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THE POLITICS OF HOMELAND

A STUDY OF
ETHNIC LINKAGES AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION
AMONGST SIKHS IN BRITAIN AND NORTH AMERICA

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Declarations

Table 3.1 draws partly on my paper '*The Punjabi press of North America 1907-1988*', Punjab Research Group, Discussion Papers Series, No.20. Table 3.2 uses some information from '*The Punjabi press*,' New Community, 1989, 15[2], p.171-184 written jointly with Gurharpal Singh and Table 3.3 draws slightly on '*Nurturing the faithful; the role of the sant among Britain's Sikhs*', Religion, 22, 1992, p.349-374.

Darshan Singh Tatla, December, 1993

SUMMARY

The transnational activities of migrant groups have become a major issue in recent decades. This study offers an analysis of overseas Sikhs' involvement in Punjab issues; especially concentrating on post-1984 period, when a vigorous support and mobilisation by overseas Sikhs for a 'homeland' has led to diplomatic strains between the Government of India and some of the states with large Sikh migrant population. This study concentrates upon the mobilisation among Sikh migrant groups in Canada, the United States and Great Britain -three countries which account for over three quarter of overseas Sikh population.

The issue of 'homeland' among displaced minorities and migrant groups has usually been studied as a diasporic phenomenon. In a theoretical formulation preceding this study, the term diaspora and recent contributions to extend its scope to all such migrant groups who were neither forced out of their homelands nor had continuous historic connections is critically examined. Rejecting the wider definition advocated by more recent contributors to extend this term to any migrant group which maintains some connections with their land of origins, a case is made for only those migrant groups which are essentially involved in a demand for a secure and independent 'homeland' to be part of 'diaspora studies'.

Proceeding with migration history and experiences of Sikhs in Britain, Canada and the United States, the study explores the persistence and continuation of cultural and religious practices derived from their land of origins. Noting that neither the homeland for Sikhs was an unambiguous term till recently nor were they forced out from their homes, Sikh migrant groups provide an interesting but problematic example of transnational ethnic linkages. The next two chapters analyze the social, cultural and political links with the Punjab. The study then provides a description and analysis of Sikh mobilisation as a reaction to dramatic events in the Punjab in June 1984. The last chapter situates overseas Sikh mobilisation as a reaction to a crisis which has fermented some new elements of ethnic consciousness with consequent bearing upon the group identity and political mobilisation within overseas Sikh migrant groups. It also notes the impact of overseas Sikh mobilisation on the transnational relationship of concerned states and their respective policies towards Sikh migrant groups.

This study of overseas Sikhs provides an interesting case of transnational politics where a crucial event in a migrant groups' home country could perceptibly shift their political loyalty towards an imaginary homeland, and how in the process, their land of origin becomes a 'threatened homeland'. The study thus illustrates the limitation of the existing analytical concepts dealing with the behaviour of migrant groups whose attachments to their roots are principally triggered into a virulent form of mobilisation due to a traumatic event in their religious centre.

The study draws upon a wide range of sources including interviews with leading participants, and a thorough examination of ethnic Punjabi media of the United States, Canada and Great Britain. In addition it takes account of the growing body of secondary materials associated with the study of Sikhs in the Punjab.

GLOSSARY

Akal Takhat:	The sacred building opposite the <u>Harmandir</u> . This was severely damaged during the Indian army invasion in June 1984. It was rebuilt in haste by the Government of India and handed back to Sikh priests in October 1984. This 'government built' shrine was demolished again by the Sikh priests and community leaders in April 1986, it is now being re-built through traditional volunteer service by Sikhs
Akali Dal:	A major political party of the Sikhs
Akhand Path:	Continuous reading of the Guru Granth from beginning to end; takes about 48 hours.
Amrit:	The Sikh baptism
Amritdhari:	A baptised Sikh wearing 5Ks.
Bhangra:	A folk dance of the Punjab
Bhog:	Concluding ceremony in a gurdwara
Harmandir:	The Golden Temple, Amritsar. Also called <u>Durbar Sahib</u>
Dhadi:	Traditional singers of heroic tradition of Punjab
Gadr:	An association of migrant Indians based in San Francisco from 1913 to 1917 which led a militant campaign against British rule in Punjab/India. Also spelled as <u>Ghadar</u> .
Ghallughara:	Two major massacres of Sikhs in 1742 [Chhota Ghallughara] and 1762 [Vadda Ghallughara]
Giddha:	A folk dance of Punjab practised by women
Guru Granth:	The Sikh scriptures also called Adi Granth
Heer Ranjha:	A folk-tale of romance of Punjab, others are <u>Mirza Sahiban</u> , <u>Sassi</u> and <u>Sohni</u>
Izzat:	Honour
Jujharu:	Valour / militant. Another Punjabi word is <u>Kharhku</u> .
Kabaddi:	A popular game of Punjab
Khalsa:	Collective name given to Sikh society
Khalistan:	Land of the Khalsa: Name of the Sikh homeland
Kirtan:	Religious hymn-singing
Langar:	Free kitchen attached to almost every gurdwara
Mona:	A clean-shaven Sikh
Panth:	Literally path, a collective name for the Sikhs, also used as <u>Khalsa-Panth</u> or <u>Sikh Panth</u> .
Parchar:	The propagation of Sikh faith by emphasising <u>Amrit</u>
Pardes:	Foreign land/country
Quam:	Nation
Ragi:	Traditional hymn-singers in a gurdwara
Sangat:	Congregation
Sant:	A holy man. Also called a <u>sadhu</u>
Sahajdhari:	A non-baptised Sikh
SGPC:	Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee established in 1925, -an elected body of the Sikhs managing main historic gurdwaras in the Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.
Shahid:	Martyr
Waheguru ji ka Khalsa waheguru ji ki fateh:	A form of Sikh greeting used when addressing the <u>sangat</u> [congregation]
Watan:	Homeland sometimes called <u>Des</u>

INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses some aspects of overseas Sikh communities' political behaviour, especially their role and involvement in the demand for a 'Sikh homeland' in the post 1984 period. On the 3rd June 1984, the Indian army in an operation code-named 'Bluestar' stormed the Golden Temple with the specific aim to 'remove terrorists, criminals and their weapons from sacred places of worship'^[1]. Thousands lay dead on the sacred parikarma [walkabout] surrounding the pool, among them Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Subeg Singh, Amrik Singh, ordinary Sikh pilgrims including women and children whose bodies were unceremoniously disposed in rubbish trucks and cremated, their names perished among the debris^[2]. The building facing the Harmandir, the

¹ Government of India, White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, New Delhi, 1984, p.4.

² According to the White Paper, the number of casualties were as follows:

	In the Golden Temple	Other Religious Places	Curfew	Total Violations
1. Civilians/Terrorists				
[a] Killed	493	23	38	554
[b] Injured	86	14	21	121
2. Army Casualties				
[a] Killed	83	1	8	92
[b] Injured	249	24	14	287
3. Civilians / Terrorist Apprehensions				
	1592	796	2324	4712

Source: White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, 1984, Annexure XI

Unofficial sources have disputed the government figures and claimed over two thousand Sikh pilgrims were killed. There is no independent confirmation of the dead or the injured, nor was a list published of those who died. No commission of enquiry was launched into the circumstances leading to such a large scale civil disturbance in the post-independence India.

Akal Takhat, almost crumbled due to heavy shelling. The Sikh Reference Library containing original manuscripts, hand-written copies of the Guru Granth, Sikh gurus' letters and commands were, according to later versions, deliberately set on fire.

While the White Paper issued by the Government of India asserted 'the ideological underpinning for the demand for a separate Sikh state was provided by certain members of the Sikh community in foreign countries' and that 'the essence of the problem in Punjab was not the demands put forward by the Akali Dal in 1981 but the maturing of a secessionist and anti-national movement with the active support of a small number of groups operating from abroad', almost every overseas Sikh household reacted with anger and shock^[3]. Many could not believe that their 'own government' could set its armed forces upon 'the house of God and faith' and kill its own citizens indiscriminately and especially on a day of a pilgrimage.

The 'Operation Bluestar' was the culmination of the Sikh leaders' campaign for Punjab autonomy which began in 1981. Overseas Sikhs were increasingly drawn into this campaign and perturbed at the escalation of violence in the Punjab. Negotiations between the Union government and Sikh leaders ran into several rounds but broke down every time it was reported that agreement was being concluded^[4]. Then, despite

³ Government of India, The White Paper, 1984, p.1 and p.2.

⁴ The Punjab crisis since 1984 has attracted many popular and scholarly accounts. Among the popular accounts, see: Nayar, Kuldip and Singh, Khushwant, Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After, New Delhi, Vision Books, 1984; Singh, Amrik [ed], Punjab in Indian Politics, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1985; Tully, Mark and Jacob, Satish. Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's last battle, London, Pan Books, 1985; Joshi, Chand. Bhindranwale: myth and reality, New Delhi, Vikas, 1984. Gupte, Pranay India: the challenge of change, London, Methuen, 1989. Akbar, M. J. India: the siege within: challenges to a nation's unity, Penguin, 1985. Bhullar, Pritam The Sikh mutiny, Delhi, Siddarth, 1987. Harminder Kaur, Bluestar over Amritsar, Delhi, Ajanta, 1990. Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Bluestar: the true story, New Delhi, UBS Publications, 1993. Madhok, Balraj Punjab Problem: the Muslim connection, New Delhi, Hindu World Publications, 1985. Singh, Patwant and Malik, Harji Punjab: the fatal miscalculation, Delhi, Published by Patwant Singh, 1985. Kapur, Anup Chand. The Punjab crisis: an analytical study, New Delhi, S. Chand & Co. 1985

repeated public assurances given to the contrary, the army was sent into the Golden Temple⁵. A majority of Sikhs were amazed that the solemn assurances given by the Government of India could be set aside, notwithstanding the intransigence of their own leaders. They sought answers to many distressing questions. Was such a massive operation involving armed forces fighting right into the centre of Sikh faith necessary to arrest those responsible for terrorist acts and taking refuge in the precincts of the Golden Temple? What actually happened in the Golden Temple during the first week of June or indeed since the launching of Akali movement in 1981? In the first week of June such thoughts became a definite past. The television brought news of fighting in progress and then the horror of destruction to the most sacred Akal Takhat building straight into Sikh families' sitting rooms. Many who had disputed the wisdom of Sant Bhindranwale's fiery rhetoric now hailed him as a martyr among those who fell victim to the armed forces' onslaught.

Anger and condemnation was spontaneous. As the shock wave spread up and down the gurdwaras, special meetings were convened and resolutions passed condemning the Government of India's action. On the following

Among academic studies, see: Singh, Iqbal Punjab under siege: a critical analysis, New York, Allen McMillan and Enderson, 1986. Kapur, Rajiv. Sikh Separatism: the politics of the faith, London, Allen & Unwin, 1986. Jeffrey, Robin What's happening to India: Punjab, ethnic conflict, Mrs Gandhi's death and test for federalism, London, Macmillan, 1986. Brass, Paul R. Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison, New Delhi, Sage, 1991. Kapur, Rajiv 'Khalistan': India's Punjab problem', Third World Quarterly. Koehn, Sharon D, 'Ethnic emergence and modernisation: The Sikh case', Canadian Ethnic Studies, 33[2], 1991, p.95-116. Leaf, M. 'The Punjab crisis', Asian Survey, Vol XXV, No. 5, May 1985, p. p475-498. Mahmood, C Keppley. 'Sikh rebellion and the Hindu concept of order', Asian Survey, 29[3], March 1989, pp. 326-340. Pettigrew, Joyce. 'In search of a new kingdom of Lahore', Pacific Affairs, 60[1], 1987, p.1-25. Singh, Gurharpal 'Understanding the Punjab problem', Asian Survey, 27[12], December 1987, p.1268-77. Singh, Gurharpal 'The Punjab problem in the 1990s: a post 1984 assessment', Journal of Commonwealth and comparative politics, 32[2], p.184. Hapke, Holly M. 'The political economy of Sikh nationalism', Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik, 1984, 4, 13-26. Narang, A.S. Storm over the Suttlej: the Akali politics, New Delhi, Gitanjali, 1983.

⁵ Arun Shourie, 'Lessons from the Punjab', in A Kaur, A Shourie et al [eds] The Punjab Story, Delhi, Roli Books International, p.181.

Sunday, on June 10, overseas Sikhs turned out in large numbers to protest against the 'desecration' of their faith. Protest marches were held in major cities of Canada, the United States, Far Eastern countries and European capitals. A Sikh diplomat in Norway resigned. In the aftermath of this 'traumatic event', anger amongst ordinary Sikhs found expression in several ways⁶. A call for the 'liberation of the Golden Temple' saw several volunteers lined up to go to Punjab. Video-tapes and books received from the Indian High Commission justifying government's action were publicly burnt at many gurdwaras as they were seen as adding 'insults to injury.' Many gurdwaras organised local demonstrations. Several Sikhs wrote angry letters to the press and several events within the Sikh community followed in quick succession. Between 3rd June and 31st October, 1984, as the news came of Indian Prime Minister's assassination by her two Sikh body guards in New Delhi, new organisations had been formed, committed to nothing less than an independent Sikh state. The media reported a mood of jubilant celebration in Sikh circles on the death of the Indian prime minister⁷. Later some Sikhs tried to diffuse this untoward action as one by a few irresponsible members of the community, others saw it as representative of a silent majority sharing similar emotions with other overseas Sikhs⁸. While Indian authorities led by Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi defended the army action as necessary for the unity of country, subsequent events claimed the life of Indian Prime Minister, leading to the massacre of over three thousand Sikhs in the capital city, Delhi, and hundreds of Sikhs in other cities⁹. The

⁶ Khushwant Singh, My Bleeding Punjab, Delhi, 1992, p.81.

⁷ The Guardian, The Times 1.11.1984. Similar reports were published by national dailies of Canada, the United States and other countries with Sikh migrant communities.

⁸ Helweg, A.W. 'Sikh politics in India: the emigrant factor', in Barrier, N.G. and Dusenbery, Verne A. [eds.] The Sikh diaspora: migration and experience beyond Punjab, Delhi, Chanakya Publications, 1989, pp. 305-336

⁹ Chakarvarti, Uma and Haksar, Nandita. The Delhi riots: three days in the life of a nation, New Delhi, Lancer International, 1987. People's Union for Democratic Rights and People's Union for Civil Liberties, Who are the Guilty? Report of a Joint Inquiry into the

consequent spiralling and worsening of law and order coupled with the increasing militancy among the Sikh youth have embroiled the Punjab in an unparalleled scale of violence.

The Punjab crisis struck a deep and disturbing chord in the minds of thousands of Sikhs in far distant lands. Overseas Sikhs were outraged over what they thought was an act of genocide in the Golden Temple and deliberate humiliation of the whole community. A community's different set of assumptions, cultural expressions, linguistic meanings and explanations ran in stark contrast to the official statements of the government of India. The attitude of Sikh leaders in overseas countries has certainly seen a remarkable shift from pro-India to pro-Punjab. As a direct result of 1984 events, as this study will gather evidence and analyze overseas political mobilisation in support of Punjab, there has been a discernible shift in overseas Sikh leaders' pronouncements towards an independent homeland for the Sikhs.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

The sudden appearance of highly emotional and charged appeal of 'Sikh homeland' to a large number of Sikhs in the overseas countries presents difficulties for a student of Sikh history and political science. For historians of Sikhs, the demand may present something of a new invention; for political scientists, the emergence of the Sikh homeland issue in the international arena runs parallel to a number of other migrant communities yearning for a homeland.

This phenomenon of intra-ethnic solidarity, of which migrants Sikhs' support for their co-ethnics in the Punjab is just one example among many similar cases across the globe, presents several difficulties to a student of political science. First, there arises a general question of why members of an ethnic group settled in overseas countries may

causes and impact of the riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November, Delhi, 1984.

continue to attach themselves to their country or region of origin or their 'homelands', and why this interaction, in recent decades, has been on the increase. Second, why it is the case that some ethnic groups become involved in the issue of 'homelands'. Third, how are particular ethnic groups involved in this process. This study focuses on Sikh migrant communities settled in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, and is mainly concerned to provide an answer to the third question only; namely, how overseas Sikhs became involved into this process. However, the need to address the first two issues is crucial to clarify the basic premises of the analysis.

The first task, then, is to account for the phenomena of ethnic loyalty to homelands. Such attachment, taking the historic case of Jewish exile, is usually termed as a diaspora. Chapter One undertakes a review of literature relating to the concept of diaspora. It examines the possibility whether Sikh migrant communities, who are apparently recent migrants and settled across several countries, can be covered by this term. On the strict criteria of a 'forced' separation of a community from its homeland, the Sikh communities in overseas countries clearly do not qualify as a diaspora. However it will be argued there that the overseas Sikh reaction to homeland events in the post-1984 period, as well as a long and persistence attachment to a notion of a 'homeland', can be analyzed using a slightly wider definition of the term diaspora. This is to be sharply distinguished from a far wider definition of diaspora which has been advocated by some sociologists and political analysts¹⁰. According to the wider category any migrant group maintaining an active relationship with its land of origins will satisfy the conditions of a diaspora. However, as we shall see in chapter One, this wider definition adds to confusion rather than clarifying the concepts.

¹⁰ Sheffer, Gabriel [ed.] Modern Diaspora in international Politics, London, Croom Helm, 1986. Said, A.A. and Simmons, L.R. [eds.] Ethnicity ion international context: the politics of dissociation, NJ, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1976. Goulbourne, Harry. Ethnicity and nationalism in post-imperial Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

The Sikhs' case fulfils certain essential ingredients of a 'diasporic community'. The original connotation of a religious community scattered away from its centre, though not by force, applies in good measure to overseas Sikhs. They continue to draw on an essentially religious world-view in an increasingly unbelieving world. They have also tried to uphold an ethnic identity, with varying degree of success in overseas locations, this identity is essentially derived from a religious tradition, and a sense of territorial centre in the Punjab. The historical Punjab has impinged upon their sense as a territorial home. In the post-1984 period, a more concise sense of a Sikh homeland, Khalistan -a secure land for a religious community has emerged. However this transformation from an ecclesiastical tradition to a political assertion has occurred due to the dramatic events of 1984.

In order to understand an apparent shift in an ethnic group's political and social outlook due to 1984 events in Amritsar, it is necessary to trace the development of Sikh identity and the idea of a Sikh homeland during the recent past. It may also be necessary to situate the Sikh reaction to the Indian army action on the Golden Temple in terms of a collective group reaction seen as humiliation by the leading members of the group. The new developments seem to contradict with the popular image of Sikhs as a progressive and economically successful community. Portrayed as an outward-looking group, overseas Sikhs are thought to be integrative, economically successful who nevertheless have strong connections with the Punjab. A crisis in their land of origin seems to have turned a community into an inward, introspective group, with a number of its members transferring its emancipation to a vision of an independent and secure homeland.

In the post 1984 period, overseas Sikh involvement into the Sikh homeland issue has been pervasive. This study locates this mobilisation of overseas Sikhs as an immediate reaction to Indian state's violation of a sacred place and the religious tradition associated with it. The threat thus posed led, for a section of the community, a clear

resolution of their divided allegiances. The overseas mobilisation, as will be seen in Chapter Four, has an element of continuation. Overseas Sikhs' interaction with their land of origins goes back several decades. The study will also examine whether overseas Sikhs' involvement arises essentially from the uncertainty of their status in foreign lands, which, in the post-1984 period, has become imbued with a search for a secure 'homeland'. Migrant Sikhs thus do not meet a strict definition of a diaspora but may yet satisfy the conditions associated with the psychological and sociological attributes of a diaspora¹¹. The study should also throw some light on a crucial process of ethnic allegiances and how these change. In particular, it may highlight how an external threat may create a condition in which other allegiances, at least for a majority of its group members, are subordinated to group solidarity¹².

PUNJAB AND THE SIKHS: ISSUE OF A SIKH HOMELAND

The overseas Sikhs' reaction to the Punjab crisis needs to be situated within the Sikh society's evolution in the contemporary India. The present crisis arose when a major political party of the Sikhs, the Akali Dal, launched a campaign for a certain measure of autonomy for the Punjab. Arguments for such autonomy were being marshalled from much earlier period than the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973.

Indeed, the idea of Punjab as a Sikh homeland goes back to several discrete elements of Sikh history. Punjab, the land of five rivers, is the birthplace of Sikhs. Sikh history is not mythical; the faith began in the later Mughal period of India with Guru Nanak preaching a

¹¹ Tabori, Paul. The anatomy of exile: a semantic and historical study, London, Harrap, 1972, p.204

¹² Patterson, Orlando Context and choice in ethnic allegiance: a theoretical framework and Caribbean case study, Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, D. [eds]. Ethnicity: theory and experience, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975, p.313.

synthesis of local religious traditions^[13]. Borrowing much from the new Islamic tradition, he rejected the caste system of Hinduism. His new doctrine appealed to many ordinary people. However, he was unlike any other saint of the Bhakti period which swept throughout the Northern Indian society. His doctrine, unlike other saints, was gradually institutionalised by a lineage of nine successors, of which the fourth, the fifth and sixth built the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in the central Punjab, a city of some commerce and trade. The fifth guru also prepared a book of scriptures for his followers and had it installed at the centre of worship in the temple in Amritsar. Two more important towns were established by Sikh gurus, Kartarpur and Sri Hargobindpur, besides a small military enclave and fort at Anandpur Sahib. The increasing following of Gurus was noticed by the Mughal governor of Punjab and led to prosecution and local repression. The last two gurus abandoned the central Punjab and Amritsar altogether and spent their lives in Northern hilly areas of the Punjab. The increasing hostility between the Mughal rulers and the Sikhs perhaps forced the tenth guru to form Sikhs as a Khalsa Panth -a body of dedicated followers. Before his death in 1708 he also ended the lineage of living gurus and accorded the Adi Granth the scriptures collected and edited by the fifth guru as the spiritual guide for Sikh followers.

Between 1708 and 1760, many members of the small community of Sikhs were forced to abandon their homes and took to jungles as armed bands. They faced severe upheavals living precariously, threats of prosecutions by the Punjab governors, and even worse periodic havocs caused by Nadir Shah's raids into Delhi and interior India. The number of Sikhs were substantially reduced by two major massacres perpetrated in 1746 and 1762, these are since remembered as Ghallugharas. However, the declining authority of Mughals weakened by repeated invasions of Afghans from the West taking the much-trodden route of Lahore-to-

¹³ Standard histories of the Sikh community include, Grewal, J. S. Sikhs of the Punjab, Cambridge University Press, 1991, Khushwant Singh. A History of the Sikhs, Oxford University Press, 2 vols. 1966

Delhi, the militant Sikh bands came to dominate the central districts of Punjab. They soon grew into twelve Sikh confederacies, each semi-independent, only united by the external enemy. Among these, Ranjit Singh emerged as a capable leader, who crushed all of them, and at the age of 19, he was formally installed as the king of Punjab in 1799. With its capital Lahore, Punjab became a sovereign country. As befitted a Sikh sovereign, Ranjit Singh immediately visited the Amritsar, paying tributes to the Guru's Temple and donated a sizable amount of gold to the many-times razed building. His technicians skilfully emboldened this gold onto the roofs, windows and doors of the temple, beautifying its surroundings, clearing the pool¹⁴. Early European travellers coined the word 'Golden Temple' for the building, this became quite a popular name competing with others such as Harmandir and Durbar Sahib in the Punjabi language.

Although Ranjit Singh welded the Punjab's chiefs into a powerful monarchy and extended his rule to the farthest physical boundaries of Kashmir and Ladakh in the North East to Khandhar in the West¹⁵. He also signed a Treaty with the East Indian Company respecting the mutual borders. After Ranjit's death [1839], the Sikh empire was plunged into a bloody war of succession among his seven sons and their courtiers. The East India Company moved its troops to the banks of Sutlej to prepare for political uncertainty. The Khalsa army unfettered by rulers, crossed the Sutlej and Punjab became the field of three fierce battles. The English armies supported by 'Poorbias', [Hindustani sepoys], defeated the Sikh armies and the Punjab was finally annexed to

¹⁴ Madanjit Kaur The Golden Temple: past and present, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983. Kerr, Ian J. 'British relationships with the Golden Temple, 1849-1890,' The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 21[2], 1984, pp. 139-153.

¹⁵ Chopra, Gulshanlal The Punjab as a sovereign state, Lahore, 1928. Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh; Maharajah of the Punjab, 1780-1839, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962.

the East Indian Company's empire in 1849^[16]. In 1858, as a result of Indian mutiny of 1857, the East India Company's monopoly was terminated and India was placed directly under the British monarchy. The Indian mutiny was to affect various Indian provinces severely, but Punjab had by and large stood aloof from the rebellion^[17]. As a result of post-mutiny army and administrative reorganisation, Punjabis became favourites for armed forces, becoming in due course of time the 'sword arm' of British empire in India^[18]. The British were careful in winning the Sikh sympathies by a generous treatment of their cultural and religious sensitivities. As important allies of colonial power, Sikhs were able to extract some concessions which were to institutionalise some of their religious-political organisations^[19].

During colonial rule, Sikhs were to play an unusual role, first as imperial favourites then from post World War I period, the community leaders sharply divided into militant nationalists and loyalists - a political development quite isolated from the rest of Indian provinces. During the early decades, laws relating to the maintenance of Sikh historic shrines allowed Sikhs to act as a unified body and a legislation relating to specific Sikh rites of marriage legitimised

¹⁶ Hasrat, Bikram Jit Anglo-Sikh Relations: 1799-1849: a reappraisal of the rise and fall of the Sikhs, Hoshiarpur, published by the author, 1968. On Anglo-Sikh wars, the first of which was fought at Mudki in December 1846 and the third and decisive at Chillianwala in January 1849, see, Gough, Sir Charles, Gen. and Innes, Arhtur, D. The Sikhs and the Sikh wars: the rise, conquest, and annexation of the Punjab state, Patiala, Languages Department, 1970. [reprint of A.D.Innes Co. London, 1897].

¹⁷ Malik, Salahuddin 'The Punjab and the Indian mutiny', Journal of Indian History, 1972, 50[149], pp. 343-374. Also see, Norman, Gen. Sir Henry Wylie A narrative of the campaign of the Delhi army, London, W. H. Dalton, 1858. Forrest, George W [Ed.] The Indian mutiny, 1857-58 Calcutta, 3 vols. 1893. Falcon, R. W. Handbook on Sikhs for regimental officers, Allahabad, Pioneer Press, 1896. Bingley, A. H. Sikhs, Patiala, Department of Languages, Punjab, 1970. [Reprint of 1899].

¹⁸ Leigh, M.S. The Punjab and the War, Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1922. Brief, David. The Punjab and recruitment to the Indian army, 1846-1918, M.Litt., Thesis, University of Oxford, 1984

¹⁹ Kapur, Rajiv. Sikh Separatism: the politics of the faith, London, Allen & Unwin, 1986. Talwar, K. S. 'The Anand Marriage Act', Punjab past and present, 2[2], 1968, pp. 400-410.

their religious tradition. Although the emigrant politics was to play a negative role in the Anglo-Sikh relations from World War One, the concessions gained enabled them some strength in the legislative framework of the Punjab dominated by Muslim political leaders.

By the 1940s, the British were preparing to relinquish political control of India -the 'jewel of the crown'. The imperial power's decision to quit placed Indian nationalists in a painful dilemma. Despite gaining notable political allegiance for the Indian National Congress as a political party sharing an essential unified vision of Indian provinces, its appeal to the Muslim and other minority communities was to remain meagre. From 1940s onwards, various experiments of collaboration and accommodation proved increasingly hazardous. Various assurances regarding Muslims' future in a predominantly Hindu India were to be rejected by Muhammad Ali Jinnah who emerged as a champion of a separate Muslim state^[20]. While Jinnah turned around several Muslim dominated provinces including the Punjab into its fold, the events moved far too swiftly to let Sikh leaders formulate any serious plan for its community's future^[21]. While Jinnah formulated his demand for a separate state, and Congress leaders finally acceded to the partition, Sikh leaders hurriedly adopted a resolution for a Sikh homeland essentially as a reaction to the threat posed by the prospect of partition^[22]. In formulating this demand, Sikh leaders and elites were to narrate their historic relationship with the Punjab as a basis for this demand. The Executive Committee of the Akali Dal passed a resolution on March 22 1946 stating:

²⁰ Jalal, Ayesha, The sole spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

²¹ Talbot, Ian Provincial politics and the Pakistan movement: the growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937-47, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1988.

²² Tinker, Hugh. 'Pressure, persuasion, decision: factors in the partition of the Punjab, August 1947', Journal of Asian Studies, XXXVI[4], 1977, pp. 695-704. Oren, S. 'The Sikhs, Congress and the Unionists in British Punjab, 1937-1945', Modern Asian Studies, 8[3], 1974, p.409

Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language, traditions, and history claim it as their homeland and holy land which the British took over as a 'trust' from the last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the entity of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of [sic] Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and of the danger of absorption by the Hindus on the other, the executive Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal demands for the preservation and protection of the religious, cultural and economic and political rights of the Sikh nation, the creation of a Sikh state which would include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their sacred shrines and historical gurdwaras with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property^[23].

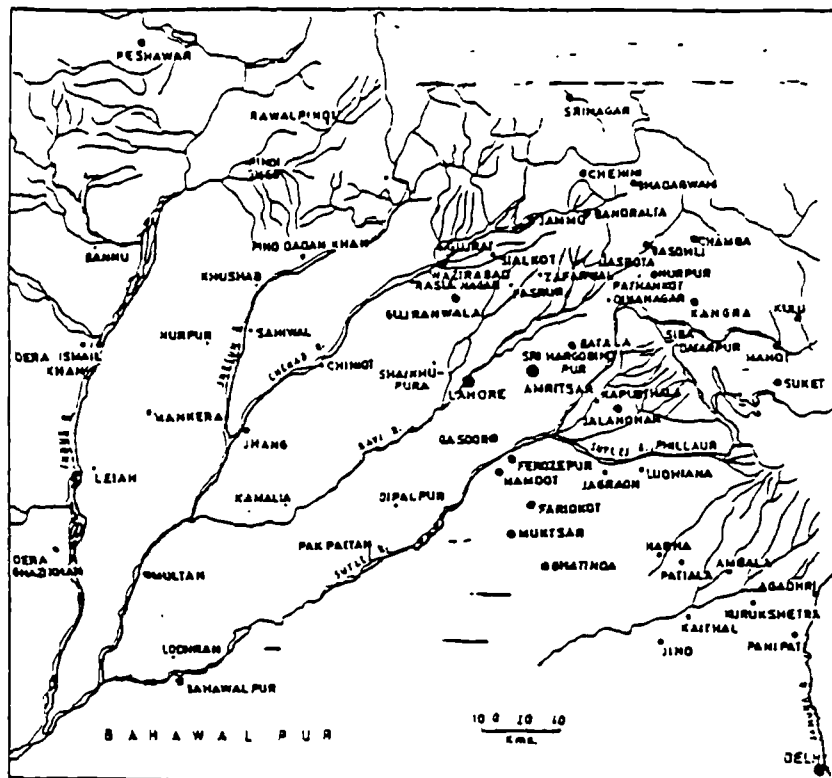
During 1946-1947 period, a number of Sikh intellectuals prompted by political events came up with a rationale for the Sikh state^[24]. However, the demand was drawn in a hurry as a reaction to Muslim threat to the Punjab rather than a well-argued case for the Sikhs. There were few backers for this demand. Although the British were aware of the 'special case' of the Sikhs and admitted something should be done to protect this loyal community, in practical terms, they could do no more than provide verbal assurances and meetings with Sikh leaders bewildered with the fast-moving events leading inexorably towards the partition of the Punjab. Except for the Communist Party's support for a Sikh homeland, the Sikh leaders were in a wilderness^[25].

²³ Quoted in Nayar, Baldev Raj Minority Politics in the Punjab, Princeton University Press, 1966, p.89. Also see, Some Documents on the Demand for the Sikh Homeland, Chandigarh, Manjeet Publishing Co, 1969.

²⁴ Bawa, Harkishan Singh, A plea for a Panjabi speaking province, New Delhi, 1948. Virk, Kulwant Singh and Harbans Singh Greater East Punjab: a plea for a linguistic regrouping, Ludhiana, Lahore Book shop, 1948. Gurbachan Singh and Gyani, Lal Singh, The idea of the Sikh state, Lahore, Lahore Book Shop. Swarup Singh The Sikhs demand their Homeland, Lahore, Lahore Book Shop, 1946. Prem Singh, A need for a Sikh Homeland, Patiala, 1966?. Gurnam Singh A unilingual Punjabi state and the Sikh unrest, New Delhi, 1960. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Azad Punjab, Amritsar, 1943.

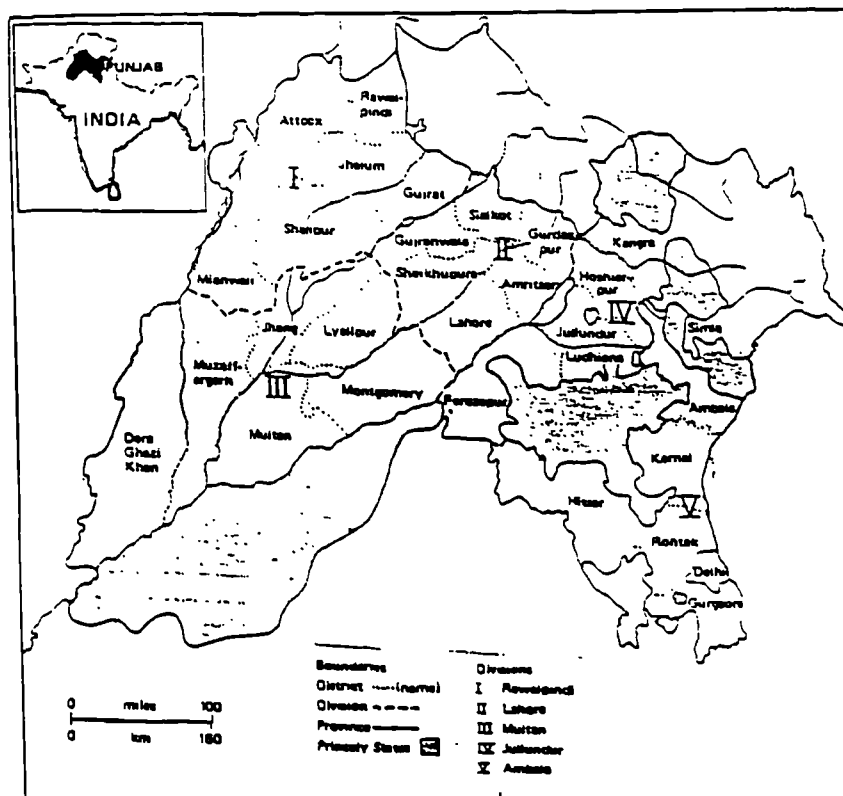
²⁵ Gurharpal Singh, The Communist Party of India and the demand for a Sikh Homeland, Coventry, Punjab Research Group, Discussion Papers Series, No. 41.

Map 1: PUNJAB UNDER THE SIKHS [1799-1849]



Source: Reproduced from Grewal, J.S. The Sikhs of the Punjab
Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.102

Map 2: PUNJAB AT THE TRANSFER OF POWER, 1947



Source: Adapted and Reproduced from
Fox, R.G. Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making
University of California, Berkeley, 1985, p.7

Although the Punjab Boundary Commission noted that the Punjab is 'the homeland ...of the Sikhs, to which they are attached by all intimate bonds of religion, history and tradition', the new boundary went through the Majha region of Punjab, an effective heartland of the Sikhs, cutting in the process two major cities Lahore and Amritsar^[26]. During British rule Punjab's population had already seen widespread migration across its districts, from Eastern to Western areas, however, the population transfer which concluded the independent nations of India and Pakistan leading to the partition of Punjab in 1947 was unanticipated and horrific tragedy for thousands of people^[27].

With the departure of British colonial power, the Punjab was divided into two major parts, a majority of Sikh community now was to concentrate in East Punjab in India as never before. The partition was decisive in terms of uniting most of the Sikh population within a well-defined territorial area of east Punjab^[28]. With partition, not only Sikhs were separated from the wider Punjabi culture of which they were a part, but a new concept was introduced into subcontinent political life, that of political entities based upon religious majority^[29]. In the undivided Punjab, the Sikhs shared a composite culture, associated with the Punjabi language. The partition of the country not only confirmed the basis of division of India on religious lines, it also brought a major dilemma for minority non-Hindu communities. Despite the secular constitutional set up, the Indian state has gradually legitimised Hindu aspirations and cultural expressions leading other

²⁶ The Punjab Boundary Commission Report, 1947, Lahore 1924, p.24

²⁷ Randhawa, M. S. Out of Ashes: an account of the rehabilitation of refugees from West Pakistan in rural areas of East Punjab, Chandigarh, Public Relations Department, Punjab, 1954, p.9-10. Also see, Corruccinin, Robert S. and Kaul, Samvit S. Halla, demographic consequences of the partition of the Punjab: 1947, University Press of America, 1990.

²⁸ Pettigrew, Joyce 1991, op.cit. p.41

²⁹ Pettigrew, Joyce. 'Betrayal and nation-building among the Sikhs', Journal of Commonwealth and comparative politics, XXIX [1], March 1991. p.41

religious minorities to be suspicious of its secular credentials. The human and physical geography of post 1947 India presented Indian nationalists, within and outside the Indian National Congress, with the challenge of a messianic order. They were discovering India was a loose confederation of numerous peoples among whom some had developed strong regional cultures with distinct language and regional identities. A few groups, among them the Sikhs, had a history of independence or a political supremacy over their provinces for a period of time. The imperial power in India neither needed nor encouraged a unified centralised state -a vision of India which was to become the ideal of western educated Indian elite and nationalists in the post-independence period. To build a nation-state, Indian elite could utilise something of a mythical past of a shared cultural and linguistic heritage, with Hinduism in all its variants as a dominant and shared religion, and Sanskrit as the fount-head of cultural expression of ancient and medieval India. These were the resources of the modern Indian nationalists coupled with anti-colonial struggle and an economic programme for the emancipation of the poor masses.

As a small religious community of contemporary India, Sikhs number about 16 million, forming less than 2 percent of its population. The older fear of Sikhs of being re-absorbed into Hindu society and rather insecure power base for the main Sikh political party has led to periodic demand for outright independence. Until 1984, Sikhs were in no sharp dilemma about their loyalty; for India, they had strong patriotic feelings while they seemed to nurture a strong sense of Punjabi nationalism, a dual sense of loyalty which was certainly not, in contradiction, for a majority of the Sikh community. Although, the immediate causes for the Sikh separatist movement in the Punjab can be traced to the failure of accommodation policy of the central government, characterised since the 1980s, by an increasing centralisation of power by the Union Government of India at the cost of regions and at odds with strong regional parties. However, if the nationalist movements are a phenomenon of modern times, manifestations

of stresses of pre-industrial [peasant] societies transforming into an industrial nation-state, then the emergence of Sikh nationalist movement in the early twentieth century presents no surprises¹³⁰. As noted previously, the idea of Sikh homeland has considerable history behind it. The Punjab by virtue of Sikh community's birthplace, encompassing major events of its history, and as a sovereign state had all the elements of a homeland. Sikhs also provide a prime example of ethnic groups undergoing changes in their loyalties to something more narrow and akin to an ethnic home for which they had nurtured no special attachment than their birthplace. Sikhs in Punjab have been looked on by Indian nationalist leaders as maintaining dual loyalties, stronger one to their region-cum-religious centre, 'the Sikh nation's province' located around central districts of the Punjab. Sikh political leaders' ethnic allegiance was suspected to vary from the 'national' interest as a weak link in building a strong nation-state. Much of the post-independence Sikh history of campaigns for autonomy can only be understood in this context.

Since 1947, many Sikh leaders have repeatedly asserted that the Indian Congress leaders had assured them of a fair treatment for the Sikh community's religious and cultural traditions. Since 1947, a section of Sikh political leadership has sought to consolidate a Punjabi speaking state, which the Government of India viewed with suspicion as a cover for a Sikh homeland¹³¹. However, as the necessity arose, Sikh leaders tried to use their historic tradition and association rather than scriptural authority to emphasise their right to a region broadly the area of Punjab. They argued that the Punjab as a distinct geographical region, being the birthplace of the Sikh community and the rise of Sikh power implied a special relationship with the province. Thus the yearning for a Sikh homeland has an element of psychological attachment

³⁰ Gellner, E. Nations and Nationalism, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983. p.109.

³¹ Nayar, Baldev Raj, 1966, op cit., p.90-112

and 'deep roots'^[32].

While in political terms, one may see a rather hesitant, and somewhat spasmodic drift towards the demand for a Sikh state by Sikh politicians in the post-independence period, this needs to be seen in the context of a high degree of integration of the Sikh elite in the state apparatus especially in its coercive services, the armies and security forces. In a sense, there has been no buffer between the peasant Sikh society informed by its religious, linguistic and cultural outlook, and the highly placed salariat Sikh class serving the Indian state with unflinched loyalty. During all three major wars which India had with its neighbours, Sikh officers and ranks served with distinction^[33]. The general community had no reservation in its loyalty towards the Indian state when it did not clash with their collective self-interest and image. However the political leaders of the Sikh community faced the classic dilemma of a minority in a democratic set up. They could mobilise their followers on culture and religious issues and seek such concessions depending upon a degree of goodwill by the Union Government. The community leaders were divided among themselves; of those who sought a policy of accommodation as the best policy and those organised in a separate party, the Akali Dal. Thus the role of Sikh leaders within the Congress and those in the Akali Dal can be seen in this context of a minority community's political options in the post 1947 India. Immediately after 1947, Sikh leaders, twice, decided to merge with the ruling Congress Party. However, from 1950s, they also mobilised under a separate political organisation -the Akali Dal, started asserting themselves to gain political power.

The Akali Dal - the main political party of those Sikhs not part of the Congress Party, were frustrated by the demography and class and caste

³² Kapur, Rajiv 1988, op.cit., p.61-63

³³ Karnail Singh, The Sikhs: Portrait of Courage, Delhi, Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, and Khalsa Defence Council, 1966.

cleavage within the Punjabi population. Immediately after the partition, these Sikh leaders were to re-appraise their strategy. They argued for political power which will safeguard the community's cultural and religious traditions. However the priorities of the Indian leaders in Delhi were to move towards integration of various regions and peoples into an 'Indian' consciousness. It promptly merged the Pepsu States of Punjab with the rest of the Punjab as the Central government feared the princely states may encourage Sikh autonomy demands due to its historical association with various Sikh rulers. More local factors have also been at work. The constant hostility from a section of Punjabi Hindus elite who represented the Punjab' Hindu population -almost 40% of total population of the Punjab. They championed a more militant brand of Indian nationalism equating it with Hindu domination. Despite a shared common language of Punjabi, Punjabi Hindus preferred Hindi as more suitable for their cultural and religious expression. The Census returns in 1951 on language were abandoned because of highly charged situation created by Punjab's Hindu elite who asked Hindus to enlist Hindi as their mother-tongue. Due to such fears from local Hindu population and non-accommodation by the Central government, Akali leaders launched the Punjabi suba movement in 1953^[34]. This led to a large scale mobilisation of Sikh peasantry in 1961, at one time the province' jails had some 59,000 Sikh campaigners. During the mobilisation, Akalis held a major conference at Ludhiana and adopted the following resolution:

This conference recalls that the Sikh people agreed to merge in a common Indian nationality on the explicit understanding of being accorded a constitutional status of co-sharers in the Indian sovereignty along with the majority community, which solemn understanding now stands cynically repudiated by the present rulers of India. Further the Sikh people have been systematically reduced to a sub-political status in their homeland, the Punjab, and to an insignificant position in their motherland, India. The Sikhs are in a position to establish before an impartial international tribunal, uninfluenced by the present Indian rulers that the law, the judicial process, and the executive action of the State of India is constitutionally and heavily weighted against the Sikhs and is administered with un-bandaged eyes against Sikh citizens.

³⁴ Sarhadi, Ajit Singh, Punjabi Suba, Delhi, Kapur, 1971.

This conference therefore, resolves, after careful thought, that there is left no alternative for the Sikhs in the interest of self-preservation but to frame their political demand for securing a self-determined political status within the Republic of Union of India^[35].

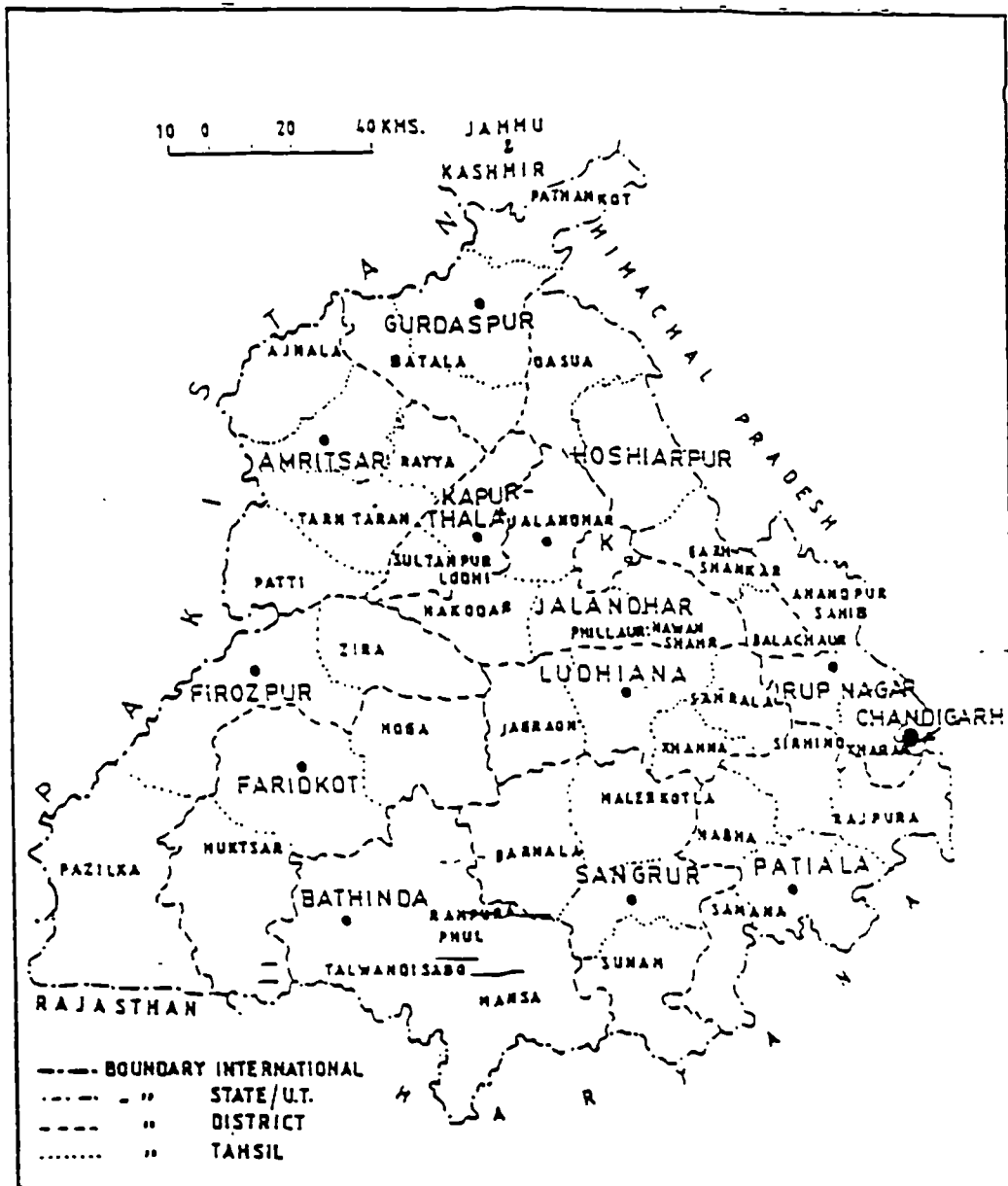
The Punjab was finally partitioned in 1966 on a linguistic basis. This reorganisation of Punjab territory into three states was highly unsatisfactory to the Akali Dal leaders. The city of Chandigarh was reserved by the Central government to serve as a capital for both Haryana and Punjab and this decision became a highly disputed one, as were several other Punjabi-speaking areas, Sikh leaders claimed, to have been wrongly allocated to Haryana and Himachal Pardesh -the two new states created out of Punjab.

The power base of various political parties in the Punjab is shown in Table 0.1. The creation of a new smaller Punjab led to short lived Akali Dal ministries. From 1966 onwards, the Akali leaders organised a number of campaigns for resolving several contentious issues with apparent un-success. From 1967 to 1980, this process of diffusion and accommodation by the Akali Dal with the Union Government in New Delhi continued with increasing constraints^[36]. However, the constant fear of dismissal by the Central government, and certain local disputes led to a re-appraisal of Akali leaders' strategy. These consideration led to the formulation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

³⁵ Akali Dal Conference, Resolution, Ludhiana, July 4, 1965. cited in Harbans Singh, The Heritage of Sikhs, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, Revised edition, 1983, p.369-70. This resolution was drawn up by Kapur Singh, a Member of Parliament and an influential Sikh intellectual and moved by 'Justice' Gurnam Singh -the leader of Akali Dal in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.

³⁶ Sharma, T. R. 'Diffusion and accommodation: the contending strategies of the Congress Party and the Akali Dal in Punjab', Pacific Affairs, 59[4], 1986, p.647. Wallace, Paul and Chopra, Surendra [eds]. Political Dynamics of Punjab, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1981. Puri, Harish K. 'The Akali agitation: an analysis of socio-economic bases of protest', Economic and Political Weekly, XVIII[4], 22 January 1983, pp. 113-118. Gill, S. S. and Singhal, K.C. 'The Punjab problem: its historical roots', Economic and Political Weekly, 19[14], April 7, 1984, pp. 603-608. Gupta, Kailash Chand. The Akalis past and present, New Delhi, Asha Janak, 1974. Nayar, Baldev Raj. Minority politics in the Punjab, Princeton University Press, 1966. Nayar, Baldev Raj. Punjab, pp. 433-502 in Weiner, Marion [ed.] State politics in India, Princeton University Press, 1968.

Map 3: PUNJAB SINCE 1966



Source:
Reproduced from
Grewal, J.S. The Sikhs of the Punjab
Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.206

Table 0.1

**Political parties in the Punjab and their electoral base
1960-1990s**

Percentage of Votes Polled by
Political Parties in the Punjab Legislative Assembly Elections

Party	Elections						
	1967	1969	1972	1977	1980	1985	1992*
Congress [I]	37.7	39.2	42.8	33.6	45.2	37.9	43.8
Akali Dal	20.5	29.4	27.6	31.4	26.9	38.0	*
BJP	9.8	9.0	5.0	15.0	6.5	5.0	16.6
CPI	5.3	4.8	6.5	6.6	6.5	4.3	3.4
CPM	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.5	4.1	1.9	2.7
Other Parties	7.7	5.6	2.5	0.4	4.4	1.1	23.5**
Independents	15.8	8.9	12.3	9.6	6.5	11.9	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1	100.1	100.6

CPI = Punjab branch of Communist Party of India [Right]

CPI = Punjab branch of Communist Party of India [Marxist]

BJP = Bhartiya Janata Party

* During the 1992 Election, the turnout of voters, due to boycott by the Akali Dal was unusually low at 24.3%. The main groups within the Akali Dal had boycotted the election.

** Other parties with their respective share of votes are: Bahujan Samaj Party [16.2]; Janata Dal [2.1]; and Akali Dal [Kabul] 5.2].

Source:

V B Singh and S Bose: *State Elections in India: Data Handbook on Vidhan Sabha Elections; 1952-1985*.
Vol. 1, The North, Part 1, 1987

For 1992 Elections: G Singh, 'The Punjab Elections 1992: breakthrough or breakdown', *Asian Survey*, 1992, p.988-999.

The first draft of this resolution was framed at Batala Conference of the Akali Dal in 1968 where a committee headed by Surjit Singh Barnala was asked to prepare a draft resolution about the policies and programmes of the Akali Dal keeping in view the Sikh identity as the focal point. This resolution was then adopted as Anandpur Sahib Resolution, it became perhaps the most discussed document in recent Indian politics. The opening paragraphs of this resolution highlights the necessity of not only preserving the distinct identity of the Sikhs but also the objectives of establishing the Khalsa raj [Sikh sovereign state] in the Punjab. Under 'purposes' of the resolution, it states:

The Shiromani Akali Dal shall strive to achieve the main objective to preserve and keep alive the concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth and to create an environment in which national sentiments and aspirations of the Sikh Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and growth^[37].

It goes on to repeat how Sikhs have, by virtue of their special relationship to Punjab as a country they once ruled, the place of their historic shrines and of Sikh gurus, Amritsar city as its religious centre, sees the province as their 'homeland'^[38].

As the campaign gained momentum from 1982, it also saw the rise of Sant Bhindranwale asking nothing less than full implementation of the Resolution. The Union Government's ultimate response was to storm the Golden Temple in June 1984, leading to an unprecedented Sikh reaction and militant mobilisation for an independent homeland. Despite an accord signed between Indian Prime Minister and the Akali leader Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, in July 1985, a number of Sikh youth took to arms^[39]. The ensuing tragedy was precipitated and confounded by the reluctance of the Central government to implement any element of the

³⁷ Shiromani Akali Dal, Anandpur Sahib Resolution, 1978, p.1. See Appendix-8 for some excerpts from this Resolution.

³⁸ Oberoi, Harjot. 'From Punjab to 'Khalistan', : territoriality and metacommentary', Pacific Affairs, 60[1], 1987, p.26-41.

³⁹ Text of the Memorandum of Settlement agreed to between the Indian Prime Minister and the President of the Akali Dal, reproduced in Indian Express, New Delhi, 25 July 1985, p.2

Accord. The Akali leader, Sant Longowal died vainly shot dead by Sikh militants on 20 August 1985. The only concession the Union government offered was to hold elections to the state assembly, as a result of which an Akali Dal government was voted to power in the province. However, this provincial government was undermined by an increase in militant movement on the one hand and the constraints imposed by the Union government leading to its dismissal in May 1987. Punjab was put under central control involving a full scale military and security deployed to suppress the militant movement. The security personnel were furnished with an unprecedented powers dispensing with the normal judicial vetting⁴⁰. After five years of protracted war in the Punjab countryside, conditions like insurrection in parts of the Punjab was brought under control. Elections were then held to the Punjab assembly in February 1992. Boycotted by the Akali Dal, a Congress ministry was put in power by a very low turn-out of voters. This ministry has been functioning with strategic support of army and paramilitary forces. The stalemate continues. By early 1993, the security forces had claimed to have broken the backbone of militants, killing leaders of major militant groups including the Babbar Khalsa, the Khalistan Commando Force, the Khalistan Liberation Force, the Bhindranwale Tiger Force and several others. A reign of terror in the countryside, staged encounters, illegal killings and highly advertised rewards for killing the chief militant leaders along with robberies and extortions have been the fare of ordinary Punjabi population in recent years. The state has perhaps gained the upper hand over the militant movement, however, the passions associated with the idea of Khalistan -an independent Sikh homeland -are likely to lead to periodic mobilisations in the near future.

The 'Bluestar Operation' came to represent in many Sikhs' minds, a humiliation of the Sikh community. The way was then prepared for the

⁴⁰ Pettigrew, Joyce 'Martyrdom and guerilla Organisation in Punjab', Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 30[3], 1992, p. 403

subsequent militant separatist movement led by the youth prepared for suitable vengeance on those responsible for such humiliation. It is in the sphere of Sikh psyche that one has to look for an explanation of the post 1984 developments in the Punjab. Thus major explanations for the separatist movement have to be located in terms of psychological and symbolic sphere of an ethnic community undergoing modernisation process, its interaction with a state which itself is trying to forge a nation from a diverse constituency of different regions with populations of nation-in making. But this ambiguous attachment needed a radical confirmation; a traumatic experience. This was to happen in June 1984. This event has been portrayed as a threat to Sikhs' survival as a collectivity. Due to this threat, conflicting allegiances of members of Sikh community have become sharpened. For some a new symbol finally became part of Sikh ethnicity: Punjab the land of the Sikhs. Sikhs as a religious community turned into an ethno-territorial community, 'the equation between Punjab and the Sikhs has become 'naturalised' as a result of 1984 events'^[41]. This was illustrated by the massive migration following the death of Mrs Gandhi in October 1984 when more than fifty thousand Sikhs, [estimates vary between eighty thousand and one hundred thousand], fled their homes across northern India to take refuge in the Punjab. Thus the Punjab became not only a safe haven, but also a territory and a symbolic area which was seen to be Sikhs' own^[42]. The notion of a 'nation' has long been part of Sikh vocabulary and the Punjabi word for a nation Quam was commonly used by Sikh leaders, usually in combination of Des as Des-Quam -the nation and the country, while des may have conveyed more than a Sikh homeland, a greater Punjab or even some notion of India, the word quam, always referred to the Sikh community. However this 'nationalistic' and inclusive rhetoric was moderated somewhat by the message of Sikh scriptures as open, transcending the region or centre, which did not

⁴¹ Oberoi, Harjot, 1987, op cit., p.39

⁴² Tully, Mark and Jacob, Satish, op cit., 1985, p.7.

bind them to a particular location^[43]. The four doors of the Golden Temple, open to all and sundry, the attached langar to a gurdwara serving the poor and the needy irrespective of their religious affiliation, were some of the ideals Sikhs have cherished throughout their history^[44].

Thus, a virulent debate about the necessity for a separate state has been ushered by the events of 1984 and the subsequent militant movement. A section of Sikh society is currently involved in this mobilisation for a separate Sikh state, derived mainly from the Jat Sikhs -a dominant component of the Sikh society. Other classes which include Ramgarhias and Chamars are not enthusiastic about the prospect of a separate Sikh state. This class division will probably become more crucial as the years roll by. Overseas Sikhs have become embroiled in this debate and mobilisation. This study offers an analysis of this process of involvement and mobilisation.

In overseas Sikh communities, the Punjab crisis has led to severe changes in their political associations and a campaign in support for a Sikh homeland. Dr Jagjit Singh Chohan, a Sikh exile who was almost the sole champion of a Sikh homeland has now been joined by thousand of

⁴³ McLeod, W.H. [ed.] Textual Sources of the Study of Sikhism, Manchester, 1984.

Pettigrew, Joyce 1991, op cit., p.40. Pettigrew notes that the demand for an exclusive Sikh homeland sits oddly with the openness of the Sikh religious tradition and scriptures preaching the unity of mankind and oneness:

For a nation whose primary reference had been a book rather than a land the increasing involvement with the state was a dangerous development. Possessing territorial sovereignty became especially important not only because of the events of 1947 and 1984 and the feeling of humiliation that developed during and after 1984 but also because no sense of boundary was provided by their very tolerant religious scripture.

⁴⁴ Popular accounts of Sikh history and the Golden Temple emphasise this aspect of Sikh religion. It is said that the foundation stone of the Golden Temple was laid by a Muslim disciple of Guru Arjan.

Sikhs advocating such a radical solution⁴⁵.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study offers a description and analysis of the transformation of overseas Sikh politics as a result of Punjab crisis. Overseas Sikh leaders have contributed to the campaign for independent Sikh homeland in no small measure. An estimate of overseas Sikh population puts it at about eight percent of total Sikh population. Of the total number of Sikhs settled in overseas countries, more than three quarters are in Britain, Canada and the United States. While Sikh migrants to Britain constitute the largest single concentration of Sikhs outside the Punjab, the Sikh population of Canada and United States has been put at quarter of a million. More important than these numbers are cultural, social and religious traits that Sikhs share in these diverse locations.

The study begins with a review of literature on migrants groups which have affected international relations. A number of hypotheses are provided at the end of Chapter One which seek an explanation for the close interaction of overseas Sikhs into the Punjab affairs are examined. Chapter Two provides a historical account of Sikh migration into three countries: Canada, the United States and United Kingdom, beginning with the earliest phase, narrating factors which motivated earlier Sikhs to go abroad, and their reception in these countries. Relative recent emigration is compared with the early emigration of some other Indians who went mostly as indentured labour. This factor accounts, in some measure, why early Indian groups lost contact with their homelands. This chapter also provides some estimates of Sikh population in each of three countries under study.

⁴⁵ The New York Times, October 12, 1971. Quoted in Jeffrey, Robin 'Grappling with history: Sikh politicians and the past', Pacific Affairs, 60[1], 1987, 60. See chapter 4 for Dr Chohan's involvement in the Sikh homeland demand.

Chapter Three then outlines the social, cultural, religious and linguistic linkages of the Sikh diaspora with the Punjab and how these in turn help to define the 'Sikh community'. Chapter Four, deals with the phenomenon of politicised ethnicity. It discusses the various forms of ethnic associations and how these are related to the self-perception of the community and its leaders.

Chapters Five and Six provide an analysis of Sikh mobilisation as a response to crisis. Chapter five deals with the Sikh politics in Canada and the United States prior to 1984 and in the aftermath of 1984 developments in the Punjab, analyzing in detail the kind of reactions it generated. Chapter Six discusses a similar process among Britain's Sikhs. Chapter Seven brings together some conclusions regarding the role of crisis in fermenting ethnic identity and its consequent political ramifications. It analyses the role of states in directing, manipulating and internationalising the process of mobilisation. Finally it also tries to locate particular pattern of overseas Sikh mobilisation in terms of community leaders' tactics, Sikh community' cultural symbolic and linguistic vocabulary.

Methodology and Sources

The study is mainly empirical, describing and examining the overseas Sikh involvement in the Punjab issues over the period of last thirty years, with particular attention to the post-1984 mobilisation. Three Sikh communities based in the Western countries, namely Canada, the United States and United Kingdom have been selected for the study. Each community had a characteristic interaction with their host society and a diverse history of Sikh settlement, its composition and growth. Canada has a oldest Sikh community while Britain's Sikh community is comparatively of recent origin. By focusing on three spatial communities and their political development, seen through such factors as the history of political and social associations, religious institutions, a comparative study should helps us to identify some crucial factors in migrant communities' transnational political

behaviour.

Certain points regarding terminology should be noted. As with all social sciences concepts, propositions and many terms are value-laden. In the case of Punjab, this is particularly so. Those Sikhs and such organisations which have supported the idea of a Sikh homeland have been variously described as fascists, traitors, extremists, communalists, separatists on the one hand; and heroes, Punjab nationalists, militants, freedom fighters and martyrs on the other. In this study, any such adjective is used in *direct quotations from other sources only*⁴⁸.

