hindus[51] around the Punjab, the Akali leadership began to look for another way, one that would safeguard Sikh interests. At this point, they came up with a demand for 'Azad Punjab' (free Punjab).

> "In essence the Azad Punjab scheme involved a redemarkation of the boundaries of the Punjab so as to detach the Moslem majority district from the province and create a new province of Azad Punjab in which the maximum Sikh population would be included and no single religious community would have a majority."[52]

In effect this would have meant Azad Punjab having a population that was 40% Moslem, 40% Hindu, and 20% Sikh with Sikhs holding the balance of power. The demand for Azad Punjab was opposed by Hindus and nationalists alike on the grounds that it was just as destructive as that for Pakistan involving a vivisection of India.

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[51]The population of Punjab was mixed all over the region. In percentage terms, in 1941, the Moslems were the majority (53%), the Hindus second (30%) and the Sikhs (15%). The picture varied slightly between districts, but Sikhs were rarely except in specific areas the majority. See Brass, P.R., Language, Religon and Politics in Northern India, Cambridge University Press, London & New York, 1974, Table 6.3, p 299.

[52]Nayar, B.R., op. cit., p 83.

Akali support for the scheme was militant and vociferous but events were moving too fast for the Akalis.

The idea of Pakistan seemed to be gaining ground, and one of the Congress leadership came up with a plan by which the Congress would agree to the separation of and creation of Moslem majority provinces if the Moslem League would throw all its weight behind the struggle with the British. This plan was said to have the blessing of Gandhi. This was ultimately rejected by Jinnah, who wanted an independent separate nation not provinces of Moslems within India but it did serve to dramatically deteriorate Congress-Akali relations because the latter were horrified by this move which would probably split their community down the middle.

In 1944 an all-parties Sikh conference was organised in Amritsar dominated by Akali or pro-Akali members. At this conference Master Tara Singh declared that the Sikhs were a nation, and if there was going to be a division of the country, then "they should not be slaves of Pakistan or Hindustan."[53] In the months following other Sikh leaders also called for a Khalistan or Sikhistan. They took this position at the Simla Conference called by the viceroy Lord Wavell to find a solution to the problem of Indian independence. The Sikh position, in a nutshell was that they preferred a united India, and were against Pakistan because it would mean that their community would be divided or come under Moslem control. But, if Pakistan were conceded, then the Sikhs too must have their separate nation. In 1946, the Akali Dal adopted a resolution calling for a Sikh homeland. In the same year, Sir

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[53]Cited in ibid, p 86.

Stafford Cripps' Cabinet Mission was sent out to come up with a solution, but their recommendations were wholly rejected by the Indians, and did not in any case grant much importance to the demand for a Sikh homeland. Khushwant Singh says,

> "The way the Sikh spokesmen worded their demand for a Sikh state, - not as something inherently desirable, but simply as a point in the argument against Pakistan - robbed the suggestion of any chance of serious consideration."[54]

Lord Mountbatten took over as the last viceroy in March of 1947, in the midst of unrest on the subcontinent. A communal madness gripped the country, and Jinnah's intransigence meant that no solution other than Pakistan could be found that would bring India independence. Thus, Mountbatten went ahead, and with the assistance of V.P. Menon, formulated a plan for the partition of India that found favour with the Congress, the League, and even the Sikhs. It should be noted that Sikhs came round to an acceptance of partition, only after a series of representations to the British, and negotiations with both the Moslem League and the Congress. From each they demanded concessions that would safeguard their position. From the Moslem League they demanded special representation on the Pakistan Government and the creation of a Punjab province where they would be able to hold the balance of power. From each side they tried to get a quasi-autonomous province of east Punjab. Having failed to secure either a homeland or a special position for the Sikhs the Akali Dal accepted partition and began to press for a division that would bring most of their people within the Indian

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[54]Singh, K., op. cit., p 259.

boundary. They made a representation to Sir Cyril Radcliffe that the boundary be along the Chenab river which would keep most Sikhs and their holiest shrines in Indian east Punjab. But when the final boundary demarcations were made 62% of the land area and 55% of the population of what had been Punjab was awarded to Pakistan. Of this boundary, Khuswant Singh writes;

> "The Radcliffe award was as fair as it could be to Moslems and Hindus. The one community to which no boundary award could have done justice was the Sikhs. Their richest lands, over 150 historical shrines and half their population were left on the Pakistan side of the dividing line."[55]

Sikhs began to arm themselves, Jathas were organised and preparation for battle began. While appeals were made to Punjabis of all religions to stay where they were (mostly by nationalist Indian leaders) the disturbing situation, the violence, communal hatred and overall madness that had the population in its grip did not permit this. So, as India celebrated her independence on the 15th August 1947 Punjab turned into a battlefield and biggest population transfer the world has ever seen began. It has been argued that there were more 'rational' considerations for the violence and migrations as far as the Sikhs were concerned. The only way the Sikh leaders could keep the Sikh community united now was to have all of them within the boundaries of one nation to "ensure the survival of the Sikhs as a compact, coherent, undivided community",[56] and this could only be done by the forcible eviction of the Moslems of East Punjab to make

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[55]Ibid, p 278.
[56]Nayar, B.R., op. cit., p 95.

room for the over two million Sikhs who were in Pakistan. So the Sikh violence against Moslems in East Punjab, while satisfying base desires of violence, also served to make possible the continued existence of a geographically united, compact Sikh community.[57]

## Post-Partition Politics

The most important result of the migration was to create a Sikh concentration in the north western districts of east Punjab, and in the princely states. Post-partition conditions made possible for the first time, the democratic argument of the will of the majority being legitimately put forward to support the claim for a Sikh state. However, the independence of India also meant that a secular nationalist leadership bound to be unsympathetic to communal demands, in the light of its experience with the Moslems was now in power.

It did not take long for the demand for a Sikh homeland to resurface. The Akali leaders however, pledged themselves to the Indian Union and the demand was expressed in terms of forming a Sikh province or state within the Indian Union. In 1948, Master Tara Singh began claims for a Sikh province, wherein Sikhs could safeguard their traditions and culture. Late in 1948, the Sikh members of the East Punjab legislative assembly sent a list of demands to the Constituent Assembly, asking for special representation for Sikhs in the Punjab legislative and within the services as well as at the centre. They also stated that should these demands not be met, then Sikhs should be allowed to set up a

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[57]Moon, P., Divide and Quit, Chatto and Windus, London, 1961, cited in Nayar, B.R., op. cit., pp 95-97.

province of their own. But, a constituent assembly embarked on creating the framework for a secular state was not going to listen to pleas for communal representation, and besides, the parallels between these demands and those of some of the earlier ones made by the Moslem League made the assembly wary.

In 1948, the Indian government took two decisions, both of which had substantial effects. First was the creation of a new state - PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) - a merger of Patiala with other princely states. Secondly, the Punjab was declared a bilingual state with Hindi and Punjabi as its languages. The first step created the nucleus of a Sikhistan or Sikh province, incorporating many Sikh majority districts. The second allowed the Akali Dal to superficially change the communal nature of their demand for a Sikh province into a linguistic one, along the lines of several other such demands that emerged in Independent India.

In 1953 a demand for the creation of a Punjabi Suba as a Punjabi speaking state, was put before the States Reorganization Commission. In 1955, these were rejected on the grounds that Punjabi was not sufficiently different from Hindi,[58] and that the demand did not have the backing of the majority of the people in the area. This dismissal prompted a leading Akali, Sardar Hukam Singh to remark, "while others got states for their languages, we lost even

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[58]The issue of whether the Punjabi language is a distinct language in its own right, whether it is spoken by Hindu and Sikh, or written by them, and in which script became a major one. For a full discussion, see Brass, P.R., op. cit., 1974, pp 286-297. In summary, it would be fair to say that Punjabi is a distinct language, and most Punjabis, regardless of their religion, speak it. However, Hindus deny this for census purposes, as a move against the establishment of the Punjabi Suba. Sikhs on the other hand identify Punjabi as their mother tongue, and Gurmukhi as its script. Hindus do not commonly use the Gurmukhi script, either switching to Hindi for correspondence, or writing Punjabi in the Devanagiri (Hindi) script.

our language."[59]

The Akali Dal, angered by the rejection of their demand, relaunched the Punjabi Suba agitation. Communal tension between Sikh and Hindu rose fuelled by the counter campaigns of the Jan Sangh and Arya Samaj. In the following months the central government merged the states of Himachal Pradesh, Pepsu and East Punjab to form a sort of greater Punjab. Nehru entered into negotiations with the Akali leaders and a regional formula by which the work of the state legislative was assigned to separate regional committees was worked out. The Akali Dal agreed to participate and even merged with the Congress to contest the 1957 state legislative elections (which they won). But by 1959, unhappy with the Congress leadership in the state and the working of the regional formula, the Akalis relaunched their Punjabi Suba agitation.

The 1959-60 gurudwara elections (to the SGPC) were dubbed a plebiscite for the creation of a Punjabi Suba and a victory for the Akali Dal gave the agitation the necessary impetus. Through 1960 and a part of 1961, the agitation went on. Master Tara Singh resigned the presidency of the SGPC to give himself completely to the task. Appeals were made to all Sikhs to come forward to the help of the Panth (which did nothing to strengthen the case that this was a linguistic not communal demand). The two leading lights of the Akali Dal, Master Tara Singh and his protege Sant Fateh Singh undertook at different times to fast unto death in support of their demands.

The Punjab Congress Government under Chief Minister

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[59]Quoted in, Brass, P.R., op. cit., p 320.

Kairon (himself a Sikh who started his political career in the Akali Dal) and the Central Government under Nehru remained firm in their refusal. Master Tara Singh ended his fast with only the promise of an enquiry into allegations of discrimination against Sikhs. This led to his being discredited and the formation of a splinter branch of the Akali Dal led by Sant Fateh Singh who had managed to end his fast without ignominy. Thus the 1960-1961 agitation resulted in not only complete failure, but also disarray in Akali ranks and an irreparable blow to the leadership of Master Tara Singh.

The demand for the Punjabi Suba was guided by several motivations on the part of the Akalis. The first and most important was to establish a territory wherein the Sikhs could wield power, and this was seen as the only effective way of securing the continued existence of the Sikh Panth. This need was reinforced by two factors. The Akali leadership perceived a threat to religious orthodoxy. Modernization was having the effect it has on religions everywhere upon Sikhism and its protectors, the Akalis were dismayed. However, the effects of increasing religious unorthodoxy do not generally bring demands for territorial political solutions. That they did so in this case is, according to Nayar, because in Sikhism unorthodoxy leads to a dramatic visible impact, resulting as it does, sooner or later in the shaving of beards and cutting of hair, and no longer observing the five K's. Further, it is believed that once this happens the reassimilation into Hinduism is inevitable. This claim is associated with the second factor - the belief that Sikhs are discriminated against within India. The two claims are not as unrelated as they might appear, particularly in light of Robin

Jeffrey's comments quoted earlier. The Sikh leaders claim that discrimination is practised by preferring clean-shaven Sikhs for promotion in the army and elsewhere, and alleging that the Government is encouraging Sikhs to turn into apostates.

As a result of the agitation, the Das Commission was appointed to go into allegations of discrimination against Sikhs. The Akali Dal boycotted the commission, but a group of nationalist Sikhs did present the commission with a memorandum, "which far from showing any discrimination against the Sikh community established the fact that Sikhs had received generous treatment from the Congress government in patronage and political representation."[60]

In 1964, Punjab Chief Minister Kairon was removed from office, and the Punjab Congress party split into factions, weakening their ability to resist the demands for a Punjabi Suba. Nehru passed away in 1964. In 1965, Sant Fateh Singh secured control of the SGPC, and the call for the Punjabi Suba reappeared. He led talks with Prime Minister Shastri but no solution emerged. Congress Sikh leaders had also extended their support for the demand. As in 1962, when the Chinese invaded India, again in 1965 the issue was put aside as the country dealt with a national emergency.

> "The war with Pakistan in September 1965 provided the government of India with an additional incentive to solve the political unrest in the Punjab, and an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the Sikh people to the defense of India, by conceding the Punjabi Suba demand."[61]

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[60]Nayar, B.R., op. cit., p 113.
[61]Brass, P.R., op. cit., p 322.

In March 1966, a boundary commission was organized to divide Punjab. As a result three states were created - a new Hindi state of Haryana out of the southern districts, the hill areas which were also Hindi speaking would go to Himachal Pradesh, and the remaining Punjabi speaking areas would go to Punjab. For the first time, Punjab would have a majority Sikh (56%) population.[62] The capital, Chandigarh was to become a Union Territory and shared between states of Haryana and Punjab until it was handed over to Punjab in 1970.

The creation of the Punjabi Suba did not, as was hoped by the Akalis, see them to power. Punjab is 56% Sikh, thus the Akalis need practically all Sikhs to vote for them before they can establish a government. Sikh support however goes to the Congress party as well as to the Communists, hence the Akalis have only been able to achieve power in the Punjab through coalitions, until very recently.

## Conclusion

The story of the origins and development of the Sikh people is the story of the creation and assertion of identity. The origins of the community, its Hindu ethos, the fact that it is a minority community, and the nature of Hinduism, by which it is surrounded and from which it has tried to distance itself, make it complex. The flexibility of Hinduism, the nature of relations between the two communities, with members seemingly drifting from one to another as political, economic and social circumstances change, have led to both close relations and vociferous denials of those relations.

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[62]Singh, K., op. cit., p 309.

By most generally accepted definitions of nationhood (in the pure sense of the word), the Sikhs would appear to be a nation. They are united by a common religion, language, history and have affiliations to a particular territory on the basis of their past. More importantly, they appear to feel that they are a nation. However, some of the factors that unite then are not exclusive to them. The Punjab has never been a purely Sikh land. Their language, at least in its spoken form is shared by Hindus and Moslems in India and Pakistan. Their most important distinguishing feature - their religion - cannot be seen as exclusive of the Punjabi community from which it arose, and within which it developed, and is often as familiar in belief and practise to Punjabi Hindus, as it is to Sikhs.

It must also be remembered, that the colonial experience, with its tangible and intangible impact, the forces of modernization and the disruption they cause to the old order, as well as the new structures and issues they create have left their mark, and are perhaps still at work. For the last 100 years or more, the Sikhs have been in the forefront of some of these efforts of modernization, applying their considerable skills and energies to the task. This has resulted in their becoming one of the more economically powerful and well-off communities on the Indian scene, with substantial connections across the world, through a widespread diaspora. These changes could not have been expected to take place, without a corresponding change in the way a Sikh views his identity.

In the context of the modern Indian political system, the Sikhs occupy a distinctive position. Their political party, the Akali Dal is unique in its explicit combination of religion and politics, in what is, at least in principle, a secular state. The links between the religious-

administrative SGPC and the Akali Dal, their tendency to mobilize on political issues through an evocation of religious loyalties, the fact that they are a legal political party that bases itself in religious shrines, and have always portrayed any failures of political action and demands as the result of religious discrimination - have all contributed to the weakening of India's already fragile political fabric. However, there are those Sikhs who do not subscribe to the Akali view, and have taken important positions in secular institutions. Also, the contribution of the entire Sikh community to the progress of India, particularly in terms of defence and economic development are unquestionable.

A further study of the more contemporary history of the last twenty years or so, will it is hoped bring a clearer understanding of the community and the present crisis in which it finds itself. This will be better considered in following chapters to allow a more detailed examination and analysis of events.

CHAPTER FIVE

# THE SIKHS IN BRITAIN

## Introduction

Migration from the Indian sub-continent has a long and varied history. It has been chronologically divided into three phases: the ancient, the colonial and the modern.[1] The oldest of these migrations took place from about 480 BC, and were concerned primarily with spreading the word of the Buddha, and to a lesser extent with trade. The impact of these migrations is still clearly visible in the cultures of several south-east Asian countries, as well as in China, Japan and Korea. Later migrations of the ancient period occurred around the 2nd century AD and were more directly related to trade. The main focus of these migrations was East Africa, and the Persian Gulf.

The colonial migrations were mostly those of the indentured labour system introduced by the British. This system, described by some as a new system of slavery[2] operated between 1830 and 1916. It was designed to supply labour to the plantation economies of other British colonies like Fiji, Malaysia, West Indies and East Africa, as well as to provide low-grade administrative back-up to the British Raj in these areas. These migrations, unlike those of the previous era were mass migrations, and were basically exploitative in nature. They led to the establishment of substantial Indian communities in a

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[1]Helweg, A., 'The Indian Diaspora: Influence on International Relations.' in Sheffer, G. [ed.], Modern Diasporas in International Relations, Croom Helm, London, 1986, pp 103-130.

[2]Tinker, H., A New System of Slavery, Oxford University Press, London, 1974.

variety of countries - Kenya, Uganda, Fiji, Mauritius, West Indies, Burma and Malaya. Even after the end of the indentured labour system, migrations from some areas of the sub-continent continued. The movement of Tamils to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), those of the Patels of Gujrat and the Sikhs of Punjab to East Africa, as well as in the case of the latter to far-off places like U.S.A and Canada gained momentum. These movements were distinct from the indentured labour migrations comprising as they did moves by adventurous innovative people in search of financial self-improvement. The effects of all these migrations on the further development of British colonialism was substantial, and their implications for present-day international relations are still working themselves out.

The modern migrations are those of the post-independence or post war period. The major ones amongst these continued to be from Gujrat and Punjab, mainly to the United Kingdom. After a revision of the immigration policies of Australia, Canada and the U.S.A., in the 1960s substantial numbers of educated Indians moved to these countries. More recently there has been a notable movement of workers from the states of southern India particularly Kerala, as well as of Sikhs, to the oil rich countries of the Middle East.

Having briefly outlined the historical context of migration from the sub-continent, we shall now move to a specific consideration of the Sikh experience. This chapter seeks to paint a picture of the Sikh community in this country. It will do so by first examining the socioeconomic and cultural background from which they come. It will then recount a brief history of Sikh migration, bringing the focus to the move to this country in the 1950s and 1960s. It will examine the motivations behind this move, and the

initial experiences of immigrants here. It will then move on to a consideration of the consolidation of the community here, the institutions within it, and the integration of members into British society.

## Background and History

Sikh communities exist in many far-flung places of the world, and some of them were established in the early years of this century. Substantial numbers of Sikhs can be found today in U.S.A., Canada, Malaysia, parts of East Africa, Fiji and the United Kingdom. In smaller numbers they are present all over the globe but particularly in the Middle East. It has been argued, by Dr. Joyce Pettigrew and Arthur Helweg in particular, that the explanation for this phenomenon lies, at least in part, in the value and social system of the Jat Sikhs, that make migration a particularly attractive option for this community. A consideration of the main elements of this system is useful here.[3]

The Sikh community has been dominated by the Jats since the time of the fifth Guru Arjun (1563-1606). The Jats are a people of tribal origin who moved to the Punjab plains in about 100 BC. They are largely agricultural people, proud and independent, with a well defined value and social system of their own. While there are still Hindu and Moslem Jats in the Punjab, large numbers of Jats embraced Sikhism, and today they dominate that community, and Sikh and Jat culture are inextricably intertwined.

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[3]This section draws on the following: (a) Pettigrew, J., 'Some Observations on the Social System of the Sikh Jats', New Community, Vol. 1, No. 5, Autumn 1975, pp 354-364; (b) Helweg, A., Sikhs in England, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, India, 1986; (c) personal experience.

The Jat social system is based on the primacy and importance of the extended family unit. A Jat grows up within the extended family, and has close relationships with all its members. There is a strong concept of familial honour (izzat). The good deeds of a member of the family bring honour to the entire unit, and similarly, the misdemeanours of one member are reflected on the whole family. This is particularly true of the behaviour of the women in the family. The prestige of a family is enhanced by service to the community, by land ownership by wealth, and to a lesser degree by ancestry. The system is not however binding or self-perpetuating, and fortunes of the family can change from generation to generation. For example a family can acquire honour through the actions of members for the good of the community, or old and wealthy families can lose their honour if subsequent generations do not come up to the mark.

Since Jats were the traditional owners of land in the Punjab, there is continuing and considerable importance attached to such ownership. Status and respect derive from land ownership, and the financial independence it provides. It implies being part of the Jat tradition. Not to own land puts a Jat in a position of 'servitude' (naukeri) - of having to work for others - and adversely affects the marriage prospects of the girls of the family. However prestigious land ownership is, it was considered degrading to work the land oneself, particularly for educated men, until the advent of the Green Revolution and mechanized farming.

The most noteworthy feature of the Jat Sikh social system is the absence of a rigid class structure. There is no difference in status and respect between a large and small landholder. Several factors

work to create this situation, most importantly the lack of an established system of primogeniture. Thus the holdings of a family fluctuate from generation to generation, as land is equally divided amongst brothers each time. Also, considerable importance is attached to financial success, for with money it is possible to acquire land, and put oneself in a position of influence. Thus, with money, it was possible to acquire status and respect and these are in no way diminished by the lack of a noble ancestry. Instances of 'old' and 'noble' families marrying into families who have recently acquired wealth illustrate this. A corollary to this, is the 'equality of opportunity' for Jats to improve their position through the accumulation of wealth and through marriage. Thus more respect is commanded by achieved status, and the same family may incorporate members with differing levels of education, varied occupations and quantities of wealth, which further work against the formation of class divisions.

The traditional attitude of Jats towards certain types of employment is also relevant. Traditionally the only acceptable occupations were farming or soldiering, and this goes some way to explaining Punjab's agricultural miracle and the disproportionately high representation of Sikhs in the armed forces. Educated Jats, however do not generally return to the land, seeking instead other occupations, that put them in a position of authority like the police or administrative services. Other acceptable occupations are those that offer the freedom of self-employment, and the transport sector, wherein Sikh owner-drivers of trucks and taxis are numerous, is a good example. Amongst the professions, only those with a clearly applicable pragmatic value, like engineering or medicine are

considered worthy, while others like teaching are not.

These features of the social system combine or work in various ways to make migration an attractive option to Sikhs. The lack of primogeniture means landholdings being broken up into smaller uneconomic units, incapable of supporting all those dependent on them. Also, for smallholders, who have no choice but to work the land themselves, similar hours of probably less arduous labour elsewhere might bring greater returns and allow then to avoid the ignominy associated with working one's land. The importance attributed to financial success and the increased honour it can bring the family through the acquisition of land, status and influence along with the respect commanded by 'achieved status' provide a powerful motivating factor for seeking one's fortune through migration. The prevalent attitudes to various types of employment restrict the means available to Jat men to make their living in their home environment. "When a Jat feels that he cannot be successful financially in his own society or his own family in a dignified manner, . . . he flees from his value system and thereby escapes humiliation."[4]

The joint family unit, where less well-off members may have to accept monetary help from richer members (something that would do their pride and self-respect no good), can also contribute to migration. Further, some Jat men migrate to escape from unloved spouses or the rigidities of their social system. It would appear then, the social milieu of the Jat Sikhs in Punjab provides several reasons that impel men to migrate, and that these migrations must be seen in light of how they help the emigrants to maintain or improve their

[4]Pettigrew, J., op. cit., p 361.

position within this system. These factors have combined with events, to make migration a 'tradition' amongst Sikhs, and they may be described as having a cultural propensity for migration.

It must be noted that once a Jat Sikh has left Punjab, he will work long hours at all sorts of jobs. This decision, is a purely pragmatic one, and by taking it, in no way does a Jat consider that he has betrayed his value system or become any less of a Jat. This is largely because he perceives himself as doing it for the preservation and enrichment of his family. This pragmatism, according to Pettigrew,

> ". . . fits in well with the stress on relationships and persons as opposed to principles, in the culture of rural Punjab. It allows those at either end of a relationship to flourish and retain what is significant to both."[5]

The history of Punjabi migration is closely linked to that of the British Raj in Punjab. After the hostilities of the Anglo-Sikh wars and annexation, a good relationship developed between the Sikhs and the officials of the Raj. This was cemented by the initially benevolent rule of the British, and the loyalty of Sikh troops to them during the Mutiny of 1857. Sikhs then moved north and west to provide the labour for the last major railway construction of the Raj in Sindh, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province. The first mass migration and resettlement of Sikhs came with the British plan to bring under cultivation vast tracts of arid wasteland in the Western Punjab from 1886 onwards. Canals were built, and lands in these districts allocated to Sikh peasants and farmers from Amritsar,

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[5]Pettigrew, J., ibid, p 362.

Ludhiana and Ferozepur in the Eastern Punjab. The canal colonists, as these migrants were known, worked hard and arid wasteland was transformed to flourishing fields and villages, land values shot up from Rs 10 an acre to Rs 400 an acre, and the Punjabi peasantry became the most prosperous in India.[6]

The Sikhs were also at the forefront of migration to East Africa. Here, the British needed a labour force to construct railways, and Sikh experience in the area contributed to the building of the Kenyan and Ugandan railways. They also served as clerks to run the bureaucracy and were involved with the development of agriculture and industry. Unlike the identured labourers, who served mainly as plantation workers, Sikhs also managed to maintain their culture abroad and kept close ties with their home villages in India. Through this exposure to the wider world, and through their growing involvement in the Imperial Army, Sikhs learnt of opportunities elsewhere and had soon established communities in Canada, the United States, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila, and other areas.

Sikhs first started coming to England in the period just after the first world war. Most of these were from the Batra caste, and were pedlars. "In the 1920s these pedlars . . . were found displaying their wares in Hyde Park, Oxford Circus and eventually establishing businesses in East London."[7] England also drew aspiring young men pursuing higher education, and some of them settled here on the completion of their studies. Sikhs also came to England in this

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[6]Singh, K., A History of the Sikhs, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Indian edition, 1977, pp 116-119.
[7]Helweg, A., Sikhs in England, op. cit., p 23.

period through their involvement with the British army and its officers. The first Gurudwara was established in the Shepherds Bush area of London as early as 1907[8] with financial assistance from eminent Indians like the Maharaja of Patiala. Its purpose was to provide a meeting and resting place for Sikh pedlars, service men, etc. It was also frequented by Indian students. But, the vast majority of todays UK Sikh population came here after independence in the 1950s and 1960s. We shall now turn to an examination of that process of migration.

## Sikhs in England

It is not possible to arrive at a firm date for the beginning of the post-war Sikh migration to the UK, with the same certainty that other such arrivals to this country can be dated. Rose[9] estimates that large scale migration of Sikhs to the UK began in the 1950s, and gained momentum in the early 1960s. Most of the migrants are Jat Sikhs though all the other castes are also represented in smaller numbers. The Ramgarhia (artisan) caste is also particularly well represented, with many of their number having come here from East Africa in the mid-sixties.

Most of the Sikhs come from a very specific area of Punjab, the Doaba, which is the land between the rivers Beas and Sutlej, and comprises of the districts of Jullender and Hoshiarpur. These two districts, particularly Jullender had a very high population density at the time - 711 and 439 persons per square mile in 1951. Also,

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[8]This information is based on a verbal account of the history of the British Sikh community given to me by 'B'.

[9]Rose, E.J.B., Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations, Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, London, 1969, p 55.

Jullender had the lowest percentage of peasant proprietors - 24%, with Hoshiarpur having 45%. Further the percentage of small uneconomic landholdings was also highest in Jullender, with over 25% of holdings being less than 1 acre.[10] Thus economic conditions were poor and opportunities scarce in the areas from which these migrants came.

The partition had led to an influx of Hindus and Sikhs from the Western Punjab, and had further exacerbated the situation. Over 4 million Hindu and Sikh refugees from the West arrived in East Punjab, having left behind 6,700,000 acres of high quality agricultural land. The Muslims who had left East Punjab, while also numbering over 4 million, had left only 4,700,000 acres of comparatively poor soil.[11] A complex system of compensation was worked out, and a maximum holding of 30 acres was fixed by legislation. Partition thus greatly added to the existing pressures on land and economic opportunity, and it was perhaps easier for those already uprooted from ancestral homes to contemplate a move to far-away England, though many waited for the settlement of their claims before leaving.[12]

Punjabi migration, in this period was not centred exclusively on the UK. They were also moving to other parts of India in large numbers, particularly to those states where new irrigation schemes had come into effect, and virgin lands were available for cultivation. Thus Sikhs can be found in large numbers all over India, and today

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[10]Arora, G.S., The New Frontiersmen, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1967, pp 24-26.

[11]Singh, K., op. cit., p 284.

[12]This tendency of those who have moved once finding it easier to move again has been commented on by Taylor and discussed in Chapter Two.

one third of the Indian Sikh population lives outside Punjab.

The UK was an attractive place for migrants in the post war years, because of an acute labour shortage caused by the war and the post-war reconstruction economic boom.

> "The expansion of the British economy in the 1950s and 1960s created substantial shortages of labour, particularly in the relatively stagnant sectors of the economy, for example, textiles, metal manufacture and transport where low pay, long hours, and shift work made these jobs unattractive to British workers."[13]

The labour shortage was exacerbated by the high rate of British emigration overseas, particularly to the United States and Australia. Thus, immigrants arriving in Britain were soon concentrated in industrial centres, where demand for their labour was greatest Yorkshire, Merseyside, the Midlands, Manchester, and Greater London and its surroundings soon acquired a substantial new Commonwealth population. While there were some schemes to recruit workers for particular jobs from their home countries (for example, London Transport established an office in Barbados and some employers advertised their vacancies in the Indian press), most of the migrants arrived unaided and without a specific job to go to.

While most of those who came over to the UK were peasants, or peasant proprietors, many of them illiterate, and speaking no English at all, there is evidence to suggest that literates and those who spoke English formed a higher percentage of the emigrants than

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[13]Layton-Henry, Z., 'The New Commonwealth Migrants, 1945-62', in History Today, December 1985, p 31.

they did of the home society.[14] Some of those who migrated were educated school teachers, clerks, police officers, and petty bureaucrats. These people often took labouring jobs once they came to this country, as these were significantly better paid than their previous white-collar occupations in India. One such case is that of 'K'. Originally from Pakistan, he came to Britain from Ludhiana, in 1959, as a recent graduate, leaving a small landholding. On arrival here, the only job he could find was as a cleaner at Heathrow Airport. Only the fear of ridicule from his community in India kept him here and made him stick it out, until he was able to make more contracts and better his position. Today he is a freelance journalist and author, who I met through his association with one of the well established Punjabi weekly papers.

Amongst these educated or middle-class emigrants were also a small number of students. The case of 'W' is one such. He originally came to Britain on a short course of study then returned to do his graduation. After acquiring a BA in Sociology from the University of London, he did not return home, but worked in a clerical position. He was soon involved in the Race and Community Relations industry and is now a Community Relations Officer, and an MBE.

Rose asserts that some pioneer settlers from India and Pakistan had come to Britain and prospered in industry or business.[15] These men began to send for their kinsfolk and fellow villagers, and that is how the migration began. Probably, one such pioneer was 'I'. He was a businessman operating from Bombay and dealing in army

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[14]Rose, E.J.B., op. cit., p 57.
[15]Rose, E.J.B., ibid, p 70.

surplus goods and automobile spare parts. He travelled regularly to Britain and Europe, using the UK as his base due to ease of communication. In the 1950s he decided to settle here, but still has close links in Punjab and India generally. Today his family is with him and he is a successful businessman as well as an eminent member of the British Sikh community through his leadership of London's oldest Gurudwara and his ownership, since 1965, of one of the two best established Punjabi newspapers in Britain.

For most immigrants though, it was not such an easy matter. For an illiterate or semi-illiterate villager, speaking no English, and having only the vaguest notions about England, to leave his livelihood however meagre, as well as family, friends and all things familiar, and set off for England was a act of courage. The obstacles of getting passports and passages, the long journey and the daunting prospect of establishing oneself in a strange land would have put off less adventurous people. Often, the extended family played a role in the process of migration, similar to that outlined by Choldin and Litwak, and discussed in Chapter Two. Families would save to send one member of the family abroad, and once he had established himself by getting a job and accommodation, he would begin to save to bring another male member of his family over. Such a typical case is that of 'L', an elderly Sikh who is part of the management of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Southall. He came over in 1961 with assistance from his brother-in-law who was already working here. Together, they set up a business to import from India the various necessities of Punjabi life like lentils, spices, cooking utensils etc. He describes a hard life on arrival, working in a factory, living in a house with other Indians, that had beds in every

room, and working all hours. But life has improved since, he now owns his own grocery store and post office and has put four children through the University system here.

These family or kinship networks played a large role in the process at the receiving end of the migration as well. Those who were hampered by a lack of English and newcomers relied on assistance from kinsfolk or fellow villagers. By and large, this assistance is unstintingly given, and if a man arrived at the home of a relative or fellow villager, he was accommodated, fed, and assisted in acquiring employment. Further, Sikh migration to the UK also displays characteristics associated with chain migration, described by McDonald and McDonald, and Tilly and Brown and discussed in Chapter Two. A good example of this is the concentration of Sikhs in Southall.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was an establishment by the name of Woolf's Rubber Factory in Southall. The personnel manager of the firm was an ex-army major, who had some experience of working with Sikhs during his army days. He was happy to take them on as unskilled labour in the factory, being acquainted with their abilities and perseverance. This fact became known in the Punjab through the network of communication established by the migrants, and many Sikhs began to make their way straight to Southall on arrival in England. By 1965, 90% of all unskilled labour at Woolf's was made up of Sikhs, and with a few other firms following Woolf's example, 70% of Indian workers in Southall were employed by four or five firms.[16] Another such area of initial

[16]Rose, E.J.B., ibid, p 454. This story was also told to me by 'F'.

concentration was Gravesend. Both these places still have substantial Sikh populations with Southall often described as 'little India' or the Sikh capital in Britain.

In the early years, as Commonwealth citizens, entry to Britain was a relatively easy matter for Sikhs who could make all the arrangements to get here. But as the numbers of commonwealth migrants rose, British unease increased and restrictions began to be applied. These took the form of pressure on the Government of India to restrict the issue of passports, and of a system of vouchers for entry. Three categories of vouchers were issued: A for those who had specific jobs to come to; B for those who possessed special skills or qualifications and; C for unskilled workers with no definite prospects of employment.[17] These controls were instituted in 1962,[18] and in 1965 the category C vouchers were officially discontinued.

The year 1961, and the first half of 1962 saw an amazing upswing in the numbers of emigrants. This was because it had become increasingly clear that the British Government was going to impose some sort of ban, and people who had previously not thought about migrating seriously came here to beat the ban. Also, at this time many Sikh men sent for their wives and families, because they feared that they would never be able to bring then over once the ban was in place. In fact, the number of immigrants of Indian or Pakistani origin who came to this country after the ban, far exceeds

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[17]Rose, E.J.B., ibid, p 83.

[18]Under the provisions of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962, which took away the right of entry to the UK from all Comnonwealth citizens except those with vouchers, and wives and children under 16 coming to join husbands or parents already here.

those who came before. Between 1962 and 1964 half of those coming in were those with vouchers, and the rest dependents, after 1964 it was mostly dependents. In the late 1960s, a large number of doctors, engineers and scientists from the sub-continent came in on B vouchers, but the mass migrations of earlier years ended at the close of the 1960s, when most dependents had joined their families.[19] With subsequent legislation in 1968 and 1971 new Commonwealth migration to the UK has practically ceased altogether.[20] There is little doubt that immigration law has been the single most important factor in deciding the numbers and composition of immigration to this country.

The arrival of wives and families changed the Sikh immigrant community radically. The all-male desperately overcrowded houses began to disappear, Indians began to buy their own homes, and concentrations of Sikhs in some areas increased partly due to maneuverings of estate agents and partly through the natural desire for Sikhs to live amongst each other. Many of those who had abandoned their beards and hair began to grow them back, as women re-emphasized religious and traditional values. More Gurudwaras came into existence, further strengthening the cohesion of the community. By this time, organisations like the Indian Workers Association (IWA) and various Gurudwara committees had come into existence, as well as local branches of Indian political parties. These organisations were able to participate in issues affecting the

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[19]Rose, E.J.B., ibid, p 84.

[20]The old Commonwealth consisted of the white dominions of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Immigration from these countries to Britain continued to be easy for those who could prove that they had one British grandparent. The new Commonwealth consisted of the rest of the countries which had once made up the British Empire.

whole community like the controversy over transport workers being allowed to wear turbans, and will be examined in greater detail in the next section.

## Organisation and Establishment

The Sikhs have been described as the best organised and most cohesive group of all the immigrants who came to Britain in the post-war era. They are the most homogeneous of all the groups, following a common religious faith, and possessing a "sense of belonging to a brotherhood which was forged in persecution."[21] Further, whether in India, or elsewhere, the Sikhs have always been a minority community, and as such are accustomed to organising and fighting to protect their rights. Also, while most of the migrants were uneducated villagers there was a substantial minority of educated urban elements amongst their numbers, and these people have mixed and settled with their village brethren in this country. This is in stark contrast to the behaviour of other immigrants, even those from the sub-continent like the Pakistanis, where there has been very little mixing between peasants and the educated elite. The explanation for this probably lies in the general lack of class divisions amongst Jat Sikhs discussed earlier. The rapid establishment of a network of Gurudwaras and the traditional role of Gurudwaras in Punjabi society has also enhanced the communities cohesion. All these factors have combined to create a well organised community, capable of generating leadership and providing community services to its members. A brief consideration of the role of Gurudwaras, and of the most prominent Punjabi institution,

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[21] Rose, E.J.B., op. cit., p 452.

the Indian Workers Association will be useful here.

Wherever there are Sikhs, there are Gurudwaras. In the words of one Sikh that I interviewed, "if there are more than two Sikhs in a place, there will be a Gurudwara."[22] Traditionally the Gurudwara or Sikh Temple has always been far more than a place of worship. All important functions in a persons life, marriage, engagement, naming, as well as death ceremonies take place in Gurudwaras. They are community centres for social activity and discussion forums for important issues affecting the community. They provide judicial and welfare services to the communities, and are often the centre of political activity. They also play educational and cultural roles. A British Gurudwara carries out all these traditional roles, and others thrust upon it in this new environment, bringing greater influence for persons in positions of authority on committees.

> "The Gurudwara leadership is the institutional representative for the Indian community . . . [it] is recognised as the primary body from which approval has to be obtained if cooperation from the Punjabis is to be elicited. Politicians running for election who want Indian votes, will attempt to gain a hearing in the Gurudwara. If the Community Relations Council wants to set up a liaison committee to improve police-immigrant relations, it is the Gurudwara committee which is approached."[23]

Thus Gurudwaras play an organised, bridging role between the

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[22]Interview with 'W'.
[23]Helweg, A., Sikhs in England, op. cit., p 177.

immigrant community, and institutions of the host community. Further, British Gurudwaras have taken it upon themselves to provide certain facilities to the Sikh community which are not catered for within the British framework, of which classes to teach Punjabi to young Sikhs is the best example.

Gurudwaras began to be established early in the settlement process, and more rapidly after the arrival of women and families in the early and mid 1960s. Gurudwaras normally began life through services in private homes that possessed the Holy Book - the Guru Granth Sahib, or as a result of community celebrations of auspicious days, and through the activities of dedicated individuals. 'R' described to me in detail, how the Gurudwara at Hitchin, where he lives, was established. It began with the arrangements to celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak. A few Sikh households got together, hired a hall, cooked food for Langar in their homes, and invited all the Indian families in the area to the celebrations. Donations were collected as is customary. Three people who had been active in organising the function were appointed trustees, by all those present, and they arranged celebrations for the next occasion. Then prayer meetings were organised once a month. As more people became involved, prayers were held every Sunday in a hired hall. The expense of hiring a hall and the inconvenience of having to put equipment into storage every week prompted them to start looking for a permanent home for their Gurudwara. With donations from the community in Hitchin, they succeeded in buying the old church hall they had been hiring, and the Hitchin Gurudwara was born.[24]

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[24]Similar experiences were related by others like 'T'

All Gurudwaras rely on donations from their congregations to function, and are run by management or executive committees, usually composed of unpaid volunteers. There is no central body linking all British Gurudwaras, nor is there any uniformity in their management or electoral systems. All committees that run Gurudwaras are elected by their sangats or congregations, though practices vary from place to place. Some congregations first elect five elders, the Panj Pyare (five beloved),[25] who then nominate an executive committee, which is approved by show of hands. In other places, the committee is nominated by members of the congregation, and elected by a show of hands. Very rarely are proper ballot papers issued and formal election procedures followed, this is done only in the case of serious dispute.[26] Gurudwaras are rich institutions, through the prosperity and the generosity of their congregations, and the power of disbursement of funds lies in the hands of the controlling committee, thus control of a Gurudwara committee means access to a large source of funds that can be used for various purposes from community service facilities to furthering particular political viewpoints. Committees are, in the last analysis accountable to the Sangats who elected them, but appear to have considerable freedom of action in the period between elections, which normally take place every two years.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the control and politics of Gurudwaras was the original focus for the politicisation of

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[25]After the five volunteers called for by Guru Gobind Singh when he created the Khalsa. See Chapter Four.

[26]The only prominent case of this kind I came across was the elections to the management committee of the Havelock Road Gurudwara in Southall, in 1985, where there was intense rivalry between old management and militant Sikh groups who backed the call for Khalistan. The Electoral Reform Society was ultimately called in. The militants won.

the Sikhs as a group, and led to the formation of the Akali Dal. Gurudwara politics continue to be important for the control of the SGPC and the Akali Dal in India, and it is hardly surprising that in Britain too, they are centres of immigrant political activity. Here, as in India, the management committee posts are contested by representatives of various political groupings or parties, and there is rivalry for control of Gurudwaras by these groups. Thus Gurudwara politics has to be closely examined to gain an understanding of the politics of the British Sikh community. Such an analysis is carried out in subsequent chapters.

Another institution with deep roots amongst the Punjabi community in Britain are the Indian Workers Associations (IWAs). The origins of these organisations can firmly be placed in the 1930s, but there are conflicting views about the precise circumstances of their birth. John states that the first IWA was established in Coventry in 1938 by Punjabi Batra pedlars, and the small number of factory workers resident there, and that this was followed by the birth of other IWAs around England.[27] However, 'C' of the IWA Southall, told me a somewhat different story. While saying that there was no documentary evidence to substantiate the facts, he said the IWAs were created in the 1930s, started in London by a group of Indian students, for the express purpose of enlisting the aid of all Indians living in England towards the cause of Indian Independence. There were at that time several India Leagues, which had a middle-class membership, and included Englishmen who espoused the cause of Indian freedom. However, they had no contact with the small

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[27]John, D., Indian Workers Associations in Britain, Institute of Race Relations, London, 1969.

groups of Indian workers and pedlars who were becoming established in England at the same time, and the new IWAs were supposed to reach them. These Indian students included some like Mr. Krishna Menon, who later went on to play major roles in the Indian Nationalist Movement. After independence in 1947, these organisations went into decline, but were reborn in the 1950s, when there was a large increase in the number of Indian immigrants in the UK. At this time, they received the full backing of the Indian High Commission, and important Indian leaders, including Nehru, which perhaps lends some credence to 'C"s story, particularly when it is noted that Mr. Menon was the Indian High Commissioner in this period.

The aims of these new IWAs were manifold, though their primary purpose was to look to the welfare of the immigrants, and to help them with initial settlement hurdles and in their dealings with British institutions and authorities. The IWAs also attempted to alleviate the "cultural starvation"[28] of the immigrants by providing them with facilities for socialising, reading Punjabi newspapers and most popular of all, organising Indian film shows. Other aims of the IWAs included fighting racism and discrimination, supporting anti-colonial nationalist movements in third world countries, promoting friendship with British people and promoting cooperation with the British Traders Union and labour movements, the last of which will be discussed later. (See appendix).

In 1958 on the advice of the visiting Indian Prime Minister, a federation of local IWAs called Indian Workers Association of Great

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[28]Interview quote from 'C'.

Britain was set up. They gained prominence and early success when their campaign, directed at Indian authorities, to issue valid, genuine passports to those immigrants who had been given forged passports by travel agents achieved the desired result. This was probably the only major achievement of the national body, which soon became victim to factionalisation (an endemic feature of Punjabi organisations) and splintered, with the IWA-GB becoming an appendage of the IWA Birmingham. This tendency has been present all through the existence of the IWA. In the early years, membership was generally high. For instance, in 1965 the Southall IWA had a membership of 3900, and there were about 10,000 to 15,000 Punjabis living there at the time.[29] Also there were often strong links between Gurudwara committees and local IWAs through the leadership of some individuals being common to both.

Although the IWAs called themselves Indian, they were in fact Punjabi in both leadership and membership. They used traditional networks to mobilise immigrants and recruit members. People from the same village or group of villages tended to come together in England. They lived in all male houses and assisted each other with settlement. One or two men from such a group acquired a position of authority within the group, by virtue of the help they had provided to others or their ownership of houses in which the group lived or both. They drew upon these relationships to establish themselves as leaders of IWAs. Others became prominent through their abilities as 'brokers' by doing favours like filling out forms, passport renewals, etc. They built up a reserve of men under obligation to them. These obligations were cashed in at the times of

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[29]John, D., op. cit., p 47.

IWA elections, as support for them. The only exceptions to this were the Communists in the IWA, who were able to command support through their ideology. But, the roots of Communist support also go back to the Punjab, where the Communist Party had a traditional strong base and, though a minority, Punjabi Communists had co-operated with the Nationalist movement till 1947, and with other parties since. So, "Punjabis had grown up in a political atmosphere where non-communists, even conservative religious leaders co-operate with Communists."[30]

It was this Communist influence that led the IWAs to associate themselves with the British labour movement, and they played a role in introducing their members to such British institutions as trades unions. The IWAs have also tried to bring their members closer to the Labour Party, on the grounds that Indians here are largely members of the working-class and should therefore support the Labour Party. This effort has met with limited success, even though there have been spectacular moments like in Southall when the "IWA delivered the Indian vote to the Labour party in the Greater London Council elections in 1964, and in the general elections in October the same year."[31] The IWAs in most places continue to support Labour, but are now working to encourage more members to join the party and contest elections themselves.

In the early years, the IWAs had a positive impact on the immigrant community. They provided a communal solidarity, and eased the immigrants into familiarity with British norms. They have also played a useful role in representing the community on matters

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[30] John, D., ibid, p 84.
[31] Rose, E.J.B., op. cit., p 465.

that concern it. But they have had only limited success in their attempt to bring their members into British institutions like the Trades Unions or the Labour Party. This is largely accounted for, by Dewitt John, as the result of the pattern of leadership already described. The internal conflicts of the leaders lead to divisions in the community, and the result is that "where an IWA leader participates in institution of the host community, this tends to ensure hostility towards it of those who do not belong to his personal following."[32]

With the passage of time, the role of the IWAs has changed. There is no longer any need for settlement services or translation, and this used to comprise the bulk of their activities. There are also not many national liberation struggles left to support. Further with the establishment of the community, and its increasing prosperity, there is no longer need for cultural events like film shows. According to 'C', they try to get people involved in the British Labour movement, but with very limited success. This was largely due to peoples continuing interest in Indian politics or 'material activities'. Thus, in the words of their own leaders, the IWAs can be seen as having little influence amongst todays Sikh community. Their present role in Sikh political activity will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## Immigrants to Minorities

Precise figures about the number of Sikhs living in Britain today are a little difficult to establish. According to the UK census,

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[32] John, D., op. cit., cited in Beetham, D., Transport and Turbans: A Comparative Study in Local Politics, Institute of Race Relations, London, 1970, p 68.

1980, there were 392,000 Indians in Britain.[33] The Government of India estimated there to be 500,000 Indians in Britain in 1980.[34] However, the 1988/1989 Labour Force Survey says that there are 779,000 Indians living in Britain.[35] About two-thirds to three-quarters of Indians in Britain are Sikhs, giving us a figure of between 514,140 to 584,250 Sikhs. Sikhs themselves estimate their numbers in the UK at around half a million, but a recent issue of Social Trends estimates the number of practising Sikhs in the UK at only 200,000.[36]

By the early 1970s, the process of family reunification amongst the immigrant Sikh population was largely completed, with wives, children and sometimes elderly dependent parents now living in England. This move brought considerable change to the life of the community. Family homes were set up and Sikhs also began to own their own homes, latest figures show that 91% of Sikh households own the home they live in.[37] Consumption patterns also began to change with a larger percentage of income being spent in England rather than remitted to India, even though such remittances continue. More attention was paid to decoration of houses, and the purchase of consumer durables. Some of the Sikh women began to enter the labour market working generally in groups with their compatriots as vegetable pickers, packers, cleaners and in

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[33]The difficulty in establishing precisely the number of Indians in Britain arises from the fact that census figures list only the country of birth, not ethnic origin. Thus, British people born in India would be included amongst the Indians, and children of Indian origin born in UK would not.

[34]Government of India, Count of Indians Abroad as of 15th July 1980, cited in Helweg, A., 'The Indian Diaspora', in Sheffer, G. [ed.], op. cit., pp 127-129.

[35]Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys, Labour Force Survey, 1988/1989, LFS Series No. 8, HMSO, 1991, p 25.

[36]Griffin, T. [ed.], Social Trends, 19, Central Statistical Office, HMSO, 1989.

[37]Brown, C., Black and White Britain: The Third Policy Studies Institute Survey, Policy Studies Institute and Heinemann Educational, London, 1984, p 69.

manufacturing jobs, and today 57% of non-muslim Asian women are working,[38] though many are restricted by poor command of the English language.

The biggest change brought about by family reunification was social. Various important rituals and celebrations could now be held here, as all the required members of the family were together. There was a greater emphasis placed on religion, and traditional values, and attendance at Gurudwaras increased. Men who had deviated from the norms of Punjabi or Sikh life, by living with white women or cutting their hair, were brought back into the fold. In many ways, reunification meant being able to live the traditional Punjabi life again, a life that revolves around work, family and kin and the Gurudwara. With this change, came the inevitable shift of focus from the home village to England. In the early days "elaborate spending in the search for prestige had been restricted to the village, and matched by conspicuous non-consumption in Britain",[39] but the arrival of families reversed this pattern, and people began to seek prestige amongst their community in England, through traditional ways of conspicuous consumption on certain occasions like marriages. In effect, the group from which an immigrant drew his identity, within which he wished to increase his prestige became the Sikh community in England, as well as the village in the Punjab. From this point on, it becomes clear the Sikhs are no longer immigrants but have become one of Britains minorities, though these feelings only found expression in the early 1980s.

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[38] Ibid, p 128.

[39] Ballard, R. & C., 'The Sikhs: The Development of South Asian Settlements in Britain', in Watson, J.L., Between Two Cultures, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1977, pp 35-36.

The 1970s appear to have been a decade of economic advancement and consolidation on the one hand, accompanied by some degree of indecision and uncertainty. This was caused by the attempt of the immigrants to live and work in Britain, while completely rejecting British social and family norms, and a strong desire to make sure that children growing up in Britain retained the cultural values and norms of their families. An increase in anti-immigrant feeling, expressed by the activities of the National Front, and the fears aroused by the murder of a young Sikh boy in Southall, as well as the race riots of the early eighties added to the worries of the community. Thus it was only in the eighties, with increased economic security, and the adulthood of a British educated, if not British-born generation, that the community changed its self-perception from immigrants to a minority community. This was confirmed to me by 'A', a noted Sikh expert on East African Sikhs. 'A' felt that the myth of return has been much stronger amongst those Sikhs who had come here directly from India, for much longer than it had been with East-African Sikhs, who moved to Britain in the full knowledge that they were here to stay.

The myth of return generally does persist longer amongst the original immigrants, and this has various implications. The myth of return appears to be a psychological tool, to deal with feelings of hostility or rejection by the majority, and the wish to return is stronger during times of high social tension. For instance, after the race riots in 1981, the "price of land in Jullender tripled because immigrants began to buy homes or home sites there."[40] Further, it provides justification for the immigrants continued saving, for if he

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[40]Helweg, A.,Sikhs in England, op. cit., p 207.

is going back, then he would wish to be financially secure when that moment comes. This results in continued hard work and thrift, and serves to improve their financial position in the host country. The myth also helps to preserve traditional norms and practices, for if a return home does take place then they are necessary for successful resettlement. On the other hand, the myth of return can even contribute to continued settlement in the host country, because when cultural values do get altered or discarded, it can be justified as a short-term measure. Thus it would appear, that the prevalence of the myth of return is common amongst communities in the phase of consolidation, and even amongst first generations, and can have its uses. However, I must point out that Sikhs today appear to have passed on from this stage, and this myth is no longer prevalent amongst the community, as not a single one of those interviewed were less than categorical in their declaration of the Sikhs' intentions to stay here.

The arrival of women and families and the consolidation of the community led to the rapid development of a whole range of business enterprises designed to serve the needs of the community. These businesses were Asian owned, and attractive to many not just because of the prestige culturally attached to self-employment and financial independence, but also because it offered a way out of manual or semi-skilled labour, and because rapid economic advancement was limited to some extent by racial prejudice. The result was the growth of Asian grocery stores, butchers, clothes stores, travel agents, record shops, book shops, restaurants, estate agents, insurance agents, loan companies, construction companies, service stations, garages, jewellers and sweet-shops. Today, 18% of

Asians are self-employed entrepreneurs, with the percentages for each ethnic group varying considerably.[41] A vernacular Punjabi press based in Britain was also born. Two weekly newspapers, established in 1965, form the backbone of the British-Punjabi press, even though there had been earlier attempts to start a Punjabi newspaper in Britain, beginning with 'Ekta' in January 1964. The 'Punjab Times' caters to the religious minded Sikhs, and 'Des Pardesh' is modelled on the English mass-circulation tabloids like the Sun or the Daily Mirror. Both these papers have their offices in Southall, and are flourishing. Several other weeklies and monthlies have appeared and then disappeared in subsequent years. Today there are 3 other weeklies, and 6 monthlies in the field, all of which have been established since the mid eighties.[42] Further, there are several societies for the promotion of Sikh religious thought and culture, like the Sikh Cultural Society of Great Britain, which publishes a quarterly called the Sikh Courier, and the Sikh Missionary Society which publishes on Sikh religious matters in Punjabi and English. Such organisations vary in size and function from being one man shows run from a front room or office to fairly large organisations with several offices in Britain like the Sikh Missionary Society. The purposes of organisations such as these was "proselytizing and converting the English to Sikhism, and encouraging wayward Sikhs to reform",[43] and they devised a language of cross-cultural communication to make their religion

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[41]Brown, C., op. cit., p 174. Sikhs are not specifically cited, but they composed of 20% of the Asian sample.

[42]For a full account of Punjabi newspapers in Britain, see Shamsher, J. & Russell, R., 'Punjabi Journalism in Britain: A Background', New Community, Vol. V, No. 3, Autumn 1986, pp 211-222. For a full list of current titles, see Tatla, D.S. & Nesbitt, E.M., Sikhs in Britain: An Annotated Bibliography, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 1987, pp 15-16.

[43]Helweg, A.,Sikhs in England, op. cit., p 87.

accessible to Westerners. These societies, in conjunction with Gurudwaras play an important role in keeping alive the ties between Punjab and the British Sikhs by inviting holy men or Sants from Punjab to tour British Gurudwaras preaching. They also provide other services, for instance the Sikh Missionary Society has recently opened a marriage bureau, to assist parents in finding suitable matches for their offspring from amongst the widely scattered Sikh diaspora, and from Punjab.

The fears of the early 1970s about Punjabi children have proved to be without much foundation. Even though

> ". . . many young Asians go through a period of rebellion against their parents' values (as do most adolescents in Britain) almost all are returning to follow a modified version of Punjabi cultural norms in their late teens and early twenties."[44]

Their parents have successfully socialized them into the deep-seated loyalty to family and culture, and most of them utterly reject the idea of 'becoming British' in their behaviour and in the cultural sense. This, according to Roger and Catherine Ballard, is largely due to their childhood socialization on the one hand, and the lack of acceptance by the majority, which often manifests itself in the form of racial discrimination on the other.[45]

This is not to say that there have been no changes to Punjabi norms and behaviour in Britain. That there have is clearly shown by examining the way marriage arrangements are made in Britain.

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[44]Ballard, R.C., op. cit., p 44.
[45]Ibid, pp 46-47.

Firstly, in the early days of immigration spouses were always sought from India, because it was a way to sponsor a young man wishing to migrate, and because girls brought up in India were believed to have the right attitudes to fit into Sikh family life. However, with the passage of time, and partly due to further restriction on immigration, spouses can now be found in the UK or amongst the Sikh diaspora, and this is seen as desirable because they would have no problems of adjustment. Still, the Indian community plays an important role, for marriages between UK Sikhs are often conceived of by relatives in India, and the connection between Southall and Coventry, can often be made in Ludhiana. Further, today young people do have a say in the choice of marriage partner, even though arrangements are still made by parents. Caste rules are still scrupulously observed, but once an engagement has taken place, there is far more freedom for the young couple to get to know each other. Also, with many Asian girls working and contributing to their own dowry and marriage expenses, they have greater authority regarding arrangements, and are also more likely to live independently of the joint family unit after marriage. Further, unhappy marriages tend to dissolve much faster than they would in Punjab.[46]

Other customs are also changing with life in Britain. Many older generation Sikhs in England complain that the earlier practice of helping members of the community is disappearing, with individualism and competition for success becoming more important. This is partly because Punjabis are now settled in family units, and

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[46]For a detailed account of changes in marriage customs, with particular reference to East African Sikhs, see Bachu, P., Twice Migrants, Tavistock, London, 1985.

have been here for sometime. This means that they are no longer in need of each others help in the way they were in the early days after migration. Further, they have also become more familiar with the ways of gaining assistance from British welfare agencies. Other changes in the way of consumption patterns, socializing and life style have also taken place. But, in the sphere of ritual, religious observance, carrying out of various customary rites on particular occasions, and celebrations of festivals, there have been no major changes, except perhaps in the elaborateness of the latter, which is a derivative of improved financial positions.[47]

It has been suggested that the continuing strong prevalence of Punjabi social, cultural, religious norms is due to the encapsulation of the community from the wider society. Many of its members, particularly women are able to live out their lives in England with minimal contact with members of the host society, most of their needs are catered for by the network of support in the form of family, religious and community organisations, as well as by commercial enterprises owned and run by other Punjabis. It is certainly true that the British Sikh community does correspond very closely with the theoretical notion of an 'encapsulated minority', expounded by Michael Banton and others. An encapsulated minority, is a minority group that:

> ". . . has a distinctive religion that instructs its adherents to retain their distinctiveness, where members of the group are physically distinguishable, speak a special

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[47]For a full account, see Singh, R., Development of Punjabi Culture and Identity in Britain, Punjab Research Group (Coventry), Discussion Paper, Series No. 15, no date.

language and dress differently."[48]

Examples of such groups are the Jews in the United States, the Japanese in the United States, and all South Asian minorities in Britain. These groups are characterised by a high level of cohesion, a continued adherence to cultural or religious norms, and by having no desire for full assimilation on the primary group level with the host society, were that option available to them.

Encapsulated minorities are those groups that are able to maintain their traditional social structure in the new environment, and this, to some extent depends on the pattern of migration followed by the community. In the case of British Sikhs, migration took the form of single men arriving first and families only after some minimal level of material establishment had taken place. This pattern is much more conducive to a retention of traditional authority structures than the 'wave' pattern of migration which involves the uprooting of whole families and even communities, thereby exposing everyone to the disruptive effect of resettlement in a strange land. When such traditional structures remain intact, as they have for British Sikhs, it is possible to socialise children into following group norms, and thereby largely avoiding most of the problems associated with the emergence of the second generation.[49]

The success of socializing youngsters depends also upon their perceiving some benefits, emotional or material from conformity, and this in turn depends on the nature of the social and cultural

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[48]Banton, M., 'Gender Roles and Ethnic Relations', New Community, Vol. VII, No. 3, Winter 1979, p 327.

[49]Peggie, A.C.W., Intragenerational Differences and Minority Politics: A Study of Young Sikhs in Southall, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 1982, pp 36-46.

system into which they are being socialized. In the case of the Sikhs that system emphasizes the 'collectivity' i.e. the family unit, and its role as a source of emotional security and financial support for all its members, as well as traditions of hard work. Further, some minorities have a flair for entrepreneurship, and while in the period just after migration, many of them can be found engaged in manual labour, they soon make use of opportunities to cater for the requirements of their community, and to service the needs of the host population as well.[50] This would certainly appear to be true for the British Sikhs, as this chapter has shown. In fact, Banton makes clearly the point that there is a two way relationship between the preservation of cultural values and the achievement of economic success,[51] and this contributes enormously to keeping younger generations within the fold. The social structure of the Sikhs itself plays a role in the community's success according to Peggie:

> ". . . members businesses would not flourish, were it not for their ability to pool resources and work together, and their children would not achieve educational success were it not for the support and encouragement they receive from the group."[52]

Thus, when younger generations see their elders achieve economic success while, and because of, following cultural norms, they perceive that to succeed themselves, or to share in the success of their families they too must conform.

It must be noted however, that the third characteristic of

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[50]Ibid., pp 44-45.
[51]Banton, M., op. cit., p 327; Peggie, A.C.W., ibid, p 46.
[52]Peggie, A.C.W., ibid, p 46.

encapsulated minorities - the lack of any desire to assimilate with the host society, is not born exclusively out of either a sense of cultural superiority, or a strong sense of ethnic awareness, but is also related to the host society's rejection, manifested in the form of racial discrimination. The awareness of a hostile world outside the confines of one's ethnic group must also be a factor in the successful socialization of the young. The issue of racial discrimination is generally one where there seems to be a certain level of ambiguity in the feelings of this community, while surveys suggest that Asians, like other minorities, are concerned with issues of racial discrimination in employment and housing, and over police behaviour, it would appear that they are generally less ready than West Indians to condemn British society and institutions as racist. The following figures are interesting: three-quarters of West Indians, but only half of Asians believe that employers refuse jobs to people on the grounds of colour or race; two-thirds of West Indians, but only a third of Asians think white landlords discriminate on grounds of colour; 38% of West Indians but only 9% of Asians believe the courts discriminate against them; while a third of West Indians believed that schools treated them worse than white people, only 12% of Asians felt that way.[53] When questioned on racism, those I interviewed responded in different ways. Those who were working in British institutions and had wider contacts with the host society, like 'O', a Borough Council official, felt racism was an important factor in the lives of British Sikhs. Drawing a vivid comparison he said that fighting racism was like pushing against a coiled spring you could only push so far, and no further. However,

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[53]Brown, C., op. cit. Figures for Sikh attitudes specifically are not available, pp 265-267.

others, like 'L', 'D', and 'Q' who is an official of the Sikh Temple in Gravesend, considered it unimportant. This would appear to point to the fact that for those whose contacts with the host society are limited, racism is not a problem. An educated commentator, 'K', made the point, already documented by Helweg, Pettigrew and others, as well as in this chapter, that racism, (as long as it does not manifest itself in physical violence) does not pose a major problem, because Sikhs draw their self-image, identity and prestige from within their own community.

The politics of encapsulated minorities are also strongly influenced by the characteristics mentioned above. An immigrant minority community can be said to have three political options. It can focus its attention on the politics of the home country, and attempt to remain involved in those. Secondly, it can attempt to enter the political mainstream of its new society, and thirdly it can develop a political context of its own, limited to control of minority institutions and organisations in the host country. In fact, a single option is rarely followed and often the politics of immigrants reflects their particular concerns, in all the areas outlined above. Further minority politics of the third sort is rarely as limited in its scope as it sounds, and is in fact often linked to, has implications for, and repercussions on politics of the home country and host country, depending on the nature of the minority institutions and organisations. In the case of the British Sikhs, their institutions and organisations are directly related to similar bodies in Punjab, and the third option is in fact the re-enactment of Punjabi politics in Britain. This option is thus intimately related to the first option of continuing involvement in Indian and Punjabi politics, and as such falls into the

province of a later chapter. Here, it would be useful to concentrate on their involvement in British politics.

According to Peggie, encapsulated minorities tend to follow the norms of the majority in the 'public sphere' of life, and there is generally a concern to present a good image of the community to the host population, as well as an importance attached to being a good citizen. The expectation is that, they will in return be allowed to acquire a 'niche' or a 'private area' within the host society, in which they are able to maintain their distinctive life-style. When the minority sees some aspect of its existence threatened in any way, it will become politically active. Such action, will normally take the form of

> ". . . seeking to make explicit and bring to the notice of the state the assumptions they hold regarding their rights and obligations as members of the society in the hope that the state will acknowledge its own commitments,"[54]

and bring pressure to bear on those elements that are posing the threat.

This does appear to hold good for the Sikhs in this country. The majority of those interviewed expressed the desire to maintain good relations with the host community, as well as stressing the importance of being law abiding British citizens, and behaving in accordance with British convention in the public sphere. That they are capable of concerted reaction to perceived threats to their welfare in Britain is clearly shown by the reaction of the community to the transport workers and turbans issue in the 1960s, to the issue

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[54]Peggie, A.C.W., op. cit., pp 207-208.

of exemption from wearing crash-helmets or hard-hats for turban wearers and the reaction of the community to the murder of Gurdip Chaggar, a Southall youth, in 1977. Thus widespread political participation of the community tends to take place on specific issues of direct concern to them, and is not necessarily party-political in nature. The activity is directed at the institutions of the state that are relevant to the particular issue.

British Sikhs are not active on the wider issues in British politics, and are probably most concerned on an every day basis with economic issues and their impact. In recent years however, there has been increasing participation in local government, with most of the areas with significant Sikh populations having one or more Sikh councillors, and Brent has had a Sikh Mayor in the recent past. Part of the reason for this is the prestige attached within the community to a government position. Many of those interviewed viewed this as a positive sign, and a trend of things to come. Several were confident of seeing a Sikh MP at Westminster soon, and in 1992, Piara Singh Khabra was elected to the House of Commons from Southall, on a Labour ticket. On party-political issues the majority of Sikhs appear to be aligned with the Labour Party, partly due to the efforts of the IWAs and partly based on their perceptions of Labour ideology and policies. However, in recent years, some of the more well-to-do Sikhs have visibly and prominently associated themselves with the Conservatives.

The comparative lack of robustness in Sikh participation in British political life is variously explained by its members. 'O' cites racism as the primary factor, particularly when you get higher up the ladder. 'R', a member of the International Sikh Youth

Federation (ISYF), claims it is part of the Sikh psyche as they are fighters, not politicians, and points out that by and large Sikhs tend to elect others to represent them to the outside world, citing the case of the Hindu-led but Sikh dominated Ghadr Party as an example. But, he feels that this is changing as the community realizes that no one can represent them satisfactorily. 'A', anthropologist and author, believes that this is largely because there are insufficient numbers of Sikhs who possess the necessary language and political skills to appeal not just to their own community, but also to the host population. She points to leaders of the ISYF who were born in Punjab, came to Britain and passed through the British education system to achieve a doctorates, and believes that they are unable to use their ethnic political base as a launching pad into mainstream politics because of a lack of the ability to have a wider appeal. 'A' is confident that this will change in the years to come, with the maturity of British born and bred Sikhs.

A further and in my view far more important reason to explain the limited nature of Sikh involvement in the national political life of Britain, is the continuing and passionate interest of British Sikhs in the politics of India generally and Punjab particularly.[55] It has been pointed out in the literature that encapsulated minorities' effectiveness in politics in the host society is decreased by continuing and highly visible links with the politics of the home country.[56] For British Sikhs, these political links are only part of a larger system of links between them and Punjab. Given the declared intention of Sikhs to stay here in Britain (largely due to the

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[55]This was pointed out by several of those interviewed like 'C', 'K', 'O' and 'F'.
[56]Peggie, A.C.W., ibid, p 209.

higher-standard of living and the better prospects for their children) an examination of these links is interesting.

Punjab is the homeland of the Sikhs, even though it has never been exclusive to them, and as such it exercises a mythical reverence over the minds of its people, where ever they may be. As Walker Connor points out, poets are better qualified to explain this emotional power of the homeland than social scientists,[57] and some lines from Robert Burns, 'The lay of the last Minstrel' make the point:

> Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
> who never to himself that said,
> This is my own, my native land!

and

> Land of my sires! what mortal hand
> Can e'er untie the filial band
> That knits me to thy rugged strand.

Apart from this emotional attachment which appears to be a universal human phenomenon, there are other reasons for the 'filial bands'. The most important of these is the Sikh religion. The origins of Sikhism, and most of its holiest places lie in the Indian Punjab (the rest are across the border in Pakistani Punjab). Every Sikh looks to Punjab, and specifically to the Golden Temple in Amritsar as the fount of his faith. Thus a Sikh's religious identity is completely tied up to the Punjabi language spoken

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[57]Connor, W., The Impact of Homelands Upon Diasporas', in Sheffer, G. [ed.], op. cit., pp 16-17.

there, without which the religion itself would cease to exist. The nature of the Sikh faith, with its close intertwining of the religious and the political also has an effect, it would appear to be impossible to confine links to the spiritual alone, and temporal matters often assert themselves. The strength and importance of these ties is manifested in the constant stream of visiting religious and/or political leaders from Punjab to the UK. The continuing interest of British Sikhs in Punjab politics is explained by these connections between religion and politics, and by the tendency of Sikh politicians of the Akali party to constantly mix religious and political issues. Many Sikhs in this country are aware of the dichotomy this presents for Sikhs settled here, and recognise it as one of the reasons for a lack of involvement in British politics. For 'C', of the Southall IWA, the obsession of Sikhs with Punjabi politics was harmful because of its divisive nature, and of no help at all in improving their lives in this country. 'W' explained the dichotomy by making a comparison with the similar interest of American Jews in Israeli affairs. It must also be noted that the troubles of the last decade in Punjab have enhanced British Sikh concern with events there. 'J', of the Babbar Khalsa observed that when things were OK and the Sikhs in Punjab were alright, Sikhs here did not need to worry, but when things were bad, it was their duty to help. Also, 'T' pointed out that contact with relatives in Punjab, who were suffering because of the unrest, made people here pay more attention to Punjabi events.