Sources of Data

The study draws upon data gathered from a number of sources. A major source has been the community newspapers. Published in many countries of Sikh settlements, these provide a detailed and rich description of current events affecting particular groups of the Punjabi migrant communities. A majority of these newspapers are in Punjabi language, a small number in English, though there is now an increasing trend towards English language papers and magazines. Canada has the oldest Punjabi press dating from 1908 the British Punjabi media dates from 1965. These contain rich details of social insight and carry reports within the Punjabi community over a long period. In European countries, occasional magazines have been launched by political leaders and associations in the aftermath of 1984. Second source of data for this

⁴⁸ Major, Andrew 'From moderates to secessionists: A who's who of the Punjab crisis', Pacific Affairs, 60 [1], 1987, p.51-2.

Nandy, A. 'The discreet charm of Indian terrorism', The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, XXVIII[1], March 1990, pp. 25-43

Noorani, A.G. 'Civil liberties: the Terrorist Ordinance', Economic and Political Weekly, 19[30], 1984, pp. 1188-89.

The right to secede is not a democratic right in India. Under laws passed through Indian Parliament and in force in Punjab, any discussion which questions or encourages the questions relating to 'territorial integrity' of the Indian Union can lead to prosecution. Such person/s can face charges of sedition and in the case of conviction may be sentenced to varying periods of imprisonment.

study comes from many pamphlets, policy statements and manifestos issued by various Sikh organisations, these indeed form the core of this study. The Punjabi newspapers, especially those launched by Sikh organisations in the three countries also yield much useful data. Third set of data was obtained through an in-depth talks and informal interviews with a number of leading actors in this study. The names of such people appear in the bibliography. Another source, an increasing one, is the considerable literature in the form of audio-visual material produced by many Sikh organisations. Although this has not been used extensively in this study, it is also vital part of Sikh cultural and political concerns and highlights the cultural and linguistic expression of the community.

Social scientists cannot experiment with social data and rarely get the chance to observe 'culture at work'. Overseas Sikh mobilisation, in this respect, seems to provide a large set of data of such nature as to draw some useful conclusions regarding 'how culture works'. The study utilises a comprehensive set of data relating to mobilisation among an ethnic community arising as a result of crisis in their land of origin.

Chapter 1

THE POLITICS OF HOMELAND AMONG MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a theoretical scheme for the study of overseas Sikh support for the 'Sikh homeland'. Several migrant groups have been involved in a similar campaign. The role and importance of ethnic groups in the international relations has increased in recent years¹¹. Three inter-related issues need to be examined. First, there arises a general question as to why members of an ethnic group settled in overseas countries may continue to attach themselves to their country or region of origin or their 'homeland' and why this interaction, in recent decades, has been on the increase. Second, why do some groups become involved in the issue of 'homeland'. And finally, how are particular groups involved in this process?

MIGRANT GROUPS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

In the recent past, there are many examples of such groups having

¹ Stack, John Jr., 'Ethnic groups as emerging transnational actors', in Stack, John [ed.] Ethnic identities in a transnational world, London, Greenwood Press, 1981. Said, A. A. [Ed.] Ethnicity and US Foreign Policy, New York, Praeger, 1977. Said, A. A. and Simmons, Luis R. Ethnicity in an international context: the politics of dissociation, New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Books, 1976. Suhrke, A. and Noble, L.G. [eds.] Ethnic conflict and international relations, New York, Praeger, 1977. Bertelsen, Judy S. [ed.] Nonstate nations in International Politics, New York, Praeger, 1977. Shiel, F.I. [ed.] Ethnic separatism and world politics, Lanham, Md. University Press of America, 1990. Keohane, Robert O. and Nye, Joseph S. [eds.] Transnational relations and world politics, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972.

exerted powerful influences upon the foreign policies of particular countries. Many case studies relating to intra-country ethnic behaviour have shown the importance of this phenomenon. Several of these are concerned with the Jewish diaspora, usually intended to evaluate the Jewish influence in the United States vis-a-vis its policy towards Israel. In Britain such studies are even fewer, despite the crucial links maintained by such groups as Ukrainians, Polish, Cypriots and more recently of Muslims from South Asia^[2]. The civil rights of Jews in the former Soviet Union, the role played by the British and German diasporas in the United States during the World War II, the Palestinian diaspora, the Chinese in South East Asia have considerably constrained the foreign policy options of many governments. The entry of the United States into the World War II was affected by the state of mobilisation of British and German diasporas and the strenuous efforts of their home governments to manipulate it. The Palestinian diaspora has been at the heart of Middle Eastern politics and its global ramifications for two generations. China's relations with the states of South East Asia are greatly complicated by the presence of overseas Chinese in the region and their continuing links with the homeland and deep suspicions of their dual loyalty among both natives and masses. The political activities of exiles has been a recurrent issue among the international agencies^[3]. Indeed, ethnic groups have been in the arena of international politics since the dawn of diplomacy among sovereign states. Some of the migrant groups involved in transnational politics

² Rex, John Ethnic identity and mobilisation, Warwick, 1991, p.73-4. Muslims have been drawn into transnational politics since the Rushdie controversy in Britain. Like many other such communities, the Ukrainian community in Britain has maintained strong interest in their homeland, the political developments there were regularly reported in The Ukrainian Review.

³ Poole, Fred and Vanzi, Max. 'Hounding Philippine Exiles: Marcos's secret war in America', The Nation, 12 May 1984/5, p. 577-78; Newton, Ronald C. 'Indifferent sanctuary: German speaking refugees and exiles in Argentina, 1933-45', Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, 24, November 1982, p.395-420. Cresciani, Gianfranco. 'Fascism, anti-fascism and Italians in Australia, 1922-45', Canberra, Australian National University, 1980, p.99. Lodge, Tom. 'State of exile: the African National Congress of South Africa', Third World Quarterly, 9, 1987, p.2-3. Shain, Yossi 'The war of governments against their opposition in exile', Government and Opposition, 24[3], 341-356.

are given in Table 1.1.

Table: 1.1
MIGRANT GROUPS / DIASPORAS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Communities	Centre	Settlement	Return	Description
<u>Classical/Historical</u>				
Jews	Jerusalem	Europe	Israel	Diaspora
<u>Historical/ Colonial</u>				
Armenians	Armenia	Europe/US	Selective	Diaspora
Ethiopians	Jerusalem	Ethiopia	Yes	Diaspora
Hispanic	Spain	Americas	Selective	Diaspora
Irish	Ireland	Americas	Selective	Diaspora?
Lithuanians	Lithuania	US	Selective	Diaspora?
Latvians	Latvia	Canada/US/Australia	Selective	Exiles
Indians	India [provinces]	Africa/Caribbeans	Selective	Diaspora?
Africans	Africa	Americas	Selective	Diaspora
Chinese	China	Far East/Americas	No	Diaspora?
Europeans	Europe	Americas	No	?
Europeans	Europe	Asia/Africa	yes	?
<u>Modern/ Post-Colonial</u>				
Blacks	Caribbean	UK	Some	Migrants
Algerians	Algeria	France	Selective	Migrants
Bangladeshis	Bangladesh	UK	No	Migrants
Cubans	Cuba	America	Selective	Migrants
Croats	Yugoslavia	Germany	Selective	Migrants
Kashmiris	Pakistan	UK	No	Migrants
Koreans	Korea	Japan	Selective	Migrants
Kurds	Kurdistan	Germany/France	No	Migrants
Mexicans	Mexico	America	Selective	Migrants
Moroccans	Morocco	France	No	Migrants
Palestinians	Palestine	America/Middle East	No	Diaspora
Sikhs	Punjab	UK/North America	No	Migrants
Pakistanis	Pakistan	Americas/Europe	No	Migrants
Tibetans	Tibet	India	Selective	Diaspora
Turks	Turkey	Germany	Selective	Migrants
Vietnamese	Vietnam	Far East/Americas	?	Migrants
Tunisians	Tunisia	France	Selective	Migrants

These cases show the extensive involvement of migrant groups into the international politics. It is necessary to see, very briefly, what factors have contributed to bring out large numbers of migrant groups into the international arena. Among such factors, the increasing pace of migration of peoples across the frontiers must be counted as a prime force.

[a] Migration

Migration is obviously a process which has been more or less a continuous phenomenon throughout the history of mankind. Search for improved economic opportunities has been the chief reason for migration since the ancient times. It is only under imperialism that a systematic process of forced migration across colonies was established in which slavery was followed by a system of indentured labour. The most conspicuous example of the earlier phase was transportation of Africans to slavery in the Americas, but the movement of contract labour to Malaya, Fiji, and the Caribbean plantations in the nineteenth century had many features of compulsion^[4]. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, large scale migrations occurred, labourers went from one colony to another under strict regulations. With the decolonisation, these migrant communities faced the prospect of hostility from nationalist governments and non-acceptance from European countries

Some groups have been forced to migrate, induced either by political or religious oppression. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, rapid population growth, uneven economic development and greatly improved transportation, have helped migratory movements^[5]. Migrant populations

⁴ Tinker, Hugh. A new system of slavery, London, Hurst, 1974.

⁵ Cohen, Robin. The new helots: migrants in the international division of labour, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Co. 1987. Lucas, R. E. B. 'International migration: economic causes, consequences and evaluation', pp. 84-109 in Kritiz, M. M. Keely, C. B. and Tomasci S. M. [eds.] Global trends in migration: theory and research on international population movements, New York, The Centre for Migration Studies, 1981. Mitchell, C. 'International migration, international relations and foreign policy', International Migration Review, 23[3], 1989, pp. 681-708. Petersen, W. 'A general typology of migrations', American

have appeared: Turks in Germany, Afro-Caribbeans in Britain, Ghanians in Nigeria, Indian, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Persian Gulf States; Cuban and Vietnamese, in America, Colombians in Venezuela. Their presence is likely to give rise to tensions and transactions between the host and home countries and between third parties. Such migrants may become a foreign ally or economic asset in due course of time. In the post-1945 period, Western countries have become homes to migrants from the developing world, estimated to be more than twenty millions. Similarly, oil rich countries have imported labour from South and Southeast Asia, estimated at over three millions. Despite United States policy not to admit non-immigrant workers, there are about four to six million illegal workers and their families from the neighbouring Mexico and Latin American countries and the Caribbean. Nigeria had attracted two million workers both illegal and legal from neighbouring countries especially Togo, Benin and Ghana then expelled a majority of them in 1983. South Africa has imported more than 400,000 miners from its neighbours. Venezuela has almost a million workers mainly from Columbia. There are about 45,000 Vietnamese settled in Soviet Siberia and other East European countries. There are also examples of daily flows of workers across some international borders. Thousands of Arab workers cross the Green Line into Israel daily from the West Bank and Gaza.

There are examples of refugees becoming permanent part of labour force, such as Palestinians in Kuwait, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, many of the refugees in East Africa. This distinction between foreign labourers, refugees and minorities could be blurred by the passage of time. Thus in Germany and France, over nine percent of population now consists of what are foreign workers but a high proportion in France at least now has permanent status. In Austria and Belgium, seven percent of labour force is foreign, Switzerland has almost a quarter, Kuwait's share is 71 percent, Qatar 81 percent while United Arab Emirates had

the highest labourers at 85 percent of the labour force⁶. In all these countries, the presence of migrant labour has necessarily led to such issues relating to citizenship, financial remittances and political associations among such migrant labour.

[b] Wars, Nation-States and Refugees

The outcome of wars is generally a number of refugees seeking asylum in another country. The Two World Wars made millions homeless who made their way to various foreign countries⁷. The United Nations has been dealing with increasing flow of refugees as a result of small and medium scale wars in different parts of the world. The UN documents testify to the existence of minorities' problems in almost every country⁸. Pious words, as many millions as refugees across the globe rot among such documents. These documents only confirm the model of a sovereign state and its framework of political domination over minority peoples. More recently, the UN has become an arena of non-governmental organisations playing an increasing part. Its claim to defend universal values and its limited success now tends to make UN Officials the appointed spokesmen of international opinion and the repositories of a legitimacy competing insidiously with that of states⁹. More than ever, refugees are now awaiting settlement in different countries, their

⁶ Weiner, Myron. 'International migration and development: Indians in the Persian Gulf', Population and Development Review, 8[1], 1982, p.1-36.

⁷ Vernant, Jacques The refugee in the post-war World, London, Allen & Unwin, 1953. There were estimated to be 9.2 million refugees in 1926 as a result of World War I.

⁸ Fenet, Alain. 'The question of minorities in the order of law', pp. p. 40-41, in Chaliand, Gerrard [ed.] Minority peoples in the age of nation-states, London, Pluto Press, 1989.

Under Human Rights Convention, UN Sub-Commission inserted article 27, in the International Convent on Civil and Political Rights. This stipulated:

In those states in which ethnic religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

⁹ Fenet, Alain. 1989, op cit., p.41.

homes and families torn and swept by wars in their regions or countries. Arendt has noted this tragic fallout:

since the Peace treaties of 1919 and 1920, the refugees and the stateless persons have attached themselves like a curse to all the newly established states on earth which were created in the image of the nation-state. For these new states, this curse bears the germs of a deadly sickness^[10].

Infringement of human rights of minorities has become a public issue paradoxically just as the number of nations have increased in the world. The indigenous nationalists who succeeded the European colonists, shared none of their predecessors' benign tolerance. Thus, the Indian communities faced a hostile government not long after the British withdrawal from East Africa. The post-colonial governments of these countries were not happy with the presence of middlemen created by the colonial era, and they initiated a preferential policy for 'sons of the soil first'. On the other hand, despite their British passports, the British did not want Asians, governmental policy was pragmatic but sentiments of hostility were unmistakable^[11]. Once independence was achieved, new politicians often denied the existence of ethnic groups or nations residing within the state. These groups, more numerous, than in any past period of history, also contribute to the intra-ethnic bridges and dual loyalties^[12].

¹⁰ Arendt, Hannah, The origins of totalitarianism, New York, Harcourt, 1973, 5th edition, p.290.

¹¹ Enoch Powell echoed the British attitude towards Asians who had settled in East African countries during colonial rule by expressing the resolution of this major dilemma.

When East African countries became independent there was no suggestion, let alone undertaking, in Parliament or outside, that those inhabitants who remained citizens of the UK and Colonies would have right of entry into this country...the practice of international law which requires a country to re-admit or admit its own nationals applies in our case only to those who belong to the UK and not to other Commonwealth citizens, whether classified as citizens of the UK and Colonies or not.

[Enoch Powell's speech at The Conservative Party, 1972, p.72 quoted in Goulbourne, 1992, op cit., p.117].

¹² Zolberg, Aristide, 'The formation of new states as a refugee generating process', The Annals, Vol. 467, 1983, pp. 24-38. Zolberg, Aristide et al. Escape from violence: conflict and the refugee crisis in the developing world, Oxford University Press, 1989. Gurr, T.R. Minorities at risk: a global view of ethno-political conflicts,

[c] Aliens and Citizens

What is common to all the above categories of migrants is that they face a conglomeration of laws in their country of settlements defining them variously as aliens, immigrants, temporary residents, refugees, or minority groups¹³. Their status remains uncertain for a considerable period of time. Some countries confer rights after stipulated periods of residence, others extend such rights to kin, still others do not give the rights at all. Old empires had to face even bigger problems. They had to change their laws which in early period allowed free migration of whites from one corner to the other within the empire. Many migrant communities have to organise initially to secure the rights of citizenship, seek out more liberal immigration laws to fulfil their family obligations.

A notable feature of post-imperial countries has been the shrinking of not only their empires but what one scholar has called its 'intellectual borders'. Thus according to Goulbourne, the new 'small England' mentality has been gaining ground among the former imperial rulers, witness the tight rules and regulations of France, Germany and Britain in the post World War period. The transformation from imperial powers to nationalist outlook of these western powers has been accompanied by changes in harsh policies and hard attitudes towards their migrant populations:

Sooner or later, Britain was bound to achieve the full retreat from empire to nation...the transition from empire to nation is likely to affect developments within Britain in that minorities which came during the imperial decline find themselves effectively excluded from membership of the

Washington, United States Institute of Peace Studies, 1993. Gurr, T.R. and Marshall, M.G. 'Minorities at risk: a global survey', Human Rights Quarterly, 11[4], pp. 375-405. Newton, Ronald C. 'Indifferent sanctuary: German speaking refugees and exiles in Argentina, 1933-45', Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, 24, November 1982, pp. 395-420.

¹³ Baubock, Rainer. 'Migration and citizenship', New Community, 18[1], 1991, p.27-48. Smith, David M. and Blanc, M. 'Ethnicity and citizenship: a tri-national comparison', European Journal of Intercultural studies, 2[3], p.25-40. Grodzins, Morton. The loyal and the disloyal: social boundaries of patriotism and treason, Chicago University Press, 1956.

nation^[14].

The colonial heritage of European nations has also provided its majority populations with a Euro-centric view, a sense of racial superiority and almost contemptuous attitude towards the cultural and linguistic aspirations of peoples of former colonies. Another attribute which applies to the former imperial powers, and not completely absent from other societies, is the construction of the 'Others'. This has been instrumental in this process of forging the European identity^[15]. From the confrontation of Islam and the Spanish conquest of the 'new world' to the scramble for colonial possessions at the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, European historians and philosophers have grappled with the clash between 'infidels' or barbarians and 'civilised' peoples. Moreover ethnically and culturally peripheral minorities have also served as 'Others'. The 'Other' need not necessarily be spatially outside, but may be an 'internal Other', such as Jews and Freemasons. In the British and European context, the obvious candidate is arguably, the post-colonial migration from Africa, the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. Many migrant communities settled for second or third generation or indeed for much longer, and having formal rights of citizenship by virtue of birth and by registration, may still not be considered to be part of the nation^[16]. The 'outsiders' are reminded quite often:

whether our background is Pakistani, Polish or Vietnamese, or whatever, we need to know our particular background and to cherish our own history and special traditions... Alongside that, however, a sound and detailed knowledge of British history and of Britain's part in world history, a feeling for what has shaped our institutions, is vital to living in, and understanding the complexities of Britain

¹⁴ Goulbourne, Harry. Ethnicity and nationalism in post-imperial Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1991. p.122.

¹⁵ See for example, Said, Edward Said Orientalism, London, Routledge, 1978. Neumann, I.B. and Welsh, J.M. 'The Other in European self-definition: an addendum to the literature on international society', Review of International Studies, 17 [1991], pp. 327-348.

¹⁶ Bendix, R. Nation-building and citizenship, Berkeley, 1966, rev ed. 1977.

today. It is essential to 'being British.'¹⁷

Thus, in Britain, according to Gilroy, 'the attachment to non-British cultures which endures in black communities and from which much of their apparent strength and cohesion derives, is cited as the final proof that the entry of aliens in the national community is not only hazardous but practically impossible'¹⁸. Since the core of citizenship laws are continuously defined by cultural-linguistic, religious and shared values, those different in colour, religion and any such criterion could find themselves less than a citizenship. In an emergency, members of a particular community, however disintegrated state it is in, can be found to be lesser citizens than their fellow citizens. The rounding up of Iraqis in Britain in the Iraq-Western hostilities suggests migrants can expect sudden turnabouts in their fate as a collective group by events beyond their control.

Moreover, in the liberal secular states, the construction of civil society has been through a process where their dominant or majority religion have become institutionalised. Asad has argued convincingly that, in such a society, although religious beliefs may not be coerced, some religious identities appear to be more at home than others. And even if personal beliefs are essentially voluntary, social identities are not¹⁹. What the distinction between the national community and ethnic community reinforces in the minds of migrant communities is the uncertainty of their status. It is not surprising then their actions would confirm their dual loyalty also. Common citizenship may not bring equality except in strictly legalistic sense. Nor need nationality coincide with citizenship, as one term refers to a sociological reality, the other to a legal one; the acquisition of citizenship

¹⁷ Patten, John. 'The Muslim community in Britain', The Times, 5 July 1989.

¹⁸ Gilroy, Paul There ain't no black in the union jack; the cultural politics of race and nation, London, Hutchinson, 1987, p.61.

¹⁹ Talal, Asad 'Multiculturalism and British identity in the wake of the Rushdie Affair', Politics and Society, 18[4], 1990, pp. 455-480.

obviously neither reflects nor coincides with a change of identity- the latter is in any case a much slower process.

Withdrawal of citizenship as a penal measure against exiles is an age-old practice. Many regimes which have used denationalization as a weapon against political exiles regard the modern concept of citizenship [i.e. a body of citizens seeking their autonomy and identity in a secure nation-state] as inadequate for defining national membership, solidarity and community^[20]. Ardent nationalist governments on the other hand have established their basis for national belonging on allegedly unimpeachable grounds as has Volk or tribal identity, which seemingly guarantee a certain irrevocable citizenship to those with the correct identity irrespective of their location^[21]. The Bolsheviks who regarded national citizenship as a bourgeois fiction were nonetheless first to employ massive denationalization measures against their opponents^[22].

THE DIASPORAS AND MIGRANT GROUPS

Diaspora has had a long currency with both historians and political scientists. Though originally concerned with the dispersal with Jews from Palestine following their defeat by the Romans in 70 AD., it has now acquired wider connotations. Diaspora originally derives from a Greek word meaning dispersion, presumes that there exists a 'centre' to

²⁰ Smith, A.D. Nationalism in the twentieth century, New York University Press, 1979, p. 148. Also see; Smith, A. D. State and Nation in the Third World, London, Wheatsheaf Books, 1983.

²¹ Barber, Benjamin. Strong democracy: participatory politics for a new age, Berkeley, California, 1979, p. 148.

²² Shevtsov, Viktor, S. Citizenship of the USSR, Moscow Progress Publishers, 1979, p. 15. Fischer, G. [ed] Russian Emigre' politics, New York, Free Russia Foundation, 1951, p.25. On 28 October 1921, the Soviets issued a decree which deprived of Russian citizenship all former subjects involved in counter-revolutionary' activities against the Soviet regime, or were considered opposed to it'. The Bolsheviks granted amnesty simultaneously with the decree of denaturalization and this policy change led to the return of 180,000 Russian refugees home.

which people on the 'periphery' will eventually return^[23]. During the long and painful separation following the destruction of the second Temple in AD 70, numerous Yiddish speaking communities have tried to give meaning to their forced 'exile'. By the time nationalism came to dominate the European thinking, Jewish thinkers linked exile, dispersion with the ideas of self-determination of nationalities or minorities. The idea of diaspora implies or may be held to imply the ideas of 'centre' and 'periphery'; the idea of a relationship or lack of relationship to the soil and territory; ideas of majority and minority. It also implies a degree of national or cultural or linguistic awareness.

However not all groups have the particular attributes of a diaspora - a term used by historians, to describe Jewish peoples' search for homeland after their uprooting from holy land^[24]. In recent times the term has come to describe minority groups whose awareness of their identity is defined by a territorially discontinuous relationship with a group settled elsewhere, for example, the Chinese diaspora, the Corsican diaspora in mainland France, the Black diaspora etc^[25]. How appropriate is this term, for describing modern migrant groups, such as the Sikhs settled in foreign lands? We must turn to some definitional problems involved in the usage of this term. While migrant groups are

²³ The word comes from Greek language meaning dispersion and originated in the Greek translation of the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible [Deut. 28.25]: 'thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth', [Oxford English Dictionary].

²⁴ Studies on Jewish diaspora are too numerous to list, see Institute of Jewish Affairs, International Bibliography of Jewish Affairs: a selected annotated list of books and articles published in the Diaspora, 1976-77, compiled by E Eppler, Westview, 1983. Ages, A. The Diaspora Dimension, Hague, M Nijhoff, 1973; E Levine, Diaspora: Exile and the Contemporary Jewish Condition, New York, S Shapolsky, 1986; Davis, M. [ed.] World Jewry and the State of Israel, New York, Arnor Press, 1977.

²⁵ Studies of African diaspora include Kilson, Martin and Hill, A. Apropos of Africa: Afro-American leaders and the romance of Africa, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1971. Kilson, Martin and Totberg, R. I. [eds.] The African Diaspora: interpretive essays, Harvard, 1976. Thompson, Vincent [ed] The making of the African diaspora in the Americas: 1441-1900, London, Longman/Heinemann, 1987. Francis, A. The black triangle: the people of the African diaspora, London, Seed, 1985.

an obvious and unambiguous term, the diaspora refers to people who are consciously keeping up their separate identity or have by circumstances, been involved with the issues of homelands. We should also note that a minority is not automatically a diaspora though a diaspora is always minority. However, as we shall see below, the distinction between an overseas migrant group which wishes to maintain strong associations with their land of origin and a diaspora is increasingly blurred by contemporary events.

Some writers are reluctant to extend the use of this term insisting diaspora represents a unique and almost mythical experience of the Jewish exile. Accordingly, there are very few other diasporas. Chaliand, for instance, has argued that the term should apply only to those forced to disperse, and thus constitute a minority, and whose members conscientiously strive to keep a memory of the past alive and foster the will to transmit a heritage and to survive. He cites in this category the classic example of Jewish, and adds rather reluctantly the Armenians, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Indians in the Indian ocean, South Africa and the West Indies, and the Palestinians. He strongly suggests that with diaspora, words such as genocide or ethnocide should remain attached indicating the precarious situation facing the diaspora²⁶. Genocide refers to a policy of a sovereign state to exterminate an ethnic group while ethnocide means forced cultural integration of a small group into a larger entity. Ethnocide usually precipitates the collapse of the group such as Aborigines in the past. In the lesser scale of force comes the acculturation, a less painful route whereby a group loses gradually its identity consciously or unconsciously and is acculturated to other values imposed by a strong or a majority group.

Intra-state loyalty and in particular the overseas ethnic groups'

²⁶ Chaliand, Gerrard [ed.] Minority peoples in the age of nation-states, London, Pluto Press, 1989, p.xiv. Marienstras, Richard. 'On the notion of diaspora', pp. 119-125 in Chaliand, Gerrard [ed] Minority peoples in the age of nation-states, London, Pluto Press, 1989, p.125.

support for the 'homeland' is usually analyzed as a diaspora experience. How can we distinguish between different categories of groups settled away from land of origin, among whom are refugees, short-term labourers, exiles awaiting their turn, migrant groups with varying degree of rights in the host country? But can all migrant groups be treated as diasporas? Does the theory also encompass old historical minorities whose members may have settled in another country. At present, there are several such groups which are involved in the 'homeland' issue.

Some political scientists have argued for a much wider definition of a diaspora. An ethnic group settled in a foreign land that maintains its continuity as a community is now suggested to be a diaspora. Cohen for example argues that for the Caribbean people of African descent:

it may none the less be possible to see them as fulfilling the minimum criteria for being a diaspora...^[27]

However he rejects that the term could be extended to include Afro-Caribbean peoples in Europe. Goulbourne in a more recent contribution has argued that whilst the experience of British Caribbean people as well as several others in Britain and elsewhere may give the impression of being a diaspora, this is not so^[28]. Goulbourne suggests, the term diaspora may be figuratively used 'to point to important new developments in the re-ordering of relations between distant populations which share strong ethnic bonds.' He suggests a new term 'diasporic relations' to take account of such groups' experiences^[29]. This category can then include, Jews, Armenians, Rastafarians, Sikhs and a few others. However, some analysts have argued forcefully for a more wider application of the term. For example, Esman suggests a

²⁷ Cohen, Robin 'The diaspora of a diaspora: the case of the Caribbean', Social Science Information, 31,1 [1992], pp. 159-169.

²⁸ Goulbourne, Harry 'Caribbean diaspora or African diaspora?: the case of Afro-Caribbeans in Britain'. Discussion paper for Conference 'Frontiers et diasporas, alterite et civilite', Florence, European Institute, 23 et 24 Mars 1992.

²⁹ Goulbourne, 1992, op cit., p.12.

diaspora is:

A minority ethnic group of migrant origin which maintains sentimental or material links with its land of origin^[30].

This definition excludes migrants who take over or form a state and become its dominant element, for example the British in Australia and New Zealand and Afrikaner in South Africa. It also exclude those groups which we refer to as minorities, whose minority status results not through migration but from conquest, annexation or arbitrary boundary arrangements; e.g. Albanians in Yugoslavia, or the Somalians in Ethiopia. Sheffer argues for an even more comprehensive and wider definition:

Ethnic diaspora are created either by voluntary migration [e.g. Turks to West Germany] or as a result of expulsion from the homeland [e.g. Jews and the Palestinians] and settlement in one or more host countries. In these host countries, the diaspora remain minority groups.^[31]

Those migrants who return after spending a few years abroad obviously would not qualify for diaspora. Thus the distinction between migrant groups and diasporas has become difficult to maintain. These two terms can be taken to refer to a continuum, migrant communities with passage of time may become diasporas.

However the above definition proposed by Esman or Sheffer does not suggest an improvement for analysis nor serves as a better description of various migrant groups. Almost all migrant groups tend to maintain some relationship with their land of origins, especially in their early period of settlement. Similarly, almost all migrant groups mobilise themselves or are induced so, for a temporary period of time, by their home or host state in an emergency or war.

Furthermore there is need to distinguish between those migrants who

³⁰ Esman, Milton J. 'Diasporas and international relations' pp. 333-349 in Sheffer, Gabriel [ed.] Modern Diasporas in international politics, London, Croom Helm, 1986. Esman, Milton J. 'Ethnic pluralism and international relations' Canadian Review of studies in Nationalism XVII, 1-2, 1990, pp. 83-91.

³¹ Sheffer, Gabriel [ed.] 1986, op cit., p.1-15.

have migrated from a secure homeland and those whose homeland was in dispute or partitioned. Just as Marienstras' statement suggests that a diaspora may develop out of a group's experience, so too it may be suggested that a group's experience may transform its status. Thus the effects of external influences on domestic ethnic conflicts and politics were, comparatively, neglected^[32]. While some analysts have put exile politics into this bracket, others restrict it to more permanent exiled groups^[33]. This could come through achievement of the long awaited return to the homeland and the successful necessary reconstruction. Alternatively the diaspora may come to an end through assimilation or integration. or the creation of a new culture in the place once regarded as alien. Since migrations are likely to continue and migrants would retain links with the homelands, however ambiguous, the presence of migrant communities could give rise to tensions between the host country's indigenous population and the ethnic groups on the one hand, and between the host government and the governments of ethnic groups on the other.

Another condition usually attached for defining diaspora is certain passage of time. The Chinese, the Armenians, and the Jews are usually classified as a diaspora because of their historical suffering as a group. Other migrant groups may or may not become a diaspora. Europeans in the New World did not because they did not consciously preserve their language and culture and have lost attachments with their lands. But the Irish, the Mexicans, Blacks are in the process or have become a diaspora. For many groups, migration involves not only physical separation but a transformation in mental, social and cultural attitudes -a process that can take centuries. Assimilation into host

³² Mayall, James 'Nationalism and the international order', Millennium, 14[2], 1985, pp. 143-157. Rothschild, Joseph Ethnopolitics: a conceptual framework, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981. Suganam, H. The structure of institutionalism, International Relations, Vol. II, pp. 2363-2381.

³³ Marienstras, Richard. 'On the notion of diaspora' in Chaliand, Gerrard [ed.] 1989. op cit., p. 119-125

country's society is not easy, it is usually a painful process. Miller sums up the dilemma of Irish settled for more than a century in America as:

Irish Americans remained in figurative if not literal 'exile' increasingly divorced from Ireland by time and circumstances, eagerly embracing the opportunities which the New World afforded, yet still remarkably estranged from the dominant culture of their adopted country. ...the scars of poverty and proscription -theirs or their parents' ran too deep to be palliated by success, especially when recurrent prejudice threatened or demeaned their achievements. ..in such circumstances, Irish Americans often wondered whether [if] full assimilation was possible even desirable^[34].

Thus the notion of a diaspora is both subjective and objective. Time is one measure of it. Economic migrants are unlikely to create a diaspora. While a migrating group does not assimilate into the host society immediately, with the passage of time many such groups do. After all, the maintenance of the feeling of belonging and ethnic identity is a matter of will, of conscious decision and perhaps, determination. Even more crucial, in this regard, is the fact of such migrant groups' relationship with their land of origins.

MIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND THE HOMELAND ISSUE

[a] The Formation of New Diasporas

Since the French revolution, the world has become dominated by nation-states as a result the non-majority groups have found themselves on the peripheral position of power and influence. All states have a territorial aspect to them but, prior to the advent of the nation-state, it is unusual for the administrative power of the state apparatus to coincide with defined territorial boundaries. Neither a

³⁴ Miller, Kerby Emigrants and exiles: Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America, Oxford, 1985. Drudy, P.J. [ed.] Irish Studies: the Irish in America: emigration, assimilation and impact, Cambridge 1985. Miller's central thesis is that Irish-American homesickness, alienation and nationalism were rooted ultimately in a tradition of Irish Catholic world-view which predisposed Irish emigrants to perceive or at least justify themselves not as voluntary ambitious emigrants but as involuntary non-responsible 'exiles' compelled to leave home by forces beyond individual control particularly by the British expansion and landlord oppression.

tight control over language and culture, or physical locations was necessary for past governments. In the era dominated by the nation-state, however, this has become virtually universal. Thus according to Giddens, frontiers and borders are two different aspects of state history. Frontiers refer to an area on the peripheral regions of a state [not necessarily adjoining another state] in which the political authority of the centre is diffuse or thinly spread. A border on the other hand is a known and geographically drawn line separating and joining two or more states. While there may be and often are mixed social and political traits displayed by groups living in border areas, those groups are distinguishably subject to the administrative dominion of one state or the other. Borders, Giddens suggests, are only found with the emergence of nation-states^[35]. Nor were the strict and uniform definitions of citizenship imposed upon the inhabitants of particular lands. The early phase of imperial rulers were far more tolerant of different groups of people who may have different languages, religions or customs. As Kedourie noted:

To an imperial government the groups in a mixed area are all equally entitled to some consideration, to a national government they are a foreign body to be either assimilated or rejected. The national state claims to treat all citizens as equal members of the nation, but this fair-sounding principle only serves to disguise the tyranny of one group over another. The nation must be, all its citizens must be, animated by the same spirit. Differences are divisive and therefore treasonable^[36].

As the old empires crumbled, new nation-states emerged. A new world order in which states were reflection of a culturally and geographically homogenous people came to dominate the world in the post War I period. Yet paradoxically the number of true nation-states in the world today are few. Fitting nation-group attributes to the existing world map, what one finds is one-nation-group dominant states with

³⁵ Giddens, A Nation-State and Violence, Oxford, Polity Press, 1985, p.50-51. Padison, R. The fragmented State: The political geography of power, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983. Sack, R. D. Human territoriality: its theory and history, Cambridge University Press 1986.

³⁶ Kedourie, E. [ed] Nationalism in Asia and Africa, London, Frank Cass, 1970.

fragmented minorities, bi-national states, and multinational states. In none of them is there a total congruence of nation-group and state^[37]. Most of the nation-states are governed by a group which has identified through a dominant culture, language and other such traditions; various minority groups feel under pressure to comply with its demands. The post World War I treaties affecting the Eastern and Central Europe, evoked a substantial literature, especially among international lawyers. These case studies, however, examine the trans-state ethnic politics with little effort at systematic investigation.

While early eighteenth and nineteenth century governments were concerned with exiles and refugees, a small number of people in all such cases, usually in the category of dissidents, the dethroned royals or asylum seekers, the high ranking class of army officers or aristocrat. In contrast the twentieth century has given rise to major floods of people forced from their borders. The nation-state formula has altered the reality of heterogeneous populations and produced two principal victim groups^[38].

In contrast to the Western states, the gulf between state and society is far wider in the developing countries. In most cases, the territorial statehood and ethnic cultures vary. Forging a 'national community' is fraught with great danger and requires statesmanship of high calibre often lacked by Third World nationalists. They are forging nation-states in which historical boundaries and geographic regions did

³⁷ Connor, Walker 'A nation is a nation is a state is an ethnic group', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 1[4], p.387-400. Claude, Ian National minorities: an international problem, Harvard, 1956. Anderson, B. Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism, London, Verso, 1983. Chaliand, Gerrard [ed.] Minority peoples in the age of nation-states, London, Pluto Press, 1989. Enloe, Cynthia H. Ethnic conflict and political development, Boston, Little, Brown & Co. 1973. Dofny, J. and Akiworo A. [eds] National and ethnic movements, London 1980.

³⁸ Tarzi, Shan M. 'The nation-state, victim groups and refugees', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 14 [2], 1991, p. 441-452. Stohl, M. and Lopez, G.A. [eds.] Government violence and repression: an agenda for research, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1986.

not coincide. Thus an ethnic group may straddle a border between the two states, belonging only peripherally to either of them, the Kurds being prime example of this. With some exceptions, later African history and culture has been that of its ethnic communities or nations such as Yoruba, Ganda, or Zulu. To cultivate a distinctive African personality and African community, radicals like Nkrumah, Senghor and Kenyatta have been forced to make concessions to traditional African cultures. To give an indigenous meaning to their chosen paths of change, African leaders have often had to look to their past, an ethnic past, for guidance and inspiration. Neo-traditionist radicals as Tilak in India, or Al-Afghani among the Arabs, have necessarily turned back to the formerly despised traditional ethnic cultures of the rural masses, with all the attendant risks to the territorial integrity and administrative stability of the states³⁹. Thus according to Smith, 'throughout the Third World, but particularly in South Asia and Africa, colonial empires created national boundaries that arbitrarily divided racial tribal and ethnic communities. The disjunction of group boundaries and territorial boundaries is so common especially in Africa and South Asian countries that there are hundred of cases which lend themselves to separatist claims'. More the African and Asian politicians forcibly try to create an integrated territorial nation, more it is likely to contribute to the number of refugees.

The centralising policies have given rise to severe problems of nation-building. As the intelligentsia try to appeal to traditional cultures and ancient historical myths, there is a risk splitting the new state, as the ancient myths are usually along the ethnic line. An appeal to dominant ethnic consciousness testifies to the fragmentary nature of the roots of a state. Smith outlines the dilemma of post-colonial nationalists of these poly-ethnic states: 'to preserve the fragile state and its artificially created territorial domain, the leaders must centralise the means of administration and coercion, and place a heavy

³⁹ Smith, A.D. State and Nation in the Third World, London, Wheatsheaf Books, 1983.

emphasis upon the inviolability on the territorial status quo. They must also extend the powers of its bureaucratic personnel to all areas of the territory. To counteract any tendencies to ethnic fragmentation and secession, the leadership must strengthen the powers of central institution to instil a sense of loyalty and solidarity across the whole territory to the political community embodied in the state. On the other side, to forge a nation as a civic community requires a breakdown of ethnic and cultural allegiances'.

The current wave of ethnic or mini-ethnic agitations, according to Hobsbawm, is a response to the overwhelmingly non-rational and non-nationalist principles of state formation in the greater part of the twentieth century. Soon after independence 'tensions developed between the component parts of the independence movement, e.g. in Algeria, Arabs and Berbers between peoples actively involved in it and those not, between the emancipated non-sectional secularism of the leaders and the feelings of the masses'⁴⁰. Although the dual membership of a country which was common enough in the days of empire, has formally ended, the legacy and laws, the spirit behind them very much has survived. Examples of such migrant groups can be found in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Nigeria and Angola and Ethiopia. Several minority groups claiming for independence or a measure of autonomy. Such groups usually either tend to be on the borders of these states, or in many cases were recipients of particular set of policies by the imperial rulers. In many such cases, their members have also settled into foreign lands, who are willing to support such campaigns, e.g. Tamils, Sikhs, Kashmiri Muslims in South Asia.

With the gradual recognition of ethnic groups as one important factors among many affecting international political relations, early studies were usually geared towards policy, i.e. how to control and manage such

⁴⁰ Hobsbawm, E. Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Cambridge, 1990, p. 101-2.

ethnic conflicts^[41]. While scholars began to recognise the significant role played by ethnicity in world politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, few linked ethnicity to an explicitly transnational perspective. Traditional analyses of international politics by contrast de-emphasised the global implications of ethnicity by exclusively focusing on the intra-state dynamics of ethnic groups. Said and Simmons provide several examples of such essential links between ethnic group behaviour over the borders^[42]. Both Liberal and Marxist political analysis tend to play down the significance of ethnic groups in domestic or international politics. Both traditions, starting from entirely different assumptions, suggested that the ethnic groups are a transitory phenomenon arising due to peculiar phases of capitalist expansion in the world^[43]. These groups, they argued, would soon disappear, according to classical Marxist formulation, into more permanent class issues. In particular the migrant communities in the Western countries were expected to follow their submerging into the mainstream political and social activity.

[b] Relationship with Homeland

Migrant groups have varying relationships with their homelands. Some have a secure homeland others may consider their homeland occupied by others, or part of a state which they want to get rid of. For the British in India, Croats in Germany, Pakistanis in Kuwait, Koreans in

⁴¹ Horowitz, David. Ethnic groups in conflict, University of California, Berkeley, 1985. Wallerstein, I. The modern world system: capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century, London, Academic Press, 1981. Grodzins, Morton. The loyal and the disloyal: social boundaries of patriotism and treason, Chicago University Press, 1956. Morse, Edward L. Modernization and the transformation of international politics, New York, The Free Press, 1976. Magubane, Bernard M. The ties that bind: African-American consciousness of Africa, Trenton, Africa World Press, 1987.

⁴² Said, A. A. and Simmons, Luis R. 1976, op cit., p.16. Also see Said, A. A. [Ed.] Ethnicity and US Foreign Policy, New York, Praeger, 1977.

⁴³ Phillips, Peter D. and Wallerstein, I. 'National and world identities and the interstate system', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 14 [2], 159-171.

Japan, or Haitians in the United States, their homeland is unambiguous. This may not be so for other migrant groups. Depending upon the historical experience, however, the 'homeland' may be a less specific point of reference. Blacks in America look upon whole of Black Africa as their ancestral homeland rather than any particular region or cultural community. Jews in the diaspora have identified with historical memories of Jerusalem and the land of Israel, to which the Messiah would lead them on the day of redemption. Few had any contact with that land, while they identify sympathetically with the present state of Israel, Palestine has not been the actual home of their fathers for nearly two millennia.

Table 1.2
MIGRANT GROUPS : CONTESTED HOMELANDS

Groups	Homeland	Period of Involvement
<u>North America</u>		
Blacks	Africa	Since the abolition of slavery
<u>Europe</u>		
Ukrainians	Ukraine	1917-1992
Latvians	Latvia	1917-1992
Armenians	Armenia	Post World War I
Cypriots	Cyprus	1974-
<u>Middle East</u>		
Kurds	Kurdistan	
Palestinians	Palestine	1948
Jews	Israel	Millennia
<u>South Asia</u>		
Sikhs	Punjab	1984-
Tibetans	Tibet	1962-
Kashmiris	Kashmir	1947-
Nagas	Nagaland	1947-
Tamils	Jafna/Ceylon	1980s-

An ethnic homeland is not merely a territory, it is in a particular group's perception of it as the cultural hearth and the centre of the ethno-nationalist linguistic group. In Bismarckian terminology, 'Blut und Boden,' blood and soil become mixed. Emotionally charged concepts defy logic. The psychological associations between homeland and one's people becomes mythical and resists exposition in rational terms. Words

become pregnant with mysterious terminology 'fatherland', 'motherland', the native land, the ancestral land, and finally, my 'homeland' a territory imbued with an emotional, almost mystical powers and reverential dimensions⁴⁴. Each region has produced a share of patriotic literature, such odes have become 'national' anthems as regions turned into nations.

The passionate defence of homeland is not necessarily based on historical records. Connor cites many such cases. Thus, 'Finns and Germans for example are descendants of people who migrated from East of what is today perceived as Finland and Deutschland. Afrikaner and Quebecois provide examples how homeland can be a region with short association'. Moreover, the concept of homeland may also expand for people who have conquered others. Until recently, the Russian homeland was viewed as encompassing the strip of Russian dominated land stretching from the western border of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic to Vladivostok, though it originally referred to the region of Muscovy. Poles do not appear to differentiate between traditionally Polish dominated regions and that large western sector of the contemporary state of Poland which prior to 1945 was populated principally by Germans. These qualifications hardly reduce the emotional attachments of a homeland. As in other aspects of nationalism 'it is not facts but what people perceive to be facts that is of essence. The important point is the populated world is subdivided into

⁴⁴ Grainger, John H. Patriotisms: Britain 1900-1939, London, Routledge, 1986. Welch, Susan. 'Identity with the ethnic political community and political behaviour', Ethnicity, 1977, pp. 216-225. Smith, A.D. 'States and homelands: the social and geopolitical implications of national territory', Millennium, 10, 1981, pp. 187-202. Connor, Walker Beyond reason: the nature of the ethno-national bond', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16, 1993, pp. 373-389. Connor, Walker 'The impact of Homelands upon Diasporas', pp. 16-45 in Sheffer, Gabriel [ed] Modern diasporas in international politics, London, Croom Helm, 1986.

Connor refers to the eighteenth century poet, Robert Burns who, echoed this universality of attachment to homeland:

breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
can e'er untie the filial band
that knits me to thy rugged strand.

a series of perceived homelands to which, in each case, an ethnic-national group claims a profound and exclusive proprietary rights. Nomenclature is instructive. Scotland for Scots, Germans birthright to Deutschland, Kurds to Kurdistan or Nagas to Nagaland, Hindus to Hindustan, Bengalis to Bangladesh'^[45]. In such an international environment, minorities with different cultures are viewed at best as outsiders, 'strangers within the gates'. They may be tolerated, even treated equitably, and individual members may achieve the highest office. Their stay may be multi-generational, but they remain outsiders in the eyes of the indigenous, who reserve the *inalienable right* to assert their primary and exclusive claim to the motherland. Moreover, in a number of cases, what superficially might pass for the peaceful acceptance of a migrant community has been due to the lack of means to purge the homeland of an alien presence. Thus in F S Furnivall's famous model of plural society, the indigenous people -a small representation of the mother country, and a large immigrant population resided within the colony in reasonable harmony. But relationship altered perceptibly with the end of colonialism. Indeed as Furnivall pointed out, even prior to Dutch withdrawal the nationalist movement on Java achieved popularity because of its anti-Chinese immigrant activities^[46].

[c] Ethnic Identity

Models of political behaviour of ethnic groups have anchored their assumptions in two major and contrasting views of ethnicity, usually labelled as primordial and instrumentalist. Although there are several exponents of each approach, one could take Geertz's writings for primordialism while Wallerstein's can be characterised by instrumental. The primordial views the assumed givens of shared culture at the heart of the ethnic matter. These primary authority patterns stand independent of the physical boundaries of nation states. The

⁴⁵ Connor, 1986, op cit., p.18

⁴⁶ Furnivall, J. S. Colonial policy and practice, Cambridge University Press, 1948, p. 310.

independence of ethnic identity rests in its socio-psychological dynamics and in the lack of congruence between ethnic nations and geographical and political boundaries of states.

Ethnic groups throughout the world offer their members two crucial elements usually identified with traditional nineteenth century European nationalism; an effective group identity, the psychological sustenance of affective ties, a sense of peoplehood, self-esteem, and interdependence of fate. This sense of belonging and peoplehood forms the basis of ethnicity. It is reinforced by racial, religious, linguistic and cultural differences providing group members with a distinctive identity or world view.

Instrumentalists on the other hand, view ethnicity as a weapon among many which a group may pursue in its collective bargains with an authority. Geertz's and Wallerstein's position have been elaborated and defended by several other writers. Other examples of a primarily primordialist approach, are recent works of Isaacs and Epstein. Isaacs suggests that ethnic identity is made part of an individual even before he or she attains consciousness. Other writers focus on the cognitive and affective elements of ethnicity, thus in its most elementary aspect identity is a matter of perception.

Instrumental view has also several advocates. Glazier and Moynihan take ethnicity to be primarily an artificial construct and approach and treat it as a strategic blueprint. In an influential book they examined the contemporary status of an ethnic groups in New York city primarily as interest groups, -an approach within the instrumentalist variation⁴⁷. Ethnicity is seen to replace class as the most fruitful

⁴⁷ Glazier, Nathan and Moynihan, D. Beyond the Melting Point, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963. Glazer, N and Moynihan [eds]. Ethnicity: theory and experience, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975. Keyes, Charles F. [ed.] Ethnic change, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1981.

basis for organisation as a strategic option^[48].

Although the debate between the two perspectives has underscored many writings in the field of ethnicity during the last three decades, scholars have been increasingly aware of the difficulties raised by each of these rather extreme positions. Ethnicity thus has both primordial and instrumental elements. Ethnic identity is both dynamic and situational. The external environment refers to the racial environment in the larger society. This includes three factors; the salience of the nation-state entity; the cultural definition of minority status; and the visibility of relevant groups. Changes in these three factors will interact with the internal environment of an ethnic group to shape and determine some of the changes in its ethnic identity.

PATTERN OF MOBILISATION

In general, the relationship between migrant groups and their homeland has become politicised in recent years. Studies relating to ethnic group mobilisation on behalf of their erstwhile homes, be these countries of origin or in more interesting cases, demand for homeland arising out of new circumstances, are still in its infancy. This may be due to inherent difficulty of the subject, combining as it does, elements of international politics with an analysis of socio-psychological dynamics of inter and intra-group behaviour.

First, there has been a general consensus among academics of the transitory nature of ethnicity of migrant groups. A major assumption of

⁴⁸ Banton, M. Ethnic Competition, Cambridge, 1983. Banton incorporates some aspects of economic factors into the instrumentalist view of ethnicity. He argues 'when people compete as individuals, their activities tends to dissolve the boundaries that define the groups, whereas when they compete as groups their activities reinforce those boundaries'. Ethnicity again is seen as a strategic choice.

Kasfir, Nelson. 'Explaining ethnic political participation', World Politics, 31, 1979, pp. 365-380.

Western social sciences in the post 1940 decades that ethnic conflict could soon disappear as nations modernised and minority groups assimilated^[49]. Indeed there was a long tradition in the social sciences from Durkheim to Deutsch' advocating such a proposition. It has been common among political scientists and sociologists to assume that any particular cultural or religious traits of minority groups settled in another country would soon come to pass into the mainstream culture. Such common approach to the ethnic phenomena have been reviewed by Safran in the following way:

Most political scientists have not yet settled on a paradigm for the pluri-ethnic reality: instead they have been hidebound in an ideological framework that posits the existence of ethnic groups and the articulation of ethnic consciousness as indicative -at best -of the growing pains of modernisation and as reflecting differentials in distribution associated with uneven mobilization and other pathologies of development or at worst -as dysfunctional for democracy and institutional pluralism and as indicative of false consciousness. Few political scientists have seen any utility in the continued existence of ethnic minorities and few have admitted an intrinsic value in minority cultures. The two doctrines that have continued to inform most ethno-political analyses are Jacobinism and Marxism^[50].

They were helped in this conviction by the unyielding nature of ethnicity. Since it remains such an elusive concept, such a behaviour found itself a favourite candidate for dismissal in favour of more tangible factors. Fishman has called this as certain sociologists' 'contempt for ethnicity'^[51].

How such migrant groups are mobilised is governed by a complex set of factors. Table 1.3 provides a summary of such factors.

⁴⁹ Ryan, S. 'Explaining ethnic conflict: the neglected international dimension', Review of International Studies, 14 [3], 1988, p.161-178.

⁵⁰ Safran, William 'Ethnic mobilization, modernization and ideology: Jacobinism, Marxism, Organicism and Functionalism', The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 15[1], pp.1-31.

⁵¹ Fishman, Joshua A. Language and Ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1989.

Table 1.3
FACTORS IN THE MOBILISATION OF MIGRANT GROUPS

Factors	Host Country	Homeland/Home Country
[a] Ethnic Identity		
Cultural		
Similar	High	Low
Dissimilar	Low	High
Linguistic		
Similar	High	Low
Different	Low	High
Religions		
Same	High	Low
Different	Low	High
Colour/Race		
Similar	Low	Low
Different	High	High
[b] Migration Experience		
Forced	Low/High	High
Voluntary	Low	Low
[c] Connection with Country / Region of Origin / Homeland		
Member of Majority	Low	Low
Member of Minority	Low	High
Homeland in Conflict	High	High
War / Hostility	High	High
Genocide	High	High
[d] Host Society: Experience		
Discriminatory	High	Low/High
Favourable	Low	High
[e] Migrant Groups' Skills		
High	High	High
Low	Low	High/Low

Mobilisation among migrant groups depends upon a number of factors. However, a major factor in this mobilisation is the difference between ethnic identity of a migrant group with its host society. Second, important factor is the kind of relationship with its home state or homeland. In general the policies of host state coupled with those of the homeland can determine the degree of mobilisation in a migrant group. Thus according to one scholar, in the British context, 'ethnic

nationalism arises due to two interacting factors:

exclusion from the British national community, and the dynamics of developments 'back home'^[52].

Where the cultural differences are minor, where there is no discrimination or deprivation, the group members may feel no compelling reasons to organise as group. They may disappear as a separate community. Migrants with strong sense of identity which contrasts sharply with the host society will, generally, have higher potential for mobilisation. Some migrant groups, more than others, have inclination to maintain group solidarity and to promote their self-interests by political means. For some migrants and their descendants, attempting to influence the foreign policy of their host country is an important measure both to their self-definition and the attitude of host society towards the migrants^[53]. This has been the experience of Javanese in Malaysia, Dutch in the United States. Where the cultural differences are greater, especially if ethnic identities are reinforced by religious solidarity, as with the Greeks, Irish and Jews in the United States, then communal distinctiveness and solidarity are likely to be longer lasting. Social marginality is also a likely factor in a community's will to organise for self-maintenance, defence and advocacy.

Diaspora communities which have consciousness of superiority to their host community may resist assimilation. Germans in the United States maintained their elaborate networks on the feeling of their superiority of culture. The Chinese in Southeast Asia and Asians in Africa have also displayed similar tendencies, as did the Jews and Greeks in Eastern Europe two centuries ago. The Chinese will not assimilate in Southeast Asia, but can come to terms with United States which they respect as equal to theirs. Through a combination of preferences and social exclusion, ethnic groups tend to maintain their identity and solidarity over extended periods. Thus after three generation of

⁵² Goulbourne, Harry. 1991, op cit., p.173-213.

⁵³ Weiner, Myron. 'Asian Americans and American Foreign Policy, Revue European des Migrations Internationales, 5[1], 1989.

residence in France, Armenians have still maintained very strong relations. In many countries there are older diaspora and new diaspora. Even within the same ethnic group, mutual support and solidarity may be strained by tensions and conflicts between earlier and later arrivals.

The response of the home government have usually been mixed. The home government may ask the host government to influence, usually to restrain what it perceives to be hostile or embarrassing activities of sections of its migrant communities. Dublin has asked the United States to restrain the movement of weapons from sympathizers to the IRA. Peking has asked governments of Southeast Asia to block the flow of funds and support from sections of overseas Chinese to the regime of Taiwan. The former Yugoslavian authorities called upon the Federal Republic of Germany to control the activities of migrants which were supporting the Croat nationalists. The disintegration of Soviet Union was welcomed by several migrant communities based in Britain and the United States. The host country government may try to use an overseas ethnic community in pursuit of its external political or economic goals.

How the interest groups of minority groups can be articulated and to what extent are determined by the conditions of host society are illustrated by two extreme examples. While United States as an open society gives a large measure of freedom for interest groups, in the former Soviet Union no diaspora could articulate such demands. Jews in the United States have seized this opportunity, while Soviet Jews had no such recourse. Thus migrant communities in France are free to organize, many Gulf States prohibit the formation of such political organisation even among the fellow Arabic migrants. Even in the same country the opportunities may not be equal for every group of migrants. Thus blacks in South Africa before 1990 were highly restricted, while Jews are relatively free to organise, Indians are somewhere in the middle. Thus the opportunities and activities facing the migrant are as much determined by the condition of host countries as by their own

skills and endowments.

Some migrant groups may become involved in the foreign policy considerations of their host governments. States are not reliable champions of the rights of ethnic groups or migrant populations^[54]. President Lopez Portillo of Mexico threatened to reduce oil exports to the United States if illegal Mexican migrants were not given better treatment. Israel has always protested at the treatment of Jews in the former Soviet Union, while its protests to Argentinean mistreatment of Jews have always been subdued for reasons of military trade. Relationships among various migrant groups within a host country could cause foreign policy considerations. The Ayodhya issue in India led to hostility among Hindu and Muslim migrants in Britain. The relationship between Afro-Americans and American Jews have long been a sour point to policy makers of the USA. Thus 'the rising level of nationalism within each group, especially the concern with Israel by the one and the concern with the independence of Africa...of the other, drives a deep wedge of resentment between Jews and Afro-American. The national implications of this rift are unsettling, and they hardly contribute to healthy international prospects'^[55]. The Italian-Ethiopian war had a negative impact on Italian American -African American relations across the United States. Hostilities between Indian and Pakistan in the last two decades led to a deterioration of relations between Indian and Pakistani migrants in Britain. There are several examples of 'homeland issues' which have provoked conflicts between migrants groups in a third country^[56]. India cannot bargain with the Middle Eastern states

⁵⁴ Said, A.A. [ed] Ethnicity and US Foreign Policy, New York, Praeger, 1977.

⁵⁵ Washington, Joseph R, 'Jews in Black perspectives: a dialogue', Cranbury, NJ, Associated University Presses, 1984.

⁵⁶ Bousquet, G. L. Behind the bamboo hedge: the impact of homeland politics in the Parisian Vietnamese community, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1991. Mitchell, C. 'International migration, international relations and foreign policy', International Migration Review, 23[3], 1989, pp. 681-708. Magubane, Bernard M. The ties that bind: African-American consciousness of Africa, Trenton, Africa World Press, 1987. Newsome, Yvonne D. 'International issues and

over its migrant population now working in the Gulf states, because it wanted to project itself as a leader of Third World. Nor for similar reasons did it protest at the harsh treatment to overseas Indians in East Africa. China invaded Vietnam in 1978 in part to avenge the mistreatment of Chinese minority which the Vietnamese regarded as effective fifth column. The main reason however for the invasion was that Vietnam had become an ally of Soviet Union. In the neighbouring Cambodia, thousands of ethnic Chinese were slaughtered by Pol Pot regime and China hardly sent a note of protest. In international politics, reasons of state normally take precedence over the claims of migrant communities. States will not risk important security or economic interests for the sake of their co-ethnics.

Migrant communities have, on occasions, directly attempted to influence events in the home country by economic, political or occasionally military aid. Overseas Chinese provided vital economic help and sent vital military equipment and facilitated the revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen against C'hing regime in 1911. From Germany, Turkish guest workers have provided financial support to competing political parties in Turkey while Croats used to smuggle weapons to support Croat dissidents in Yugoslavia. Factions of Irish diaspora have supplied weapons to the Irish terrorists or 'freedom fighters' in Northern Ireland leading to uneasy relations between the British government and the United States. Examples of actions by migrant groups which have created serious tensions between host and home governments are many. In all such cases, home governments accuse the hosts of tolerating and even abetting hostile activities which they argue should be suppressed. Under Japanese government pressure, the British colonial government in Malaya did embargo financial help from local Chinese government which was resisting Japanese invasion in the 1930s. Economic assistance from

domestic ethnic relations: African Americans, American Jews, and the Israel-South Africa debate', International Journal of Politics, culture and Society, 5[1], 1991, pp. 19-48. Newby, Robert G. 'Afro-Americans and Arabs: an alliance in the making?' Journal of Palestine Studies, 10, 1981, pp. 50-58.

the Jewish communities abroad has been an important factor in the establishment of the Zionist settlement in the Palestine and Israel.

Home governments have also used their overseas populations to attain particular aims, economic, political sometimes military. The governments of South Asia realise vital economic benefits from financial remittances from their nationals working in the Persian Gulf States. The Chinese government has operated a network of educational, tourist and financial services to facilitate these flows similar to those established by Israel government in attracting the funds from overseas Jewry. The imperial government of Germany made an all out effort to mobilize its citizens in United States to prevent American participation in the World War I. Similarly Britain used its population in the United States to prompt its intervention in the War. More problematic are efforts by a home government to manipulate a reluctant, insecure, unsympathetic or divided diaspora community, e.g. Hitler's effort to mobilize German Americans to help on behalf of Third Reich.

Exile politics has been practised by many ethnic groups in the United States. Examples include Irish Fenians and members of various Cuban juntas in the 19th century, the lobbying of immigrant groups for the independence of their homelands during and after the First World War I, ie Indians in San Francisco in 1914-18. Koreans established a government in exile in 1919 whose president Syngman Rhee installed by the America occupation force in Korea in 1945, became the Republic of Korea's first president three years later. Until the Second World War Asians were denied the right to naturalise and thus the right to vote. American Chinese's role in the overthrow of Manchu Empire and the establishment of the Republic was crucial⁵⁷.

Blacks of the United States have been less influential in influencing

⁵⁷ Ma, L Eve Armentrout 'Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns: Chinese politics in the Americas and the 1911 revolution', Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.

the government's policy to take tough measures against the South African regime. Malaysia's Chinese have used their limited influence on their government's policy to accept the normal diplomatic relations with the Peoples' Republic of China in 1972. They were however, unsuccessful in their campaign for taking the ethnic Chinese 'boat peoples' as refugees. The success of Jewish diaspora in the United States in committing its government to far reaching diplomatic, military and economic support of Israel is the most dramatic example of diaspora influence on the host government⁵⁸.

Some home governments have cultivated close ties with their diaspora, fostering cultural links, promoting return travel, facilities for financial remittances, and neutralising dissidents within the diaspora. Despite such efforts, a diaspora may prove to be a burden. China's efforts since 1955 to normalise its relationships with Southeast Asian states have been frustrated by the presence of Chinese there. The supply of arms to IRA by militant Irish groups in the United States has been source of embarrassment to Ireland. Overseas Chinese financed and supported the overthrow of the Ch'ing dynasty by the republican revolutionary forces of Sun Yet-sen. The East European diaspora in the United States had provided considerable help to oppose the Soviet imposed regime in their homelands. American Jews, certainly a section of it, opposed the annexation of West Bank by the Likud government under Begin and Shamir. German Americans were charged with disloyalty during the World War II and their standing went down in the public. The Ayodhya issue led to swift retaliation in far distant lands; the Muslims in Britain attacked some Hindu temples, setting one on fire.