Further, most Sikhs have family and many property, in the Punjab. Given the importance of both in their value system, the strength of the ties becomes more comprehensible. The cultural roots of the Sikh way of life, the family system, and all their

traditions, customs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals which are observed in England, lie in the Punjab. Even in matters of dress, fashion, music, entertainment, movies and sport, the lead comes from India, with Indian entertainers, musicians, film stars and even cricketers enjoying tremendous popularity here. All these elements serve to perpetuate the flourishing and intimate links of British Sikhs to their homeland. That these ties are deep-seated and extremely important to them was clearly expressed by one who said that such ties transcend the mere legalities of citizenship and nationality.

## Conclusions

The Sikh community in Britain can be said to have been established in four phases. In the first phase, during the inter war period, a small community of pedlars and ex-serviceman was born. In the second phase, in the aftermath of the second world war and the partition and independence of India, there was a mass migration of single males to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by a labour-starved British economy. This was followed in the 1960s by the third phase which involved the migration of women, children and old people from Punjab leading to family reunification in the UK. The fourth and current phase is the existence of a well established community, whose first British educated and British born generation has reached adulthood.[58]

Today the Sikh community is a self-confident, thriving community, marked by a high degree of cohesion and capable of supporting a flourishing network of its own organisations and

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[58]Ballard, R. & C., op. cit., pp 21-22.

institutions. It has integrated economically very well with British society, but shows no inclination to assimilate. This would probably be best explained by the fact that since the primary motivation for migration was economic, it is in that area that migrants have been most willing to adjust and change. Further, the numbers now in Britain are sufficient to sustain their way of life, making further adjustment unnecessary, and finally, total assimilation even if desired, is prevented by racial differences and attitudes of the majority.

It is in no sense however a static and unchanging community. Despite the fact that the younger generation has been successfully socialized into following the religious and cultural values of their parents, these value systems have undergone some changes in their new environment, and that is part of the reason for the success in keeping the young within the fold. Further, it is a community that clearly sees its future in Britain, but equally clearly wishes to maintain strong links with its home country, and is susceptible to influence from events there.

Finally, a word about the future. With the passing away of the immigrant generation and the domination of the community by British educated, and still later, British born members, changes seem inevitable. A movement towards the life style of the majority appears likely, with only those aspects of traditional life being maintained that do not cause major inconvenience and that bring prestige. Also, involvement in wider areas of British life, including British politics looks likely. Links with Punjab and India will probably grow weaker in time, though this does depend on the political situation in Punjab. If present disturbed conditions

continue, links will remain strong, if not, they will probably weaken over time. If however there is a drastic change in the status of Punjab, i.e. if Khalistan is established, then predictions are harder. In my view that will not lead to any exodus back to Punjab, but will strengthen links between the diaspora and the home community, as the diaspora will play a crucial role in the further development of the state, and this may well have other implications for the diaspora and its integration with the majority community of its host country.

CHAPTER SIX

# THE PUNJAB PROBLEM

## Introduction

There has been a situation of crisis prevailing in the Indian Punjab for the most part of the last decade. The Sikh community, around whom this crisis revolves are an integral part of post-Independence Indian life. Through their efforts, Punjab has become the breadbasket of India, contributing over half of the total food-grain stocks held by the government of India.[1] The Sikhs form a disproportionately large section of India's armed forces - 12%, and 20% of the army officers corps,[2] despite forming only 2% of the Indian population. They are also well-represented in business and government posts. Almost one third of the total number of Sikhs in India, live outside the Punjab.

The problem in Punjab is of particular and vital concern to any government in Delhi. In a country with over 800 million mouths to feed, the importance of Punjab's contribution to the all-India effort to be self-sufficient in food cannot be overstated. Also, Punjab lies at the border with India's now traditional sub-continental adversary, Pakistan. Furthermore, Punjab links the long-disputed and presently disturbed state of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian

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[1] In 1977-78, Punjab contributed 3.23 out of 5.16 million metric tons of wheat procurement (63%) and 1.88 out of 3.36 million metric tons of rice stocks (56%). See Thandi, S., Some Issues Relating to Agrarian Changes and the Political Crisis in Punjab, Punjab Research Group (Coventry), no date, and Gill, M.S., 'The Development of Punjab Agriculture - 1977-80', Asian Survey, Vol. XXIII, No. 7, July 1983, pp 830-844.

[2] Cited in, Mahmood, C.K., 'Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order', Asian Survey, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, March 1989, p 329.

heartland. Thus, Punjab and her people are vital to the continued security and development of India.

In this chapter, I shall attempt to explain how sections of a community that seemed so prosperous and well-integrated into Indian life, have reached a state of virtual war with the Indian government. I shall do this by considering the historical background and deep-rooted factors, as well as the more contemporary issues without going over material already covered in chapter four. It is hoped that such an approach would cast some light on the reasons behind that now familiar, ghastly litany of violence in the Punjab.

## The Issue of Sikh Identity

"The growth of Sikh fundamentalism and the separatist demand is not as sudden as it may seem. Both have deep social and historical roots, linked to the development of a distinct Sikh identity, community and organisation."[3] The issue of Sikh identity is a confusing one. In its origins the community appears to have been born out of the Sant tradition[4] and most of its members came from amongst Hindu ranks. Traditionally, the two communities have been very close, to the point of blurring the distinction between them. Intermarriage between the two was (and still is) commonplace. Also, the practise amongst Punjabi Hindus of bringing up their eldest male offspring as a Sikh (this was seen as a contribution to the defense of the community, and Sikhs termed 'the sword arm of the Hindus'), served to cause further overlap between the two. Hindus

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[3]Kapur, R.A., Sikh Separatism - The Politics of Faith, Allen & Unwin, London, 1986, p xii.

[4]Some authors hold that it was the result of a marriage of Hinduism and Islam. See Chapter Four for Sant tradition.

worshipped at Sikh shrines, and to be considered a Sikh, being a devotee of the gurus was sufficient criteria.

The first seeds of the distinction between the two communities came with the tenth guru, Gobind Singh's creation of the Khalsa (the pure) in 1699. They were to be an army of soldier-saints, for the defense of the faith - against Mogul persecution and Moslem invasions which were the major threats at the time. These Khalsa were required to espouse the five k's - visible symbols that would declare their identity to all.[5] However, all devotees of the gurus, whether they became Khalsa or not, were Sikhs, and in the period of Mogul rule most Gurudwaras were assigned to the care of non-Khalsa Sikhs. Later, during the reign of Punjab's only Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801-1839) the threat to the faith declined, and numbers of Khalsa followed suit.

The roots of the present definition of Sikhs as those who are Khalsa alone, lie in the period of British Raj in Punjab. In the second half of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th centuries, India went through a period of traumatic change - the beginning of the process of modernisation, which was brought about by the British presence. In Punjab, this process was more intense than it had been over parts of the country where the Raj had gradually established itself, for Punjab, annexed as late as 1849, encountered in one go, the full effect of the British influence. Christian missionaries, exuding proselytizing zeal were soon to follow in strength. In fact, an American Presbyterian mission had been established in Punjab as far back as 1835, and their presence in

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[5]The Five K's are: (l) uncut hair and unshorn beards; (2) a comb; (3) shorts; (4) a steel bangle; (5) a sword.

Punjab was explained as follows,

> ". . . this was the land of the Sikhs . . ., a people . . . who had already in principle at least discarded the old idolatry of Hindooism, and broken in some measure the bond of caste, and therefore might be considered to be in a favourable state to be influenced by the preaching of Christian missionaries."[6]

After annexation, numbers of Christian converts increased dramatically, from 3796 in 1881 to 315,931 in 1921.[7] The combined effect of the challenges posed by the Christian missionaries and those of modernisation brought about by the British Raj, which did not so much try to use the old Punjabi aristocracy for imposing their authority - but rather a levelling approach, resulted in the call for reform amongst Punjabis of all religions. In the absence of the traditional aristocracy, the Punjab became a seething cauldron;

> ". . . no other region in South Asia possessed such an explosive combination of fundamentalist communities and movements. In Punjab is where the heart of Jama'at-i-Islam and Pakistan lies. In Punjab is where the heart of Khalistan, the Sikh Suba is to be found. And in Punjab is where one also finds the heart and root of Arya Dharm."[8]

The main Hindu reform movement active in Punjab was Swami Dayanand's Arya Samaj. Dayanand aimed to take Hinduism

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[6]Kapur, R.A., op. cit., p 14.
[7]Ibid, p 14.
[8]Frykenberg, R.E., 'Fundamentalism and Revivalism in South Asia', in Bjorkman, J.W. [ed.], Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia, Riverdale Company, Maryland, 1988, p 33.

back to its Vedic purity, and was also involved in bringing western education to the Punjab through the network of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges he established. Dayanand considered Sikhism to be nothing more than a strand of deviant Hinduism, and his Arya Samaj carried out several 'Shudhi' or purification ceremonies, to bring Sikhs back into the Hindu fold. This brought outrage from the Sikhs, who protested - 'Hum Hindu Nahin' (we are not Hindus) - in the title of a pamphlet circulated at the time.

In response to the activities of the Arya Samaj, and other challenges, as well as for the spreading of Western education among Sikhs, the Singh Sabha movement was born in 1879. This organisation was soon dominated by 'Tat Khalsa' or true Khalsa, who were proponents of the idea of a separate, distinct, non-Hindu Sikh identity. The debate between them and other Sikhs, as well as the Arya Samaj raged furiously in the Punjabi press of the day. A Sikh widow contested her husband's will, which had been executed according to Hindu law, on the basis that he had not been a Hindu. Thus the Punjab High Court found itself in the position of having to decide whether Sikhs were Hindus. When it decided that they were, there was further protest from the Sikhs.

The British Raj also added its contribution to the debate about Sikh identity. The natural and traditional inclinations of the Jats[9] led them towards recruitment in the army. They had earned the respect and admiration of the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars before annexation, because of the bravery and skill with which they fought. After Sikh loyalty during the mutiny in 1857, Sikh numbers in the

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[9]Jats - particular tribal people who had settled in Punjab, and from whose number many became Sikhs; see also Chapters Four and Five.

British army were greatly increased. British regulations dealing with the recruitment of Sikhs was significant. "Quite against the actual diversity of belief and observance, the British usually treated one Sikh identity, - the Singh (Khalsa) or Lion one, as the only true Sikhism . . ."[10] The regulations held that the five Ks should not be interfered with in any way, that Sikhs must retain their beards, hair and other symbols, and even if they take these up only on joining the army, once they have, they must not be allowed to give then up. Thus, for the purpose of recruitment to the army at least, a Sikh became defined as Khalsa.

All these forces, most particularly the propaganda and activities of the Singh Sabha's Tat Khalsa reformers, led to an increase in the number of Khalsa, who had been on the decline since the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Empire.

> "By 1921, the nature of those who regarded themselves as Sikhs had significantly altered. For centuries, Sikh identity was diffused between Sahajdhari (clean-shaven, non Khalsa) and Kesadhari (unshaven, Khalsa) Sikhs and overlapped with the Hindu community . . . Influenced by the reformist campaign, Sahajdhari Sikhs had either adopted Khalsa tenets or chosen to be regarded as Hindus. Being a Sikh was becoming synonymous with being a member of the Khalsa."[11]

In 1909, under the Minto-Morley reforms the British introduced the elective principle to India. Indians were now to elect

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[10]Fox, R.G., Lions of the Punjab - Culture in the Making, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p 7.
[11]Kapur, R.A., op. cit., p 32.

their representatives to the Legislative Councils. But this was to be based on the notion of separate electorates for separate communities - as this was seen as the only way of ensuring sufficient Muslim representation. This notion was not extended to include the Sikhs. After much protest from them, in 1919, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms extended this right to the Sikh community as well.

Between the years 1920-25, a new movement took over the leading role of the Singh Sabha within the Sikh community. They were called the Akalis (The Immortals) and they were the prime movers behind the Gurudwara reform movement which culminated in the formation of an elected body, the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), who would manage Sikh shrines. There was a bitter dispute to unseat existing managers, many of whom were not Khalsa Sikhs. This caused yet another rift between Hindus and Sikhs, as Hindus used to worship at Sikh shrines and they saw this move of the Khalsa as hostile towards them. These rifts widened in the 1950s and 1960s when the Akalis (now the Sikh political party) began to demand a Punjabi Suba or State wherein Sikhs could be in the majority, and thus have political control. This demand was disguised as a demand for a Punjabi-speaking state, along the lines of similar linguistic movements in several parts of India at this time. Many Hindus turned their backs on their language and reality, and described themselves as Hindi speakers to avoid the formation of the Punjabi Suba. After long and bitter agitations, the government of India agreed to the Akali demands in 1966. In the present circumstances, with sectarian violence rife in the Punjab, politically the two communities are further apart than ever before.

Thus, starting from Guru Gobind Singh, upto the present day

we have seen a process of evolution of the Sikh identity culminating in the widespread definition today of a Khalsa Sikh as the only true Sikh. In the words of a prominent Sikh historian and author, "There is no such thing as a clean-shaven Sikh - he is simply a Hindu believing in Sikhism."[12] The fundamentalism and separatist demands of Sikhs today can legitimately and logically be seen as continuation of the process of evolution and assertion of a Sikh identity. This long evolution has been designed to set Sikh identity apart from that of the Punjabi Hindu; with whom he has so much in common, and thereby prevent the absorption of Sikhism by Hinduism.

Hinduism responds to new belief systems with "tolerance, and even welcome of all possible ideas and beliefs, alongside the rejection of any social innovations, [and this] remains characteristic of Hindu attitudes."[13] The examples of two religions which appeared in India before Sikhism, and the fate that befell them is often cited - Buddhism and Jainism. Hinduism's response to them, set the trend of "erasing heterodoxy by embracing it."[14] This view of Hinduism sees it as:

> ". . . a dynamic pattern of domination, rebellion, and incorporation, always transforming itself but maintaining its characteristic social order . . . it is a tradition that cannot respect true otherness but can only assimilate otherness to Hinduness, which is then accorded legitimate respect."[15]

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[12]Singh, K., A History of the Sikhs, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, 1966, p 303.
[13]Mahmood, C.K., op. cit., p 338.
[14]Ibid, p 339.
[15]Ibid, p 339.

While some of this viewpoint may be debatable, it is certainly true that Hinduism has a pervasive effect on other religions in India, as the existence of a sort of caste system among Indian Christians illustrates. It would be natural for a minority to feel unease in the face of the overwhelming magnitude, complexity and tenacity of the Hindu way of life, and Khushwant Singh acknowledges this, "Sikh resistance to being absorbed by Hinduism, and the movement for a Sikh state . . . are more intimately related to each other than is generally realised or admitted."[16]

## Punjab Politics - The Akali Dal and the Congress

The Akali Dal is the Sikh political party. It was born out of the agitation for Gurudwara reform in the 1920s and has retained its pre-eminent position in Sikh politics, through its control of the Gurudwara management body the SGPC. This control also gives it access to vast funds - over 8 million pounds a year.[17] It has always claimed to represent all Sikhs, and often equated loyalty to Sikhism with loyalty to the Akali Dal. In fact, the Akali Dal is representative of the richer Jat-Sikh farmers of Punjab. It does not necessarily command the support of non-Jat Sikhs, sections of the peasantry, the landless, the traders or artisans. The support of these elements is largely divided between the Communist parties and the Congress. The Bharatiya Janata Party is also popular in the state, particularly amongst Hindus. Thus, despite Akali claims to represent all Sikhs, and Sikhs forming the majority of Punjab's population, this does not lead to guaranteed victory in elections for the Akali Dal, as its

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[16]Singh, K., op. cit., p 302.

[17]Kapur, R.A., 'Khalistan - India's Punjab Problem', Third World Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 4, October 1987, p 1209.

leaders had hoped during the agitations for a Punjabi Suba. From this failure of the Akali Dal to win power, stems a lot of their confrontational attitude to the government, as well as their insistence on combining the religious and political issues explicitly - in a bid to unite the Sikhs around them. Thus, the Akali's main strategy for securing their power base has always been that of turning political issues into religious ones, of warning constantly of the danger to the Sikh Panth (community), and trying to convert religious zeal into electoral support. In this explicit combination of religion and politics, the party was unique on the Indian political stage, which is, at least in principle, based on secularism.

> "Akali leaders believe that without political power in the hands of the Sikhs collectively, the disintegration of an independent Sikh community and its absorption into the mass of Hinduism is inevitable."[18]

It has always been in their interests, therefore, to promote a distinctive Sikh identity, which they have done through a "skilful manipulation of religious symbols, the language issue, and the issue of Sikh subnational identity."[19]

Akali strategy for the achievement of its political objectives follows a pattern largely set during the Gurudwara reform movement. A consideration of Akali strategy is important because it is politically divisive, and has played a role in the escalation of the Punjab problem because of its very nature. Baldev Raj Nayar has outlined three strategies generally adopted by the Dal.[20] The first of

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[18]Kapur, R.A., op. cit., 1987, p 1209.
[19]Malik, Y., 'The Akali Party & Sikh Militancy: Move for Greater Autonomy or Secessonism in Punjab', Asian Survey, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, March 1986, p 348.
[20]Nayar, B.R., Minority Politics in the Punjab, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1966, pp 201-270.

these is constitutional, and attempts to use all channels provided by the law for minorities and opposition elements to bring their grievances to the notice of the Government of the day. This would include submission of memoranda, sending deputations to meet the Prime Minister and other senior officials of government, arranging meetings and conferences at which the potent cocktail of religion and politics is endlessly served, and any other lawful means of attracting support for their cause. Usually, these methods are not used by themselves, but against the background of, or just preparatory to, an agitation.

The second strategy is described as infiltrational and normally aimed at the Congress Party High Command at the Centre, through its Punjab organisation. It is quite machiavellian in conception, and makes a mockery of party-politics. It involves the group of Akali legislators elected to the state legislative (where they have generally formed a minority) joining the ruling Congress party, and working for Akali interests as a bloc within the Congress; "acting as a group, they pursue, to the extent that they abide by the Akali ideology, objectives that are opposed to the Congress ideology, even though they are members of the Congress party."[21] This strategy has fringe benefits for the Akalis, in that some of its leaders, who would otherwise find it impossible to attain political office, because, until recently, the Akali occupied a near permanent position on the opposition benches, get the opportunity to do so. Further with the move of some prominent Akali legislators to Congress ranks, rivalry between leaders within the Akali party decreases, and is contained without factionalisation or splitting of the party. This strategy was

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[21] Ibid, pp 212-213.

adopted in 1948, 1956 and tried in 1961, as well.

The third and most widely used strategy is agitational. This strategy relies on the Akali ability to arouse the Sikh masses through fervent religious appeal and lead them to direct confrontation with police and authorities, including courting arrest. These operations are usually directed from inside Gurudwaras (where police do not interfere) and involve sending out Jathas (quasi-military groups) that deliberately break the law and get arrested, in an attempt to fill up the jails. The purpose of these agitations is:

> ". . . to overwhelm the government by inducting into the agitation thousands of volunteers ready to court imprisonment, and creating a situation where all government activity concentrates on coping with the agitation, which contains a high potential for the imminent breakdown of law and order, thus coercing the government into making concessions."[22]

This strategy is clearly based on tactics used by Gandhi and other nationalist leaders in the struggle against the British and has been successful for the Akalis when used during the 1920s and the 1950s and 1960s. These tactics tend to exacerbate tensions between Hindus and Sikhs, and often succeed in pulling wavering Sikhs back into orthodoxy.

In addition to these strategies the Akali Dal's negotiations with government for the settlement of their various demands has also followed a pattern,

"Every time the Akali Dal has arrived at a political

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[22]Ibid, p 234.

> settlement with the government - a settlement which the government has assumed to be final - the Akali Dal has immediately moved on to the next step, after consolidating the earlier concessions."[23]

This has obviously led to distrust of the Akalis on the part of the government, as well as a reluctance to put much store by the outcomes of such negotiations. The other note-worthy trend in Akali politics is the tendency of the party to form factions. This factor too, has contributed towards the escalation of the Punjab crisis. The existence of strong factions within the party make any negotiation process with the Akalis more complicated than it would otherwise be. This is because it is not always clear which faction represents mainstream or popular views, and all settlements have to satisfy all factions if they are to stand any chance of success. A clear example of the detrimental effect of factionalisation on the settlement of disputes is provided by the 1985 Punjab accord signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for the Government and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal for the Akalis. The Sant was shot for signing this deal by supporters of the most extremist sections of the Akali Dal - the erstwhile supporters of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, and this combined with the failure of the Central Government to implement certain sections of it was a fatal blow to the accord. A further problem is that all factions of the Akali Dal use the same politico-religious rhetoric with equal fervour making it difficult to distinguish between mainstream and extremist sections, and all Akalis get tarred with the same brush.

Despite their claims to the contrary, the Akali Dal are not the

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[23] Ibid, p 265; clearly seen in agitations for the Punjabi Suba.

only force in Punjab politics. The Congress Party has long attracted Sikh support, particularly that of the Mazhabi or scheduled caste Sikhs, and of course the Hindus. The rivalry between the Akali Dal and the Congress Party in Punjab is well established - except for a brief period of co-operation in the early 1950s. This rivalry has a special dimension, because the Congress Party is both, a competitor within the state, as well as for the most part of the last 45 years, ruling party at the Centre. It is thus a Congress Government to whom the Akalis have had to address their various demands, a Congress Government that makes vital economic and other decisions that have a great deal of importance to all the states in the Indian Union, including Punjab. Successive Congress Governments have had no hesitation in using their position of authority in Delhi to the detriment of their rivals in the various Indian states, and Punjab was no exception. This rivalry has contributed substantially to the present problems in Punjab. As Gian Singh Sandhu points out,

> "The present crisis is political. It is rooted in the Akali quest for power, growing into a desire for secure power, and culminating in a demand for more and secure power in Punjab, on the one hand and the Congress(I)'s hesitation to accommodate the Akalis, growing into a determination to defeat them, and culminating in a no holds barred bid to liquidate them as a power in Punjab."[24]

Murray J. Leaf however sees the Punjab crisis as having still deeper roots and far wider implications. For him, it,

> ". . . grows out the very structure of the Indian Union,

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[24]Sanhu, G.S., 'The Roots of the Problem', in Singh, A. [ed.], Punjab in Indian Politics, Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp 62-63.

and its history. The forces at work in Punjab are also at work in many other states, particularly those with substantial populations of politically alert and well organised peasants, at the core of an emerging rural 'middle class'. The central government policies that have stirred the fear and anger of such groups in Punjab, have done the same in other states, although the commonalities have been masked."[25]

## Economic Causes

No analysis of the Punjab problem that does not address the economic factors involved can hope to present a complete picture. Punjab is one of the most prosperous states in India, enjoying a higher per capita income than all the others. The basis of Punjab's wealth is agriculture, with only 0.3% of the world's arable land, it produces 1.9% of the wheat and 1.2% of the rice in the world.[26]

Punjab agriculture has achieved this spectacular success, due to the now famous Green Revolution. The Green Revolution came about due to the introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice, developed originally in Mexico, and the provision of suitable conditions for farmers in Punjab to use them. "The creation of the infrastructure that made the economic miracle of Punjab possible was the result of unreserved commitment of national resources to Punjab, soon after Independence."[27]

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[25]Leaf, M.J., 'The Punjab Crisis', Asian Survey, Vol. XXV, No. 5, May 1985, p 475.
[26]Gill, M.S., op. cit., p 831.
[27]Sareen, R., 'Focus on Punjab-II', The Tribune, Chandigarh, 19th January, 1989.

This infrastructure included the expansion of credit facilities for purchase of seeds and fertilizer, and government policies of subsidising machines, electric power and fertilizers.

> "The Green Revolution undoubtedly brought about a radical transformation in the traditional agricultural methods and achieved its objectives of creating a thriving capitalistic agriculture, capable of producing a massive marketable surplus in food grains - in effect, Punjab was transformed into India's granary, a development just as significant as the incorporation of Punjab into the world economy by British colonialism."[28]

A large element of the success of the Green Revolution depends upon the co-operation between farmers, and State and Central governments. The State government provides infrastructural facilities such as electricity and is largely responsible for the availability of credit through the co-operative banks. The price of imports like fertilizers and machinery is decided by manufacturers, government taxation policy on these items, as well as by any subsidies paid by either central or state government on these goods. The agricultural support price for the output is fixed by the Central Government on the recommendation of the Agricultural Prices Commission. In the early years of the Green Revolution, when the Central Government's priority was the building up of food stocks, farmers received a high rate of return for their efforts (around 27%). But, as food self-sufficiency increased and the food productivity of other regions in the country improved, the

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[28]Thandi, S., op. cit., p 1.

Government's need to build large buffer stocks declined. There was at this time a change in Government policy towards agriculture, and since about 1975-76, the Central Government's policies have been "intentionally discriminating against agriculture."[29] This policy of the Central Government contributed in no small measure to demands by the peasantry to redress their grievance.

> "The Green Revolution has had three important implications for Punjab. It has created an economically powerful, socially influential section of farmers, who are keen to perpetuate the arrangements which have helped them become rich, it has accentuated the class contradiction between farmers and landless labourers, and it has created a new younger generation, well educated and financially well off, which has not been accommodated in gainful jobs or the production process."[30]

The number of landless has doubled from 17.3% in 1961 to 38.3% in 1980.[31] This has led to increased migration to the towns, and the competition there between migrants (mostly Sikh) and townspeople (mostly Hindu) for jobs, housing and other facilities has increased communal strife. The stagnation of the agricultural economy has also led to enhanced tensions between farmers, who are mostly Jat Sikhs and the traders who are usually Khatri Hindus or Sikhs. The Green Revolution also resulted in a change from traditional custom based labours to wage labour, and the increased

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[29] Ibid, p 6.

[30] Narang, A.S., Punjab Politics in National Perspective, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986.

[31] Singh, R., Some Economic Aspects of the Current Punjab Problem, Punjab Research Group (Coventry), no date, pp 4-5.

demand for labour, brought on by the increased production, and the enhancement of the wealth and status of Punjabi farmers (who began to employ people to work land they had worked before), led to an influx of migrants from other states in India. These migrants were mostly Hindus, and this has led to further communal problems.

Added to this, there has been very little government investment in Punjab, in the heavy or large industrial sector. Thus, in spite of the surplus created by the new agriculture, there has been hardly any real structural change in the Punjab economy which remains largely agricultural. The surplus generated by agriculture in Punjab ends up being:

> ". . . transferred to support industrial and commercial enterprises in metropolitan and other forms outside the state . . . the state has capital, but is unable to use it . . . basically because industrial licensing is controlled by the Centre, and licenses are not forthcoming in the measure that they should be."[32]

Government investment in key heavy industrial sectors has served to accelerate industrial development within the Indian economy. There has been no such investment in Punjab, partly because the Central Government is supposed to be reluctant to commit substantial resources to, and create industrial capacity in, a border area. Thus Punjab has a lopsided industrial sector, consisting mostly of small and medium scale industries.

Traditionally, the Sikhs, particularly the Jat Sikhs consider only two occupations worthy of a man - farming and soldiering. But

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[32]Gujral, I.K., 'The Economic Diversion', in Singh, A. [ed.], op. cit., p 48.

these two professions do not provide sufficient employment for all, and other factors have come into play to affect them. For instance, Gujral claims that during the Emergency a decision was made, to recruit for the army only in proportion to the population of each state.[33] This would adversely affect Sikh chances of employment in the army. Also, the third option, for Sikhs since the beginning of this century - migration - is becoming more difficult, as more and more countries adopt tighter and more restrictive entry policies.

These various factors - the lack of investment in heavy industry, the influx of migrant labour; the increased levels of education brought about by the prosperity of the Green Revolution; the limitations on availability of migration opportunities; the cut in recruitment to the army; have combined with the increased aspirations of educated youth to create a truly frustrating situation for these young people. The levels of educated unemployed are far higher in Punjab than such figures elsewhere in the country.[34] It would be logical to assume that these conditions cannot be entirely unrelated to the fact that many of those who supported Bhindranwale, and comprise the various groups associated with

[33] Ibid, p 43.
[34] See Gujral, I.K., ibid, p 48.

| Subject and Qualification | All India Average Unemployment % | Punjab Unemployment % |
|---|---|---|
| Commerce | | |
| Graduate | 11.9 | 17.9 |
| Post Graduate | 4.5 | 26.4 |
| Arts | | |
| Graduate | 15.6 | 12.6 |
| Postgraduate | 3 | 12.3 |
| Science | | |
| Graduate | 3.9 | 6.7 |
| Postgraduate | 5.8 | 8.1 |

violence in Punjab are educated young men.

Another issue which has contributed to creating ill-will between Punjabi farmers and the rest of India as epitomised by the Central Government is that of sharing of river waters. After partition, three of Punjab's rivers were allocated to India, and today these are shared between Punjab and the neighbouring states of Haryana and Rajasthan. There has been a tendency, amongst all those concerned in this sharing, including the Central Government to view the waters of these rivers as property, with all states claiming their share, instead of a more rational approach based on harnessing them for optimal use. There has been continued dispute between the various states as to the distribution of waters. The Central Government has also played a role as arbiter, and the dispute has been referred to the Indian Supreme Court. None of the arrangements yet arrived at, have proved satisfactory to all parties concerned, and this is still an important issue for the Sikhs.

**Other Issues**

According to the Government of India's 1984 White Paper on Punjab, the violence in that state was the result of machinations of 'external forces'. It says: "the influence of external forces, with deep-rooted interest in the disintegration of India was becoming evident."[35] Since the start of the crisis, the Government of India has consistently claimed that Punjab was the victim of a larger plot to destabilise India. India has always pointed to Pakistan, across the border from Punjab as the chief culprit. The Indian Government has

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[35]Government of India, White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, 1984, p 3.

a record of using the bogey of 'external forces' to distract from problems within India herself, and of using it to unite this disparate country. Most analyses of this crisis tend to dismiss the Pakistan factor as irrelevant. Any claim that Pakistan or any other outside party is the instigator of violence in the Punjab is probably far-fetched and exaggerated. As this chapter has shown thus far, there were several factors in Punjab itself to explain the escalating crisis. But if the Indian Government's accusations can be taken to mean that the perpetrators of violence in Punjab were being aided by Pakistan, it would appear that this merits some consideration. The Indian Government's accusations were based in part on the interrogation reports provided by the Punjab police, of the questioning of those arrested for committing acts of violence in Punjab. Several of these detainees gave accounts of the training and support they had received in Pakistan. Further, during pilgrimages to Guru Nanak's birth place in Pakistan, Khalistan supporters were given a free hand to propagate their political views at meetings and through the distribution of pamphlets and other audio-visual material. Tully and Jacob also draw attention to the fact that when Sikh extremists hijacked an Indian aircraft in August 1984, passengers claimed that the hijackers were unarmed until the plane reached Lahore. When the hijack finally ended at Dubai, the Walther PPK. 7.65 calibre gun recovered from the hijackers was found to have been delivered to an Islamabad address by the manufacturers.[36] The Indian press has also often supported such government allegations against Pakistan through their reports. As recently as July 16, 1989, the Hindustan Times reported that there was evidence that Pakistan was still

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[36]Tully, M. & Jacob, S., Amritsar, 2nd edition, Pan, London, 1986, p 235.

pushing trained terrorists into Indian territory, although Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had given assurances to the contrary.[37]

Later in January of the next year, the paper gave detailed accounts of the activities of various groups in Pakistan, their leadership and activities, and also said that after the advent of Ms. Bhutto's government in Pakistan, training camps are no longer run, "instead crash courses are being run for groups of two to six boys in the bungalows owned by the goons of Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif."[38] Members of various organisations based in UK and Canada are also alleged to frequently visit Pakistan to meet with their Indian counterparts and assist in their training.[39]

The case against Pakistan, therefore can only be one of 'accessory to the fact' and no more. Even that case remains unproven in spite of all the allegations, because the Indian government has never produced any documentary or other evidence to prove conclusively to the international community that Pakistan is indeed an actor in Punjab politics.

Another issue which has some bearing on events in Punjab is that concerning the city of Chandigarh. This city was purpose-built, to be the capital of Indian Punjab after Partition. It was designed by Le Corbusier, and is considered one of his finer works. At the time of the creation of Punjabi Suba in 1966, it was supposed to be shared

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[37]Hindustan Times, 16th July 1989.

[38]Hindustan Times, 14th January 1990.

[39]In the course of my interviews with members of the International Sikh Youth Federation (UK), which has close links with the All India Sikh Student Federation (followers of Bhindranwale), I found that many of them were unable to visit India any more because of their political activities. They found consolation, it seems through Pakistan - which was referred to as 'Nanke' - which is Punjabi for one's mother's parents home.

by Punjab and Haryana (the newly created state) as their joint capital, and administered by the Centre. Soon after the establishment of Punjabi Suba, Akali leaders began to campaign for Chandigarh to be transferred to Punjab. A veteran non-Akali Sikh - Darshan Singh Pheruman fasted to death for this demand. Then, the Akali leader Sant Fateh Singh declared he was going to commit self-immolation if Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab. As preparations for this were being made, Mrs. Gandhi stepped into the dispute and announced that Chandigarh would go to Punjab, and two Tehsils of Punjab territory could go to Haryana. The Sant was spared, but the accord was never implemented. Since then it has been a bone of contention between Punjab and Haryana, and has consistently figured prominently on lists of Sikh grievances and demands. It was the issue over which negotiations between Akalis and the Government broke down, before Operation Blue Star. Later still, the Rajiv-Longowal accord decided that it would go to Punjab, on 26th January 1986. It has still not been transferred to Punjab, and it was government's failure to implement this aspect of the accord that dealt it the fatal blow.

The reluctance of successive governments to hand over Chandigarh to Punjab is not hard to explain, but difficult to excuse. The most widespread interpretation is that they do not wish to risk the wrath of Hindu Haryana, and by extension Hindu wrath by giving this prized city to the Sikhs. In 1985 after signing the Accord, the next state elections were due in less than a year. The truth of the matter may well be, that the Chief Minister of Haryana, Mr. Bhajan Lal raised alarm within the Congress Party, that if Chandigarh went to Punjab, the Congress Party would lose control of Haryana. The

Congress had just lost power in Assam, Punjab too was out of Congress hands, and it looked as if full implementation of the Punjab Accord could lose them Haryana and Rajasthan (involved with water-sharing with Punjab). At this time, the party was also in opposition in most Southern states. Such party-political considerations seem the best explanation for the on-going saga over the fate of Chandigarh.

Many of the issues discussed in the preceding three sections find a place in the document known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (See Appendix). This consists of a list of Sikh grievances "derived from a resolution outlining the policy and programme of the party adopted by its working committee in October 1973 at Anandpur Sahib."[40] At this time, Punjab was in the hands of a Congress Government, led by Giani Zail Singh, later President of India. This document is important, because it was around this list of grievances that the Sikh agitations in the 1980s were based. The release of this document at this time should be seen in the light of previous comments made about Akali tactics when in opposition. The document was originally a list of 45 demands on a variety of issues. It was later shortened to just 15, when negotiations with the Government got underway (See Appendix). In this Resolution the Akali Dal restates its claims to represent the entire Sikh nation, but the demands themselves belie this, being heavily slanted towards the concerns of the more well-to-do Jat Sikh farmers. The demands in this document were a mixture of economic, social, political and other issues. The economic demands included annulment of the existing arrangements for the sharing of river waters between states and new arrangements made to take their place; land reforms; loans to be

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[40]Kapur, R.A., op. cit., 1986, p 219.

made available to middle-class and poor farmers; that prices of agricultural produce be fixed on the basis of returns to the middle-class farmers; the nationalisation of the food grain trade and an increase in industrial investment in Punjab. The document also demanded that the 'interference' of Central Government should be limited to Defence, Foreign Relations, Currency and General Communications; that Chandigarh be handed back to Punjab; that army recruitment of Sikhs must not be restricted to their proportion of the Indian population; and that an all-Indian Sikh Gurudwaras Act, putting all Gurudwaras under the control of the SGPC be passed. Still other demands included 'Holy City Status' for Amritsar; the naming of a train as 'The Golden Temple Express'; and the setting up of a radio station to broadcast prayers from the Golden Temple to Sikhs all over the world.

At first, the Government of India declared the Resolution a secessionist document, and refused to take part in negotiations based upon it. But, after unequivocal statements by Akali leaders, negotiations on a shortened version of 15 demands began in the 1980s, and carried on sporadically and unsuccessfully until the launch of Operation Blue Star. The interesting fact about this Resolution is that in the period 1977-1979, when the Akalis were partners in the Punjab Government and at the Centre, none of the demands in this resolution were pressed. When the Congress returned to power both in Punjab and at the Centre, in 1980, the agitations for the demands in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution were relaunched. This clearly shows that for the Akalis, the issue was not really the demands in the Resolution, but power.

With this, we come to the conclusion of the examination of

background events and deep-rooted causes of the Punjab Problem. We shall now move on to a consideration of the events themselves. It is hoped that this analysis of the progression of events in Punjab, will make it clear how India's most prosperous state reached the brink of an armed insurrection, and enable us to understand the processes which led to it.

## The Crisis

The Punjabi Suba or state was established in 1966, in response to long-standing demands from the Akali Dal for a Punjabi speaking state. The Akali leader Sant Fateh Singh announced at the time, "[T]he Punjabi Suba is our last demand."[41] But, even at that time, there were elements in the party who did not agree with the Sant's sentiments. A faction of the party still led by the erstwhile dominant Akali leader Master Tara Singh had all along made no secret of the fact that the demand for a Punjabi Suba was a demand for the creation of an entity in which Sikhs enjoyed political power, and could hence ensure the preservation of the Sikh religion, culture and way of life. A more marginal and extreme group was also in existence at this juncture which soon came under the leadership of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan who now lives in the UK, and is still a leading champion of this cause.

The first government of the new Punjab state was a coalition between the Akalis, Jan Sangh and the Communists. Having achieved their Punjabi Suba, the Akalis seemed to have no idea what to do with it, and Punjab politics disintegrated into a charade of support-

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[41] Singh, K., op. cit., p 309.

switching, floor-crossing legislators, and changing fortunes for all the coalition partners. The result of this was that by 1968 Punjab was under President's rule.

In the 1969 mid-term poll, the Akalis under Sant Fateh Singh became the largest party in the Punjab legislature, winning 43 out of 104 seats. An Akali led coalition government took office once more. The Akali Chief Minister announced a ten-point programme designed to improve conditions for Punjabi farmers, but seemed more interested in setting old personal scores and safeguarding his position. The two main factions of the Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh and Fateh Singh fell out over accusations by one that Fateh Singh had dishonoured the Akalis by breaking his vow to fast to death for Chandigarh in 1966. In the meantime, Dharshan Singh Pheruman did exactly that. The Chandigarh issue came alive again, and Mrs. Gandhi settled it (for the movement) by announcing her award to Punjab. The two Akali factions now fought over who should get credit for this 'achievement', and the Chief Minister and his faction lost the argument, and their support in the house.

A new Akali-led government under Prakash Singh Badal (educated, well-off Jat Sikh farmer) was sworn in. Parliamentary elections were held in March 1971. Of the 13 seats from Punjab, the Congress won 10, Communists 2 and Akalis one. Badal's government could not survive this debacle long, and by June Punjab was once more under President's rule.

While the various Punjabi political parties and their factions were hurling charges and counter-charges at each other, the tension simmering between Pakistan and India boiled over, and war broke

out. While the issue was the future of East Pakistan, once again Punjab bore the brunt of the Pakistani assault, but the war ended within two weeks, with the establishment of a new state - Bangla Desh, and a victory for India. Mrs. Gandhi's prestige and popularity were never higher, and she took the opportunity to call Assembly elections. The Congress Party won a majority in the Punjab Assembly, and Giani Zail Singh (later to be the Indian Home Minister and President) took the office of Chief Minister.

Zail Singh remained in this position until the 1977 election, called in the aftermath of the Emergency. He made a conscious bid to enlist the support of the communal element in Punjab politics by going out of his way to not merely accommodate but court them. His major triumph in this area came with the construction of a road, which followed the path taken by the forces of the tenth Guru against the Mogul armies, named Guru Gobind Singh Marg (road), which he inaugurated by leading a procession from one end of it to the other. During this period, the Akalis fought to preserve their grip on the Sikh masses by returning to their agitational tactics in 1973, they put together a list of Sikh grievances, which was adopted by their working committee in October at Anandpur Sahib and became known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. When the Emergency began in 1975, the Akali leadership fought it more resolutely than any other opposition party in the country, with their usual tactics of sending out jathas to court arrest.

In the 1977 general elections, the Akalis were returned to power in Punjab, in a coalition with other parties. For the first time they also got a role in the Central Government, because they were part of the opposition who had united against Mrs. Gandhi. One of

their members, Surjit Singh Barnala (later Chief Minister of Punjab) became the Agriculture Minister.

In the same year, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale became the head of the Damdami Taksal, a missionary school for Sikh preachers, founded 200 years ago by Baba Deep Singh, a Sikh hero. Bhindranwale was born in 1947 to a small farmer who already had six sons. He entered the school at an early age, and eventually became the favourite of its head, Kartar Singh. When Kartar Singh was fatally injured in a road accident, he passed on his position to Bhindranwale, who then took the title Sant. Kartar Singh's son, Amrik Singh later became the President of the All India Sikh Student Federation (AISSF), and Bhindranwale's right hand man. Bhindranwale achieved his early prominence in Punjab politics due to the conspiracies of Giani Zail Singh and Sanjay Gandhi (son of Mrs. Indira Gandhi). At this time, the Congress was in the unfamiliar role of the opposition. Sanjay and Zail Singh needed a method of breaking up the coalition government in Punjab, and they set about elevating this obscure preacher, so that he could challenge the Akalis support base, and cause the government to fall. This was part of their attempt to break up the coalition government at the Centre, and in the event, that government collapsed after only two years in office.

In 1973, the Sikh High Priests had issued a hukmnama (religious edict) against the Nirankari sect. They were the followers of Baba Dayal Das, and very influential amongst the Punjabi trading community. They had aroused the wrath of orthodox Sikhs, by treating the descendants of their founder as living Gurus, and because of their tendency to follow Hindu customs like idol worship.

They posed a dilemma for the Akali Dal, who as the Sikh political party had to abide by the hukmnama. Yet, in 1978, when the Akalis were part of a coalition government with the Janata party government permission had to be given for this sect to hold a convention in Amritsar on Baisakhi Day, because of the insistence of other-members of the coalition, some of whom depended on the support of the trading community. When this announcement was made it caused fury in the ranks of the faithful, and Bhindranwale and one Fauja Singh led a procession from the Golden Temple to the Convention. When they arrived there a free-for-all broke out. Fauja Singh and eleven other Sikhs and three Nirankaris were killed. This event brought Bhindranwale irreversibly into the public eye, and with the help of his mentors in the Congress he stayed there. Tully and Jacob, along with other observers of Punjab politics say that this assistance included the setting up of a political party - the Dal Khalsa, whose initial expenses were all paid by Giani Zail Singh.[42]

In 1979, the Central Government broke up. In 1980, Mrs. Gandhi was swept back to power. Zail Singh was appointed Home Minister. Later the same year, assembly elections were called, and the Congress returned to power in Punjab. Darbara Singh, a confirmed secularist became Chief Minister, and his policies were very different from Zail Singh's ideas of pandering to the forces of communalism. These two were also arch rivals for the leadership of Punjab, thus in Mrs. Gandhi's new administration, her home minister and the Chief Minister of Punjab were at daggers drawn. There is no doubt that this made a significant contribution to the deteriorating

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[42]Tully & Jacob, op. cit., p 60.

situation in Punjab and the Governments attitude towards it. The Akali Dal too was in its normal state of disunity with two factions - one led by Sant Harchard Singh Longowal who had led the agitations against the Emergency and the other grouped around the President of the SGPC, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who were more militant.

It was a series of murders, and the government's response to them that began the escalation of the crisis in Punjab. In April 1980 the Nirankari leader Gurcharan Singh was shot. Given Bhindranwale's public hostility to the Nirankaris, and his statements about the killers being worth their weight in gold it was not unnatural that he came under suspicion. He moved into a hostel in the Golden Temple complex when calls for his arrest began. However, the Home Minister assured parliament that he was not involved. In September 1981 a Hindu newspaper editor, known for his strong opposition to Bhindranwale's views was shot. Bhindranwale had long been a critic of Narain and again suspicion fell on him and his followers. This time the Chief Minister was determined to arrest him. But, when the police arrived at the Haryana village where he was preaching he had fled. A riot ensued, and a van full of his documents and records of his speeches was burnt. Bhindranwale was assisted in his flight by the Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, on the orders of Zail Singh. Police followed him to his Gurudwara, and he sent word that he would volunteer himself for arrest in five days time after addressing a religious meeting. On the appointed day, after whipping up the crowd to a frenzy he was arrested. In the ensuing violence police opened fire and eleven people died.

With the arrest of Bhindranwale violence escalated alarmingly.

In spite of this, less than a month later, he was released, the Home Minister having assured parliament of his innocence. He came to Delhi to celebrate his release at the head of gun-toting procession of youths, openly violating the law. His release marked a turning point, for he was seen as a hero, having defied the Government and still at liberty. The violence increased, murders, bomb blasts, attempts to derail trains, even hijacking of Indian Airlines planes, were becoming commonplace.

In the meantime, the Akalis had been reviewing their position. They decided to try to cash in on the following that Bhindranwale enjoyed, and resurrected their Anandpur Sahib Resolution. In October 1981, they presented a shortened version of fifteen demands, (the first of which was the release of Bhindranwale), to the Government. Mrs. Gandhi attempted to negotiate with the Akalis, but she kept changing her conditions, or making unilateral decisions on issues that were supposed to be on the negotiating table. To keep the pressure on the Government, the Akalis launched a series of agitations. More alarmingly Bhindranwale's followers launched a campaign to stir hatred between Hindus and Sikhs. Heads of slaughtered cows were thrown into Hindu temples. Hindus consider the cow to be sacred, and this was very offensive. The idea of the campaign was to frighten Hindus into leaving Punjab. If there was a violent backlash outside Punjab, against Sikhs, they would begin to move back to Punjab, and by this process Punjab would become a Sikh state.

The Government took no decisive action of any kind, indeed it seemed paralysed by events in Punjab, and all the time the ferocity of Akali agitations and the violence in Punjab increased. In April 1983,

a Deputy Inspector General of Police, who went to worship at the Golden Temple was shot dead. By this time Bhindranwale had moved into the complex, and his followers were everywhere. Later in the same year, buses were stopped as they travelled through Punjab, and Hindu passengers were separated and shot. Mrs. Gandhi dismissed her own party government in Punjab, brought it under President's rule and increased the powers of the police.

But, by this time Bhindranwale's power had grown enormously. He virtually ran a parallel administration from the Golden Temple. People came to him for redress of grievance, and very few in Punjab could refuse to do as he asked. The Akalis attempted to exercise control over him, but things had gone too far for that. All this time, right up to his end, Bhindranwale never clearly demanded Khalistan. His standard answer to the question of whether he supported the demand for Khalistan was, "I am neither in favour nor against it. If they give it to us, we won't reject it."[43] Bhindranwale insisted that he was only demanding full implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The violence he orchestrated was not confined to Hindus, Sikhs who opposed him were just as liable to violent deaths.

Calls for Bhindranwale's arrest grew louder. He responded by moving into the Akhal Takht - shrine where the Sikh holy scripture the Guru Granth Sahib is housed, directly opposite the Golden Temple. With the assistance of his followers who included ex-army officers, the building was fortified. About ten days before Operation Blue Star, Mrs. Gandhi made a last attempt to negotiate with Akali

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[43]Ibid, p 92.

leaders. However, they were no longer capable of either convincing or ordering Bhindranwale and his supporters, so it was a futile exercise. When the negotiations did not reach any solution, they announced a further escalation in their agitations, even though they knew the situation was getting totally out of anyone's control now. Finally, on the 5th of June 1984, the Government which had remained passive for so long launched a full frontal assault on the Golden Temple complex, codenamed Operation Blue Star, with the objective of flushing out the extremists.

A bloody battle followed in which Bhindranwale and most of his inner circle were killed. Several of his supporters had escaped before the start of the action, and they were still at large. The army also suffered heavy losses. The Akhal Takht was destroyed. Sikhs everywhere were shocked and hurt, but the action seemed to have the support of most elements of the Indian poliy, including the opposition. Several units of Sikh soldiers rebelled when hearing of the action. The army then spread out across Punjab in what were called 'mopping-up operations'. In October that same year, with the army still deployed in Punjab, and the Akali leadership still under arrest, Mrs. Gandhi was shot by her own Sikh bodyguards. Massive anti-Sikh riots followed - with over 2000 Sikhs being massacred in Delhi alone. The reports of two citizens groups into these riots suggest that they were far from the spontaneous outbursts of grief-maddened people, more the outcome of organised systematic violence against Sikhs,[44] directed by members of the ruling party.

In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi won an overwhelming mandate from

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[44]See the report, Who are the Guilty?, compiled by Peoples Union for Democratic Rights and Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, Delhi, 1985.

the people. He moved quickly on Punjab, releasing Akali leaders and several detainees. In July that year, he signed an accord with the Akali leader Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. The Longowal-Rajiv accord referred most of the disputed issues to commissions, and set a date for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab - 26th January, 1986. It also dealt with other issues like the mutinies and anti-Sikh riots (see Appendix). In August of the same year, while campaigning for the Assembly elections that had been called, Longowal was assassinated by Sikh extremists. The Akalis elected Barnala to take his place. The Akalis won a clear majority in the assembly elections for the first time in their history. Barnala was sworn in as Chief Minister.

But 26th January 1986 came and went and Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab. A new Akali party, representative of the extremist viewpoint, led by Bhindranwale's aged father Joginder Singh, called the United Akali Dal emerged. Violence again escalated in the state, the Golden Temple was again occupied by militants. The state government did not hesitate for long this time, in an operation called Black Thunder they laid siege to the Golden Temple and managed to clear it of extremists. Barnala's position was consistently undermined by the factions of his party and the new Akali Dal. His government lost the support of one faction of his party, and became dependant on the Congress for its continued existence in office. At the same time there appeared to be a struggle going on for the leadership of the extremist elements, who had by now splintered into the numerous assault and commando-style groups that had perpetuated the violence in Punjab. Several elements in the Sikh clergy appeared ready to lend their support to these elements.

Then, two Panthic Committee of five members emerged, and it is believed that they operate from Pakistan and attempt to exercise control over the violent operations of the extremist elements. In January 1987, at a special meeting in the Golden Temple, the call for Khalistan was reiterated, Indian flags were burnt, and the Khalistan flag briefly raised. Violence escalated and so did charges of inefficiency and corruption against the Barnala government. On 11th May 1987, this government was dissolved, and Punjab came under President's Rule yet again. This state of affairs prevailed there until very recently.

The situation is not however as depressing as it may appear. There was no serious reaction to Operation Black Thunder, as there had been to Operation Blue Star.

> "It is now becoming apparent to many Hindus in Punjab that the Sikhs in general have no common cause with the terrorists. The Sikhs too have made it apparent through their response to Operation Black Thunder that the extremists do not speak for them.[45]

More encouragingly, Punjab has seen an increase in both agricultural and industrial production in recent years.[46] But the violence continues, even if it is confined to certain districts of the Punjab, rather than all over the state.

In the latter part of 1989, general elections were held in India. The Congress Party, retained its position as the largest party in parliament but did not win enough seats to give it a majority. A

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[45]Gupta, D., Bannerji, S., Mohan, D. and Navlakha, G., 'Punjab: Communalised Beyond Politics', The Economic and Political Weekly, 13th August 1988.
[46]See Hindustan Times, 10th August 1989.

minority government, with the support of various opposition parties, and led by Mr. V.P. Singh took office. In Punjab, several of the parliamentary seats were won by the Akali Dal of Simranjit Singh Mann (ex-police officer who resigned after Operation Blue Star, and had been in jail for the last five years). The UAD has now merged with this Akali Dal. The new Prime Minister made some gestures to show the people of Punjab that their problems are high on his agenda. It appeared that this administration did not wish to continue the Congress policy of treating Punjab as merely a 'law and order' problem. Mr. V.P. Singh announced a package of measures to deal with the situation, at an all-party conference on Punjab in Ludhiana in January 1990. These addressed some very important issues like bringing to justice those responsible for the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere, after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. But Punjab was not yet deemed ready for assembly elections and President's Rule continued.

The V.P. Singh government in Delhi collapsed after barely a year, and after the caretaker premiership of Chandra Shekhar, general elections were held in 1991. In the course of these, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. The Congress retained its position as largest party in the Lok Sabha, but fell short of a majority, and a minority Government led by Narsimha Rao took office. Punjab did not participate in the general elections of 1991, because of the situation of lawlessness and violence that continued to prevail there. Chandra Shekhar made some attempts to deal with the Punjab problem, but the brevity of his tenure and the insecurity of his position did not permit any resolution. Finally, early in 1992 both Lok Sabha and state assembly elections were held in Punjab. A very

low turnout due to a boycott call by Sikh militant groups, means that the new state Congress Government has very limited legitimacy and ability to deal with the problem.

## Conclusions

In an article written in 1986, Robin Jeffrey[47] pinpoints three reasons for the Punjab problem. The first he says is the peculiar culture and history of Punjab, which has endured innumerable invasions because of its geographical location. This has created a violent culture, with a love of arms. The second is the economic aspect, the increase in prosperity and expectation brought about by the Green Revolution, combined with industrial stagnation and increasing educated unemployment.

The third, and by far the most important, is inability of politicians to stop playing their party-political and personally ambitious games. In my view, it was the complete failure of responsibility on the part of all those involved in Punjabi politics - whether Congressmen, Akalis or anyone else, that has been the chief contribution to the trauma Punjab has been through, which is not yet over. All the parties concerned appeared to be playing games for their own ambitious purposes, with absolutely no regard for the effect of these maneuverings. Mrs. Gandhi and her personal style of leadership, which involved a refusal to accept the special position of elites within their own regions, in her bid to concentrate power in her own hands bears a heavy responsibility, as does her henchman,

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[47]Jeffrey, R., 'The Punjab Meltdown: Three Factors and Some Fall out', Asian Review, (Asian Studies Association of Australia), Vol. 10, No. 2, November 1986, pp 137-44.

President Zail Singh. The Akali leaders, for their part suffered from the complete absence of a courageous and principled leadership. In their bid to maintain their grip on the Sikh masses they were pushed into more and more extreme positions which caused irretrievable damage to Sikhs, till the point when they became almost totally powerless and irrelevant. All parties are thus guilty of allowing personal or party-political issues to come in the way of any genuine attempt to address the problems, and restore normality to Punjab. It is for this reason that such emphasis is being laid on their role in these events.

The Congress Government perhaps bears an additional burden of responsibility, as it was in authority. It allowed the situation to deteriorate to the point where Operation Blue Star or something like it became inevitable. The damage that Blue Star caused cannot be overstated. It gave a massive lift to the Khalistan cause, because the outrage and hurt it caused to all Sikhs, meant that almost none were willing to speak for reconciliation with the Government. This silence in turn led to a further widening of the rift between Hindu and Sikh. This action also drew into the violent and extremist fold, many who were not convinced of the validity of that point of view before.

CHAPTER SEVEN

# BRITISH SIKHS AND INDIAN POLITICS

## Introduction

Having completed our examination of political events in Punjab in recent times, we now turn to the question of British Sikh involvement in those events. That the links between British Sikhs and their origins and kin in Punjab are deep seated and intense has already been established. Given these strong links as well as the intertwined nature of the Sikh religion and Sikh politics, it is hardly surprising that these links should extend from the emotional, cultural and religious sphere to the political. This is clearly manifested in the absorption of British Sikhs with Punjab politics.

In the course of this chapter, I shall attempt to relate the concerns and activities of British Sikhs to the events in India. I shall do this by an examination of the politics of the British Sikh community, and will draw heavily upon the interviews I conducted with members of the community. The analysis will make clear what British Sikh political activity involves, who it is targeted at, and who the participant organizations and groups are. This will be followed by an attempt to relate events in Punjab to events here, and assess the impact of British Sikh politics on the situation in Punjab.

The discussion in Chapter Three regarding the conditions which must prevail for a diaspora to function successfully as a political actor, applied to the British Sikhs would suggest that they have every potential to perform such a role. They have successfully

retained their sense of identity, language, religion and culture in Britain, and enough members of the second generation have been drawn into the fold for this state of affairs to continue. This has come about through the efforts of the community themselves, through their network of Gurudwaras and other organizations. Some assistance from local governments towards teaching of Punjabi etc. has helped.

The political system in Britain is one characterized by the existence of civil liberties and political freedom. This system, along with government policy that aims for integration of immigrants rather than total assimilation, and allows a diversity within society has enabled them both to maintain their distinctiveness, and be politically active.

As the community has established itself in Britain, it has grown prosperous, with a substantial number of its members becoming house owners and self-employed. This has increased their resources, and their own traditions of charity and regular donations to Gurudwaras has put those resources at the command of politically active members of the community. Also, while many of these who came here were peasants, with leadership from the more educated members of their community, and later of British educated Sikhs, this community has never lacked the organizational, public relations or political skills it needs to make an impact.

Clearly then, all the ingredients are in place - an examination of British Sikh politics will show us the use to which they have been put.

## British Sikh Politics

It is useful to conceive of the political activity of British Sikhs as being directed towards influencing three 'targets'. These targets are a direct result of the particular situation of the community, as an encapsulated minority in Britain, and one that has a continuing strong attachment to and identification with their home society in Punjab. The three 'targets' are:

(1) The British Sikh community itself.

(2) The Indian polity, particularly Punjab.

(3) The British polity.

(1) The British Sikh community can be seen as the 'constituency' or the primary target of political activity within the community. Those who aspire to be leaders of the community need the support of the ordinary Sikh in Southall or Smethwick to legitimize their claim to that role. Thus would-be leaders have to first establish a support-base within their own community, before they can hope to have any impact on events or policy within the other two target areas. Equally such leaders are vital to the existence of the community since they are best placed to voice its particular concerns. Community leaders establish themselves as such in various ways through leadership of organization like the IWA, through positions on management committees of Gurudwaras, through membership of and prominence within groups or parties like the ISYF or the Akali Dal. There is no centralized institution or authority within the British Sikh community; each Gurudwara, each wing of the IWA is an independent entity, and this ensures that no single leader or organization assumes a dominant role. It also ensures that any general assessment of the views and aspirations of

British Sikhs becomes a complex task.

While a position of community leadership brings its rewards in terms of high status within the community, the ultimate political objective, even of political activity targeted specifically at British Sikhs, is two-fold, and relates to the community's needs and aspirations in British society, as well as its hopes and fears about Punjab in India. Further, leaders try to play a role in both target areas regardless of where their support-base lies, and through which institution they have gained prominence. Thus, 'R' is concerned with turning Punjab into the sovereign state of Khalistan as well as with persuading British schools with substantial numbers of Sikh pupils to teach Punjabi as a second language.[1] The evolution of British Sikh politics has not so far resulted in specific organizations directed towards achieving certain aims in specific target areas. By this I mean that there is no organization exclusively for dealing with community objectives in the British arena or Indian arena. All organizations and leaders attempt to play a role in all areas. For instance the Akali Dal does not confine itself to securing British Sikh support for a particular cause or policy in India, but is quite ready to intervene in issues related to British Sikhs on the British political stage. A good example of this was the activity of Akali leaders in Wolverhampton during the turbans in transport dispute there in the 1960s.[2]

Part of the explanation for this rivalry lies in the theme of disunity, disjunction and factionalism that characterizes all Sikh

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[1]Interview with 'R' of the ISYF, UK.

[2]See Beetham, D., Transport and Turbans, Institute of Race Relations, London, 1975, pp 37-65.

politics, whether in India, Britain or elsewhere. It is paradoxical, that a community with strong proven organizational and mobilization ability should be riven internally. The sources of this tendency to disjunction lie within the Sikh social and cultural framework. In part it arises from "personal rivalry, . . . an unfortunate negative consequence of their otherwise wholly admirable commitment to egalitarianism."[3] A further source of disunity is caste, which still prevails amongst the Sikhs. Caste divisions are evident not just in the formation of different Gurudwaras for different castes in Britain, but also occupationally. Contemporary realities and moving to Britain have not dissipated these barriers, rather they have been adapted to British life. Further division is brought in by sectarian loyalties to particular religious leaders (Sants), who exercise a powerful influence over their followers. Sants from Punjab regularly visit Britain and have strong followings here, keeping that source of disunity amongst British Sikhs alive.[4]

Sikhs themselves seek to present their community as a united one, often pointing to the Langar (communal dining hall) in the Gurudwaras, and professing distaste for the caste oriented nature of Hinduism.[5] However, as further examination of British Sikh politics shows, a tendency to internal dispute is as much a part of diaspora politics as it is of the Punjabi variety. The existence of large numbers of political groupings and factions, often divided by personal rivalries is evidence of this.

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[3]Ballard, R., 'Differentiation and Disjunction Amongst Sikhs in Britain', in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], The Sikh Diaspora, Chanakya, Delhi, 1989, p 203.
[4]Ibid, pp 203-205.
[5]This came across in several interviews notably with 'G', 'R',and 'N'.

(2) As far as the second target area, the Indian polity, is concerned, the British Sikh community does not function as a united entity trying to achieve certain clear aims. There is no conformity of vision or action regarding Punjab politics, and thus one can rationally only speak about the ways in which various members of the community and their organizations attempt to further their preferred objectives in Punjab. Essentially these attempts take one of two forms. First, British Sikhs are so closely associated with the Punjabi political scene, that they can almost be said to be a part of it. This close association comes about due to the reflection of the prevailing political configurations in Punjab within the British Sikh community. All parties and groups have their UK wing, and any schisms or rifts in the Punjab organization are immediately reflected here. Such association brings benefit to British Sikhs because it enhances the prestige of people here to be associated with groups in Punjab and is a channel for their political aspirations in a society they still consider theirs. The benefits for the Indian wing of the organization are often more tangible, taking the form of monetary support, and providing them with an extremely useful international base of operations. Such connections vary in strength and degree of organization, with some groups having fully-equipped offices in the UK, and a constitution that officially links them to their Punjabi counterpart, while others are based on the activities of an individual or small group of individuals. For example the ISYF is clearly associated with the AISSF in India, and has several branches in the UK, while the international aspects of some factions of the Akali Dal are based around particular individuals. The UK mirror-image of the Punjabi political scene is only distorted in one aspect, certain groups like the ISYF, and the Dal Khalsa International are here on

equal terms with others like the Akalis, while their parent organizations in Punjab are often illegal, because of their involvement in acts of violence. These groups are therefore easier to contact and deal with in the UK, than they are in Punjab, and are also less inclined to violence.

Inasmuch as the first way of influencing events in Punjab is a direct result of the origins and strong connections of British Sikhs with Punjab, the second set of ways in which some members attempt to influence events there is directly related to their existence in Britain, outside the jurisdiction of Indian law. In the perceptions of many this gives them a freedom, denied their brothers in India. Several of the more militant Sikhs interviewed laid greater stress on this aspect, saying that they were 'free' here unlike their kin in Punjab. In this regard, it has been suggested that this freedom allows Sikhs here to "support terrorism and gain meaning in the tradition of self-sacrifice without risking themselves, as long as they do not violate the laws of their place of residence."[6] Perhaps this freedom does make them bolder in their demands and more steadfast in sticking to those demands than they might have been in the face of daily risks in Punjab. It must be noted, that Sikhs in Britain are not unaware of this. 'R' expressed his feelings on this matter when he described Indian Sikhs as luckier than he was, meaning that he recognizes both their greater contribution, and the importance of his own role in their common struggle. Helweg's point about staying within the law of the host country is very clearly true for the Sikhs, who recognize that if they break British law, they jeopardise the

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[6]Helweg, A., 'Sikh Politics in India', in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], op. cit., p 329.

very freedom that allows them to play their role. They use this freedom to mount a media campaign against the Indian government and its actions in Punjab. Most of these groups are those that advocate the creation of Khalistan, and they attempt to function as an alternative source of information about events in Punjab. Certain groups have mounted some fairly successful campaigns in the world media, particularly regarding the abuse of human rights by the Indian government in Punjab. For instance, the work of the Punjab Human Rights Organization, an affiliate of the ISYF is noteworthy in this regard.

(3) Within the British polity, the third target area, the political aims of British Sikhs would appear to be fairly limited, and quite clearly the result of the main motivation behind Sikh migration to Britain. As it was economic in nature, British Sikhs wish to integrate economically with British society, but they have no wish to assimilate or to discard their culture and traditions in favour of British ones. Thus their political activity is chiefly centred on resisting what they see as any threat to their economic welfare and any attempt at homogenization, by making it disadvantageous for them to retain their cultural distinctiveness. This is clearly seen in the overall lack of enthusiasm and interest in British politics in the community, and by their ability to mobilize effectively on issues they perceive of as a threat to their way of life, as was illustrated by the turbans in transport issue in the 1960s and the crash-helmets or turbans issue in the 1980s.

However, recently there have been some attempts to use their influence in British political parties, mostly through the MPs of their constituencies, to bring to public attention in Britain events in

Punjab, as well as to try and bring pressure to bear on the Indian government through condemnation of its actions by British political institutions.

Keeping in mind these three target areas that form the focus of immigrant politics we now move on to an examination of the role played by the various political institutions and organizations in this process. The institutions may, for the sake of conceptual clarity be divided into three main groups. However, it must be made clear from the outset that such a distinction is not always clear-cut in reality, and often there is overlap between the personnel and other aspects of these three groups. The noteworthy groups of organizations are:

(1)Gurudwaras

(2)IWAs

(3)Political parties or groups.

**Gurudwaras**

The role of Gurudwaras in Sikh society both in India and Britain, as well as their basic functions and the way they are run has already been described in detail elsewhere. These descriptions have emphasized the political nature of the institution. For the British Sikh Community, most of whose members regularly attend a Gurudwara, its politics forms the grass-root level of political activity. According to 'E', veteran observer of British-Sikh affairs, Gurudwara politics is the key to understanding British Sikh politics. Since Gurudwara committees are elected bodies, leaders of Gurudwaras have some legitimate claim to their role, and such leadership provides a vantage point for further political activity,

directed at other targets. Leaders of Gurudwaras also control Gurudwara funds, which are generally substantial (they are reluctant about giving precise figures) particularly in large Gurudwaras. This gives them the means to make an impact in their chosen target area.

As far as the Indian political scene is concerned, Gurudwara managements use various ways to make an impact there. The most important of these is through monetary and technical support of their chosen allies. The Indian Government has long alleged that the main source of funds for extremist violence in Punjab is from overseas Gurudwaras. Most Gurudwara leaders here acknowledge that they send money to India, but claim it is for humanitarian and relief work, like building Gurudwaras, schools and hospitals or providing emergency financial aid to victims of events like the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. On further questioning though some admit that such funds can be used for other purposes, and it is totally impossible to prove this because often money is sent through illegal foreign-exchange dealers (havalas), and can be sent on a person-to-person basis. These activities sometimes cause problems within the groups and their supporters, as there are allegations of the leadership in India and here appropriating the money for personal use. These monetary contributions are the main factor in keeping continuing close ties between Indian based organizations and their UK counterparts, because of the need for such material support in India to strengthen the position of a particular group.

Gurudwaras also attempt to generate publicity and discussion about events in India. They organise public meetings, invite speakers, organise functions to commemorate important dates and organise demonstrations to present their point of view to visiting

Indian dignitaries. The speakers invited are often prominent religious and/or political figures from the Punjab and there is a constant stream of visitors ranging from purely religious Sants to important political figures like Sant Harchand Singh Longowal.

As far as the British target area is concerned, Gurudwara activity tends to concentrate on issues relating to Sikh life here. They are involved in increasing the teaching facilities for the Punjabi language, and have several low-to-middle level contacts with British institutions and agencies, like Community Relations Councils, Police Liaison Committees etc., through which they attempt to smooth the relations between the Sikh minority and the host majority. There have been relatively few attempts to use these channels to lobby the British government about events in India and its policies towards that country. Neither are Gurudwaras active on the current issues in British politics, unless these are directly related to their particular concerns.

There are over 100 Gurudwaras in the UK, and they vary enormously in size, resources and influence. Some Gurudwaras are run for and by particular minorities within Sikh society, like the Ramgarhias or Ravidasis. It is possible however to identify certain large, rich and powerful Gurudwaras whose activities provide a lead to others around the country. Amongst these one should include the Shepherds Bush Gurudwara in London, the Singh Sabha and Havelock Road Gurudwaras in Southall, as well as those in Gravesend, Smethwick, Birmingham and Coventry. In recent years all these Gurudwaras have reflected the turmoil in Punjab, through bitterly-contested election struggles which have at times resulted in violence. These events will be detailed in the next section, which

relates events in Punjab to those among the British Sikh Community.

**The IWAs**

The origin and functions of the IWAs have already been discussed at length elsewhere. Here it is sufficient to note, that of the three sets of institutions around which British Sikh political life revolves, this set is unique, in that IWAs are creations of the Sikh immigrant experience in Britain, not replicas or extensions of Indian/Punjab organizations. This factor, along with their largely communist leadership have made them intrinsically different from the other two groups.