Migrant communities have mobilised to influence international

⁵⁸ Bick, Etta Zablocki, Ethnic linkages and foreign policy: a study of the linkage role of American Jews in relations between the U.S. and Israel: 1956-1968; Unpublished Ph.D., dissertation at the City University of New York, 1983.

organizations on behalf of their homeland⁵⁹. The most conspicuous case has been the success of Palestinians in isolating the Israel government in the United Nations and its agencies. However, similar efforts by the Kurdish, Armenians, Croatian, Sikhs, Kashmiris, South Moluccan and other migrant groups to invoke the United Nations support have failed entirely because they lack crucial support of some of member governments.

Thus migrant groups' involvement into international politics is quite varied. Almost all groups have generally mobilised due to a crisis in their home country. Wars, natural calamities, civil wars have usually led migrant groups to mobilise on behalf of their co-ethnics, the home state or in support of the host state. This type of mobilisation is usually for a short period. Others may have more durable connection, especially those groups which have long-standing relationship with their homeland. The formation of nation-states have contributed to many such ethnic groups' involvement in 'homeland' demand. In such cases, members of an ethnic community in scattered lands have provided crucial support.

THE SIKHS AS A CASE STUDY

The Sikh campaign for a separate homeland presents, in the light of above framework, an interesting case of post-colonial state-formation. The Punjab crisis has led to widespread mobilisation and support from their co-ethnics from abroad. This forms the main subject of the present study. Like other migrant groups involved in the international arena, Sikh involvement in 'homeland' politics throws up several interesting contradictions. Since 1947, India has had to contend with several ethnic claims for self-determination. Some of these were co-opted through accommodation, the Tamils being the prime example, others

⁵⁹ Ronen, Don. The quest for self-determination, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979. Rothschild, Joseph. Ethnopolitics: a conceptual framework, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981.

remain unresolved. The Nagas, Kashmiris, Tamils, Gurkhas and, more recently, the Sikhs have joined in this campaign. The Indian territorial state is a prime example of a post-colonial state without a firm centre, whose physical and cultural boundaries are not in congruence. Within its borders, some ethnic groups have well-founded claims to be potential nation-states. These groups are considered by the dominant ethnic group a threat to the survival of its polity. Some ethnic groups such as the Kashmiri Muslims cut across the territorial boundaries and have received considerable help from the neighbouring state as well as overseas Kashmiris. Tamils of Sri Lanka have similarly attracted support from their co-ethnics from within India and abroad.

The Sikh migrant communities have had considerable linkages with their land of origin. However, this connection became a passionate cry for a Sikh homeland due to Indian army action in the Golden Temple in June 1984. The emotional outburst has become institutionalised into a number of organisations which have since campaigned for a sovereign Sikh homeland. The overseas Sikh mobilisation has not attracted any serious attention. The only notable exception is a recent study by Goulbourne who examined the case of British Sikhs' involvement in the demand for Khalistan. By concentrating on the activities of Dr J. S. Chohan, a leader of the Khalistan Council, Goulbourne has argued that the demand for Khalistan illustrates a phenomenon whereby some minority groups opt for what he terms the 'communal option'^[60]. This option is thought to

⁶⁰ Goulbourne, 1991, pp.126-169.

The Indian diaspora, old, populous and widely scattered around the globe has attracted few scholarly studies. Apart from Tinker's notable contribution who examined the colonial policies towards Indian migration, there exists no general study of the Indian diaspora or its constituents such as the Sikhs and Gujaratis. More perceptive works have come from creative writers such as Naipaul brothers and Dabydeen.

Recent articles relating to Indian diaspora are: Helweg, A.W. 'The Indian diaspora: influence on international relations', pp. 103-129, in Sheffer, Gabriel [ed] Modern diasporas in international politics, London, Croom Helm, 1986. La Brack, Bruce, 'The international effects of the diaspora on America: a century of global change reflected in the East Indian communities in the US', a paper presented at 4th East Indians in the Diaspora Conference, Columbia University, July 13-15, 1989. La Brack, Bruce, 'Foreign / Domestic issues: the case of North American overseas Sikh communities and the reciprocal impact of political unrest', paper at 33rd International Congress of Asian and

be less desirable than a pluralistic paradigm he proposes to policy makers of a multi-ethnic polity. He attributes the emergence of such an option to the particular vision of community leaders on the one hand and an outcome of certain policies of a state towards its ethnic minorities.

This study presents an account of migrant Sikh communities' mobilisation in the Punjab issues and, since 1984 in the cause of a Sikh homeland. In the light of above theoretical review of migrant groups' involvement in international politics, the Sikh case presents several interesting hypotheses to test. Concentrating on the case of Sikh migrants in three Western countries, the study tries to locate the Sikh mobilisation by answering some of the theoretical issues relating to diaspora. Overseas Sikhs do not fulfil the classic definition of a diaspora, but they come close to fulfilling a slightly wider definition of a diaspora.

- [a] Scattered across several countries, they have had fairly long linkages with their land of origins and have tried to maintain an ethnic consciousness.
- [b] In the post 1984 period, the process of mobilisation in the cause of 'homeland' seems to suggest all the hallmarks of emotional, psychological and cultural characteristics of a diasporic community.
- [c] This mobilisation has come about as a direct result of a cathartic event affecting their religious centre and region of origin.

As seen in the introduction, the issue of Sikh homeland arose mainly due to the Indian army action in the Golden Temple in June 1984. Prior to 1984, overseas Sikhs considered India as their country. A migrant usually experiences a sense of loss, nostalgia and alienation in his new environment; individual as well groups have different capacities to deal with a new world. Similarly, a sense of duty towards kin back at home and a vague or a developed sense of responsibility towards one's homeland also impinge upon migrants. Such feelings can become operational in crisis or in case of hostilities. As seen through above

examples, home governments or host governments have tapped migrants' connections and divided loyalties for their particular ends. Like other migrant communities the Sikh case also presents a complex relations with their host countries and the country of their origin. It is obviously misleading to talk as if they were united or monolithic in their orientation to their *domestic situation or to the international* affairs. Factors of internal stratification also need to be taken into account. Like other groups, they are divided by class interests, by the longevity of their residence in the host country, by subethnic, regional or caste origins. There may also be conflict of goals and tactics. Careful observations of Sikh migrants is likely to disclose such divisions and a complex pattern of mobilisation for the homeland issue.

The study tries to identify important factors in this process of mobilisation. Starting with an examination of Punjab linkages in social, religious and political spheres, the study then delineates the impact of crisis in highlighting the issue of homeland for a migrant group. Finally, we look at the policies of home and host governments in affecting a migrant group's behaviour and political development. The study will highlight how Sikh mobilisation has been mediated by factors of migration experiences, internal socio-cultural characteristics, and, the impact of the policies of host and home governments. In examining this mobilisation, attention shall also be paid to overseas Sikh communities' political, psychological and cultural expressions.

Chapter 2

THE SIKHS ABROAD

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SIKH COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN AND NORTH AMERICA

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of overseas Sikh settlements with an historical account of emigration and their destinations across the world. Section one presents an overall picture of overseas Sikh communities. Section two provides a brief historical account of the migration process especially as it relates to Britain and North America [the United States and Canada], the three Western countries which are the focus of this study. Section three examines some salient characteristics of migrant Sikh communities, relating them to the social structure of the Punjab, and how these have been mediated by their migration experiences and reception in the host countries. In the final section we return to the question of whether such characteristics of overseas Sikh communities can define and classify them as a diaspora.

OVERSEAS SIKH COMMUNITIES: AN OVERVIEW

For every one hundred Sikhs, eighty live in the Punjab, about seven live abroad, with the rest living in the neighbouring provinces of the Punjab, with notable concentrations in Delhi, Calcutta and other metropolitan cities of India. The total Sikh population is estimated at 16 million, of these just over a million live abroad. These are based on 1991 estimates rather than actual figures which are as yet

unavailable. Of the overseas Sikh population, estimated to be about one million, over seventy five percent are settled in three countries, namely Britain, the United States and Canada. For a community which is less than two percent of India's population, the ratio of overseas residents to the total Sikh population is strikingly high. This is especially so if we take account of the fact that emigration has been restricted to a small tract of the Indian Punjab. Moreover, the emigration of Sikhs is comparatively recent; the majority of those living in western countries came to settle in the post 1947 period. Three phases of Sikh emigration can be distinguished: colonial, post-colonial [1947-] and post-1984. Data relating to Sikh emigration in the colonial era is scanty and to construct a true picture for the entire period much empirical work remains to be done.

THE COLONIAL ERA

After three decisive battles in 1846-49, an independent Punjab became part of the East Indian Company's rule in India. The Company troops consisting of some British regiments, supported by thousands of Hindustani soldiers employed by the East Indian Company faced Sikh armies in these Anglo-Sikh Wars in the central and western Punjab. The Sikh ruler of the Punjab, Maharajah Ranjit Singh, had raised a large army to expand and maintain his kingdom from Kashmir to Kandhar -the furthest limit on the Afghan borders¹¹. The Punjab army, trained by European officers, had drawn Muslims and Afghans into its ranks.

¹ Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh; Maharajah of the Punjab, 1780-1839, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962. By the mid eighteenth century, twelve Sikh chiefs came to dominate central and western Punjab. Among these, Ahluwalia, Singhpuria, Nishanwalia, Bhangi, Kannahya, Nakki, Dallewalia, Shaheed, Karora, Ramgarhia and Shukerchakia, the latter produced the Sikh ruler Maharajah Ranjit Singh [b. 1780, d. 1838] who set out to establish the Sikh rule by capturing Lahore in 1799.

Table 2.1
OVERSEAS SIKH POPULATION: SOME ESTIMATES

Continent/Country	Period	Population*	Main Location
[i] Europe			
United Kingdom	1960-90	300,000-400,000	Ealing, Birmingham, Coventry Wolverhampton, Leeds
Denmark	1981-	3,500-5,000	Copenhagen
Germany	1981-	15,000-20,000	Major cities
France	1982-	2,500-3,000	Paris
Belgium	1984-	3,500-5,000	Major cities
Netherlands	1984-	1,500-2,000	Amsterdam
[ii] Americas			
Canada	1905-1913	7,500-10,000	Vancouver and B.C
	1960-1990s	100,000-125,000	Vancouver and Toronto
U.S.A.	1905-1913	7,500-10,000	Imperial Valley, Sacramento
	1960-1980s	100,000-125,000	California, New York
Mexico	1930-	1000-1500	Major cities
Argentina	1950s	500-2,000	Major cities
[iii] The Far East			
Malaysia	1865-1940	30,000-45,000	Kuala Lumpur, Penang
Singapore	1865-1940	25,000-30,000	North of the City
Australia	1890-1910	5,000-7,500	Woolagong, Sydney
New Zealand	1890-1910	2,000-3,000	Farmlands
Fiji	1890-1910	1,200-2,500	Farmlands
Philippines	1910-1930	4,000-5,000	Manila and rural farms
Thailand	1920-1940	2,500-5,000	Bangkok
	1984	2,000-2,500	Bangkok
[iv] The Near East			
Afghanistan	1900-1930	2,000-2,500	Kabul
Abu Dhabi	1970-1980	10,000-25,000	Transient Labour
Iraq	1970-1980	7,000-10,000	Transient Labour

* The strength of Sikh population is indicated by bands for want of a precise figure.

SOURCES

Far East: Sandhu [1969], Sidhu [1983]
 North America: La Brack [1988], Chadney [1984], Johnston [1988], Gonzales [1986]
 United Kingdom: Knott and Toon [1982]
 East Africa: Mangat [1969], Sidhu [n.d.]
 Europe: Estimates

Before the rise of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, who subjugated armed bands of Sikh chieftains into a powerful Sikh kingdom, joining a Sikh or Mughal chief for a modest share of plunder and adventure was considered an honourable occupation. The imposition of British rule in the Punjab in 1849 affected Punjabi society profoundly. Two new developments took place: first, an irrigation project and general improvements in transportation which linked the province to the outside world; second, the Indian mutiny in 1857, as a result of which recruitment of Punjabis into imperial armies became an established policy. Both these developments prepared the ground for Punjabis to venture out, at first to the outlying areas, and then abroad. The integration of the Punjab economy into the colonial economic system proceeded briskly. Between 1873 and 1903, Punjab's rail system expanded from 400 miles to over 3000 and its system of irrigation canals grew from 2,744 miles to 16,893². In 1904 Indian wheat exports to Great Britain exceeded those of Russia and the United States, and the Punjab provided a major part of the Indian food grain trade. The exports that left the Punjab brought cash and credit making distant travel possible for Jat Sikh peasants. Independent emigrants from the Punjab were able to pay the fare taking them first to the Far East and then onwards to the Pacific States. The responsiveness of Punjabi villagers to opportunities in the far lying countries, the Telia' [Australia] and 'Merika' [America] was conditioned by the Punjab economy's integration into the international economy.

The advent of the 'Canal Irrigation Project' to the wasteland - popularly known as 'bars' of the Punjab in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to a rapid migration from and mobility within the central district of the Punjab. Under the 'Canal Colonies' scheme, surplus river water was channelled into newly built canals in

² Calvert, H. C. The wealth and welfare of the Punjab, Lahore, 1936.

the unpopulated lands in the Western Punjab³. As a consequence, thousands of Punjabi peasants migrated to larger irrigated lands of Canal Colonies; for example, the number of emigrants from Amritsar, Jullundur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, and Ludhiana in the Chenab Colony in the Lyallpur district rose from 221,445 in 1901 to 280,232 in 1911. Previously the population was most dense along river stretches and in the sub-montane districts of high rainfall. With the introduction of the canals, new cities such as Lyallpur and Montgomery sprang up. The population of Lyallpur increased from a mere 60,306 in 1891 to 2,157,000 in 1951. Large scale migration took place from the crowded Eastern districts to new and more fertile agricultural land between Jhelum and Sutlej. In terms of the shift in population across various districts of the Punjab, the Canal Colonies had a profound impact on demographic levels in the Western Punjab. The districts of Lahore, Lyallpur, Multan, Montgomery, Jhang, Shahpur gained large populations from the eastern and central districts of Punjab.

The British administrators' basic philosophy was evolved by officials belonging to 'the Punjab School'. Underneath it was a philosophy which saw a contented peasantry as the bulwark of the imperial rule. Reflecting this, a number of land policies were introduced to protect rural peasants, particularly migrant farmers, from the onslaught of urban financiers. These innovative land policies led to an agitation by urbanised elite --the first signs of discord appeared between a

³ Paustian, Paul W. Canal Irrigation in the Punjab, Columbia University Press, New York, 1934. Ali, Imran The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885-1947 Princeton University Press, 1988.

Nine projects were undertaken by the British Punjab authorities to irrigate the desert areas of western Punjab districts, starting in 1886, last colony was started in 1925. Work on this continued till 1940s. These projects in chronological order of colonisation with their popular names and approximate acreage of allotted irrigated land of each are: 1886-88; Sidhani Colony, Multan district [250,000 acres], 1886-8, Sohag Para, Montgomery [100,000 acres], 1892-1905, Lower Chenab and Chunian [also known as Upper Bari Doab], Gujranwala, Jhang, Lyallpur, Lahore, Sheikhpura [over 200,000 acres], Lower Jhelum, 1902-6 [450,000 acres], Jhelum [450,000 acres], 1914-1924, Lower Bari Doab, Montgomery and Multan [over 1,000,000 acres], 1915-1919, Upper Chenab, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sheikhpura [80,000 acres], 1916-1921, Upper Jhelum, Gujrat [40,000 acres]; 1926-1940, Nili Bar, Montgomery and Multan, [Over 1,000,000 acres].

benevolent imperial authority and the Punjabi rural society⁴).

The second major impact of colonial rule was the emergence of the Punjab as a favourite ground for army recruitment. The circumstances leading to certain sections of the Punjabi population being classified as 'martial races' and fit for army recruitment are complex. The crucial event was the 1857 mutiny when British rule faced a grave threat from a combined force of Hindu and Muslim sepoys. Hurriedly raised Punjabi regiments fought loyally to defeat the sepoys of Central and Eastern provinces and end the short reign of the Mughal emperor in Delhi. Repercussions of the 1857 mutiny were the wholesale re-organisation of armies as well as a formal British takeover of India. Henceforth, recruitment for armies was restricted to more loyal provinces. Amongst the Punjab population, Sikhs emerged as a particularly favoured 'martial race' fit to serve the empire⁵. Between 1858 and onset of the First World War, the proportion of Punjabi men in the army increased steeply. The number of Sikh soldiers during the First World War increased to a record level of 150,000, a quarter of all the armed personnel in India.⁶ As professional soldiers, they were deployed to the far corners of British colonies; from Malaya in the Far East, to the Mediterranean, to the British African colonies and protectorates in Africa and to Europe⁷. Sikh soldiers who went abroad to fight for the Empire, were then inspired to settle away from the sedentary rural life. Army service was usually short-term and

⁴ Barrier, N. G. 'The Punjab disturbances of 1907: the response of the British government in India to agrarian unrest', Modern Asian Studies, 1[4], 1967, pp. 3353-383. Legal protection of peasant classes was embodied in the Land Alienation Act of 1900.

⁵ Dewey, Clive 'Social mobility and social stratification amongst the Punjabi peasantry; some hypotheses', a paper presented at Institute of Commonwealth Studies, n.d.; Brief, David The Punjab and recruitment to the Indian army, 1846-1918, unpublished M.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1984.

⁶ Leigh, M. S. The Punjab and the war, Lahore, 1922.

⁷ MacMunn, Sir George, Lt.Gen. The armies of India, London, A. C. Black, 1912. MacMunn, Sir George, Lt. Gen. The history of the Sikh Pioneers, London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co. 1935.

thereafter they were the first to seek their fortunes abroad. As an officer lamented,

they go off to Canada, the Argentine, all over the place;
they are very restless^[8].

In large Sikh villages, the retired army personnel would narrate their adventures to the young, or perhaps the two-storeyed buildings built with their overseas wages conveyed the worth of their adventures. The authorities also reserved special lands in the Canal Colonies for ex-army personnel. Young Punjabis of central Punjab could enlist into exclusive Sikh regiments and see the world^[9].

While the process of economic development and army recruitment gave access to the outside world, the emigration from Punjab must be looked at within the framework of colonial emigration which affected other provinces of India. As the British Empire spread upwards through the Indian peninsula, from the lower South, to the Eastern and then to the Northern provinces, various provinces in turn came under the influence

⁸ Army in India Committee 1912, vol III, p.1022, Col. E B Colle.

⁹ For a sample of folk-songs relating to travel and migration, see anthologies edited by Bedi, Sohinder Singh, Folklore of the Punjab, New Delhi, National Book Trust, India, 1971 or Nahar Singh [ed] Malve de lok geet, 4 vols. 1989.

Songs relating to migration experience occupy a prominent place in Punjabi folklore. These are usually sung at fairs or festivals. A typical popular song would usually start with a couplet by one group of singers; *Barih barsin khattan giya si, Khatan Gaye si; byee ki Khat liyanada* [For twelve years you went away, travelled far and long, what fortune have you brought? The second party then would make an elaborate reply with several variations to the same set of question. Popular folk songs of Punjabi rural women, the following are well-known: *Kaan Banere te boliya, ni aaj pardesi aaona*, [the crow crows on the roof of my home, the foreigner might return today]; *mera dhol gaya pardes ni saeeyo, koi deve sunehrha* [my husband is away in foreign lands, has he sent any message?]

Some songs recall the days of army recruitment in the Punjab and men's going to the wars; *kathtian ho ke karan siapa, vihaian te muklaian, hi mar je Laat sahib jin laman valaiti laayian, jang vich harenga je naran tarpayian* [The wedded and newly wedded sit together and curse the English Lord who has taken their men in the English wars, you will surely lose the war by separating the brides for long].

The plunder and ravages of Afghans along with the smaller chiefs remain to this day part of Punjab folklore. A popular Panjabi language proverb runs as: *khada pita lahe da, baki Ahmed Shahe da* [to eat and drink is all we know, for the rest to Ahmed Shah doth go].

of the shipping companies' agents. Such agencies sprang up in several cities in Southern and Eastern India, responding to white settlers' needs for cheap labour in colonies as divergent as Fiji, Malaya, the West Indies and the African continent. The labour needs of such colonial capitalists far exceeded the supplies and thus millions of Indians went abroad to participate in the exploitation of raw materials and plantations. The white settlers setting out on personal and economic adventure for the exploitation of colonial resources, combined this docile colonial labour in such a judicious mix, even Marx could not help but laud this exceptional case of progressive capitalist development.

The demand for Indian labour came from several colonies, and became specially heavy in the aftermath of abolition of slavery throughout the British empire¹⁰. Between 1801 and 1826, the labour demand from sugar and other plantations of White settlers was unusually high. From 1830s onwards, the East India Company introduced a system of indenture to streamline the export of labour from various provinces to the outlying British colonies¹¹. The existing network of European agency houses in the main ports of Southern India who were by now used to furnishing a variety of colonial labour requirements spread even further. Amid disturbing reports of ruthless exploitation of Indian labour in the colonies and with high mortality rate during their transportation, heated debate took place about the volume of migration and how the East Indian Company should proceed curb those inhuman conditions. Ethical judgements were pronounced on the nature of indentured system, but it remained despite all legal regulations, 'a new system of slavery'.

¹⁰ Slave trade was abolished in 1807. After 1 May 1807, no British ship was permitted to clear port with a cargo of slaves, and from 1 March 1808 no slave could be landed in a British colony from any ship. Further legislation passed in 1811 made this traffic a felony punishable with transportation.

¹¹ Law Commission Report led by Macaulay, 1830. The Government of India brought these reforms under the Act V of 1837.

Among the measures taken in this period were: the quota of women was raised to 25 percent; the enforcing of passage regulations after reports of several scandals of hardship and mortality on the ships, a written statement of the terms of contract, 5 years service, renewable for further five year term, the return of the emigrant to the port of his departure¹². Many labourers chose to settle in their new countries after the end of their indenture period¹³. In some colonies, they were joined by 'free' migrants from commercial and mercantile classes of India, especially the Gujarat. The indentured system by which Indians were recruited and shipped to colonies led to a growth of 'Indian communities' abroad. Thus noticeable Indian communities grew up in Mauritius, British Guiana, Natal, Trinidad, Fiji, East Africa, the Transvaal, Cape Province, Ceylon, Malaya, Jamaica and British Columbia, not to mention small groups in Hong Kong, and in China. Spread across both self-governing dominions and colonies, these settlements of Indian labourers were truly an imperial phenomena¹⁴.

The indentured labour system was increasingly questioned and finally

¹² Act XXXII of 1837], this scheme was extended from Calcutta to Madras and Bombay.

¹³ Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, 1910 [CommD 5193 Part II], Minutes of Evidence. Johnson cites Sikh emigration in these minutes.

The numbers of Indians abroad in 1921 were as follows: This is derived from 'Indian communities in the British Commonwealth: 1921'

Burma	887,077	Jamaica	18,610
Ceylon	635,761	Zanzibar	13,500
Malaya	470,180	Tanganyika	10,000
Mauritius	265,524	Uganda	3,518
South Africa	161,329	Hong Kong	2,000
British Guiana	124,938	S. Rhodesia	1,184
Trinidad	122,117	Canada	1,016
Fiji	60,634	Australia	300
Kenya	22,822	U. K.	5,000

Total population of India in 1921 :			
Overseas Indians :			
318.9 Millions			
2.5 millions			

¹⁴ Tinker, Hugh A new system of slavery, the export of Indian labour overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, 1974. Tinker, Hugh Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950, Hurst, London, 1976. Tinker, Hugh The Banyan Tree, Oxford University Press, 1977.

laid to rest in 1920 due to a combination of political factors¹⁵. However, Punjabi emigrants escaped the worst of the indentured system, particularly the hardships of sea voyages, and the penalising return conditions imposed on people from other provinces. The late entry of the Punjabis into the colonial emigration market also determined the destinations of a small number of those Punjabis who were enlisted by colonial agents. As agency houses spread towards North West India and finally to the Punjab, some colonies were already closed to Indian labourers, while others such as the Far Eastern were still importing labour or just opening up. By the 1880s the emigration from the Southern and Eastern Indian provinces had passed the peak of the 1850s. Sources of new recruits had shifted to the North Western Provinces and the Oudh. Thus in the year 1883, over two-thirds of the new recruits were engaged from this province, about one-sixth from Bihar and Bengal, with a small fraction from the Punjab. This change in recruitment areas in the last years of the indentured system, with increasing concentration on the congested districts around Benaras continued until the end of the century. Labourers for Fiji were largely supplied by Madras and Southern provinces. Again when there was a boom for a brief period after the Boer War and a heavy demand came from Natal, Madras was the main source of supply. By the 1910s the indentured emigration from Northern India was in its final phase, but labour migration from South India continued in massive numbers for another twenty years.

Until the 1880s the Punjab was relatively untouched as far as indentured migration was concerned. The small numbers who did go were not the sort of recruits the colonial planters or farmers were looking for. The arrival of 'unfamiliar types' in the West Indies was duly noted and discouraged. The annual report for Trinidad 1902-3 mentioned that new recruits included people from Rohtak in Eastern Punjab and others from Ajmer, in Rajasthan including Rajputs and Pathans unused to manual labour and classified as 'undesirable'. Two years later,

¹⁵ Tinker, 1976: op cit., p.334-366.

Trinidad protested more strongly about these hard men from the borderlands of Punjab:

...these are very objectionable as field labour...many absconded to the Spanish main, refused to work in the fields, and nearly all have been unruly and troublesome¹⁶.

Some Punjabis and Pathans were also sent to Fiji, where they immediately objected to their conditions and caused trouble, according to the Governor, Sir Everad Thurn, who thought they had 'been soldiers or something of that sort' and unused to labour. Similarly Harlech concluded that the valiant deeds of the Indian army in North Africa had not helped the standing of the local Indians: soldiers belonged to 'martial races' and were willing to put up a fight for their rights.

Sikhs were an unusual group in the India emigration: they were prepared to fight for their rights. The mass of poor labourers mainly from Madras, and the traders and shopkeepers from Gujarat, who formed the bulk of the emigrants were not prepared or organised for struggle¹⁷.

Emigration from Calcutta was narrowed down to the eastern districts of United Provinces. In 1908 nearly 90 percent came from this area, especially the districts of Fyzabad, Basti, and Gonda. The 'Committee on Emigration from India' which reported in 1910 recommended that this situation should be confirmed by Government directive, and despite protests from the Emigration Agents for the receiving colonies, this was enforced. A Marsden, the Agent for Trinidad at Calcutta told the Colonial Office [4 September 1913]

It does not appear to be generally understood that we are confined in our recruiting to a class of people who are not the most robust of the natives of India. The enlistment of Punjabis, Sikhs and Nepalis is forbid, as well as those men who have formerly worked as soldiers and policemen. Nor have we any opportunity of getting recruits from the hill tribes [Dhangars]. The result is that we are confined to drawing our recruits from people who are exposed to famine, drought and flood...and who at times are forced to undergo long periods of semi-starvation¹⁸.

¹⁶ Annual Report for Trinidad 1902-3, cited in Tinker, 1974: p.58.

¹⁷ Tinker, 1976: op cit., p.29.

¹⁸ Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, 1910, Minutes and Evidence.

By 1920-21 Indians could enter the British colonies with a minimum of difficulty, but their entry to most of the Dominions was closed. Indian entry to the United Kingdom was free from all checks, other than the requirement to produce a British Passport or other evidence of nationality. In this respect, the British Nationality Act 1914 had extended the scope of British citizenship. Previously a passport issued in India or Canada or Southern Rhodesia had merely represented that territory, the 1914 Act conferred common citizenship upon all the subjects of the Crown as far as the laws of the U.K. were concerned. To mark the accession of George V, the India Office declared its position on overseas Indians in the following cautious terms;

His Majesty's government fully accepts the principle that each of the Dominions must be allowed to decide for itself which element it desires to accept in its population. The extreme contention urged by some Indians, 'that membership of the British Empire shall entitle any British subject to reside wherever he chooses is disposed of by acknowledged facts'¹⁹.

The government of India had to accept these acknowledged political facts and asked for that the policies of white Dominions should be so framed, 'as to avoid wanton injury to the self-respect on non-European British subjects with emphasis put upon exclusion on educational grounds not on grounds of race'. Yet this acknowledgement of a common status was accompanied by the tacit assumption that the vast majority of people of the British Commonwealth would claim the rights of their own country. 'That they would not flock to U.K.', The Round Table declared: 'our climate keeps coloured races away more effectively than the most drastic of immigration restrictions'.

[a] The Far East

A crucial element in Sikh emigration to the Far East was their recruitment into the police, other security forces and as junior personnel on the railways. These were the kind of services which were in high demand in these colonies. The crucial link in initiating this

¹⁹ Cited in Tinker, 1976: p.29.

demand was usually the personal influences of British officers who had served in the Punjab and United Provinces and then had gone to other colonies. A familiar example is that of a British police officer, C. V. Creagh who had been transferred from Sind to Hong Kong as a Deputy Superintendent of Police in 1865-66. He immediately recommended his trusty Sikh police from Punjab to be engaged as members of the Colony's police. The first batch of 100 Sikhs arrived in Hong Kong in June 1867 and officials were so impressed that further recruitment was recommended^[20]. In the year 1871, there were 182 Sikhs and 126 Muslims from the Punjab in the Colony's police force. In line with contemporary colonial thinking, Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims and Chinese were trained and raised in separate regiments under European officers. Each regiment or company had its own establishment staff of the same nationality. In 1939, Hong Kong's police force comprised of 272 Europeans [including some white Russians], 774 Indians and 1140 Chinese. In 1952 the police force was completely Hong Kongised and Sikh personnel were expelled. Many Sikhs after completing ten years period of service were hired by private firms as security personnel or served at another port.

After Hong Kong, Malaya was the major destination of independent Sikh migrants. Not until the opening years of the 20th century, did Malaya become a major importer of Indian labour. In 1900 there was a larger Indian population in British Guiana than in Malaya. But with the rubber boom, the demands of Malaya seemed insatiable. Madras supplied virtually all the labourers for the rubber estates. Before the War, a vast majority of South Indians were employed in rubber plantations. Sikhs were recruited into the mines, while some Punjabis went into mercantile and skilled labour categories. A number of Sikhs also served as security guards^[21]. Malaya was a major destination for a small

²⁰ Government of Hong Kong, Blue Books, various years. Also see Vaid, K. N. The Overseas Indian community in Hong Kong, Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1972, p.37.

²¹ Sandhu, Kernial Singh. Indians in Malaya: some aspects of their immigration and settlement, 1786-1957, Cambridge, 1969. Sandhu, Kernial Singh 'Sikh immigration into Malaya during the period of British rule',

number of Sikhs with police connections. First to enter Malaya were those recruited by Captain Speedy in 1873 to combat Chinese insurgency among the tin mines of Perak. Some of these pioneer recruits were subsequently drafted into government services, to form the nucleus of police and para-military forces of the state, following its passing into British control. The government following its increased demand started recruiting directly from Punjab. As the news spread of government jobs in Malaya, independent migrants started arriving there. Those rejected by security services, would find themselves working in the private sector as caretakers, watchmen, bullock cart drivers, dairy keepers and mining labourers. Others drifted to neighbouring states of Thailand or Sumatra. Still others dreamed of America and Canada. Apart from policemen, some commercial immigrants came to Malaya. Some Sikh convicts also found their place in Malaya^[22]. The Malay States Guides and the Straits Settlements Sikh Contingent, two of the principal government bodies employing Sikhs, were disbanded in 1911 and 1926 respectively. The exact figure of Sikhs in Malaya is unknown, but it would be about 30,000. This compares with 10,000 in 1931 and 15,000 in 1947.

The first Sikhs in Australia perhaps arrived as early as the close of the nineteenth century. This seemed to be a by-product of Punjabi recruitment to British armies and police. Those Sikhs who were stationed in Hong Kong and the Malaya States in police and security duties were attracted to Australia. In the late 1870s some of these were also ready to go to the United States, but a few went to Australia, mainly to the Western part. Some retired Sikh policeman from

pp. 335-354. in Ch'en, J. and Tarling, N. [eds.] Studies in social history of China and Southeast Asia, Cambridge, 1970.

²² Kirpal Singh and M L Ahluwalia, Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 42-54.

Nihal Singh, popularly known as Bhai Maharaj Singh and another Sikh leader, Kharak Singh were sentenced to exile for their part in Sikh wars against the British in the 1840s.

Hong Kong went to New Zealand calling others to join them from home^[23]. For some Sikhs, New Zealand was the second step after entering Australia; others went from New Zealand to Fiji lured perhaps by stories of sugar-cane fortunes^[24]. It was becoming increasingly difficult to get into Australia as the government effectively put a bar on coloured immigration in 1901 by announcing several tests for the entrants to be conducted in the European languages. A few tried to call on Auckland where they were usually able to get into New Zealand with a smattering of English -the only requirement for settlement laid down by law in 1899, here again the main purpose to keep Asians out.

New Zealand was a convenient route to Fiji for a small number of Punjabi migrants. Over 90 percent of the Fijian Indian population is from the Gujarat, from the hinterlands of Barodas. In 1904 the first free immigrants arrived in Fiji from the Punjab via Noumea. In the decade before the First World War a small batch of Sikhs were recruited via an agent as is indicated by the letter written to the Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur in 1914. How the earliest emigrants from Punjab went abroad is illustrated by the following appeal to the authorities by some Sikhs who had gone to Fiji.

we the Punjabi now residing in Fiji Islands left our country on the inducement and representation of Wali Mohamed and Atta Mohamed; castes Syed, residents of Karnana, Tahsil Nawanshahar, District Jullundur, Punjab. They have been sending our people during the last 5 years and on each steamer 45 or 46 men are being emigrated while they take Rs 35 as their commission for each individual and Rs 5 from the Shipping Company^[25]

²³ McLeod, W H, Punjabi community in New Zealand, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1984. McLeod, W H 'The Punjabi community in New Zealand', pp. 113-121 in Tiwari. K.N. [ed.] Indians in New Zealand, Wellington, 1980. McLeod, W. H. A list of Punjabi immigrants in New Zealand 1890-1939, Auckland, Country section of the Central Indian Association, 1984. Singh, Gajraj, The Sikhs of Fiji, South Pacific Social Science Association, Suva, n.d. Leperavanche Marie M De. Indians in a white Australia: an account of race, class and Indian immigration to Western Australia, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

²⁴ Mcleod, 1984: op cit., p.116.

²⁵ Signatories to this appeal reveal the social and religious division of early Punjabis abroad. All 46 signatories belonged to Jullundur district, the majority of them being Jat Sikhs. Sikh settlement in Fiji for the early years was as follows:

Another avenue was for those who were policemen. These Sikhs were brought to Fiji from Shanghai and Hong Kong under contract without penal sanctions. Some of these decided to stay after their contract periods.

[b] East Africa

Sikhs were recruited from the Punjab for the development of the Ugandan Railways project during the last years of nineteenth century. Perhaps there is considerable truth in Grigg's statement that 'the railway is the beginning of all history in Kenya'^[26]. Most of the Indian labour on the railways comprised of Punjabis, a majority of them Muslims with the rest being Sikhs and Hindus. For the first time Karachi became the embarkation post for Punjabi emigrants. Among Sikhs who migrated to East Africa, most of them were artisans, belonging to the Ramgarhia class^[27]. As the railway line progressed, the number of imported labourers rose sharply, 3,948 arrived in 1896, 6,086 in 1897 and

Period	Indians	of which Sikhs
1878-79	498	3
1882-83	922	105
1883-4	1514	101
1884-5	2316	37
1885	540	8
1886	1012	5
1887	None	None
1888	537	2
1889	675	1
1890	1155	3
1891	1055	8
1892	1529	8
1893	781	6
1894	1082	2
1895	1432	1
1896	1179	8
1897	1339	2
1898	567	0
1899	931	6
1900	2304	63

²⁶ Cited in Hill, M. F. Permanent way: the story of Kenya and Uganda railway, Vol 1, East African Literatures Bureau, 1949.

²⁷ Bhachu, Parminder Twice migrants: East African Sikh settlers in Britain, Tavistock, London, 1985.

another 13,000 in 1898. Of these 16,312 were repatriated at the end of their contracts, 6,484 were invalided and 2493 died. Only 6,724 opted to remain in Kenya at the end of their contract in 1904; by then the railway line had reached Kisumu²⁸. O'Callaghan proposed that the Indians employed on the railways of whom several hundred were Sikhs, should be given free plots of land contiguous to their places of employment for five years as an inducement to take up permanent residence with their families. Although the recommendations for an organised agricultural settlement were never implemented, the Indian community in Uganda soon grew in numbers through their enterprise, according to the official report in 1903. Indians had taken all the retail trade from the Arabs and Swahilis who originally were the sole traders. By 1911 at the time of the Census, there were 1102 Muslims, 673 Hindus 263 Goans, 124 Sikhs, and 53 other Indians, a total of 2216. Of these 480 were merchants, 221 shop assistants, 330 clerks. By 1914 the number of Indians rose to 3110. In 1921, Sikhs numbered 129, while the total Indian population had risen to 5200. Several associations sprang up among the Indians in Uganda, and although the number of Sikhs was small, they participated vigorously in trade unions and sports²⁹.

The second route to East Africa was through army recruitment. A small number of Sikhs went to various colonies and protectorates of East Africa as soldiers. In 1895, after assuming the Company's responsibilities, the British government decided to establish a military base force known as the East African Rifles with headquarters in Mombasa. At the outset the force was composed of 300 Indians

²⁸ Hill, 1949: op cit., p.189 and p.240.

²⁹. 'Sikhs in sports', The Sikh, Vol 10, 1982, published by the Sikh Council of Kenya. This lists a number of Sikhs who played in the national hockey team of Kenya. Another Sikh Joginder Singh took part in East African Safari Rally in 1965. See Barnard, R. The Flying Sikh, Transafrica Publishers Ltd, 1975. Hazara Singh Rajput, more commonly known as Makhan Singh participated in trade union movement. He came to Uganda with the Sikh regiment in 1914. After the War he set up transport business and became well-known as a game hunter. He became president of the Mbarara Indian Association and a staunch supporter of East Africans' struggle for independence.

recruited from Punjab, 300 Swahilis and 100 Sudanese. Although during the next few years the East African Rifles participated in campaigns against Arab rebels and other insurgents, [Sikh troops with others were employed to quell the mutiny by Sudanese troops in October 1897], the contingent was not replaced at the expiration of the contract period in 1900^[30]. However, more Sikhs had arrived by then. In 1898, the Uganda Rifles and the East African Rifles were merged into the newly founded King's African Rifles for regular service in Nyasaland and Somaliland as well as Uganda and the East African Protectorate^[31].

In Kenya the total number of Sikhs employed in the railways and security services during the period of railway construction, from 1895-1901 was nearly three thousand. They built the first Sikh gurdwara at Kilindini in 1892^[32]. After the completion of the railways, the number of Sikhs declined sharply. In 1921, the census showed a Sikh population of 1,619 out of 45,633 people of Indian origins. In the 1930s, the Sikh population gradually increased again both with families joining their men and a fresh wave of migrants. In 1948, the Sikh population had gone up to 10,663, doubling to 21,169 in the next 14 years. As Kenya gained freedom in 1963, the decline of the Asian population began rapidly. During, 1962-69 it declined from 176,600 to 139,000 and by the year 1979, numbers had reduced to 78,600^[33]. Almost two thirds of all Sikhs lived in Nairobi and the rest in the Coastal province especially in and around Mombasa. However, with independence came 'Africa for Africans' policies. With official policies favouring the indigenous population, a majority of Sikhs along with other Indian communities especially

³⁰ Hill, 1949: op cit., p.168.

³¹ Mangat, J. S. A history of the Asians in East Africa c.1886-1945, Oxford, 1969. Gregory, Robert India and East Africa; a history of race relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939, Oxford, 1972.

³² Sidhu, M S, The Sikhs in Kenya, Punjab University, Chandigarh, [n.d. 1980?]. Surinder Kaur, Afro-Sikhs in Kenya, Nanak Parkash, Nairobi, Sikh Students Federation, 1977, pp. 66-68.

³³ Kenya Population Census, 1962. Non-African Populations, Vol. IV, p.69, p.85.

Gujaratis re-migrated to the United Kingdom. A small number went to Canada or the United States. Those who remained behind were either without means or more adventurous and wealthy businessmen able to exploit the economic policies of the post-colonial nationalist governments. Among Kenyan political life, Sikhs played a prominent part. Makhan Singh and Kirpal Singh Sihra made major contribution to Kenyan national life; the former became prominent in the trade union movement while the latter established Kenya Airways in 1965, a large private company which was taken over by the Kenyan government. Mr Sihra migrated to London and was the first to propose a Sikh commonwealth for overseas Sikh communities^[34].

[c] North America

Between 1904 and 1917 the total number of East Indians who entered the US were not more than ten thousand. Of this it has been estimated that ninety percent were Punjabi Sikhs. The beginning of Sikh migration to North America is attributed to army connections. After a parade for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in London in 1887, a Sikh toured Canada before going home^[35]. In the following years some of these army men turned up at Pacific Coast ports. Sir Harry Johnson who had met some of these 'reserve soldiers of the Indian army who have served with the Malay police or the Hong Kong police, and who are Sikhs', described the Sikh migrants' voyage:

...in the spirit of adventure they drifted across to the Philippines Islands and engaged themselves in the services of Americans,... from there they found their way to Hawaii and then to the States, and some of them stayed in California and others came on^[36].

³⁴ Sihra, K.S. The Sikh Commonwealth, London, 1985.

³⁵ La Brack, Bruce, The Sikhs of Northern California, 1904-1975, AMS Press, New York, 1988. Johnston, Hugh 'The development of Punjabi community in Vancouver since 1961', Canadian Ethnic Studies, XX[2], 1988, pp.1-19.

³⁶ Johnson's account of Sikh emigration is contained in Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, 1910, Commd, 5193, Minutes of Evidence.

After landing, either in Vancouver or San Francisco, they rapidly moved southwards to Southern California or settled in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. In British Columbia, Washington and Oregon, they found well-paid jobs in the lumber industries; some also worked on Pacific Railways, others became farm labourers. The rush years were between 1905 and 1908 when about 5000 Indians, mostly Sikhs, came to British Columbia^[37]. They were largely from Hong Kong, Singapore and other Far Eastern centres. By the year 1905, Sikh presence in the Seattle-Victoria-Oregon areas was quite noticeable. Some of the American papers dubbed their arrival as 'the tide of turbans' and others went further by describing it as 'the Hindu invasion'^[38]. The simmering racial hostility came to the surface in 1907 and 1908 when there was a temporary recession in the lumber industries and unemployed East Indians huddled together. Most of the Sikhs were called Hindus as distinct from North American Indians. This unemployment was blamed on the Hindus by white workers and anti-oriental feelings arose^[39]. In Canada, the racism broke into songs with the anthem, 'White Canada for Ever'

To orient grasp and greed
We'll surrender, no ever
Our watchword the 'God save the King'
White Canada for ever

The Canadian government acted quickly to implement hastily drafted regulations passed through Orders-in-Council under the Canadian Immigration Act. Entry into Canada was refused to persons who had not come from their country of origin by a 'continuous journey', and who could not produce a through ticket. In addition arrivals had to be in

³⁷ Das, R.K. Hindustani workers on the Pacific coast, W de Gruyter, Berlin, 1923. Misrow Jogesh C. East Indian immigration on the Pacific Coast, R and E Research Associates, San Francisco, 1971, [originally published in 1915]. Chadney, J. G. The Sikhs of Vancouver, AMS, New York, 1984.

³⁸ Doreen, Indra, 'South Asian stereotypes in the Vancouver press', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2, 1979, pp.166-189.

³⁹ Ferguson, C. A. A White Man's country, Doubleday, Toronto, 1975. Hess, Gary R. 'The Hindu in America; immigration and naturalisation policies and India, 1917-1946', Pacific Historical Review, 38, 1969, pp.59-79.

possession of \$200, which replaced the small fee of \$20. These deterrents were meant to dissuade Asian immigration, and these measures certainly produced desirable results. Only 27 Hindus were able to enter between 1909 and 1913^[40]. The Canadian government also offered a plan to re-settle Sikhs in Honduras. Tejā Singh, who became the first president of the Khalsa Diwan Society set up in 1908 among Vancouver Sikhs rejected this offer. He also led a delegation to Ottawa for fair treatment to Sikhs^[41]. Teja Singh arrived in Vancouver in October 1908. For the next three years travelled extensively between Stockton's and Victoria's Sikhs playing a leading role in the political events. The delegation asked the government to drop the 'continuous journey clause'^[42].

However such restrictive measures aimed at Asians of another British colony went against the spirit of 'free movement of peoples within the British Empire'. Despite the intervention of the Government of India against these measures, Canadian authorities did little to ease Indians' entry. Sikhs stationed in Malaya states and other Far Eastern countries were to challenge the discrepancy between the stated ideals of the empire and its practical realities in a more dramatic way. Badly hit by these new measures of the British Columbian authorities, a determined effort was made to break through the web of the Canadian immigration laws in May 1914. A Sikh businessman Gurdit Singh chartered a Japanese ship 'Komagata Maru' and collected 376 passengers from Hong Kong and Shanghai fulfilling just about all the requirements of Canadian immigration laws. The ship arrived at Victoria harbour on May 23, 1914. The Canadian Immigration Department after protracted

⁴⁰. Gonzales, Juan L. 'Asian Indian immigration patterns: the origins of the Sikh community in California', International Migration Review, V[1], 1986, pp. 40-54.

⁴¹ Delegation members were Teja Singh, Dr Sundar Singh, Rājā Singh and Reverend L. W. Hall. They met Minister of the Interior, Robert Rogers in Ottawa in December 1911.

⁴² Jivan Kahani, Raj yogi Sant Atar Singh Ji maharaj de varosae sant teja Singh ji di apni kalm ton likhi hoi, bhaq duja, Kalghidhar Trust, 1989.

negotiations prevented all but a few from landing. Despite strenuous legal battles, the local Sikhs could not force open the doors of Canada for their fellow men. Eventually escorted by HMCS Rainbow, the Komagata Maru returned home^[43]. On landing at Calcutta Budge Budge port, they were met by police and in resisting arrests the Sikhs suffered severe casualties. The Komagata Maru voyage played a large part in the transformation of the Sikhs' cultural nationalism into a political expression of anger against British rule in the Punjab. The loyalty of proud ex-soldiers and policemen swung violently against the government and opened the Sikh soldiers to the nationalist propaganda.

Faced by strict immigration controls, with no possibility of calling for their families, many Sikhs responded positively to the exiled Indian leaders' call for a return to India to wage a war against the imperial rule. The newly formed organization, the Hindi Sabha held several rallies in areas of Sikh settlement in California. With the generous offer of help from Sikh farmers, an office of the Gadr Party was established in San Francisco in 5, Wood Street, renamed as Yugantar Ashram, where it started a weekly paper, 'Gadr'. As the movement gained momentum, over two thousand Sikhs left the United States to fight for the liberation of India^[44]. The immediate impact of this return to the Punjab meant the Sikh populations of Canada and America were substantially reduced.

Early Sikh settlers were mainly farm labourers usually working under a gang leader. Working on California's farms, and wherever their work would take them, their daily wages averaged around \$1 to \$1.75 per day. Cooking and residences were shared. When some of them acquired the

⁴³ Johnston, Hugh The voyage of Komagata Maru: the Sikh challenge to Canada's colour bar, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1979.

⁴⁴ Josh, Sohan Singh, Hindustan Ghadar Party, Delhi, 2 vols, 1976, 1978; Puri, Harish, Ghadar movement: ideology, organisation and strategy, Amritsar, 193; Brown Emily C, Har Dyal: Hindu revolutionary and nationalist, Tucson, 1975. Isenmonger F C and Slattery, J, An account of the Ghadar conspiracy, 1913-15, Government of Punjab, Lahore, 1919.

knowledge of crops, seed stock, transportation and processing systems and a feeling for the market, they bought farm lands and became farm owners. The pioneer Sikhs who had settled in Imperial Valley in California could not bring in their families and this resulted gradually in Punjabi-Mexican familial alliances. Many Sikhs raised mixed families by marrying Mexican women, popularly called Mexican-Hindus^[45]. Their numbers were decreasing as there was no fresh immigration till 1946. In a survey of Mexican-Sikh families in the late 1960s, an observer pointed out:

The first generation are beginning to die out and the second and third generation are rapidly losing their ethnic and religious identifications as Punjabis. Complete assimilation to American culture whether of the Mexican-American or Anglo variety appears inevitable within a generation or two unless a substantial number of new Sikh and Moslem immigrants both male and female appear on the scene. Given present US immigration policies, the likelihood of this occurring, although theoretically possible, seems rather remote^[46].

In 1930, the Asian Indian population numbered 3,130 and by 1940 it had dropped to 2,405, with the majority living in California. Half of them were employed as farm labourers, 15 percent were farmers or farm managers and 20 percent were involved in non-farm labour. Only 4 percent were classified as professionals. Between 1920 and till 1947, Sikhs in Canada and the United States lived in small and isolated communities. They could not own lands, nor vote and their presence was irksome to ordinary Americans. In May 1913, the California Alien Land Act restricted the right to register land to American citizens only^[47]. In 1917 they were barred from entering the country and in 1923 they lost the right to become American citizens. The US Supreme Court delivered its verdict on a Sikh farmer's right to buy land, the famous

⁴⁵ La Brack, Bruce and Leonard, Karen 'Conflict and compatibility in Punjabi-Mexican immigrant families in rural California, 1915-65', Journal of Marriage and Family, 46, 1984, pp. 527-537.

⁴⁶ Littleton, C Scott, 'Some aspects of social stratification among the immigrant Punjabi communities of California', pp.105-116 in Beals, Ralph [ed.] Culture, change and stability, Los Angeles, University of California, 1964.

⁴⁷ Leonard, Karen 'Punjabi farmers and California's Alien Land Law', Agricultural History, 59[4], October 1985, pp. 549-562.

'Thind Case' when it ruled that Asian Indians were not 'free white persons' and therefore could not become American citizens^[48].

THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

Only in 1946, with the passage of the Luce-Cellar Bill [Public Law 483], were Asian Indians freed from the 'Barred Zone' immigration restrictions and initially given a quota of 100 immigrants per year. In the 1960s, however, American immigration policies were reversed. Thousands of migrants from India landed in the United States. Of these new arrivals, few went to South California. They settled mainly in metropolitan cities. The liberalisation of American immigration laws allowed a large number of Sikhs to California, especially to rural areas, and the peach growing area of Yuba city has grown from its small base of the 1950s^[49]. In 1948, Sikhs numbered just 400, increased to 750 in 1965 and by 1980, the Sikh population was estimated to be about 60,000. Over 6000 Sikh were estimated to be living in Yuba City in 1981, it has three gurdwaras, the first of which was built in 1967. This reversal in the American Sikh population has been described by La Brack:

In the process a once quickly disappearing minority group has become one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the nation and one of its most successful^[50].

With new Sikh arrivals, the occupational profile of American Sikhs underwent a radical shift, when professionals came to the United States in large numbers. The following table illustrates the numbers involved in this migration process.

⁴⁸ Hess, 1969: op cit., p.63-64.

⁴⁹ Miller, Allen, An ethnographic report on the Sikhs-East Indians of the Sacramento Valley, Berkeley, 1950. Gibson, M. A. 'Punjabi orchard farmers: an immigrant enclave in rural California', International Migration Review, XXI[1], 1988, pp. 28-50.

⁵⁰ La Brack, Bruce, 'Occupational specialization among California Sikhs: the interplay of culture and economics', Amerasia, 9[2], 1982, pp. 29-56.

Table 2.2
ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.: 1900-1981 PERIOD

Years	Total Nos.	Cumulative	Rate Per Year
1900-1906	870	0	124
1907-1914	5943	6813	743
1915-1929	1646	8459	110
1930-1944	183	8642	12
1945-1965	6371	15013	303
1966-1981	215640	230653	14376

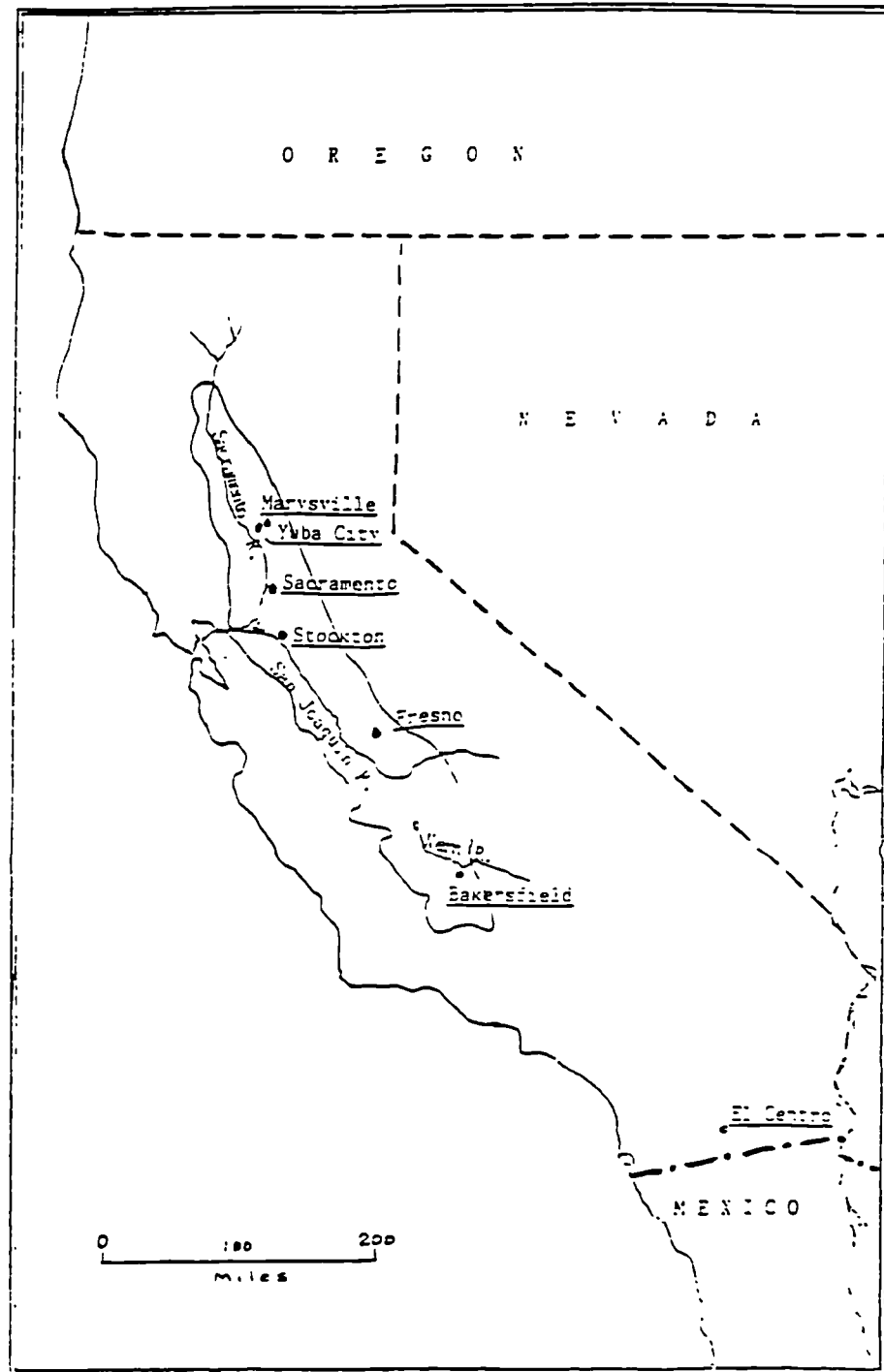
Source: Statistical Yearbook of the INS 1981

Among those listed as Asian Indians, several commentators have noted that for the early years, ie. from 1950 to 1966, a majority were Sikhs from Punjab. For the post-1966 period, the ratio of Sikhs among Indians dropped progressively; in the 1980s, it was probably as low as ten percent. The geographical distribution of Sikhs also presents an interesting picture. In California Imperial Valley, Jan Quin Valley and the Sacramento Valley are areas of Sikh migrants; the latter accounts for the later arrivals and now has the largest concentration of Sikhs⁵¹. Professionals are scattered more evenly in New York, New England states and in the Southern states.

⁵¹ Bhardwaj, Surinder M. and Rao, Madhusudana N. 'Asian Indians in the United States: a geographical appraisal', pp. 197-217 in Clarke, Colin. Peach, Ceri. and Vertovec, Steven [eds.] South Asians Overseas: migration and ethnicity, Cambridge University Press, 1990. Also see, Gonzales, 1986: op cit., p.45

Map: 4

Early Sikh Settlements in the United States



Source: Map adapted from
La Brack, Bruce The Sikhs of Northern California: 1904-1986
New York, AMS Press, 1988, Page 109

In the post-1960 period, the occupation of Canadian Sikh settlers presents a different picture. A majority are manual labourers working in farming, lumber and other industries. In 1961, the total South Asian population in Canada was less than 7000.

Most Punjabi migrants are sponsored by relatives already in Canada. This has been true since 1919 when Indian residents in Canada were first allowed to bring in their wives and children. This sponsorship still links urban Vancouver to Punjabi villages. In 1984, 94 percent of all immigrants from India were sponsored relatives and only 4 percent were independents. The evolution of Canadian immigration regulations has perpetuated a sharp distinction between the Punjabi community in British Columbia and other Indo-Canadian communities. The Punjabi community, with a rural base in the Punjab and a group of families whose roots in Canada, has made, according to one commentator, 'aggressive' use of the right to sponsor^[52]. Because of a point system for immigration, the ratio of professionals from India has fallen sharply since the early 1970s. The ratio of professionals from over forty percent in the 1968-72 period, was reduced to less than two percent in 1983-84. The percentage of unskilled workers and dependants has correspondingly risen. The sponsorship system has by and large determined the structure of the Sikh community of Canada. The people who were in BC in the 1950s sponsored those who came in the 1960s and those who were here in the 1960s sponsored those who came in the 1970s. Under the quota system in the 1950s and early 1960s and under the nominated relative system of the late 1960s and 1970s, it was possible to bring over brothers, sisters, middle aged parents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, grandparents, cousins and more distant relatives. One scholar has suggested that in this way perhaps just 200 families occupy the top of a pyramid^[53].

⁵² Johnston, 1988: op cit., p.4.

⁵³ Johnston, 1988: op cit., p.15.

By 1986, the Punjabi population had gone up, probably, to a figure of 110,000 or 115,000 with a concentration of 35,000 or 40,000 in metropolitan Vancouver. According to the 1981 census population, Canada had 67,710 Sikhs with 69,500 Hindus. Of these, 22,392 Sikhs and 6,865 Hindus had settled in Vancouver. Approximately one third of Vancouver's Hindus are of Punjabi origin. Estimates of the total number of Sikhs in Canada vary a figure of 125,000 is quoted by several sources. The distribution of the community is marked by the heavy concentrations in Vancouver and its suburbs and Toronto. The former was an older established centre for Sikhs, the latter a major destination for the post 1960s migrants. With the growth of the Sikh population the number of gurdwaras has increased. There are now five gurdwaras in Vancouver. With a more open immigration policy of Canada, a primary migration of about 5000 Sikhs every year from the Punjab is increasing the Sikh population of Canada more sharply than any other western country.

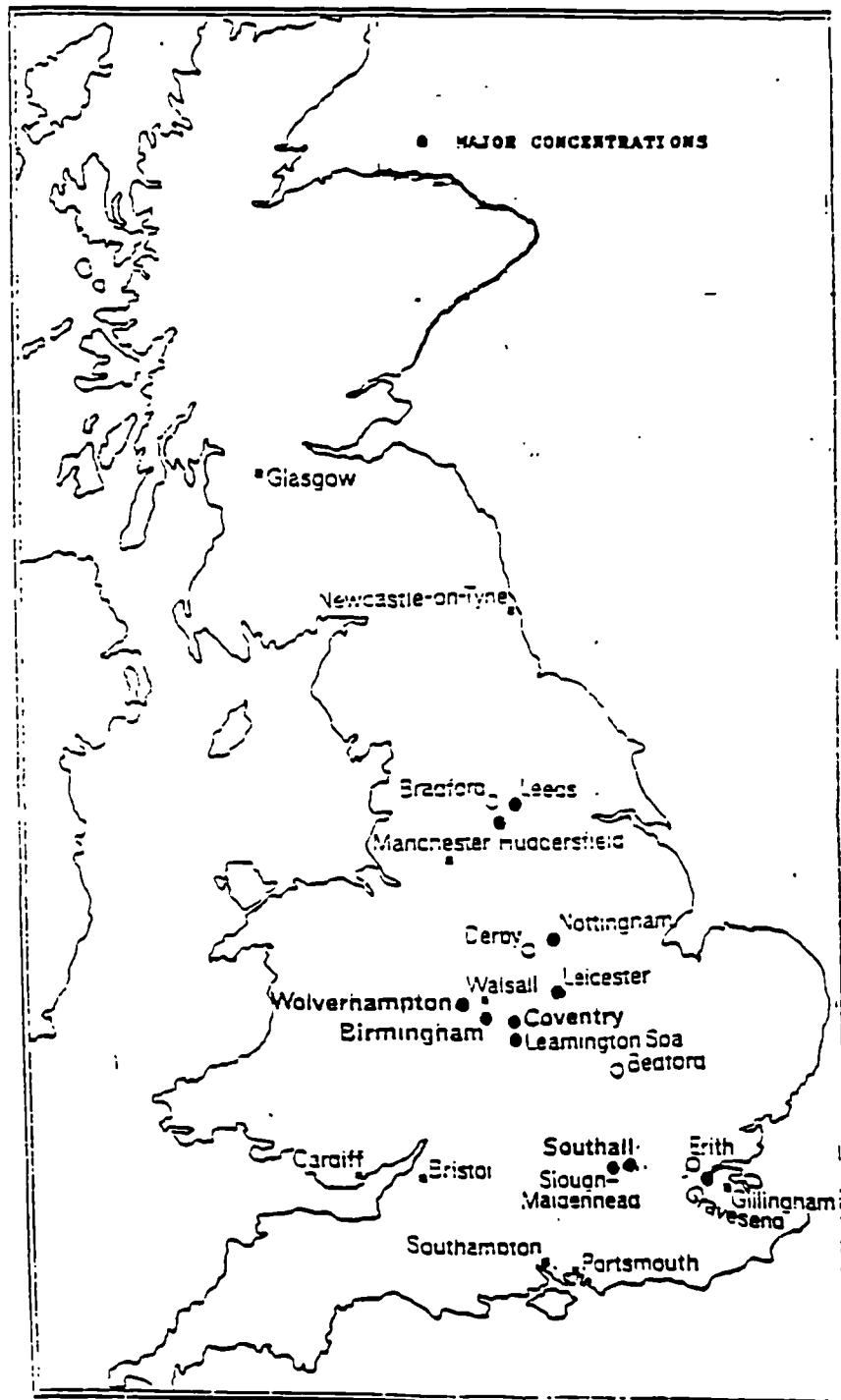
[a] United Kingdom

Sikh migration to the United Kingdom coincided with the partition of the Punjab. Apart from a Sikh prince, no other Sikh was living in Britain in the nineteenth century. Prince Dalip Singh, the youngest son of Maharajah Ranjit Singh [1780-1839], the Sikh ruler of Punjab, was exiled to Britain in 1856. He died as a rebel in Paris in October 1893^[54]. During the wars, a few Sikh artisans came over to take part in various 'Museums of Empire' and then left the country. Similarly many Sikh students returned home after graduating in British universities.