The IWAs have a secular attitude, and close historic association with the Indian Nationalist Movement, and the Congress Party. They have drawn their support from the British Sikh Community not by appealing to religious or ethnic sentiment, but by virtue of the wide range of settlement services they have provided, the friendship/kinship network of their leaders and the campaigns mounted to deal with problems specific to Sikh migrants in Britain. Their early success in the campaign to get genuine passports from the Indian government for those Sikhs who had fallen into the hands of unscrupulous travel agents in their eagerness to migrate, and had ended up in Britain with forged passports, is an example. However, the IWAs are not immune to the malaise that affects all Punjabi organizations, factionalism, and have split several times since their inception. These splits have as often been due to differences in political stances on Indian (Communist) politics, as on different strategies that ought to be adopted to improve conditions for Indians in Britain. Again, unusually for a Sikh organization, politico-

ideological differences have also played a divisive role. This factionalism has resulted in no centralized IWA organization, and several towns having more than one IWA, which has obviously had a negative impact on their political efficacy.[7] Further with the consolidation of the Sikh community in Britain, there has been a decline in the demand for their settlement services, and though some have attempted to provide for the current needs of the community by opening women's centres and youth centres, their importance in community affairs has declined.

The IWAs have been most active in trying to influence attitudes and policy in the British polity, a target area of secondary importance to other groups. In this area, they have been involved with setting up the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), though this caused some factional dispute. Further they have been active in trying to bring their members into the mainstream of the British Labour Movement through liaison with trade unions and the Labour Party, though again not all sections of the IWA have been in agreement with this policy. Some sections of the IWA have attempted to form closer links with wider movements like the Black Power movement and Black Panthers. Still others have attempted to increase Sikh participation on the British political scene by taking stands on various contemporary movements like backing the miners strike, opposing the dissolution of the Greater London Council and participating in Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marches. This same section, the IWA (Southall) has been seen as having an assimilationist policy rather than an

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[7]See Josephides, S., Organizational Splits and Ideology in the Indian Workers Association, Punjab Research Group (Coventry), Discussion Paper, Series No. 21, no date.

integrationist one, and this has created further friction between it, and other IWAs.[8]

As far as Indian politics is concerned, the IWAs have generally taken a pro-Congress stance, and because of this and their close association with the Indian High Commission in London, they have widely been identified with government policy. The Khalistan issue has further divided the IWAs, most of which take the anti-Khalistan view, in keeping with their secular and socialist leanings. The repercussions of this will be discussed in the next section. IWAs generally attempt to show solidarity with other socialist and secular bodies in Indian politics, like the Communist Parties and the Congress. They often organise receptions for visiting Indian dignitaries and functions to celebrate Indian National Days like Independence Day or Republic Day. They also organize public meetings, inviting speakers from India and here.

**Political Parties and Organisations**

Ever since the establishment of a thriving Sikh community in Britain, most of the Indian political parties who have a substantial following amongst Sikhs have had a UK wing. These have largely come about due to the results of some individual efforts and the overseas offices of some of them are the homes of individuals who are actively involved. Such connections are prestigious for those who live here, especially when they are in the position of playing host to important visitors from India, most of whom (other than government officials and ministers) come here on personal

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[8]Ibid, pp 28-29.

invitations. The important political parties in Britain include the Overseas Congress, various factions of the Akali Dal and the Communists. The strength of these parties in the UK is difficult to establish, as no group reveals membership figures, and there is no certainty whether all of them keep such records. It would seem likely that party support, like other Sikh political relationships, is based largely on personal support and a friendship/kinship network, as well as traditional affiliations carried on from Punjab, and is likely to conform with levels of support enjoyed by these parties in Punjab. All of these parties have associates, sympathizers or members in leadership positions in Gurudwaras and IWAs throughout the UK, and their influence in the community is exercised through these leaders.

As far as the Indian political scene is concerned, they attempt to increase support for their parent organizations amongst UK Sikhs, and provide logistical, public relations and in some cases, monetary support. Their political ambitions in India are completely congruent with those of the Indian organization they represent. Quite naturally, given their origins and concerns, they are not remotely as active in the third target area, Britain. The Congress Party and its overseas counterpart has usually been in the strongest position to do this, by virtue of its long tenure as the ruling party and its ability to deal with the British Government on issues relating to Sikh welfare. Thus when a Sikh youth was harassed in school in the UK and his hair cut off, it became a matter of concern to the Indian parliament. When there were riots in Southall, following the murder of Gurdip Chaggar in 1976, the Indian Congress Government expressed its concern to the British Government. Other parties too, have been

involved in purely 'British Sikh' matters as the earlier example of Akali intervention in the turbans in transport dispute shows.

In recent years, particularly in the last decade, certain political organisations have come to prominence in Britain. These organisations are all associated with the demand for the creation of a sovereign Sikh state of Khalistan in Punjab. All of these too have affiliations with, or are linked to groups in India. Most of these groups are associated with violence and terrorism in support of their cause, and are thus either banned completely or severely restricted in their activities in India. For them, their UK and other international wings (mainly in the USA and Canada) are a very important source of publicity, support and funds, as these can function without fear of the Indian Government and law enforcement agencies. The most important groups are:

**ISYF**

The ISYF was created in September 1984, in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star. It was modelled on and closely associated with the AISSF, who were Bhindranwale's own personal army before his death. Jasbir Singh Rode, a nephew of Bhindranwale, and a Dubai-based businessman at the time played a crucial role in the foundation of the ISYF, which has managed to attract significant support among Sikh youth in this country, and boasts a membership of over 20,000. It has branches in all major English towns and cities with a Sikh population, and a central organisation. It's leadership consists of highly educated and articulate young Sikhs, most of whom came to Britain as adolescents and have passed through the British education system. The organisation stresses the need to inculcate awareness

about the distinct Sikh identity, and aims to prepare Sikh youth for "the creation of an environment in which Sikh national expression can find its full satisfaction."[9]

**Akhand Kirtani Jatha**

This is a fundamentalist Sikh sect, which lays emphasis on living life strictly according to Sikh principles, and emphasises meditational and devotional aspects of the religion. Its founder was Sant Bhai Randhir Singh, who joined hands with the Ghadr revolutionaries during the First World War, and was imprisoned for his activities. In recent years its more prominent members have included Bibi Amarjit Kaur, wife of Fauja Singh who marched with Bhindranwale against the Nirankaris and was killed in the ensuing melee. This organisation has had a small membership in England since the 1960s, and also has support in Canada. While being non-violent itself, it supports the activities of Babbar Khalsa, a group who on their own admission are responsible for some of the violence in Punjab in the last decade.

**Babbar Khalsa**

The Babbar Khalsa was one of the militant organisations formed in 1978 after the showdown with the Nirankaris in Amritsar. It was led by Jathedar Sukhdev Singh and claimed responsibility for the deaths of 45 Nirankaris. This group did not support Bhindranwale,[10] and during his sojourn in the Golden Temple in the

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[9]See Dietrich, A., The Khalistan Movement in Britain, Punjab Research Group (Coventry), Discussion Paper, series No. 12, no date, p 11.
[10]Tully, M. & Jacob, S., Amritsar, 2nd edition, Pan, London, 1986, p 110.

days before Operation Blue Star, was the bodyguard of the moderate Akali leader Longowal, who also stayed there. The Babbar Khalsa International was founded by two Canada based Sikhs, and still enjoys some support among Sikhs in that country. This group is more overtly religious than the ISYF, stands for the creation of Khalistan, as is quite ready for its members to die fighting for this cause. It is known to have links with various organisations in India, and has been involved in violence through the Khalistan Commando Force and the Babbar Khalsa Force International.

### Dal Khalsa

This group was created in 1978 and claims as its founders the poet Gajinder Singh and Bhai Fauja Singh. However, it is also known that this organisation was created by Giani Zail Singh to be a vehicle for Bhindranwale, against the Akali leadership. Dal Khalsa members in India claimed responsibility for stirring up communal hatred between Hindus and Sikhs by throwing bovine carcases into Hindu temples and its members carried out the hijack of an Indian Airlines plane in 1982, and are still in jail in Lahore. This organisation also emphasises strict adherence to the Sikh code of conduct. The Dal Khalsa International in the UK claims that it aims to work for Khalistan through entirely peaceful means. The strength of this group is also extremely difficult to assess, but would appear to be even less than that of Babbar Khalsa.

### National Council for Khalistan (NCK)

The NCK is the creation of the best known advocate of Khalistan, and has generated a fair amount of publicity. Its chief

architect is Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, erstwhile Akali politician, former Punjab Finance Minister and an advocate of a Sikh homeland in Khalistan since the early 1970s. The NCK was established in 1980, its creation being simultaneously announced by Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan in London, and Balbir Singh Sandhu in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. At the time of its creation it did not have too much impact on Sikhs or Indians, but this changed after Operation Blue Star. The NCK is an umbrella organisation (the Dr. compares it to the PLO) which incorporates various groups who wish to see the creation of Khalistan, including the Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa, and Akhand Kirtani Jatha. It has offices in Khalistan House in London, and similar organisations exist in the USA, Canada and West Germany. This organisation issues Khalistani passports, currency, flags and postage stamps, and is under the constant scrutiny of the Indian media, giving Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan a certain notoriety. This organisation has a larger support base than others, by virtue of the fact that it incorporates several groups, who nominate members to the five member council.

These groups are in a loose alliance of two blocks with ISYF on the one side, and the others under the umbrella of the NCK on the other. The relationship between the two blocs is not co-operative, with the ISYF accusing the NCK of complicity in the deportation of its founder Jasbir Singh Rode, who ended up in prison in India. Within the NCK, and the ISYF as well, there are known to be virulent personality clashes between some of the more prominent leaders. All these groups are also prone to factionalism and their disagreements with each other convulse the community. These disagreements are publicly carried out, with accusations and counter-

accusations by one group about another being published as advertisements in the Punjabi press, who are the only people to profit from the exercise. The murder in India of General Secretary of the AISSF, Harminder Singh Sandhu, (by members of an opposing faction of the same organisation, it is alleged), gave rise to a spate of such advertisements accusing the Babbar Khalsa of complicity in the act. They retaliated with accusations that their accusers themselves were responsible, or were government agents. Some of the disagreements between these groups have culminated in violence, but by and large are limited to vitriolic attacks on each other in the press.

These groups, as well as some of the political parties, are closely involved in the management of Gurudwaras and this activity tends to be the base of their operations, and provides them with recruiting ground for increasing their support amongst British Sikhs. Most of these groups also organise religious-political functions on important dates and anniversaries in the Sikh calendar, with the aim of enhancing their status and increasing their following. The political parties like Congress and Communists tend on the other hand to be more readily associated with the leaderships of IWAs, and are less involved in Gurudwara affairs at the present time.

The impact of these groups on the Indian/Punjab political scene is most strongly felt through their affiliates in Punjab, who they support in monetary and general terms. Also, the publicity that these organisations generate against the Indian Government and its actions in Punjab has a significant impact. In this regard the activities of both the NCK and ISYF to bring world attention to the issue of human rights abuse in Punjab is noteworthy. Further, the

NCK has been active in lobbying the governments of Western countries, particularly those who give substantial aid to India, to cease doing so because of her human rights record, as well as to generally bring pressure to bear on the Indian Government regarding its treatment of Sikhs. NCK has also attempted to launch a weekly radio programme, "Khalsa Voice",[11] which has not found a radio station willing to broadcast it, largely, according to Dr J.S. Chauhan because of pressure from the Indian Government.

Most of these groups are not too concerned about their impact on the British political stage, as their focus is Punjab and British Sikhs. However some, like the ISYF and to a lesser extent the Babbar Khalsa, have begun to involve themselves in community relations affairs, largely as a means of ensuring that the youth of their community are given every facility to retain their language and culture. They are not interested in any wider participation in British political life.

Now that we have a clearer idea of the various elements involved in the British-Sikh political life, the relationship between them, and the sorts of methods available to them, as well as the focus of their political activities, we can attempt an analysis of the relationship between events in Punjab and those in this country.

## British Sikhs and Indian Politics

The British Sikh community has not been aloof from the rapid economic, social and political changes in the Punjab in the last three decades. In 1966 the Punjabi Suba was created, making Punjab a

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[11]Dietrich, A., op. cit., p 9.

Sikh majority state. This had come about as a result of the serious and sustained agitations for the cause by the Akali Dal, whose UK wing had assisted by organizing demonstrations in London during Prime Minister Nehru's visit in 1958. This help was acknowledged by visiting officials of the Akali Dal who made it a point to thank UK Sikhs for their help in achieving the Suba.[12] On the economic front too, Punjab's agricultural miracle was supported by her sons in the UK. Some British Sikhs claim that the changes were all financed from abroad, and while this certainly seems like exaggeration, substantial help did flow from the UK to the Punjab. For instance Punjabi immigrants in Britain paid the Ferguson company in the UK for a substantial number of tractors that the company delivered to the Punjab.[13] The booming small and medium scale industrial sector in Punjab has no doubt profited from the monetary as well as innovative and technical contributions of the Punjabi diaspora.[14] Thus close links, with tangible benefits for Punjabis in all spheres of their lives have characterized the diaspora's relations with the homeland.

The UK has also functioned as a political base for certain elements from Punjab since the early 1970s. Within the mainstream Akali movement for the creation of the Punjabi Suba, there was always a more extreme element (contained in the faction led by Master Tara Singh) who were demanding a 'Sikh Homeland'. From this vague notion, of an autonomous region, within India, wherein

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[12]See Rose, E.J.B., Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations, Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, London, 1969, pp 460-61.

[13]Interview with 'O'.

[14]See Ballard, R., 'Migration in a Wider Context: Mirpur and Jullender Compared', New Community, Vol. XI, Nos. 1/2, Autumn/Winter 1983, p 122.

Sikhs could preserve their distinctive cultural and religious heritage, there ultimately developed the fullblown separatist movement for Khalistan. In the early years, this movement centred around the activities of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan. After a brief stint as Finance Minister in a Punjabi Government in 1967, he became associated with this cause, and in 1971, because of his activities in the context, particularly during a 'religious' visit to the Nankana Sahib Gurudwara (Guru Nanak's birthplace) in Pakistan, his passport was revoked by the Indian Government. The same year, the Doctor drew attention to himself, by inserting a full page advertisement in the New York Times propagating a Sovereign Sikh state. At this time he did not enjoy much support in India, the UK or anywhere else, except that provided by his small faction of the Akali Dal and certain individuals in the UK. He was, in fact, considered by the majority to be on the 'lunatic fringe' of Punjabi Politics.

The 1975 Emergency in India was most vociferously resisted by the Akali Dal, the only Indian political party to do so with any strength and impact. This led to a hardening of attitudes against Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress, though Akali protest was muted in the UK, largely due to cooperation between them and the IWAs, and Congress Chief Minister Zail Singh's masterful maneuverings in Punjab, which did not allow the anti-emergency agitations to become anti-Indian. In 1977, after the elections, the Akalis had a role in both state and central government, and that effectively meant a temporary halt in their agitations. In this period, Dr. Chauhan returned to India, to continue his struggle for the 'Sikh Homeland', with some spectacular stunts, but was still too much outside the mainstream to be taken seriously.

But, in 1981 with the battle between Sikhs and Nirankaris in Amritsar, and the subsequent rise to pre-eminence of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, several organisations were created, most of them with militant goals. Many of these very soon had UK based wings as has been described. When Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress were swept back to power both in Punjab and at the Centre, the Akalis returned to their traditional tactics in opposition, launching a series of agitations based around the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which they had ignored while in power. The growing militancy of Punjabi politics was reflected in the UK, through the increasing prominence of groups like Dal Khalsa and Akand Kirtani Jatha, and the creation of the NCK in 1980 when Dr. Chauhan returned to the UK. Dr. Chauhan is known to have made some attempts to involve Bhindranwale in the cause for Khalistan and his organisation, but the Sant remained non-committal until his end.

In 1981 at a Sikh Educational Conference, well attended by the diaspora, an American Sikh caused a stir by describing the Sikhs as a nation, and recommending that they should seek separate UN representation. The resolution was passed by the Sikh intellectuals and dignitaries present, but later a split occurred, and the resolution was withdrawn. But this brought the diaspora's role squarely into the public eye, and caused concern in India, particularly in light of this American-Sikh's "self-proclaimed friendship with General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan."[15]

In the years 1981 to 1984, as the Punjab agitations became more fierce, and the violence escalated, taking a heavy toll of both

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[15]Singh, G., A History of the Sikh People, World Book Centre, Delhi, 1989, p 745.

Hindu and Sikh lives, the mood of the Sikhs began to change. Various organisations in the UK stepped up their activities. The NCK began to issue Khalistani passports and banknotes etc., after releasing their Khalistan Constitution, simultaneously in London and at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Jathas were formed, and donations collected for the cause. More people in the UK were ready to listen to the voice of their 'lunatic fringe,' but by and large, these organisations were still the minority, with the vast majority of the British Sikhs not sympathetic to their views or the demand for Khalistan. Gurudwaras were still in the control of pro-Congress or Moderate Akalis or the Communists through the IWAs, and groups advocating Khalistan were excluded from their programmes and premises. All this changed in June 1984.

The Indian army action in the Golden Temple on the 5th of June outraged Sikhs the world over. There was an instant, strongly felt gut reaction condemning the desecration of their holiest shrine, across the entire spectrum of Sikh society. In India some Sikh troops mutinied, and prominent Sikhs, even those known for their opposition to Bhindranwale and their commitment to a secular India, voiced public protest.

The same outrage was reflected abroad. In the UK, Sikhs marched in their largest ever demonstration to the Indian High Commission to register protest. It seemed as if, virtually overnight, the entire Sikh population of this country had become supporters of Khalistan, as sorrow and anger led to increasing militancy. In Southall, on the 23rd June, an all-party conference was held, attended by all groups and over 70 Gurudwara managements. In a complete reversal of earlier attitudes, Dr. Chauhan received

recognition for his work for Khalistan, and a new Khalistan Government in exile with him as President was formed. Office holders were nominated to its five member council, from other groups. The Akali Dal was condemned for surrendering to the Indian Government, and its British leader apologised publicly for his party, but to no avail.

Most Gurudwaras now opened their doors to Dr. Chauhan and others associated with the NCK, including the oldest Gurudwara at Shepherds Bush, traditionally managed by a caste of traders and the intelligentsia, who were of moderate persuasion. Dr. Chauhan and his associates toured Gurudwaras in the country, making speeches and collecting funds, which were pouring in from diverse sources. IWA members in Leicester burnt their membership cards.

There was wide media coverage of some of these events in the UK, as well as those in India, and this and the attitude of their elders had a remarkable impact on Sikh youth. Many, even those born and bred in the UK, and generally westernised to a fairly high degree began to return to Sikhism. They grew their hair again, and became involved in Gurudwara and political activities. It should be noted, as Angela Dietrich does that

> ". . . the fact that youth overseas were liable to recruitment particularly by fundamentalist cadres . . . would appear to be linked with conditions in this country as marked by economic recession and racialism. This has increased their susceptibility and fomented a desire for re-discovering their glorious traditions."[16]

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[16]Dietrich, A., op. cit., p 10. Such notions are also expressed by Tatla, D.A., Nurturing the Faithful: The Role of the Sant Among Britain's Sikhs, Punjab

This revivalism among Sikh youth, led to the creation of the ISYF, which is still one of the best supported and organised of the various groups operating in the UK. Later in the year, Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. There was an appalling backlash against the Sikh community in India, and this received wide media coverage, as did reports of British Sikhs celebrating her death by uncorking champagne. Sikhs everywhere felt more vulnerable and insecure, and Hindus blamed the entire community for the acts of a few.

As a result of the events in India, the pro-Congress and moderate Akali parties have been discredited, and their support amongst British Sikhs has declined dramatically. They have been challenged for their position as Gurudwara leaders across the length and breadth of the UK. The ISYF has been particularly active in this regard, and now controls some of the biggest Gurudwaras in the UK, including those at Gravesend, Havelock Road, Southall, Smethwick and Birmingham. These takeovers have sometimes been protracted and violent affairs, particularly in the case of the Southall Gurudwara, one of the richest, where the stakes were high. Violence has also broken out on this issue in Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Gravesend, Coventry, and Birmingham.

The role of the IWAs, with their strong links with the Indian High Commission has been seriously, perhaps irretrievably weakened. Control of Gurudwaras, where they held it, has been wrested from them, and they are widely associated in the public mind with Congress Governments, which is seen as something of a

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Research Group (Coventry), 1989, p 1.

stigma. This too has not come about without violence, and one of their prominent leaders, who was also a member of the overseas Congress was murdered in Southall. Such violence also extends to those who are suspected of being Government spies, and a religious leader Darshan Das, was shot dead in the Midlands on the strength of such suspicions. However IWAs continue to be recognised by British institutions such as local councils, community relations organizations and the police, as leaders of the Indian community, and still play some service role. They have not evolved into a coherent opposition to the high profile of the militant groups.

The activities of the UK Sikhs have also had an impact in India, where they are widely reported in the press. The Indian Government has now issued a blanket visa requirement for all British nationals who wish to visit the country, largely to curtail links between pro-Khalistan elements inside and outside the country. This has met with disapproval from all sections of the British population of Indian origin, who resent having to get a visa to go 'home'. Its impact on such links is doubtful, particularly with the easy accessibility to Pakistan for Indian and British Sikhs. Meetings there between Western based organisations and their Indian counterparts are known to take place, sometimes in the guise of religious pilgrimages to Sikh shrines in Pakistan. Further the anti-Indian publicity generated by British Sikh activity, and their attempts to lobby governments into putting pressure on India are a thorn in her side as well as being detrimental to her image as the third world's premier democracy. The activities of British Sikhs have also had an effect on Anglo-Indian relations, with the Indian Government demanding British help to control these elements. This will be

further discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Looking at these changes, it would appear that the British Sikh political scene altered drastically in the aftermath of 1984. The pro-Khalistan element seems to have gained the upper hand within the institutions of the community. Proof of this would seem to lie in their control of leading Gurudwaras, the decline of more secular organisations, the support they have in the Punjabi press, where leading newspapers are sympathetic to their cause, and more trivial things like the graffiti on walls in Gurudwara precincts. However caution is indicated in declaring that they have the whole hearted support of Sikh masses here. This is because the voice of an organised minority is often clearer and louder than that of a confused and nervous majority. Also, it is possible that the freedom they enjoy in Britain, coupled with their known affiliations to violence plays a role. Further the support they enjoy may well be the result of conditions, particularly for youth (who form its largest element) in England, rather than the reality in India. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the government's actions in June 1984 gave these groups a standing and level of support they would otherwise have found extremely difficult to achieve.

Since 1984, some of the initial fervour has now died down, but these groups have consolidated their positions and look set to stay in control where they have achieved it for sometime. The infighting between them, and the lack of single body to represent them, as well as their vulnerability to factionalism, particularly due to their connections in India have meant that they are not as strong as they were. There have been disagreements between and within the two major blocs the NCK and ISYF. In the case of the former the

infighting has resulted in Dr. J.S. Chauhan being shunted out of the Presidency of the NCK, and that position lies vacant, with the organisation headed by an acting president. The ISYF has split into two factions, along the lines of its Indian counterpart the AISSF. The public mud-slinging that these groups have indulged in has tarnished their image in the eyes of their supporters, and it has been suggested that this has led to a decrease in the financial support of these groups.[17] This development is not encouraging for the future efficacy of such groups.

A further reason for the continued concern about and involvement in Punjabi affairs, is the behaviour of the Indian Government, regarding the release and dissemination of information about Punjabi events. They are less than open in their public treatment of the issue, news has been subject to censorship, and foreign journalists particularly are prevented from doing their jobs in the Punjab. This contributes to a reliance on rumours rather than facts, and keeps expatriate Sikhs keenly interested in the actualities of events in Punjab.

## Conclusions

The impact of Indian political affairs is very clearly felt by Sikhs in the UK. Events in Punjab tend to affect them as much as if they were still members of that society. Reacting to these events from the UK lends Sikh political groups some strengths like the freedom they enjoy here, greater access to the world's media, and the ability to tap the resources of an extremely well off segment of

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[17] Punjab Kesari, 9th February 1990.

society. Their weaknesses lie in the doubtfulness of their efficacy over such a distance, and the fact that this distance could play a role in keeping them out of tune with reality in Punjab, though all of them would deny this.

An assessment of their impact in India is less easy. They have generated alarm with their activities, and their high profile abroad, and have strengthened the state's case that events in Punjab are partly the result of external interference, as they are seen to be acting at the behest of India's enemies. The damage done by their campaigns has had some effect on India's image.

It is known that groups here provide monetary and other support to their fellows in Punjab. This support is important not only in terms of its magnitude but also because it is a demonstration of emotion and filial ties. What is nearly impossible to judge is the importance of that support to the activities of Punjabi group. The sums involved tend to be large,[18] particularly by Indian standards, and there is a special value attached to contributions in 'hard currencies' which are of considerable importance when it comes to the purchase of arms in the international market. As against that, most groups come into existence in India first, and as such must possess independent resources, but it seems logical to assume that without the help of British Sikhs, their activities would be curtailed to some degree.

Further, there is difficulty in assessing the relationship

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[18]Other researchers too have found that it is impossible, however good one's access to the community, to discover precisely the amounts of money sent, how, and to whom. See, for instance La Brack, B.W., 'The New Patrons', in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], op. cit., pp 261-262.

between British and Indian members of a group, and the role played by the British members within the group, and the extent of their powers. Two incidents during my interviews are interesting in this regard, as well as for the light they shed on the UK Sikhs involvement with the level of violence in the Punjab. In the first instance, during an interview with Dr. J.S.Chauhan, he mentioned that he had just received news of the killing by police in Punjab, of a relative of one of the New York based supporters of his movement, and that the police did not realise yet what a mistake they had made in killing this person, and how the vengeance exacted for his death would be terrible. In another interview with a different leader, reference was made to the recent murder of a Punjab police officer and it was claimed that the man had been responsible for several atrocities against Sikh men and women, had been on their target list for some time, and that they had successfully dealt with him the day before. If these statements are more than idle threats and empty boasts, it would appear that UK Sikh groups have not only close contact with their affiliates in Punjab, but also some decision making powers regarding actions of these groups. On the other hand, one of those interviewed also referred to UK Sikhs as helping, with a supporting role. It is difficult to establish the exact nature of the relationship between the British and Indian components of these groups. Obviously, the role of the UK Sikhs is likely to be different within different groups but, this does not make our assessment easier. Further, in perceiving the groups as having 'British' and 'Indian' components we may be emphasising a dichotomy that has little relevance to Sikhs themselves, who may function in an integrated manner regardless of the geographical distance between them.

That these groups are an embarrassment to the Indian Government is beyond dispute, and it appears unlikely that they are any immediate threat, but what is more interesting is their role in any negotiated peace with the Government. Informed sources in India seem to feel that it is the Sikhs in India who matter, and if they can be convinced, then the rest will follow. However this does not appear to be that clear to me. The case of the 1985-87 Barnala Government, which enjoyed the popular support of the Punjabi people, but was eventually brought down by the factionalism within the Akali Dal and by its failure to control extremist violence would suggest otherwise, when it is remembered that this Government did not enjoy the support of any of the militant groups in Punjab, or their UK wings.

The final point of interest is the extent to which British Sikh politics reflects the reality in India given the distortion caused in the 'mirror-image' by the greater freedom enjoyed by militant elements abroad. Also, in this regard, the doubt about the UK situation truly reflecting the opinion of the majority of UK Sikhs noted earlier is relevant. For instance, if militant groups in India enjoyed the same freedoms as do their brothers overseas, would their voice be the loudest? There are no opinion polls or other such data on either British or Indian Sikhs to assist us in such a judgement, and Indian/Punjabi election results are distorted by the prevailing violence, leaving any answer in the realm of educated guesswork at best.

It would appear, then, that the activities of British Sikhs are not the primary factor in keeping the Punjab situation in its unsettled state, the impetus of events comes from Punjab, and it is those who

are there who are primary actors. The only power that UK based groups appear to have is to assist, and probably to disrupt any moves that they do not agree with. In the event of a disagreement between UK Sikhs and their Indian counterparts, it would appear likely that the view of the latter would prevail.

CHAPTER EIGHT

# ANGLO-INDIAN RELATIONS AND BRITISH SIKHS

## Introduction

Britain and India have shared a unique historical relationship. From the year 1600, when the East India Company was formed, there has been a British connection with the subcontinent. The British were not either the first or the only European presence in the subcontinent at this time. The Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama had landed in Calicut, South India in 1498, and laid the foundation of the Portuguese dominated spice trade that was to last over a hundred years, and whose Indian base was Goa. As a result of European developments, the Portuguese were replaced as the main spice traders by the Dutch, by the year 1595. The new traders were however far more interested in the East Indies and Ceylon (the source of the spices) and India was only important to them as one link in their commercial chain spreading from the East Indies to Europe's Atlantic coast. The English traders of the East India Company too came looking for spices which were in short supply in Europe, not too bulky too transport, and hence extremely profitable. They could not operate freely in the East Indies because of Dutch predominance there so settled on India.[1]

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[1] Spear, P., A History of India, Vol. 2, 2nd edition, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970, p 66, writes that had it not been for this situation there might never have been a British Empire in India.

In India, the British had to compete first with the remnants of Portuguese influence, and then after defeating them through superior naval power, with the French. The final confrontation with the French did not come until 1760 and the fall of their bastion in Pondicherry, but the British, led by the adventurer Clive were on the ascent from the 1757 battle of Plassey when they became the de facto authority in Bengal. By this time the British had built up a long experience of dealing and negotiating with Indian rulers and merchants, which served them well in their later experiences on the subcontinent. Clive was followed by Warren Hastings, and in his thirteen year governorship, the East India Company was well and truly entrenched in India. For the next hundred years the Company consolidated and extended its rule, and in the aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny (or First Indian War of Independence) the British Crown became the sovereign authority in the subcontinent.

The pattern of the European relationship with India was established by the Portuguese, Dutch, French and of course the British. This pattern of exploitative trading relationships, the securing of which led to encroachment into the political sphere, and was always influenced, directly or indirectly by the rivalries and struggles of the European powers in their own theatre, continued through the Imperial years. India became one of the main factors underpinning British power and status. As Lord Curzon wrote in 1901; "As long as we rule India we are the greatest power in the

world. If we loose it we shall drop straight away to a third rate power."[2]

The British drew India into the wider stage of world politics. British administration unified India, and planted the seeds of Western education and institutions. In time, these brought about what is generally termed Indian nationalism, but what Spear describes as "Indian transformation . . . a mingling of old ideas with new which produced both a political movement against the foreigners and a transformation of traditional society."[3] This led ultimately in 1947 to the Partition of the subcontinent, and Independence for India and Pakistan.

In 1947 it seemed there were excellent prospects for a strong and lasting relationship between Britain and India. The decoupling of the two countries had been carried out in a relatively non-violent and amicable way with most of the bitterness and recrimination on the Indian side being directed at the Muslim League and their demand for Pakistan, rather than at the British. In fact, the mutual feelings of goodwill and concern on which the Raj ended was one of its unique features, and stands in direct contrast to the decolonisation process in Algeria, Indonesia, Congo and Angola, to name but a few. The acceptance of Dominion status as an interim measure, as well as the request to Mountbatten that he serve as the first Governor-General of Independent India are evidence of this. India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth even after declaring herself a

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[2]Cited in Moorhouse, G., India Britannica, Harvill Press, London, 1983, p 9.
[3]Spear, P., op. cit., p 158.

republic was in a keeping with this mood of affection that prevailed, at least between the ruling elites of both countries, and set the tone for other British Colonies who were soon to gain Independence. The fact that there was a close personal relationship between the Prime Minister of India Nehru, and the last Viceroy and his wife must also have played some part in this.

Two hundred years of British Imperial rule had created an Indian economy totally linked with that of Britain. Trade had formed the basis of the Empire, and it was still a major element in the relationship. At the time of decolonisation India had a favourable balance of trade with Britain, due to Britain's war needs and the decline in the ability of the Indian consumer to pay for British manufactured goods, but was paying 'Home charges',[4] which meant a huge net transfer of resources from India to Britain. Britain agreed to compensate India for her share of the war expenditure, so India was able to start life as a solvent nation, and this foreign exchange reserve permitted continued trade between the two countries. Britain was also the largest foreign investor in India at the time.

In the field of defense too, the prospects for continued cooperation looked good. Britain still had colonial possessions in Africa and the East Indies and was thus compelled to maintain a presence in the area. In the immediate aftermath of Independence,

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[4]These were charges levied by the British Government on India for items like the costs of the administration and army in India, as well as for the running and staffing of India house in London. In effect, India was paying her colonisers to keep her colonised - surely as fine an example of British administrative ingenuity as any.

India took her lead in matters of defense strategy and policy from the British, and they in turn articulated a commitment to retain a major interest in the Indian Ocean as well as to "frontiers on the Himalayas."[5] Indian troops were equipped with British armaments and her senior officers were all British trained. Further an Indian elite educated in Britain or British run institutions in India would now run the government and administration of India which was itself largely based on British models and structures. Many of this educated elite had strong bonds with Britain Also, for some time after Independence, there was a population of retired officers of the Raj and their families who chose to live in India, as well as British businessmen and tea-planters whose commercial links kept them tied to the country. Thus, at Independence, there seemed to be every reason and every hope that the long and close relationship between the two countries could continue, with some readjustment, to make it a relationship based on equality, fairness and common interests as befitted that between sovereign states.

This chapter is concerned with the relationship between the two countries since Independence, and with how that relationship has been affected by immigration issues generally, and particularly the formation and existence in Britain of a minority Sikh population from the Indian Punjab. To analyse this, a general review of the decline in Anglo-Indian relations will be carried out in the first half

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[5]Harold Wilson declared this in a ringing commitment to Indian territorial and political integrity in June 1965, cited in Lipton, M. & Firn, J., The Erosion of a Relationship - India and Britain since 1960, Royal Institute of International Affairs & Oxford University Press, 1975, p 178. Soon afterward the decision to withdraw British troops east of Suez was taken.

of the chapter. The role of the Commonwealth as well as that of trade and aid will be examined, bringing the focus to the commonalities and disparities between the two countries in world affairs, leading to an understanding of the underlying frictions and affinities in the relationship. Secondly, a detailed consideration of immigration issues, giving background and context to the discussion on British Sikh affairs, will be undertaken. Finally, an analysis of the impact of the political activities of British Sikhs on the Anglo-Indian relations is carried out.

## Change and Evolution

Though the prospects for close Anglo-Indian ties after Independence looked favourable, there were several fundamental changes taking place in world affairs that would ultimately have a considerable effect on relations between the two. Both countries were being pulled in different, sometimes opposite directions, by their geographic location, ideological concerns, and position in the world power hierarchy.

In the immediate aftermath of decolonization, i.e. the period between 1948 and 1956, the relationship between India and Britain continued to be strong and mutually beneficial, though more equal and voluntary. In terms of capital flows, trade, military relationships as well as more generally in the diplomatic sphere, India and Britain continued to be of considerable importance to each other. The post-colonial weakening of ties did not really get under way until the late 1950s, and accelerated through the 1960s. By the

early 1970s, the relationship had become one of minimal significance to both countries. This remarkable "[E]rosion of a relationship"[6] came about due to a variety of reasons, but not predominantly because of tension and hostility between the two. It appears that there was a time-lag between the official and celebrated decoupling of India and Britain in 1947, and the actuality of that event which followed about ten years later.

It would not be an exaggeration to describe the extent of the decline in Anglo-Indian relations as dramatic, particularly in the sphere of trade and economic ties, which had formed the cornerstone of the relationship for nearly 400 years. With the decreasing importance to each other as trading partners, came the delinking in other areas of the relationship. By 1970, British exports to India were one-third of their level in 1956. More importantly, mutual trade shares between the two countries were also declining. In 1956, Britain sold 6.1% of her exports to India, by 1969 only 1.6% of her exports went there. British imports from India in 1956 constituted 4.2% of her total imports, and in 1969 had fallen to 1.7%. The same sort of changes are reflected on the Indian side. Whereas in 1960 British supplied 19.3% of Indian imports, by 1971 it was only 7.8%, and Britain was overtaken as the biggest exporter to India by the US, then the USSR.[7] Other economic links were following a similar pattern of disengagement. In 1959, 6.1% of British private foreign

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[6]Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit. This is the only comprehensive examination of Anglo-Indian relations, and it documents the period in which the ties between Britain and India were irrevocably loosened - 1960 to 1974.
[7]Ibid, p 209.

investment went to India, but by 1971 the proportion had fallen to 1.6%.[8]

A number of factors have contributed to this decline. On the British side the main economic reason why her trade links with South Asia and India particularly have declined so dramatically, specially when contrasted with her links with her African colonies, is the impact that Indian exports have for British workers and industry. Most of the African or Caribbean countries sell Britain raw, unprocessed primary products like coffee beans, bananas, cocoa which she cannot produce, but she can and does process - thus constituting no threat to her home industry or workers, and helps them as well as British consumers. The imports from India, while also having the same effects in some cases like the imports of Indian tea, also present a threat. The case of cotton textiles is illustrative. Import of cheaply manufactured Indian cotton textiles presents a problem to British manufacturers of the same products, who cannot compete. This has led to the growth of restrictions and imposition of quotas on the import of textiles.[9] Further, British foreign investment in countries of Africa and Caribbean is by firms producing goods for the British market, and they have been able to sustain pressure on the British Government to keep restrictions on imports from these countries down to a minimum. British firms in India are influenced by the larger size of the Indian market, and restrictions on imports by the Indian government to direct most of

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[8]Ibid, p 210.
[9]Ibid, p 214.

their production towards the domestic Indian market, thus ensuring that there is less pressure on Whitehall regarding import restrictions from India.[10]

Indian economic policy has also played a role in contributing to the decline in trade between Britain and India. Indian policy of industrialization and self reliance has meant increasing restriction on British imports. Indian manufacturers demand protectionist measures to safeguard them from the cheaper products of well established industrial countries like Britain. Further some British imports were simply uncompetitive, and India bought that which she previously bought from Britain (first because of colonialism and later because of habit and lethargy and reluctance to change) from other industrial countries like the USA, and Germany.

It has been argued that a further, more general factor has also indirectly had an impact on Anglo-Indian trade relations. This is the fact that since decolonization both the British and the Indian economies have grown sluggishly, and certainly at a slower pace than comparable industrial countries (Britain) or other third world countries (India). This means, that relative to other countries who are growing faster and expanding their exports, imports and foreign investment, the share of Britain and India in each others economies is reduced simply because they cannot match the growth of other economies. This "purely arithmetical effect"[11] also applies to countrys' foreign exchange positions. Both countries have had

countries'

[10] Ibid, p 215.
[11] Ibid, p 224.

dwindling foreign exchange reserves or current deficits and this has meant that other countries have done better in trade with each of them than they have with each other. Thus to some extent, the magnitude and strength of Anglo-Indian trade relations is dependent on the health of their economies, in comparison to that of their major competitors.

Political realignment and changes have also contributed to the declining trade between Britain and India, as well as having wider implications for their relationship. Britain's formation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and then her joining the European Economic Community (EEC) have meant that her trade with these countries has increased in magnitude and importance. Supplies of industrial goods from countries like USA and Germany and later Japan became attractive to the Indian government because of their competitive price and modern technology. Also, India's ever closer links with the Soviet Union and easier availability of barter or rupee deals (as opposed to those involving the use of India's declining reserves of foreign exchange) made that country assume increasing importance as a trading partner for India.

The aid relationship between India and Britain, while reflecting in real terms the decline shown in other economic aspects has a slightly better record. British aid to India began in earnest after the transfer of sterling agreed at Independence was completed, and when India faced her first foreign exchange crisis in 1957-58. While Britain still gives more aid to India than she does to any other country, more of the aid given to India is tied and in the form of

loans rather than grants. Further, in real terms, the assistance Britain provides to India has fallen over the years, but the British contribution is better targeted and more efficiently utilized. Britain also provides assistance to India under the auspices of the Commonwealth in both monetary and technical terms.

After 1947, military and defence relations began to change, but real disengagement, lagged behind formal decolonization. Right through till 1960, India used military equipment manufactured almost exclusively in Britain, in all three of her services. Until 1954, the Chief of the Indian Air Force was British, as was the Chief of Naval Staff until 1958, and most of senior officers were British trained. Until 1962, in the absence of any perceived threat from any of the neighbours India was content to base her planning and defence strategies on those that British had formulated. Britain's continuing commitments in South East Asia and Africa ensured that she remained an important actor in security politics of the area. It was the withdrawal from these areas, and the subsequent reassessment of British defence policy in the mid sixties which focussed on Europe and America that led to her diminished role in the Indian Ocean. There was some attempt to revive that role by setting up bases on the Indian Ocean Island of Diego Garcia, but this never materialized. The divergence of defence thinking in India and Britain is a natural outgrowth of the different regional concerns as well as the directions in which political relations with other countries were moving.

The Chinese invasion of 1962, came as a shock to India, and brought a complete revaluation of her defence policy. Before this

the Indian government took the view that to accept military aid from any country would compromise its non-aligned or neutralist position and thus received hardly any assistance of this nature from Britain or any other country. However after 1962, it changed its views and decided that military aid in the absence of any formal military ties did not compromise neutrality. India then became a recipient of substantial military aid from Britain, particularly in the period 1962-1964. At this time, while help had been rapidly forthcoming from Britain, the United States and France in response to Indian requests, attentions began to turn to self-sufficiency and independence in defence matters. This move was even more pronounced after the 1965 hostilities with Pakistan, during which both Britain and the USA cut off arms supplies to the protagonists. It became clear to India that in matters of defense, it was a great weakness to rely heavily on supplies from other countries, however friendly. The initial impact of the Sino-Indian hostilities was an increase in arms supplies from Britain to India. However it eventually led to an increase in the quantity of arms made at home, as well as purchased from other countries, most particularly the Soviet Union, who did not suspend supplies during any of the wars - 1962 or 1965 or 1971. Russian arms helped cement an increasingly strong political relationship that was developing between the Soviet Union and India.

During the latter half of the 1960s, a large part of the defense relationship shifted to the manufacture of equipment in India, under license from their British manufacturers. Thus India has built Avros at the National Aeronautic Laboratory in Bangalore, Leander class

frigates in Mazagaon Docks in Bombay and Vickers tanks in their Indian reincarnation - the Vijayanta. Equipment sales continue to form a part of the relationship, even though in recent years India's main weapons supplier was the Soviet Union. Recent purchases of Westland and Sea-King helicopters, the aircraft carrier Hermes and Combat Tractors are proof of that. However India is now much more discerning about weapons procurement, and buys them from a variety of other countries like West Germany (submarines) and Sweden (artillery) to give but two examples.

India continues to have good defence relations with Britain on the level of staff training, through contacts between defence establishments in both countries, and through military attaches in each others capitals. The number of Indian officers who receive basic training in Britain had declined before Independence with the establishment of the National Defence Academy at Khadakvasala. Now most joint training concentrates on senior officers at specialist colleges in Britain like Royal College of Defense Studies and Joint Services Staff Colleges. British officers attend courses at the equivalent college in Wellington, India. Indians share technical expertise in areas where they possess it like high altitude warfare, and Britain responds in kind.

Since 1947, India and Britain have been on divergent political paths. Britain emerged from the second world war triumphant but substantially and permanently weakened. She was economically devastated, heavily indebted and weary of war. Her status in the world scale of power had been considerably reduced, Pax Britannica

having been replaced by a world with two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. She was still one of the 'big three' and had some influence in shaping the institutions of the post-war world as well as being at the head of a Commonwealth that included a quarter of the world's population. Her spheres of interest remained widespread, but in the aftermath of the war primary consideration was given to keeping the United States involved in the defence of Western Europe against the Soviet threat. This meant that her relationship with the Americans took on a new dimension, and that her concern with Europe did not end with the war as some had expected it would. By 1949 Britain was part of NATO, a recipient of aid under the Marshall Plan, and clearly on one side in a divided world. Henceforth, this was to be the first plank of Britain's post-war foreign policy. She has been perhaps the most faithful of America's European allies. Her 'special relationship' with the United States has formed the bulwark of her defence and foreign policy.

India on the other hand, influenced by Nehru, has sought to find an independent, yet active role in world affairs. From as early as 1946, Indian leaders were articulating their hopes for an independent India in world affairs: "India will follow an independent policy, keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against another."[12] Emerging from colonialism, India jealously guarded her independence of action in every sphere, and wanted now to be a full participant in world politics. Thus non-alignment was a logical choice. This stance was misunderstood in the West, most

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[12]Singh, P., India and the Future of Asia, Faber & Faber, London, 1966, p 109.

particularly by Americans, who saw it as thinly disguised support for Communism.

India did not share British concerns about the future of Europe, and did not perceive the Americans as the hope of the free world. Indo-American relations had got off to a shaky start with India's early recognition of China, and her refusal to back the Uniting for Peace Resolution. They took another long-lasting turn for the worse inspite of the 'Point Four' five year aid deal signed between the two countries in 1952, when America involved Pakistan in first the SEATO then the CENTO alliances and then proceeded to arm and supply her.[13] As Britain was also a member of both, this did not have a positive impact on Anglo-Indian relations either. Neither did India see the Soviet Union as a major threat, partly because, there was some sympathy in India with her anti-imperialist socialist ideology. Given India's experience, it would have been amazing had such sympathy not existed, and India's relationship with the Soviet Union was also a major factor in the declining links between Britain and her former colony.

From 1953, after Stalin's death Indo-Soviet relations improved progressively, first with a five year trade pact, and then in 1955 with a long-term agreement for Soviet technical and economic aid,[14] until they were cemented, after the Sino-Soviet split by the signing of Indo-Soviet Treaty in August 1971. India's move towards the Soviet

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[13]See Keylor, W., The Twentieth Century World - An International History, Oxford University Press, New York, 1984, pp 309-310.
[14]Ibid, p 310.

Union, despite her public stance of non-alignment have to be understood in the light of her geostrategic position, her relations with her neighbours and the involvement of the West, led by America, in the security of the region. India and Pakistan began life as independent nations in an atmosphere of violence and tension, and the first military action both sides engaged in was against each other over control of Kashmir. This issue again led to war between them in 1965. In 1971, India intervened in the conflict between East and West Pakistan, and was instrumental in the creation of Bangladesh. Pakistan has been allied with America, through SEATO and CENTO and has also developed good relations with India's other, perhaps more dangerous neighbour China, even functioning as a conduit between America and China in their famous rapprochement, led by Kissinger. China too has invaded India in 1962, and continues to occupy what India considers to be her territory in the Aksai Chin plateau. After the Western alignment with Pakistan, and the arms embargo during the war of 1965, as well as American support for Pakistan in 1971, Indian decision makers felt they had no options but to secure themselves with a closer link with the Soviet Union. These security considerations, as well as the fact that trade in arms and other goods with Soviet Union and Eastern European allies could be done in barter form or rupee deals, as well as the Sino-US rapprochement and the frostiness of the cold war led the two countries to ever closer ties, which only changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The strength of the Indo-Soviet bond did not stop India from carrying on what she saw as an independent foreign policy. She took her role as founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement rather seriously, and tried to don the mantle of 'third world leader' in various forums like the Group of 77 and the United Nations Conference on Trade And Development. She was active amongst those members of the third world demanding a New International Economic Order, and in trying to safeguard a role for the Non-Aligned Movement on the world stage. Her primary foreign policy options, outside the immediate threats to her security in the region, became identified with her status as a large but poor third world country, active in world affairs through the NAM and the United Nations. The moral tone of Indian, particularly Nehruvian pronouncements and stances became a great source of irritation to the Western Alliance[15] which again put India and Britain on different sides of the fence.

As decolonization progressed in Africa, the Far East and Caribbean, Britain's colonial role all but disappeared, and with that has come reassessment and reformulation her foreign policy taking account of the change in her role from an Imperial world power to middle ranking European power. Both, her defence and foreign policy evolved from "a broad conception of a world role to a narrower conception of the primacy of regional interests."[16] Her

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[15]Singh, P., op. cit., p 109, cites a statement by Styles Bridges, Chairman of the Republican Policy Committee which is remarkable for its virulence.

[16]Frankel, J., British Foreign Policy 1945-1973, Royal Institute for International Affairs & Oxford University Press, 1975, p 287.

defence commitments and expenditure were too great to be sustained in light of her altered position, and gradually these were reduced. The final turning point in the readjustment of British foreign policy came with the decision in 1967 to withdraw from East of Suez. At the same time, her role in the Western alliance became more important and she began to get involved with the European members of the alliance, with whom she did a lot of her trade. In 1973, after some effort and soul-searching, Britain joined the EEC. This was another watershed in British policy, confirming as it did her new role in world, as well as her vision for her own future.

Thus in the period between Indian independence in 1947, and British membership of the EEC, both countries went through a reexamination and reorientation of their foreign defence and economic policies, the result of which was to confirm the declining importance to both, of their relationship. This decline came about, not so much due to hostility and tension, but redefinition and inattention. Inspite of the common historical experience and several other commonalities between the two countries the impact of diverging geographical and other interests has been too strong. Britain and India share parliamentary democracy as a system of government which should encourage a common interest in preservation of that form of government in the face of totalitarianism. They also have cultural similarities through the use of the English language in India and the existence of a British educated ruling elite in India. But increasingly these similarities have either themselves caused problems or have become irrelevant in

the face of the different alignments of the two countries. Both are middle ranking powers, but Britain is on the descent, while India is emergent.[17] Such a relationship is subject to special strains that arise from the emergent powers expanding needs and horizons at the same time as the converse is taking place for the declining power. The difference between Britain and India in alignments, spheres of interest, and the fact that they are on opposite sides of the rich-poor divide have been strong enough to overshadow the commonalities.

There remains one forum which Britain and India share specifically because of their past association, and that is the Commonwealth. This institution has survived all the changes brought about by decolonization. But its role in world affairs and its importance to its members has declined considerably in the post colonial period, and it has been beset by several problems. The Commonwealth remained a major consideration in the foreign policies of both India and Britain, for a considerable period after decolonisation, and was seen by some as a means by which Britain could avoid either American hegemony or being reduced to being simply another European power.[18] In the early years both sides seemed equally strongly committed to the preservation and strengthening of this institution. However, by the mid-sixties this too had changed.

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[17]Lipton, M. & John Firn, J., op. cit., p 6.

[18]Frankel, J., op .cit., p 222, also, see Northedge, F.S., Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy 1945-1973, Allen & Unwin, London, 1974, pp 205-238.

For Britain, there was a gradual diminution to the uses to which the Commonwealth could be put. It began to be seen as less of an asset and more of a liability.[19] The ease with which other members of the Commonwealth criticised rather than supported British policies (over Suez, for instance), as well as the danger of Britain becoming involved in disputes between members and non-members played a role in changing British perception. Further, the Commonwealth was no longer a source of economic gain to Britain, and in providing a reservoir of much needed labour in the 1950s, also created another source of friction between Britain and other members when Britain began to restrict such movement. The tendency of Commonwealth governments to expect Britain to consult with them before making any major decision (such as Suez or regarding immigration control) caused a real irritant to Britain, and was perhaps instrumental in bringing about Britain's attitude of disengagement. An active role in the Commonwealth was perhaps even more difficult for Britain, because she found it hard not to take a stand on disputes between members and had to be reasonably even-handed in her dealings with them. This meant playing down strong links with South Africa, to her economic detriment and not developing the strong common interests between herself New Zealand, Australia and Canada on security alliances for instance. Events within individual Commonwealth countries also contributed to its diminishing importance as member governments fell to military coups and racial tensions flared in South Africa and then

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[19]Frankel, J., op .cit., pp 224-5.

East Africa and Rhodesia. This latter had special significance with the problem of multiracial composition of the organization and sensitivity of the British to accusations of racial bias.

For India's part, her relationship with the Commonwealth reflected her relations with Britain. If there was tension with Britain, as in 1957 over the British position in the security council on the Kashmir dispute, or in 1961 over Indian annexation of Goa, then that was accompanied by calls for termination of Indian membership.[20] India also wished to use the Commonwealth to insure that Pakistan did not gain an edge in influencing British policy. Further, the Indian government, particularly under Nehru, felt that it would be a safeguard against ill-treatment of Indians who lived in other Commonwealth states.[21] Most non-Congress political parties in India, particularly the Communist Party of India, opposed India's membership,[22] but that has not prevented India from being an active participant. She also sees the usefulness of a multiracial group of nations from both North and South being able to discuss in a friendly atmosphere, but she too regards the Commonwealth as less important in world affairs. Economic benefits are there but do not bring enough rewards to India for this aspect to strengthen her commitment.

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[20]Banerji, A.K., 'India and the Commonwealth - The Nehru-Menon Legacy that Still Survives', Round Table, No. 284, October 1981, p 346.
[21]Ibid, p 347.
[22]Bannerji, A.K., India and Britain 1947-1968: The evolution of Post-Colonial Relations, Minerva, Calcutta, 1977, pp 33-34.

It can be argued that the main reason the Commonwealth has survived is because of its reduced role and importance. This means that it has a diminished capacity to constitute an impediment to the aims and ambitions of any state and therefore all the members have no real reason to see its demise. It is also still occasionally useful - as in creating awareness and initiating sanctions against South Africa. In recent years this single issue has been the source of much tension between Britain and other members including India. Through the 1980s the issue of sanctions against South Africa has captured the Commonwealth agenda, overshadowing useful aspects of the organizations work in the field of technical cooperation, measures to combat drug trafficking etc.[23] Further, none of the summits in the 80s or the one in Harare in 1991 have managed to give the Commonwealth some clear agenda or high-profile policy, thus it trundles along, too impotent to be a cause for concern or action.

The relationship between Britain and India today is a very different one from the close and promising one of the late 1940s. For too long they have been on different sides of the North-South and East-West divides. Each of their concerns are regional, with India taking the lead in security matters in her region[24] and paradoxically, the distance between them matters more in this age of modern technology than it did in the past. Suspicions on the Indian

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[23]See Mayall, J., 'The Commonwealth at Vancouver', The World Today, Vol. 43, No. 12, December 1987, pp 203-204, and 'The Commonwealth at Kuala Lumpur', The World Today, Vol. 45, No. 12, December 1989, pp 201-202.

[24]See Tripathi, D., 'Indian Foreign Policy: The Rajiv Factor', The World Today, Vol. 44, No. 7, July 1988, and also Hewitt, V.M., The International Politics of South Asia, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992.

side about Britain's bias towards Pakistan based on her wider alliances has soured the relation somewhat. Britain's irritation, along with that of other powers to India's purported neutrality and moralist attitude in the face of links with Soviet Union, (her refusal to condemn the invasion of Afghanistan and her friendly relations with the Najibullah regime are a case in point) have not helped. There remains an economic relationship of limited importance and some recognition in Britain of India's major role in her region. For the vast majority of British people, the link with India is nostalgic, while for Indian elite the US has long replaced Britain as 'the fount of education, technology, culture and modernity.'

**Immigration and Anglo-Indian Relations**

One aspect of the four hundred year long relationship shared by Britain and India has been the movement of their populations to each others' lands. There have been Britons residing in India since the start of the 16th century and Indians living in Britain since the late 18th century. The first Britons in India were the traders and officials of the East India Company, while the first Indians in Britain were probably servants of these Company men, who were brought back to England to continue to serve their masters.

British migration to India steadily increased with the spread of the British Raj, but considering the extent of the influence they exercised, their numbers were always relatively small. For instance in 1850, there were still only 39,631 Britons in India. That number grew after the control of India passed to the Crown, and in 1911

there were 122,860 Britons resident in India.[25] With the increasing Indianisation of the Indian Civil Service and other Indian administrative, military and judicial institutions, the numbers of Britons in India declined after the First World War, and of course, fell strongly after Independence. It is estimated that there were about 28000 Britons in India in 1951 and the numbers have since fallen from 6500 in 1969[26] to an estimated half of that figure. Most Britons returned home at Independence, and of those who stayed, only the few owning family businesses or married to Indian citizens or both, remain.

British companies operating in India, continue to send out British managers and technical experts, but their numbers are small due to the increased competence of Indians at all levels of their organisations, and because the Indian government imposes a high tax burden on 'non-essential' foreigners working in India, making it an unattractive posting. There also continues to be a small exchange of students and scholars, which was further decreased by the Conservative Government's decision to charge overseas students fees reflecting the 'true' costs to universities. The number of British tourists visiting India has increased considerably. The British government also sends diplomats and consular officials as well as technicians and some army personnel to India but none of the above categories of persons are permanent settlers. Migration of that character from Britain to India has all but ceased entirely, the only

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[25]Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit., p 154.
[26]Ibid, p 155.

exceptions being those who marry Indian citizens and settle there. It is thus insignificant in the impact it makes on Anglo-Indian relations.

Far more significant, in this context is the out migration of Indians. The political implications of such migrations were felt by the British government even before Independence. Indian immigration to Canada, early this century is a case in point. The migration of large numbers of Japanese and Chinese had created an anti-Asian sentiment among the natives and was being restricted. But Indian migration presented a special problem as these were British subjects. "Canada's immigration policy vis-a-vis Indians was thus formulated after prolonged negotiations between Vancouver, Ottawa, London and Calcutta."[27] The Indian government was under pressure to restrict the migration at source. It in turn restricted advertising and other activities by shipping companies who had carried migrants to Canada, and the Canadian government passed the Continuous Passage law.[28] The British government at the same time recruited agents and informers to keep track of the members of the Ghadr Movement,[29] who were raising funds and stirring up trouble by calling for an Independent India.

At the same time, other Dominions in the Pacific were or had already enacted legislation to restrict Asian entry. These included measures like education and literacy tests, imposed by Australia

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[27]Singh, K., A History of the Sikhs, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Indian edition, 1977, p 170.

[28]See Chapter Four of this study for the incident of the Komagata Maru.

[29]Popplewell, R., 'The Surveillance of Indian 'Seditionists' in North America', in Andrew, C. & Oakes, J. [eds.], Intelligence and International Relations 1900-1945, Exeter Studies in History, No. 15, 1987, pp 49-76.

which meant that the immigrant had to pass a dictation test, given in any language by the immigration officer.[30] The concern of the London government seems chiefly to have been a desire to try and disguise the racist content of these various restrictions being placed by older Commonwealth members on the newer ones. The Indians, at whom these restrictions were aimed recognised them for what they were, and this explicit racism was partly responsible for turning loyal Sikhs into revolutionaries.

As has already been documented elsewhere in this study, the 1950s brought a large increase in the number of Indians moving to Britain. Britain had reaffirmed the right of all Commonwealth citizens to enter the UK in 1948 with the Nationality Act, in a period of labour scarcity. The passing of the 1952 Nationality Act in the United States severely curtailed the right of entry for people with ethnic origins in the Asia-Pacific triangle with the exception of Australia and New Zealand. Restrictions were also applied to Jamaican migration to the States. The effect of this was for more and more potential migrants from Commonwealth countries to look to the opportunities available in the UK. The subsequent rush of migrants soon produced a backlash in Britain, and by 1958 the possibility of legislative control of immigration was raised in Parliament.

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[30]Bevan, V., The Development of British Immigration Law, Croom Helm, London, 1986, p 66. This was done under the terms of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Australia).

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrations Act marked a watershed in the history of Commonwealth migration to the UK.

> "It broke the barrier of sentiment and attachment to the Commonwealth. Once that barrier was cleared, there was no looking back . . . the future lay in a bipartisan policy of stricter control for the Commonwealth."[31]

This act introduced a system of vouchers for Commonwealth citizens wishing to work in Britain, but it did not prevent the entry of dependents of those who had already gained access to this country. The increasing hostility to coloured immigrants was already beginning to have a negative impact in India, which was intensified by the passing of the 1962 Act. The Government of India believed that the act was based on colour discrimination, partly because of the Labour Party's opposition to it.[32] The Government of India's faith in the Labour Party to stand against what it saw as racially discriminatory legislation against immigration suffered when in 1965 the White Paper on immigration was published, for it applied further controls on immigration and was concerned to tighten up the already existing laws to prevent their evasion. The White Paper marked the beginning of a long period when both the main British parties became united in their favour of strict immigration control. It moved the control of Commonwealth immigration much closer to

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[31] Ibid, p 77.

[32] This is the interpretation put on the Government of India's position by Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit., pp 167-8. I tend to agree. The British Government denied any racial bias in the Act, arguing instead that links of culture, language and familial connections existed between Britain and the old Commonwealth states, putting them into a different category from the states of the new Commonwealth. This arguement was later formalized into law with the 'grandfather clause' discussed further in this chapter.

that applied to aliens and was accomplished by non-statutory instructions to immigration officials,[33] both trends remain part of immigration policy till today. At the same time as the abolition of C category vouchers and strict limits on A and B categories, the Labour government policies included a sharp decline in the real value of aid given. These actions were deeply resented in India.

Then, in 1968 a further Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed, in response to the arrivals of large numbers of Asians(many of whom were Sikhs) from Kenya, who were British Passport holders. The Act restricted the right of entry to only those British Passport holders who could prove a close ancestral link with the UK, which of course the Asians could not. This Act outraged the Indians who saw it as not only discriminatory, but also as a betrayal by Britain to those who held a right to her protection. What made matters worse for India, was that this Act had been brought in by those she had perceived as her allies, the Labour Party. Britain and India then entered into negotiations about the fate of East African Asians, allowing them to go to India, with an entry certificate to the UK, in their passports, should they want to move on from India to Britain, as most did.

The 1968 Act also limited entry of children of British settled immigrants to those who were under the age of sixteen. This, along with measures to restrict the entry of elderly dependents, brought a further decrease in numbers entering Britain, but was particularly

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[33]Bevan, V., op. cit., p 79.

hard-felt in India as it stopped the process of family unification. The Labour Party was now "pushing for control as eagerly as any right wing government",[34] and this caused further hostility in India; in spite of its attempts to look as if it was playing fair by passing the Second Race Relations Act at the same time. A further crisis hit British immigration in 1972, with Idi Amin's expulsion of the Ugandan Asians (again they included a good proportion of Sikhs), who were mostly British Passport holders. The Conservative government in the face of international pressure and opinion that saw the UK government as legally responsible for them, allowed them entry to Britain. However, this was done with reluctance, and no attempts were made to recover compensation from the Ugandan government for the property left behind by the Asians.

Further, the act of 1968 had also brought in the notion of entry certificates. These were designed to prevent ill-treatment and harassment of Indian visitors to Heathrow, but while inconveniencing all Indian travellers, including senior government officials by obliging them to obtain these from an overworked and understaffed British High Commission in India, they did little to ease the conditions Indians faced at entry points to the UK.

Immigration became a factor in Anglo-Indian relations in this period not only as a result of British Acts restricting it and thus causing hostility in India. India felt that Britain should have consulted her before restricting immigration. This issue, and dealing

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[34] Ibid, p 82.

with large numbers of individual cases became the single-most time consuming one for British High Commissions and Consulates in India, thus "diverting effort and attention from more positive and long term issues such as trade and aid."[35] Further, there were several instances of Indians arriving at Heathrow being subjected to rigorous examination and questioning, and being detained or deported. This was seen as harassment by the Indian government, particularly when even temporary visitors like journalists, scholars and officials were treated like illegal immigrants and refused entry. This mistreatment of Indians soon became common knowledge in India, putting further pressure on the Indian Government to pursue the matter strongly with its British counterpart and also causing concern for the treatment that those who had succeeded in immigrating to Britain must be receiving at the hands of their hosts. This single issue was a constant source of friction and tension between the two governments up until the early 1970s. Successive attempts by the various British governments to provide reassurance to non-white immigrants already in Britain by their twin-track approach of immigration restriction and good race relations did little to assuage these fears.

The 1971 Immigration Act further tightened up and fine-tuned British Immigration law by increasing powers of expulsion and "completing the merging of Rules on Commonwealth citizens and Aliens."[36] However it was most notable for the controversy it raised

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[35]Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit., p 171.
[36]Bevan, V., op. cit., p 83.

about patriality. After debate and one defeat in the Commons, the bill passed included a definition of patriality based on the 'grandfather clause'. Under this provision, a "Commonwealth citizen who can show that one of his/her grandparents had been born in the UK is entitled to entry clearance and indefinite leave to stay."[37] This obviously works to the advantage of white Commonwealth nations and discriminates against others. The racist content of British immigration law had now become explicit. The Indian government had no better expectation from the Conservative Party, and no choice but to accept this.

Since the passing of the Immigration Act 1971, the framework for immigration control in UK has largely been the same. All changes have been carried out in the sphere of administrative procedures rather than legislation. In the period 1973 to the present there has been a considerable effort to decrease illegal immigration and further tighter entry. The 1978 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration introduced annual quotas for entrants from the Indian subcontinent, along with tougher rules for the entry of husbands and wives or fiances. This led to further problems for Indian women entering Britain as prospective spouses, some of whom were put through virginity tests[38] before being admitted into the UK. This caused a great deal of anguish in India, as well as made the job of finding marriage partners for young Indian adults living in UK far more difficult. That the complaints and hostility of both

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[37]Ibid, p 83.
[38]Ibid, p 88.

Indians and their government regarding the defenses being built against entry to Britain, and the way in which these were implemented by suspicious and uncompromisingly hostile immigration officials, were not simply a case of national paranoia or sour grapes was proved by the publication of the Commission for Racial Equality's long awaited 'Investigation into Immigration Control Procedures' in 1985. This report substantiated what Indians had been saying for years, and led to a review of instructions issued to immigration officials. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) report also made the basis of immigration law plain, that the "Home office works on the pressure to emigrate"[39] theory, viz. that evasion of immigration control is most prevalent amongst entrants from "countries where there is the greatest political, economic and social pressure to leave"[40] - the poorer countries of the world, which further strengthened the Indians' case that they were being chosen for the harshest possible treatment

British Immigration Law has been "directly concerned in reflecting the UK's changed views to the Commonwealth."[41] As the importance of keeping that link strong and healthy declined, so did British inhibitions on curbing immigration from Commonwealth countries in response to fears of large influxes. In turn, British restrictive measures have themselves had an impact within the Commonwealth. She has been criticized by the new Commonwealth for her racist immigration policies, and in the early years for

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[39] Ibid, p 89.
[40] Ibid, p 89.
[41] Ibid, p 23.

imposing these policies without consultation with them. Thus the issues of immigration and racism have been both a cause of the decline of the strength of the Commonwealth, and have also reflected that fact.

In 1986, again through administrative procedure rather than legislation, the British Government imposed a visa requirement on all travellers to Britain from India, and some other new Commonwealth countries. This was meant to ease the load on immigration officials in Britain and cut down allegations of harassment, and would also take the refusal of entry overseas, away from the glare of publicity in UK. The immediate result of that announcement was a rush beat the ban. Immigration officials at Heathrow were swamped, and people awaiting entry clearance were lodged in jails, amongst other places, until their papers could be processed. This does not qualify as the most sensitive handling of an always touchy issue, and clearly exposes the attitude that lies behind immigration control in the UK, and which has been the main cause of friction with the Government of India.

There were hopes in 1973, when the 1971 Immigration Act came into force, that there would now be an end to all the tension caused by this issue.[42] It was felt that the two countries could now put it behind them and concentrate on more worthwhile aspects of their relationship. However, immigration matters have continued to be a contentious issue, and in the eighties have taken on a new form.

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[42]Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit., p 171.

The activities of the Sikh diaspora had come to the attention of the Indian Government as early as "the late 1970s, when Mrs. Gandhi made public statements about problems created by the Sikhs in Vancouver."[43] Approaches to Britain to curb the activities of Khalistan leaders had been made after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft to Pakistan in 1981, but it was in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, when expatriate Khalistani leaders became strong, that this issue began to have a real impact on India's relations with other countries. We now turn to an examination of what effects their activities have had on the relationship between Delhi and London.