⁵⁴ Alexander, M. and Anand, S. Queen Victoria's maharajah Duleep Singh, 1838-1893, London, 1979.

Map: 5

Sikh Settlements in Great Britain



Map adapted from
Dewitt, John Jr. Indian Workers Associations in Britain
London, Oxford University Press, 1969, Page 26

Early Sikh settlers were Bhatras who earned money by hawking and peddling in small outlying towns of Britain. They came from a cluster of villages of the Sialkot district in West Punjab, and Jalandhar in the early 1920s^[55]. By the 1930s, small colonies of Punjabi pedlars, consisting of Sikh Bhatras and Punjabi Muslims grew up^[56]. During the wars, many Sikh soldiers passed through Britain and went to fight in Europe. Many of them were to return after the end of War as immigrants.

It was at the end of the Korean war that Britain felt a shortage of labour on an unprecedented scale and opened doors to its ex-colonial citizens. Many Sikh ex-servicemen were persuaded to emigrate to the UK by jobs. Thousands left the Punjab, a number of them mortgaging their lands for the cost of the passage. The majority of the emigrants were village folk, who wished to return after making a fortune in Britain. However, a succession of restrictive immigration laws ensured that families had to called in before it was too late^[57].

Virtually all Sikhs were united with their families in the early 1970s. By the 1970s, another class of Sikhs arrived from East African countries, especially from Kenya and Uganda. Due to the Africanisation policies, Ramgarhia Sikhs from Uganda and Kenya re-migrated to Britain and some went to Canada or the United States. They brought capital and an ethnic consciousness unlike those who had come directly from the Punjab. In addition to East African Sikhs, several thousand Sikhs from Singapore and Malaysia also re-migrated to settle in Britain as was stipulated within their employment contract with the British

⁵⁵ Aurora, G. S. The new frontiersmen: a sociological study of Indian immigrants in the United Kingdom, Bombay, Popular Parkashan, 1967. Tatla, Darshan Singh and Nesbitt, E. M. Sikhs in Britain: an annotated bibliography, University of Warwick, 1987. The latter provides a comprehensive list of studies relating to Sikhs in Britain.

⁵⁶ Tatla, Darshan Singh. 'This is our home now: reminiscences of a Punjabi in Coventry', Oral History, Spring 1993, pp. 68-74.

⁵⁷ Britain's black population London, Runnymede Trust, 1980.

authorities. The majority of these twice migrant Sikhs have tended to settle in London and its suburbs^[58].

Table 2.3
INDIAN MIGRATION TO UNITED KINGDOM: PEAK YEARS

Year	Numbers
1955	5,800
1956	5,600
1957	6,600
1958	6,200
1959	2,950
1960	5,900
1961	23,750
1962	22,100
1963	17,498
1964	15,513
1965	18,815
1966	18,402

Sources: Rose et al., *Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962*
Control of Immigration: Statistics 1966 [Comm. 3258] p.4

In terms of numbers alone, the United Kingdom Sikh community deserves special attention. It is the largest of the overseas Sikh communities. An estimate puts the Sikh population in Britain at around 300,000 for the year 1981^[59]. About 60 percent were born in the Punjab with 40 percent British born. Map 2.2 indicates the settlement pattern, showing a large concentration in the industrial towns of the Midlands and the Northern working class areas. Most came from rural areas of the Punjab and took manual jobs. Those arriving from the Far East, or East African countries had either capital or professional skills and they were usually able to find clerical jobs. The latter group also moved to a better class of housing while rural Punjabis were to buy their first homes near their factories.

During the 1970s the Middle East countries also attracted a considerable number of Sikh migrants, usually on a fixed time contract. The massive oil revenues accumulated as a result of the rise in price

⁵⁸ Bhachu, 1985: op cit., p.33-34.

⁵⁹ Statistics for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Britain are discussed in Knott, Kim and Toon, Richard, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus in the UK: problems in the estimation of religious statistics, University of Leeds, Religious Research Paper 6, 1982.

of oil, which began in 1974 enabled several Arab governments to undertake big construction projects, through Western international companies. This in turn led to a high demand for labour in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, and other countries. The increased demand for labour was met by importing labour from Pakistan, India and the Far East. Many Sikh peasants and artisans went on contractual labour. The following figures indicate the number of Indian workers in these countries⁶⁰. The numbers have declined recently as the oil revenues have been exhausted. The Iraq-Iran war and the recent hostilities between Iraq and Western allies has led to a reduction in Indian and other overseas labour.

POST-1984 EMIGRATION: REFUGEES

The separatist movement in Punjab since 1984 has led to widespread violence. From 1985 a militant movement dedicated to the creation of a Sikh state has been responsible for killing many civilians and security forces. The state security forces have responded by and large with a policy of 'bullet for bullet' the breakdown of judiciary has been almost complete. Paramilitary forces, special squads, and Punjab police along with regular armed forces have been given widespread powers to summary trial effectively to kill anyone suspected of terrorism. The Punjab's rural society has been terrorised to an unusual degree. This atmosphere of violence has led to flight of many youngsters to cities or to abroad. Although numbers involved in this latest phase of

⁶⁰ Number of Indian labourers working in the Middle Eastern Countries is indicated below:

Year	Indian labourers in Middle East Countries
1975	Not available
1976	4200
1977	22,900
1978	69000
1979	171,000
1980	236,200
1981	276,000
1982	239,545
1983	119,000 [to June]

Source: Secombe and Lawless [1985]

emigration from the Punjab are small and reliable figure is not available for any of the destination countries, the post-1984 Sikh emigration demands separate attention. Virtually all emigrants are young males who have fled their homes due to fear for their safety or for that of their close kin. This emigration has a uniform pattern with the destination determined by a particular person's acceptance in a country, or, prior to his departure, the support or message from some of his friends abroad. Thus Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore in the Far East have each become home to perhaps two to three thousand Sikh refugees. Similarly European countries have become the destinations of several hundred Sikhs fleeing from the Punjab. Thus France, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Netherlands all have a sizable Sikh refugee population, ranging from a hundred to about a thousand settled in major cities. In Europe, Germany has attracted the highest number of Sikh refugees, estimated to be over ten thousand^[61]. During 1984, the number of Indian asylum seekers to Germany were 1,083, and during 1986, the corresponding figure was 6,554. A majority of these applicants were Sikhs. However not one applicant had been accepted, while most were given a temporary stay^[62]. The United Kingdom has also granted temporary stay for Sikh asylum seekers; numbers involved are unknown. Between 1979 and 1985, sixty seven had applied, only four were accepted. Since then the numbers seeking refuge have increased but figures are not yet available. Three to four thousand may be reasonable estimate. Canada has several thousand Sikh refugees and Canadian officials have treated them quite differently than other such refugees. The Canadian government's treatment of a group of Sikh refugees who arrived from Europe in 1987, as we shall see later, was characteristically harsh^[63]. The United States has also some population of Sikh refugee particularly in the New York area.

⁶¹ According to UNHCR, Geneva: Hans-Ingo von Pollen. 'Die Entwicklung der Asylbewerzzahlen im Jahre 1983', Zeitschrift für Ausländergerecht und Ausländerpolitik, 2, 1984, pp. 110-112.

⁶² 'Kein Hertz für Inder', Der Spiegel, September 22, 1986.

⁶³ Indo-Canadian Times, July 31, 1987.

In each country, refugee status has been granted to only a handful of Sikhs so far, the numbers who have sought such status is many times higher. Only a few of these Sikhs have been joined by their family members. As we shall see in later chapters, the presence of these Sikhs with their experience of an embittered Punjab, with their rather uncertain status and with the fear that they may have to return to their homes in the Punjab to face prosecution, has brought a distinct exilic style of politics into the Sikh communities abroad.

The Punjab conflict since 1980s has led to considerable internal migration among Sikhs and Hindus. After the 1984 riots when Sikhs became a target of violence in New Delhi and some Northern Indian cities several thousand Sikh families arrived in Punjab as a safe 'homeland'. The government of Punjab had registered 26,000 Sikh refugee families arriving from other parts of India. At the same time, it was stated that at least 1000 Hindu families had moved out from Punjab between 1983 and 1986^[64]. From 1986 onwards, the internal flow of Sikhs families coming in and Hindus leaving Punjab has increased but no data is available as yet.

OVERSEAS SIKHS: DIASPORA IN THE MAKING?

Presently a million Sikhs live abroad in different countries. Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, the three countries which are the focus of this study, account for three quarters of the overseas Sikh population. While colonial emigration involved Sikh men seeking economic fortunes with the firm intention to return to their homes, post-colonial migrants have aimed at more permanent settlements. Decolonisation has also affected migrants. Sikhs have undertaken further migration from newly independent nations to Europe's imperial centres. Sikhs from East Africa and the Far East have re-migrated to the Western Countries. Thus in Canada, the United States and UK, direct

⁶⁴ Facts about the Punjab Situation, Chandigarh, State Government of Punjab, 1986.

migrants from Punjab, second time migrants from ex-colonies, and second or third generation children of old Sikh migrants, mix with each other.

Although each host country has affected the experience of Sikh migrants in a unique way, there are common problems and experiences which are shared by Sikh populations. As an easily identifiable group, Sikhs have faced the problems of 'outsiders'. They have been labelled as East Indians in Canada, Asian Americans in the United States and Blacks or Asians in the United Kingdom. A majority of Sikhs in each country are now citizens in a legal sense, but have unequal status compared to the indigenous population. Despite gradual integration into the host society's political structure, racial incidents, hostility towards particular cultural or religious demands and general insensitivity towards cultural norms of minorities have given Sikh migrants a sense of collective fate.

As a cultural-bearing group, Sikh communities in various countries have cultivated and reproduced some essential cultural and social institutions which impinge upon their private and to some extent their public lives. These social values, religious traditions and linguistic bonds are derived from the Punjab. However, the land they left behind has also changed to an unusual degree. For older migrants, the Punjab was a composite province encompassing western districts and many migrated from those areas. The Punjab itself has seen tremendous transformation in its physical and human geography. In 1947, the Punjab province was divided between the new independent states of India and Pakistan. Migration on an unprecedented scale, involving a million people took place, with Sikhs and Hindus leaving their erstwhile homes in the Western parts to settle in the Eastern districts, while Muslims took a long march in the opposite direction to the Western districts of the newly established borderline. Thousand of Sikhs, who had earlier settled in the Canal Colonies, found themselves travelling back again to an uncertain future. The scars of this painful experience have been

deep upon individuals, but only a few fragments of records exist⁶⁵. However, even such a tragedy was put behind. In the 1960s, Sikh peasants were involved in agrarian revolution utilising their earlier experience of the Canal Colonies development. Many Sikhs bought irrigable lands to till in areas such as Terai in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan. Sikh farmers' case in Terai region was taken up by the Akali Dal in the Punjab with the Uttar Pradesh government in the 1970s. Urban Sikhs went to main cities, especially Delhi⁶⁶. As a result, migration has become part of folklore as well as a living reality for the Punjab's rural population. In Canada, United States and UK, Sikh communities now comprise all sections of the parent society. Different social classes of Sikh society have become established: Jats, Ramgarhias, and Chamars are recognisable in terms of their social and religious observances.

Most Sikh migrants' identification with their land of origin can be confirmed easily. Return visits, flow of funds to their homes, and building of gurdwaras all testify to such a dynamic relationship. However when we think of Sikh migrants' perception of their homeland, it is certainly not as an independent Sikh homeland as advocated by Sikh militants in the post 1984 period. In the colonial period, it is more than likely that Sikh migrants considered the Punjab and India as their country as well as homeland, there being no contradiction between

⁶⁵ Corruccinin, Robert S. and Kaul, Samvit S. Halla, demographic consequences of the partition of the Punjab: 1947, University Press of America, 1990.

⁶⁶ Net migration from Punjab to some other Indian provinces is indicated in the following table;

Delhi	129,730
U.P.	70,130
Rajasthan	37,187
West Bengal	135,554
Bombay	32,424
Madhya Pradesh	14,352
Bilaspur	4,747
Himachal Pradesh	1,003

These figures relate to 1941-51 period
Source: Techno-Economic Survey of Punjab, p. 179

the two. These questions are difficult to answer due to the lack of any direct evidence from Sikh migrants abroad. Since there are no testimonies which could answer such direct questions. Moreover, in terms of religious identity, even orthodox Sikh migrants were in the process of marking boundaries with other Punjabis, especially the Punjabi Hindus. Consolidating their friendships and building common religious places was not unusual. *In particular this is true of Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus in early Vancouver.*

While overseas Sikh communities perhaps continued to define themselves as members of the Sikh Panth with origins in the Punjab, there was no urgent need to clarify or take an explicit stand. Thus, when Sikhs were moved by their leaders to leave the United States to wage a war of liberation in India, they sang songs for the liberation of India making references to the Sikh historical tradition. Indeed, they identified religious differences as a major reason for Indian subjugation by the foreigners. However, in many other ways they continued to identify themselves as apart of the Sikh community, offering support for the exclusive Sikh causes when the need arose.

The host countries have categorised them as Canadians, Americans or British, at least in an administrative sense. As a group with distinguishing marks defined both by colour and cultural traits, Sikhs have attracted racial category among the black population. Within South Asian migrants, they can define themselves as Punjabis, Indians, Asians or Blacks. Clearly it is necessary to ask how far do these ethnic labels correspond to the reality of individuals and for the group.

Do Sikh communities abroad constitute a diaspora? On the classic definition of the term diaspora, the answer has to be in the negative. Neither during the colonial era, nor later, were Sikhs forced to leave their homes. Indeed, in contrast to other Indians, Sikh migrants were spared the excesses of indentured labour, as most of them went abroad on their own or through favourable opportunities in military or

security services in the colonies. Their destinations were also quite different from those of fellow Indians. In terms of push factors from Punjab, element of compulsion from the home government or authorities has been absent. Only a few Punjabis were exiled abroad due to their political views by the British authorities. So, if the diaspora grows out of a painful propulsion or separation of a people from their homeland, contemporary or past overseas Sikh communities fail to meet this essential criterion of a diasporic condition. This view, however, needs to be qualified though for the post-1984 period. A considerable number of Sikhs have been forced to abandon their homes due to the political situation in the Punjab. But, neither their numbers nor their influence has been significant enough to set aside the above conclusion. Nevertheless, despite this conclusion, it will be argued that overseas Sikhs may yet meet a weak definition of the term 'diaspora' which emphasises a durable and active exchange with the homeland.

Conclusion

Since the 1960s, when the first Sikh stepped out, over a million of Sikhs have left their homes never to return. Many were to build their houses in distant lands, live and die there. During the past forty year period, three largest Sikh communities have become established in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Although coming from different social backgrounds, having diverse migration experiences, some direct migrants from Punjab others from East Africa or the Far East, a majority of them can still trace their roots to the areas of origin in the Greater Punjab. What they essentially share are similar heroic tales of emigration either of their own or of their forefathers and experiences of reception in their host societies. Overseas Sikh communities are, in more ways than one, a microcosm of the larger Sikh society in the Punjab. The overseas Sikhs' connections with their land of origin, the various form it has taken and how it has exercised their sensibilities in overseas settings, is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

OVERSEAS SIKHS AND THE PUNJAB

DIALECTICS OF ETHNIC LINKAGES

Introduction

This chapter examines overseas Sikh communities' complex web of exchanges with the Punjab. The overseas Sikhs have been closely involved in an on-going process of mutual dependence. As local communities have grown in various cities in Britain, Canada and the United States, Sikhs have sought to reproduce many of their Punjab social norms as well as cultural and religious values. The high concentration of Sikhs in these three countries and with ever cheaper travel, media and communication networks, contacts and flows of information from the Punjab have exerted a powerful influence on the outlook of migrant Sikh communities abroad. This is reflected through the formation and emergence of an identity which despite local and national influences of each country, has strong Sikh and Punjabi elements to it.

The range of associations that Sikhs have formed abroad show a strong relationship and commitment to the Punjab's socio-political structure. The contribution to Punjab's social and economic development, especially from the 1960s onwards, has been extensive, though hardly studied. While some institutions and societies formed by Punjabi emigrants help them to define as members of a religious community, others define themselves as a linguistic community and, still others, define them as part of wider sections of the population either as

Indians, Asians or a section of the Black population of each country. Such linkage can be conveniently divided into four types: economic, social, religious and political. This chapter will explore the first three types of ties and assess their impact in the formation of individual and collective identities. The political bonds are discussed in the Chapter Four.

ECONOMIC EXCHANGE

Economic rationale constitutes the *raison d'être* of most migrants in the early period of settlement. Sikh migrant communities in Britain and the United States are still either first generation or second generation. In Canada a mixed pattern emerges with some families being able to trace their origins to fifth or even sixth generation, but there are many who are first or second generation only. Inevitably, there is diversity in how individuals respond to the needs of their relations left behind. Family obligations often differ. While one family may maintain close connections, another may cut such ties within few years of their settlement. A wealthy migrant may decide to sever relationships with kin at home, his new interests making the relationship altogether unnecessary. Such a person may decide to invest in business in his country of settlement or spend money upon his children's education by sending them to a private school. Another individual may feel he is much indebted to those left behind and has a moral duty to help. To what degree an individual helps or maintains such relationship, and at what point he decides to cut such involvement is by no means clear-cut. With the passage of time, migrants obviously develop their ties with the host society. Economic ties usually become less pronounced by the second or third generation. In general many individuals continue to support their immediate brothers, sisters or parents if they are still behind, others may be willing to extend economic aid to distant relatives and show this generosity even to friends.

In the early stage of settlement abroad, many Sikhs remitted a high percentage of their wages to support their families left behind. After a few years' sojourns in foreign lands, most Sikhs had intended to return to the Punjab to lead a comfortable family life. Back home, the majority of them owned some land usually in the range of 5 to 20 acres in their ancestral villages, normally with shared cultivation with their brothers. As seen in Chapter Two, a majority of migrant Sikhs, share a peasant background. Land as such was 'real wealth' in their perception. Reflecting this, a number of Sikhs sent considerable amounts of money to buy more land usually adjoining their own land or, in some cases, in a nearby village. This can be seen, starting in the 1960s, when the price of farms in many Punjab villages escalated sharply due to the overseas factor¹¹.

On a collective basis, the contribution of overseas Sikhs to the Punjab economy has been quite substantial. In many ways, though little documented, the 'green revolution' strategy in the Punjab was helped by emigrants' remittances. The financial clout provided by relatives abroad meant many Punjab peasants could experiment and take risk with new hybrid varieties of wheat. In parts of Jalandhar and especially Hoshiarpur district, the problem of water-logging was a nuisance and hindrance to the farmers' development strategies. In the 1960s and 1970s, many preventive measures against water-logging were specifically aided by Sikhs settled in Britain and North America. Money to buy new agricultural seeds and machinery such as tractors, harvesters and tube-wells came from abroad. From Britain, many Sikhs helped their relatives by sending Massey Ferguson tractors under a scheme set up by the Punjab government to assist the import of tractors and other farm machinery. This was one major achievement of the rather short-lived ministry of Akali dissidents in 1968-69. The Punjab finance minister Dr Jagjit Singh, a person who was to play a more significant role among British

¹ Thandi, Shinder 'The role of remittances in the development of capitalist agriculture in Punjab' -a paper presented at the annual meeting of BASAS, University of Birmingham, April 1992.

Sikhs in the later 1970s and 1980s, undertook a tour of Britain. He appealed to them by placing a personal letter in a Punjabi weekly

The Punjab government appreciates the contribution of overseas Sikhs in the development of the Punjab. In order to facilitate this valuable assistance, the Punjab government has through liaison with central and foreign governments formulated a scheme whereby you can now send a tractor or other agricultural machinery to your relatives without paying excise tax. This would mean your relatives will get a valuable component of machinery to increase productivity on the land. You would be helping them in a most effective way. I am here to finalise the details of this scheme. Please contact me if you would like to discuss any aspects of this scheme^[2].

Under this scheme, it is estimated that about three thousand tractors left Britain for the Punjab. Though no reliable studies are available to estimate the total amount of remittances by British or North American Sikhs, circumstantial evidence points towards a substantial sum. Overseas Punjabis' contributions to Indian foreign exchange are considered to be a 'substantial amount' of the total. A precise figure cannot be worked out for overseas Sikhs' share. One scholar has termed overseas Sikhs' economic aid to Punjab as of 'new patrons'^[3]. He estimated that about one fourth of the total remittances to India from abroad reach the Punjab due to the Sikh connection. The amount involved is estimated to be around half a billion American dollars per year. Whatever impact remittances were having on specific families or between family units in Punjab and those abroad, the uses they were put to seemed largely capital expenditure for consumption or investment, with little overtly political activity associated with such funds. No detailed studies are available on the economic utilisation of funds in the village economy. From a study of a Jalandhar village, Helweg has judged that such remittances have found many uses^[4].

² Des Pardes, March 10, 1968. Letter from Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan, Finance Minister, Government of Punjab.

³ La Brack, Bruce, 'The new patrons', pp. 261-304 in Barrier, N. G. and Dusenbery, Verne A. [eds.] The Sikh diaspora: migration and experience beyond Punjab, 1989.

⁴ Helweg, A. W. 'Emigrant remittances: their nature and impact on a Punjab village', New Community, X[3], 1983, pp. 435-43.

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Such aid to educational or religious buildings has usually channelled through dedicated individuals or in a number of cases through sants. Sant Domeliwale, like several religious preachers, has undertaken the building of many such buildings, including schools and a college. According to one of his followers, charity works undertaken by the sant include some historic gurdwaras of Pakistan and Punjab and the amount provided by his followers could be more than £50,000. Appeals and donations for various religious causes appear regularly in the Punjabi media^[5]. Various charities have been beneficiaries of overseas benevolence. A collection box placed in Ross Street Gurdwara in Vancouver and at the Sikh Missionary Society in Southall on behalf of the Pingalwara, Amritsar suggest this as an established practice.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Many Sikhs in the United Kingdom and North America have consciously maintained cultural and social norms of their origins. This process has been aided, partly as a result of concentration of Sikh families in particular locations of various cities in all three countries. Cheaper air travel and the increasing mobility made possible by prosperity of many families have also been factors. This contrasts sharply with the earlier period of Sikh migrants to the Far East and North America who were cut off from their origins and tried to establish themselves socially by inter-marriages. Such practices are now quite uncommon. Since the 1960s, Punjabi migrants' norms and traditions have accepted little influence from the host societies' cultural and social milieu^[6].

⁵ Sant Domeliwale undertook to build a number of gurdwaras, schools and repair some historic buildings in the Punjab. Among those which received assistance were, Mata Gujri Sarai, Sirhind; Gurdwara Chouka Sahib; Amarjit Secondary School, Domeli; Gurdwara Chak Preman; Babbar School Babeli; School Rohan Jattan. He also undertook repairs to some historic gurdwaras in Pakistan.

⁶ La Brack, Bruce, 'Evolution of Sikh family form and values in rural California: continuity and change, 1907-1980, Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 19, 2, Summer 1988, pp. 287-307.

Overseas economic transactions have not only enriched, the village economy but urban centres as well. This has resulted, for example, in the establishment of small and medium scale factories, warehouses, transport companies and investment in urban property in such towns as Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Mohali near Chandigarh. While a substantial number of Sikhs frequently travel to the Punjab to look after their economic interests, a small number have retired there by building more befitting residences in cities such as Jalandhar, Ludhiana, or Chandigarh. Schemes for 'help-back-home' have taken, in some instances, rather novel forms. A number of Village Welfare Societies exist in overseas countries. Thus for example, two well-known societies of ex-residents of two villages of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, have not only aided the village in various projects, but have often helped its leaders in forging various alliances in Britain. In Canada, the Dhudike village society has published a booklet highlighting their village's past⁷

A number of educational institutions, hospitals and charities have benefited from these remittances. Take the case of Bhai Budh Singh Dhahan Hospital at Dhahan village. This is an 80-bed hospital in a rural setting with very modern facilities⁸. Similar is the case of Sang Dhesian, another village in Jalandhar, which has benefited from overseas funding for a college for girls. This college advertises an innovative curriculum, with courses in computers, nursing, textile technology, along with traditional ones. After acquiring such skills,

⁷ Dhudike, a village in Faridkot district from where a number of Sikhs went to the Far East, who, then migrated to Pacific states of America. A booklet to commemorate the old veterans was published by the Village Society.

⁸ The career of Budh Singh of Dhahan village, presents interesting insight into this linkage with the Punjab. After living in Canada for twenty years, he returned to his village to set up the Guru Nanak Mission, Medical and Educational Trust. This project has grown into a hospital, a school and a mobile eye camp. In Canada, this is registered as Canada-India Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Society. Budh Singh has made a regular round of Britain and Canada to seek funds. The trust publishes a quarterly Punjabi magazine listing donors and Trust's activities. Jivan Sewa, Vaisakhi Issue, 1993.

several of its students have gone abroad⁹. Batala Kar Seva Project and Guru Gobind Singh College, Jandiala are other examples of substantial projects undertaken by overseas Sikhs' aid. The Batala Project, for example, consists of digging a sacred pool, a museum cum library and building for a vocational college. Appeal for money went to British, Canadian and American Sikhs through the Punjabi media. This project was launched in 1985 and led to the involvement of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee¹⁰.

Many overseas Sikh families continue to draw on the Punjab to bring husbands or wives for their off-spring. To a large extent the governing principle for family relations remains that of Punjabi society. The concept of izzat [honour] remains central to inter-family relationship; the rightful place of a daughter, the duty and place of a woman and that of a man within a household are shared values. Marriages are invariably arranged, rules and rituals associated with ceremonies such as birth, death and kinship across the extended family seem almost a replica of Punjabi society. Whatever research exists points that second and third generation Sikhs also adhere, by and large, to Punjabi cultural norms in the three countries¹¹. Over the years, changes that have taken place within families, the direction of change suggests consolidation rather than fragmentation as far as social norms are

⁹ Dhesi, Avtar, The Punjabi Tribune, May 21, 1993.

¹⁰ The project was launched by Iqbal Singh Khera, a businessman from Walsall. He came from a village near Sultanpur Lodhi. In an advertisement placed in a number of Panjabi papers, It calls upon Sikhs, 'In order to give this ancient town a proud place on the map of the world, we have taken this cause by the grace of the Guru'. It also cites that the SGPC Amritsar has given this service to Iqbal Singh Khera and Bhai Jaswant Singh Bhanwra. 'All foreign Sikhs are requested to share their wealth and enjoy the blessing of Guru Nanak'. Appeal is made by Iqbal Singh Khera, Professor Piara Singh Padam, Jaswant Singh Bhanwra, Ranjit Singh JP, Dilbagh Singh Mawi, Amrik Singh Malhi, Karpal Singh Dhillon, Baljit Singh, Sukhdev Singh Dhillon.

¹¹ Thompson, M, 'The second generation: Punjabi or English?', New Community, III,3, 1974, pp. 242-48. Chadney, J. G. 'Sikh family patterns and ethnic adaptation in Vancouver', Amerasia, 7, 1980, pp. 31-50. La Brack, Bruce. 'Immigration laws and the re-vitalisation process: the case of the California Sikhs', Population Review, 25 [1-2], 1982, pp. 59-66.

concerned. Out-marriages which were quite common among earlier Sikh males, especially in Imperial Valley of California have proved to be an exception. This old Punjabi community of America which was dissolving into a mixed Punjabi-Mexican households with inter-marriages has seen almost a complete reversal¹².

In each country, laws and quasi-laws governing family life have influenced Sikhs also. Immigration laws relating to fiances has affected the choice of partners. The Canadian situation is quite different however, where liberal immigration laws have meant many Sikh families choose their future brides and bridegrooms from Punjab. They are also able to sponsor relatives, the easiest route for this has been through marriages. A Canadian Sikh marriage alliance, in many cases, has meant that two families immigrate rather than just a boy or the bride. Since the 1970s, Metropolitan Vancouver is intimately linked to rural Punjab. Marriage partners have been chosen not only from the Punjab, but also across the continent. Several marriages are being arranged between British, Canadian or American Sikhs. At a recent marriage arranged between a Canadian and British Sikh family in London, guests not only came from the Punjab, but a number of Sikhs arrived from America¹³. Each country's immigration laws have to some extent modified this matrilineal behaviour. British Sikhs now do not, as a rule, look for a Punjab bride or bridegroom due to cases of refusals or inordinate delays in clearing those concerned by British authorities.

For Sikhs families, marriage remains perhaps the single most important occasion to show its solidarity and power among its larger kinship group. Among the well-to-do, the practice of dowry has assumed

¹² La Brack, Bruce 'Conflict and compatibility in Punjabi-Mexican immigrant families in rural California, 1915-1965', Journal of Marriage and Family, 46, 1984, pp. 527-37. Leonard Karen, 'Marriage and family life among early Asian Indian immigrants', pp. 67-75 in S Chandrasekhar ed. From India to America, La Jolla, Population Review Publications, 1982.

¹³ Des Pardes, January 26, 1992.

considerable proportion. Indeed the 'dowry problem' has been exercising the minds of community leaders in all three countries. Thus, marriages are always concluded in a gurdwara, but this is preceded by the required legal ceremony. This is now part of pre-marriage rituals while the conclusion of a religious ceremony leads to the consummation of the marriage. Concern with the daughter's arranged marriage and the position of women in Sikh society has also given rise to some local problems.

Social caste has also played an important role just as it does in Punjab. Strict endogamy and adherence to social classes in terms of marriage partners applies to most Sikh marriages. Thus Jat Sikhs tend to marry into Jat Sikh families, Bhatras with Bhatras, while Ramgarhias marry into Ramgarhia families. In Britain in 1974 when the laws were so changed as to make it difficult for a girl to bring a husband from the Punjab, a number of parents with marriageable girls faced severe difficulties. Many parents organised themselves and lobbied concerned officials, and the government amended the law so that it was applicable to both boys and girls. Teenage girls have been protected in particular cities from other gangs. Thus, some Sikh youth fought Muslim youngsters in cases involving the abduction of Sikh girls from schools^[14]. In Canada and to a lesser extent in Britain, many Sikh relatives live near each other. Older parents are generally around to look after children or keep an eye on them. Older people have acted as important

¹⁴ Youth gangs such as 'Panther', 'Shere Punjab' of Birmingham; 'Tooti Nang' and 'Holy Smoke' of Southall are well-known among the community. Occasional news on gang fighting appear in the local press. The Express and Star of 20 April 1988, carried the headline 'Gang battles fear over daytime disco crimes' and quoted Chief Superintendent of Police in Birmingham as:

we have heard that London gangs are going to these discos. We have heard rumours that drugs may be sold at these events and that girls are forced into prostitution. But it is difficult to find out the truth of what is going on.

Mrs Anne Searle, an officer in the Education Department of Birmingham responded 'because of the commercial greed of these promoters we have a problem, we are taking very seriously. Letters have been sent to all headmasters in the city, warning about the discos'. Dal Singh, a spokesman for Birmingham Sikh Students Association is reported to have said, 'Day-time concerts are far too big a temptation for our school children. The promoters are to blame for organising these events' Birmingham Daily News: January 26, 1988.

functionaries in the continuation of rituals and ceremonies and they generally insist upon such practices.

The discovery of family lineage or tradition has been, for some members, a satisfactory occupation. Thus a Saini Sikh, has compiled a 'Directory of Saini Sikhs in United Kingdom, United States and Canada'. Similarly, another Sikh belonging to the Chana group of families, has compiled a guide of overseas Sikh Chana families and how these are related to their ancestors in their village^[15]. The Dthesis of Jalandhar district are planning a similar directory. The old colonial link with Punjab has been kept in memory in Britain by old Sikh army veterans, who hold an annual meeting of ex-army men. The first such re-union was held in 1986 and attracted a number of English officers of Sikh regiments^[16]. In California, Gadr heroes are remembered annually. In Canada, the tragic events associated with Komagata Maru are given an annual airing through various channels particularly by the Punjabi media.

[a] Cultural Links

Coming from a rural background, Punjabis have several folklore traditions to draw upon. Among these Bhangra for men, and Giddha for women is quite common at various festivals and ceremonies. Heroic tales of bravery against Mughal rulers, and daring deeds of particular Sikh generals as well treachery of some during Anglo-Sikh wars, the love ballads of Heer Ranjha, Mirza Sahiban, the patriotic songs praising Bhagat Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha both hanged by British authorities for sedition, are but some of the common themes of various music songs through the present decades. With the rise of the video culture and

¹⁵ Directory of Saini Sikhs in UK, USA and Canada, published by Northern India Saini Cultural Society, Chandigarh, 1988. The Society also publishes Saini Duniya, a monthly magazine. The directory lists Saini Sikhs' strength; thirty families are in USA, eighty five in Canada and about 150 in UK.

¹⁶ The first Ex-Army Re-Union was held on December 6, 1986, in Southall. Men who served in Sikh Regiments, Punjab Frontier Force and other regiments met their old comrades including a number of British officers who were specially invited for the meeting. Sidney Bidwell, MP for Southall and Mayor of Ealing were among the guests.

decline of cinemas, Bhangra music has become by-word for Asian music especially in Britain. The Punjabi bhangra band had its humble beginning in the 1960s. Various community leaders have always been involved in the organisation of entertainment for Punjabis. At political rallies, it would take the form of recitation of revolutionary poetry; at weddings, it would be a Bhangra band and in a Gurdwara, Dhadis would sing songs in praise of Sikh heroes. Indeed, the story of initial success of the Indian Workers' Association, Southall and its somewhat sudden demise in the 1980s, can be neatly narrated around the acquisition of a cinema hall in Southall.

By the 1980s, several groups became prominent with hundreds of records, cassettes eagerly bought by the Punjabi youth. Concerts are now regularly arranged where hundreds throng. Major pop-singers of Punjab make regular appearances in Britain and reach out to Canada and California. Thus top names of Punjab's singers, including Gurdas Mann, Kuldeep Manak, Surinder Kaur, Narindar Kaur, Didar Bains, Hansraj, Surinder Shinda and many others have recorded their songs in Britain and performed at large venues such as NEC or Wembley Arena. Punjabi films, religious videos, live recordings of hymn-singers and pop-singers on tour in Canada and Britain are available in considerable numbers. Such wares are marketed through Asian shops and distributors. A rough count identifies some sixty recordings of religious songs and over one hundred records by pop groups. Malkit Singh, based in Birmingham was spotted as a potential talent by Smethwick based Bhujhangy group while on tour of Punjab. Malkit has sung pop, but his melodies of nostalgia and songs with old tunes have sold the most; one such cassette has sold over a hundred thousand¹⁷. There are more than a dozen Bhangra pop groups in Britain, more well-known are *Komal, Nachdey Hasdey, Suraj, Amar, Sangam, DCS, Chirag Pehchan, Bally Sagoo, Alaap, Holle, Hira, Ajuba, Nishanna, Culture Shock, Indian Apache,*

¹⁷ A particular song has become very popular, with a nostalgic theme of the village life in the Punjab: *Tutak tutian, hi yamalo, aja tutan vale khooh te.*

Golden Star. Some pop singers have gone into Punjabi films, usually made with help from Bombay studios. Bhangra music in Britain with the largest concentration of Punjabi pop groups, has gone from the initial stage of recognition to the more problematic stage of professionalisation. Dilemmas offered by its entry into the mainstream music market are surfacing now. While maintaining its regional roots, ie the Punjabi lyrics, can it smoothly 'cross-over' into western music without becoming rootless and synthetic to the point of oblivion? Difficult as these questions are, these issues should be seen as part of the emerging Punjabi identity in the western world. Regular appearances of Bhangra groups in places as far apart as Los Angeles, Frankfurt, Singapore has contributed to a sense of metropolitan Punjabi identity and pride among the Sikh youth. Whether western influences would conflict with the function of music supportive of the Punjabi communal identity is a question looming just on the horizon.

Punjabi sports, especially a traditional game called 'Kabaddi' remains the most popular game among overseas migrant communities. Kabaddi tournaments are held every summer in all major cities of Sikh settlement. Starting in May till the end of July, there is a tournament match every weekend. In Britain, it starts with Gravesend in the first week of May concluding with the final match of Kabaddi at the end of July in Smethwick. The North American pattern is similar with Toronto, Vancouver and Yuba City as the main avenues for such games. For the last ten years or so, Kabaddi has been brought to the international arena involving players of Punjab, England and Canada and Pakistan. The Punjab Kabbadi team plays in Britain; it may then go to play in Vancouver and finish with a match in Yuba City, California. Team mangers and Kabaddi associations alternate between co-operation and competition especially between Canada and Britain. An example of such co-operation is a letter from the chairman of the Sports committee of the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver, to the secretary of the Indian Kabaddi Association in Britain.

... you will be glad to note that Khalsa Diwan Society,

Vancouver is holding its annual sports tournament on May 16-18th 1992. Reputed players from Canada, USA, UK and India are taking part. On behalf of the Society I request you to bring your Kabaddi team with 12 players to take part in the tournament. A Kabaddi team from India is also expected to take part in this tournament....The society will provide for your group free boarding, lodging and medical facilities during your stay in Canada....Your participation in the last year's tournament was a great success....^[18].

A similar letter from American Kabaddi Federation inviting all players to Yuba City on May 7-9 also appeared along side this. Didar Singh Bains, a Sikh millionaire from Yuba City is the chairman of the Federation of Kabaddi. In a recent move, the Kabaddi players have formed a union to negotiate their demands to play various places in Punjab, California and Canada^[19]. On numerous occasions, the Punjab government ministers or officials have accompanied these tournaments. Sikh businessmen are keen to provide for the upkeep of team members, furnishing such items as shirts, overalls and cash, exploiting the game's popularity for publicity and with a genuine appreciation of particular players. A number of the Punjab players have become household names throughout Canada and Britain, Fiddu being the prime example. Thousands of Punjabis watch, besides Kabaddi, football, hockey, including Japanese style children's games. The highlight of any such tournament is of course Kabaddi. A recent game in Vancouver, where Canada's federal minister was present, ran into scuffles when fans of a player wanted to crown him instantly. In a similar exchange, a women's hockey team from Punjab has toured Britain, Canada and California. Various gurdwaras honoured team members with gifts. Sikh athletes have been supported by particular gurdwaras. In the post 1984 years, these games also came into the orbit of dispute. Certain police authorities in West Bromwich and in Vancouver could testify to the displeasure of Indian authorities presumably because games were renamed in the memory of Sikh leaders who perished in the June 1984 battle at

¹⁸ Des Pardes, April 24, 1992. Letter from Gurdev Singh Johal, Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, dated March 15th 1992.

¹⁹ Des Pardes, May 15, 1992.

the Golden Temple^[20].

[b] Linguistic Links

Linguists have emphasised the role of language as a major vehicle of defining and articulating distinct ethnic consciousness. Punjabi, the language of Sikh scriptures, has gradually become a fundamental part of the Sikh identity. In the post independence period, Sikh leaders in the Punjab have led several campaigns for according Punjabi official status in Punjab. Overseas Punjabi communities are concerned at the loss of the Punjabi language among their children. Many parents have gone to considerable lengths to teach Punjabi to their children. Some have taught them at home, others by sending them to Punjabi school usually run by a local gurdwara. Gurdwaras, thus, have acted as centres of linguistic and cultural transmission in addition to being places of worship. In recent years, educational authorities have responded somewhat, though the situation differs from one country to another or from one city to another within the same country.

Parents and teachers have discussed ways of improving the provision of Punjabi and ways of countering the sluggish response of Punjabi parents^[21]. Regular articles in Punjabi media appear with pleas and suggestions for improvements in the provision. During the last two decades, two Sikh schools with Punjabi as part of the curriculum have been started by Sikhs in Vancouver. In Britain, a small start has been made by buying two old high school buildings in Southall and East London^[22]. In the United States, many Sikh parents have sent their children to weekend schools, in more recent years, emphasis has shifted to residential camps for young children organised all year round by

²⁰ This pressure was somehow related to games being played in the memory of Sikh martyrs, Sant Bhindranwale, Subheg Singh and Sikh pilgrims shot dead by the Indian armed forces during its seige of the Golden Temple in June 1984. However there is no confirmation of this interpretation.

²¹ Des Pardes, September 10, 1972.

²² Des Pardes, May 23, 1980.

various societies.

Table: 3.1
NUMBER OF PUNJABI LANGUAGE STUDENTS
ENTERED FOR GCSE AND A LEVEL EXAMINATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Year	A Level	GCSE
1992		1442
1991		1281
1990		1220
1989		1111
1988	74	952
1987	56	856
1986	36	532
1985	28	496

Source: LEAG, JMB, NEAB, MEG Boards, and NCMTTT Newsletter, Spring 1993

In all three countries, the number of students who are sitting for qualifying examinations have shown a slow but steady increase. Much of the teaching materials are still imported from the Punjab, though locally produced materials have increased. Although considered inappropriate for overseas Punjabi children, many schools still use imported materials due to a lack of alternatives^[23]. Among those who have published in Britain are well-known members of Punjabi community^[24]. Dual language books aimed at infant and junior children are now being published by enterprising publishers^[25]. Public libraries especially in Britain and Canada now stock some Punjabi books. In areas like Southall, Walsall, or Surrey in South Vancouver and some areas of Toronto, local libraries may stock two to three hundred Punjabi books and Punjabi newspapers. The lobbying of the media especially television in Britain has also been undertaken by community leaders. In 1972 a

²³ These include [1] The School Education Board, Punjab [2] Sishu Bharti [3] Nawin Punjabi Series [4] Amardeep Punjabi Series [5] Hemkunt Press, Delhi [6] Harjeet Punjabi Grammar Series.

²⁴ S. S. Kalra, Dr Jagat Singh Nagra, Darshan Singh Bhogal, Chanan Singh Chan, Gurbachan Singh Sidhu, Shivcharn Gill, A. K. Sharma, S. K. Sharma, R. S. Bedi. Dr Nagra and Mr Sidhu's books were particularly meeting a unique demand. In 1989, BBC launched a Hindi-Urdu Bol Chaal programme aimed at English speakers. A series of bilingual books have been published by commercial publishers, Magi and Mantra have published about a dozen titles for junior readers.

²⁵ Tatla, Darshan Singh and Gardner, Sean Teaching material for Community Languages: a review, Birmingham, Digbeth Trust, 1988.

number of them, representing a wide spectrum of the community, including some Punjabi Hindus, lobbied the BBC but it proved to be unsuccessful^[26].

In Canada and Britain, there exists a considerable literature by Punjabi authors. This diaspora literary tradition includes travel literature, biographical sketches, novels, short stories and drama^[27]. Poetry accounts for the largest number of books. These books are usually published by their authors from a Punjab or Delhi publisher. Reputations are made by publishing a book in Punjabi, in the world of the Punjabi writers. Literary prizes are keenly contested: the Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir Award, the Punjab Languages Department Award and the Sahit Academy Award of Ludhiana have been awarded to British or Canadian Punjabi authors. A literary award from Canada, the Manjit Memorial Literary Award is offered to Punjabi writers. Recipients would usually visit Canada. Sant Singh Sekhon, Santokh Singh Dhir, Kulwant Singh Virk are prominent writers of the Punjab who have been awarded this prize.

Literary associations were instrumental in organising cultural evenings with Punjabi songs and Bhangra dancing enjoyed by Punjabi families. Such literary societies exist from California's Yuba City to Southall. Visiting Punjab writers preside over annual functions, where popular poetical recitation captures the audience. In Britain, Southall saw the formation of the Progressive Writers Association in 1964. Among its early activities were the deliberations to start a literary monthly. This association also conducted the first 'Kavi Darbar' [poetical symposium] in 1964. Similar literary events were initiated in other

²⁶ Des Pardes, September 27, 1970. This committee consisted of Jarnail Singh Hayer, Sohan Singh Cheema, Giani Bakhshish Singh, Zorawar Singh, Kewal Krishan Sharma, Ajit S. Rai, S. S. Sangha, Sohan S. Jump and A. S. Shatar.

²⁷ Parwas: a journal of diaspora Panjabi literature was established in 1991. Teaching of diaspora Panjabi literature is now well established in educational institutions of the Punjab. An anthology of world Punjabi literature was published by Ravinder Ravi and other writers from Canada.

areas of Sikh settlement, the Midlands and the North. On a specified weekend, poets and other writers would sit in a pub and recite their latest compositions, some of it usually written in factories during lunch breaks. While *Kavi Durbars* are held at regular intervals, *Dhadi Durbars* have also become quite common in the aftermath of the 1984 events. Language concerns have been discussed in international conferences sponsored by overseas Punjabi writers and gurdwaras. Since 1980, four such conferences have taken place. The first of the 'World Punjabi Writers Conference' took place in London in the Summer of 1980, it was sponsored by the Punjabi literary societies of United Kingdom and several gurdwaras. Canadian Punjabi writers organised similar meeting in Vancouver and Toronto; the latest of which took place in 1991. Writers from the Punjab, Britain and United States have debated various language and literary issues. News of literary and social events from Britain and North America find regular coverage in the media of Punjab^[28].

The Punjabi media is a vital link between overseas Sikh population and their ex-homes. The British and North American Punjabi press have played a crucial role in helping Sikhs keep in touch with issues of their homeland. The first Punjabi monthly was published from Vancouver in 1907, since then many weeklies and monthlies have linked the events of overseas Sikhs with those of Punjab. During the Gadr movement [1913-1919], the Indian Emergency [1975-77], and in the post 1984 period, the Punjabi media provided not only news but in some ways also acted as a focus for mobilisation. Of the many newspapers and journals launched in Pacific states, one of the most influential was Gadr published from San Francisco. The first issue was launched in November 1913, edited by Lala Har Dayal and his Sikh comrades. The first issue announced:

Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's language, a war against the British raj. What is our name? Gadr, What is our work? Gadr. Where will Gadr break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will

²⁸ Regular columns in Punjab dailies appear such as *Ajit* and *Jag Bani*.

take the place of pen and ink^[29].

The paper was despatched to the Punjab and places of Sikh settlement such as Canada, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, the Malay States, Siam, Singapore, Trinidad, and Honduras. At one stage the print-run was 4000 copies per week, the poetry sections give the flavour of its special appeal to Sikhs. Among the proscribed literature of the British Punjab, copies of Gadr figure prominently^[30]. Even after the conclusion of the active phase of Ghadar movement, America-based Sikhs sent funds for other publications propagating freedom, among these were: the Daily Akali of Lahore, Akali te Pardesi of Amritsar and Desh Sewak^[31]. An American Sikh, Ratan Singh returned via Moscow much impressed by the Soviet revolution, to launch a journal Kirti from Amritsar^[32]. While the Gadr movement failed in its declared objective, it has left a lasting legacy celebrated in various ways in the Punjab.

Table 3.2 and 3.3 list the current Punjabi media of Britain and North America.

²⁹ Cited in Puri, Harish Ghadar Movement: ideology, organisation and strategy, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983.

³⁰ Barrier, N. G. Banned: proscribed literature in British India, Missouri, University of Missouri, 1971

Many poems appearing in the Gadr Weekly were collected into pamphlets called Ghadar dian gooian [Rebels' Songs]. Songs as illustrated by the following couplets called for sacrifices:

Time for prayer is gone,
take the sword in hand.
Mere talk serves no purpose,
time is now to plunge in a battle.
Those who long for martyrdom,
their names and deeds will survive and guide.

³¹ Isemonger, F. C. and Slattey, J. An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy, 1913-1915, Lahore, 1919.

³² Established in 1926, this was a monthly magazine financed through Sikh exiles' funds. The magazine tried to rehabilitate the Gadr leaders' strategy and appealed for a socialist future for India on the pattern of the Soviet revolution.

Table 3.2
THE Punjabi MEDIA OF NORTH AMERICA
Weekly Newspapers

Year	Title	Editor/Prop.	Place	Freq	Language
1984-	Sangharsh	Sukhdev S Dardi	Vancouver	F	P
1985-	Awaz-e-Quam	ISYF	Toronto	W	P
1985	Fulwari	Surjit Sangra	Vancouver	F	P
1985-	World Sikh News	WSO	Stockton	W	E/P
1986-	Chardhi Kala	ISYF	Vancouver	W	P
1986-	Itihas	Jagdev S Nijjar	Toronto	W	P
1988-	Express News	T S Hayer	Vancouver	W	E

Periodicals: Monthlies and Quarterlies

1981-	The Farmworker	C.F.U.	Vancouver	Q/Occ.	E/P
1984-	The Truth	Dr R M Singh	Quebec City	Q	E
1985-	The Sword	W.S.O.	Edmonton	Q	E/P
1985-	Sahitak Kirnan	Mohinder S Ghah	Yuba City	Q	P
1986-	Jago	S Kanwal	S Jose	M	P
1986-	Sikh News and Views	Coll [Sikh Soc]	Willowdale	Occ	E/P
1987-	Surti	R S Rania	Toronto	M	E/P
1987-	The Sikh Herald	Raghubir S Samagh	Toronto	Q	E
1987-	Tasveer	T S Hayer	Vancouver	q	P/E
1987-	Kalm	Darshan Gill	Vancouver	M	P
1987-	Nawin Awaz	Hardial Bains	Vancouver	M	E/P
1988-	Sikh Times	T S Hayer	Vancouver	M	E
1988-	Sanwaad	Sukhinder	London [Ont]	M	P
1989-	Watan	Sadhu/Hundal	Vancouver	M	P

Table 3.3
THE PUNJABI MEDIA OF GREAT BRITAIN
Weekly Newspapers

1965	Des Pardes	Tarsem S Purewal	Southall	W	P
1965	Punjab Times	Surjit Singh Minhas	Southall	W	P
1985	Awaz-e-Quam	ISYF	Birmingham	W	P
1987	Punjabi Guardian	Inderjit S Sangha	Birmingham	F/M	P/E

Periodicals: Monthlies/Quarterlies

1960	Sikh Courier	P.M. Wylam	London	Q	E
1987	Sikh Pariwar	R.S. Rana	Birmingham	M	P
1967	Lalkar	H. Brar	Southall	Q	E/P
1984	Khalistan News	Collective	London	Q/Occ	E/P
1983	Sikh Messenger	Indrajit Singh	London	Q	E
1990	Sikh Reformer	S Thandi	Coventry	Q	E
1989	Sewadar	Collective	London	Q	E/P

Legend: Language: P = Punjabi E = English;

M = Monthly; B/M = Bi-monthly; Q = Quarterly; Occ = Occasionally;

Proprietor: ISYF = International Sikh Youth Federation; W.S.O. = World Sikh Organization, Coll = collectively owned or edited; CPI [ML] = Communist Party of India [Marxist-Leninist] ; C.F.U. = Canadian Farmworkers' Union, * = Trotskyite

In the past three decades several papers have been launched by individuals with political, religious or literary commitments or aspirations. The first paper in Britain was established by Vishnu Datt Sharma, a Punjabi Hindu and an emerging leader of the Indian Workers Association of Southall. Ekta was distributed around Southall on January 26, 1964, the republic day of India. Mr Sharma was to edit several more papers in his mission to spread his vision of the socialist message among Punjabi migrants. Britain's currently popular Punjabi weekly *Des Pardes* had humble beginning, as a four page sheet put together by Mr Purewal and members of his family on the festival of Baisakhi in April 1965. Its rival Punjab Times was also launched in 1965 by group of Sikhs to further their own and their community's interests^[33]. From the earliest Punjabi literary monthly *Basera* in Britain started by Harminder Atwal in August 1961, over two dozen titles have appeared. Family resources are the mainstay of their finance. Only in some later newspapers such as Punjabi Darpan or Shere Punjab, was there resort to corporate finance. The early ventures were all started from homes. While a few surviving weeklies have managed to move to purpose built offices, monthlies are run through home-cum-offices. Computer typesetting is now the norm but printing is still usually done on old rotary press. In addition to magazines based in Britain or Canada, there have been a few joint ventures, a magazine printed and published from say, Jalandhar with contributions from UK and Canadian writers. A prime example of this is a literary quarterly Lakeer first launched in the early 1970s recently revived again. An exact parallel situation obtains in British Columbia's Punjabi circles.

The Punjabi media has encouraged writers by publishing their work regularly. Some editors pay contributors, others provide an eminent means of recognition. Tara Singh Hayer, a Canadian newspaper-proprietor, presents an annual award to a Punjabi writer, the past

³³ The first issue was launched on the Guru Nanak's birthday after a prayer on 17th October 1965. First few issues were typeset in Jullundur and printed from London. Copies were sent to the Indian High Commission, to famous people and politicians in Punjab and India.

recipients include two writers from Britain. The Punjabi press in these countries has drawn upon the Punjab media not only for its subject matter, but also for technical support including the importing of editorial personnel. To launch a Punjabi paper could suggest an irrational urge to an outsider, but the pioneers who launched such ventures were responding to an identified demand within the Punjabi-reading community. The financial risk attending such businesses were balanced by authority, alliances and patronage brought to the proprietors. This process is illustrated by the early adventurers in this field, the following account by Mukhtiar Singh, an ex- Director of Punjab Times, is instructive:

Taking the latest issue of our new Punjabi paper...I went to India. I landed in Delhi on 1st December 1965. Through our newly appointed resident correspondents in Delhi, Iqbal Singh Sachdeva and Daljit Singh, who were also our relatives, we made contacts with Gurmukh Nihal Singh, an ex-governor of Rajsathan. The latter immediately arranged our meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadar Shastri...³⁴

If the weeklies have some respect for market forces, the literary monthlies are more of a personal idiosyncrasy carrying such 'unquantifiable' rewards as of 'becoming a writer' or 'publisher' -high goals in a society that attaches considerable moral prestige to the written word and to its writers. In the case of IWA in Britain and EIWA

³⁴ Punjab Times, 1000th special issue, 1984. It continues the narrative:

'Among other dignitaries I met there were, Air Marshall Arjan Singh, General Choudhry, and Indira Gandhi the information and broadcasting minister. During the interview with Indira Gandhi in the parliament House, the first question I asked her, 'We have endeavoured to publish a Punjabi weekly from London. Do you know about this? Indira Gandhi was surprised and immediately called for her Information and Broadcasting Secretary. The secretary apparently did not know anything about it. I was upset by this careless attitude of officials of independent India and asked rather in anger "Dear minister, news of camera meetings held in our country can be heard on BBC Radio London, how come you are not even aware of your own countrymen's efforts in London. Moreover we send a free copy by air to your office here'. Indira Gandhi duly noted this and apologised for this lapse and asked for full inquiry into the matter. She obviously sent a memo to Indian High Commission in London. As a result, the Information Secretary made several rounds to our office to see the editor and begging for his job, requested all the past copies of the paper. I had a meeting with Indian Prime Minister along with General Chowdhry and Air Chief Marshall Arjan Singh. There I explained the aims of the paper to the Prime Minister... who congratulated me on such a venture. After a press conference in Delhi, I arrived back in London'.

in Canada and indeed in a number of other Punjabi associations, motives were hardly financial. Since the 1970s, Punjabi readers could also buy imported Punjab and Indian newspapers and magazines such as *Ajit*, *Quami Ekta Weekly*, *The Punjabi Tribune*, *Arsee*, *Nagmani*, *The Tribune*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Statesman*, *The Indian Express*, *India Today*, *Sunday*, not to mention several pop and film monthlies available through large Asian shops in the major cities of Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The invasion of the Golden Temple by the Indian armed forces in June 1984 and the consequent developments in Punjab have also affected the Punjabi media. A number of new publications were started advocating the formation of independent Sikh state, Khalistan. Whereas the pre-1984 concerns of Punjabi readers embraced more mundane matters such as general news about the Punjab or more personal matters such as changes in the immigration laws or the alleged harsh treatment of Delhi's immigration officials accorded to visitors to the Punjab. Since June 1984, the Punjabi media has taken, by and large, a sympathetic view of Khalistan. The leading Punjabi weekly *Des Pardes* in Britain, and Indo-Canadian Times in Canada adopted a critical attitude towards India broadly supporting the concept if not the tactics for Khalistan.

RELIGIOUS TRADITION

The most easily distinguishable mark of overseas Sikh communities has been the dedication with which they have built places of worship, the gurdwaras. The history of Sikh settlement in each country and its subsequent growth has seen the establishment of gurdwaras. The gurdwara as a religious institution has played a major part in the sustenance of ethnic consolidation, acting as a centre for social, educational and political activities and ceremonies. Issues facing the community have been discussed in the precincts of gurdwara, it has also provided mass support to aspiring community leaders, a place to honour receive the dignitaries from the host societies and from the Indian sub-continent.

Historically in the Punjab and elsewhere, the politics and religious concerns of Sikh community have usually been associated with a gurdwara. For the earliest settlers a gurdwara provided support till they were able to find accommodation. Thus, in Fiji Samabula Gurdwara provided a free kitchen and shelter for Sikhs arriving by ship. Its Management Committee provided surety for Sikh immigrants to satisfy government regulations that restricted immigration to only those who had someone to look after them during their initial stages. In the late 1950s, there were several complaints about Southall Gurdwara being used as a dumping place for 'illegal immigrants'. The local English paper and local residents were quite unable to understand the 'natural' role of the gurdwara as a resting place for incoming Sikhs.

Early Sikh settlers usually hired a hall on Sunday for Diwan [congregation]. Britain till 1957 had one gurdwara in London where Sikhs, on special occasions, such as Vaisakhi or Diwali would go. Britain's first Gurdwara owes its origin to princely patronage. The Maharajah of Patiala provided major funding for its purchase in 1911. Canadian Sikhs built a gurdwara in 1908 under some difficult circumstances, whilst the Stockton gurdwara dates from 1912. The number of gurdwaras has kept apace with the growing Sikh population. By the 1990s, the number of gurdwaras in Britain increased to about 160, Canada has about 80 and the United States about 75^[35]. The location and history of these gurdwaras is intimately connected with the rise of local Sikh communities in each town and country.

Apart from gurdwaras as institutions, a number of religious societies exist. Some have educational aims, others strictly religious. Thus for example an association called Guru Amar Das Mission was set up in 1979 as a medical charity carrying out eye operations for partially-sighted in rural Punjab. According to its annual report, it has helped several

³⁵ Shergill, N.S. International Directory of Sikh Societies and Gurdwaras, 1985.

dispensaries, rural hospitals and health centres. Another society, the Sikh Missionary Society was established in 1969 in Gravesend on the 500th anniversary celebration of Guru Nanak. This society has published several pamphlets, providing basic information about the Sikh religion, customs and ceremonies. Its annual reports for 1991-92 noted a donation of £100 to Taran Sahib, Amritsar, another £100 for the Institute of Sikh Studies, and £50 for Save the Children Fund. The Society has arranged a Kirtan [hymn-singing] class for children, currently with 25-30 students. The Punjabi language class has a similar number of students on the roll. It has sent money to Delhi to the Relief Fund for 1984 victims [money is still being collected after nine years]; free *Kakars* [5Ks] are also provided for those taking baptism; it collects money for Pingalwara, Amritsar. It has offered *Gurmat* [Sikh religion] classes affiliated to the Punjabi University, Patiala. The society has arranged an annual camp for Sikh children for many years, about one hundred children take part, and the demand for places is high³⁶. In Vancouver, a camp is run during the Summer with a similar programme.

Numerous links exist between Canada, America and Britain as far as religious matters are concerned. Canada and America are in any case physically connected and a number of activities are jointly planned. The British connection across the Atlantic is by no means non-existent. Harbhajan Singh Yogi, based in Los Angeles, has become an influential missionary with about five thousand American Whites among his followers. He has often visited Britain. During his latest tour in 1992, as on previous occasions, he was accompanied by a group of American Sikh followers³⁷. In Britain, he organised a special session for young children at a West Bromwich Gurdwara, later joined in the

³⁶ The Society held a children's camp Gravesend, from 26 July to 2 August 1992. The programme included lectures on Sikh religion and culture, Kirtan classes, communal living, games and walking. A similar camp is organised by a Birmingham Sikh society.

³⁷ *Des Pardes* April 24, 1992. Dusenbery, Verne A. 'Of Singh Sabhas, Siri Singh Sahibs and Sikh scholars: Sikh discourse from North America in the 1970s', pp. 90-119 in Barrier, N.G. and Dusenbery, Verne A. [eds.] *The Sikh diaspora*, 1989.

inauguration of a new Gurdwara building in Leicester. Recent anniversary celebrations of Sikh gurus were other occasions when Sikhs from the three countries as well from India, joined on a common platform. Thus, in 1973, when Guru Tegh Bahadur's anniversary was celebrated in London at the Royal Albert Hall, guests included Khushwant Singh, Indarjit Singh and Attar Singh from India. Earlier, in 1969, the fifth centenary celebration of Guru Nanak's birthday was another such grand occasion for international gathering in London. Overseas donations towards the reconstruction of Akal Takhat have been substantial. This appeal was launched by Baba Thakur Singh, head of Damdami Taksal, a bank account was opened in each country³⁸.

An exchange of an academic kind has also taken place bringing together some of Punjab's Sikh scholars and concerned overseas Sikhs. During the 1980s, four conferences were organised, starting with Berkeley, Toronto, London and Los Angeles. The first two were sponsored by Sikhs from Canada and the United States, the latter two by Sikhs from Britain³⁹. The latter two were primarily concerned with countering 'misinformation' about the Sikh faith. On a more positive note, the Federation of Sikh Societies in Canada, was able to raise sufficient funds to establish a chair of Sikh Studies and Punjabi Language at the University of British Columbia. Donations from various gurdwaras, Sikh societies and individuals raised \$250,000 and the chair was formally set up in 1988 with the appointment of a Sikh scholar. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the Sikh Society of Michigan began an appeal to encourage Sikh Studies at the University of Michigan. The first

³⁸ Des Pardes, 15 May 1992. Barclays Bank, Code No 20 79-07 Ac. No. 80434884, Southall. The advertisement explains why the building constructed by the Indian government was demolished in January 1986 and a new building was started. It says, 'history tells us hukamnamas issued from this sacred place have always confronted the authority of governments'. Baba Dharam Singh was the emissary from Amritsar who sought donations for the building funds.

³⁹ The European Institute for Sikh Studies was set up by some Sikh educationists in London. It organised a conference, for details see the brochure issued by Sikh Educational Council, Hitchin by Dr B. S. Bagga and Dr Pargat Singh.

appointment for this position was made recently⁴⁰.

[a] Rituals and Practices

From Southall in Britain to Stockton in California, the religious rituals within a gurdwara are remarkably similar. Every Sunday from early morning till late afternoon Sikhs arrive continuously. The more devout tend to visit early. At the centre of the worship is Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scriptures attended by a person. In the early morning hymn singers perform Kirtan. This is followed by a community prayer. Some of the compromises accepted prudently by early Sikh settlers, such as using chairs in a Stockton Gurdwara and using caps to cover heads within the gurdwara practised until early 1970s, have gradually been rejected. Religious practices have thus gravitated towards the orthodox version of Sikh theology. Much of this has come about by the sheer strength of the community members willing to adorn a turban or a minority taking a populist stand and forcing the silent majority to accept these changes. While in Britain this transition has been painless, Canadian compromises have been preceded by a fierce controversy attended by a number of minor and major incidents. Many Sikhs are clean-shaven, earlier Sikh settlers tended to be so. Sikhs holding a position on the management committee of a gurdwara in Canada's prestigious Khalsa Diwan Society had a long struggle between the sahajdharis [slow adapters of 5Ks - a term now often used for those Sikhs who are clean-shaven] and Amritdharis [baptised Sikhs]. Inside the largest gurdwara in Vancouver fighting broke out several times. For a few years, two parallel committees came into being. For almost a decade, litigants went to local courts to seek clarification and endorsement of their respective claims. However by the late 1970s, the changes were in place, almost each gurdwara in all three countries is now run by Sikhs wearing five Ks.

⁴⁰ Dr Pashaura Singh was appointed to this post in Summer 1992. The University of Toronto has been running a course in Sikh Studies, with Hew McLeod as a visiting professor for the past five years period. Dr. H. S. Oberoi holds the Sikh Studies chair at the University of British Columbia.

Behind these administrative changes within a gurdwara are more fundamental questions of what kind of person a Sikh is or what sort of society a Sikh society is going to be? During this transition to more orthodox practices, intense debate has taken place about how Sikhs should be true to their customs and faith. Similarly debate has raged on the management committee of a gurdwara; should be an elected? or should it be a consensus body arrived by the deliberation of 'five beloved ones'? The real issue is what kind of place a gurdwara ought to be and how its affairs should be conducted. Elections to the Khalsa Diwan Society in Vancouver, and Southall Gurdwara committees are contested far more keenly than any local council or parliamentary seat. Voting methods, membership issue, the role of granthis [person employed by the committee to perform religious services in the gurdwara] have been discussed and contested by opposition groups. In every gurdwara, invariably two groups of Sikhs have fought for its control. That such groups have forged powerful political alliance derived from the Punjab's political parties is something we shall see in detail in the next chapter. During the last two decades, the ragis -hymn singers and Dhadi Jatha traditional religious and folklore singers have made frequent visits to Britain and North America. They have in this exchange, brought an undiluted kind of historical and theological narrative that is heard every Sunday within the gurdwaras. These Dhadis sing and narrate the events associated with the storming of the Golden Temple, praising the bravery of Sikhs resisting the Indian armies' assault, and the daring deeds of Sikh guerrilla leaders.

Vancouver has seen the number of gurdwaras increase from three in the 1960s to seven in the 1980s. This increase reflects the increase in the Sikh population, but there are also other factors at work. Sharp differences within a gurdwara committee or amongst community leaders in the same city may lead dissidents to buy another place for a gurdwara. In Vancouver, the history of Akali Singh Gurdwara can be seen in these terms alone. Examples of this kind of dissent can be given in Britain's Midlands especially in Birmingham. The income of the gurdwara has been

rising in the last two decades. In Britain a few gurdwaras have received grants from some local authorities for supplying services to old people or advice to women.

Another issue that has been put back on the agenda is baptism. Thousand of Sikhs have become Amritdhari in the last two decades. A British based religious missionary known as Chalda Vaheer Jatha has been on the move for several years. Led by a dedicated Sikh, Kuldip Singh from Dudley, this group has visited Sikh settlements in virtually every country, offering baptism, organising camps for Sikh children^[41].

[b] Saints and Pilgrimages

From the late 1960s, the revival and consolidation of Sikh religious tradition owes much to the visits of *sants* or the holy men. Several Sants have visited Canada, Britain and United States and indeed other Sikhs in the Far East, during the last three decades^[42]. As traditional preachers, they have sustained the faith of older Sikhs and given considerable help to the second generation Sikh youth. It would require much further enquiry to enumerate and evaluate sants' contribution to the diasporas religious tradition. From the year 1911 when Sant Teja Singh led a deputation to Ottawa on behalf of Sikhs of British Columbia for political rights to the 1982 when Sant Puran Singh presented a petition to Downing Street, London regarding a Sikh student's right to wear a turban, there has been a continuous and abiding influence of Sikh sants. Visits to Britain by a sant will also usually include North America, perhaps East Africa and the Far East. Among the early sants in Britain, apart from Sant Teja Singh, Namdhari chief, Baba Jagjit Singh has been a frequent visitor. During his first visit in 1969, he led a

⁴¹ Among the countries visited by the Jatha were Germany, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia. News of various visits appear in the Punjabi media.

⁴² Tatla, Darshan Singh, 'Nurturing the faithful, The role of sants among Britain's Sikhs', Religion, 1992, pp. 349-375. La Brack, Bruce 'Sants and the sant tradition in the context of overseas Sikh communities', in Schomer, K and McLeod, H. [eds.] The sant: a devotional tradition of India, Berkeley, 1988.

huge procession and celebration of Baisakhi festival at the Ealing Council Hall. In 1978, he again celebrated Baisakhi -a three-day grand function in Birmingham. Participating in a music competition, marrying the couples who had waited for his blessing and giving counsel to Namdhari Sangat's administrative and management problems were all part of the duties performed by the visiting head. Table 3.4 summarises visits of Sikh sants to Britain and North America in recent years.

Table: 3.4
SIKH SANTS IN BRITAIN AND NORTH AMERICA
VISITING YEARS

Sant	Punjab Centre	Years*
Teja Singh	Mastuana [Faridkot]	1908-11
Jagjit Singh Namdhari	Bhaini Sahib [Ludhiana]	1967-
Gurbachan Singh Nirankari	Delhi	1967-78
Darbari Das	Lopon [Faridkot]	1968-74
Amar Singh Burundi	Nanaksar [Ludhiana]	1969-
Harbans Singh Domeliwale	Domeli [Jalandhar]	1970-90
Ishar Singh Rarewala	Rara Sahib [Ludhiana]	1970-75
Sadhu Singh	Nanaksar [Ludhiana]	1970-
Gurmel Singh Baghapurana	Baghapurana [Ferozepore]	1971
Mihan Singh Siarhwale	Siarh [Ludhiana]	1972-
Gurdev Singh	Nanaksar [Ludhiana]	1975?-
Puran Singh Karichowale	Karicho, Kenya	1977-83
Gian Singh	Kutya Johlan [Jalandhar]	1974-
Kirpal Singh Radhasoami	Beas [Jalandhar]	1979
Gurbachan Singh Kambliwale	Jalandhar	1980-
Bhai Naurang Singh	Jalandhar	1983-
Nihal Singh Harian Velan	Hakampur [Jalandhar]	1985-
Jagjit Singh	Harkhowal [Hoshiarpur]	1987-
Nahar Singh	Nanaksar [Ludhiana]	1989-

* Years refer to the period during which visits took place, the early date indicating the first visit made either to Canada, Britain or United States. In most cases all three countries would be covered within a single visit.

Sant Sarwan Singh undertook two trips to England from Domeli starting in 1970. His followers, Ajaib Singh of Leicester, K S Nijjar of London and Gurbaksh Singh Rai of Ilford, East London joined together to

arrange the visit. He visited again in 1973 when he toured several Western countries, reciting *kirtan* in classical music. In America he sang *Gurbani* and played music at the Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses of California University. Among others who undertook trips to Britain in the 1970s was Sant Ishar Singh Rarewale, who is commemorated especially in Wolverhampton where he died in 1975^[43]. During the early 1970s, several *sants* of the Nanaksar tradition visited Britain and North America, among these Amar Singh, Sadhu Singh, Gurdev Singh and Mihan Singh. Mihan Singh's trips to Britain and Canada are almost a yearly routine, spending the summer months in Canada and winter in the Punjab. In Britain, his followers converted an old cinema building into a gurdwara in Coventry, five Sikh families contributing £13,000 each. Presently, Amar Singh Burundiwale has a gurdwara in Wolverhampton, Singapore and Toronto. Sant Mihan Singh has a magnificent gurdwara in Vancouver, Gurdev Singh has a gurdwara in Smethwick and Toronto. These gurdwaras have also become, in some measure, models of religious worship. With a strong emphasis on *nam simran* and hymn singing and a strict code of religious routine, a new pattern has evolved for others to emulate. The popularity of a gurdwara in Birmingham, for example, is widely owed to its strict orthodox practices under the watchful eyes of a resident *sant*.

The *sant* presence in Canada and Britain has helped to establish such standards of religious behaviour for individuals and also for the community. These standards are increasingly gravitating towards those prevalent in the homeland, the Punjab. Followers of a particular *sant* are usually proud to seek *amrit* from his hands. A picture of the *sant* will find its place among the albums of the family. The visit of a particular *sant* has also seen an emphasis on the *nam simran* aspect of Sikh faith. It is usually common for the follower to commence and conclude the *Akhand Path* in the presence of a *sant*. This ceremony will

⁴³ Sant Ishar Singh Rarewala passed away in Wolverhampton on 5 September 1975. His body was flown to Punjab where it was received among others by Sant Mihan Singh, ministers and thousand of mourning followers.

end as usual with the *langar* provided by the family where the *sant's* other followers would help and share some of the chores.

Sants have influenced the lives of thousands of Sikhs in Britain and North America. Almost every Sikh family has known one or other *sant*, with pictures of their favourite *sants* in their homes, sometimes his words recorded on tapes. Many a time, either a *sant* or some relatives would intervene in family disputes. For a number of worried parents, their daughters' marriages have been taken care of by the *sant*. The Namdhari chief has performed marriages of his followers, who would wait, sometimes over a year, for his visit. Some other families may consult Asian astrologers or sadhus or 'agony aunts'. *Sants* have also contributed to the revival of traditional norms and strict religious practices abandoned by early Sikh settlers as concessions to an alien environment. By exchanging information of the well-being of Sikhs in Britain and elsewhere with their relatives and friends back home, both in terms of material and moral progress, the visiting *sants* have brought standards of social and religious judgement among overseas Sikh communities much closer to the Punjabi society.

The Indian Punjab is not the only place connected with overseas Sikhs. The western Punjab in Pakistan, especially the religious and historic places associated with their gurus and the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh in Lahore, are places of pilgrimage. An annual *jatha* of Sikh pilgrims leaves Britain and Canada for Lahore and other places in Pakistan. This excursion usually takes place in November to mark the birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak at Nankana Sahib in Pakistan^[44]. Tours to

⁴⁴ Sant Domeliwale led many pilgrimages to Pakistan. A full-page advertisement, like the one below, is placed among Punjabi weeklies. The *jatha* departs to Pakistan for a historic tour of Guru Nanak's birth place and other sacred shrines. Departure date is 23 November via Pakistan International Airlines from Heathrow to Rawalpindi. After arrival a coach will take us to Dera Sahib, Panja Sahib, and finally to Nankana Sahib where we shall celebrate Guru Nanak's birthday. From here we will depart to Punjab crossing Attari border on 30 November reaching Amritsar the same evening. There you are free to meet your relatives and you can return to Britain within six months. Full cost of the trip is £480, this includes coach, air fare and accommodation.

Hemkunt in the Himalayas of northern India and other historic places are arranged during the summer. In Britain, some concern for the preservation of the Anglo-Sikh heritage has been evident. Coaches are arranged to visit Maharajah Duleep Singh's Elveden Estate in Suffolk. His belongings and those related to Sikh rule or Sikh armies have been keenly contested by Sikh buyers in recent London auctions. A painting of Duleep Singh's, until recently in the possession of Lord Dalhousie's family was bought by a Sikh family, the Chowdhurys at a price of £58,000 at Sotheby's auction in London in May 1990. The Summer of 1993 saw a big rally in the quiet, small town of Thetford to mark the 100th anniversary of Duleep Singh's death. His grave in a small village near Cambridge has been frequented by Sikhs as a mark of the Sikh heritage in Britain. The Punjab government officials visited Britain to acquire some historic antiques for the 150th anniversary of the last Sikh ruler^[45]. Udham Singh's remains from Britain were received by government officials^[46]. The return of fire-arms belonging to the tenth Sikh Guru were received by the government and paraded through many towns and villages of the Punjab. In Canada, the memory of a Sikh, Mewa Singh considered to be a martyr to the Sikh cause, is preserved. Meetings have taken place about Gadr writings and Gadr newspapers for their preservation at Berkeley and San Francisco.

Although the Sikh community shares language, common beliefs, customs and life styles, there are also well established religious subgroups, which, in the absence of a better word, are generally called 'sects'. Namdharis, Nirankaris, Radhasoamis are well-known. These sprang up

Kirtani jatha [hymn-singers] of Bhai Joginder Singh will accompany us. You should arrange visa by 9 November or contact Khaira Travel Agency, Smethwick. *Punjab Times*, October, 25, 1985.

⁴⁵ The Punjab delegation consisted of Manmohan Singh, Dr J S Grewal and I C Puri who arranged to borrow some of Sikh ruler's relics for an exhibition in the Punjab. The deputation also appealed to Sikhs in Britain to acquire the Elveden Estate.

⁴⁶ Udham Singh was hanged in 1939 for murdering General Dwyer in London -a past governor of Punjab. This was 'to avenge the death of 379 persons, in Amritsar in April 1919' according to Udham Singh.

initially as a reform movement within the Sikh faith, but gradually acquired rituals and religious distinction. In recent years, there has been a tension between Sikh orthodoxy and these sects. Each sect has an historical and, from an anthropological viewpoint, an evolving relationship with mainstream Sikhism^[47]. These groups or sects have continued to exert their separateness from mainstream tenets of Sikhism. In some cases the divergence may be only slight, in other groups, the differences may pose challenge and indeed invite a schism from the orthodox leaders of the community. All these sects are well represented in overseas Sikh population. Overseas opportunities have been utilised by these sects for vital growth. Thus the Nirankaris with its characteristically urban and educated elite has, despite comparatively smaller numbers, been able to create religious centres in several cities of Canada and Britain^[48]. Sant Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari chief undertook several visits until his assassination in 1979. The growing antagonism between Nirankaris and Sikhs has led to mutual suspicion and acrimony in local areas of Nirankari and Sikh population, such as Smethwick. A visit by the late Nirankari's wife in August 1989 was shrouded in secrecy and she was provided with a police guard^[49]. Some sects have struggled to keep a foothold in Sikh orthodoxy while maintaining some of its own innovating rites. Thus Namdhari Sikhs with three gurdwaras in Britain and a similar strength in Canada have kept within the bounds of the Sikh faith though keeping a distinct identity of their own^[50].

⁴⁷ McLeod, W.H. The evolution of Sikh society, Oxford, 1976.

⁴⁸ Following a violent clash among Sikhs and Nirankaris in Amritsar in April 1978, a *hukamnama* [a religious indictment] was issued from the Akal Takhat, Amritsar. The bitterness that followed ultimately claimed the life of Nirankari chief in 1979, when he was shot dead at his residence in New Delhi.

⁴⁹ Mataji, wife of the late sant Gurbachan Singh, as she is affectionately called by the followers, stayed in a hired hall in Oldbury. *Express and Star*, August 1989.

⁵⁰ Apart from the usual Sikh services in the gurdwara, Namdharis additionally emphasise the collective 'nam simran' - a practice started by the sect founder, Baba Ram Singh.

The Punjab's social structure is illustrated in the following table. If data were available on overseas Sikh communities' the picture would probably be quite similar to Punjabi society.

Table 3.5
PUNJAB POPULATION BY RELIGION AND CASTE GROUPS: 1971

Percentage Breakup of each caste group among Percentage Distribution of Hindus and Sikhs in the total Population Total Hindu and Sikh population among four caste Groups			
Caste Groups/ other Religions	Hindu	Sikh	Total
1 Higher Castes	15.4 [86]	2.5 [14]	17.9
2. Peasants	4.4 [10]	39.3 [90]	43.7
3. Servicing and Artisans	4.1 [35.5]	7.5 [64.5]	11.6
4. Scheduled Castes	13.8	10.9	24.7
Total of four castes	37.7	60.2	97.9
Other religions			2.1
Grand Total			100.0

Source: M S Dhami, Communalism in Punjab: a Socio-Historical Analysis', Punjab Journal of Politics, XI[1], 1985, p.26. Percentage distribution within each caste group by religion [for Hindus and Sikhs] in given in parentheses

More interesting is the case of lowest class among Punjabi population, the Chamars, also called Mazhabi Sikhs landless labourers in the village community of Punjab⁵¹. Due to opportunities offered by overseas migration, their leaders have been able to chalk out an alternative path for its members. As the Chamars tried to develop and deploy their community resources, the question was not only regarding the gurdwara for the faith but which faith? Ravidasi leaders had several grudges against the Jat Sikhs. It was the same Sikhs, they told a correspondent of a Punjabi paper, 'who did not allow them to go to their gurdwara in the Punjab village'. Old feuds between Jats and Chamars remain evident in overseas factories where both groups work

⁵¹ For a classic study of social and caste structure of Punjab society see Ibbeston, Denzil. Punjab Castes, Patiala, 1974, [Reprint of 1883]. Marengo, E.K. The transformation of Sikh society, Portland, Oregon, The Ha Pi Press, 1974. For a study of Ramgharia and Bhatra Sikhs in Britain see Bhachu, Parminder Twice migrants, 1985 and Ghuman, P.A.S. 'Bhatra Sikhs in Cardiff: family and kinship organisation', New Community, VIII[3], 1980, pp. 308-316 respectively.

side by side. Thus, in Bedford, where the number of Chamars and Jats were even in the brick-kiln factories, reports of hostilities over the election of a shop steward and other matters came up regularly. This came to a head when there was a strike at the factory. Chamars were particularly incensed by the advice from a leader of the Indian Workers Associations regarding the proper conduct of the strike. IWAs were regarded Jat Sikh organisations by Ravidasis.

While it was sufficient for the past hostility between the landlords [Jats] and workers [Ravidasis] to force the latter to have their separate places of worship but a vital question remained. What should their new faith consist of? Ad-dharmis?, Hindus or Buddhists? Would their place of worship be another gurdwara like the Sikhs or should they assert their separateness within Sikhism by emphasising the distinctive role of Chamar Sikhs to the Sikh Panth? Or should they have a complete break as many Buddhist associations were preaching to them? Dr Ambedkar a leader of the untouchables from Gujarat had considerable influence throughout India, though his influence on Punjab's Chamars remained negligible. However, in Britain the Ambedkar groups had considerable means and resources for preaching to Punjabi Chamars. With a temple in Wolverhampton as a base, starting in the 1970s, an intense debate took place within the Chamar community. Converts to Buddhism argued for a clean break with Hinduism as well as Sikhism. Others were content to keep within the orbit of Sikhism by emphasising 'their own guru Ravidas' which they pointed out was accorded a high recognition by the Sikh gurus. Others adopted for a renovated Ad-dharmi identity -an indigenous religious tradition among Punjab's Chamars. Keeping a rightful distance from the Sikh faith while retaining a Punjabi identity, the Chamar community leaders discussed the issue of a 'sacred book' like the Sikhs, and how it should be installed in the temple^[52]. Exchanges that flowed freely through the columns of Punjabi weekly

⁵² In 1977, the 600th Birthday of Guru Ravidas was celebrated by two associations. A letter was received from the President of India for the occasion.

papers especially in Britain show the process construction identities. In April of 1971, Mohinder Badhan, a Buddhist convert, wrote to fellow Chamars to adopt his path. In a sharp retort, Mihar of Letchworth replied:

Dr Ambedkar was if anything a Hindu, for he married a Hindu woman at a ripe old age. He embraced Buddhism only in the last six months of his life. Your claim that Buddhism believes in equal respect to all saints is nonsense, there is no god or saints in that religion. Are not Buddhist Chinese fighting their Vietnamese and Tibetan brothers. We can only find salvation in Ravidas^[53].

The debate continued for several years. Overseas opportunities have allowed Chamar communities to assess and assert their own vision through religious institutions. This they have done from a position of economic power and equality that they lacked in the Punjab villages. In a survey, Lievesley questioned 100 Ravidasis, 5 of them said they were Hindus, 70 identified themselves as Ad-dharmis, 21 as Ravidasis, with one saying Radhasoami and none of them as Sikh^[54]. This separate identification for Chamars either as Ad-dharmis or Ravidasis has been helped by leaders from the Punjab and India, including Prithvi Singh Azad and an Indian minister, Mr Jagjivan Ram. Both held deliberations with the Ravidas leaders to establish Guru Ravidas Foundation of India, the idea being to link various overseas Ravidas associations in an international association. However, the differences in religious observances are small: instead of the Sikh, 'Sat Sri Akal', Ravidas followers have a *jaikara*, occasionally turbans are replaced by red caps. The present situation in most Ravidas temples is similar to a gurdwara. Guru Granth Sahib is installed at the centre of worship. However, the emphasis is on the recitation of Ravidas bani from it. An improvised version of ardas [Sikh prayer] concludes the daily prayers and proceedings.

⁵³ Des Pardes, June-July 1971, letters column. The debate continued off and on, see issues of this paper for the years, 1973, 1976 and 1978.

⁵⁴ Leivesley. A. D. W. Ravidas community problem in the West Midlands and Northern India, University of Aston in Birmingham, M.Phil., 1985.

Conclusion

Despite differences in the phases of settlement, and the complex diversity of situations of the three countries, Sikh communities of Britain, Canada and the United States, through various exchanges with the Punjab, have been able to reproduce many facets of Punjabi social life. In addition to an active concern by individuals for social, cultural and religious reproduction, the formation of well-recognised social classes and religious sects in the diaspora suggest an identity which owes markedly to Sikh social and religious norms. The Punjabi society has exerted considerable pressure on overseas Sikhs and their collective behaviour. Sikh tenets have influenced enough individuals to engender among them a respect and justification for their rituals and practices, a strong tendency to reproduce these among their children born overseas. Although there is a distinct loss of Punjabi linguistic competence with consequent cultural shifts, there is also a marked tendency towards maintenance of language the Sikh values and practices among a large number of families.

Taken together, individuals have retained many features of their 'Punjabiness' or, if we may say, their 'Sikh-ness', to be members of a collective Sikh or Punjabi identity. In their new lands of settlement or birth, a majority of them have either changed their 'nationality' from an Indian one, or were born into a British, Canadian or American nationality. However, in each of these societies, sufficient distance exists, due to various factors between the indigenous populations and individuals of Punjabi descent, as to be brand them 'outsiders', with factors such as colour, origins, behaviouristic characteristics playing their role in this attribution and classification. Citizenship acquired by Sikh migrants through naturalisation or immigration procedures does not make them equal to indigenous members of society. Moreover, as we have seen, Sikh migrant communities have actively produced some of the cultural and religious traits which bonds them to their former homes.

Through numerous exchanges with the Punjab, overseas Sikhs have built

several institutions reflecting the influences of home life. These transfer of resources, contacts and networks have influenced the Punjab's economic and social life, and in this dual process of exchange, overseas Sikhs have been drawn into the orbit of Punjabi society. The transfer of economic resources to Punjab villages, revitalisation of social and religious norms among overseas centres of Sikh migrant communities, could not be shown through a balance sheet approach. This exchange and transfer is more subtle, symbolic and unquantifiable. The transmission of values and ideology is difficult to document, but the home society and its institutions continue to have a varied and significant influence upon Sikhs in the Western countries.

In addition to social values, economic resources and religious traditions, Sikhs in Canada, the United States and Britain have also formed political alliances with the Punjab. The formation of political associations in these three countries, and how in recent years these became increasingly active on behalf of the Punjab issues, are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

PUNJAB AND THE OVERSEAS SIKHS

POLITICAL LINKAGES UPTO 1984

Introduction

Besides establishing social, economic and religious links, Sikhs in Britain, Canada and the United States have developed political ties with the Indian Punjab. On some crucial issues facing the Punjab, overseas Sikh leaders have been able to mobilise considerable section of Sikhs providing publicity, guidance and solidarity. This interaction can be seen in the gradual emergence of associations which are based on similar ideology and organisational structures. This chapter chronicles and analyses the development of political associations among Sikh communities in the three countries. The first section discusses some of the important associations in the pre-1947 period. The second section discusses associations formed in post-1947 period and their role upto 1984. The final section considers the pattern of mobilisation and examines in particular how these have articulated and responded to the issues emanating from the Indian Punjab. Since the Punjab crisis has effected a major change leading to new pattern of associations, the post 1984 developments are treated in the next two chapters.

OVERSEAS SIKH POLITICS: AN OVERVIEW

Beginning in the 1960s, in many cities of Canada, Britain and California the Sikh population grew considerably and more active among them formed social clubs or local associations. These organisations

have performed a multitude of functions, acting as advice centres, participating in local issues, representing 'Sikh' or 'Indian' or 'Asian' interests at various levels to local or central government agencies, and acted as recruiting agencies for political parties. While some associations have taken the task of fighting racism, others have taken cultural-religious issues on board, still others have acted on behalf of 'homeland issues'. Competition as well as co-operation on various issues has also been the hallmark of them. Cultural and political demands have been articulated through a range of associations. The dynamics of such demands have usually gone through three processes. First, particular demand has been raised by individual/s, discussed at the local gurdwaras, then taken to local representatives or the appropriate national organisation. Thus, for example, a job refusal for a Sikh due to his turban involved the local gurdwara, then community's own organisation, the Akali Dal, and then local and other organisations seeking redress. A case of racial abuse may also involve the local gurdwara's management committee, and other organisations. There will be individuals who wish to join main political parties rather than their community based organisations. However, in many cases, those working in community organisations find it a convenient route to become conversant with the mainstream political system. Apart from isolated cases of individuals participating in the main political parties of their host country, the predominant tendency among Sikhs has been to form their own associations which seem to satisfy their urges for community leadership, prestige and power. Although individuals have been free to associate with any political party, and to join the mainstream political system, in the past several factors accounting for their lack of enthusiasm for joining the political system of the host society. In recent years, however, there is a discernible trend towards participating into mainstream political parties, especially in municipal elections¹¹. In all three countries, Sikhs have joined the

¹ Bald, Suresht R, 'The South Asian presence in British electoral politics', New Community 15[4], 1989, 537-548.

local bodies such as the City Councils. There is now one Sikh MP in Britain, two elected in Canada in 1993 elections. In California, a Sikh was elected as a Senator in the 1960s. While this trend may continue with more Sikhs joining into mainstream politics, the recent past and contemporary evidence suggests it will probably be a long drawn out process.

Most of these organisations have passed through three stages; from local group doing 'social work', to acting as pressure groups, and finally setting out its aims as a political group usually allying with some political organisation in the Indian Punjab. Since the 1960s, these associations can be divided into two: [a] associations which were formed by Sikhs locally but over a period of time have grown into allies of particular parties of the Punjab; [b] associations whose focus remain the host society and are serving the local needs. One of the most significant characteristic of Sikh community organisations abroad has been their links with the Punjab political parties. Their structure, role and relationship with the contemporary Indian Punjab can be conveniently analyzed by first providing a broad historical evolution of such associations.

EARLY POLITICAL LINKS

Until recently there have been few Sikh exiles or refugees. One of the first exile was Dalip Singh -a Sikh prince in the mid-nineteenth century. After three Anglo-Sikh Wars, the Punjab was annexed and joined in the British India's empire. As the last heir to the Punjab throne Dalip Singh was exiled to Britain effectively terminating the Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab. After spending a largely contented life among British aristocracy in a Suffolk estate, Dalip Singh turned a rebel in his later life. During the 1880s, he made some frantic visits to European kings, including the Russian Czar with proposals to invade India and re-install him as a sovereign of the Punjab. the British authorities considered Dalip Singh as a potential threat fearing Sikhs

remembered the deposed prince in affectionate terms, and blocked his return to his native land^[2]. Baba Ram Singh -a leader of Sikh sect called Namdharis became embroiled into a violent confrontation with the British authorities in some areas of the Punjab in late nineteenth century. He was the first among many political dissidents who were exiled to the Far East.

In Britain three Indians were elected to British parliament in the late nineteenth and early part of this century^[3]. Exiled Indian nationalists, mostly students, also created some networks in Britain in support of Indian independence. Activities of small groups of Indian exiles in Britain and continental Europe did lead to some violent incidents. On July 1, 1909, Sir William Curzon Wyllie was shot dead by Madan Lal Dhingra -an Indian student in London^[4]. The Director of Intelligence submitted two 'Memoranda on the Anti-British Agitation among Natives of India in England' and 'India House' was put under surveillance. Shyamji Krishnavarma had fled from India in 1887, and in 1905 he started publishing Indian Sociologist and also bought a house

² Ganda Singh [ed] Maharaja Duleep Singh's Correspondence, Patiala, Panjabi University, 1980. Alexander, M. and Anand, S. Queen Victoria's Maharajah Duleep Singh, 1838-1893, London, 1979.

³ Kosmin, Barry A. 'London's Asian M.P.s: the contrasting career of three Parsee politicians', Indo-British Review, XVI[2], 1989, pp. 27-38. D. Naoroji, M. M. Bhowmagree and Shahpuri Saklatvala, three MPs of Indian origin were elected as Members of Parliament: Naoroji from Finsbury in 1886 who represented it until 1895, then he stood from Lambeth North in 1906; Mr Bhowmagree was elected from Bethnal Green North East in 1895 and re-elected in 1906. Saklatvala was MP for Battersea North from 1922 to 1931.

⁴ Popplewell, Richard, 'The surveillance of Indian revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the continent, 1905-1914', Intelligence and National security, 3[1] 1988, p.56-76. Popplewell, Richard, 'The surveillance of Indian seditionists in North America, 1905-1915; in Andrew, C and Noakes J. [eds.] Intelligence and International relations, 1900-1945, Exeter University Press, 1987.

Mention should also be made of another exile organisation, the India Home League, set up by Lala Lajpat Rai in October 1917 in the United States. From January 1918, he also issued a monthly journal Young India with N S Harikar as its editor. Two other organisations, The Hindustan Students Association and the Hindu Workers Union of America were also set up during this period from the same building -1400 Broadway. Short lived and with limited appeal, nonetheless, they all shared the common aim of Indian independence.

in Highgate calling it India House as a hostel for nationalist students. A law student, Vinayek Sarvarkar was to become a powerful orator and inspired students like Dhingra. With surveillance of both British and Europe based Indian nationalists, there was no major incident of violence until the 1930s. The India League, grew up in Britain from an early association 'Home Rule for India' set up by Annie Besant in 1914. In 1927, its name was changed to 'Commonwealth of India League'. Krishna Menon, an Indian student, later to be first Indian ambassador to Britain, became its secretary in 1928 and helped to expand it to provinces^[5]. A Sikh from Punjab was to cause a furore in London, when he killed an ex-governor of Punjab in 1939 at a public meeting. He was promptly hanged for the crime but he is a much revered figure among Sikhs and the wider Indian community^[6].

In the late 1930s, when the population of Punjabi migrants in Britain had reached about a thousand, consisting mostly of pedlars but also some manual workers, especially in the Midlands, an Indian Workers Association [IWA] was set up. Initially as a socialising club, its members also provided some help for Indian nationalists^[7]. Some of its members provided funds for the defence of Udham Singh. This association was wound up, as other such small associations when India gained freedom. Muslim Punjabis resigned with the creation of Pakistan as a separate nation. In the early 1950s, Indian migrants were to revive the IWA by invoking Udham Singh's association as one of the founders of IWA, though he was certainly not among its founders^[8]. A summary of the

⁵ Silverman, Julius. 'The India League in the freedom movement', Indo-British Review, XVI[2], 1989, pp. 47-56.

⁶ Grewal, J. S. and Puri, H. K. [eds]. Letters of Udham Singh, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, 1974. See introduction for a brief sketch of his life.

⁷ Tatla, Darshan Singh. 'This is our home now: reminiscences of a Punjabi in Coventry', Oral History, Spring 1993, pp. 68-74.

⁸ Josephides, Sasha. Towards a history of Indian Workers' Association, Coventry, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 1991, Research Papers in Ethnic Relations No. 18.

pre-1947 associations is given in Table 4.1.

[a] The Gadr Movement

Early Sikh emigrants' politics was to create severe problems for Punjab administrators. One of the most well-known case is the *Gadr movement* formed in the Pacific States in 1913-15. The revolutionary movement came as a result of many developments in the small number of Sikhs settled in close proximity in Vancouver, Victoria in British Columbia and certain towns of California and Oregon. The Khalsa Diwan Society [KDS] was formed in 1908 and it kept a close association with the Chief Khalsa Diwan of Lahore and Amritsar. The KDS played its part in Sikh community affairs, in particular taking up cases of individual Sikhs petitioning to the Canadian immigration officials. With the arrival of Teja Singh a Columbia educated Sikhs, the KDS took on some collective causes and established a Sikh gurdwara in Vancouver and another one in Stockton. Teja Singh led a delegation to Ottawa and while another delegation was sent to London to petition for the lifting of the 'Orders-in-Council' which had effectively barred further immigration from the Indian subcontinent⁹. However, the KDS' co-operative attitude was increasingly questioned by those Sikhs who were inspired by Lala Har Dyal and a few other revolutionaries like Tark Nath Das, who urged upon them a direct war against the British rule in India. The dramatic showdown between Sikhs and Canadian immigration authorities took place with the arrival of Komagata Maru ship with over two hundred Punjabis seeking Canadian immigration. The Canadian government refused passengers to disembark, the ship was ordered back¹⁰. While the KDS offered legal aid to the would-be-immigrants, however radical solution offered by revolutionary rhetoric of Lala Har Dyal appealed to many

⁹ KDS, Memorandum to Canadian Government: 1913, Vancouver, 1913. The second delegation consisted of, Balwant Singh, Nand Singh and Narain Singh leaving Vancouver in March 1913 for London. The delegation also visited Punjab and had a meeting with the Punjab governor.

¹⁰ Johnston, Hugh. The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1979.

Sikh workers. The Komagata Maru passengers were embroiled into a bloody confrontation with the British authorities in Calcutta¹¹.

The failed mission of Komagata Maru voyage fuelled animosity among Sikh migrants towards British rule. They felt betrayed by the government for whom many fought in overseas countries and earned distinctions. Vulnerable and frustrated, many Sikh migrants channelled their anger into an organised revolt. Lala Har Dyal was to inspire them to form a militant movement. A Hindi Sabha which was effectively turned into a Gadr [rebellion] organisation in October 1913¹². It started a weekly newspaper Gadr from San Francisco. In the first it propagated a revolt against the British rule in India. In a 'back to India' call given at meetings at Fresno and Sacramento on 9 and 11 August 1914, volunteers lined up. The KDS and the United Indian League offered some finance. Over two thousand Indians, the majority of them Sikhs, left the United States to wage a war on British rule in India. However, a long absence from the Punjab meant that returning Sikhs were unaware of the strength of Punjab Sikhs' loyalty towards the raj. Their enthusiastic departure without adequate organisational structure also meant a serious breakdown on their arrival. Nevertheless, Sikh regiments at Ferozepore, Lahore and Meerut were asked to mutiny on 19 February 1915 -the day fixed for rebellion. But deft work by the Punjab police who had infiltrated the rebellion saved the situation. In the Punjab, on February 21 -the date set for the revolution, -the Gadr leaders expected civilian and military cantonments would rise against the

¹¹ Gurdit Singh, organiser of the ill-fated voyage, remained underground for several years, his sudden reappearance after years of hiding at a public shrine in Nankana Sahib in the autumn of 1921 was an emotional display of the Akali leaders' estranged relationship with the British authorities.

¹² Puri, Harish K. Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation and Strategy, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1983. Josh, Sohan Singh. A history of Ghadar Party, New Delhi. Jensen, Joan M. Passage from India: Asian Indians in North America, Yale University Press, 1988. Bose, A. C. Indian revolutionaries abroad, 1905-1922, Patna, 1971, p.65. Buchignani, Norman and Doreen, Indira, 'The political organisation of South Asians in Canada, 1904-1920' pp. 202-232, in Dahlie, J and Fernanado, T [eds] Ethnicity, power and politics in Canada, Toronto, 1981.

British rule. Two days before this date, police moved into the revolutionaries' headquarters and took a number of activists into custody. The Gadr activists were tried in twelve special tribunals. Of 175 revolutionaries, eighteen were hanged, 58 were transported for life and the remainder were given less severe sentences^[13]. The American-made Punjabi revolution was over. The American government held its own conspiracy trial after the war in 1918. Eight Germans, seven Americans and 14 Indians were convicted and sentenced ranging from four months to two years^[14].

However, the Gadr activists attracted more support in the Sikh villages and regiments than the government at first realised or was later prepared to admit. The tactless handling of overseas Sikhs' grievances was blamed for this rebellion which seriously affected the Anglo-Sikh relations and the morale of the British armies^[15]. The Gadr organisation was wound up by the San Francisco Conspiracy proceedings of 1919. However, Sikhs in Pacific States have jealously fought for its inheritance till 1947 and indeed beyond. This erosion of a 'special relationship' between the British and Jat Sikhs in the Punjab was due in no small measure to the North American Sikhs' political mobilisation. Subsequent events such as the building of a wall in a Delhi Gurdwara, Rikab Ganj and the heavy recruitment during the World War [Sir Michael O'Dwyer's reign], added to the worsening of Anglo-Sikh relations. The Lord Hunter's Committee appointed to investigate the

¹³ Lahore Conspiracy Case p.7.

¹⁴ US versus Bopp Franz et al defendants: Reporters' transcript of the trial of the Ghadar Party activists in the district Court of the United States for the Southern Division held on November 20 1917 -April 23 1918, London, India Office Records, Mss Eur C. 138, 1968.

¹⁵ Chamberlain to Hardinge, 10 Sept 1915, I.O. Memo on Indian immigration to Canada, Vol 121, No. 52.

...[It] specifically affects the Sikhs from whom many of our best soldiers are drawn and on whom, from the mutiny onwards we have been accustomed to rely with confidence for whole-hearted support of the British raj. For the first time in their history there has now been serious discontent among them and this has been largely due to at least made possible by, the exploitation of their grievances in this matter.

Amritsar Disturbances of 1919, pointed to these underlying tensions. The formation of the Kirti Party and then the Communist Party was also directly related to this overseas development. The rise of revolutionary groups such as the Babbar Akali in the Doab area, or Bhagat Singh's Socialist Party were inspired by the Gadr revolutionaries. During the Second World War, Sikh emigrants and soldiers in the Far East formed Indian National Army with Japanese support and, for a short period, posed a serious threat to the security of British rule in India¹⁶.

POST 1947 POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

As we move to the post 1947 period, overseas Sikhs' sporadic connection with Punjab such as the return of anguished Gadrites, a few exiles and isolated incidents in the far corners of the empire, gives way to a more systematic and enduring political alliance with the Punjab. Since the 1960s Punjab's main political parties, the Akali Dal, Communist groups and Congress Party have made political alliances with overseas Sikh associations in these three countries. While the emergence of each organisation has its unique history, with particular individuals making important contributions, nevertheless such organisations can be described in parallel terms to those in the Punjab. A summary of Sikh political associations for the period 1947 to 1984 is given in Table 4.1.

¹⁶ Mohan Singh Soldiers contribution to Indian independence: the epic of the Indian National Army, New Delhi, Army Educational Stores, nd. [1974?].

The Indian National Army [INA] was raised in Malaya in December 1941 from the British Indian army deserters and prisoners taken by the initial success of the Japanese forces. Mohan Singh -an ordinary rank in British army became commander of several thousand Indian soldiers, a majority of them Sikhs. The INA soldiers and the Japanese army were defeated in Imphal in 1944 by the Allied Defence Forces.

Table: 4.1
 SIKH ORGANISATIONS: NORTH AMERICA AND UNITED KINGDOM
 1908-1984 Period

Period	Association	Base	Causes
<u>Pre-1947 Period</u>			
<u>Canada/USA</u>			
1908-1947	Khalsa Diwan Society	Vancouver	Immigrations/Sikhism
1911-1912	Hindi Sabha	Oregon	Indian independence
1913-1919	Gadr Party	San Francisco	Indian independence
1908-1911	United Indian League	Vancouver	Indian independence
1912-1914	Hindustan League	Vancouver	Social/India
1918-1919	United India League	New York	Indian independence
1918-1920	Hindustan Students Association	New York	Indian politics
1918-1920	Hindu Workers Union of America	New York	Indian politics
<u>United Kingdom</u>			
1922-1947?	India League	London	Indian independence 1938-
1947	Indian Workers Association	Coventry	Indian independence
<u>1947- to 1984 Period</u>			
<u>Canada</u>			
1947-1990s	Khalsa Diwan Society	Vancouver	Sikhs/Immigration
1952-1960s	East Indian Welfare Committee	Vancouver	Racism/Immigration
1973-1990s	National Association of Canadians of Indian origin	Canada	Pan-East Indians
1977-1980s	East Indian Workers Association	Vancouver	Racism/Class
1975-1977	Indian Peoples Association of North America [IPANA]	Vancouver	East Indian/ Class
1975-1980	BC Organisation for Fighting Racism	Vancouver	Racism/Immigration
1976-1990s	Akali Dal	Canada/USA	Sikhism/ Homeland
1980-1983	Canadian Farmworkers Union	BC	Farmworkers
1981-1988	Federation of Sikh Societies	Canada	Educational
1978-	Babbar Khalsa International	Vancouver	Religion
1970s-	Akhand Kirtani Jatha	Vancouver	Religion
<u>USA</u>			
1970s	Sikh Study Circle	New York	Sikhism
1972-	Nanakana Sahib Foundation	New Jersey	Pilgrimage / Religion
1976-	The Sikh Council of North America	California	Religious
1976-	Sikh Association of America	California	Punjab/Religion
1981-	Sikh Cultural Society of America	New York	Religious
1983-	North American Akali Dal	Los Angeles	Punjab/Religion
<u>United Kingdom</u>			
1957-1990s	Indian Workers Association	Southall	Immigration / Class
1971-1973	Association for Asian Communists	London	Race / Class
1976-77	Southall Youth Movement	Southall	Racism/Youth Issues
1957-1990s	Indian Workers Association [GB]	Midlands	Immigration / Class
1967-1990s	Akali Dal	London	Sikhism / Cultural
1971-1977	Sikh Homeland Front	London	'Sikh Homeland'
1976-1990s	Indian Overseas Congress	Midlands	Indian issues
1960s-	Akhand Kirtani Jatha	Birmingham	Religious Issues
1970s-	India Association	London	Indian /UK Issues
1970s-	Federation of Indian Societies	London	Indian / UK issues

[a] The Akali Dal

Since the 1970s, Akali Dal has been functioning as a major social and political organisation among Sikhs in the UK and North America. It has mobilised on issues affecting the Sikhs in each country as well as providing an active support for Punjab's Akali leaders. In Britain, the Akali Dal was formally approved by Sant Fateh Singh, the president of Akali Dal during his visit to Britain in 1966. Following his visit, several leaders from Punjab undertook trips abroad. Bharpur Singh -a member of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee [SGPC] arrived followed by Santokh Singh -a Sikh leader from Delhi. The Akali Dal of Britain was formally launched in June 1968. The first meeting of Shiromani Akali Dal [UK] took place in Ealing Town Hall on 8 September 1968. Three British MPs, David Ennals MP, Sir Edward Boyle MP and Stephen Jacob witnessed these proceedings¹⁷

The Akali Dal was organised in the United States and Canada a few years later than in Britain. Again, it came out of close consultation between North American Sikhs and the Punjab leaders in the mid 1970s. By the 1970s, a number of local associations had come into being with Sikh members, ranging from the India Society of Yuba-Sutter and the Hindustani Welfare and Reform Association of the Imperial Valley, New York's Sikh Cultural Society where two large gurdwaras were being managed by a large population of professional Sikhs. In 1976, an attempt was made to organise an all-American Sikh body, known as the Sikh Council of North America. This led to a conference in Berkeley presided over by Lily Carter, American President's mother¹⁸. Soon after this, the Sikh Council was effectively turned into the Akali Dal of North America. This conversion was facilitated by Sikh leaders' visits to North America during 1976-78. The Akali Dal of North America was formally inaugurated at a conference in Vancouver. This was to have

¹⁷ Des Pardes, October 13, 1969.

¹⁸ Lily Carter's inaugural speech appears in Conference Proceedings of the Sikh Council of North America, 1976.

common personnel from Canada and the United States.

The Akali Dal of Canada immediately took up the issue of Sikhs as 'separate people' from 'East Indians' or 'Canadians of origins in India', and suggested that they should be called just 'Canadian Sikhs' whose political interests should be looked after by gurdwara societies or suitable representatives of the Sikh Panth. The newly launched Akali Dal of Canada faced competition not only from the oldest and prestigious Khalsa Diwan Society, but also from the Federation of Sikh Societies which had branches throughout Canada. Until 1947, the KDS was a broad church and indeed acted as a spokesmen not only for Sikhs but for the whole of South Asian community in Canada. However in the 1960s, with the arrival of new-comers, conflict arose between modernist and traditionalist segments of Sikhs. As we shall see the tension between secular and religious organisations has been a recurrent phenomenon in the history of Sikh organisations. In 1952 a dispute arose over the requirements for election to the KDS executive committee with the traditionalists arguing unsuccessfully for the exclusion of clean-shaven and turban-less Sikhs. Following their defeat, a group of 'traditionalists' broke with the KDS to found a second Vancouver gurdwara and a second society, the Akali Singh Sikh Society. Shortly thereafter, a parallel split occurred in Victoria where a 'traditionalist' minority broke away from the KDS to form yet another independent society. With the unity of the province's Sikh gurdwaras under the umbrella of the KDS now broken, the affiliated KDS gurdwaras gradually became independent of KDS, Vancouver. These developments together with an increase in the non-Sikh, South Asian population effectively undermined the credibility of the Vancouver KDS as the sole organisation speaking to the wider Canadian society on behalf of the entire South Asian immigrant community.

Parallel to this development, several Sikh leaders from Punjab visited North America. A number of Sikh community leaders persuaded them to set up a more close working relationship with them. As a result the Akali

Dal of North America was set up drawing several of its key members from the KDS, Vancouver.

[b] Leftist / Communist Groups

There are several leftist associations among Sikhs in Britain and North America. The Communist Party of Punjab is the third major force, its peculiar characteristics and early role in the Punjab affairs has meant that the support for it has come mainly from Sikhs in rural areas with several pockets in particular districts. Thus in Britain, the formation of IWA was due to the dedicated work of Punjabi communists like Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Jagmohan Joshi and several others from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts.

In Britain the IWAs emerged as major community organisations comprised of all Punjabis, including the religious Akalis, Congress party sympathizers and low caste Chamars. The IWAs leaders shared a leftist ideology, several having ties with the Punjab branch of the Communist party of India¹⁹. The Indian Workers Association was formed on 3rd March 1957 in Southall with Ratan Singh, Amar Singh Takhar, Ajit Singh Rai, Harbans Singh Ruprah, Jaswant Singh Dhami as its founders members²⁰. Its name was derived from an earlier organisation set up in Coventry in 1938²¹. Among its earlier activities, in line with its constitution of helping immigrants to develop friendship with the British people', the IWA leaders organised English classes, offered help with translation and form-filing, and represented Indian workers'

¹⁹ Singh, Gurharpal. Communism in the Punjab upto 1967, University of London, Ph.D., 1986. Josh, Bhagwan Communist movement in Punjab, 1926-1947, Delhi, 1979.

²⁰. Sharma, Vishnu D. Punjabi Darpan, July 11, 1986. Mr Sharma, a key figure of IWA Southall, died on 22 April 1992 when taking part in a conference at Sahibad near Ghaziabad in Uttar Pardesh, India.

²¹ Tatla, Darshan Singh, 1993, op cit., p.71

interests at various local and national government agencies^[22]. From 1962 till 1982 IWA leaders could with some justification claim to have entered CARD from a position of strength, though their attitude did not help to play a constructive role. According to Vishnu Sharma, by the end of 1960s, 'the IWA had around sixteen thousand members, larger than any other Pakistani or Afro-Caribbean organisations', and that 'it took upon all-Indian issues, irrespective of sects, parties and religious affiliation and used only democratic methods'.

However, organisational difficulties soon crept in. In a first major split in IWA in 1962 the IWA Southall branch declared its independence. This split came as a casualty of Indo-Chinese hostilities. The IWA[GB] leadership branded Southall leaders as bourgeoisie who had abandoned the proletarian ideals. Personality clashes between Sikh peasants with non-too-strong loyalty towards India in its conflict against a revolutionary China and urbanite Hindu leaders with more patriotic feelings towards India were perhaps as much responsible as any other factor in this split up. In 1964 this split was formalised following the split in Indian Communists into Right CPI[R] and CPI[L]. The IWA Southall became an ally of CPI[R] while IWA [GB] became ally of CPI [M], the latter had a particular strong base in rural Punjab with Harkishan Singh Surjeet as its new leader. Another event in the Punjab was to cause a further split in IWA[GB]. The Naxalite movement in the Punjab during 1967-68 split up Birmingham branch -one of the largest - among IWA[GB] became the Naxalite faction calling itself for a while as IWA[ML] [GB]. Avtar Johul and Jagmohan Joshi emerged its new leaders^[23].

²² IWAs established its office at 16-18 Featherstone Road, Southall. In 1966-67, a local cinema was bought for £75,000 by taking £50,000 loan from Lloyds Bank and raising another £24,000 from members. With the rise of video culture the declining attendances at the cinema caused severe rows among IWA leaders.

²³ JOHN, DeWitt, 1969. Indian Workers Associations in Britain. Oxford: Oxford University Press for Institute of Race Relations. Josephides, Sasha. 'Principles, strategies and anti-racist campaigns; the case of the Indian Workers' Association', in Harry Goulbourne [ed] Black Politics in Britain, Aldershot, Avebury, 1990. Also see introduction in Werbner, Pnina and Anwar, M. [eds.] Black and ethnic leaderships in Britain; the cultural dimensions of political action,

The early 1970s were heyday of leftist activists. During 1980s and early 1990s IWAs declined sharply. A concerted effort to unite the splinter groups of IWA[GB] came in 1989. Characteristically, it was through the effort of Communist leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet from Punjab who once again mediated and presided over the unification of the two Midlands based IWAs^[24]. In the 1990s, apart from an annual meeting, the IWAs have been in limbo. The IWA Southall was also reduced to the status of a welfare agency with P. S. Khabra as its paid employee, and with an office in the Dominion Centre converted from the old cinema building once owned by the IWA. Mr Khabra was elected Member of Parliament from Southall on a Labour Party ticket in the 1992 General election^[25].

In Canada, the formation of leftist associations began in early 1970s. Their formation coincided with a split in the Communist party in the Punjab into three distinct entities, CPI, CPI[M] and a revolutionary break-away group, the Naxalites CPI[ML]. Many Sikh youth were influenced by the Naxalite movement, a number of whom migrated to Canada during the 1968-1975 period. As a result, several leftist groups were established in Canadian cities of Sikh population, notably in Toronto, Vancouver and Edmonton. The East Indians Welfare Association [EIWA] was only sporadically active in the 1970s and had been struck off the Provincial Register of Societies. In 1973, an East Indian Defence Committee [EIDC] was formed as a response to the growing racial tension and violent attacks on Sikhs usually known as East Indians. The EIDC allied itself with the orthodox group in the KDS Vancouver

Routledge, 1991.

²⁴ Of the reorganised IWA, Prem Singh retained the Presidency, Avtar Jouhal became its General-Secretary, Avtar Sadiq became a Deputy General-Secretary and Makhan S Johal became the Vice-President.

²⁵ During the years of enactment of new immigration laws, particularly in 1962, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1981, IWA organised demonstrations. Southall -as a major area of South Asian residents, saw racial incidents in 1976, April 1979, and July 1981. During the Southall riots, 342 people were charged and fined, payment was made by IWA Southall. The total bill was more than £30,000.

dispute. It is a Maoist group [now affiliated to the Albanian leaning Communist Party Marxist Leninist [CPI-ML] which had organised vigilante action to defend East Indians in Vancouver from physical and verbal harassments by whites. Another broadly leftist organisation with large membership of Sikh migrants was the East Indian Canadian Citizens Welfare Association [EICCWA]. This was an early attempt to form an overtly non-religious organisation formally independent of any gurdwara. By setting its objectives as working for the benefit of the entire 'East Indian' population throughout the country, it implicitly accepted the Canadian social reality that there exists a distinct 'East Indian' ethno-cultural group sharing certain unique interests and activities. Thus it was at this juncture that the Welfare Association as it came to be called by community members -began to take on some of the more political functions, community representations to government for increased immigration quotas for India.

[c] Indian Overseas Congress

The Indian Overseas Congress [IOC] was formally organised in Britain in the Emergency years to draw support from overseas Indians. Both in Britain and Canada, a number of Sikhs joined this new organisation and held various offices in it. After the overthrow of Indira Gandhi's government, the IOC was also discredited. With the return of the Congress government in India in 1981, IOCs were again revived. At many gurdwaras, especially in Vancouver, the conflict between Congressite Sikhs and Akalis have led to bitter controversy.

During the emergency rule in India [1975-77], there were bitter feud and sometimes physical assaults on opponents. Akalis joined hands with the Communist groups to hold several protest meetings against the Emergency. However, as the CPI[R] had offered support to the Emergency, IWA Southall led by Vishnu Sharma endorsed the Emergency. He also branded Jai Parkash Narayan who had emerged a major opponent of

Emergency rule as a stooge of American CIA^[26]. At several places there were clashes with Congress supporters and the Communist groups^[27].

[d] Caste Group Organisations

Jat Sikhs constitute a majority of overseas Sikh community and they are equally divided into Congress and Akali Dal associations. Chamars -the labourers from Punjab villages have always shied away from the Akali Party. They have usually opted for the Congress, or in more recent years formed their own associations. In Britain and Canada, Chamars have organised through such religious-cum-political alliances such as the Ambedkaris, Ravidasis or more recently as Bahunjan Samaj Party. Similarly artisan groups such as Ramgarhias have not shown much support for the Akali Dal. They have either gone into local political parties or tended to become members of pan-Indian associations.

[e] Pan-Indian Organisations

In Britain, examples of such associations are the India Association, Federation of Indian Organisations and the Federation of Sikh Organisations. These are more or less social clubs rather than political organisations, though on occasions they have acted as such. Their membership and support base is usually small and their survival crucially dependent on some form of official patronage. Thus for example the Indian Association of UK was formed several years ago in London and it went through several name changes^[28]. In Canada, the East

²⁶ Des Pardes, December, 5 and 12, 1975. Vishnu Sharma alleged CIA hand in Jai Parkash Narayan's campaign.

²⁷ Des Pardes, December 12, 1975. Prem Singh, Secretary of IWA's letter to CPI and Congress Leaders.

Earlier when the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi visited London in 1969, she arrived to address an audience at the Dominion Cinema, Southall on a cold bitter day of 7 January 1969. She met a demonstration led by IWA and Akalis. On another occasion, a visit by the Indian High Commissioner and Swaran Singh to the Dominion Cinema in October 1970, was greeted by eggs by IWA activists.

²⁸ Some Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus formed Punjab Unity Forum and launched a journal, Unity from London. Its office-bearers for 1988 1989 were: President Daljit Singh Shergill, Senior President: R Singh, Vice presidents: A K Singh and A S Grover, General Secretaries: B S Sood and

Indian Canadian Citizens Welfare Association [EICCWA] was formed in 1952 mainly to voice concern over its immigration policy. It had become virtually defunct by the early 1970s. Its successor was the National Association of Canadians of Origins in India [NACOI]. This was set up in 1975-76 with a grant from the Department of Multiculturalism. Its aim was to facilitate governmental discussions with one organisation per ethnic group. The NACOI received meagre support within any of its composite East Indian communities. The aims and objectives of NACOI were largely representational to central government and its agencies^[29]. The NACOI's rival, meanwhile, is the Indian Peoples's Association of North America [IPANA], another pan-East Indian organisation in Canada. IPANA was formed in the early 1970s as a response to Indira Gandhi's Emergency, though by mid-1970s, IPANA had extended its base to Canadian issues. IPANA's approach to political issues is like NACOI, a low key. Because it has a predominantly Marxist bent, the Association prefers to support other groups rather than take a prominent position in the community's political life. In general, however, local Sikh participation in the 'establishment' of ethnic political organisations [e.g. NACOI, the revived and revitalised East Indian Canadian Citizens Welfare Association and the fledgling Fraser Valley East Indians Canadian Welfare Association] as well as the leftist alternative [eg the aforementioned East Indian Defence Committee, the rivals; IPANA and the more recently founded East Indian Workers Association [EIWA]] suggests a significant acceptance of the

Harbans Singh, with Founder President: Jaswant Singh.

²⁹ Its aims are as follows:

1. To encourage Canadians of Indian origins to fully participate in Canadian society
2. To provide a national voice to Canadians of origins in India
3. To provide a forum to exchange ideas issues and common concerns
4. To facility communication with and other organisations
5. To assist orientation and adaptation of Canadians of origins in India to the Canadian milieu and bring about a better understanding of Canada and other Canadians.
6. To formulate guidelines for improving the collective images of Canadians of origins in India
7. To assure due recognition of contribution of Canadians of origins in India to Canada [NACOI, 1977].

position that to compete for funds and recognition in the wider Canadian society it may be necessary to organise into what are at least in theory 'pan East Indian ethno-political organisations'³⁰. However these organisations, at best, gain a very selective support amongst the Sikhs.

SIKH ORGANISATIONS, PUNJAB LINKS AND ISSUES OF MOBILISATION

Since independence, and especially after the creation of the Punjabi Suba in 1966, Congress and the Akali Dal have been the principal contenders for power. The post 1947 Punjab political parties and their electoral base can be seen through Appendix-9. The support for the Akali Dal is among the Jat Sikh farmers. The Congress support has slightly wider base among Hindus, rural scheduled castes and even some Sikhs. The Communist Party of India is confined to rural Jat Sikh and scheduled caste support in some pockets of the Punjab. The Jan Sangh-BJP has attracted support from the caste Hindus particularly urban Hindus. The most unambiguous features of the party struggle in relation to social, cultural, and religious groups in the Punjab since independence have been the dominance of the Akalis among rural Jat Sikhs and the strong, but limited base of the Jan Sangh among urban Hindus. It is not surprising then to find Jat Sikhs aligning with the Akali Dal in overseas countries. In this struggle, as in the historic conflict over religious allegiances in the Punjab as well, the large population of scheduled castes is a critical 'floating' element. Thus overseas associations reflect this class and religious divide. The Akali Dal in Britain and Canada has drawn its support from Jat Sikhs, Communist groups have drawn similarly on the Sikh peasantry for its mass support; Congress support has been again from Jat Sikhs, especially among businessmen. Broadly speaking, Sikh associations have organised on three kinds of issues:

³⁰. Dusenbery, Verne A. 'Canadian ideology and public policy: the impact of Vancouver Sikh ethnic and religious adaptation', Canadian Ethnic Studies, XIII, 3, 1981, pp. 110-119.

- [a] Sikh ethnic identity
 [b] Racism, Immigration and Workers' Issues
 [c] Punjab and Indian Political Issues

While the Akali Dal has been concerned with the issues of Sikh identity; the turban cases, Punjabi language teaching and 'representation' aspects of the Sikhs. The wearing of turban has been a steady issue for the Akali Dal leaders. In Britain, this led to a concerted campaign in the 1960s and early 1970s, while in Canada, the Human Rights Commission have been instrumental in mediating in several such cases. In the United States, some such cases have involved American-convert Sikhs. The leftist associations have generally taken up cases of immigration controls and racism.

Table 4.2

OVERSEAS SIKH ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR PUNJAB LINKS

Political Party in Punjab	North America	UK
Congress Party	IOC	IOC
Akali Dal	Akali Dal	Akali Dal
Communists	EIWCC/IWA/IPANA	IWAs
Bahujan Samaj Party	Ambedkar/Ravidas Groups	Ravidas/Ambedkar Groups

TABLE 4.3

RESOURCES OF OVERSEAS SIKH POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Factors	IOC	Akali Dal	Communists
Authority	INC, India and Punjab	Religious authority	Ideology
Patronage	IHC's Patronage	Akali Dal	Indian Communists
Institution	Gurdwara	Gurdwara	Gurdwara

Class/Caste	Chamars / Jats	Jats	Jats / Non-Sikhs
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CPI(R) = Punjab branch of Communist Party of India [Right]
 CPI(M) = Punjab branch of Communist Party of India [Marxist]
 CPI(ML) = Punjab Branch of Communist Party of India [Marxist-Leninist] Naxalite Groups
 IWA = Indian Workers Association, this is usually associated with Southall Group.
 IWA (GB) Indian Workers Association [Great Britain].
 IHC = Indian High Commission
 INC = Indian National Congress

[a] Sikh Ethnic Identity

In all three countries Sikhs had to campaign for some of their peculiar customs and religious practices. The turban was and remains an ordinary part of dress for most Sikhs in the Punjab. However overseas situation changed it in a contest of will of individuals and also turned into an issue of group identity. Sikh women's dress, in common with Asian social customs are different than Western women. These again became matters of contest. Carrying of a kirpan, by baptised Sikhs was thought to be an offensive weapon when it was first brought into public discussion. Taking of an oath on Sikh scriptures was a difficult question, buying or converting an old building into a gurdwara, the list of practices at odd in the Western context seem quite long.