After the army action in the Golden Temple in June 1984, UK Sikhs were outraged. Some of them attacked India House, managing to get inside the building and causing damage.[44] They subsequently set up a 'Khalistan Government' in exile,[45] and 25,000 of them marched to India House to protest.[46] The Indian Prime Minister wrote to her British counterpart to express India's concern about the activities of UK Sikhs.[47] A few days later, the BBC broadcast an interview with one of the self-styled Khalistani leaders, Dr.Jagjit Singh Chauhan, and this shocked and angered Indians who claimed that he tried to incite Sikhs to murder Mrs. Gandhi. There were

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[43]Helweg, A., 'Sikh Politics in India: The Emigrant Factor', in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], The Sikh Diaspora, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1989, p 324.
[44]The Times, 6th June 1984.
[45]The Sunday Times, 10th June 1984.
[46]The Times, 11th June 1984.
[47]The Times, 18th June 1984.

demonstrations in Delhi outside the British High Commission and the residence of the BBC Delhi correspondent Mark Tully.[48] The Indian Government announced that all British and Canadian passport holders would now need a visa to travel to India.[49] Later in the year when Mrs. Gandhi was in fact killed by two of her Sikh bodyguards, some Sikhs in Britain, like some in Canada and the US celebrated, and these celebrations were given media coverage.[50] This brought further protest from the Indian Government,[51] and took relations between India and Britain into their coldest phase. Pending defence sales from Britain to India were halted,[52] and visits by the British Defence Secretary and Industry Minister were postponed.[53] India had been negotiating the purchase of Westland Helicopters and Sea Harrier Jets from Britain, and it expressed its disapproval of the way the British Government was handling it's Sikhs by halting the process.[54]

The issue of Sikh separatism is a very crucial and emotional one in India. The importance of Punjab in industrial and agricultural terms, to the entire country cannot be overstated.[55] In Britain, this issue is not and has never really been part of the political debate, and does not generate a great awareness amongst the general public or even the intelligentsia. Britons at home have failed

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[48]The Times, 25th June 1984.
[49]The Times, 15th June 1984.
[50]The Times, 1st November 1984.
[51] The Times, 3rd November 1984.
[52]The Times, 24th December 1984.
[53]The Sunday Times, 23rd December 1984, and The Times, 30th December 1984.
[54]The Times, 9th February 1985.
[55]See Chapter Six of this study for a detailed analysis of the Punjab Crisis.

to realize the significance of the activities of British Sikhs to the Indian Government. There is thus a "gulf of perception between Delhi and London over the treatment of Sikh extremists in Britain."[56] The Indian Government believes that the British Sikhs are actively supporting violence and terror in the Punjab and that "the British Government fails to understand the importance of the Punjab crisis and lacks the political will to control Sikh extremists."[57] In India, Britain is criticized for failing to act against 'extremists', for giving sanctuary to the self-appointed leaders of Khalistan, and for providing the base where Sikh Governments in exile can be set up and function without hindrance. Indian suspicions of British intent in this matter go back to Partition and accusations that the British always wanted to see India partioned and weakened, and has always, with its main ally the United States been partial to Pakistan in any dispute. Thus, following cold war logic, it was believed that in light of India's close relationship with the Soviet Union, the dismembering of India to create a new Sikh anti-Soviet state, sharing boundaries with both Pakistan and the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, would considerably tilt the balance of power in South Asia towards the Western Alliance.[58]

The problem, at the beginning seemed to lie in the lack of hard facts about what British Sikhs were doing, and it affected both governments. The British Government's internal security wing or

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[56]Barber, J., 'Britain and India: A Continuing Relationship', The World Today, Vol. 42, Nos. 8 & 9, August/September 1986, p 133.
[57]Ibid, p 133.
[58]Goulbourne, H., Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp 149-150.

any other security branch had never needed to concern themselves with the activities of Sikh community before. They were seen as law-abiding citizens, and there was no intelligence network of the kind that they must operate within the Irish community in UK. The Indian Government too, while having long been aware of the presence of some individuals like Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan calling for Khalistan from Britain, had not felt particularly threatened by their activities as long as they could not travel freely to India. Hence it too did not have a sophisticated intelligence network among Sikhs here. Thus, in the aftermath of 1984, when these individuals began to garner support from amongst British Sikhs, the Indian Government demanded help from the British, who could not provide it, being in the same state of ignorance as the Indians.[59]

In April 1985 Mrs. Thatcher visited India, and tried to reassure Rajiv Gandhi that the British were taking steps to counter terrorism,[60] but with limited success, in spite of the personal rapport that was established between them. Attempts were made to reopen discussions on helicopter sales, and Britain hinted that the aid it had agreed to give the Indians to buy those helicopters for use on off-shore oil-rigs and transport could not be transferred for any other purpose.[61] Mr. Gandhi then told the Upper House of the Indian Parliament that the deal was off as the machines were unsuitable, and that India had requested Britain to switch the aid for buying the Sea

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[59]This is the impression I have gleaned from sources within the Sikh community, as well as from informal conversations with a member of the Research Department (South Asia Section) of the Foreign Office, and of the BBC Eastern Service.
[60]The Times, 15th April 1985.
[61]The Times, 27th April 1985.

Harriers for the Navy.[62] The British Government refused to oblige, on the grounds that it could not give aid for military purposes, and requested a delay in the planned annual round of economic talks to be held later that month. This was seen as a retaliation against India's stance on the helicopter deal.[63] However, it seems that the British action changed Indian thinking, and not wanting to loose the aid and the helicopters they performed a volte-face and by September were again negotiating the final points of the contract.[64] The arrest of Sikhs conspiring to kill Mr. Gandhi during a brief visit to the UK in October may have helped to convince the Indians that British were taking the Sikh problem seriously, but it is equally likely that the blowing up of Air India flight 182 from Montreal to Bombay, over the Irish Sea by Canadian Sikhs on June 23rd, 1985 created some sympathy in UK official circles towards the Indian position. The signing of a deal for the purchase of Sea Harriers in November,[65] followed by the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries for India to purchase the aircraft carrier 'Hermes' in March 1986,[66] signalled that the relationship had climbed out of the nadir of late 1984 and most of 1985, though the issue of the British Sikhs continued to be critically important.

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[62]The Times, 3rd May 1985.
[63]The Times, 29th May 1985.
[64]The Times, 8th September 1985.
[65]The Times, 18th November 1985.
[66]The Times, 17th March 1986.

The then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffery Howe, visited India in April 1986 and found that though he had other items on his agenda, Indian journalists and government officials kept returning to the activities of British Sikhs. He held discussions with his Indian counterparts about how extradition of Sikhs wanted in India could be expedited, and agreed to appoint a liaison Minister of State for Sikh Issues (Mr. Timothy Renton) to work with the Indian Government, but ruled out the possibility of a new bilateral extradition treaty between the two countries[67] on the grounds that the existing Fugitives and Offenders Act covered the problem, to the dismay of Indian officials, who were pursuing such a treaty with Canada and saw it as an effective way of controlling Sikhs outside their jurisdiction. He "confessed to being astounded at the way it [UK Sikhs issue] had dominated the proceedings."[68]

Britain believed that it was in fact doing all it could to counter British Sikh 'terrorism', within the bounds of its own constitution and laws. As Sir Geoffery was at pains to point out during his visit to India, Britain is committed to the fight against international terrorism. But he also stated that it would be against democratic principles to prosecute people for expressing an opinion, even if that was a demand for Khalistan,[69] which did not find much favour with the Indians who seek to drive home the point by making comparisons between the IRA and the Sikh terrorists. The British Government, it must be said has made some attempts to deal with its domestic Sikh

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[67]The Times, 2nd April 1986.
[68]The Guardian, April 2nd 1986.
[69]Barber, J., op. cit., p 133.

problem. There were several instances of violence amongst Sikhs in UK at this time with Mr. Tarsem Singh Toor of the Southall Workers Association being shot dead in January 1986, and Mr.Sangtar Singh Sindhu being wounded. In November 1985 another Sikh was wounded in Luton, and these have been treated seriously. Further three Sikhs who hatched a plot to kill Mr. Gandhi during his 1985 visit, and were arrested, tried and two of them convicted. In cases of such clear violations of domestic law the British Government has not been slow to take action. The UK Government has also made a conscious effort to improve its intelligence about the activities of its minority community organizations, including the Sikhs.[70] The questioning by Special Branch of members of the families of known militant Sikhs is witness to this.[71]

What continues to concerns Delhi is the fact that London has not put a halt to the high-profile activities of the Khalistani leadership in UK. They are still free to meet, to publish, to give interviews to any journalists that might want them, to hold public meetings and protest marches and generally to indulge in what Delhi sees as anti-Indian activities. London of course claims that in a democratic society it cannot check these sorts of activities, and this does not ring true to Indian officials who know that the same Government is responsible for the gagging of Sinn Fein.

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[70]Goulbourne, H., op. cit., p 153.

[71]I am aware that such questioning has taken place in at least two instances. One of the persons questioned is a personal friend who I had known well before I embarked on this research.

The Delhi Government has also been concerned that the UK has given sanctuary to terrorists fleeing India where they have committed acts of violence. But London has to consider the accusations of human rights abuse against the security forces in India, that have been documented not just by British Sikhs themselves, but also by respected international agencies like Amnesty International,[72] and has given asylum to Sikh 'refugees'. There has been constant pressure from Delhi to prevent this happening or berating London for having allowed it to happen.[73] On his 1986 trip Sir Geoffery was closely questioned in this context about Mr. Jagjit Singh Thekedar, and why he had been given a house to live in by the British Government.[74] Further, instances of apparently harmless British Sikh visitors to Punjab, being arrested and held without charge for some considerable period under India's harsh Prevention of Terrorism legislation have not served that government's case well.[75]

On the other hand, reporters in Britain, and defence counsel of Sikhs charged here in connection with politically motivated violent crimes, like those accused of plotting to kill Rajiv Gandhi, have accused the Indian and British governments of operating a sinister system of pay-offs. If Britain convicts or extradites a Sikh 'terrorist', British firms receive orders for goods from the Indian

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[72]See, for instance Amnesty International News release of 10th August 1988, calling on the Indian Government to stop the unlawful killing and torture of detainees by the security forces.

[73]The Times, 11th December 1985, carries one such statement by Rajiv Gandhi rebuking the British Government for granting asylum to a 'terrorist'.

[74]Barber, J., op. cit., p 134.

[75]The Times, 10th November 1986 and 6th January 1987.

Government. The defence in the above case declared that his client was being tried because of the orders that the Indian Government had pending with Westland for helicopters.[76] Others have argued that the Sikhs in Britain feel that Indian and British governments are in 'collusion'. They point to the above case, as well as to the British Home Office's decision in 1984 not to grant entry to Jasbir Singh Rode, the nephew of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, simply on the request of the Indian Government. They say that he had had no contact with his uncle, and that he lived and worked in Dubai, but was nevertheless denied entry to Britain because the Indian Government demanded it.[77]

However, it seems more likely that the Indian objective is the setting up of a permanent and simple bilateral extradition deal with Britain, like the one it has secured and signed with Canada.[78] In this regard, negotiations between the British and Indian governments have been going on since 1986. The British Government's reluctance seemed to have been overcome by "India's anger over what its establishment sees as British indulgence towards the Sikhs."[79] More cynical explanations may better explain the following sequence of events. On Sept. 18th 1986 the British High Commission delivered a draft of a new extradition treaty to the Indian Foreign Office.[80] Four days later India bought eight Sea

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[76]Helweg, A., in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], op. cit., pp 325-326.
[77]Goulbourne, H., op. cit., p 154.
[78]The Times, 6th February 1987.
[79]The Times, 19th September 1986.
[80]Ibid.

Harriers as discussions continued on that draft treaty.[81] By April 29, 1987 both countries were reported as near agreement on the treaty.[82] Then India raised a cost-related query about the deal for their purchase of 'Hermes'.[83] The UK's attitude of non-involvement in the Fijian crisis caused another rift between the two governments,[84] and the discussions on the treaty did not come to fruition. A year later, in March/April 1988 at a meeting of Ministers Timothy Renton and Natwar Singh in Delhi, "the two agreed that the Sikh issue had placed a strain on British-Indian relations and was a major point of contention."[85] Britain seemed to have reverted to her earlier position that an extradition treaty was unnecessary, but the credit for the talks going well went to the successful extradition of JKLF activist Amanullah Khan.[86] One week after these meetings, India purchased Combat Tractors from Britain,[87] and then three days later signed a memorandum of understanding for technology transfers and more defence equipment purchases.[88] Junior Foreign Office Minister Lord Glenarthur visited India and negotiations on the extradition treaty started again. This sequence has been presented in a detailed manner to because it clearly illustrates the nature of the relationship between the countries. India's chief concern remains her domestic problems, and

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[81] The Times, 22nd September 1986.
[82] The Times, 29th April 1987.
[83] The Times, 4th May 1987.
[84] The Times, 27th May 1987.
[85] Helweg, A., in Barrier, G. & Dusenbery, V. [eds.], op. cit., pp 325-326.
[86] Ibid, p 325.
[87] The Times, 9th April 1988.
[88] The Times, 12th April 1988.

she continues to want firmer British commitments on dealing with the Sikhs, and occasionally when unsatisfied with the turn of events, she retaliates with some small gesture like refusing permission to a British television crew to film in India.[89] This behaviour serves to irritate the British, who seem to take India's demands more seriously only when commercial pressures force them to use her strong desire for an extradition treaty as bait. The relationship is thorny and has been badly bruised by the issue of Sikh extremism.

It must be pointed out that Britain is not the only host to a Sikh diaspora, substantial and well organized communities also exist in Canada and the United States. Sikhs in these two countries have been active in giving the call for Khalistan and in creating public awareness about the crisis in Punjab. In the US, the more open system of government has made some Congressmen susceptible to pressure from the Sikh lobby and the political activities of some Canadian Sikhs resulted in the blowing up of the Air India jumbo-jet, 'Kanishka', over the Irish Sea in June 1985. Relations between India and these two countries have also been influenced by Sikh diasporic politics.

Nor are Sikhs the only group in the UK whose political activity is of interest to the Indian Government. The activities of the Kashmiri community and their organizations, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) have been of concern for

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[89] The Times, 9th February 1989.

sometime, at least since 1981 when the Indian Consul in Birmingham was kidnapped and killed by Kashmiri separatists.

## Conclusions

The story of Anglo-Indian relations in the post colonial era has been one of drifting apart. There has been no particular major cause of hostility between the two, rather a divergence of interests and the inattention of policy makers to nurturing what was a potentially beneficial and strong relationship. "In times of peace, and without overt mutual hostility, no pair of major nations has let slip, so quickly, links of such weight and size."[90]

The divergence of interests, regional preoccupations and different orientations towards the super-powers in the Cold War have taken their toll on the relationship, which has always been one "in which there is cooperation as well as tension."[91] That these tensions have never blown up to the point of drastically damaging Anglo-Indian ties, and have managed to coexist with continuing economic exchange albeit at a reduced level, is at least in part due to the ease of communication and good personal relationships and rapport that exist between bureaucrats at the highest levels in both countries.

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[90]Lipton, M. & Firn, J., op. cit., p 1.
[91]Barber, J., op. cit., p 134.

Thus, even before migration became an issue in the relationship. Britain and India were no longer close, and already looking in different directions. However, from the late 1950s, the issue of immigration has been a running sore in the relations between the two, with accusations of racism from India, and the constant problems for both Indian visitors at Heathrow as well as British immigration officials. Large amounts of British and Indian manpower and time has been expended on the issue, which has perhaps indirectly contributed to the continuing decline of the relationship by not leaving either side with the time or desire to improve it.

In the aftermath of 1984, the immigration issue took on a new direction and focussed on the activities of British Sikh community. The running sore became an open wound. For the Indian Government, this was matter which involved far higher stakes than any quarrel over British immigration laws and procedures ever could. Delhi felt that British Sikhs were posing a threat to the security of the Indian State, and expected that the British Government would take the same sorts of measures against British Sikhs that Delhi was taking in Punjab against their brethren. The British it seems, failed to realize the both seriousness of Indian demands that they act against their Sikhs, as well as the depth of feeling in South Block about this issue. The British position, confirming their anti-terrorist stance, and being ready to deal with individual requests for extradition did not satisfy Delhi who wanted to see an end to the activities of Khalistan leaders in Britain, as well

as greater control by the authorities on Sikh gurudwaras. However, it seems that the British are unwilling to curb the non-violent activities of the Sikhs, seeing them as part of a democratic society, and nor are they prepared to interfere in the running of Sikh Temples as that may be harmful to relations with the Sikhs in Britain, and race relations generally. London is also limited in its ability to satisfy other Indian demands like denying British Sikhs access to air time on radio and television, particularly on BBC World Service. The Indian Government's arguments, drawing parallels between the activities of the British Sikhs and the IRA have not convinced Whitehall, in spite of their threatened cancellation of defense and other contracts. The Indian Government's main thrust then shifted to demanding a bilateral extradition treaty, and negotiations for such a treaty have been prolonged. They have tended to move faster whenever Britain wanted to sign some contract with India.[92]

It would appear that immigration issues generally and the diasporic politics of British Sikhs in particular have played a role in the decline of the Anglo-Indian relationship. However the pattern of disengagement and decline was already established before either of these matters made an impact. Hence they cannot be described as sole casual factors, but simply as catalysts that served to make a deteriorating situation worse. Further, the impact of the latter issue

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[92]Recently, (3rd and 16th January 1992) after visits by Kenneth Baker and Douglas Hurd, an extradition deal between the two countries was agreed. At the same time India's position on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has long been a source of annoyance in the West, was discussed.

- that of Sikh activity in Britain - has been the more serious of the two in its implications for the wider relationship between the two countries. It has caused India to question the basic direction of British foreign policy in South Asia, and contributed to Indian fears of a western conspiracy to balkanize India. For a period, between June 1984 and September 1985 this issue was responsible for taking Anglo-Indian relations to their lowest ebb, and while some business has been conducted since then, normalcy has not returned. The open wound has not healed, and it would be fair to say that the activities of British Sikhs have had a long-lasting souring impact on ties between the two countries.

The end of the cold war and all the subsequent changes in international relations have not left Delhi entirely untouched. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, India has made a frantic effort to rethink its foreign policy options in light of the new realities of world affairs. She has moved distinctly westwards and her dire economic straits have led her to follow the stringent conditions laid down by the IMF and the World Bank in exchange for a badly needed loan. In the economic sphere the minority government of Narsimha Rao is overseeing the most thorough-going attempt at economic liberalisation, releasing the economy from the layers of red-tape and socialist ideology that have smothered progress for years. These changes presage a different kind of India, one that seeks to be part of the world economic system, rather than self-reliant within it, and opens up opportunity for unfettered investment by foreign companies. Perhaps this widening of economic

opportunity will blow away the clouds of Sikh extremism that continue to hang heavy on the Anglo-Indian horizon.

# CHAPTER NINE

# CONCLUSION

"There is now a growing realization that immigration and refugee issues may prove to be among the most important and troubling world problems of the next decade."[1] An ever increasing world population, made more mobile by improvements in communications and travel technology, means a larger movement of people across international boundaries. The permeable nature of those boundaries and the universality of the state means that all these movements become a matter of concern to states, and influence their relationships with each other.

This study has tried to examine some aspects of the problem created by the situation described above. A survey of the literature on migration has brought out the primary importance of the distinction between internal and international migration. Internal migration, while having a profound influence on the life of the individual migrant, as well as domestic consequences for the country within which s/he moves, is distinct from international migration in that any political impact it may have is also largely internal. It is only when state borders are crossed that migration acquires the potential to become an issue of relevance to International Relations, because it is only then that it can have a bearing on relations between

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[1]Teitelbaum, M., 'Right Vs. Right: Immigration and Refugee Policy in the United States', Foreign Affairs, Vol. LIX, No. 1, Fall 1980, p 21.

states and be used as an instrument of states' foreign policy.

The review also shows that most traditional migration literature, concentrating as it does on the individual's experience, on what motivates him to move, on his experiences in his new society etc., is not imbued with a clear sense of the political aspects or implications of such moves. This literature is better equipped to provide a 'micro' level understanding of migration, than a wider 'macro' level one. Only limited areas of traditional thinking and theorizing about migration have direct bearing on the sorts of issues of concern to students of International Relations, for instance the discussions on the economic implication of migration for sending and receiving countries. Further there is an in-built bias in migration theory about the desirability of assimilation of the migrant in his new society. Far more time and effort has been spent studying the process of assimilation and the factors that will speed it up than has been expended on trying to explain why some immigrants only ever achieve a very limited level of inclusion in their host society or why later generations of immigrants experience revival of their own distinct ethnic identity.

The reasons for this incomplete development of migration theory are not hard to find. It is partly the result of the fact that migration studies fall into several disciplines, but are not central to any. Also, the concentration on particular migration experiences has prohibited the development of a higher level of generalisation, which is made all the more difficult by the large number of variables that have to be accounted for in every experience. Further, given the

bias in the literature towards assimilation, long term political aspects of migration did not merit much attention.

This is not however to discard existing migration theory, because it provides us with a good understanding of the process of migration, and the dislocating nature of the experience for the individual. Further, it makes useful distinctions between voluntary and involuntary migration; between push and pull migration; outlines ~~varies~~ various patterns of migration; and generally provides us with a framework that highlights areas of interest to a political understanding of the subject. To blame those scholars from other disciplines who have studied migration from their own perspectives, for not providing a Political/International Relations framework in an area we have all but ignored until very recently would not be fair.

The development of a framework for a political analysis of international migration, capable of providing useful generalisations and explanations about its impact in International Relations, is still in its infancy, as Chapter Three shows. In this context, as with other areas of migration analysis, the difficulty arises in moving away from consideration of specific cases to the general. However some useful points can be made. Firstly, it must be noted that the decisions of states themselves are a major determinant of the size and direction of population movements. Every state is a sovereign entity, and as such has full powers to decide who shall leave its territory and who shall enter. The rules of entry and exit that states formulate are the single most important factors that govern the movement of people across borders.

Further, while the focus of analysis must clearly be international migration, it is useful to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary migration, because the dynamics and implications of the two are often (though not always) distinct. Involuntary migration, except in the case of that caused by natural disasters, is generally a direct result of government policy. This may be because of political oppression, intolerance of dissidence, war, or 'nation-building' by expelling ethnically different minorities. It is thus clear that governments use refugee flows as instruments of both foreign and domestic policy. For sending countries, creating a flow of refugees can stabilise the internal political situation by getting rid of opposition, can homogenise the population by expelling minorities, and can be used to put pressure on neighbouring countries or to acquire and control new territories.

There exists an international regime governing the treatment of refugees, viewing them as victims of human rights abuse, and obliging all states to provide them with the protection that they need. There also exists an international agency, the office of UNHCR, to care for refugees and assist them to survive until repatriation or resettlement become possible. However, because the obligations put upon states cannot infringe upon their sovereignty, states are in fact free to choose who they will recognise as a refugee, thus allowing them to put their national interests before their international obligations.

The general unwillingness of states to admit refugees is caused by the effects they can have on the receiving country. Not only can

refugees cause severe economic and political problems for the government of a receiving country, but they can also have a profound influence on the relationship between the sending and receiving countries, particularly, if the two are neighbours, as is often the case. Once a receiving country accepts refugees, it's relationship with the sending country is influenced by that fact, and if the numbers are large enough, by the refugees themselves. The Indian subcontinent presents plenty of examples about the impact of refugees on inter-state relations. The Pakistani Government's attitude toward Kabul because of the presence of Mujahideen in Peshawar, or the Indian Government's decisive intervention in East Pakistan, leading to the creation of Bangla Desh because of the huge influx of Bengalis to India, are cases in point.

Voluntary migration is also susceptible to the decisions of governments. Large scale voluntary migration appears to have become a thing of the past, because of the the tight rules governing entry to most countries in the present day. The only exceptions to the rule seem to be countries where the immigration is taking place for the purpose of ethnic unification, as in the case of Soviet Jewry migrating to Israel. The decision to allow large numbers of immigrants entry is largely influenced by the labour needs of the receiving economy and the 'costs' of creating a multi-cultural society. However, countries differ in whether they grant permanent or temporary residence to immigrant workers, and the treatment accorded to and the rights enjoyed by immigrant workers vary a great deal from country to country.

Through the process of voluntary or involuntary international migration, diasporas are created. These are minority groups, of migrant origin, ethnically and sometimes racially distinct from the majority host population, as in the case of the British Sikh diaspora. These diasporas have the potential to play a political role that can have an impact in their home country, in their host country, and on relations between the two states. Their ability to function as actors on the international stage, is influenced by several factors.

Firstly, and most importantly, they must retain their distinctiveness from the host majority in terms of culture, religion and language, for if they assimilate entirely there is nothing that ties them to their home community any more. They are often encouraged to maintain their separate identity by the prejudice they encounter from the host majority. This does not mean that they stay entirely apart from the host society (if that were possible); the more well integrated they are economically with their host society, the more prosperous they are likely to be, and the skills and resources they command are likely to be greater, enhancing their political potential. Obviously, none of this would be possible in a host country unless a social, cultural and political atmosphere of tolerance prevails there. Thirdly, the political system in the host country should be relatively open and free and not one that circumscribes diaspora political activity. Fourthly, the diaspora must also have strong continuing links with their home country. Further, when politics in the home country is stable, both the interest and the role of the diaspora is likely to be less than if the home country is

experiencing threat, insecurity or turmoil. Sixthly, it also appears to be the case that a diaspora involved in the politics of its home country is not going to be equally involved in the host country. In that arena, such a diaspora has limited political aims related to safeguarding its minority status, and conversely a diaspora that flings itself whole-heartedly into the mainstream of host country politics is going to have less passion left over to expend on its home country's affairs. Finally, it is not necessary that the diaspora support the government of the day in its home country though some of course do. Often the diaspora become the focus of opposition against the government in it's home country, particularly when the home country lacks an open political system. A diaspora that comes from a multinational state may confine its concern to it's own particular part of the homeland, and such concern could be another reason for it to oppose the home government.

The examination of the British Sikh experience serves to confirm some of the generalisations made above. Their history shows us that they developed as a minority community, largely because of their religion, in a part of India dominated by two bigger communities - the Hindus and the Moslems. That they have a very strong sense of their own distinctive identity is shown from their constant battles over their separateness from the Hindu community, with whom they were often associated. Their religion, with its move away from caste taboos and its central institution the Gurudwara, has contributed to their cohesion and strength as a group. Their long experience as a minority community even in their own homeland,

has left them with considerable expertise in creating and maintaining institutions and organizations like the Akali Dal and the SGPC that safeguard their identity and position, and provide them with distinctive political expression, as well as enabling them to play any larger political role.

The Sikhs' relationship with the British, mostly through the Imperial army, as well as their own social system, which attaches considerable importance to wealth and land ownership and judges only a limited number of professions to be truly suitable ways of acquiring the above, combined to make migration an attractive proposition for Sikhs from the early years of this century. Sikh migrants living in far-flung parts of the world, have seen no contradiction in living abroad for economic self-improvement while maintaining their cultural identity and links with their homeland. The British Sikh experience is typical in this regard.

Since the post-war economic boom brought large numbers of them into this country they have prospered economically, raised a second generation of British-educated members of the community who show no signs of either moving away from their cultural and religious heritage or weakening their links with their homeland in Punjab. They have built up a network of community organizations like Gurudwaras and IWAs which enable them to live a life in many ways similar to traditional Punjabi life, and also provide them with channels for political expression. Like other Sikh diasporas in other parts of the world, British Sikhs, particularly those of the younger generation see no contradiction in being British, and here to stay as

well as Sikhs with an overriding interest and passion in Punjabi politics and affairs.

Having retained their distinctiveness, and over the years prospered economically in Britain, the Sikhs are a diaspora particularly well-qualified to function as political actors on the international stage. They have always been involved in Punjabi politics, from the inception of their community here in the post-war years, but the events of the last decade or so in Punjab have assured their keen interest and participation. Underlying problems, like those of educated unemployment, the failure of reality to match aspirations, the belief that Punjab was being discriminated against in the Indian Union because of its success, disputes with other states over sharing of resources like river water, have meant that British Sikhs maintained an interest in Punjabi affairs. When these were combined with the machinations of Indian and Punjabi politicians into the traditional Sikh cocktail of religion and politics that set Punjab ablaze, British Sikhs were not left untouched. The events of June 1984 particularly, ensured that British Sikhs would not be mere spectators while Punjab seethed.

Ever since there have been Sikhs in England, there have been branches of Punjabi political parties here. This tendency increased with the accelerating pace of events at home. Smaller parties, factions and groups formed in Punjab rapidly acquired a British branch, the British Sikh political scene is a replica of the Punjabi one, and Punjabi politics is re-enacted in the UK. The conflict between 'moderates' and 'extremists' that characterized Punjabi

politics at this time was carried out in the UK too, with 'extremists' challenging 'moderates' for the control of Gurudwaras. The marginalisation of the Congress Party in this debate, and in Punjabi politics generally, was also evident here by the reaction of the community to the Overseas Congress and to the IWAs who took a secular nationalist approach and enjoyed close relations with the Indian High Commissions and Consulates in this country. Here as in India, this process was not accomplished without recourse to violence, though on a much smaller scale. The only real difference between Punjabi politics and British Sikh politics was the status of those groups that have been banned in India because of the seditious nature of their activities. Their British counterparts, not subject to any such restrictions, were able to function on a par with all other groups here. This may have made their voice seem louder than it actually was, particularly in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, when even the most moderate voice was not raised in favour of the Indian Government, however the current configuration of British Sikh diaspora politics certainly has the more 'militant' groups in the ascendance.

Diaspora political activity was not confined to a mere replay of Punjabi events. Each group here provides succour and support to their counterparts in Punjab. Most importantly this takes a monetary form. While it is difficult to establish the exact amount and destination of this support, indications from Gurudwara average weekly collections are that it would be substantial, and particularly helpful in India, where 'hard currency' is even more valuable.

There is some evidence to suggest that members of groups here contributed to the strategic and planning functions of their groups in India, and were also influential in decision-making, but this seems to vary from group to group,and is too sensitive a matter for Sikhs here to comfortably discuss.

British Sikhs also use their position as UK citizens, and therefore free of the restrictions of Indian law and security, to mount a publicity campaign designed to increase international awareness about the Punjab problem. This had its greatest success in the area of human rights abuse, specially when it was substantiated by independent reports by organizations like Amnesty International. To take full advantage of the freedoms that they enjoy here, there has been a clear acceptance that they must function within the confines of British law, and thus after apart from a few serious incidents and some skirmishes between 'moderates' and 'extremists' there has been very little violence in UK, unlike Punjab. This puts the concerned groups in the contradictory position of advocating strict adherence to the law in one country, while contributing to increased lawlessness in another. Sikhs have also made some attempts to interest politicians here in Punjab, with the ultimate aim of pressurising the British Government to censure its Indian counterpart.

A final assessment of the role of British Sikhs in Punjabi politics must acknowledge that the impetus of events comes from Punjab. Had problems not arisen in Punjab, the activities of the diaspora to guide them in that direction would, most likely, not have

had any noticeable impact. However, having said that, it is clear that the help provided by the diaspora increases the strength of their Indian counterparts, and has made a substantial contribution to raising international awareness about the problem. Further, it seems probable that diaspora groups have the ability, through their Punjab based brethren, to disrupt any moves toward resolution of the Punjab problem, that do not meet their requirements. Because they are away from the scene of the action, and do not have to put up with either all the trauma of violence and upheaval, or life under the rule of the Indian security forces; they may be more reluctant than those in Punjab to accept a solution that does not meet their demands in full.

British Sikh political activity has also had a significant impact on relations between Britain and India. They have brought bitterness and tension into an already declining relationship. It was the activity of British Sikhs and what India perceived as inadequate handling of that activity that led to Anglo-Indian relations reaching their lowest ebb in late 1984 and through most of 1985. Even now, while some level of commercial exchange between the two countries has resumed, the activities of the diaspora continue to be an irritant in the relationship, with every potential for having further detrimental effects upon it. Thus while not reversing the general trend of relations, Sikh diaspora politics has served to weaken it considerably. Some part of the explanation for the downswing also lies in the attitude of the British government whose handling of events has been less than sensitive to India's needs.

This study shows that the notion of a diaspora as an actor in international relations is a valid one. It also provides some generalisations about the conditions under which a diaspora is likely to effectively take on such an active role. Further, through the examination of the British Sikh case, some elaboration regarding the diaspora's role becomes possible. The most important form of diaspora involvement in homeland politics tends to be as a provider of monetary and other material support. Diasporas may also be involved in the strategic planning and decision making processes of their allies in the homeland. Further they put to good use their special status of being outside the jurisdiction of their home state, garnering support for it, or as in the case of the Sikhs campaigning against it. In some respects, they function as the external arm or international public face of their homeland allies or the homeland state itself, and in this way have a considerable impact on the prestige and image of their home state abroad. They can also have a significant impact on relations between their home and host countries.

It must also be noted that diasporas can play different roles at different times, with regard to their home countries. The same British Sikh diaspora that pits itself against the Indian Government today, sought the support of that government to protect it from what it perceived to be the rising threat of racism in Britain in the 1970s.

It seems plausible to suggest that in an age of excellent and ever-improving communication technology, the links between diasporas and homelands, which forms the basis of their role as

international actors, will be maintained and strengthened. A comparison of the Ghadr movement in the early years of this century with the activities of present day Sikh diasporas brings out this point. In spite of being as well equipped as contemporary British Sikhs in terms of resources and passion about politics in the homeland, when the Ghadrites tried to incite revolution and rebellion against the British Raj in India, they were totally unsuccessful. One of the main reasons for this was because they were so out of touch with the mood in India, where all nationalist leaders had pledged their support to the British war effort, and members of their own community were enlisting in the Imperial Army in large numbers.

If we accept that diasporas are indeed actors on the international stage, then we must consider the implications of this. Clearly, like other non-state actors they present one more challenge to a statecentric approach to International Relations. The traditional approach, that requires us to focus on states and their external behaviour in our search for explanation and understanding of international events, would be hard pressed to explain the nadir Anglo-Indian relations reached a few short years ago, let alone elucidate on the links between Punjabi politics and events in Britain. In an increasingly interdependent world, where sophisticated communications technology has for ever changed the impermeability of state borders, it is one more nail in the coffin of an unreconstructed Realist approach.

This notion also presents a wider challenge to the whole discipline, not just one approach within it, and that is the attention it

draws to the validity of the distinction so dear to the hearts of International Relations scholars - that between domestic and international politics. When, as in the case of British Sikhs, 'domestic' events in one country have 'domestic' effects in another, can we continue to usefully maintain the distinction?

However the challenge presented by diasporas goes further than that. When a well-organised minority group, living in one country and subject to its laws, can have considerable impact on events in and the international standing of another state, whose jurisdiction does not extend to them, then that group is encroaching on the authority and sovereignty of that state. In so doing they challenge the very foundations on which the present day international system rests.

Given the primacy accorded to notions of state sovereignty and non-intervention, the international system has no mechanisms for coping with diasporas, except through the established channels of diplomacy between their host and home states. That these can prove to be less than effective is clearly shown by the interactions between the Indian and British Governments on the issue of British Sikhs. If the host government is not threatened by the diaspora's activities, and has no other compelling reason but demands by the home government, it can be less than sensitive to such demands. In the above case, for instance, one cannot help wondering how the British Government would have reacted to these events if India was home to a vocal Irish Nationalist minority.

Like all other research, this work answers a few questions, but raises several others. With regard to diaspora activities themselves several points need further elucidation. The conditions that determine whether a diaspora's stance towards its homeland will be supportive or antagonistic, united or divided, need further exploration. An analysis of the position of diasporas when disagreement or conflict between home and host state rears its head should provide fruitful insights. The consequences of having a multinationally based diaspora, all looking back to a single homeland, and the dynamics between those diasporas would bear further investigation. Further, the political, moral and ethical basis of diaspora political involvement in the homeland needs attention, as diaspora behaviour poses problems for long held notions of citizenship, and the rights and duties that that entails.

In the wider area of the complex relationship between international relations and international migration even more work needs to be done. To take the area of involuntary migration, where an international regime to guide the behaviour of states already exists, at least in skeletal form. Attention must be given to ensuring that states fulfil their obligations. Through practical policies, informed by research, the human race should be capable of avoiding situations like those that exist in the 'refugee camps' in Hong-Kong, or on the high seas between Haiti and Florida. Increasing emphasis is already being placed on policies that try to ensure domestic conditions within states that do not create refugees, but far more needs to be done. Further, the focus of response to refugee issues

must shift to the needs of the refugees themselves rather than the interests of the states at whose mercy they find themselves.