Only major symbols of communal identity could become matters of mobilisation by Sikh community leaders. Even that had to wait until Sikhs had become sufficient in number to raise those issues at a public platform. Thus in the late 1960s, there arose three long and drawn-out cases relating to the Sikh turban in Britain. The first concerned a Manchester Sikh working in a bus garage in 1959. Mr G S Sagar, a Manchester Sikh, applied for the post of conductor on a bus. He was turned down on the ground that his turban did not conform to the rules of service. He was however offered a job in a garage. Mr Sagar went to his councillor to get support for his application. Trevor Thomas wrote to the general manager saying that Mr Sagar will wear a blue turban with a badge on it and he should be taken on. However, he was again rejected. The Transport Committee considered the question again and after 'considerable research and discussion' it was decided not to

allow exceptions to the rules^[31]. The campaign in fact took seven years to reverse the decision. As Mr Sagar saw it, the decision was based upon ignorance and misunderstanding. Mr Sagar in the meantime prepared a leaflet on the history of Sikhs, and the significance of turban for the Sikhs. It was the Gurdwara which in fact made the case for the next formal application on behalf of the Sikhs in Manchester.

A second case arose in Wolverhampton at a later date. By this time, the Akali Dal was established. It got quickly involved into this dispute. The Wolverhampton Transport Committee appear to have learnt nothing from the Manchester dispute, though they could hardly have been unaware of its existence. The case started when an old employee came wearing a turban after a sickness leave. T S Sandhu was ill for three weeks in July 1965 and then only 23, he came back to work with a turban. He explained it in terms of religious conversion and henceforth to take his faith seriously. He was told of union rules, and sent home.

He immediately called for Mr Panchi's assistance who was now head of the Akali Dal. A demonstration by Sikhs took place in Wolverhampton on 4th February 1968 and another on April 24, followed by yet another on 12 May. But these protest marches brought no change in Transport Authority's policy. It was at this point a new Sikh leader emerged. A sixty-five year old Sikh, Sohan Singh Jolly declared he would immolate himself on 13 April if the Transport Committee did not change its policy^[32]. For Sikh leaders it also meant a test of their commitment. Only those who could make sacrifices could serve as leaders. When Mr Jolly declared to immolate himself for the cause he was asserting not only his will but also putting the community members' ambivalent and pragmatic attitude on test. Mr B S Gill, Secretary of the Wolverhampton gurdwara commented on Mr Jolly's decision to intervene, 'having done

³¹ Manchester Evening News, June 22, 1959.

³² See Sohan Singh Jolly's interview in Des Pardes, September 28, 1969.

so, he had to go through it' this is how the local Gurdwara management committee viewed his intervention. Panchi -the old Akali Dal leader had to retire as he could hardly match this^[33].

This led to hectic activity and intervention by Punjab and Indian leaders. The Indian ambassador to Britain, Mr Shanti Sarup Dhawan visited Wolverhampton to meet the Transport Committee on 29 January 1968. In New Delhi, Gurnam Singh an Akali leader went to see Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi and the President, Mr Zakir Hussain regarding the turban issue. There were several demonstrations in Delhi on this matter^[34].

The Mayor of Wolverhampton unused to such threats, described it as blackmail. The local gurdwaras became far more involved in the dispute. The Transport Committee said it was up to the Public Transport Authority. The Indian High Commissioner appealed to the Department of Transport to relax the rule and warned them of the serious effect of a suicide could have on the Indian opinion. However, with representations, they agreed to meet Mr Jolly on April 9 four days ahead of his deadline. The committee met on April 9, 1969 and within four hours of deliberations, agreed to change the rule^[35]. The chairman explained afterwards that as men of honour, they had been forced to have regard to wider implications. Mr Jolly called this as victory of the Sikhs and went to Punjab to be honoured there by Akali Dal leaders.

The third case is known as Mandla case. A Sikh student's application was turned down by a head teacher knowing that the student would be wearing the turban. The case went all the way to the house of Lords, when it was resolved in favour of the Sikhs. It saw a major

³³ Express and Star, January 16, 1969.

³⁴ The Times April 7, 1969.

³⁵ Beetham, D. Transport and Turbans: a comparative study of a migrant community, Oxford University Press for IRR 1970. Reeves, F. Race and borough politics, Avebury, 1989, pp. 61-77, pp. 229-232.

mobilisation among Sikhs in Britain, with two major protest marches in London led by a Sikh saint from Birmingham.

In Canada and the United States, there have been as many cases involving the Sikh turban and these have all seen similar campaigns by Sikhs. In Canada, Gian Singh Aujala won a case against his employers to wear his turban. He was employed by Pincurtan Security. When he started wearing his turban the company sacked him for changing his appearance. The case went to the Human Rights Commission where he won the case and was re-employed. There was another case in Edmonton of a Sikh boy wearing a Kirpan in school^[36].

Religious rituals and practices have been debated in their overseas context. The kind of conversions started by Harbhajan Singh Yogi were subject to longish queries both in US Sikh circles as well as in the Punjab^[37]. In 1982, a B.C. gurdwara hoisted the Indian flag along side the Sikh flag on Indian independence day, 15th August. This was subject of considerable furore among the Sikh community of Canada leading to the intervention of Amritsar: the Akal Takhat Jathedar and other head priests from Punjab had to clarify the situation. Kirpal Singh, the Akal Takhat Jathedar, Amritsar, sent a clearly worded reply saying no other flag is to be hoisted along side that of the Khalsa^[38]. In 1972 Canadian Sikhs started a new debate about the need to cover heads inside the gurdwara. More orthodox among them also argued that clean

³⁶. World Sikh News, Mr Justice granted an interim injunction restraining the school Board from suspending or expelling Suneel Singh Tuli a grade 12 student. "surely the fact that this person would be seen to have fallen from his faith [if he does not wear Kirpan] in my view is sufficient to warrant the relief that he seeks.... in my view something positive can result from this application. To allow the applicant to wear the requirement of his religion upon baptism including Kirpan would provide those who are unfamiliar with the tenets of his faith an opportunity to develop an understanding of another's culture and heritage..."

³⁷ Indo-Canadian Times, November 1983. Letter to Attorney General and appeal to other Sikh societies for sending such a letter to Khalsa Diwan Society.

³⁸ Indo-Canadian Times, 21 September 1982. Letter from Kirpal Singh, Jathedar, Akal Takhat, Amritsar.

shaven Sikhs should not be elected on to management committees of a gurdwara. The unorthodox group felt it should not force the people to cover their heads and believe any Sikh should be allowed to serve on the management committee^[39]. The matter was resolved eventually in favour of orthodoxy.

[b] Race / Immigration / Workers Issues

Leftist or Communist led associations such as IWAs and EIWA or EIDC, have organised themselves on issues of racial discrimination, immigrations issues and workers' causes. In Canada, leftist groups have fought for labourers, particularly in the formation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. There are some 12,000 workers in the Fraser Valley of the total 16,000 farm workers in British Columbia. Employed in seasonal work at a small scale family-farming, there were cases of glaring exploitation especially of women workers. After prolonged struggle the Canadian Farmworkers Union was formally established on April 6, 1980. However, several people have viewed CFU as a front organisation of IPANA, looking for a foothold among Sikh workers^[40].

The leftist organisations groups have been mobilising on issues of racism, immigration policies and some broad alliance with the Asian or blacks political mobilisation. The issue of government patronage, race relation agencies and co-operation with other black or Asian groups have been issues of fundamental differences between various leftist groups. For example, in a bitter duel of words, Avtar Johal accused

³⁹ Campbell, M.G. The Sikhs of Vancouver: a case study of minority -host relations, M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973. Campbell conducted interviews with Sikh leaders including Molla Singh, Jagir Singh, Prem Singh, Kesar Singh Bhatti, Dr Gurdev Singh Gill, Kehar Sekhon, Hardial Singh Johal.

⁴⁰ Gill, Charan The birth of the Farmworkers Organising Committee, [unpublished paper], Vancouver, 1983, p.4. Its key members such as Raj Chohan and Harinder Mahill were in IPANA, however others argue that does not prove that CFU was or is IPANA's brainchild. Union officers are understandably reluctant to play the importance of their membership of IPANA as it is known for its contingent of Marxists of various ilks whereas the CFU is primarily a trade union in the ordinary sense of the term.

Vishnu Sharma of being a paid servant of the government Sharma defended his co-operation for various agencies on the ground that keeping out serves no one except the high principles⁴¹. Occasional mobilisation takes place among Chamars. Thus for example on 26th January in front of Indian High Commission in 1975, when for a short time, non-Congress ministry at the centre took over. It called for march against oppression on backward classes by the Indian government 'now a government of brahmin order'. Guru Ravidas Sabha arranged another protest march on 2 October 1977 against oppression in India. In particular it cited Charan Singh the Home Minister for inciting hatred against Chamars. The procession was led by a Congress ex-minister Buta Singh and Mangu Ram, the founder of Adi Dharm in the Punjab. The Guru Ravidas Sabha headed by Shankar Lal Darbhang -leader of 40,000 strong Ravidas and Adi Dharmis met the Indian Prime Minister, Morarji Desai in London. It asked the Indian Premier to tell the BBC and ITV to stop calling Jagjivan Ram as a leader of 'untouchables'. The political alliances within this group were also exercised by Punjab events. The Republican Party was established here and arranged a protest on 4th September 1977 led by Charan Dass, Senior Vice-President of the Punjab Republican Party during his visit to Britain.

Social customs of comrades came under searching eye of fellow comrades⁴². The management Committee of Smethwick Gurdwara and the IWA leaders held several joint meetings to discuss dowry and other social problems of the Punjabi community during 1973-74.

⁴¹ Des Pardes, September 16, 23 and 30, 1973. The Punjabi titled labour sarkar di pooch bania. Exchange of letters between Karm Singh Kirti and Vishnu Sharma.

⁴² Des Pardes, December 16, 1973. A Punjabi comrade son's dowry became a subject of controversy. It concerned the son of the General Secretary of IWA [ML] of East London. The engagement dowry consisted of many items; *sone da kara, mundi, quilts, jorhi murkian, one mundi bhanoia, mundi mama, mundi vichola*. The Vachola [middleman] Ajit Singh Sandhu, Leicester explained in a letter to Des Pardes October, 28, 1973 and Vishnu Sharma wrote a number of essays beginning with September 1973 issues.

[c] Punjab and Indian Political Issues

Common to almost all associations have been a degree of mobilisation on home issues emanating from the Punjab and India. In this sense, the Sikh community seems 'politically hyperactive'⁽⁴³⁾. A distinguishing characteristic of Sikh associations is close links with the Punjab. While for the Akali Dal of three countries, Punjab issues are their main concern, even for the leftist organisations issues emanating from Indian subcontinent have been rallying point. For the leftist groups, issues are somewhat broader encompassing both the Punjab, India and the host society. For the Pan-Indian organisations, the issues been even more wider, though their mobilisation potential sharply decreases.

Table 4.4

SIKH DIASPORA REACTION TO THE PUNJAB-INDIAN EVENTS: 1960-1984

Years	Event	Groups Affected	Reaction
1962	Indo-China Hostilities	Leftist Groups/IWA	Rallies
1965	First Indo-Pakistan War	All Groups	Funds
1953-66	Punjabi Suba Movement	KDS	Volunteers and Funds
1968-69	Naxalite Movement	Leftist/IWA Splits	Funds/ Rallies
1970-71	Chandigarh Issue	Akali Dals	Rallies
1972	Second Indo-Pakistan War	All Groups	Funds and Rallies
1975-77	Emergency Rule in India	IPANA [Canada]	Rallies
1977-78	Janata Government in India	New Organisations	Rallies
1978	Akali-Nirankari Clash	Babbar Khalsa	Funds and Rallies
1981-83	<u>Dharam Yudh Morcha</u>	Akali Dal/KDS	Volunteers and Funds
June 1984	Army Action in the Golden Temple	New Organisations	Volunteers, Funds and Rallies

All major developments in the Punjab politics have caused reaction in East/Indian Workers Association, the Akali Dals and Overseas Congress branches of Canada and Britain. A writer has commented on the intensity

⁴³ Ujjal Dosanjh 'The East Indian community of Vancouver: a look from within', unpublished paper.

of this relationship on Toronto's Indian community:

The dominating conflict within the East Indian community are still the conflicts of the first generation immigrants and in this the politics of India is playing a significant role in shaping the attitude of the community. Every political crisis in India leads to renewed interest in Indian politics among the East Indian migrants and as a result new conflicts in Toronto emerge. As it is impossible to pacify the interests of first generation immigrants in the Indian politics, it is impossible to eliminate the conflicts within the East Indian community on that issue.

...The negative impact of this conflict in regard to the Indian politics on the development of broad front around the issue of racism, can only be minimised with the development of a clear and non-sectarian approach towards the issue of racism which affects the majority of East Indian immigrants regardless of their stand on Indian politics^[44].

Even among leftist associations, Punjab and Indian issues have dominated. During Indian Emergency, Mr Sharma of IWA Southall was accused of hobnobbing with the Indian Congress government and its agencies. Mr Ajit Rai spoke against the attitude of the Indian government in September 1973 at a meeting to honour Umrao Singh -an education minister from Punjab. During 1972-74, Punjab Naxalites' got much vocal support from Midlands IWAs. Meetings were being held at all the places with emphasis on solidarity within the revolutionary activity and support for comrades engaged in revolutionary activities back home^[45]. Moderate comrades were spurned and faced admonishment. When CPI[R] leaders from the Punjab, Darshan S Canadian and Jagjit Singh Anand visited Southall in 1975, they could not speak at the Dominion Cinema the main platform for Indian leaders to address the Punjabi community^[46]. Elections within leftist organisations had always an element of Punjab and Indian issues. These became central questions during the Emergency years. Mr Sharma was denounced for allying with

⁴⁴ Bharti, Jan. 'Conflict in East Indian community in Toronto, historical overview', Asiandian, 3[1], 1978, p.10-14.

⁴⁵ Des Pardes, April 1974 and December 8, 1974.

⁴⁶ Des Pardes, July 18, 1975.

the Indira Congress government⁴⁷. When the Indian Prime Minister came to address the gathering at Dominion Cinema, accompanied by the Punjab Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, in December 1978, she faced a group of Akalis and IWA demonstrators who burned the Indian national flag.

THE EMERGENCE OF SIKH HOMELAND ISSUE

The idea of Sikh separatism in Britain and Canada arose earlier than 1984. It first found favour among the Sikh leadership abroad in the late 1960s. In Britain, Sikh leaders were facing the prospect of various campaigns to 'save the turban' as the community's legitimate symbol. The tactics employed by Wolverhampton Transport Authority in bamboozling their demand alerted them to their minuscule minority position in Britain. Despite repeated appeals to the Indian High Commission in Britain, Sikh leaders gained little sympathy from the Indian government. The Indian ambassador was naturally reluctant to intervene in a dispute of a delicate nature. Whatever the considerations on the part of Indian authorities, this led to bitter heart searching among a section of the Sikh leaders, who for the first time, denounced the Indian government's attitude towards the Sikhs in general. Mr Davinder Singh Parmar thought a Sikh High Commissioner would have been more sympathetic to the Sikh causes. Another leader involved in the turban campaign, Charan Singh Panchi, blamed the Indian High Commission for hobnobbing with the Wolverhampton Transport Authorities. He was first to join the Sikh Homeland Front when it was formed as a breakaway group from the Akali Dal.

The idea of a Sikh homeland was confined to a small number of educated Sikhs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was on the arrival of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan that such brooding were channelled into an

⁴⁷ Des Pardes, July 20, 1977. Letter from Harpal Brar regarding elections: Candidates and groups are: United Front; Tarsem Toor, Ajit Rai, H S Ruprah, H S Bal; Broad Alliance; Vishnu Sharma, Dr P B Singh Johal as Vice-President; Piara Khabra as General Secretary; Indian Workers Front; Harpal Brar; Gen. Sec. Ajit Khaira, President. Broad Alliance Group won the elections.

organisation, albeit still a small one. Dr. Chohan, an ex-finance minister in the Punjab government, a dissenter from the Akali Dal, became the chief proponent of Sikh homeland in Britain. Soon after his arrival in 1971, he undertook several visits to Sikhs in North America, preaching the idea of a Sikh 'homeland.' During his first visit to Britain, in 1971, Dr Chohan joined another Sikh leader Puran Singh to raise the Sikh Homeland slogan in a demonstration in Hyde Park in September 1971. He also placed a half-page advertisement in The New York Times, making several claims about a Sikh homeland, some based on history others mere assertions:

At the time of partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 it was agreed that the Sikhs shall have an area in which they will have complete freedom to shape their lives according to their beliefs. On the basis of the assurances received, the Sikhs agreed to throw their lot with India, hoping for the fulfilment of their dream of an independent, sovereign Sikh homeland, the Punjab^[48].

In Canada, parallel to Dr Chohan, Surjan Singh and his associates had set up a 'Republic of Khalistan' with an office as its 'Consul-General' on January 26, 1982. The Consul-General' office offered such gimmicks as a 'Khalistani passport', Khalsa currency notes. The small group around Surjan Singh, also issued a monthly 'Babbar Khalsa' from September 1981^[49]. It also applied to UNO for 'Observer Status' on October 1981, which was promptly refused. From time to time, Surjan Singh would advertise his campaign in the Punjabi media, by publishing a particular resolution or a letter^[50]. His role was parallel to Dr Chohan in Britain, indeed, both worked as close allies. Dr Chohan visited Canada several times to bolster the Canadian campaign. However, like Sikhs in Britain, Canadian campaign hardly won any support from ordinary Sikhs. During the Vaisakhi procession through Vancouver in

⁴⁸ The New York Times, October 12, 1971. Quoted in Robin Jeffrey, 'Grappling with history: Sikh politicians and the past', Pacific Affairs, 60[1], 1987, 59-72.

⁴⁹ This was edited by Hardial Singh Thiara. The first issue came on September 4, 1981 carrying three items on the front page: no power on earth can stop the formation of Khalistan; Time now to struggle for freedom and the Sikh nation declares mutiny'.

⁵⁰ Indo-Canadian Times, September 4, 1981. See a copy of the letter from Surjan Singh.

April 1982, the activists of Khalistan Council were squarely beaten by a number of Sikhs and were allowed to join after taking down their placards.

It was the same story in Britain. Although the Sikh Homeland Front led by Dr J. S. Chohan unfurled a Khalistani flag in Birmingham in the presence of some 400 Sikhs, these activities were interpreted as anti-India by other Sikhs and these pronouncements were questioned by various gurdwaras^[51]. The KDS in Vancouver and a Leeds Gurdwara in Britain had passed a resolution against Dr. Chohan as early as December 1971. He was also insulted at a Wolverhampton gurdwara. Finally a full-page advertisement by Shiromani Akali Dal by its president Dr A.K.S. Aujala appeared in the Punjabi media warning Sikhs to be beware of 'traitors' implying clearly the activities of Dr Chohan and a small band of his followers. Another attempt by Dr Chohan to preach his views to a Sikh congregation in the main Southall gurdwara was also rebuffed. Like Dr. Chohan in Britain, Surjan's campaign was laughed away by most Canadian Sikhs.

Frustrated by such opposition, the Sikh Homeland proponents tried to propagate their cause through the Punjabi media. They published popular articles on the Sikh homeland in Des Pardes in Britain, and in Indo-Canadian Times in Canada. Thus in a letter published in Des Pardes, Charan Singh Panchi justified the demand for a 'Sikh Homeland':

Sikhs have to realise that there is no future for them in India dominated by Hindus. The honour and prestige of the community cannot be maintained without state power. Sooner we realise this challenge better it will be for us to set our objective of establishing a sovereign Sikh state in the Punjab. We cannot keep ourselves in bondage for ever. Our leaders are like beggars in New Delhi asking for this and that...^[52]

Several letters followed to counter his arguments, some by Akali leaders, others by leftist groups and ordinary Sikhs. The debate

⁵¹ Des Pardes, July 30, 1972.

⁵² Des Pardes, December 12, 1971.

however, continued for several years. Denounced by other Sikh leaders and denied entry into the main gurdwaras, Dr. Chohan continued his singular campaign by organising meetings and using fanciful tactics. For a short while, his campaign received wide publicity by the unexpected election of Zorawar Singh Rai, General Secretary of the Sikh Homeland Front; who became President of Shiromani Akali Dal in a meeting held in June 1972^[53]. A legal advisor to Akali Dal from Amritsar, Amar Singh Ambalvi was present to witness the event. The newly elected president, Zorawar Singh Rai proclaimed that the Indian High Commissioner could not enter any gurdwara^[54]. Although this was far from true, it reflected that Britain's Akali leaders were now split into two sizable and competing factions; the pro-India faction led by Joginder Singh Sandhu faction supported by the Indian High Commission with a weekly paper Shere Punjab and the small dissident group led by Puran Singh and Zorawar Singh Rai advocating a 'Sikh Homeland'. The dissident group embarrassed the Indian High Commission by organising a protest marches in front of their offices, the first of which took place on the 15th August 1973 -the Indian independence day. This was the first Sikh protest against the Indian state in an overseas country. Since then, Dr. Chohan kept the issue alive by demonstrating against the Indian High Commission office in London, usually on the 26th January -the independence day of India - thus in 1982 he was arrested for burning the national flag.

In order to show its displeasure with the ideas of Sikh separatism and perhaps to strengthen the hand of moderate Akalis in Britain, the Indian government ordered the arrest of Giani Bakhshish Singh during his visit to the Punjab on 15 November 1972. He was confined to 12 months imprisonment without trial. After a threat to go on a fast-unto-death Bakhshish Singh's release came only after a strong intervention by the British government. However a split came in the ranks of the

⁵³ Des Pardes, June issues, 1972.

⁵⁴ Des Pardes, December 3, 1972.

Sikh Homeland Front leaders in July 1975. This was due to sharp differences between the increasingly mobile Dr Chohan and the more modest leadership of Charan Singh Panchi.

Activities of Sikh leaders should be seen in terms of fortunes of Akali Dal leadership in their quest for provincial power in the Punjab. From 1972 to 1976, the Akalis were out of power. Only in 1977 did the Akalis gain provincial power again. After the Akali victory, several overseas Sikhs of Akali Dal went to Punjab. From Britain, Giani Bakhshish Singh went to Amritsar and this time he was received and honoured by his Akali friends. During this period Dr. Chohan also made several visits to the Punjab. In one of his visit in August 1977, he proposed Punjab to be renamed as the Sikh Homeland. Two years later, in November 1979, Dr Chohan took up the issue of radio transmission from the Golden Temple^[55]. In this venture a number of religious-minded Sikhs from Britain and Canada also joined. A number of Sikh businessmen led by Gurbachan Singh Gill set up an International Golden Temple Corporation and held several meetings at the Shepherd Bush Gurdwara during 1979-82. Besides extending an invitation to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale for a visit to UK, [which didn't take place], the Corporation arranged a 'World Sikh Festival' in July 1982. Here an important item of the agenda was a seminar propounding 'Sikhs are a nation.'

This coincided with Ganga Singh Dhillon's campaign in America. Mr Dhillon, an American Sikh, went to the Punjab as a delegate and proposed a resolution which was passed at the Sikh Educational Conference in Chandigarh asserting 'Sikhs are a nation.' These developments led to a heated debate in the columns of Punjabi media both in Britain and Canada for and against the Sikh state and whether Sikhs constituted a nation. Sant Bhindranwale wrote a letter to Dr.

⁵⁵ Des Pardes, November issues 1979.

Chohan 'appreciating his services to the Panth'^[56]. Despite this commendation, Dr. Chohan still could not muster enough support to reach a Sikh audience within a gurdwara.

In 1978, Nirankari-Sikh clashes in Amritsar drew a large support from overseas Sikh associations. The Sikh Convention Committee of British Columbia adopted the following resolution: 'The Sikh Societies in the province of BC and representatives from other provinces of Canada and the United States joined the Convention held at Gurdwara Sahib, 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver, B.C., on December 25, 1978, strongly condemn the atrocities committed against the devout Sikhs by the Nirankari Mandal in collaboration with the police in Amritsar, Kanpur and Delhi in which dozen of Sikhs have been mercilessly murdered and hundreds seriously injured...^[57]'. After leading a successful turban campaign, Sant Puran Singh Karicho Wale led another demonstration in London in support of the Punjab Sikhs on 10th May 1984. It is estimated that over 15,000 Sikhs participated in this procession^[58].

SUPPORT FOR PUNJAB AUTONOMY CAMPAIGN: 1981-1984

From 1981 onwards, Sikhs in Canada and United States were drawn into the campaign for Punjab autonomy, Dharm Yudh Morcha as it was called by Akali leaders. Help was offered through funds, protest marches and with a gesture of small number of volunteers. The Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver expectedly took a lead in this. It issued a press statement at early stage of the campaign on October 18, 1981 passing a comprehensive resolution:

1. The KDS Vancouver, B.C. demands from the government of India to stop discriminatory policies against the Sikhs

⁵⁶ Des Pardes, January 14, 1983. In the letter, Sant Bhindranwale praised Dr Chohan's services to the Panth in publicising Punjab's cause in the international community but took exception to Dr. Chohan's lax faith.

⁵⁷ Indo-Canadian Times, February 2, 1979.

⁵⁸ Des Pardes, October 23, 1969.

2. Like other nations, justice should be done to the Sikhs by accepting reasonable demands

3. The families of the martyrs and those of injured on account of the recent movement and those suffered in Nirankari clashes be awarded suitable compensations.

4. The KDS Vancouver, fully supports the Special Resolution "The Sikhs ARE A NATION" [emphasis in original] passed during March 1981 by the general body of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, Punjab, India. The KDS Vancouver further declares its full support to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to represent the Sikhs' case at the UN^[59].

Other Canadian and British organisations endorsed the Akali Dal's stand and pledged support for its autonomy campaign. The Akali Singh Sikh Society from Vancouver sent a rather more stringent letter to Indian leaders as well as to Canadian authorities. In a resolution passed on September 30, 1981, it also asked the government of India 'to accept Sikhs as a nation'. Besides organisations, many gurdwaras' management committees became involved in the Punjab campaign. On his visit to the Gurdwara Singh Sabha on September 19, 1982, the management committee of the gurdwara submitted a memorandum to the Honourable Minister of Immigration and Manpower, Mr Lloyd Axworthy:

We feel that the Canadian government should direct its officials not to give impetus and support to the Indian government's interference in Sikh religious organisations. We, the Sikh citizen of Canada, request the Canadian government, as a member of the United Nations, to protest against the atrocities being committed by the government of India on the Sikhs. Their legitimate demands are contained in the Anandpur Sahib resolution dated April 1973 as their rights and privileges as members of the SIKH NATION. [Emphasis in original]^[60]

⁵⁹ Issued by Surjit Singh Gill, Secretary, Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver. This was widely reported the Punjabi media of Vancouver.

⁶⁰ Indo-Canadian Times, October 8, 1982. Resolution was signed by Kewal Singh Chohan, President of Singh Sabha, Winnipeg. It also asked for the relaxation of immigration rules:

Due to great difficulties and delays experienced by the Canadian citizens of Punjabi Origin, an office of Canadian immigration be established in the Punjab so that pending cases could be expedited.

In view of the present volatile condition of the Punjab, Sikh community of Manitoba requests that the people who have applied for refugee status be granted immigration on humanitarian ground. We further request that open work permits should be issued while the hearing of cases is pending.....

In Toronto, support for the campaign saw a number of protest marches organised by Sikhs. However one major protest march on 14 November 1982, was marked by violence. As the Sikh procession was passing near the Indian Consulate Office, it was fired at by some unknown persons. Three Sikhs and one policeman were badly injured. Various interpretations of this incident have been provided. According to Canadian Sikhs leaders the Indian Consulate in Toronto had schemed this and other violent activities to disrupt the increasing solidarity of Sikhs^[61].

As a further step to help the Punjab autonomy campaign, Canada's Sikhs called a meeting on 23 July 1983 to discuss further participation in the Punjab struggle. At this meeting a Dharm Yudh Morcha Action Committee was formed from twenty-one Sikh Societies representing Canada's Sikh population in different cities. It was also resolved that:

- [a] All Sikh gurdwaras should offer prayers to the successful conclusion of Dharm Yudh Morcha
 - [b] The Sikh sangat [congregation] of Canada is fully behind the leadership of Sant Longowal.
 - [c] The gurdwaras should publicise Punjab demands and relay accurate news.
 - [d] Each gurdwara should contribute generously to Shahidi [Martyrs] fund.
 - [e] Take appropriate steps for the release of Babbar Khalsa activist, Talwinder Singh Babbar from a German jail.
- Several new members were added to this committee at a later stage^[62].

⁶¹ Kashmeri and McAndrew, 1989. op cit., p.28-29.

⁶² Indo-Canadian Times, August 12, 1983. Seventeen members were appointed to the committee: Jagjit Singh Sidhu, President, Abtford; Gian Singh Sandhu, Senior Vice-President, Williams Lake; Daljit Singh Sandhu, Secretary, Vancouver; Surinder Singh Jabbal, Recording Secretary, Vancouver; Avtar Singh Baghri, Treasurer, Kunail; Charan Jit

Akali leaders of the Punjab warmly responded to overseas Sikh support. They sent letters of thanks to individual and various Sikh leaders as well as particular gurdwaras. In a letter to Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver, Gurcharan Singh, Secretary of Shromani Akali Dal wrote from Amritsar in September 1983 congratulating Canadian Sikhs for sending money, jathas and propagating the cause of the Panth. A part of the letter read:

Dear Mota Singh Jheeta and Charanjit Singh Randhawa:
For those of you from Canada who not only have sent us money but also the jatha to participate in the struggle, the Akali Dal is grateful to all the Sikhs of Canada. We do hope you would continue to give the same kind of support to the common cause of the Panth^[63].

The struggle of the Punjab autonomy also coincided with several religious issues facing the gurdwaras in Canada. It may be fair to say that the most important event for Sikhs in Vancouver and indeed for the British Columbian Sikhs is the election to Khalsa Diwan Society held every two years. Although the KDS officials were elected usually by consensus and a show of hands in early years, elections had become very prestigious issues leading to highly volatile and public demonstration of powers between the two contending groups. The KDS constitution has seen many amendments and contested through courts. From the 1980s, individuals contesting the elections advocated a more orthodox vision of the Sikh faith. In 1982, the KDS Election, the Sandhu Group manifesto proposed a major innovation. They would, if elected allow no one to address the Sikh congregation without covering their head first. The Sandhu Group won the election and initiated this and other reforms in practice. The opposition group took issue to the court and lost. In the next election, in 1983, the membership of the KDS was 11400 [The membership of this society is, theoretically, open to all Sikhs in Canada^[64]]. In 1983 elections, the manifestos of both Parties not only

Singh Sandhu, Member, Prince Charles, Raghbir Singh Grewal, Member, New Westminster.

⁶³ Indo-Canadian Times, September 9, 1983.

⁶⁴ Indo-Canadian Times, October 15, 1982.

mentioned the local issues, such as a better management of its Punjabi School, new facilities in the langar and the gurdwara library, but also their commitment to the Punjab autonomy campaign. For this election stakes were considered so high that the President of Shromani Akali Dal from Punjab, sent an appeal to Sikh voters of Vancouver:

At the critical times when we are engaged in the Panthic struggle, the control of Ross Street Gurdwara must be in the hands of those sympathetic to the Sikh-Panth. The Khalsa Diwan Society has already contributed very significantly to the cause of Sikhs in the Punjab, those elected in the past year have proved worthy of their offices. I was very impressed by their dedicated work when I was on tour of Canada. I appeal to voters to elect only those persons who are clearly committed to the cause of the Panth and disown those whose activities will weaken religious and other progressive tasks undertaken by the Society^[65].

The two opposing groups became a microcosm of Punjab political alliances. The Nanar Group claiming the Akali Dal support, accused the other group of collaboration with the Congress, who if elected, would sabotage the Punjab cause. They quoted the Congress Party of Canada's constitution, '2[e] to promote the policies and philosophies of the Indian National Congress'. Through advertisement campaign in the Indo-Canadian Times, they listed Congress Party members of Vancouver who were supporting their opposite group.

Exchange between the Punjab Akali Dal and overseas Sikh leaders became more extensive as the autonomy campaign progressed. In a letter to overseas Sikhs, they were asked to present a memorandum to the Indian High Commission in each country. Accordingly, on October 16, an estimated crowd of two thousand Sikhs marched to the Indian Consulate Office despite heavy rain in Vancouver^[66]. In a much publicised move of solidarity, a jatha consisting of five Canadian Sikhs departed for the Punjab. At a meeting in the Ross Street Gurdwara, Vancouver held on 4 November, the hall was full of people and amidst jubilant and rather noisy scenes, the jatha was seen off by the Sikh congregation and the

⁶⁵ See Appendix-6 for the text of this letter.

⁶⁶ Indo-Canadian Times, October 22, 1982.

KDS^[67]. This jatha, the second to leave from Canada, publicised its route from Vancouver to Toronto, then via London to Delhi. At the airport they were seen off by prominent members of the Sikh community. The Jatha was given the equivalent of Rs 1,07,000 for the Dharm Yudh Morcha fund collected from Canada. The Jatha members, it was stressed, paid for their own fares. Before the Canadian Sikhs could reach Amritsar, they were arrested. Three of them, with Canadian citizenship were deported immediately, the other two were allowed to proceed to Amritsar. Here they were warmly received by the Akali leaders including the President, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. The lead was taken by Ross Street Gurdwara in helping the Punjab struggle and other Sikh gurdwaras felt left behind^[68]. Support for the Punjab autonomy campaign became a matter of competition among various leading Sikh leaders and the gurdwaras. Solidarity with the Punjab campaign provided legitimacy from Amritsar and some leaders were to use this gesture and mobilisation in such a way to undermine or gain ascendancy over others.

The British Sikh involvement into Punjab autonomy campaign ran parallel to Canada. The main Sikh organisation in Britain, the Akali Dal was increasingly drawn into the Punjab campaign. The Akali Dal held a major demonstration against the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at Royal Festival Hall when she came to inaugurate the Festival of India in March 1982. Other organisations including the IWAs and the Hind Mazdoor Lahir also joined in. Later at the reception for the Indian Prime Minister, Sikh representatives were few and carefully chosen from the Namdharis and Ramgarhias and invited to the Grosvenor Hotel, London. An early protest march on 7th February attracted some five thousand Sikhs to show solidarity with the Punjab campaign. A Sikh leader from Britain, Bachitter Singh went to Punjab to participate in

⁶⁷ Indo-Canadian Times, November 12, 1982.

⁶⁸ Indo-Canadian Times, November 5, 1982. Indeed someone sent a telegram in the name of Longowal to say "do not send more Jathas but do send the money". This telegram was published by those societies who were not invited by the KDS Vancouver. However, the telegram in question proved to be a fake, posted by KDS's opposition

the campaign, he spent most of 1983 in a jailed. Dr. J.S. Chohan wrote several letters to Akali leaders in the Punjab. In one of these, he asked them to give a call for Sikh independence: He wrote;

The Shiromani Akali Dal has struggled for the interests of the Sikh Panth since 1920. ...By passing the Anandpur Sahib resolution on 4 August 1982, and by presenting 45 demands to the Union Government, the Akali Dal has effectively crystallised the Sikh struggle in the right direction... However, Akali leaders are still not categorical about their political goals. Why are you going around begging a measure of autonomy or a larger share of economic rights? ... You must decide and openly declare once for all the rightful demand for a sovereign Sikh state⁶⁹.

Akali Dal leaders from the Punjab were aware of the important role of British and other overseas Sikhs in highlighting the issues of Punjab. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President of Akali Dal, in a joint letter sent to various overseas leaders, emphasised overseas support for the Punjab cause. He wrote:

I am sending this special letter to all of you because you should know what is happening to the Panth. It is now 144 days into the Dharam Yudh Morcha. Some 17,557 Sikhs have courted arrest. You should take a deputation to the Indian High Commission office on 17 October, with a letter stating how Sikhs are being repressed in India. You should make the world aware how India is treating the Sikh Panth and to show that all Sikhs, wherever they are, share the anguish of Panth.

I am stating with firm conviction that the Dharam Yudh will continue until the cruel Indian government agrees to our just demands⁷⁰

During the Punjab autonomy campaign, especially in 1983, there were weekly collections in prominent gurdwaras, money was sent regularly to the Akali leader, Harchand Singh Longowal, with the receipts displayed prominently on the notice boards. Individual members of the management committee went to Punjab, conveying solidarity. During the latter half of 1983 and early 1984, a Sikh saint, Sant Puran Singh Karichowale, based in a Birmingham Gurdwara, became particularly involved. He had built a strong following due to his earlier participation in turban

⁶⁹ Letter from Dr. Chohan to Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and other Akali leaders, dated October 2, 1982 published in The Indo-Canadian Times, October 22, 1982.

⁷⁰ See appendix-1 for the full text of this letter.

campaign. He led a large protest rally when some 10,000 Sikhs marched to Indian High Commission in support of the Punjab campaign on 10th May 1984. On instructions from Amritsar, Some British Akali Dal leaders also burnt copies of the Indian Constitution in front of the Indian High Commission in London. The British Akali leaders announced plans to consolidate their gains with a branch in every major city proposing local members should choose the national leadership. However these plans were shelved as the June 1984 tragedy put an effective end to the autonomy campaign in the Punjab.

Conclusion

Major events in Punjab, social or political, have affected overseas Sikhs. For each event, there has been a discernible reaction among overseas Sikhs. During the last two decades, the rise of Naxalite movement in the Punjab, the Indian Emergency and, the Punjab autonomy campaign have found much support among various segments of Sikh leadership in Britain and North America. The three wars in which India was involved with its neighbours in the 1960s and early 1970s saw much enthusiasm among Sikhs. The Akali Dal in all three countries has restricted itself to religious and Punjab issues while the more secular elements have mobilised on wider issues of racial discrimination and Indian issues. Common to all organisations has been the role of gurdwaras as the social and religious centre and focus of mobilisation. Although there has been some tension between secular and religious organisations, attempts to separate them into distinct spheres have failed. While secular issues such as trade unions, racial incidents and discrimination, immigration laws have become of lesser importance to more settled Sikh migrants, the issues of Sikh ethnic identity and the reproduction of Sikh cultural norms have continued to impinge upon the minds of ordinary Sikhs.

Interaction between Sikh associations in Britain and North America and the Punjab political parties and their leaders has seen a sharp

increase in recent years. From 1960s onwards, overseas Sikh community leaders have consciously sought to develop a close relationship with political leaders from the Punjab, forging alliances with particular political groups such as the Akali Dal, the Communists and the Congress Party. Ideas and ideology from the Punjab and Indian political life have affected the formation of association among the Sikh communities of North America and Britain. This inter-relationship and dependence has been consolidated, through visits, public meetings, conferring of honours, exchange of resources and ideological support. In exchange overseas Sikhs have provided financial assistance for various Punjab or Indian causes.

In June 1984 when the Indian security forces invaded the Golden Temple, the reaction among the overseas Sikh communities was extremely volatile and a demand for an independent homeland became a rallying point for a section of the community. Although reactions to the Punjab events bear a striking similarity across the continents and, indeed among the overseas Sikh populations generally, in view of large scale changes in the organisational pattern within Sikh communities and their impact on international relations, the Sikh reaction in the United Kingdom and North America is covered in two separate chapters. Chapter Five narrates North American Sikhs' mobilisation while Chapter Six provide an account of Sikh communities' reaction in Great Britain.

CHAPTER 5

THE POLITICS OF HOMELAND AMONG SIKHS IN NORTH AMERICA

Introduction

This chapter analyses the North American Sikh mobilisation as a reaction to the Indian government's army action in the Golden Temple in June 1984. It interprets the immediate reaction and the subsequent developments leading to the formation of several new organisations within the Sikh communities of North America. A similar and parallel case of British Sikhs is undertaken in the next chapter. As outlined in Chapter Four, the 'Punjab autonomy' campaign was launched by the Akali Dal in 1982. This attracted wide support from North American Sikhs and its community leaders. However, as the central government decided to resolve this issue militarily and invaded the Golden Temple, Sikhs in North America reacted fiercely and spontaneously.

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE: JUNE 1984: THE IMMEDIATE REACTION

As the news of the Indian armed forces attack on the Golden Temple spread on the evening of 3rd June, many Sikhs had difficulty in believing the reality of the new situation. With newspaper headlines on the fighting in progress within the Golden Temple, many flocked into their neighbouring gurdwaras. Extraordinary gatherings took place within the gurdwaras during 6th-8th June 1984. As the news came on the Friday of the army control of the Golden Temple, with pictures of the devastated Akal Takhat and the surrendering of Akali Dal leaders, many

were angry, others sombre, while a few cried openly. A call was given to mount a demonstration against the Indian government's action. Thousands turned out on Sunday, 10th June for a huge procession both in Vancouver and New York. In Vancouver, the procession started from Ross Street Gurdwara towards the Indian consulate building; on the way the crowd shouted, 'Khalistan Zindabad'. Slogans denouncing the Indian government could be heard hundreds of yards away with many protesters yelling for revenge¹¹. Several incidents occurred involving pro-India supporters and angry Sikh youth in the next fortnight, among these an officer from the Indian embassy was beaten up¹². Apart from Vancouver, New York and Toronto, demonstrations took place simultaneously in other large cities of Canada and the United States, such as Edmonton, Calgary, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Intense political activity followed these demonstrations. Akali leaders were questioned by younger Sikhs within gurdwaras. At Sunday congregation old Akali leaders were called upon to resign as they had betrayed the Panth, and speakers, usually consisting of clean shaven Sikhs called for action and revenge. Copious angry debate flowed through the columns of the Panjabi weeklies. One such letter is typical of the heated discussion and emotionally charged appeals:

Khalsa ji: we should be ashamed of ourselves. We are dishonoured, we are just like dead bodies now. No doubt, we shall build more religious places, we have enough wealth, but how will we ever regain our honour and dignity? Where shall we find those priceless Punjabi manuscripts, the original copies of Guru Granth Sahib burnt by the Indian armies. Our leaders are even now quarrelling among themselves? What for? Is this humiliation not enough? Our youth in custody, many women dishonoured, young children lodged in jails; for the Guru's sake, let us unite together now and forgo our small differences. It is time for a calculated and suitable revenge and it is the right time

¹ Link, Vancouver, June 1984. The front page special report is by its editor, Promod Puri. Major newspapers of North America, both national and provincial, reported on various Sikh protests.

² World Sikh News, September, 19 1986. Four Sikhs were tried for attacking the acting Indian High Commissioner in June 1984: Joginder S Khalsa, Baljinder Singh, Gurjot Singh, Gurweshar Singh. Trial took place in December 1984 when they refused to take their kirpans off. In June 1986, the court decided to jail three Sikhs for one month where Joginder Singh went on hunger strike to retain the kirpan with him. He was released on 23rd July, when he was taken to Ross Street Gurdwara, where the Khalsa Diwan Society offered siropa [a traditional honour].

for sacrifices³].

Pamphlets and printed sheets abounded, news cuttings from English papers were pasted on various gurdwaras' notice boards. The Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada along with the Sikh Society of Calgary placed three half-page advertisements in the Calgary Herald, starting on 14 August 1984, quoting Mahatma Gandhi's pledge that in case of betrayal, 'the Sikhs could take their kirpans [swords] in hand with perfect justification before God and man'. It narrated the role of the Sikhs' contribution to Indian independence contrasting this with the atrocities committed by the Indian army during the Golden Temple seige, and highlighted some of the excesses of Mrs Gandhi's rule⁴. While most Sikhs called outright for a state of Khalistan, some came out in opposition to the idea of a Sikh state. American television found a spokesman from Yogi Harbhajan Singh's Sikh centre based in Los Angeles. He was invited to comment on the Punjab situation in the post 1984 period where he denounced the idea of a separate Sikh state. However, reflecting the majority of Sikhs' views, the papers that were launched in the immediate aftermath of June 1984 events testified to the anger amongst Sikh readers. In The Sikh News, a weekly started during the emergency by an enthusiastic Sikh from New York, its editorial asked readers to compare the Sikhs with two diaspora communities, the Palestinians and the Jews:

Without debating the merits, magnitude or the quality of injustices done, there could be general agreement that history has not always dealt kindly with either the Jews and Palestinians.

Both groups had aspirations for a homeland, but the Jews have transformed their dreams into a reality. The Palestinians cause, though equally just, has been poorly served. Neither the Jews nor the Palestinians lacked money, nor did they lack committed people. Why then the difference? It may well be that the Jews had two thousand years to have their strategy. Nevertheless, the fact remains that when Jews walked into Israel, world opinion escorted them. They had prepared the world carefully.

³ Indo-Canadian Times, September 7, 1984, letter from Harbhajan Singh Chera.

⁴ Calgary Herald, August 14, 1984.

...The Palestinians on the other hand, present entirely the other side of the coin. The world is entirely ignorant and blind to the justice of their cause...

Now the question arises- how do the Sikhs appear to the world? The Indian government would like nothing better than the international community should brand us "terrorists". Proof is not necessary. When a lie is repeated often enough, people begin to believe. From the point of view of the Indian government, such a policy makes perfect sense. The dilemma is how do we respond? When a Sikh leader publicly proclaims a reward for the head of Indira Gandhi, how do we seem to the world?.....

The Sikh nation's cause has to be fought simultaneously on three fronts each requiring a different strategy, tactics and weapons. The three fronts are [a] the hearts and minds of our own people; [b] the international community; [c] the Indian government. We cannot neglect any front, or we may win the battles but lose the war.

How does the Sikh community appear to the world? Are we like the Jews struggling to right a momentous wrong or like the Palestinians with little sense of the past, a chaotic present and little hope for the future? If the shoe fits, wear it⁵.

In the immediate aftermath of June 1984, almost all gurdwaras paid homage to those who fought for the sanctity of the Golden Temple. When on 31 October, the news of the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi came, it struck a happy chord among many Sikhs' hearts. In some places, there was an overt demonstration of this by the distribution of sweets and the exchanges of congratulations. The news of the Delhi massacre of Sikhs, however, soon arrived and dimmed this jubilant mood. Frantic efforts were then made within gurdwaras to collect money and clothes for the Sikh victims of the riots. Sending these materials created problems for a number of gurdwaras. Certain individuals approached a few MPs, but these attempts did not yield any positive results. A Canadian Sikh alleged that the Indian government had blocked aid to the victims of Delhi riots⁶.

⁵ The Sikh News, September 2, 1984, editorial, 'If the Shoe Fits'.

⁶ Quoted in Raghbir Singh, 'Obstacles to render aid to Sikhs' in Sikh Symposium, 1985. In late 1984, a deputation of Sikhs met Paul McCrossman, MP in Toronto, who with another member of Parliament Gerry Winer from Montreal approached some representatives of the government of India. However, according to Raghbir Singh their efforts did not succeed, and they are reported saying, 'gentlemen, you can't send supplies of any kind, you can only send money'.

NEW ORGANISATIONS AND THE DEMAND FOR SIKH HOMELAND

As a result of the Indian army action in the Punjab, the reorganisation of Sikh associations began swiftly. By September, two major organisations came onto the scene of Sikh politics in North America, the World Sikh Organisation [WSO] and International Sikh Youth Federation [ISYF]. In addition to these main organisations, a number of smaller organisations were formed by those who were not accommodated in the other two. Apart from WSO and ISYF, Babbar Khalsa International grew out of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, a National Council of Khalistan was also formed, other smaller groups sprang up locally, including Panth Khalsa, International Sikh Organisation, Sikh Association of America and the California Sikh Youth. The existing Akali Dal, Indian Overseas Congress and East Indian Workers Association were for the time being sidelined and had to contend with this new pattern of mobilisation, especially among Sikh youngsters. In the United States, North American Akali Dal was paralysed partly due to the resignation of its members who joined new organisations or through denunciation as 'collaborators' of the Indian state. The ISYF and WSO emerged as the two main organisations. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the organisations formed after June 1984.

Table 5.1
SIKH POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA
POST-1984 PERIOD

Organisation	Active Period	Base
CANADA		
International Sikh Youth Federation	1984-	Vancouver/Toronto
World Sikh Organisation	1984-	Edmonton/Vancouver
National Council of Khalistan	1986-	Vancouver
Babbar Khalsa International	1978/1984-	Vancouver/Toronto
Federation of Sikh Societies	1980-86	Vancouver/Edmonton
USA		
International Sikh Youth Federation	1984-	Los Angeles
World Sikh Organisation	1984-	New York
International Sikh Organisation	1986-87	New York
California Sikh Youth	1984-	Los Angeles
Anti-47 Front	1985-86	Bakersfield
Babbar Khalsa International	1985-	San Jose, Calif.

Table: 5.2
THE MEDIA OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

Media	Centre	Years	Frequency	Language
World Sikh News	Stockton	1985-	Weekly	English/Panjabi
The Sikh Times	Stockton	1985-87	Monthly	English
Awaz-e-Quam	Toronto	1985-	Weekly	Panjabi
Shahadat	Vancouver	1985-86	Monthly	Panjabi/English
Chardhi Kala	Vancouver	1986-	Weekly	Panjabi
The Sikh Herald	Edmonton	1985-	Quarterly	English
The Khalsa	Toronto	1990-	Quarterly	English
Jago	San Jose	1985-	Quarterly	Panjabi

With the formation of new organisations, the existing ones underwent radical changes. Gurdwaras, as centres of religious and social life, were transformed into centres of political mobilisation. The somewhat divided loyalty of Sikhs across a spectrum of political affiliations, from a thoroughly pro-Indian Overseas Congress to leftist organisations such as EIWA and Communists became an issue of intense debate. Of the pre-1984 Sikh organisations, the Akali Dal was just emerging as a major force both in Canada and the United States. The earlier and somewhat cosmopolitan KDS Vancouver, both as a representative body of secular and religious causes of Sikhs as well as of the wider South Asian community, was sharply turned into a more narrowly defined organisation of Sikhs alone. The only organisation which gained prestige and widespread support was the 'Republic of Khalistan' group. With the army action in the Golden Temple in June 1984, Surjan Singh, its main leader gained credence among the Sikh masses just as Dr. Chauhan was enthusiastically welcomed in every gurdwara in Britain. Since 1984, these new organisations have played an important role in articulating the demand for Khalistan, a separate Sikh state.

[a] The World Sikh Organisation

The World Sikh Organisation was formed during a tumultuous meeting at Madison Square Gardens in New York on July 28, 1984 at which several thousand Sikhs from America, Canada, Britain and the Far East were present. After month-long discussions its charter and constitution were approved. Didar Singh Bains became its chief patron -a millionaire Sikh of Yuba City. Jaswant Singh Bhullar, a retired Major-General, who had just arrived in America from Punjab became its first General Secretary. It elected a National Council, most of whom were drawn from professional Sikhs⁷. The WSO was organised into two separate wings;

⁷ Delegates to the first WSO International included Jagjit Singh Mangat, Gurinder Singh Grewal, Didar Singh Bains, Gurbux Kaur Kahlon, Dr Gurcharan Singh, Harbans Singh Saraon, Gurcharan Singh Dhillon, Balbir Singh Ragi, Baldev Singh and Karamjit Singh Rai.

The first National Executive Committee of the WSO consisted of the following members: President: Ganga Singh Dhillon, Senior Vice-President: Lakhbir Singh Cheema, Administrative Director: Dr Manohar

WSO [Canada] and WSO [USA], with the International Council having overall control of national organisations. The WSO-Canada has its structure with branches in major cities of Canada. It was presumed that other countries especially United Kingdom would also become part of, or represented by the WSO. At the first meeting of the National Council for the United States, Ganga Singh Dhillon was elected president of the WSO-USA. Mr. Dhillon was well-known for his work through the Nankana Sahib Foundation and a protagonist of the 'Sikhs are a nation' theory through his writings. Since 1985, the WSO has used a mixture of elections and nominations for various positions within its hierarchy⁸¹. These positions have been rotated periodically, meetings are usually held on weekends and most of the business thrashed out over the phones.

According to the WSO constitution, 'it will strive for an independent Sikh homeland by peaceful means'. It launched a weekly newspaper *World Sikh News* from Stockton, California in January 1985. This is an English language weekly, with an inset in Punjabi. It aims at 'projecting the voice of Sikhs across the world' and news relating to what it calls the 'independence struggle' in the Punjab dominates its pages. News of Sikh demonstrations against Indian politicians, and news about Sikhs' participation in American cultural and social life is also given

Singh Grewal, Treasurer: Bir Ishwar Grewal, Area representative were also nominated as Vice Presidents, from South: G S Brar; Mid-West: Sarjit S Dhillon; East: Avtar Singh; West: Gurnam Singh Pamma. The Executive Committee was also drawn with regional representatives: Cleveland: Surjit Singh, Modesto: Hardyall Singh Dhatt and Bhupinder Singh Dosanjh; New York: Gurcharan Singh, Naunihal Singh and Harbhajan Singh Gill; Sacramento: Bakhshish Singh; San Jose: Ajit Singh Baniwal, Houston: Kewal Singh Sohal, Los Angeles: Darshan Singh Bhasin and Parminder Singh Wadhawa, Yuba City: Harbhajan Singh Bains; El-Sobrante: Sulakhan Singh Dhillon; Boston: Manohar Singh Grewal; Chicago: Amarjit Singh Sidhu.

⁸ World Sikh News, July 3, 1987. Manohar Singh Grewal became WSO President in 1987 with Dr Naunihal Singh as a director of administration and Dr Harbans Singh Saraon as director of finance. On 25 February 1993, the WSO announced its new executive committee for USA: Dr Gurcharn Singh Dhillon, [President], Surinder Pal Singh Kalra, [Director of administration], Dr. Harbans S. Saraon [Senior Vice-President], Lakhbir S. Chima [Vice-President, West], Balwant S. Hansra [Vice-President, Mid-West], Harbhajan S. Gill [Vice-President, East], Amolak Singh [Vice-President, South], Gurmej S Gill, [Director of Finance].

prominence. The WSO has taken care to nurture its image as a legitimate umbrella organisation working for all Sikhs in North America which seeks the self-determination for Sikhs in the Punjab, stressing its use of peaceful means.

The WSO has organised regular meetings in local gurdwaras up and down the country. In its well-attended annual conventions, the WSO has adopted resolutions for a sovereign Sikh homeland. The following is typical of such resolutions passed in Sacramento on 28 July 1991. It stated:

Since June 2, 1984, Khalistan has been occupied by the immoral and corrupt forces of the evil Indian regime.

...Amnesty International, Punjab Human Rights Organisation, and several other human rights organizations have repeatedly reported these brutal incidents in their reports. In spite of these, the Indian government continues its inhuman and brutal acts against the innocent Sikhs. On this day we appeal to all freedom loving nations to boycott India economically until the Indian government stops its inhuman treatment and allows the international human rights organisations to observe and investigate independently.

On the plight of Sikhs in the Punjab, it stated:

The UN Charter recognises every nation's right of self-determination. On the basis of this recognition of the fundamental human rights of liberty and freedom by the world body, Sikhs living in occupied Khalistan have the right of self-determination in their homeland. We the American Sikhs support their just and legitimate demand for self-determination and renew our solemn pledge to continue to support their just and legitimate demand by all legal means so that our brothers and sisters living in occupied Khalistan can also enjoy the same glow of freedom as we enjoy in our great nation of the United States of America⁹.

The WSO has often endorsed Sikhs' belief in the United States institutions and stressed the loyalty of Sikhs to the United States, 'the fundamental beliefs of Sikhs are enshrined in the United States constitution.' -an assurance a number of other organisations have also given when making such pledges to Sikhs in the Punjab.

The WSO drew wide support from professional Sikhs, many of the office-holders either doctors or engineers. Several Sikhs offered substantial

⁹ World Sikh News, August 2, 1991.

donations to the cause of Sikh freedom. Membership of WSO rose to over five thousand Sikhs, most of them professionals in the United States. It opened an office in New York with well-equipped staff. However, new office holders at the WSO had little experience of Sikh community's politics or the administrative requirements of a large organisation with members crying for some immediate action or revenge. Like other new organisations, the WSO was also plagued by factions. At a very early stage the WSO prevented its collapse by dismissing a number of its key officials including its first secretary-general, J. S. Bhullar. Just before the Indian army action in the Golden Temple complex, he had fled abroad claiming that the late Sant Bhindranwale had asked him to organise overseas Sikhs. However, in less than ten months, his work came under suspicion. Dr G. S. Aulakh, in particular, campaigned to remove him alleging he was an Indian spy¹⁰. J. S. Bhullar counter-charged Dr. Aulakh as a self-seeker. Both resigned from the WSO. In this process, Ganga Singh Dhillon was implicated and hurriedly dismissed from the presidency¹¹.

[b] The International Sikh Youth Federation [ISYF]

The second major organisation was established in August 1984 with Lakhbir Singh as a convenor and Harpal Singh as its chief organiser. Like its counterpart in Britain, the ISYF constitution incorporates an active struggle for an independent Sikh state¹². Lakhbir Singh came

¹⁰ Indo-Canadian Times, December, 6, 1985. Letter from J.S. Bhullar alleging financial malpractice by Dr G S Aulakh.

¹¹ Members of the National Council alleged 'S. Ganga Singh Dhillon has lost credibility ... due to his anti-Panthic activities. ... resolved that S. Ganga Singh Dhillon is hereby removed from the Presidency of WSO-USA with immediate effect'. Lakhbir Singh Cheema took over as the acting president. Among various charges cited against Mr Dhillon, was a meeting with Tirlochan Singh Riyasti, a senior Congressman of the Punjab and the appointment of J S Bhullar as the first Secretary General of the WSO. This evidence was based on reports published in New Delhi papers, especially The Hindustan Times, of 28 January 1985. It carried a letter from G S Dhillon on the front page. However Mr Dhillon alleged that the Indian newspapers had deliberately distorted his speech and had tried to discredit him by misinformation.

¹² This constitution is virtually the same as the one issued for ISYF, United Kingdom in September 1984.

as a refugee and drew his potential power through his links with the Bhindranwale family. Harpal Singh also came from the Punjab via Britain. He had already launched the International Sikh Youth Federation in Britain before reaching Canada. Here again, he played a key role in launching the ISYF at massive meetings both in Toronto and Vancouver. Several branches were organised in various Canadian cities immediately.

The Federation branches tried to control gurdwaras and challenged the existing management committees. In a number of smaller towns, the ISYF successfully gained control of some gurdwaras. However in Toronto and Vancouver, the main gurdwaras were already in the hands of strong and equally vociferous pro-Khalistan members. The ISYF had to support particular groups to gain a foothold. The ISYF emerged as the largest organisation, its membership is stated to be over six thousand. It launched a weekly paper Awaz-e-Quam from Toronto in close co-operation with the International Sikh Youth Federation based in Britain. Its local branches which controlled several gurdwaras has provided it as a platform for collection of funds and mobilisation.

However, within eight months of its inception, the ISYF was split into two, engulfed by factions. Harpal Singh, as the chief organiser, fell from favour; several Federation activists linked him with the Indian intelligence agencies. He was denounced through a widely circulated Panjabi weekly and dismissed. However, he was not subdued, he set up a rival ISYF, launched another Panjabi weekly *Chardhi Kala* rebutting all the charges. He also managed to marry twice in this brief period -a point used against him by his opponents. The ISYF has been most active in Vancouver and Toronto with branches operating in many Canadian cities. It was also established in California with particular strong branches in San Jose, Fresno, Los Angeles and Yuba City.

At its first annual meeting held in Vancouver on 10 November 1985, in

the presence of several thousand Sikhs, the ISYF passed a resolution for an independent Sikh state. In this conference, several prominent Sikhs participated from America. An American Sikh, Dr Arjinder Pal Singh Khalsa presided over the meeting. The WSO chairman, Didar Singh Bains was also present and read several gurbani shabads, Dharm sir dition bajh nahin rehna [we cannot maintain our faith without sacrifices]. Dr G. S. Aulakh then representing the United Akali Dal of USA also spoke at this meeting. Giani Pritam Singh offered his thoughts on behalf of Britain's newly formed ISYF^[13]. Joginder Singh Sandhu, president of the Khalsa Diwan Society, Ross Street Gurdwara called for a new organisational structure in every gurdwara.

[c] The Babbar Khalsa

This is the third most important organisation operating primarily in Canada but also in some towns of California^[14]. It has the same constitution as that of its UK counterpart. The second clause in its constitution relates to the issue of Sikh sovereignty and reads as:

Khalsai halemi raj di prapti ate is vich jaat paat rang nasal dharma quam ate ilaqai vitkirian rahit samaj di sathapna karni. [To work for the establishment of Khalsa rule where there would be no distinction on the basis of caste, colour, race, religion, origins or regional differences]^[15].

¹³ Indo-Canadian Times, November, 1985. The first National Panel was elected as follows: President Satinder Pal Singh, Surrey, BC; Senior Vice-President Gurdial Singh from Toronto; General-Secretary Barjinder Singh Bhullar from Calgary, Vice-President Amarjit Singh Saran from Edmonton; Second Vice-President Hardial Singh Garcha from Vancouver; Joint-Secretary Bibi Surinder Kaur; Treasurer Manjit Singh Dhami, Vancouver; Office-Secretary Jasjit Singh Aujla; Organising Secretary Harminder Singh from Montreal; Secretary Gurdev Singh Sangha from Kitchner, Ontario; Press Secretary Jagtar Singh Sandhu and Pushpinder Singh. Lakhbir Singh was elected the Convenor, working for all ISYF units in America, Britain and Canada. Religious heads: Avtar Singh Kooner, Balbir Singh and Sucha Singh from Calgary, Harpal Singh Vancouver, Giani Gurdev Singh, New Westminster were present at this meeting.

¹⁴ Gurmej Singh of Babbar Khalsa, Britain appointed four members Ajit Singh, Gurmit Singh, Jarnail Singh and Gurdip Singh. In addition, Jagjit Singh was appointed to serve in Washington.

¹⁵ Babbar Khalsa International constitution, Birmingham England, n.d. According to this document the Babbar Khalsa was set up first in 1976 as a chlda vaheer [The moving column].

The Babbar Khalsa in Canada has grown at the same pace as its sister organisation in the UK. Resources and membership in just one city - Vancouver provides it with a more solid base than its UK wing. The Babbar Khalsa has drawn particular support from Sikhs who were earlier part of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha. These Sikhs would regularly join in night long sessions of hymn-singing. They are an orthodox group with strict adherence to the Khalsa rahit. Until 1978, they were content with the religious fulfilment they derived by singing hymns. After 1978, they became politicised as one of the foremost champions of a Sikh state. A number of Akhand Kirtani Jatha Sikhs have been drawn into political events since 1984. Such is the case of Uday Singh. He has campaigned almost independently by writing letters to the press, meeting Talwinder Singh, a Canadian Sikh in jail in Germany during 1983 and visiting Britain several times. In a poignant tone he narrated his ordeals as follows:

I was on sabbatical for the year 1985-86. I intended to visit some universities in Europe including two in Germany. I reached Cologne airport at about 7 PM on June 10, 1985 by British Airways flight 744 from London. This was the time Rajiv [Indian Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi] was visiting Europe. Immediately the airport police took me into their custody. In vain I told them everything about myself and the purpose of my visit; I was kept in solitary confinement for ten hours without any food or even water..¹⁶

The Babbar Khalsa International limits its membership to Amritdhari Sikhs. The core membership of Babbar Khalsa is fairly small but their dedication to various community causes has earned them a high reputation among ordinary Sikhs. Perhaps due to its adamant fundamentalist posture, the Babbar Khalsa has attracted enormous publicity in the Canadian and Indian press. From time to time, stories and allegations about its members' roles and the organisation's aims have hit the newspaper headlines. An Indian newspaper in 1985 reported that Babbar Khalsa was training Sikh youth for the liberation of

¹⁶ Uday Singh, Khalistan di lahir da utaar te chraah, Toronto and Birmingham, 1987.

Khalistan; the story proved to be a fake¹⁷.

Among its members, the names of Talwinder Singh, Darshan Singh Saini, Tejinder Singh Kaloe figure prominently. In the post-1984 period, exchange between the British and Canadian leaders has been extensive. Gurmej Singh, from Britain undertook several visits to Canada and California. However, his passage got progressively more difficult with immigration authorities. During Summer 1986, he was arrested while crossing the American border to Vancouver and deported¹⁸. However, Gurmej was able to set up Babbar Khalsa's branch in California, in August 1986, with personnel appointed¹⁹. The most prominent personality of Babbar Khalsa to emerge in Canada was Talwinder Singh. His sharp rise as a leader of Babbar Khalsa and a spokesman for the Sikh community of Canada was a controversial one²⁰. While some Sikhs went as far as accusing him of being a collaborator working with Indian intelligence, the majority remained steadfastly loyal and respected his genuine commitment. Talwinder Singh was arrested in Europe on the border of Holland and Germany in June 1983, and released in July 1984. After his return to Canada, he emerged as the main leader of the Babbar Khalsa. In November 1985 he was arrested in the Air India bomb case

¹⁷ India Today September 15, 1985. It reported, 'Babbar Khalsa has launched an all-out effort to recruit Sikhs abroad for the creation of Khalistan through a Khalistan Liberation Army to be trained and armed abroad. In pursuit of this aim, in February 1982, the organisation hired Johann Vanderhorst, a veteran mercenary who had fought in Rhodesia to train Sikh recruits in British Columbia. Vanderhorst hired fellow mercenaries by putting advertisements in Canadian papers offering salaries of US \$1250 a month to train people in the use of weapons and combat techniques. ...The Indian government obtained clandestine pictures of the training camp in BC which have been handed over to the Canadian government'.

¹⁸ Des Pardes and Indo-Canadian Times, August 29, 1986. After a meeting in Fremont on 9-10 August 1986, he was arrested and deported to Britain.

¹⁹ Des Pardes, August 29, 1986.

²⁰ Kashmeri, Zuhair and McAndrew, Brian. The soft target: how the Indian intelligence penetrated Canada, Toronto, James Lorimer & Co., 1989. This book by two journalists working for Toronto based newspapers The Globe and Mail, and The Toronto Star, have suggested that Talwinder Singh was supported by the Indian intelligence agencies to destabilise the Canadian Sikhs' campaign for Khalistan.

with three other Sikhs. Released and arrested again in May 1986 he was released again in April 1987. Sometimes in 1988, he was believed to have left for Punjab crossing from the Indo-Pakistan border to join the militant movement. He was reportedly shot dead in a 'police encounter' near Jalandhar in October 1992 with his charred body disposed off by the police. His death became an occasion for celebration among his followers and a show of strength for his detractors^[21].

[d] Other Organisations

A number of small organisations were also established in the wake of 1984 crisis in the Punjab. Some of these were established by Sikhs who were not happy with new organisations, others by newcomers. Many Sikhs attracted to the WSO felt unhappy with its slow working, one man especially critical was Dr G. S. Aulakh who had abandoned his lucrative professional career in Massachusetts to devote himself to the 'Sikh cause'. He projected himself as an effective lobbyist at the Capitol Hill. He quitted the WSO to found a new organisation, the International Sikh Organisation [ISO] in 1986. His newly launched International Sikh Organisation [ISO] attracted a number of supporters and he has since built an office in New York. A Canadian wing was also set up drawing upon some people associated with the Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada. The ISO launched a monthly journal for a few years; it also published a book on the US Congress debate on the Punjab issue. The Sikh Herald, a monthly was launched from Edmonton. Later The Khalsa a fly-sheet newsletter was published.

The ISO was overshadowed by events in the Punjab. The 'Panthic Committee' formed by a number of Punjab militant leaders in 1986 nominated Dr Aulakh to become president of the newly formed Khalistan Council succeeding the ISO. Like other leaders, Dr Aulakh has travelled widely across Britain and Europe to mobilise financial and moral

²¹ Talwinder Singh had a small but dedicated group of followers in Europe. The Belgium-based group brought out a monthly Jado-Jahid [The Struggle] as spokesman for the Babbar Khalsa International [Jathedar Talwinder Singh]. See the June 1993 issue.

support.

The Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada [FSSC] which was instrumental in setting up a chair of Sikh Studies at the University of British Columbia, also became involved in the post-1984 reaction and mobilisation. Mention should also be made of the National Sikh Centre. This was known as the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation set up in the Washington Metropolitan. In the aftermath of June 1984, the Centre has tried to rebut 'false propaganda about Sikhs as terrorists'^[22]. The Centre has, in just over two years, helped 'Sikhs to become aware of themselves as a community'. Another organisation set up in Ottawa in 1989 was the Canadian Sikhs' Studies Institute. It has taken up the cause of human rights in the Punjab, although its main concern has been to offer help for the 'turban cases'.

PATTERN OF MOBILISATION

The new organisations have shared a common objective: to rally support for a sovereign Sikh state. For this purpose, they have mobilised their resources and Sikh support mainly in three ways:

1. by organising rallies and financial support through various gurdwaras;
2. by publishing propaganda and publications in support of Khalistan;
3. by highlighting issues of human rights abuse in the Punjab and campaigning for the right of self-determination for Sikhs of the Punjab, and raising awareness of the Sikhs' case among the politicians of Canada, the United States and the United Nations.

The various gurdwaras, up and down the country are meeting points for these organisations. The ISYF has fought many elections and sometimes

²² World Sikh News, August, 14[?], 1986.

faced confrontations in local gurdwaras in Canada as a result some of the prominent ones came under its control. Some, on the other hand, have become scenes of bitter and often violent conflicts between the old and new leaders. Among the resources of ISYF and WSO, are the incomes of the gurdwaras. The larger gurdwaras have substantial incomes. The KDS Vancouver's annual budget rose from \$40,000 in 1972, to \$630,248 in 1984 to \$751,145 in 1987²³. The budget of Delta Surrey, B.C. Gurdwara was \$489,908 in 1987.

Within the gurdwaras, Sikh religious bards have narrated stories, some real other imaginary, of the atrocities inflicted by the Indian government upon the Sikhs, eulogising the heroic defence put up by a small number of Sikhs in the Golden Temple during June 1984. Within many gurdwaras, religious prayers and hymn-singing have been followed by emotional appeals for mobilisation in support of Khalistan. Ragis and Dhadis have sung the heroic deeds of Sikh history, glorifying the sovereign Sikh state under Ranjit Singh and how the Khalsa empire was brought down by the treachery of the Brahmins and the British government. Vaisakhi, the harvest festival in the Punjab and also the occasion of formation of Khalsa by the tenth Guru in 1699, became an occasion to confirm Sikhs' commitment for liberation. On this occasion, the WSO sent greetings to the 'Sikhs of the world' in the World Sikh News:

To one and all on the auspicious occasion of the birth of the Khalsa Nation, the [WSO] re-dedicates itself to the liberation of Khalistan. Let us all unite to face the challenge posed to the Sikh identity²⁴.

Occasions such as the birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak, have been turned into political rallies. In Yuba City every November, a procession is led through the city. Thus in 1987, an estimated crowd of ten thousand Sikhs attended, five Sikhs led the procession barefoot,

²³ Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, Annual Reports.

²⁴ World Sikh News, April 15, 1988. Appeal by Dr Manohar Singh Grewal, President and Naunihal Singh, Director of Administration of WSO.

followed by five others with unshielded kirpans, with the Guru Granth Sahib in front on a truck. The WSO officials, including Didar Singh Bains, Dilbagh Singh Bains and Gurnam Singh Pamma joined the Sikh congregation who shouted 'Khalistan Zindabad' as it passed through various streets to return to the gurdwara^[25].

New Sikh organisations have extensively used the Panjabi media. Advertisements about the forthcoming meetings, appeals for funds and protest marches appear with regular frequency. Two of the larger organisations launched their newspapers. The World Sikh Organisation launched World Sikh News from Stockton, the International Sikh Youth Federation launched Awaze-Quam. The post-1984 changes in the Sikh media can be seen through table 5.2. The ISYF also launched a monthly, Shamsheer Dust, the ISO started The Sikh Herald from Toronto. Jago was launched from San Jose -a literary and religious Punjabi monthly. The Panjabi media centred in Vancouver reported extensively on local Sikh events^[28]. Many Punjabi newspapers changed sides, generally from a pro-India stand to anti-India and pro-Sikh stand. Some editors became embroiled in personal and factional feuds, resulting occasionally in violent incidents. The circulation figures for the Panjabi media rose dramatically. The Indo-Canadian Times, a Panjabi weekly, achieved an immediate increase in its circulation by taking a pro-Khalistan stand. Sharp divisions within the community were in turn reflected through readers' letters. There was much concern about the image of Sikhs projected by the English media. In Stockton, this led to a campaign of letter-writing by some concerned Sikhs. Similarly in San Diego, terms like 'suspected Sikh extremists' and 'according to police sources' were

²⁵ Indo-Canadian Time, November 20, 1987.

²⁸ Ian McIlgrew, 'The Unholy Terror', Toronto, 1988. A TV programme Saturday Night of January 1988 attracted considerable debate in the Punjabi media, especially in the World Sikh News and Panjabi media of Canada. A Sikh literary society, Punjabi Sahit Sabha of Ontario served a libel suit on its producers.

introduced after a campaign by the local Sikhs^[27].

Various organisations have held meetings to 'pay homage to martyrs'. As the underground movement in the Punjab intensified during 1987-1991, it threw up several guerilla leaders who gained prominence. As a leader was shot dead by Indian security forces, meetings followed in various gurdwaras to pay homage. In an issue of World Sikh News dated September 2, 1988, an announcement read:

Religious ceremony in the memory of Avtar Singh Brahma and the President of Pakistan Zia-ul-Huq by Sikh-Muslim Friendship Society, the WSO, Babbar Khalsa International, Sikh Youth of California, for the peace of the great martyrs who became victim of their enemy's conspiracies. This will take place at Lee Marathon School, San Jose on September 4, 1988.

Another announcement in World Sikh News of August 5, 1988, is also typical of many religious-cum-political meetings:

The Sikh Youth of New Jersey are performing Mahan Kirtan Durbar on 20 August 1988 in the memory of Sikh martyrs Soorbir Jarnail Khalistan Commando Force, Bhai Sahib Labh Singh, Lt Gen Surjit Singh Panta, Gurjit Singh Kaka, Sukhvinder Singh Sandhu, Gurchran Singh Khalsa [Dal Khalsa] and many unknown Sikhs who have laid down their lives for the liberation of Khalistan in recent months. Also to honour all those Singhs now in jail for the honour of the Sikh nation, including Simranjit Singh Mann, Gajinder Singh [Lahore] Satnam Singh [Lahore] Gurpartap Singh and his friends [New Orleans jail] and several others who are sacrificing their precious lives for the cause of Panth and chardhi kala of Khalsa. We will perform an ardas for them^[28].

Regular demonstrations against visiting Indian politicians, in Vancouver, New York and San Francisco have been organised. Sikhs who have lost their relatives or suffered in jails have been honoured. Bimal Kaur Khalsa, widow of Beant Singh, was enthusiastically welcomed in a Stockton gurdwara. She called western Sikhs to unite together

²⁷ World Sikh News, September 2, 1988. A letter from Vikram Singh informs the readers that as a result of demonstration against San Francisco Chronicle a meeting was arranged with its editors who agreed to review their coverage of Sikhs and Punjab events.

²⁸ World Sikh News, August 5, 1988. The programme lists various participants: Rehras by Bhai Pritam Singh Chani, Akhand Kirtani Jatha New Jersey; kirtan by children. Didar Singh from Delhi; Pargat Singh from New York, Bawa Singh from Gurdaspur and Gurmail Singh -the chief hymn singer from Durbar Sahib, Amritsar will take part in kirtan.

against the Indian government which is 'enslaving us'^[29].

Jasbir Singh Bajwa who had applied for refugee status was deported on May 11, 1988; his case was supported by WSO to wear a turban in custody. Mr Bajwa was arrested in February 1985^[30]. Earlier, Dr Gurpartap Singh Virk and Sukhvinder Singh along with Gurinder Singh and Jasbir Singh Sandhu were arrested in May 1985 in New Orleans for plotting to kill Bhajan Lal, the chief minister of the Indian province of Haryana while on a visit to America^[31]. After serving 7 years in jail, Dr Virk was released in March 1992. He flew to London where he was honoured by the Southall Gurdwara. As part of the campaign, a number of North American Sikhs have travelled to Europe as well as Pakistan. Thus, Satinderpal Singh and eight other Sikhs who went to Lahore cornered the Indian consulate there on June 12, 1986. As a result, six Canadian Sikhs were charged for assault^[32]. Another case undertaken by the WSO concerned Ranjit Singh Gill and Sukhminder Singh Sandhu who were arrested as suspected 'extremists' in May 1987 at a gas station in New Jersey. India applied for their extradition. The extradition case continued for several months at Manhattan's Metropolitan Correction Centre^[33]. Another Canadian Sikh, Balkar Singh of Toronto was arrested in Amritsar in 1987 while on a visit to his relatives and was released only after the intervention of the Canadian

²⁹ World Sikh News, March 22 1991.

³⁰ India West, May 20, 1988.

³¹ Indo-Canadian Times, June 19, 1987. Dr G S Virk was jailed for ten years, Sukhvinder received seven years, the other two Sikhs five years each.

³² The Hindustan Times, June 13, 1986. It covered the news on its front page. Indian diplomats involved were Ravi Mathur and the first secretary, N Nayar.

³³ India West, September 11, 1987. Punjab Human Rights Organisation, in a letter of February 7, 1990 appealed to US government not to extradite the two Sikhs in question explaining that the crimes alleged by the Indian government are 'forged'. Mr Kuby, the defence attorney observed, 'the witness Mrs Russell who alleged she was threatened by Sikhs has now disappeared. The FBI reported later that Mrs Russell had faked threats and phoney death calls. She was now a patient at a private psychiatric hospital at the Carrier Institute in Bellemead, Md.

authorities on 26 October 1988. He was arrested again in April 1992 in Toronto and charged this time for supporting terrorism. The arrival of Sikh refugees in 1987 also created a major problem for the Canadian government. The WSO Canadian President Gian Singh Sandhu and KDS, Vancouver undertook the expenses of a law firm to defend them^[34]. By August 1987, about 167 were released by police after forms of sponsorship were received for them. The cause was taken up collectively by every Sikh organisation almost in competition with each other. Gian Singh Sandhu asked those who were granted asylum to 'undertake to observe the laws of Canada regardless of your view of the Punjab situation'^[35]. Dr. Chohan from Britain sent a telegram to Canadian authorities for granting refugee status to all Sikh passengers.

There have been over a dozen more cases of violence either amongst Sikh groups over the control of a gurdwara, or cases involving assaults on various officials of the Indian High commission^[36]. In a major incident, Malkit Singh Dhoot -a Punjab Minister on a private visit to attend a marriage ceremony in Vancouver was attacked. The minister had tried to speak in West Mount Gurdwara where Khalistani Sikhs forced him out. A Panjabi weekly editor from Vancouver, Tara Singh Hayer was shot and seriously wounded in his office on 29 August 1988. His attacker, a 17 year old Sikh youth had travelled from Britain, seeking refugee status in Vancouver. The WSO-Canada chairman, Gian Singh Sandhu and

³⁴ World Sikh News, July issues, 1987 and Des Pardes, July 1987. 174 Sikh refugees landed in Canada in July 1987. In Britain, Jasbir Singh of Coventry and Nirranjan Singh Mann were questioned by police. They were alleged to take 174 Sikhs from Rotterdam to the Canadian coast of Nova Scotia. It was reported that twenty one Sikhs are on hunger strike at the port as they were forced to remove the ceremonial kirpan [dagger].

³⁵ Indo-Canadian Times August 7, 1987 for statement of Gian Singh Sandhu.

³⁶ Five Sikhs were arrested for plotting to sabotage Air India plane. Gurcharan Singh Banwait, Chatar S Saini, Kashmir S Dhillon, Santokh Singh Khaila and Ravinder Singh Anand, all members of Babbar Khalsa were charged under 423 [1] Act Canadian criminal code and murder.

other Sikh leaders condemned the attempted murder immediately³⁷. Accusations and real events mixed with uncanny relevance. A Canadian Sikh was involved in a violent incident. Tejinder Singh Kaloe -a Hamilton Sikh was acquitted of the June 1986 charges of conspiracy to commit sabotage in India. On July 2, his brother Balbir Singh was shot dead by police back in the Punjab. The defence lawyer Michael Code after investigation stated:

The post-mortem showed that he died of a contact wound at the back of the head... in which the gunshot was travelling downwards through the body and it had left blackening and charring around the edges of the wound indicating that the gun had either been in contact with the back of the neck or else within inches of the back of the neck. This obviously was consistent with an execution and was inconsistent with the sworn affidavit filed by the Indian police in Hamilton³⁸.

Code sought additional information for the case from External Affairs Ministry, which strongly suggested, 'that the Indian police were producing perjured affidavits in Canadian courts'. Mr Code working on this case thought the Canadian government was in a position to demand that India should honour basic human rights. Canada was about to sign a bilateral extradition treaty at this time and Canada had given about \$2 billion in direct aid -the largest donor to India. Code observed:

It certainly seemed to me as a matter of fundamental human decency that a country should not be sending vast amounts of money and signing extradition treaties with a country where the police appear to be executing the brothers of Canadian Sikhs after receiving police intelligence from Canadians and misusing it...You can only contrast this with what would have happened if there was information that the Soviet police were executing the brothers of Canadian citizens. It just seemed to me be a blatant double standard³⁹.

There are a number of other cases involving Canadian Sikhs' whose relatives were detained in the Punjab. During the 1987-1991 period as the confrontation between the armed forces and Sikh militants led to large numbers of casualties almost daily, many North American Sikhs were to cancel their plans to visit the Punjab.

³⁷ World Sikh News, September 2, 1988.

³⁸ Kashmeri and McAndrew, 1989, op cit., p.148.

³⁹ Kashmeri and McAndrew, op.cit, p.149.

Opposition to Khalistan

Opposition to Sikh Homeland campaign has come from many quarters, both from within the Sikh communities as well as from outside. The existing Sikh societies had to face issues peculiar to the post 1984 events. The Sikh Cultural Society of New York, for example, had to suspend four of its members who participated in the Indian independence parade in 1985. A resolution was passed unanimously by the gurdwara in New York on March 16, 1986 to bar such incidents in the future. Arguments and political differences within the community have become the subject of intense discussion leading on several occasions to violence and a charged atmosphere. In Fremont, Darshan Singh, a religious leader from the Punjab, and a past jathedar of Akal Takhat, was barred entry into a gurdwara alleging him to be a collaborator of the Indian state. Gurtej Singh, president of the Sikh Youth of California along with Jaswinder Singh were arrested for this incident. A similar incident happened again at kirtan organised by the Sikh Foundation of Virginia, where some Sikhs who included some clean shaven youth, disrupted the programme within the gurdwara.

Though no *sant* was required to take up a public declaration, those suspected of hobnobbing with the Indian government were denounced. For some, there was also fear of intimidation and violence. *Sant* Mihān Singh's followers faced some angry questions both in Coventry and Vancouver as the *sant* was a close ally of the Indian Home Minister, Butā Singh. A number of followers deserted him and there is a case when one Sikh demanded the refund of his large donations to the magnificent gurdwara built in the 1970s on the outskirts of Vancouver.

Besides the internal dissension and factions, the major opposition came from Sikh communists. Many of these associated with progressive writers associations or leftist organisations made their opposition to Khalistan. A number of writers called for the boycott of Panjabi papers which were supporting the cause of Khalistan. The Indo-Canadian Times was particularly singled out. A number of 'progressive writers'

associated with EIWA dubbed it as a promoter of 'sectarianism, separatism and violence'. A writer, Gurcharan Rampuri was beaten up by angry Sikh youth while a number of meetings by leftists groups were disrupted by the ISYF supporters.

As a major organisation of communists with a large participation of Sikhs, the EIDC became embroiled in the Punjab issue. In a statement the EIDC issued, a solution to the Punjab crisis was offered along the following lines:

The army should be taken out of Harmandir Sahib, reconstruction should be given to Baba Kharak Singh and his associates. Chandigarh and other Panjabi speaking areas should be given to the Punjab. A village should be taken as a unit of measure. Water and electricity issues should be referred through the Supreme court. The government should not interfere into Sikh religious matters and it should look carefully into the complaints of the Sikh community. Gurdwaras should be used only for religious purposes, no arms should be taken into them except the kirpan. Separatist and imperialist powers should be given a crucial beating and defeated. The solution to the Punjab and that of the Sikhs is not to play into the hands of imperial powers or advocate separatism but to maintain the unity of India and solve the issue amicably⁴⁰.

Mr Ujjal Dosanjh, an independent spokesman with sympathies on the left, advocated the unity of India. He appeared frequently on radio and TV with his plea for Indian unity. In a well-publicised speech he used some daring words:

...I ask those of us who have raised separatist slogans to reconsider their position and come and join hands with all of us... We have not only the integrity, communal harmony and unity of India at stake but also the credibility and respect of our community in Canada and other parts of the world⁴¹.

His stand was rebutted by several Sikh readers of Indo-Canadian Times, including the president of the KDS⁴². Dr Gurpartap Singh replied and asked why the issue of the Punjab rights should not be raised in

⁴⁰ Indo-Canadian Times, September 21 1984.

⁴¹ Indo-Canadian Times, August 31, 1984, This letter was published in several papers, including Vancouver's Sun, 22 August 1984.

⁴² Indo-Canadian Times, August 31, 1984. Letter from Ajit Singh Nanar also alleged that Mr. Dosanjh had issued this statement after a private meeting with Mrs Indira Gandhi.

foreign countries. He asked Sikh comrades 'if Ghadar leaders could wage a war from San Francisco seventy years ago, why ain't we justified in demanding Sikh independence'⁴³. Similar debate continued among Sikh organisations and their representatives. Based in Bakersfield, a small organisation of Sikhs called itself, Anti-47 Front and issued a pamphlet against Sikh separatism. Hardial Bains, leader of another group of Communists with many Sikh members, denounced the demand for Khalistan, calling instead for class alliances with Hindu workers and other religious minorities to create a workers' state in India. In a major publication of its kind, Bains blamed the current Indian leadership of encouraging Hindu fundamentalism and religious intolerance⁴⁴.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND THE SIKHS

The widespread involvement of Canadian and American Sikhs in the Punjab issue, and their support for an independent Sikh state has given rise to strained relations among the three states. New Sikh leaders have tried to influence the local and national politicians regarding the situation in the Punjab. At these meetings, it is quite common to invite Canadian parliamentarians or US Congress Senators who are sympathetic to the idea of Khalistan. In one such meeting, for example, held in February 1993, Congressman Vic Fazio was honoured at the National Press Club⁴⁵. Vic Fazio is reported to have told the convention, 'India has tried far too successfully to prevent the world watching. They tried and I think they had some success in the Punjab in

⁴³ Indo-Canadian Times, 21 September 1984, Dr Gurpartap Singh Virk's letter.

⁴⁴ Bains, Hardial. The call of the martyrs: on the crisis in India and the present situation in the Punjab, London, Workers' Publishing House, 1985.

⁴⁵ World Sikh News, February 26, 1993. The senator was presented with a plaque, which said, 'You are recognized as a leader for your efforts. Truly you are an inspiration -like the majestic eagle. In recognition of your solidarity and support to the Sikhs nation: WSO, USA, 1993'.

preventing IHROs [International Human Rights Organisations] from monitoring the events and activities, which would give the rest of the world a true picture of what is happening there'.

This has taken the form of representations to official agencies, the involvement of individual politicians and the circulation of publications. While the WSO's primary emphasis remained on diplomacy, the ISYF and Babbar Khalsa offered undisguised support to Sikh militants and other organisations working for a Sikh state.

Individual Sikhs and organisations have urged them to raise the issue in the Congress. Congressmen Norman Shumway, a Republican from Stockton, California, Wally Herger from Yuba City with other senators, questioned the American policy towards India. During his visit to India, Mr Shumway met the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi but was refused permission to see the Punjab. In August 1988, he introduced a Congressional resolution [H.Con Res 343] concerning "human rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab of India". The Punjab crisis has figured in the US Congress several times. On a Special Order debate on October 2, 1987, several Congressmen participated in the debate. Mr Fazio commented:

...I think that the efforts of the Indian government to bring together the disparate people of India into one unified country are severely undermined by a lack of democratic treatment of the Sikh community despite the fact that India is populated by sixteen million Sikhs..^[46]

Mr Dawyer also spoke comparing American neglect of Sikhs' plight with its concern for other regions:

...clearly the problems of the Punjab do not command the public's attention to the extent, say United States-Soviet relations do, our policies in the Central America or the ... apartheid in South Africa. But the problems which exist in this region [South Asia] are important to Americans for several reasons.

First there are serious human rights questions involved here. The US, as the leading advocate for personal freedom

⁴⁶ US Congressional Records, Special Order Debate on Sikhs, June 2, 1987. This is also included in International Sikh Organisation, US Congress on Sikh Struggle for Freedom in India, Washington, 1988, p. 68.

and liberty, has a moral imperative to speak out in injustice wherever it might occur.

Second, there are geopolitical concerns, as well. Located as it is on the Indian border with Pakistan, just 150 miles from the Soviet Union, the status of this region within India could have profound implications for its eventual role in the future of the Indian subcontinent.

Finally, there are great many American citizens who trace their roots back to India and to the Punjab region to whom this issue is extremely important^[47].

Mr Dornan from California drew attention to the media's portrayal of Sikhs:

However, it does seem clear to me, Mr Speaker that the entire Sikh community is being unfairly swept with the broad brush of terrorist stigma. Clearly, to destroy the image of some 15 million Sikhs throughout the world is unjust^[48]

In another move, Congressman Dan Burton reintroduced a bill to stop developmental assistance to India on grounds of human rights violations in the 102nd Congress of the US^[49]. The text circulated among the Congressmen said:

Last year I introduced legislation [HR 4641] to terminate developmental assistance to India until their government permitted human rights organisations like Amnesty International to enter India in order to monitor human rights.

....As you may recall my bill required the President to report to the Congress within 60 days of enactment whether the Indian government was denying visas to human rights monitors. Developmental Assistance to India under Chapter I of the Foreign Assistance Act would have been cut off if the President reported that such visas were being denied.

...Unfortunately human rights organisations are still banned from working inside India and reports of human rights violations continue.

It is time to focus the world's eyes on India's human rights record. That's why I have decided to introduce legislation identical to HR 4641 in the 102nd Congress. If the so-called world's largest 'democracy' is too fragile to withstand the scrutiny of groups like Amnesty International, then they are not deserving of our financial assistance.

Dan Burton was responsible for introducing the famous 'Burton

⁴⁷ US Congressional Special Order Debate, June 2, 1987. Also included in US Congress on Sikh Struggle for Freedom in India, 1988, p.60-71.

⁴⁸ US Congressional Records, July 17, 1986. Also included in US Congress on Sikh Struggle for Freedom in India, 1988, p.17.

⁴⁹ World Sikh News, February 22, 1991.

amendment' known as 'the Justice in India Act amendment'. This was passed by a majority of 219 against 200 in the House of Representatives on June 25 1992. This amendment criticised India for violating human rights and cut \$24 million developmental aid to India. A similar amendment was defeated in earlier years. However the voting on this amendment revealed the respective lobbying strengths of Sikh leaders on the one hand and the Indian embassy staff who were joined by Hindu leaders of America.

In American cities, where there is a sizable Sikh vote, Democrat and Republican Senators, have been aware of the situation in India. Prospective candidates with Sikh voters or sympathies have been approached by Sikhs to highlight the issue. Thus, in a meeting with prospective Senator Mr Walley Herger in Yuba City, where he was given \$10,000 for a fund-raising dinner, Dr N S Kapani, Didar Singh Bains and Dr Gurinder Singh Grewal all spoke of the Punjab situation^[50]. The WSO has instituted a Sikh Heritage Award, the first of which was given to Senator Hon. Dan Burton for calling upon the Indian government to stop violating the human rights of the Sikhs^[51]. In the United States and Canada, Sikh leaders have made stringent efforts in lobbying various politicians. Rep Wally Herger with a large Sikh vote in Yuba City has been highlighting the issue of human rights and tabled several motions to harass the Indian government. During the 1989 vote, many American Hindu were involved in this process^[52]. A Congressman Stephen Solarz, a consistent pro-Indian lobbyist from New York saw a Sikh and Hindu polarisation, resulting in the defeat of Mr Solarz in 1992 elections.

In August 1993, Pete Geren from Texas, introduced a House Concurrent

⁵⁰ World Sikh News, October 31 1986.

⁵¹ World Sikh News, August 5, 1988.

⁵² India West, July 7, 1989. Raj Dutt, President of the Indian-American Political Committee who lobbied hard against Herger amendment, commented, 'Dr Aulakh and the Khalistanis have been very organised, and did a fabulous job of lobbying for this amendment. The apathy of the Indian community has really shown on this one'.

Resolution 134 calling for the 'self-determination of the Sikh nation', asking for a United Nations sponsored 'plebiscite in the Sikh homeland, so that Sikhs can determine for themselves, under fair and peaceful conditions, their political future'. In a letter to fellow Senators asking for support for his resolution, Pete Geren informed:

The Sikh homeland is the birthplace of the Sikh nation. Sikhs ruled the Punjab from 1765 until it was annexed by the British in 1849. No Sikh has ever signed the Indian constitution and Sikhs regard the Indian government as an occupying force.

The Sikh nation is 21 million strong. They are a formidable people with a clear desire for freedom, the universal right of all nations. As Americans, it is our duty to recognise this right and lend our moral support. It is time that we cease turning a blind eye to India's brutal denial of freedom and human rights. We must support the Sikh nation in its just struggle for freedom..^[53]

Politicians from main political parties have been urged to press India for a solution to the Punjab problem. The president of WSO [USA] wrote to the Secretary of the United Nations asking him to intervene on behalf of the Sikh community^[54]. In the United States, Dr G. S. Aulakh was able to secure Khalistan's admittance to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization [UNPO] at a meeting in Hague on June 24, 1993. On June 17, 1993, the house of Representatives unanimously voted to cut \$4.1 million dollars in US aid to India in protest at India's record of freedom and human rights. Canvassing at Capitol Hill has intensified as a result of Dr Aulakh and some of his colleagues' efforts. Dr Aulakh has written to newspapers, addressed Congressional Committees and visited many European countries^[55]. In a self-justified tone, Dr. Aulakh stated:

⁵³ House Concurrent Resolution 134 in the House of Representatives in August 1993. Letter of 30 July 1993. Twelve original co-sponsors were: Dan Burton [R-ID], Gary Condit [D-CA], Dana Rohrabacher [R-CA], Floyd Flake [D-NY], Duncan Hunter [R-CA], Christopher Cox [R-CA], Walter R Tucker [D-CA], Philip Crane [R-IL], Robert Underwood [D-GU], William Jefferson [D-LA], William Lipinski [D-IL], and Charles Wilson [D-TX].

⁵⁴ World Sikh News, June 17, 1988.

⁵⁵ His recent letters have appeared major American newspapers. See for example The Washington Post November 20, 1993, The New York Times, November 22, 1993.

The international community must understand that a plebiscite would give the Sikh nation an opportunity to determine its fate through peaceful, democratic means. Khalistan will eventually be free. India is not viable politically, morally or economically. It will eventually break up into its natural parts as the former Soviet Union has. However, we can end the bloodshed and free Khalistan through the democratic mechanism of the plebiscite. I urge the international community to choose the peaceful option^[56].

Parmjit Singh Ajrawat, a member of the Council of Khalistan, wrote to Gary L. Ackerman in mid 1993 regarding his pro-India stand:

We write to you this letter with great remorse and concern regarding your stand against the Sikhs along with pro-India lobbying in the US Congress with special reference to the Burton Amendment. ...You are a Jew and come from a minority background like us. We are shocked and dismayed to know that a person of Jewish descent will stand on the House floor openly condemning an aggrieved minority and join hands with a tyrant government of India who in recent years has come to be recognized as one of the worst offenders for human rights of its own citizens^[57]

Canadian Sikhs have been more seriously embroiled in the political turmoil. There are two reasons for this. Sikhs have a long history of political activities in Canada going back to Komagata Maru voyage. Second, Sikh population is concentrated in just two metropolitan, Toronto and Vancouver. With Punjabi media situated in Vancouver, news from home is well circulated and discussed among the Sikh migrants. Moreover some members of the Babbar Khalsa had already been accused by Indian government for propagating Sikh separatism. As the first anniversary of June 1984 approached, the Canadian intelligence was several times cautioned by the Indian officials of a likely 'plot' being planned by some Sikh organisations of Canada. Then came the news of Air India plane disaster confirming Indian intelligence reports.

⁵⁶ The Council of Khalistan, Press statement issued on August 6, 1993.

⁵⁷ Letter, August 16, 1993. The letter continues. '...It was indeed extremely disturbing to know that you stood on the floor and quoted Sikh militants as the ones who blew up the Indian prime minister. ..How wrong could you get? For your information, it is a well known fact that it was the Tamil lady who blew him apart and whose group has been in turn trained by Mossad in Israel. What a shame it is for a US Congressman to tell a lie like this. ..Today the whole Sikh world is observant of their friends and foes alike and history shall be the witness'.

As soon as the Air India plane crashed off the Irish coast on 23 June 1985 with all of its 329 passengers killed, 'Sikh extremists' in Canada were branded as culprits by a section of the popular media. Several news stories linking North American Sikhs with 'terrorist activities' circulated in the press. The Vancouver Sun published a story of a United States terrorist training camp linking it with the Air India crash. It named two Sikhs, Ammand Singh and Lall Singh as prime suspects⁵⁸. The Babbar Khalsa leader, Talwinder Singh and three other Sikhs were arrested immediately. Another Sikh, Inderjit Singh Reyat was arrested in Coventry and the Canadian government had him extradited to Vancouver for trial. While Talwinder and his associates were eventually released, Reyat, after a lengthy trial, was sentenced for ten years for his part in the Air India sabotage⁵⁹. Although the team of aviation experts investigating the accident could only point at a mere speculation of a 'bomb theory', the media had almost tried and put the blame squarely on the door of certain Sikh organisations, especially the Babbar Khalsa members. In May 1986, the Canadian Prime Minister had to intervene at this accelerating propaganda, saying that the 'entire Sikh community could not be blamed, and until proved otherwise, the benefit of doubt should be given to the Sikhs'⁶⁰. In early 1987, Clark's department interfered with an application by the Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada for a grant from the ministry of multiculturalism to set up a Sikh Studies chair at the University of British Columbia. The External Affairs Minister claimed that such a grant could harm bilateral relations with India. Its posture was criticised by most of the Canadian media. In February 1987, Clark agreed to field questions at a University of Toronto conference on Sikhism. A Toronto Sikh lawyer, Sher Singh confronted him at this

⁵⁸ The Vancouver Sun, June 26, 1985. A photo of a Sikh, Ammand Singh in an American training camp was produced, these pictures were also reproduced by British dailies, The Times and The Guardian.

⁵⁹ World Sikh News, April 26, 1991 Inderjit Singh Reyat was convicted in Vancouver of Narita airport and Air India jet bombing of June 23, 1985.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Gupte, 1989, p.

meeting about the issue of the Sikh Studies chair. The next morning, the lawyer was told that the external ministry was withdrawing its objection.

Several Sikh leaders have tried to present a peaceful face of the community and their own organisations. The WSO President, Gian Singh Sandhu met the Parliament Committee on May 31 1986 and presented several memorandums, stressing the need for Canadian government not to bow to pressure from India. It asked the Canadian government to tell India to improve its human rights record regarding its treatment of Sikh and Muslim minorities. It called for Canadian foreign aid to India to be tied to the issue of human rights. In a Toronto demonstration on 17 April 1988, in the Parliamentary Building several Sikh leaders asked Barbara McDougall, the deputy Foreign Minister, to treat Sikhs like the Ukrainians, Polish, and other minorities of Canada who are legitimately supporting independence for their homeland^[61].

However, it seemed, the Canadian government was under considerable pressure from its senior Commonwealth partner. On 6 February, 1987, the Foreign Secretary, Joe Clark signed an extradition treaty between Canada and India in New Delhi^[62]. There he assured Canada's full support for India's fight against terrorism. He also pledged that the Canadian intelligence would cooperate with the Indian intelligence agents to counter Sikh extremists' activities in Canada. At this time, it also put in a request for the extradition of three Sikhs from India^[63]. On his return, he sent a letter to seven provincial premiers asking them to boycott three Sikh organizations [WSO, ISYF, Babbar Khalsa] accusing them of using Canada as a base to create an

⁶¹ The Toronto Star, April 18, 1988.

⁶² The Indo-Canadian Treaty was signed by Charles J Clark for the Government of Canada and Narayan Tiwari for the Government of India. This Treaty came into effect on 10 February 1987. Some excerpts are given in Appendix -2.

⁶³ India West, July 22, 1988.

independent Sikh homeland^[64]. He wrote:

The activities of these organisations have been a significant irritant in our relations with India. The government of India has taken particular exception when elected officials attend functions sponsored by these organisations.

This letter was subject of a long debate in the House of Commons, and several opposition members charged Mr Clarke of adopting undue procedure. In a House of Commons debate, 'Sikh Organisations: the Government Position' on March 10, 1987 this letter led to many questions from several MPs. Mr Robinson, Burnaby MP for the New Democrats Party asked, 'who is running the foreign affairs policy of Canada? Is it the secretary of state for Foreign Affairs or is it the Government of India?'

When we examine the response of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, it seems that in fact our policy in respect of this very important question is not being dictated by Canadian interests but rather is a policy which is being dictated by the government of India itself^[65].

To this debate, Rt. Hon. Joe Clark the Secretary of State for External Affairs relied in the following terms:

Mr Speaker, The Sikh community has a long history in Canada. ...I have also celebrated with them the richness of Sikh traditions which are enhanced so much when the adherents of Sikh traditions are free to practise them in peace....

After paying some other complimentary remarks, Mr Clark, however, defended his letter to seven premiers in no uncertain words;

However, let us face the facts. The activities of a small, militant minority in the Sikh community represent the most serious internal security threat Canada faces today. Undeniably this minority seeks to dismember a friendly country, either through peaceful means or violent means. My friend the Hon Member for Edmonton-Strathcona [Mr Kilgour] asked the other day whether there was not a difference between the World Sikh Organisation and the other two. Indeed, Sir, there is a difference, but the constitution of the World Sikh Organisation clearly states that one of its objectives is 'to strive through peaceful means for the establishment of a Sikh nation, Khalistan'. At the time constitution was adopted there was a vigorous debate within the WSO. They knew then that their decision would be controversial and the consequences of their decision is

⁶⁴ The Globe and Mail, May 24, 1988.

⁶⁵ Canada, Parliamentary Proceedings, Official Report [Hansard] Vol. 129, No. 269, p.13615.

that their objectives are incompatible with Canadian policy.

Let me give you, Sir, some background on the other two organisations mentioned in my letter. The Babbar Khalsa is an Indian-based international organisation comprising Sikhs whose objectives are the eradication of Sikh apostasy and the establishment of Khalistan.The Canadian branch is relatively small, but its total devotion to Sikh independence and its willingness to undertake acts of violence makes it a serious source of concern.

In May 1986, members of the Montreal area of Canadian Babbar Khalsa were involved in a plot to place a bomb on an Air India flight to New York. Two were convicted and given life sentences. On May 25 1986, four members of the ISYF attempted to assassinate a visiting Punjab state Minister in British Columbia. They were each sentenced to twenty years for this offence. As a government, Sir we cannot ignore these facts, nor can we ignore other cases of terrorism that we have encountered.

Moreover these two organisations have occasionally attempted to dupe Members of Parliament or public figures in Canada into supporting their cause., for example, by having them photographed under the Khalistan flag or wearing buttons indicating support for Khalistan^[68].

A number of Opposition MPs took exception to Mr Clarke's explanation and condemned his speech and asked him to withdraw the letter in question. However, Joe Clark, Canadian External Affairs Minister refused to withdraw or modify his letter to the premiers of the Canadian provinces telling them not to attend events organised by Sikh organisations advocating the creation of Khalistan. He declared, 'we owe no less to India when it faces a challenge to its integrity'^[67]. During the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee, the WSO leaders stated that they abhor violence in pursuit of its objectives. But India's Deputy High Commissioner, Mr M. L. Tripathi, in a letter, informed the Committee that all of these organisations have advocated the creation of Khalistan, citing in evidence a joint Sikh demonstration on October 12 against the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to Vancouver for the Commonwealth Meeting. Mr Tripathi also quoted from a spokesman of the Panthic Committee that it

⁶⁸ House of Commons Proceedings: Sikh Organisations: Government position. These were reproduced in the Sikh Times, April 1988. pp. 12-21.

⁶⁷ See the following chapter for a further discussion of this debate.

was receiving help from the WSO, the ISYF of Britain and Babbar Khalsa of Canada⁶⁸.

Martin Dolin, a member of Parliament [who had Clark's letter published], stated:

I am a provincial politician. I rely on Minister for Foreign Affairs. I get a note from our premier's office saying this organisation is violent. I don't get any proof from Clark. Meanwhile I find out that there were academics at the dinner, they had discussion, a very interesting one that I would have liked to take part in. There was no violence, no action, no promotion of violence and that's all there was.

Accepting Clark's advice Martin Dolin refused to mix with the Sikhs. He lost his election, as Sikh voters switched to the Liberal candidate who had denounced Clark's letter. Clark refused to appear before the House of Commons' Multicultural Committee to answer specific questions about his allegations of Sikh terrorism. He went instead before the Justice Committee and said that the WSO should, 'stop advocating the dismemberment of a friendly country [India]'.

In the fall of 1988, Clark came down again on 'Sikh extremists'. He told the Vancouver Sun's editorial writers that it was his government's responsibility to help the 'moderate Sikhs' wrest control of their community organisations from a handful of 'extremists'. Clark left the clear impression that the Sikh community and its temples were being overpowered by bands of 'extremists'.

The WSO officials further alleged that the Canadian government was trying to undermine the WSO by funding to the tune of \$130,000 a new Sikh organisation, the National Alliance of Canadian Sikhs⁶⁹. Mr Gian Singh Sandhu, the president of WSO-Canada reminded that 'the WSO has represented Sikhs without any grant or subsidies from the government, yet the Minister has the nerve to proclaim the alliance as a principal organisation representing Sikhs. Would the government stopped interfering in the internal matters of ethno-cultural communities and the Sikh community specifically?'⁷⁰. Ram R S Chahal, another Sikh

⁶⁸ India West, July 22, 1988.

⁶⁹ Many ISYF members joined this alliance. Balwinder Singh Sandhu became president at a meeting on 21st June at Surrey Gurdwara.

⁷⁰ Mrs Shirley Maheou St. Laurel MP for Cartierville constituency, stated this and accused the government for sponsoring the new Sikh organisation, even paying for air fares to bring certain Sikh leaders together.

leader deplored the Canadian government's meddling in the community's affairs. He also drew attention to the Department of Multiculturalism's initiative to fund a new organisation. He stated, 'The Macauliffe Institute of Toronto has been given \$75,000 to do a feasibility study, to see how best to implement this 'great idea'. He also sent memorandum to the concerned minister, Mr Gerry Weiner on several occasions asking him why a new organisation had become necessary? He wrote:

We have the WSO working for Sikhs. We have also countless other small organisations and associations. We do not need the Tory government to start a new organisation, telling Sikhs how they should behave. It is our opinion that this is unwarranted meddling in our affairs. It is a ploy to divide and conquer. It may be a scary thought but could it be that our minister of Foreign Affairs is taking lessons from the government of India. The latest we have heard from the 'Sikh Congress' is a 65 page report on completion of phase one.You can be sure that nothing will ever be said against India, for that may embarrass our ally and sister commonwealth country....^[71]

The president of the WSO Canada also wrote an angry letter to the External Affairs Minister:

As president of the WSO, I am prepared to put my office and reputation on the line. If he [Clark] or his ministry can provide the documentary evidence [wrongdoing] beyond a reasonable doubt that would stand in a Canadian court. ...I am prepared to resign as president immediately. ...In fairness, I ask Mr Clark to do the same. If he cannot fully prove the accusations, I believe he owes it to Sikh community which he has maligned, to seven premiers whom he has misled and to the numerous elected officials whom he has misinformed, to resign as Minister of External Affairs^[72].

To this, the minister did not reply; Sikh leaders' campaign to extract any concession from the external affairs ministry did not yield much. The Canadian authorities have kept Sikh activists under close scrutiny this seems due to the Indian government pressure. A number of Sikh organisations have responded to this surveillance. In Early 1988, WSO advised Sikhs in Canada to shun anyone from CSIS and not to co-operate with the Canadian intelligence department, advising Sikhs, to insist on recording the discussion. The WSO alleged that:

...The Sikh community and its friends are now part of a ping-pong game of exchanged misreporting, fabrications, garble, mumble and slurs in which CSIS appears to play a central role... In future, in those rare cases where

⁷¹ World Sikh News, April 5. 1991.

⁷² Kashmeri and MacAndrew, 1989, op cit., p.

information requested is specific, limited, and important to assist national security, ..in all such cases, Sikhs are advised to hold meetings only in the presence of a lawyer, newspaper reporter or an opposition Member of Parliament. Please seek advice from WSO before agreeing to such a meeting⁷³

In 1993, the parliamentary elections brought a new liberal government into power. Two Sikhs, Gurbax Malhi, from Toronto [Malton] and Harb Dhaliwal from Vancouver South were elected MPs in October 1993 elections. For the first time in Canada, two Sikh MPs are to sit on the government side. The WSO and ISYF have both welcomed this new development and asked Sikh MPs to devote some time for the Sikh interests.

Despite many efforts Sikh leaders face uphill task of convincing the Canadian or America public about the Khalistan issue. The image of Sikhs in Canada especially has been that of a violence-prone community. It seems Sikhs' standing in the Canadian public life had turned very low. Gurcharan Singh, Secretary of the Ottawa branch of the Federation of Sikh Societies, lamented that 'rightly or wrongly, the word Sikh to many Canadians now suggest violence. Every time the word Sikh is mentioned it's with the premise that we are bombers of Air India and killers of 329 people' The role of the media in sticking this label has been considerable. A number of papers have made wild allegations such as a training camp run by a Rhodesian mercenary⁷⁴. The CSIS

⁷³ World Sikh News, April 15, 1988.

⁷⁴ Vanderhorst's name and training camps figured prominently in a book, Derivative assassination: who killed Indira Gandhi?, compiled by the Editors of Executive Intelligence Review in 1985. Its editors alleged that the Khalistan movement had become 'integrated into the ranks of Soviet-directed international terrorism'. It justifies this charge as, 'this hypothesis is corroborated by the training that had been given to the Sikhs in BC by South African mercenary Johann Vanderhorst. In this camp, members of the Babbar Khalsa, Dal Khalsa, the Dasmesh Regiment, and the Sikh Student Federation were trained along side the Red Brigades, the Armenians ASALA, and Palestinian terrorist..'

The Executive Intelligence Review is published by Lyndon LaRouche, a right-wing, anti-semitic and anti-Communist crusader in the US. In another issue, it accused Yoram Hamizrachi a former colonel in the Israeli defence forces who taught conflict studies at the University of Manitoba. In the LaRouche publication, Yoram was described as an Israeli intelligent agent from Mossad who was stationed in the Winnipeg

[Canadian Security Intelligence Service] and RCMP scoured BC for the whereabouts of the camp, but it proved to be a complete hoax.

If Sikhs seem to have lost sympathy from majority community in both countries, they have tried to cultivate friendship with other diaspora communities. Inter-community alliances among South Asian migrants have seen comparative shifts. In Fresno, a few Sikhs approached the local Muslims and held a joint meeting with the Muslim Friendship Society's Fresno Chapter 'to identify the mutual areas of interest and develop effective strategy to voice the plight of the minorities as well as explore the avenues for relief to the victims'⁷⁵. Representations to US and Canadian governments have been many. Meanwhile ordinary Sikhs remain wary of slogans and radical solutions. For activists, the case for a separate Sikh homeland is the only solution for community's predicament. The small battles amongst the North American Sikh communities have continued echoing the Punjab crisis which is in need of an urgent and honourable resolution.

Conclusion

A number of Sikh associations have come into being in response to the army action in the Golden Temple. After the initial outcry against the Indian government, these associations have tried to establish themselves by controlling the gurdwaras and starting their own media. In both Canada and the US, the WSO and ISYF have actively highlighted the plight of Sikhs in the Punjab and helped in internationalising the issue of a Sikh homeland. Most new organisations are committed to the idea of an independent homeland for the Sikhs. They have faced stiff opposition from other organisations with Sikh membership. The Punjab

to help Sikhs in the gun-running operation to Punjab'. Mr Hamizrachi was variously involved in multicultural affairs in Winnipeg. He had appeared in Winnipeg Sikh shows, his wife Beattle had done a Master's degree thesis on the Khalistan issue taking a critical line on the government of India.

⁷⁵ World Sikh News, November 21, 1986. R S Bajwa, Dr Hamdam, S Azad, Rajwant Singh and Sen Barbara Mikulski participated in this meeting in November 1986.

crisis continues to generate the debate as to whether the Sikh community should seek an independent Sikh state or accommodation within the existing framework of India. Though initial massive support has subsided, these organisations have over the years continued to draw wide support among the Sikh masses. This support and mobilisation shows Punjab politics remain a crucial agenda among the overseas Sikhs. By lobbying the US Congress, the Canadian parliamentarians, and by making representations to the United Nations, North American Sikhs and their organisations have, to some extent, defined the issue of a homeland. Why a 'homeland' should appeal to many Sikhs in the Western countries, and in such highly emotional terms, will be examined in Chapter Seven. First we need to examine a parallel case of British Sikhs' reaction to the Punjab crisis.

Chapter 6

**THE POLITICS OF HOMELAND
AMONG SIKHS IN BRITAIN****Introduction**

The Sikh community in Britain, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is one of the largest abroad. This chapter will review the British Sikhs' mobilisation in response to the Punjab crisis, starting with immediate reaction to the army action in the Golden Temple, the formation of new organisations and the rallying for a Sikh homeland. This chapter, like the previous one draws upon the Punjabi papers, the publications of various organisations and on the personal testimonies of a number of activists and participants. These reactions and developments arose, as we shall see later, as part of the Sikh community's religious and cultural concerns.

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE JUNE 1984: THE IMMEDIATE REACTION

On Sunday, 10th June, Britain's Sikhs, turned out in large numbers to protest against the 'desecration of the holiest shrine' of their faith. Sikhs from all walks of life joined in a protest march from Hyde Park to the Indian High Commission. Newspapers estimated some 50,000 Sikhs in the procession, chanting slogans and denouncing the Indian government and shouting 'Khalistan jindabad' [must have an independent Sikh State]. The march passed off peacefully with only a little damage to the Indian High Commission in the late hours of that night. Among the march were leaders of the Kashmir Liberation Front and Naga

leaders.

This traumatic event left many ordinary Sikhs angry and profoundly sad. Their anger found expression in a number of ways^[1]. Responding to a call in the Punjabi media, for the 'liberation of the Golden Temple' several volunteers offered themselves to go to the Punjab. A number of gurdwaras in large cities of Britain organised local demonstrations, such as in Birmingham and Bristol^[2]. The English and Punjabi media carried many angry letters from Sikhs and several events within the Sikh community followed in quick succession. Inderjit Singh editor of The Sikh Messenger wrote an article for The Guardian and there appeared several letters from Indians and Sikhs in the columns of English papers. Punjabi games were taking place in various cities, these were cancelled across the country for the rest of the year. Between 3rd June and 31st October, 1984, when the news came of the Indian Prime Minister's assassination by her two Sikh body guards in New Delhi, two major new organisations had been formed. These were the Khalistan Council and the International Sikh Youth Federation^[3]. Both were committed to nothing less than an independent Sikh state. The British media reported celebrations among Sikh circles in Britain as the news of the Indian prime minister's death came^[4]. Some Sikhs tried to explain this action by a few irresponsible members of the community, while others thought it a reflection of a silent majority of the Sikhs.

While the Indian authorities defended the army action in the Golden Temple in terms of India's unity, Sikhs in Britain were outraged over

¹ Khushwant Singh, 1992, op. cit., p.81-82 .

² Barot, Rohit. 'The Punjab crisis and Bristol Sikhs', a paper presented to British Association for South Asian Studies, Annual Meeting in Birmingham, 10-12 April 1991.

³ Helweg, 1989, op cit., p.324. Parallel protest marches were held in Canada, the United States, Far Eastern countries. In Europe smaller meetings took place, in Norway, a Sikh diplomat resigned.

⁴ The Times, November 1, 1984 and other British media.

what they thought was the desecration of their most sacred historic shrine. The Indian High Commission in London sent video-tapes and books explaining why the action became necessary to several gurdwaras and leading Sikhs. These were burnt by angry Sikhs outside a number of gurdwaras. The Government of India announced visa requirements for all visitors to India in a move to curb 'Sikh extremism from abroad'. Many Sikhs who had acquired British citizenship faced bureaucratic controls, besides extra cost. Several organisations including the IWAs called for the lifting of this requirement but without success. The Sikh community's different set of assumptions, cultural meanings, language and explanation ran in stark contrast to the officially sanctioned statements of the Government of India. The Indian High Commission alleged 'Sikh extremists here are not only being allowed to break the laws of this land, but for their own selfish and cynical political ends to fan the flames of communal passions which cannot be without a long-term adverse impact on communal harmony in this country'¹⁵. The Indian High Commissioner left this matter, 'for the British authorities and the British media', calling it 'an internal matter'.

The pictures of Sant Bhindranwale along with Subeg Singh and Amrik Singh and other prominent Sikhs killed in the army action in Amritsar

⁵ Letter from the Indian High Commission, London to Clare Short, MP, Ladywood, Birmingham, 2 July 1984. While sending four video cassettes, three of them containing English language material also, the letter also rebutted the charge of the MP who wrote on behalf of her Sikh voters,

'..it is not true to say that the safety of the friends and relatives of your constituents is under threat: in fact the threat to their safety has been removed by the army action.' ..

It also went on to remind the MP that:

'Not enough credit has been given for maintaining intact the central shrine of the Golden Temple, the Harmandir Saheb[sic]. Had the security forces been given a free hand 'Operation Bluestar' would have been over in less than 30 minutes without the loss of life a single soldier.It is doubtful if any European forces would have accepted such iron discipline and supreme sacrifice..'

'..No humanist seems to have bothered when hundreds of innocent men, women and children were murdered by Bhindranwale's hit squads. '

have appeared in several British gurdwaras. New Sikh martyrs became figures of reverence. Many traditional religious practices within the gurdwara have seen radical changes. The practice of inviting Indian politicians into the gurdwaras was scrapped. Even the so-called 'moderate' Sikh leaders visiting Britain in the post-1984 period had to address the Sikh congregation away from the main gurdwaras. Several major gurdwaras' management committees changed hands replacing the old Akali leaders with Sikh youth calling for revenge and for a sovereign state. Thousand of Sikh youths have taken Amrit -a traditional Sikh ceremony for initiation into the Khalsa tradition. Ragis and Dhadis have recorded songs in the memory of Sikh martyrs who have laid down their lives against the Indian armies. Videos, tapes and literature celebrating the heroic deeds of those who fought against the armies, laying down their life for the cause of Sikh nation, preserving izzat and sovereignty have been brought out. As a result, there is a marked shift in the organisational pattern and style of leadership among British Sikhs. Table 6.1 summarises the post-1984 organisational structure of Sikh political associations in Britain.

Table 6.1
SIKH POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS OF UNITED KINGDOM
Post-1984 Period

Organisation	Year Launched	Base
Khalistan Council	1984	London
ISYF	1984	London, Midlands and North
ISYF [DM]	1986	Birmingham
Babbar Khalsa	1978	Birmingham, Coventry, North
Dal Khalsa	1984	London, Birmingham
Punjab Unity Forum	1986	London

ISYF = International Sikh Youth Federation
 ISYF [DT] = International Sikh Youth Federation [Damdami Taksal]

Table 6.2
THE MEDIA OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS OF UNITED KINGDOM
Post-1984 Period

Organisation	Media	Centre	Year	Frequency	Language
Khalistan Council	Khalistan News	London	1984-	Q/Occ.	E
Babbar Khalsa	Wangar	Birmingham	1985-	M	P/E
ISYF	Awaz-e-Quam	Birmingham	1985-	W	P/E
Dal Khalsa	Sikh Pariwar	Birmingham	1985-92	M	P
Punjab Unity Forum	Unity	London	1986-	Q	E

P = Punjabi, E = English
 W = Weekly, M = Monthly Q = Quarterly, Occ. = Occasionally

NEW ORGANISATIONS AND THE DEMAND FOR SIKH HOMELAND

[a] The Khalistan Council

The Khalistan Council was elected at a large and stormy meeting of Sikh organisations on 23rd June 1984 in Southall. The British Sikh leader, Giani Amolak Singh after leading the Akali Dal campaign in support of the Punjab autonomy during 1981-1984 was subjected to severe criticism and decided to retire from active Sikh politics. His and other Akali leaders' assurances in post-June 1984 that the Akali Dal henceforth will be committed to an independent Sikh state were summarily dismissed by those present at this meeting⁶. The old Akali leaders had no option but to present a low profile and were swept over by the new organisation. The original membership of the Council consisted of Dr Jagjit Singh Chohan, ex-minister of the Punjab dedicated to the idea of a separate Sikh homeland since the early 1970s; Gurmej Singh and Sewa Singh drawn from the Babbar Khalsa organisation; Karmjit Singh as a representative of Sikh youth and K S Khaira representing the re-organised Akali Dal. An office was made available immediately by a Sikh business family, the Khaira brothers in Central London. An appeal was made for funds and within a few months it topped £100,000. A weekly meeting by the Khalistan Council was arranged in different gurdwaras up and down the country where the latest news from the Punjab was discussed by anxious Sikhs with their leaders, amidst the cries of 'Khalistan Zindabad'. The 'Voice of Sikhs' a Radio programme was launched by the Khalistan Council in May 1985⁷. Radio Caroline a pirate radio outside British territorial waters started to broadcast half an hour programme of Sikh religious and cultural affairs. At one stage the Khalistan Council apparently made much use of its liaison with some governments. In late 1985, it claimed that the government of Ecuador were willing to recognise the exiled government of Khalistan. Although one diplomat from Ecuador spoke at a Birmingham rally, this

⁶ Des Pardes, June 29, 1984.

⁷ The Sunday Observer, May 5, 1985. Report by Shyam Bhatia.

gesture did not come to anything. Dr Chohan's activities came in for some criticism and somewhat light scrutiny by the British press.

After about two years, the Council showed strains in its functions. Gurmej Singh representing the Babbar Khalsa effectively parted company by setting up his own office in Birmingham, while Karmjit Singh resigned as a representative of the Sikh youth. Mr Khaira was already suspended due to a family feud. Other members have joined to fill the vacant places. A monthly journal called Khalistan News mostly in English with occasional article in Punjabi was issued from the headquarters of Khalistan Council in central London starting in June 1984. It has been extolling Britain's Sikhs to wage a war of independence in Punjab. Since 1984, one of the activities of the Khalistan Council has been to protest 'police killings' of Sikh youth in the Punjab. Every January it has held a demonstration against the Indian High Commission in London. The Council has published several pamphlets and reprinted reports of human rights agencies from the Punjab and Delhi. As president of the Council, Dr Jagjit Singh Chohan has been writing regularly in various Punjabi weekly papers. Dr Chohan has also briefly elaborated the ideology of a future Sikh state as a liberal democracy with proper safeguards for its minorities^[8]. From time to time, he has written letters to Sikh leaders in the Punjab and advised them on the future course of action. During the Punjab elections held on February 19, 1992, for example, he cautioned Sikh voters and leaders against the chimera of representative democracy in the Punjab. He argued it would be a step back from the Sikh nation's clear objective of obtaining sovereignty. The strength of the Khalistan Council has dwindled to a small number of Dr Chohan's admirers. This has not stopped Dr Chohan campaigning in various gurdwaras countrywide where his speeches, mixed with a wry sense of humour, are still eagerly listened to by the audience.

⁸ Goulbourne, 1991, op cit., p. 160-61.

[b] The International Sikh Youth Federation

Among the most important organisations to emerge in the wake of the June 1984 events is the International Sikh Youth Federation [ISYF]. This owed its origin primarily to the arrival of Bhai Jasbir Singh -a nephew of Sant Bhindranwale. Jasbir Singh was in Libya for several years as a small contractor. He arrived in Britain in July 1984 and immediately set about organising the Sikh youth. At a meeting on 23 September 1984 at Almvale Comprehensive School, Walsall, amidst 4,000 Sikh youth, the new constitution of the International Sikh Youth Federation was approved and a 51-member panel was announced. According to its constitution, ISYF will strive for the 'establishment of a sovereign Sikh state'. For this purpose, it will aim at mobilising Sikh youth across the world in an active struggle for the realisation of this goal and to make them aware of 'their religion, national flag, past struggle for independence, unique identity, and separate nation'⁹. Within months of its formation, the number of units working in different cities went up to 21. Many large branches such as Birmingham and Southall had over a thousand members. However, in December its leader Jasbir Singh, after a short visit to Pakistan, was detained at Heathrow and the Indian High Commission asked for his deportation as a matter of diplomatic priority¹⁰. After representations and protracted negotiations in which matters of trade and political relations between Britain and India were discussed and thought to be at risk, he was deported. According to an ISYF statement issued at a protest march, Jasbir Singh's activities to unite the Sikh youth, especially his emphasis on amrit parchār, became a sour point for the Indian government who sought his extradition¹¹.