As regards voluntary migration, it is increasingly clear that its volume is set to decrease in coming years, as countries across the world tighten up their entry rules further and further. There are clear areas here that could benefit from research, for instance the question of political and moral obligations of states to immigrants (temporary, permanent and illegal), and vice-versa. The frictions caused by conflicting rules of entry and exit between states could be eased through movement towards an international regime in this area which could establish principles satisfying tight requirements while being fair. An analysis of the implications of such migration for race relations internally, and between countries could inform the creation of such norms. The greater cooperation that this is likely to bring may also allow the evolution of rules and procedures for dealing with the erosion of state-sovereignty that immigration and diaspora formation can entail.

And finally a word about Punjab:

Five years of President's Rule have radically altered the political complexion in the state. Successive Indian Governments led by Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Narsimha Rao, have not accorded the problem the priority it deserves on the national agenda. They have been prevented by their own weaknesses, and the rise of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatya Janata Party from even exploring possible solutions, let alone reaching

them. For the majority of this time-span, the Centre's policy on Punjab has been a 'law and order' approach, concentrating on fighting violence with violence.

The only semblance of democracy in this period came from elections to the Lok Sabha in 1989. The result of these elections demonstrated the dramatically changed political configuration in the state. There were no moderates in Punjab any more. All factions of the Akalis as well as the militants had become united in their belief that Punjab problem could no longer be resolved within the terms of the Rajiv-Longowal accord. The Akali Dal (Mann) captured 10 of the 13 seats which Punjab fills in the Lok Sabha. The Congress-I won only one seat, and moderate Akalis who had swept to power in Punjab Assembly in 1987 were routed, receiving only 6.1% of the vote. The militant groups are in the ascendance. They have penetrated those areas of Punjabi life which no Indian Government has ever sought to control; like matters of personal attire, specially for women. Their strength in the rural areas is greater than ever, and they are involved closely in the politics of the twin pillars of Sikh society - the Akali Dal and the SGPC.

In March 1992, state assembly and delayed Lok Sabha elections were held in Punjab. The Akalis, and their militant supporters boycotted the election, with the exception of one moderate faction. Candidates and voters alike were threatened with violence if they participated. The boycott and the threats, as well as the hopelessness of the Punjabi people was reflected in the turnout, which averaged 21.6% in the state, with some polling stations

recording not a single vote.[2] The Congress state government elected enjoys the support of very few of the Punjabi people.

This dire state of affairs reflects the lost opportunities of the last few years, for which both Punjabi and other Indian politicians must shoulder responsibility. The people of Punjab, in the mean time, are caught between the rock of militancy and the hard place of the Indian state's security system. As ever, the violence continues.

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[2] India Today, 15th March 1992.

# APPENDICES

## The Anandpur Sahib Resolution

## FOREWORD

The Shiromani Akali Dal undoubtedly is a great organisation, whose coming into existence has been a matter of pride for the Sikhs. Its entire history is a glorious record of struggles and agitations, victories and achievements of which it can be justly proud. The past record of the party vouchsafes that whosoever has ever tried to confront it, he did have to perish ultimately. The most momentous part played by it in the Freedom Struggle of the country would ever form an indelible part of history written in letters of gold.

Shiromani Akali Dal has been guiding the Sikhs according to exigencies of the situation for their rights and for a respectable status in the set-up of the country. Its objective has been exaltation of the Sikh Panth and for the achievement of this lofty ideal, Shiromani Akali Dal has been adopting different and varied means.

Keeping in view the anti-Sikh policies of the Congress government and the political, social and economic conditions prevailing in the country, the Shiromani Akali Dal has decided to redraw the aims and objectives of the Sikh Panth and to give a more vigorous lead for their achievements so that by so doing it may serve the larger interests of the Panth, the Punjabas also the Country and thus live upto the expectations of the Sikhs.

For such a purpose, a sub-committee of the Sikh intellectuals and thinkers was formed by the Shiromani Akali Dal at a meeting of its Working Committee, held on 11.12.1972 to draw up the draft of a 'Policy-Programme,' with the General Secretary of the Party, S.

Surjit Singh Barnala, as its Chairman, and S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, M.P., President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Jathedar Jiwan Singh Umranangal, S. Gurmit Singh, ex-minister, Dr. Bhagat Singh, ex-minister, S. Balwant Singh, ex-Finance Minister, S. Gian Singh Rarewala, S. Prem Singh Lalpura, S. Jaswinder Singh Brar, General Secretary, Shiromani Akal Dal, S. Bhag Singh, Ex-M.L.A., Major General Gurbux Singh Badhni and S. Amar Singh Ambalvi Advocate, as its members.

This Sub-Committee had eleven sittings beginning with the first at Amritsar, on 23.12.1972. Most of the meetings were held at Chandigarh for its peaceful and congenial atmosphere.

All the members of the sub-committee evinced keen interest in its working and engaged themselves in very interesting and useful discussions which were a treat to watch and partake of. A unanimous report was ultimately drawn up after very close deliberations on each and every aspect of the matters and more subtle of their aspects. Actuated by feelings of love for the Sikh Panth, more of its eminent Army Generals, Legal experts, Doctors, Political thinkers, experienced politicians and religious leaders joined together to lend their helping hands to draw up this plan for a more glorious future of the Panth. During their discussions a very happy balance of love for the Panth and the Country was all too evident, as also the keenness to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs and the Country.

When the meticulously drawn up report of S. Surjit Singh sub-committee was presented in the meeting of the working committee of Shiromani Akali Dal held at Shri Anandpur Sahib, the sacred and

historic seat of the Tenth Lord, it was approved, after close discussions extending over two days, for placing it before the General House.

This draft is, therefore, being sent to you to enable you to study it in depth so that the meeting of the General House may be benefited by your valued opinion.

With Panthic Love and regards.

Office of
Shiromani Akali Dal,
Sri Amritsar,
1.8.1977.

Yours humbly,
Ajmer Singh,
Secretary,
Shiromane Akali Dal

## The Resolutions

adopted, in the light of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, at the open session of the 18th All India Akali Conference held at Ludhiana on 28-29 October, 1978 under the Presidentship of Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi are as under:

### Resolution No. 1

Moved by S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and endorsed by S. Parkash Singh Badal, Chief Minister, Punjab.

The Shiromani Akali Dal realizes that India is a federal and republican geographical entity of different languages, religions and

cultures. To safeguard the fundamental rights of the religious and linguistic minorities, to fulfil the demands of the democratic traditions and to pave the way for economic progress, it has become imperative that the Indian constitutional infrastructure should be given a real federal shape by redefining the central and state relations and rights on the lines of the aforesaid principles and objectives.

The concept of total revolution given by Lok Naik, Sh. Jaya Parkash Narain, is also based upon the progressive decentralization of powers. The climax of the process of centralization of powers of the states through repeated amendments of the Constitution during the Congress regime came before the countrymen in the form of the Emergency, when all fundamental rights of all citizens were usurped. It was then that the programme of decentralization of powers ever advocated by Shiromani Akali Dal was openly accepted and adopted by other political parties including Janata Party, C.P.I.(M), A.D.M.K., etc.

Shiromani Akali Dal has ever stood firm on this principle and that is why after very careful considerations it unanimously adopted a resolution to this effect first at all India Akali Conference, Batala, then at Sri Anandpur Sahib which has endorsed the principle of State autonomy in keeping with the concept of Federalism.

As such, the Shiromani Akali Dal emphatically urges upon the Janata Government to take cognizance of the different linguistic and cultural sections, religious minorities as also the voice of millions of people and recast the constitutional structure of the country on real and meaningful federal principles to obviate the possibility of any

danger to National unity and the integrity of the Country and further, to enable the states to play a useful role for the progress and prosperity of the Indian people in their respective areas by the meaningful exercise of their powers.

## Resolution No. 2

The momentous meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal calls upon the Govt. of India to examine carefully the long tale of the excesses, wrongs, illegal actions committed by the previous Congress government, more particularly during Emergency, and try to find an early solution to the following problems:

(a) Chandigarh originally raised as a Capital for Punjab should be handed over to Punjab.

(b) The long-standing demand of the Shiromani Akali Dal for the merger in Punjab of the Punjabi-speaking areas, to be identified by linguistic experts with village as a unit, should be conceded.

(c) The control of Head Works should continue to be vested in Punjab and, if need be, the Reorganization Act should be amended.

(d) The arbitrary and unjust Award given by Mrs Indira Gandhi during the Emergency on the distribution of Ravi-Beas waters should be revised on the universally accepted norms and principles, thereby justice be done to Punjab.

(e) Keeping in view the special aptitude and martial qualities of the Sikhs, the present ratio of their strength in Army should be maintained.

(f) The excesses being committed on the settlers in the Terai

region of U.P. in the name of Land Reforms should be vacated by making suitable amendments in the ceiling Law on the Central guide-lines.

## Resolution No. 3

(Economic Policy Resolution)

The chief sources of inspiration of the economic policies and programme of the Shiromani Akali Dal are the secular, democratic and socialistic concepts of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Our Economic programme is based on three basic principles:

(a) Dignity of Labour.

(b) An economic and social structure which provides for the uplift of the poor and depressed sections of society.

(c) Unabated opposition to concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the capitalists.

While drafting its economic policies and programme, the Shiromani Akali Dal in its historic Anandpur Sahib resolution has laid particular stress on the need to break the monopolistic hold of the capitalists foisted on the Indian economy by 30 years of Congress rule in India. This capitalist hold enabled the Central government to assume all powers in its hands after the manner of Mughal Imperialism. This was bound to thwart the economic progress of the states and injure the social and economic interests of the people. The Shiromani Akali Dal once again reiterates the Sikh way of life by

resolving to fulfil the holy words of Guru Nanak Dev:

"He alone realizes the True Path who labours honestly and shares the fruits of that Labour".

The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly feels that the most pressing National problem is the need to ameliorate the lot of millions of exploited persons belonging to the scheduled classes. For such a purpose the Shiromani Akali Dal calls upon the Central and State Governments to earmark special funds. Besides, the State Governments should allot sufficient funds in their respective budgets for giving free residential plots both in the urban and rural areas to the scheduled castes.

The Shiromani Akali Dal also calls for the rapid diversification of farming. The shortcomings in the Land Reforms Laws should be removed, rapid industrialization of the State ensured, the credit facilities for the medium industries expanded and unemployment allowance given to those who are unemployed. For remunerative farming, perceptible reduction should be made in the prices of farm machinery like tractors, tube-wells as also the inputs etc.

## Resolution No. 4

This huge session of the Shiromani Akali Dal regrets the discrimination to which the Punjabi language is being subjected in the adjoining States of Himachal, Haryana, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir etc. It is its firm demand that in accordance with the Nehru Language Formula, the neighbouring States of Punjab should be 'given second' language status to the Punjabi language because a

fairly large sections of their respective population are Punjabi-speaking

**Resolution No. 5**

The meeting regrets that against the 'claims' of the refugees who had migrated to Jammu and Kashmir as a result of the partition of the country, no compensation has been provided to them even after such a long time and these unfortunate refugees are rotting in the camps ever since then.

This Akali Dal Session, therefore, forcefully demands that their claims should be soon settled and immediate steps should be taken to rehabilitate them even if it involves an amendment in section 370.

**Resolution No. 6**

The 18th session of the All India Akali Conference takes strong exception to the discrimination to which the minorities in other states are being subjected and the way in which their interests are being ignored.

As such, it demands that injustice against the Sikhs in other states should bc vacated and proper representation should be given to them in the government service, local bodies & state legislatures, through nomination, if need be.

**Resolution No. 7**

The 18th session of the All India Akali Conference notes with

satisfaction that mechanization of farming in the country has led to increase in the farm yield and as a result the country is heading towards self-sufficiency.

However, the session feels that poor farmers are unable to take to mechanization because of the enormity of the cost involved.

As such, the Shiromani Akali Dal urges upon the Government of India to abolish the excise duty on tractors, so that with the decrease in their prices, the ordinary farmers may also be able to avail of farm machinery and contribute to the growth of gross agricultural produce of the country.

## Resolution No. 8

The meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal appeals to the Central and State governments to pay particular attention to the poor and labouring classes and demands that besides making suitable amendments in the Minimum Wages Act, suitable legal steps should be taken to improve the economic lot of the labouring class, to enable it to lead a respectable life and play a useful role in the rapid industrialization of the country.

## Resolution No. 9

This session seeks permission from the Government of India to install a broadcasting station at Golden Temple, Amritsar, for the relay of 'Gurbani Kirtan' for the spiritual satisfaction of those Sikhs who are living in foreign lands.

The session wishes to make it clear that the entire cost of the

proposed Broadcasting Project would be borne by the Khalsa Panth and its over-all control shall vest with the Indian Government. We have every hope that the government would have no hesitation in conceding this demand after due consideration.

## Resolution No. 10

The huge Session of the Shiromani Akali Dal strongly urges upon the Government of India to make necessary amendments in the following enactments for the benefit of the agricultural classes who have toiled hard for the larger National interests:

1. By suitable amendments in the relevant clause of the Hindu Succession Act, a woman should be given rights of inheritance in the properties of her father-in-law instead of the father's.
2. The agricultural lands of the farmers should be completely exempted from the Wealth Tax and the Estate Duty.

This way of life is based upon three basic principles:

(i) Doing honest labour.

(ii) Sharing the fruits of this labour, and

(iii) Meditation on the Lord's Name.

The Shiromani Akali Dal calls upon the Central and the State government to eradicate unemployment during the next ten years. While pursuing this aim, special emphasis should be laid on ameliorating the lot of the weaker sections, Scheduled and depressed classes, workers, landless and poor farmers and urban poor. Minimum wages should be fixed for them all.

The Shiromani Akali Dal urges upon the Punjab Government

to draw up such an economic plan for the Slate as would turn it into the leading province during the next ten years, by raising per capita income to Rs. 3,000/- and by generating an economic growth rate of 7% per annum as against 4% at National level.

The Shiromani Akali Dal gives first priority to the redrafting of the taxation structure in such a way that the burden of taxation is shifted from the poor to the richer classes and an equitable distribution of National income is ensured.

The main plank of the economic programme of the Shiromani Akali Dal is to enable the economically weaker Sections of the Society to share the fruits of National income.

The Shiromani Akali Dal calls upon the Central Government to make an international air-field at Amritsar which should also enjoy the facilities of a dry port. Similarly, a Stock Exchange should be opened at Ludhiana to accelerate the process of industrialization and economic growth in the State. The Shiromani Akali Dal also desires that suitable amendments should be made in the Foreign Exchange rules for free exchange of foreign currencies and thereby removing the difficulties being faced by the Indian emigrants.

The Shiromani Akali Dal emphatically urges upon the Indian Government to bring a parity between the prices of the agricultural produce and that of the industrial raw materials so that the discrimination against such States which lack these materials may be removed.

The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the exploitation of the producers of the cash crops like cotton, sugar-cane, oil seeds etc. at

the hands of the traders should be stopped forthwith and for such a purpose arrangements for the purchase of these crops by the government, at remunerative prices, should be made. Besides, effective steps should be taken by the government for the purchase of cotton through the Cotton Corporation,

## Resolution No. 11

The vast Session of the Shiromani Akali Dal strongly impresses upon the Government of India that keeping in view the economic backwardness of the scheduled and non-scheduled castes, provisions proportional to their population should be made in the budget for utilization for their welfare. A special ministry should be created at the Centre as a practical measure to render justice to them on the basis of reservation.

The Session also calls upon the government that in keeping with the settlement already, no discrimination should be made between the Sikh and Hindu Harijans in any part of the country.

## Resolution No. 12

The Congress government is called upon to vacate the gross injustice, discrimination done to Punjab in the distribution of Ravi-Beas waters. The Central Government must also give approval for the immediate establishment of six sugar and four textile mills in Punjab, so that the state may be able to implement its agro-industrial policy.

## Revised List of 15 Demands submitted by the Akali Dal to Government in October, 1981

### RELIGIOUS DEMANDS

1. Unconditional release of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and judicial enquiry with regard to Police action in connection with Delhi Rally (September 7), Chowk Mehta and Chando Kalan.
2. Removal of alleged Government high-handedness in the management of Delhi Gurdwaras, holding of democratic elections after removal of forcible control by "one of Government's stooges".
3. Restoration of the SGPC's right to send pilgrim parties to Pakistan and deploy sewadars for the maintenance of local Sikh shrines.
4. Permission to Sikhs travelling by air to wear kirpans in domestic and international flights.
5. An All India Gurdwaras Act should be passed.
6. Grant of holy city status to Amritsar on the pattern of Hardwar, Kurukshetra and Kashi.
7. Installation of "Harimandir Radio" at Golden Temple, Amritsar to relay kirtan.
8. Renaming Flying Mail as Harimandir Express.

### POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEMANDS

9. As per the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the S.A. Dal is firmly convinced that progress of States would entail prosperity of

the Centre, for which suitable amendments should be made in the Constitution to give more rights and provincial autonomy to States. The Centre should retain Foreign Affairs, Defence, Currency and Communications (including means of transport), while the remaining portfolios should be with the States. Besides, the Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation.

10. Merger of Punjabi-speaking areas and Chandigarh into Punjab.
11. Handing over of dams and headworks in the State to Punjab and redistribution of river waters as per national and international rules.
12. Second language status to Punjabi language in Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.
13. Stoppage to uprooting of Punjabi farmers from Terai area of U.P.
14. Setting up of a dry port at Amritsar.
15. A licence should be granted for a New Bank in place of the Punjab and Sind Bank, which should be under Sikh control and remunerative price should be fixed for agricultural products by linking it to the index of industrial production.

## RAJIV-LONGOWAL ACCORD

## JULY24, 1985

### Memorandum of Settlement

Following is the text of the memorandum of settlement.

1. Compensation to Innocent persons killed.

1.1 Along with ex gratia payment to those innocent killed in agitation or any action after 1-8-1982 compensation for property damaged will also be paid.

2. Army recruitment.

2.1 All citizens of the country have the right to enrol in the army and merit will remain in the criterion for selection.

3. Enquiry into November incidents.

3.1 The jurisdiction of Mr. Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission enquiring into the November riots of Delhi would be extended to cover the disturbances at Bokaro and Kanpur also.

4. Rehabilitation of those discharged from the army.

4.1 For all those discharged, efforts will be made to rehabilitate and provide gainful employment.

5. All India Gurdwara Act.

5.1 The Government of India agrees to consider the formulation of an all India gurudwara bill. Legislation will be brought forward for this purpose in consultation with

Shiromani Akali Dal others concerned and after fulfilling all relevant constitutional requirements.

6. Disposal of pending cases.

6.1 The notifications applying the Armed Forces Special Powers Act to Punjab will be withdrawn.

Existing special courts will try only cases relating to the following types of offences (a) Waging war (b) Hijacking.

6.2 All other cases will be transferred to ordinary courts and enabling legislation if needed will be brought forward in this session of Parliament.

7. Territorial claims.

7.1 The capital project area of Chandigarh will go to Punjab. Some adjoining areas which were previously part of Hindi or the Punjabi regions were included in the Union Territory. With the capital region going to Punjab the areas which were added to the Union Territory from the Punjabi region of the erstwhile state of Punjab will be transferred to Punjab and those from Hindi region to Haryana. The entire Sukhna lake will be kept as part of the Chandigarh and will thus go to Punjab.

7.2 It had always been maintained by Mrs. Indira Gandhi that when Chandigarh is to go to Punjab some Hindi-speaking territories in Punjab will go to Haryana. A commission will be constituted to determine the specific Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab which should go to Haryana, in lieu of Chandigarh.

The principle of contiguity and linguistic affinity with a village as a unit will be the basis of such determination. The

Commission will be required to give its findings by 21st December, 1985, and these will be binding on both sides. The work of the commission will be Limited to this aspect and will be distinct from the general boundary claims which the other commission referred to in para 7.4 will handle.

7.3 The actual transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and areas in lieu thereof to Haryana will take place simultaneously on 26th January, 1986.

7.4 There are other claims and counter-claims for requirement of the existing Punjab-Haryana boundaries. The government will appoint another commission to consider these matters and give findings. such findings will be binding on the concerned states. The terms of reference will be based on a village as a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity.

8. Centre-state relations.

8.1 Shiromani Akali Dal states that the Anandpur Sahib resolution is entirely within the framework of the Indian Constitution, that it attempts to define the concept of Centre-State relations in a manner which may bring out the true federal characteristics of our unitary Constitution, and that the purpose of the resolution is to provide greater autonomy to the state with a view to strengthening the unity and integrity of the country, since unity in diversity forms the corner-stone of our national entity.

8.2 In view of the above, the Anandpur Sahib resolution insofar as it deals with Centre-State relations, stands referred to the Sarkaria Commission.

9. Sharing of river waters.

9.1 The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan will continue to get water not less than what they are using from the Ravi-Beas system as on 1-7-1985. Water used for consumptive purposes will also remain uneffected. Quantum of usage claimed shall be verified by the tribunal referred to in para 9.2 below.

9.2 The claims of Punjab and Haryana regarding the shares in their remaining waters will be referred for adjudication to a tribunal to be presided over by a Supreme Court judge. 'The decision of this tribunal will be rendered within six months and would be binding on both parties. All legal and constitutional steps required un this respect be taken expeditiously.

9.3 The construction of the SYL canal shall continue. The canal shall be completed by I5th August, 1986.

10. Representation of minorities.

10.1 Existing instructions regarding protection of interests of minorities will be recirculated to the state chief ministers (PM will write to all chief Ministers).

11. Promotion of Punjabi Language.

11.1 The Central Government may take some steps for the promotion of the Punjabi language.

This settlement brings to an end a period of confrontation and ushers in an era of amity, goodwill and co-operation, which will promote and strengthen the unity and integrity of India.

## Chronology of Important Dates in Sikh history

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|---|---|
| 15th April 1469 | Birth of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith. |
| 1581 | Fifth Sikh Guru Arjun commences building of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. |
| 1604 | Guru Arjun completes the Guru Granth Sahib. |
| 1606 | Moghul persecution results in the death of Guru Arjun. |
| I675 | Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur executed by Moghul emperor Aurangzeb. |
| 1708 | Guru Gobind Singh passes away, ending the line of Sikh Gurus. |
| 1708-1716 | Agrarian Uprising in Punjab against Moghul nobility, led by Banda Bahadur. |
| 1738-39 | Nadir Shah of Persia invades Punjab. |
| 1747-48 | Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan invades Punjab. |
| 1748-49 | Second Afghan invasion. |
| 1751-52 | Third Afghan invasion. |
| 1756-57 | Fourth Afghan invasion Golden Temple destroyed by Ahmed Shah Abdali. |
| 1758 | Marathas enter Punjab. |
| 1759 | Fifth Afghan invasion. |
| 1762 | Battle of Panipat between Marathas and Afghans. |
| 1762 | Sixth Afghan invasion. Rebuilt Golden Temple destroyed by Ahmed Shah Abdali. |
| 1764 | Seventh Afghan invasion. |
| 1766 | Eighth Afghan invasion. |
| 1769 | Ninth Afghan invasion. |
| 1780 | Birth of Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia. |
| 1801 | Ranjit Singh becomes Maharaja of Punjab. |

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| 1813 | Battle of Attock. First Punjabi victory over Afghans. |
| 1818 | Battle of Multan. Second Punjabi victory over Afghans. |
| 1819 | Battle of Shupaiyan. Third Punjabi victory over Afghans. |
| 1839 | Death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. |
| 1845 | First Anglo-Sikh War. |
| 1848 | Second Anglo-Sikh War. |
| 1849 | Annexation of Punjab by the British. |
| 1857 | Indian Mutiny. Sikhs remain loyal to the British. |
| 1873 | Singh Sabha formed at Amritsar. |
| 1909 | Minto-Morley reforms introduce the elective principle. |
| 1913 | Ghadr movements launched. |
| 1914 | Komagutu Maru arrives in Vancouver. |
| 1914 | Sikhs recruited in large numbers for First World War. |
| 1919 | Jalianwalla Bagh massacre. |
| 1919 | Montague-Chelmsford Reforms extend special electorates to the Sikh community. |
| 1920 | Akali Dal formed for Gurudwara reform, management and control. Agitations begin. |
| 1925 | Akali agitations succeed, Sikh Gurudwaras Act passed, creating the SGPC. |
| 1939 | Second World War. Akalis break ranks with Congress over non-cooperation and encourage Sikh recruitment. |
| 1940 | Moslem League Conference adopts the Pakistan Resolution |
| 1944 | Sikh All-Party Conference demands Khalistan if Pakistan is to be ceded. |
| 1946 | Akali Dal adopted resolution calling for Sikh homeland. |
| 1947 | Partition and Independence. |
| 1948 | PEPSU created. (Patiala and East Punjab States Union). |
| 1953 | Demand for Punjab as a Punjabi speaking state put to States |

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| | Reorganization Commission. Rejected in 1955. Agitation |
| for | Punjabi Suba commences. |
| 1962 | Chinese invade India. |
| 1965 | War with Pakistan. |
| 1966 | Punjabi speaking state created. |
| 1973 | Anandpur Sahib Resolution adopted by Akali Dal. |
| 1977 | Indira Gandhi looses elections. Akalis get role in Central Government for the first time. |
| 1977 | Jamail Singh Bhindranwale becomes head of the Damdami Taksal. |
| 1980 | Mrs Gandhi swept back to power. Giani Zail Singh becomes Home Minister. Darbara Singh becomes Punjab Chief Minister. |
| 1980-84 | Akali agitation on Anandpur Sahib Resolution demands leads to escalating violence in Punjab. Provides springboard for Bhindranwale. |
| June 1984 | Operation Bluestar. Indian army operation to clear armed Sikhs out of the Golden Temple. Serious casualties and heavy damage. Sikhs outraged. Bhindranwale killed. Some Sikh regiments mutiny. |
| Oct 1984 | Mrs. Gandhi assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. Serious riots against Sikhs in Delhi and other places. Heavy casualties. |
| 1985 | Rajiv Gandhi elected by overwhelming mandate. |
| July 1985 | Rajiv Candhi and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal (President Akali Dal) sign Punjab Accord. |
| August 1985 | Sant Harchand Singh Longowal assassinated by Sikh extremists. |
| 1985 | Akalis win clear majority in Punjab assembly for the first |

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| | time. Surjit Singh Barnala becomes Chief Minister. |
| May 1987 | Punjab Government dissolved. Punjab under Presidents' Rule. |
| May 1988 | Operation Black Thunder lays siege to Golden Temple to flush out extremists who had reoccupied it. |
| 1989 | General elections in India Extreme faction of Akali Dal wins most of Punjab seats in Parliament. V.P. Singh becomes Prime Minister. |
| May/June1991 | General elections held, but law and order situation in Punjab prevents elections in the state. Rajiv Gandhi assassinated, Narsimha Rao becomes Prime Minister. |
| March 1992 | Lok Sabha and State Assembly Elections held in Punjab. Congress wins majority of seats in both, but low turnout and boycotts by the Akalis make it a hollow victory. |
| | The violence continues. |

## Glossary

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| AISSF | All-India Sikh Student Federation. |
| Akali Dal | Sikh political party. |
| Akali | Literally: immortal. |
| Akhal Takht | Literally: throne of the timeless one. Seat of Sikh spiritual authority in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. |
| Akhand Kirtani Jatha | Sikh sect emphasizing purity and meditation. |
| Arya Samaj | 19th century Hindu reform movement founded by Swami Dayanand. |
| Babbar Khalsa | Sikh Lions, political group associated with violence. |
| Baisakhi | Spring Harvest Festival. |
| Bhakti | Literally: devotion. Hindu spiritual movement of the 13th and 14th centuries. |
| Bhramo Samaj | 19th century Hindu reform movement founded by Raja Ram Mohan Ray. |
| BJP | Bharatiya Janata Party. Right-wing political party with Hindu fundamentalist leanings. |
| Chief Khalsa Diwan | Ist Sikh political association. |
| Dal Khalsa | Khalsa party, Bhindranwale's political party. Today group associated with violence. |
| Damdami Taksal | Sikh missionary school founded by Baba Deep Singh 200 years ago. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale became its head in 1977. |
| Devi | Literally: goddess. Devi cult or Sakhti cult: emphasizes the powers of the female deity. |
| Dharmsala | House of refuge. |
| Ghadr | Literally: revolution - name taken by a party formed early this century in the USA to fight British rule in |

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| | India. Members were mostly Sikhs. |
| Gurmukhi | Punjabi script in which all Sikh sacred literature is written, and used by Sikhs. |
| Guru Granth Sahib | Sikh holy scriptures. |
| Guru-da-langar | Food of the Guru - name given to the free meals served to all at any Gurudwara. |
| Gurudwara | Sikh temple and community centre. |
| Hukmnama | Religious edict. |
| ISYF | International Sikh Youth Federation. |
| IWA | Indian Workers Association |
| Izzat | Honour. |
| Jainism | Sect of Hinduism founded by Mahavira in the 5th century BC |
| Jat | People of tribal origin who settled in Punjab. There are Hindu, Moslem and Sikh Jats. |
| Jatha | Bands of fighters, today used to describe quasi-military groups of Sikhs. |
| Jathedar | Leader of a Jatha. Respectful title. |
| Kesadhari | Sikh who retains his beard and unshorn hair. |
| Khalistan | The name of any possible future Sikh homeland. Derives from Khalsa (pure), stan (land). |
| Khalsa | The pure. Used for the brotherhood of initiated Sikhs. |
| Khatri | Punjabi trading caste from which the first Sikh Guru Nanak and all his successors came. |
| Komagatu Maru | Name of the ship hired by Sikh businessman to take would be Sikh migrants from India to Canada in 1914. |
| Marg | Road |
| Mazhabi | Lower cast Sikhs. |
| Miri | Temporal authority. |

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| Misl | Groups of fighters, with a leader, who held sway over Punjab until the monarchy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. |
| Nanke | Maternal grandparents' home. |
| Naukeri | Service, as in employment. |
| Nirankari | Sikh sect, considered heretical today because of their tendency to treat their leaders as living Gurus. |
| Operation Black Thunder | Siege of the Golden Temple for the same purpose as above lasting from May 12 to 18th 1988. |
| Operation Blue Star | Code name for the Indian army operation to clear the Golden Temple and other Gurudwaras of armed extremists, launched on June 5th, 1984. |
| Panth | Literally: Path; used to refer to the Sikh community. |
| Sahajdhari | Sikh who no longer retains his beard and has cut his hair. |
| Sangat | Congregation. |
| Sarbat Khalsa | Biennial meetings of misls held at Baisakli and Divali. |
| Sati | Self-immolation by a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. |
| SGPC | Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. |
| Shloka | Sacred verse. |
| Shudhi | Purification. |
| Singh Sabha | Sikh political association formed at the end of the 19th century to encourage western education amongst Sikhs. |
| Sufi | Moslem mystics who spread Islam in India. |

## Aims and Objectives of the IWA-GB

(i) To organise Indians to: safeguard and improve their conditions of life and work;

(ii) seek co-operation of the Indian High Commission in UK towards the fulfilment of its aims and objects;

(iii) promote co-operation and unity with the Trade Union and Labour Movement in Great Britain;

(iv) strengthen friendship with the British and all other peoples in Great Britain and co-operate with their organisations to this end;

(v) fight against all forms of discrimination based on race, colour, creed or sex, for equal human rights and social and economic opportunities, and co-operate with other organisations to this end;

(vi) promote the cause of friendship, peace and freedom of all countries and co-operate with other organisations, national and international, striving for the same;

(vii) keep its members in particular, and the people of Great Britain, generally, informed of political, economic and social developments in India; and to

(viii) undertake social, welfare and cultural activities towards the fulfilment of the above aims and objectives.

# METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

During the late summer of 1989, I carried out interviews with selected members of the British Sikh community. The criteria for selection of those to be interviewed was their reputation and standing within the community, and three types of people were targeted.

Firstly, an effort was made to pin-point and speak to those who could in any sense be described as community-leaders. Thus those interviewed include officials of the management committees of some of the largest Gurudwaras in the UK, like the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Southall, and the Sikh Temple in Gravesend. They also include owners/editors of the most popular Punjabi weeklies in Britain, as well as leaders of the IWA. There were also interviews with members or officials of various Sikh/Indian political organisations in this country, like the National Council for Khalistan, the International Sikh Youth Federation, the Babbar Khalsa.

Secondly, those who perform or performed a bridging role between the Sikhs and British society, and who are best described as 'brokers', work for local councils or community relations programmes, and have a long experience of liaison between immigrant Sikhs and authorities in this country. These included a Senior Community Relations Officer, and a Borough Council Officer (both Sikh).

Thirdly, those who could be described as observers of Sikh affairs in this country and in India were selected. These included several Sikh academics and others like an erstwhile London correspondent for the 'Times of India', with a record as an observer of Sikh affairs. It must be noted that often individuals played dual roles, that overlapped between the categories.

On some occasions the interview lead to a group discussion involving others present in the Gurudwara or the offices of those being interviewed, and this was often helpful as it allowed me to observe discussions amongst the community members themselves. Interviews were carried out in a mixture of Punjabi and English, with several of those interviewed being reasonably proficient in both.

The questions asked of those interviewed are set out below. However certain changes were made when interviewing specific people. Questions were added, put in a different order, their assumptions examined etc., depending on the experience and background or political stance of the person being interviewed. This was to enable me to get the maximum out of each interview, and necessary because of the different sorts of people interviewed. It must be pointed out that the following is a schedule to guide the interview rather than a formal questionnaire.

## THE SCHEDULE

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself; how you came to be living in England; your profession etc.?
2. Could you tell me something about the migrant experience of the Sikh community, in general terms? How and why they came; the early years; the starting of Gurudwaras and newspapers; the arrival of families etc.

3. Do many Sikhs return to Punjab?
   If not, then how would you explain the continuing relevance of Punjab to them?
   What sort of links exist between Sikhs here and Punjab?

4. Could you tell me about the organisation of Gurudwaras here?
   How they are managed and run?
   What role the Sangat (congregation) play in Gurudwara decision-making?
   What rules govern Gurudwara management etc.?

5. How involved/interested are you in British politics?
   What can you say generally about Sikh attitudes to and involvement in British politics?

6. Does the attitude of sections of the British population (general ignorance about Sikhs, racism etc.) have anything to do with Sikhs looking to Punjab?

7. Is the younger generation of Sikhs as interested and involved in Punjab politics?
   Does the younger generation show more inclination to political expression through British politics?

8. Living as you are so far away from Punjab, what are the ways in which you can influence events there?

9. What sort of impact do political happenings in Punjab have on the Sikh community here? Can you give me some examples?

10. Do the politics of the Sikh here, and their actions have an impact on what is going on in Punjab/India? Can you give me some examples?

11. Can you give me any advice regarding books etc. that I should read; people I should meet to further explore the questions above?

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