⁹ ISYF Draft Policy Programme and the Constitution, September 1984.

¹⁰ Gill, Manjit Singh 'When the British judiciary does what India pleases', *The Guardian*, January 7, 1985.

¹¹ Bhai Jasbir Singh, the chief organiser of ISYF was deported from Britain after a tough stand by the Indian High Commission. So concerned was the Indian government that having secured his deportation from Britain, it asked all governments en route not to let Jasbir Singh in. The Tribune -the Punjab's English daily paper wrote an editorial on his deportation from Britain under the title, 'Returned Unwanted', April

Local branches of the ISYF set out to control the gurdwara management committees and immediately ran into considerable opposition. The ISYF wanted to replace old management committees who were either Akalis or drawn from the pro-India Congress and Indian Workers Association [IWA], or a mixture of all these elements. The IWAs had always played an active part in local gurdwara politics and saw no contradiction in being a communist and fighting for a seat in a gurdwara management committee. This was especially the case in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. In Derby, the struggle for control of the gurdwara led to dramatic action¹². Elections were forced upon the management committee and elections led to the management committee of ISYF. However, the major struggle was in the prestigious gurdwara of Havelock Road, Southall which was in the middle of legal proceedings. The ISYF, by virtue of its strength, started managing the day to day running and effectively have been in-charge of the gurdwara since 1984. Another large Gurdwara in Smethwick was also the subject of dispute and was run by a receiver appointed by the court. The ISYF asked the two main contending parties to withdraw the court case. When a new election was held in December 1984, ISYF gained a strong role in the new management committee. A particular noteworthy change in Smethwick was the complete dissolution of Communists and Congress where they always had a hand in the running of this important centre for Smethwick Sikhs. In a similar vein, ISYF fought against Congress leaders who were in control in the Luton Gurdwara in May 1985. A similar, but somewhat novel situation developed in Huddersfield and Coventry where there was tension between Babbar Khalsa and the Federation. A most flagrant case arose in Kent's gurdwara in May 1987, when fighting led to the arrest of a number of

17, 1985 and The Times February 11, 1986 published a 'Prisoner of Conscience' column on him. After two years in jail, he was released in April 1987.

¹² Des Pardes and Punjab Times October 1985. On a cold and rain-drenched night of 18th October 1985, over three hundred Sikhs kept an all-night vigil outside the gurdwara. The Management Committee had locked the building, the police had to intervene to re-open the building in the early hours of the morning.

ISYF supporters and Congress workers and some outsiders¹³.

The Indian Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, arrived in Britain in October 1985. Over 2000 Sikhs marched to demonstrate against him. Just prior to his visit four Sikhs belonging to the ISYF were arrested in Leicester on charges of a murder plot against the visiting Indian premier. While the case was dismissed by a Leicester court judge on the grounds of insufficient evidence, the Birmingham Crown Court found two Sikhs, Sukhwinder Singh Gill and Jarnail Singh guilty and jailed them for 14 and 20 years respectively¹⁴. Earlier, in September 1985, Sangtar Singh Sandhu called a meeting of the Longowal Akali Dal group at a London hotel. He was the only Sikh to place an advertisement in a Punjabi paper welcoming the Indian Prime Minister. Soon after this, an attempt was made on Sandhu's life and he had to be hospitalised. The issue of 'Sikh extremists' operating in Britain was reported to be main item on the agenda of the Rajiv-Thatcher talks during the visit.

A number of ISYF activists have been picked up on various charges in the past years as a spate of violent events have occurred within the Sikh community and some of those involved have been imprisoned. The ISYF president, Dr Pargat Singh escaped with minor injuries during a violent attack on 7th November 1985. His successor Dr Jaswinder Singh's house was attacked by some unknown gang. Another development within the ISYF has sharply affected its activities. A section of its leadership parted company in late 1985 setting up its own rival organisation under the banner of Damdami Taksal¹⁵. This was initially led by Bhai Gurmel

¹³ Erith and Crayford Times, August 13, 1987. The Beldevere Gurdwara, Kent was scene of fighting among two rival Sikh groups. Cases of litigation as a result of 1984 events have increased sharply, needing an in-depth study.

¹⁴ The Times, October 18, 1985 and The Sunday Observer, October 13, 1985. The case was decided at Birmingham High Court on 28th December 1986, where the third Sikh, Parmatma Singh was freed.

¹⁵ Sant Bhindranwale belonged to the Damdami Taksal which traces its lineage to a close follower of Guru Gobind Singh. The Damdami Taksal gained prominence in the post 1984 period.

Singh of Smethwick. This faction was much facilitated by the arrival of several Sikhs considered to be close to Sant Bhindranwale in 1984. Moreover, Bhai Gurmel Singh was able to procure several letters from a Damdami Taksal leader in the Punjab to legitimise his leadership of the breakaway faction¹⁶.

Despite the factional disputes which have split it into two groups, the ISYF has established its own Punjabi weekly paper, Awaz-e-Quam. This campaigns for an independent Sikh state, Khalistan. The circulation of this weekly is mainly amongst Sikh youth. The paper is produced and distributed with the help of a number of volunteers. The ISYF has also published several pamphlets including the Delhi riots report. In another move it has set up a Sikh Human Rights Group with the cooperation of London's Sikh barristers. This group has taken a keen interest in the case of a Sikh, Karamjit Singh Chahal who is in detention under the National Security Act. His case has invited wide comment from the British press¹⁷.

[c] The Babbar Khalsa

Another small but important organisation of Sikhs known for its members' strict adherence to the Khalsa traditions, the Babbar Khalsa was set up in 1978. Prior to 1984 they had organised the Akhand Kirtani Jatha who were content with weekly recitations of Sikh scriptures and night-long hymn singing sessions called rayin swai at various gurdwaras or at private homes. The Babbar Khalsa was set up as a direct result of a violent clash in Amritsar in April 1978 when thirteen Sikhs belonging to the Akhand Kirtani Jatha were killed by a dissenting sect called Nirankaris. Members of this organisation have been among the most radical advocates of a sovereign Sikh state. The Babbar Khalsa members also gained respect from ordinary Sikhs for their stubborn resistance

¹⁶ Many Sikh organisations, including IWAs have used this method of establishing their credentials.

¹⁷ ISYF, Annual Report, Walsall, September 1986.

and valour against the Indian army during the Golden Temple fighting. A leading member of Babbar Khalsa, Gurmej Singh was nominated to the Khalistan Council; he has maintained a separate office in Birmingham since 1986, as a centre for the Babbar Khalsa members¹⁸. It has published a monthly magazine, Wangar from its Birmingham office. However, differences seem to have arisen among the Babbar Khalsa members since the nomination of Balbir Singh as its chief, replacing Gurmej Singh. In July 1992 it suffered another setback with the capture of Gurdeep Singh by the Punjab police -a key member who went to Pakistan and then entered the Punjab¹⁹. Two gurdwaras in the Midlands are partly controlled by the Babbar Khalsa, one in West Bromwich and the other in Coventry. The latter has been subject of fierce competition between the ISYF and the Congress and Communists alliance against the Babbar Khalsa members. Every two years, elections are the scene of ugly incidents often leading to violence and police intervention²⁰.

[d] Other Organisations

Among smaller organisations in the post 1984 period, mention should also be made of the Dal Khalsa. This is a small group consisting of Jaswant Singh Thekedar, Manmohan Singh Khalsa, Mohinder Singh Rathore, Manjit Singh Rana and a few others. This organisation came into prominence with the hijacking of Indian plane to Lahore in 1982. Its members are involved in helping the Dal Khalsa members in the Punjab and in particular Gajinder Singh and other Sikhs in Lahore jail who had

¹⁸ The Guardian, June 7, 1986. Gurmej Singh was granted British nationality after considerable protest by the Indian government. Balbir Singh became the new chief of Babbar Khalsa in Britain replacing Gurmej Singh according to an announcement of the Babbar Khalsa from Punjab.

¹⁹ Gurdeep Singh's arrest coincided with the killing of Sukhdev Singh the chief of Babbar Khalsa in a police encounter in August 1992. Gurdeep Singh's written statement of confession and details of his activities in Britain were given wide media coverage in the Punjab. He is now lodged in a jail in Patiala.

²⁰ Coventry Evening Telegraph, August 2, 1984. Des Pardes, April, 1993. The Charity Commission has been involved in the conduct of elections in this gurdwara since 1984. The police had to intervene several times to stop in-fighting among its committee members.

hijacked an Indian Airlines plane in 1982. Mr Thekedar and other members of Dal Khalsa have also issued a map of Khalistan amidst a controversy that no other organisations were consulted. The Dal Khalsa leaders have also split; Manmohan Singh Khalsa is leading one group, the other is led by Jaswant Singh Thekedar^[21]. Accusations have also been laid on each other for being paid agents of the Government of India. The Dal Khalsa in the Midlands has also organised a literary wing Sikh Sahit and Sabhiarcharik Kendar [Sikh Cultural and Literary Centre]. This is organised by Ranjit Singh Rana -a Midlands based Dal Khalsa leader. He has also published a monthly journal^[22].

Another small group, Sikh Study Forum was formed in London to highlight the human rights aspects of Punjab. It has held a number of meetings and published a booklet titled Sikh jagat vich futt ate is de karn^[23]. In addition, some individual Sikhs' efforts should perhaps also be mentioned. Kirpal Singh Sihra, a Sikh businessman from Kenya now settled in London, floated the idea of a 'Sikh Commonwealth' in 1975, its original aim being to sustain self-awareness amongst overseas Sikhs. However, in the aftermath of 1984, he brought out several pamphlets and two books to propagate the proposition of Sikhs' right to

²¹ Jaswant Singh Thekedar arrived in London in 1982 and was allotted a flat in 1984 for his family in an estate of Southall. Various objections were raised by his adversaries, in particular by a prominent Panjabi Hindu leader, Vishnu Sharma. It was alleged that the Indian government wanted him for alleged murders. The Housing Department conducted a long enquiry and the Director of Housing had to issue a statement before allotting Mr Thekedar's family a flat. In July 1993, Mr Thekedar was finally granted an asylum by the tribunal.

²² Sikh Pariwar a monthly magazine till 1992. The Sikh Cultural and Literary Society established by Ranjit Singh Rana with other Sikh writers, has honoured Harbhur Singh, Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Brijinder Singh, Piara Singh Padam, all Punjab-based writers who have either defended the Sikh campaign for autonomy or been discriminated against by the Indian authorities.

²³ The Sikh Study Forum, Sikh jagat vich futt ate is de karn, London, 1988. This was written by Niranjan Singh a lecturer at Khalsa College, Jalandhar, Punjab who was invited to lecture.

independence^[24]. He led a campaign at the United Nations to secure NGO status, this failed mainly because of what he called the 'Russian block vote'^[25]. On a more modest scale, a London based Sikh, Devinder Singh Parmar has been advocating the establishment of an independent Sikh state and he has taken an active part in the Sikh Homeland Front activities. Indeed Mr Parmar has been fighting a one-man crusade for a Sikh state far longer than anyone else; in the mid 1950s he started a small consultative group among like-minded Sikhs in London^[26]. Later he edited a paper Khalistan Times from time to time from his home in north London. This paper acquired currency during the post 1984 period and appeared till 1991, 'when its editor had the time or an occasion demanded it'. Another case of individual campaigning for a Sikh homeland is that of Swaran Singh, a businessman based in Smethwick. On important occasions in the Sikh calendar, he usually places an advertisement in a Punjabi weekly setting down the case for a Sikh homeland.

PATTERN OF MOBILISATION

Every June since 1984, a Sikh protest march has taken place in London, starting from Hyde Park marching towards the Indian High Commission offices in central London. Prior to this march, a typical advertisement in the Punjabi media reveals the context of the protest.

Durbar Sahib [The Golden Temple] is the spiritual source of Sikh faith. Whenever the oppressors and powerful have dishonoured this place, they have invited ruin upon themselves and their dynasties. The Sikh nation has always come out stronger while facing such ghallugharas. There is no Sikh in India who has not in some way contributed to the

²⁴ Sihra, K.S. Sikhdom, London, published by the author, 1985. He has also published another book titled Khalistan, 1986. The latter, on its title page says, 'authorised for publication by the Khalsa Sikh Secretariat, Durbar Sahib, Amritsar, Khalistan' and consists of a theological and constitutional statement for a Sikh state.

²⁵ The Khalistan Times, No. 6, 1987 gives details of Mr Sihra's efforts at the United Nations to gain an NGO status. Mr Sihra accused the Government of India for intense lobbying against his application.

²⁶ The Independent, September 5, 1992. Davinder Singh Parmar died in London on August 27, 1992.

sacrifices for the Sikh nation.

Dear Khalsa ji: we who are living overseas, it is a duty of every Sikh household topay tributes to the spirit of our martyrs^[27].

Annual conventions of these organisations are usually held in May or June, while the ISYF holds its annual meeting in September. At these conventions, resolutions are passed to show solidarity with the Sikhs in the Punjab, money is raised for Shahidi fund [funds for martyrs' families] and new office bearers are announced. At the Khalistan Council and the ISYF conventions, foreign delegates also participate, usually several fly in from Canada and the United States. Various leaders pledge their support for Sikh independence and narrate how they are working towards this aim.

During September 1985, when the Punjab Accord was signed by the Indian Prime Minister and Akali leader, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal in September 1985, several organisations and gurdwaras rejected this Accord as a betrayal. The Khalistan Council, ISYF and management committees of several gurdwaras placed advertisements to this effect in the Punjabi media.

Every year, all new organisations hold their annual conventions confirming their commitment for a Sikh homeland. The Khalistan Council has usually invited delegates from other countries and also other exiled leaders of minority organisations of the Indian continent. Kashmiri, Naga and Afghan leaders have addressed their past meetings. At a meeting in 1990, which was called a 'World Sikh Convention', the following is a typical resolution:

²⁷ Des Pardes, Special Issue, June 28, 1991. The two-page advertisement, goes on to say:

Each gurdwara has arranged a coach to London, Hyde Park,
.....The march will take place on 23 June 1991.

The appeal is issued jointly by the Council of Khalistan, Babbar Khalsa International, International Sikh Youth Federation, Shiromani Akali Dal, Republic of Khalistan, Dal Khalsa International, Khalistan Liberation Movement, Akhand Kirtani Jatha.

On 26th April 1986, that Panthic committee made public the resolve of the Sikh nation to constitute itself in a sovereign state that shall bear the name Khalistan. This convention on the fourth anniversary of that historic occasion, pledges its full support to the ideal of that sovereign state and urges all individuals, parties and organisations that oppose the said ideal shall be given no recognition nor co-operation of any kind.

This convention urges Sikhs all over the world to abide by the law of the country they are settled in and be good citizens wherever they are but be aware of the agents of the Indian government who roam around provoking strife in the various gurdwaras for the very specific purposes of discrediting the Sikh settlers in the eyes of the host society.

This Convention urges... to take new hope from the events of East Europe and other parts of the world which herald the dawn of the era of freedom of peoples...

This convention urges all national governments to link their aid and trade programme with India to its human rights record^[28].

In the aftermath of 1984 many ordinary Sikhs took amrit. Another feature of resolving their status and gaining legitimacy by the dissenting groups, is to seek support from Sikh leaders in the Punjab. Thus letters regularly appear in Punjabi weeklies from Punjab leaders clarifying 'who are the true representatives of Damdami Taksal and beware of traitors within'^[29]. More recently, a number of underground leaders from the Punjab have published their own versions of particular events. This trend towards convincing the international networks of Sikhs leaders has become more pronounced with the passage of time.

However, feuds among various Khalistani organisations and their leaders are rife and have plagued the unity and effectiveness of each

²⁸ Press Release, Khalistan Council, Slough, 30, April 1990. The meeting was held in Slough on 28 and 29 April 1990.

²⁹ Among a number of letters sent by Damdami Taksal chief, Jathedar Thakar Singh to Bhai Gurmel Singh, one reads as;
To the respected Sikh congregation of Britain, we send our fraternal Sikh greetings. We have received a number of letters regarding Bhai Gurmel Singh, alleging he is not following the Sikh tradition of service to the community. May we make it clear through this letter that there is no truth whatsoever in this allegation. He is our recognised and dedicated discipleand doing such services as are appropriate. Please pay all respects due to him.

organisation. Both the Khalistan Council and ISYF have, during their short life, been plagued by rival factions. The ISYF has been split into two factions since 1985. The personal rivalry among leaders has meant they approach Amnesty International, the United Nations or the British government, not on a common platform but competitively. A prime example of internal squabbles is the support given to Dal Khalsa members involved in the hijacking of Indian Airlines plane and who are jailed in Lahore. An International Defence Committee was set up to fight their case. However, various Sikh organisations based abroad vied with each other to help them while trying to undermine their rivals. Thus, according to Gajinder Singh, the leader of hijackers, the World Sikh Organisation based in America, the International Sikh Youth Federation of Canada and UK and three more organisations, 'were more in the mood to make capital out of our case rather than actually helping us'. Virtually each representative who went to meet them in Lahore jail branded other organisations as 'traitor' to the Sikh cause'³⁰.

Although all post-1984 Sikh organisations in Britain share the common aim of support for an independent Sikh state, the support they have among various sections of Sikh population is far from uniform. The internal differentiation within the Sikh community is reflected in differential support to this cause. While Jat Sikhs are in the forefront of the separatist movement, the Ramgarhias and Namdharis have shown little interest, indeed some of them are perhaps opposed to the movement. From 1983 onwards, the visiting Congress Party members or ministers were not welcome at major gurdwaras, some used the Ramgarhia gurdwaras to address the Sikh congregations. The latter two groups have condemned the invasion of Golden Temple but they have refrained from

³⁰ Des Pardes August 15, 1987. Based on an interview with Gajinder Singh published in this paper. Approaches made by overseas organisations to Sikhs in Lahore jail illustrates the extensive network of Khalistan movement abroad. Among those who contacted Sikhs in Lahore jail included: Dr Ganga Singh Dhillon [World Sikh Organisation], Harcharan Singh [Khalistan Council U.K.], Joginder Singh from Malaysia, Dr Arjinder Singh Sekhon [ISYF USA], Balbir Singh [ISYF, Canada], Dr Jasdev Singh Rai [ISYF, UK]. Gajinder Singh from Lahore jail wrote a monthly column in a Sikh Pariwar edited by Ranjit Singh Rana - a leading member of Dal Khalsa.

joining in the struggle for independence. However, several Ramgarhia gurdwaras have contributed to Sikh refugee aid to the 1984 Delhi riots victims. In January 1985, the Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Birmingham sent £3500 in aid of Sikh orphans and widows of Delhi riots to a Chandigarh Rehabilitation Society. The Bhatra Sikhs, on the other hand, have shown enthusiasm for the separatist cause. Their gurdwaras have been the venue of several such conferences. Of all the Sikh sects, the Ravidasi Sikhs have been unambiguous in opposing the Khalistan movement^[31]. The Khalistan Council, in some of its publications, made appeals to Ramgarhia and Ravidasi Sikhs to join in 'common' struggle against the high-caste Brahmin-dominated Indian state^[32]. Sikhs leaders have also alleged of a 'divide and rule' policy by the Indian High Commission in favouring the particular groups within the Sikh community.

The role of Sikh gurdwaras as centre of mobilisation in the post 1984 period need to be noted. Besides a place of worship, each Sikh gurdwara acts as a community centre for social, political and cultural concerns, resolving on occasions even family disputes. In the post 1984 period, many gurdwaras have made a financial contribution to the victims of Delhi riots of November 1984. A Birmingham gurdwara sent Rs. 100,000 [About £2,000] to Delhi to distressed Sikhs^[33]. Various gurdwara routines have also changed perceptibly since 1984. Almost every Sunday, the Dhadis up and down the gurdwaras sing songs of praise for the Sikh martyrs combining the past heroes with the contemporary ones. Dozens of tapes recorded by various Dhadi Jathas have been made available. Gian Singh Surjeet, the Pasla Group and Jago Wale have become well-known

³¹ Solihull Daily Times, January 29, 1986. A Ravidasi Sikh and member of Indian Overseas Congress, Mr Badhan from Birmingham got himself into news by saying he was afraid of his life from the extremist Sikhs.

³² Khalistan News, April 10, 1987. Under the heading 'A clarion call to Ramgarhia and Ravidasi Sikhs', it asked them to join the struggle based on Sikh principles of equality and fair play for all, irrespective of caste and creed.

³³ Birmingham Evening Mail, November 6, 1984. This gurdwara has made several contributions to educational and charity institutions in the Punjab, including a donation of £10,000 for Ethiopia Famine Fund.

singers throughout the gurdwaras in Britain³⁴. Punjab's militant Sikh leaders, among these, Labh Singh, Avtar Singh Brahma, Bhai Anokh Singh, General Subeg Singh, Amrik Singh, and several others have been commemorated in various songs recorded by Dhadis. Those connected with the Khalistan movement in the Punjab or those whose relatives suffered or were mistreated by the Indian authorities were offered honours. Basant Kaur Khalsa, wife of Beant Singh arrived in Britain in April 1991. She was greeted and facilitated by a number of Gurdwaras. Although she had to cut short her tour because of election announcement in the Punjab, which were postponed on the day of poll, she and her father were given 'siropas' [a characteristic Sikh form of honour] and substantial money by ordinary Sikhs.

Some gurdwārās which are controlled by sants have remained aloof from the 'Khālīstan movement'. Sikh youth leaders too, had to face the reality of *sants*' influence among ordinary Sikhs. Some older generation Sikhs have tended to switch to the calmer serenity of these gurdwārās. The 1984 events in the Punjab have increasingly shadowed the role of *sants* in Britain. Every *sant* on visit to Britain came under some pressure to pronounce his stand upon the Punjab events. This was generally insisted upon by the followers who were naturally worried about ISYF's tactics in taking over some gurdwārās under their control. Sometimes a situation arose demanding a *sant*'s helping hand. Three cases are given below when a *sant* became a helpful ally of different groups. The first concerns the Southall gurdwara. In 1986, after two years' control by the ISYF, the Southall gurdwara became the focus of the struggle between the two warring factions of the ISYF. In a powerful bid to overthrow the rival faction, an old building acquired by the committee some years before but lying neglected, was opened up by the opposing faction of the ISYF. A prominent announcement that this building would be a new centre for the Sikh congregation. The quarrel

³⁴ Pettigrew, Joyce. 'Songs of the Sikh resistance movement', Asian Music, Fall/Winter, 1991/92, pp. 85-118.

unfortunately escalated, when one person was stabbed in September 1988^[35].

In Britain no other sant has directly involved himself in the political arena except those mentioned above. The reasons are not difficult to find. Many *sants* are already prominent in public life. They are obviously very vulnerable to passport controls, visas and thus have tried to keep on the right side of the Indian government's policies. This has not, however, stopped them from asking Sikhs to be more firm in their religious beliefs. In fact some of them have suggested the rationale for the current crisis facing the community in terms of religious lapses. Sant Mihān Singh in particular blamed the lax administration of the Golden Temple for the dishonour incurred there. Stretching this argument, he emphasised amrit parchār as a top priority.

Opposition to Khalistan

However, not all British Sikhs are convinced by the arguments of the above organisations. Perhaps a majority of Sikhs remain ambivalent about the issue of Khalistan. The opposition to the idea of a separate state has come from a number of small organisations. First among these, as may be expected, is the Indian Overseas Congress. The morale of its leadership, with a large number of Sikhs involved, in the immediate 1984 period was rather low. When, for example, Congress leaders announced the observation of Indian Independence Day in Derby on 14th August 1984, these celebrations were abruptly halted by angry Sikh youth. Many known leaders of Congress were subject to a torrent of criticism in the local gurdwaras and were in due course thrown out of management committees. However, there was a concerted effort to revive the flagging Overseas Congress by various means. In 1985, Swaran Singh -a Sikh ex-cabinet minister arrived in Britain to rejuvenate this organisation. He also inaugurated another organisation, the Punjab Unity Forum [which later became the Sikh Forum] and helped in launching

³⁵ Des Pardes, September 23, 1988.

a new journal called Unity. A number of Sikhs and Hindus were recruited into this organisation. It held its first conference in 1985 where the twin aims of keeping Britain's Sikh community loyal to India and 'unity among Indians abroad'. However matters were far from peaceful as far as Congress leaders were concerned. Sohan Singh Lidder, president of the Indian Overseas Congress was shot in Luton in late 1985. An ISYF activist Sulakhan Singh Rai was charged with the murder. In addition, he was also charged with the plot to murder Tarsem Singh Toor, the General Secretary of Indian Overseas Congress branch in Southall who was shot dead by unknown assailants^[36]. Mr Rai was given a life sentence at the Old Bailey. A spokesman from the Indian High Commission has pleaded with the British government, 'our very simple proposition to Her majesty's Government is that since we are friendly countries, British citizens should not wage war against India from here. The British government has given us protection but we very unhappy about these extremists. We know who the extremist are and we have pointed them out. There are no more than a few dozens and most of them have British passports.'^[37]

The cause of Indian unity and the fight against Sikh separatism also came from an unexpected quarter. In a Punjabi weekly newspaper Sandesh International from Southall, a sustained campaign of news and views emphasising the unity of India was started immediately after June 1984. Earlier this paper had also supported the Emergency measures of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1975 and was the only Punjabi weekly to support the Indian government in the aftermath of 1984. In its pages appeared an advertisement for the unity of India, calling the Sikhs, who were burning India's national flag, traitors^[38].

³⁶ The Guardian, February 6, 1986.

³⁷ The Guardian, June 7, 1986.

³⁸ Sandesh International a Punjabi Weekly from Southall launched a vigorous campaign against Sikh separatists. However, its proprietor was sent to jail on charges of heroin smuggling and the paper was closed amidst controversy that the Indian High Commission was providing financial support.

These advertisements were placed by a new organisation calling itself Sachkhand Nanak Dham [SND] with a base in Birmingham. The emergence of Darshan Dās as head of Sachkhand Nanak Dham was widely believed among certain Sikh circles to be a ploy of Indian government agencies. Whether one believes in this 'conspiracy theory' or not, the case of Darshan Dās seems an interesting one. The late Darshan Dās -a young Hindū from Hoshiārpur, suddenly appeared on the scene in Handsworth with a building in hand and a number of wealthy followers. At the height of the 1984 tensions, the newly discovered *sant* startled many Sikhs by promising to send a gold-wrapped copy of Gurū Granth Sahib to the Golden Temple to replace the original destroyed during the fighting. In another advertisement in Sandesh International, it also promised the readers that Sachkhand Nānak Dhām was carrying out repairs to the damaged *Akāl Takhat* and asked that no one should offer donations to others for this purpose³⁹. In a subsequent advertisement, a challenge was thrown to Sikh youth to dare burn the Indian flag in the Slough-Gravesend area. Taking up the challenge, some Sikhs went there and put the Indian flag on fire; in the ensuing clash, SND supporters were badly beaten up. In a symbolic fusion of Hindū and Sikh religious spirit, reminiscent of such attempts in the late nineteenth century by some Hindū religious leaders, SND followers were to keep their hair and turban with a mark on their foreheads -a characteristic Hindū custom. Darshan Dās used to combine the unique mixture of using the Sikh scriptures and the themes of Indian unity with magical spells of nām simran. However, the SND refrained from further physical confrontation with Khalistani youth, but stepped up its propaganda for 'world peace' and the need for 'patriotism'. A number of articles in this weekly, till its demise in 1986, appeared in which Sikhs scriptures were re-interpreted to preach the unity of India and mankind. Undeterred by such high ideals, some Sikhs tried to set fire to the headquarters of SND in Birmingham. The continuing confrontation between SND and Sikhs came to boil when the SND leader, Darshan Das, was murdered by two

³⁹ Des Pardes, August 31, 1984. Also see issues of Sandesh International, August/September, 1984.

Sikhs. The *sant's* brief but colourful and charismatic career was cut short by two young Sikhs who shot him dead during a prayer meeting in a Southall school^[40].

The role of Punjabi communists in opposing the separatist claims of Sikhs is however more significant than the SND or Indian Overseas Congress. The Indian Workers' Associations were major organisations, practically all Jat Sikh dominated. A few Punjabi Hindus held important positions among them. The IWAs also represented, in a way, the elite Sikhs as the majority of literate Sikhs found within them an expression of their resentments against racial discrimination, and an outlet for literary pursuits^[41]. IWAs dominated the 1960s and 1970s, when some Sikhs formed a separate religious-political organisation in the shape of Akali Dal. The Akali Dal had a close and working relationship with the local IWAs, collaborating on various issues. The IWA activists, who were Sikhs and of communist persuasion, had considerable sympathy among the Sikh population of Britain. However they were ill-prepared for the Punjab crisis. In the aftermath of June 1984, various branches of IWAs issued statements denouncing the demand for an independent Sikh state. This was, of course, a carbon copy of the two Punjab Communist Parties' stand on the 'Punjab problem'. Many Sikhs resigned from the IWA for what they thought to be its anti-Sikh stand. The IWA lost substantial support in Leicester and Derby in September 1984 when many Sikhs resigned en masse at a public meeting. In Leicester, scores of Sikhs burned their IWA membership cards in a public show of repudiation of the communists' attitudes. A similar setback was apparent at the stronghold of the IWA in Birmingham when some of its workers tried to distribute a pamphlet condemning both the Indian government and the Akali leaders for the tragedy in Amritsar in front of the Smethwick

⁴⁰ The Independent, 13 November, 1987. Des Pardes, 20 November 1987. Darshan Dās was killed on 11th November 1987. Two Sikh youths, Rajinder Singh Bath and Manjit Singh Sandher are now serving life sentences for the murder.

⁴¹ Dewitt, John Jr. Indian Workers Associations in Britain, London, Oxford University Press, 1969.

Gurdwara. The angry Sikhs belonging to ISYF and others gave them a severe beating. This was the first of a series of fights which continued for several years in the Midlands. In a number of towns meetings arranged by the IWAs were either abandoned or held behind closed doors. As the clash between Sikh militants and Communists in the Punjab resulted in the killings of a number of Communists, the confrontation between pro-Khalistan activists and IWA activists in Britain took some violent turns⁴².

Among various IWAs, IWA[GB] which owes its allegiance to CPI[M] had a strong base in Derby, Nottingham and Birmingham. Through its occasional paper Lokta, it has stressed the unity of India and alleged the Punjab problem was a foreign conspiracy. The theory that 'imperialist powers are designing the breaking-up of India' along with pleas to the Union Government for a resolution of the Punjab crisis is a favourite position taken by IWA leaders. The third splinter group of Punjabi communists are Naxalites. Calling themselves again IWA[GB], they are far more critical of the Indian government's role in handling the Punjab situation and their solution is to campaign for a revolution to get rid of all the ills of the existing order⁴³.

The IWA based in Southall, however, took a different route to oppose the Sikh separatist ideas. Vishnu Datt Sharma joined by another Punjabi Hindu in 1984 and appealed to boycott the two popular Punjabi weeklies, Des Pardes and Punjab Times. However, the impact of the appeal was hardly noticeable. Not only did the circulation of these two papers escalate, there was an apparent lack of enthusiasm for the pro-India cause. In another move, Mr Sharma started a monthly paper 'Charcha' to

⁴² Express and Star, July 8, 1986. Many clashes between ISYF activists and communists took place in the Midlands during the past years. At a meeting held at Summerfield school by IWA CPI[ML], ISYF activists disturbed the meeting; as a result several people were hurt. Smethwick was the scene of another fighting in July 1987.

⁴³ Lalkar is the occasional publication of IWA[GB] which offers such revolutionary solutions.

woo 'the patriotic section of Sikhs and the Punjabi population', aimed to encourage 'unity and patriotism for India' in the aftermath of 1984. After initial enthusiasm the magazine slimmed down in frequency before ceasing publication in 1987. In the post 1984 period another monthly was launched from Leicester called Lokta by Avtar Sadiq. The paper reflected the ideological stance of the IWA affiliated to the CPI(M) and carried its message of internationalism and with occasional updates of factional fighting within the Punjabi communists.

In the aftermath of 1984, the pro-India lobby started several ventures aimed at Sikh readers. Ram Kaushal, a proprietor of Amardeep -a Hindi weekly from West London started Punjabi Darpan a Punjabi weekly in early 1985, edited by Sarwan Zafar. After the closure of Sandesh International in 1986, another pro-India weekly Shere Punjab was launched with a similar editorial policy. The line taken by these new publications was to expose the Sikh separatist stand.

However, if winning the hearts of the Sikh population in Britain was a top priority for post-1984 publications, the means were not always straightforward. The two new papers, Punjabi Darpan and Shere Punjab were both owned by Hindu proprietors albeit with Sikh editors. Moreover, only a small number of Sikh readers seem to have been attracted to these papers. Other means employed were influence and political power. It was alleged that some Punjabi Hindus had put pressure on the Ealing Council to stop advertisements in the Des Pardes. By some strange logic, the Punjab Times was exempted. Some writers led by Ranjeet Dheer, a councillor from Southall boycotted Des Pardes, he was joined by a few other writers of revolutionary orientation. The standing of papers such as Lalkar among Punjabi readers was never high, but it touched an all-time low in the post 1984 period. Nor did Lokta gain any ground among Sikh readers⁴⁴. The

⁴⁴ Tatla, Darshan Singh and Gurharpal Singh. 'The Panjabi press', New Community, 15[2], 1989, pp. 171-184. This provides a general overview of the Panjabi press in Britain. The role of Panjabi press in the post-1984 events needs further analysis. The British Panjabi media

British media showed only a slight acknowledgement of its Sikh readers and Punjabi papers. No English daily found fit to launch an enquiry into the turmoil within the Sikh community during this period. Nor was any Punjabi paper approached to clarify the issues. The Punjabi community's world was perhaps still too small for an English audience even when it was at its most volatile.

INDO-BRITISH RELATIONS AND THE SIKHS

The post-June 1984 developments among British Sikh communities settled has been exercising the minds and diplomats of Britain and India. The Government of India impressed upon British and other foreign governments to deal severely with the 'Sikh extremism and separatism' based abroad. For Britain, the stakes have been higher. During the 1985 visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Britain it was widely reported that Anglo-Indian relations had considerably worsened due to what Indian authorities considered 'soft approach towards Sikh militants' in Britain.

Negotiations of bilateral trade, particularly the arms deal which the British were keen to procure from India were conditioned by such policy considerations. Mr Heseltine -Minister for Defence had to cancel his visit to Delhi in December 1984^[45]. The British premier, Mrs Thatcher during her visit to India in April 1985 tried unsuccessfully to salvage Britain's export of aircraft missiles to India^[46]. The Indian Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi cancelled a £65 million order for the Westland helicopters and a £175 million order for British Sea Harrier Jets and

has been under severe pressure to conform to the Indian government line, Air India advertisements have been denied, others have been 'asked' to toe the line. Tarsem Singh Purewal, the editor of Des Pardes, a weekly with the largest circulation among Sikhs in Britain, has been singled out. He has been intimidated, taken to the Press Advisory Council, complaints against him to local Ealing Council have been many, and he has been denied entry to India.

⁴⁵ The Sunday Times, 23 December 1984.

⁴⁶ The Times, April 15, 1985.

Sea Eagle Missiles was the subject of lengthy negotiations. A British Aerospace Exhibition planned in New Delhi was also cancelled.

The Government of India has consistently maintained that Sikh separatism has been encouraged from abroad. The White Paper issued after the army action in the Punjab listed activities of several individuals and organisations based in the UK and other countries, giving details of Dr Jagjit Singh's career, activities and his connection with overseas Sikh leaders. Both Labour and Conservative parties have been making statements about their respective stand on the 'Punjab question'. In the case of the Tory party, matters have been rather more urgent. The Anglo-Asian Conservative Association had to be dissolved by the Central Conservative Office due to what was alleged as the 'Sikh domination' of it^[47]. Moreover some local MPs have been involved in the lobbying of particular cases of Sikhs held in India and in meeting deputations of local Sikhs^[48]. The Labour party has also issued statements from time to time, concerning the human rights issue but shelving the question of Sikh independence. The Green Party, though insignificant in British politics, formulated a lengthy solution to the Punjab issue, supporting the right of self-determination^[49].

Since 1984, the House of Commons has debated the 'Sikh question' on a few occasions. Several MPs have taken part in these debates. One of the most consistent campaigners, Mr Terry Dicks, a Conservative MP from Hayes and Harlington, has raised several issues. In a debate he pointed out his concern with the Sikh issue in the following terms;

⁴⁷ The Guardian, August 20, 1986.

⁴⁸ Asian Times, January 9, 1987. Kuldip Kaur, wife of Mr Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi, one-time President of Anglo-Asian Conservative Association was arrested when she visited Punjab and was released only after a personal petition from Terry Dicks, MP. The pro-Sikh activities of Terry Dicks MP were subject to a long article, linking him with a fraud case registered against Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi. The Observer, 12 May 1991.

⁴⁹ The Green Party, 'Policy Statement: Punjab', September 1988. The Green Party, Background Papers on Punjab, 1988.

There are about 8000 Sikhs in my constituency, the vast majority of whom are decent, hard-working people who want to live in peace with their neighbours and make a positive contribution to the community. Judging from reports that I have read of debates in the American Congress, the same is true of Sikhs who reside in the United States and of Sikhs the world over.....

I do not have to remind the House, especially at this time of the year, of the contribution that Sikhs have made in two world wars to defend the freedom and security of the United Kingdom. The list of decorations won by Sikh soldiers is a credit to their loyalty and devotion to our country....

On 31 October, this year [1988] I asked the Foreign Secretary whether he would make a statement on a recent report by Amnesty International entitled "India a review of Human Rights Violations". His answer was no. On the same day I asked him what representations he had made to the Indian government about the alleged violation of basic human rights as reported by Amnesty International. Again his answer was no. I also asked him whether he would publish the evidence on which he based his view that the judicial system in India protected the rights of minority groups such as the Sikhs. His answer was no. On the same day I asked whether he would receive a deputation from the Sikh community in Britain to discuss the allegation of violation of human rights in India. Again his answer was no.

Finally I asked whether the Foreign Secretary would use his good offices to persuade the Indian government to grant me an entry visa to visit the Punjab and make contacts with relatives and friends of my constituents. He replied it was a matter for the Indian authorities¹⁵⁰.

He also brought forward the issue of restriction on foreign Sikh leaders' entry into Britain for consultation with their fellow leaders;

Let me also bring to light an immigration case that is interesting to say the least. Until March of the last year a Mr Gunga [sic] Singh Dhillon a Sikh with an American passport had been allowed unfettered entry to the United Kingdom. However when he arrived in August of last year he was prevented from entering the United Kingdom and sent back on the next available plane without being allowed access to a telephone to contact his solicitor or a Member of Parliament. ... On making enquiries on behalf of Mr Dhillon, I was told that he had been excluded for reasons of national security. I then asked what had happened between March 1987 and August 1987 to make the Home Office take this action. I was told that even as a Member of Parliament involved, I could not be given that information. I am aware however, as is Mr Dhillon, that the Indian government had brought pressure to bear on the British government to ensure that Mr Dhillon was not allowed to enter the United Kingdom. This gentleman -well-respected in America and known to both Republicans and Democrat politicians at Capitol Hill -was denied entry to this country to see his family, at the whim of the corrupt

⁵⁰ House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates 11 November 1988.

Indian government..^[51]

In a major debate in 1991, Dicks was supported by another Tory MP and members of Labour Party. Opening the debate, he stated:

I want to mention yet again in the House the persecution of Sikhs in the Punjab. Members of the Sikh community living in my constituency and Sikhs throughout the world have been concerned for the safety of family and friends living in the Punjab. The rape of young women, the beating of old men and the murder of young boys, to say nothing of the imprisonment without trial of many thousands of innocent people, has been going on since 1984 and continues unabated. Indian security forces are killing hundreds of innocent Sikhs in encounters and there is evidence that those forces have swept through villages in the Punjab intent on nothing less than widespread slaughter^[52].

Terry Dicks also reminded the British government that the Sikh question goes back to the British empire in India:

In 1947, when India obtained its independence it was the British who accepted a guarantee by the Hindus who make up 84 percent of the population that the self-determination of the Sikhs in the Punjab will be recognised. On that basis the British government granted India its independence. Unfortunately for the Sikhs, the British government has done nothing to enforce the guarantee and successive Congress party dominated Indian governments have been able to ignore the pledge.... The refusal of the Indian government aided and abetted by Britain to keep their word has led to Sikh people to call for their own independent state.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr William Waldegrave, answering for the Government, summed up his position on the Sikh activities in the following terms:

The activities of the terrorists are not confined to India. In October 1985 a plot was uncovered to assassinate Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to the United Kingdom. A moderate Sikh leader Tarsem Singh Toor was murdered in January 1986. Another Darshan Das Vasdev was shot dead in November 1987 and three other attempts were made on the lives of leading Sikh moderates. In all those cases, those responsible have been tried and convicted. I return to the original question asked by my hon. friend: what is the effect on Indo-British relations of the situation of Sikhs in India?^[53]

⁵¹ House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, November 11, 1988.

⁵² House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates Weekly Hansard, Issue No. 1573, Vol 199, No.22 November 29, 1991, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1991, p.1241.

⁵³. Mr Toby Jessel [Twickenham] On that point about relations between Britain and India is my hon friend aware that the vast majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House greatly cherish the historic ties of friendship between Britain and India...

The minsters had to deal with several matters relating to British Sikhs' rights. Terry Dicks brought up the case of Mrs Kuldip Kaur, who was released after considerable publicity and intervention. During her visit, she was held in jail by Indian authorities for eight months. Mr Waldegrave had also to deal with another Sikh, Harjinder Singh Dilgeer ordering his deportation⁵⁴. A Labour MP, Mr Max Madden for Bradford with a significant Sikh vote in his constituency, raised several questions in the Parliament. He asked the Home Secretary to seek information from the Government of India on, 'how many police officers and other ranks from the Punjab police force have been prosecuted for crimes up to March 31, 1991; the list of crimes committed and punishments made'. Mark Lennox-Boyd another Minister for State for Commonwealth affairs gave a rather incomplete reply:

In response to our expression of concern the Indian government have told us that up to March 31 1991, a total of 157 police officers and other ranks have been punished for human rights violations in Punjab'.

In another reply to a question by Max Madden on the fate of Karmjit Singh Chahal, the Home Secretary told the House that the decision to deport Chahal in August 1990, was based on reasons of national security and fight against international terrorism. He declined to specify the nature of crime committed by Mr Chahal. In a written answer to another question by Madden, the Home Secretary told the House that Charity Commissioners 'have used their power of enquiry in some 17 cases involving allegations of misuse or misappropriation of funds, during the last three years, by charities connected with the Sikh community living in the United Kingdom' and that in the last five years, no

Mr Dicks: How does my hon friend know that? Mr Jessel: and that this was shown on Wednesday when 45 members of the House attended a function of the Indo-British Parliamentary group at India House.

Mr Dicks: They all had a free curry at the Indian government's expense.

Mr Waldergrave: Against the background of tragedy and terrorism, it behove us all not to do anything to encourage the spilling over of those bitterness in Britain.

⁵⁴ Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, a member of Dal Khalsa was deported to Sweden in September 1986. See Appendix-4.

British or non-British national has been '[a] arrested, [b] charged or [c] convicted' over offenses relating 'to the funding of terrorism in India'^[55]. The Home Secretary also furnished an account of his official visit to Delhi between January 2 and 6 1992 as follows:

We discussed in particular the importance of co-operation between the governments of the United Kingdom and India in combatting terrorism. I stressed our commitment to the fight against terrorism and to co-operation with Indian in this. I also took the opportunity to express our concern about human rights.

I also discussed the desirability of concluding a bilateral agreement to enable co-operation in the tracing, freezing and confiscation of terrorist funds and the proceeds of serious crime, including drug trafficking. In addition, I discussed the suggestion by the Indian government that the existing extradition arrangements should be replaced by an extradition treaty. I agreed that our experts should again consider this, while having proper regard to the practical and legal requirements^[56].

The Parliament approved the Indo-British Extradition Treaty on July 22, 1993. However its passage through the Parliament was not smooth, it led to considerable debate. Several MPs from all parties raised questions about the necessity of such a Treaty. Julian Critchley [Aldershot] enquired of the Minister about many Sikhs who are British citizens and are very much opposed to many of the efforts of the Indian government, 'They must be uneasy about some of the provisions' he noted. Several MPs expressed reservations about the Treaty as far as Sikhs and Kashmiris in Britain were concerned. Terry Dicks, Max Madden and Roger Godsiff [Birmingham, Small Heath] strongly condemned the agreement. Godsiff asked the minister:

How can the government argue that there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that, under the treaty, the person being extradited, "would not be prejudiced...or be punished, detained or restricted on grounds of political opinion." when the Indian army is daily carrying out a war against the people of Indian-held Kashmir and when under the Indian constitution, it is an act of treason for any Indian national to advocate secession by any part of the union from the state of India?^[57]

⁵⁵ Hansard issue no. 1575, December 12 1991, p.510 and issue no. 1577, January 13, 1992, p.463-64.

⁵⁶ Hansard issue no. 1577, January 13, 1992, p.463-64.

⁵⁷ House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates [Hansard], Vol 229, No.222, Thursday, 22 July 1993.

He went on to say:

I cannot but believe that the British government have put human rights at the forefront of their consideration of the issue. I cannot help but feel that what is really driving the treaty is our desire to increase commerce with India and, above all, to increase the arms trade to India. One third of our current export to India relate to the arms trade. A junior Defence Minister is actively involved in promoting the arms trade with India.

The treaty was voted with 123 MPs for and 38 against, significantly, Mr Piara S Khabra, a Labour MP representing a sizable Sikh population of Southall voted with the government.

In Birmingham, with several incidents between Sikhs and opposition groups led by IWAs, the local police had some worries. In a separate development, Geoffrey Dear, Chief Constable of the West Midlands, went on a tour of the Punjab, at the invitation of the Indian government. On his return, he told a press conference that there may be as many as 2000 of the region's Sikhs who support terrorists fighting for independence in the Punjab. He asserted that up to 100 Sikhs living in the West Midland are actively involved in terrorist activities for the creation of Khalistan'^[58]. Dear's statements led to furore among Midlands' Sikh leaders and a meeting was arranged, where Sikh delegates presented a petition which said among other things:

Our homeland is now being mercilessly trampled on by Indian security forces with the so-called aim of curbing extremism, which in practice, has meant denying justice to thousands of victims of state terrorism. ... Reports of daily killings of Sikh youth, and secret trials without adequate provision of any decent legal assistance, and the deliberate policy of 'shoot to kill' by the police authorities has been reported by the British and international press and these reports have been confirmed by some humanitarian organisations^[59].

The strict regulations regarding visas has also helped many otherwise

⁵⁸ The Birmingham Post, February 23, 1989. The paper quoted Gurmej Singh Gill, 'Mr Dear is telling lies and we are very annoyed'. Coventry Evening Telegraph, February 6, 1989 reported the arrest of Inderjit Singh Reyat, a local car worker, who was later extradited to Canada.

⁵⁹ Memorandum presented by G. S. Gill, Balwinder Singh and Tarsem Singh all of ISYF. The memorandum also stated, 'your visit and hobnobbing with the Indian authorities has aroused suspicion and fears among the Sikh community settled here who are naturally concerned about their kith and kin in the Punjab'.

sympathetic Sikhs to take a critical attitude towards India. A number of Sikhs have been questioned and a few arrested at Delhi airport for alleged connection with separatist leaders. According to Mr Kuldip Nayar, Indian ambassador in Britain under the short-lived Janata Government, the list of Sikhs under Indian authorities' surveillance was 'quite long', and the new ambassador took some credit in scrapping a large part of it⁶⁰. Strict visa regulations between Britain and India were relaxed only in 1990 as the Janata Government headed by V P Singh came to power. The new Indian Ambassador to Britain, Mr Kuldip Nayar, took some credit for the new policy and sought some rapport with one or two gurdwaras -the first time an Indian diplomat was received by a management committee of a gurdwara since 1984.

Conclusion

As a result of the 1984 events in the Punjab many ordinary Sikhs have gone through a process of political re-orientation. In sending the armed forces into the Golden Temple, the resulting demolition of Akal Takhat seems to have crucially affected that special bond. In Britain, the support for Dr Chohan prior to 1984 was meagre. In the post-1984 period, the rapport and rehabilitation of the credibility of Dr Chohan among Sikhs in Britain after 1984 is a key indicator of the enormous impact of the June 1984 events on the Sikh psyche. From 1987 onwards, when the moderate Akali Dal ministry was dismissed by the central government and the Punjab was placed under direct central rule, increasing cases of human rights violation by paramilitary forces have led to a gradual alienation of Sikh sympathy for India.

This has happened as the Punjab crisis has lingered on and due to the Indian government's continuous dithering in its resolution. The White Paper issued by Government of India in the aftermath of June 1984 noted 'Sikhs are among the large number of Indians settled or working abroad

⁶⁰ Nayar, Kuldip India House, Penguin, 1991.

whose love for India is not in doubt....'. British and other overseas Sikhs had a very proud relationship with India. During the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965 and 1971, the support sent by British Sikhs amounted to thousands of pounds with messages of goodwill. When the Bangladesh war veteran, Lt-General Jagjit Singh visited Britain, the welcome among the Sikh community was tumultuous; he was honoured in many gurdwaras.

The experience of Sikh leaders involved in 'turban issues,' claiming that the Indian High Commission provided no support or even sympathy, may well have contributed in small ways to the growing chasm. However, these were only small dents in the sustained love for India. The Punjab events have impinged upon the consciences of ordinary British Sikhs and have probably contributed to this alienation. Whether this has contributed to their strengthening of resolve for a separate state for the Sikhs is open to speculation. However, the attitude of Sikh leaders has certainly seen a remarkable shift from pro-India to pro-Punjab and in the post 1984 period, and a discernible shift in their pronouncements towards an independent homeland for the Sikhs.

CHAPTER 7

THE CALL OF HOMELAND

MODELS AND REALITY OF ETHNIC MOBILISATION

Introduction

This chapter seeks an explanation for overseas Sikhs' attachments to the Punjab, and attempts to locate their reaction to the Punjab crisis. This reaction, as we have seen, has mainly turned into a demand for a 'Sikh homeland' involving a considerable number of Sikh organisations. In articulating this demand, individuals and organisations within the community have become embroiled in an unprecedented debate about the need for a 'homeland' and about their position as a 'threatened minority'.

As seen in the foregoing chapters, individuals have gone to the Punjab to join the struggle and the overseas financial flow for the cause has been of sufficient magnitude as to cause a concern for the Government of India. As a result of overseas Sikh involvement, especially those of Canada and Britain, two treaties have been pushed by the latter on the somewhat reluctant Governments of Britain and Canada. Both treaties are aimed at stalling overseas Sikh support for what the Indian government terms 'abetting terrorism'. They provide for the confiscation of funds and extradition of persons involved¹. During the past decade, overseas Sikhs' initial reactions have become institutionalised with the establishment of several organisations. Indeed, the demand for

¹ See Appendix-2 for some excerpts from the two Extradition Treaties concerning overseas Sikhs in Canada and Great Britain.

Khalistan does not suggest an ideological construct by the few.

Overseas Sikhs have helped to internationalise the Punjab issue in other ways. Several Sikhs have been refused permission to enter India; Sikh community leaders' visits across the continent have often been subjected to diplomatic rows, involving the states of India, Canada, the US and Europe. The surveillance of Sikh activists has been, by available accounts, quite relentless. The Punjabi media editors known to be sympathetic to the Sikh homeland issue have faced harassments and 'threats', those taking the pro-India line have been compensated appropriately. The relationship with other Indian communities such as Hindus and Muslims has been affected. The image of Sikhs in the host societies has, to some extent, become tainted. The overseas Sikh involvement for a homeland raises at least four inter-related issues:

1. What are the parameters within which a migrant group mobilises?
2. How can a 'traumatic' event affect group behaviour and transform past attachments into a radical resolution?
3. How widely shared is the demand for a Sikh homeland among overseas migrant communities?
4. How does a migrant group's involvement affect interstate relations and, in turn, how a migrant group's behaviour and evolution is affected by state policies?

1. THE CASE OF PRIMORDIAL ATTACHMENTS?

The considerable mobilisation among overseas Sikhs for a Sikh homeland in the post 1984 period, and intimate connection with Punjab political and social structure, which we have seen through the previous chapters needs to be situated, partly, in terms of Sikh identity. Sikhs in overseas countries, by and large have continued to define themselves as a religious and linguistic community. A majority of Sikh migrants had direct experience of the contemporary Punjab. An equal and increasing

number of Sikhs, perhaps more in Britain than in Canada or America, were born in their adopted countries. The latter know the Punjab and India from secondary sources, notably their parents, while some may have no notion at all. The older Sikh generation is rapidly declining and remember a 'Greater Punjab' consisting of Western districts which is now part of Pakistan. Many Sikhs had their ancestral homes there. Depending upon the history of migration, individuals have acquired citizenship of host countries. Perhaps a majority of them do not look upon Punjab or India as their ultimate home.

However, Punjab has affected the overseas Sikh communities in a profound way. As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, migrant Sikh communities have reproduced some of the features directly related to their home culture. Communities have formed a relatively closed social system which is generally restrictive of acculturative pressures. Communities have also invested substantial resources in the teaching of Punjabi language -considered by them as an essential element of Sikh identity. Punjabi literature of overseas Sikh communities is quite substantial. Folk singers, films, videos and cassettes are another way the Punjabi and Indian culture is brought into the overseas Sikh homes^[2].

In a way some of the overseas Sikhs have tried to rediscover their home country. While the Choudhrys - two Sikhs from Britain who took a tour of Pakistan to discover their Sikh heritage in 1985 published an illustrated booklet, others have used their wealth to consolidate links with the Punjab^[3]. A small number of publications show this process vividly. A book on Ramgarhia Sikhs' history was sponsored by some Ramgarhia Sikhs from Britain^[4]. A book highlighting the role of Mazhabi

² M Schudson, 'How culture works: perspectives from media studies on the efficacy of symbols', Theory and Society, 18, 1989, pp. 153-180.

³ Chowdhary, Hardip Singh and Choudry, Anup Singh, Sikh pilgrimage to Pakistan: illustrated guide, London, Gurbani Cassette Centre, 1985.

⁴ Rehal, Gurdial Singh Ramgarhia Itihas, Apra, Itihasik Tract Society, 1979. Mr Rehal acknowledges overseas Sikhs' financial help in writing the book.

Sikhs was published by the efforts of a Sikh from Southall and written by an eminent historian⁵. A sculptor arranged a tour of Punjab and published a booklet on Punjab rural arts. Conferences have been organised to sharpen the Sikh viewpoint and to provide guidance for action. Academic studies of Sikh religion were endowed with funding from Sikh professionals and businessmen have been endowed such as at the University of Michigan. This project was undertaken by the Sikh Association of America, characteristically launched in the name of Khalsa⁶. Economic and social links have played their parts and numerous societies and charities exist. Visits by rahis, sants, granthis from reputed centres of Sikh faith are frequent. The reading and hymn-singing classes for Sikh children and trips to historic Sikh shrines in Pakistan are ways and means of Sikh identification and links with its centres. Exchange of ideas and materials between overseas Sikhs and their land of origin has a historical continuity as far as North American Sikhs are concerned⁷.

At the same time, a reinterpretation of social conventions, ideology and norms has been an on-going process among Sikhs communities abroad. Justifying the individual Sikh's right to wear a turban or keep a kirpan, another collective symbol, has invariably become linked to the community's cultural and symbolic consolidation. While a practice common among early overseas Sikhs of cutting hair has been questioned, the return to orthodox practices in the religious sphere has been helped by an influx of large numbers of Sikhs observing such practices.

⁵ Mazbi Sikhian da itihās written by Shamsheer Singh Ashok, Historian Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, published by Kartar Singh Nayar, 1987. This book includes appreciations from a number of Sikhs including; the late Gurcharan Singh Khalsa, a well known journalist, Giani Amolak Singh, a Sikh leader of Southall, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, an Akali leader of Punjab, late Dhanna Singh Gulshan MP, Minister of State, Yogendra Masklwana. London and a Birmingham gurdwaras are listed as contributors to the book along with forty individual Sikhs who contributed from £5 to £250.

⁶ Kuldeep Singh, National Secretary of Sikh Association of North America appealed for donations of \$1000 for the next five years. In Summer 1992, Dr. Pashaura Singh was appointed to Sikh Studies post.

⁷ Barrier, N.G. 1989, p.49-89.

From the 1970s onwards a serious re-evaluation of religious practices started when a number of gurdwara management committees changed their practices to what are now called 'orthodox' traditions. The role of Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, as the most prestigious and largest organisation was noteworthy in this respect. Until the late 1960s, the KDS had provided what one scholar has called 'secular' leadership^[8]. In 1971, an issue arose about the 'appropriate' Sikh religious practice within the gurdwara, this was settled in favour of orthodoxy^[9]. Orthodox religious practices have been used to outbid competing parties; leaders have promoted a particular gurdwara as using more authentic Sikh practice.

The fight for turban rights or cases against particular Sikhs are published in Southall, Stockton, Vancouver and, indeed, as far as Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. Sometimes even local events have attracted the concern of world-wide Sikh diaspora. The unfurling of the Indian national flag in a British Columbia's gurdwara brought the intervention of the Sikh religious authority in Amritsar. The Indian national flag was unfurled along with the Khalsa flag to mark independence day of India on 15 August. The head granthi of the Golden Temple to the Gurdwara committee in clear terms: 'no other flag than of Khalsa can be unfurled at a Gurdwara, regardless of its be of a national government or any other organisation'^[10]. Leaders who emerged in the post-1984 period have offered a new vision for the Sikh community. The Sikh Welfare Foundation of North American appealed to fellow Sikhs:

With all that is happening with Sikhs, it is time to organize to improve our image, welfare and self-dignity. We

⁸ Johnston, 1988, op cit., p. 6.

⁹ See for example the election manifesto issued by the two groups for KDS Vancouver in 1978. Amar Singh Mattoo and his group says, 'that the Society is facing court case in which the opposing group proposes that the Committee members should be amritdhari Sikhs. It notes with irony that many relatives of those supporting this argument are still sahajdhari Sikhs. It asks Sikh voters to think and foresee if our new Sikh generation would be Sahajdhari or Amritdhari'.

¹⁰ See Appendix-3 for the text of the letter published in Indo-Canadian Times, October 8, 1982.

should: work to shatter the myth India has created that Sikhs are terrorists. Become an ambassador. Study Sikhism and Sikh history. Create an understanding among ourselves, and among our communities and citizens of the country we live in....

....Ensure Sikh children receive the best education and achieve scholastic merits. Mothers, you should teach your children our religion. ...

...Celebrate the following holidays in addition to our national holidays: April 13th is our New Year Day, -the birthday of the Khalsa. Ensure our gurdwaras provide Sikh baptism [Amrit] on that day. Observe June 6th as the Martyrdom Day: to honour our dead heroes during the massacre of the Golden Temple^[11].

Through many such appeals fellow Sikhs have been asked to understand their past and to prepare for the future challenges. 'Who are we?' and 'Where do we belong?', has become a recurring question. Such questions have also been prompted by overseas situations. Administrative bodies of various states require categories and seek clearly defined boundaries^[12]. In each country Sikh representatives have sought a distinct nomenclature. In Canada the issue was addressed more openly in response to a letter to the Federal Minister by an Akali Dal leader:

... We do hope that this brief would better state our position as Canadian Sikhs [emphasis in original] and the government will not fall into error in dealing with questions whenever the question of so-called "East-Indians" or "origins in India", comes up. Even our "origins" go further than "India", since our people are composed of the Indo-Scythian stock that had settled in northern India since the first century A.D.^[13]

In 1982, a seminar was called for debating the 'Sikhs are a nation' theme in Britain. Earlier in 1981, an American Sikh leader, Ganga Singh Dhillon, addressed the All India Sikh Educational Conference in

¹¹ World Sikh News, February 19, 1988.

¹² Mason, David. 'Categories, identities and change: ethnic minorities and the social scientist', European Journal of Intercultural Studies, 2[3], 1992, pp. 41-52

¹³ Text of a letter by Molla Singh, President, Shiromani Akali Dal Association of Canada, to Rt. Hon. John Roberts, Secretary of State, Government of Canada, 23rd August 1977; quoted in Campbell, M.G. The Sikhs of Vancouver; a case study of minority-host relations, M.A., Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1977.

Chandigarh, Punjab and expounded a similar proposition^[14].

Individual migrants' attachments, reactions and commitment to issues emanating from their erstwhile homes are necessarily complex; on the one hand these are linked to their experience of foreign lands, and on the other, to their sense of belonging to an ethnic group. Sikhs in the three western countries in this study have shared a composite Punjabi culture with Hindus and Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. A number of Sikhs have been through the acculturation process in East African and Far Eastern counties. The reception experience in host societies; a welcoming attitude, or hostile and discriminatory posture have impinged upon minority communities. In the last three decades, the analysis of emotional basis of ethnic attachments has been couched, usually, in an uncritical reference to the notion of primordialism as it was first formulated by Edward Shils and then by Clifford Geertz. However, what we need to study is not the givens of any ethnic community, but the 'specific devices and mechanisms of cultural reproduction, including ethnic-identity, attachment and reproduction'^[15]. Such experiences and related events lead to the development of migrant-host relationships. The outlook of severely discriminated groups usually changes to seek a radical solution and individuals within such groups may resort to revenge, or retire to their private world. Some migrant groups may seek confrontation with their oppressors within the host society, others may be content with patronage from the ruling elite, still others may yearn for a secure 'homeland' of their own. Such ambiguous responses which are the hallmarks of any large migrant community may find a clear direction and resolution by a crisis in their land of origins.

¹⁴ Dhillon, Ganga Singh, Presidential Address to 54th All India Sikh Educational Conference, 13-15 March 1981, Chandigarh, Published by Ganga Singh Dhillon, 1981. World Sikh Festival was held in London from 9th to 11th July 1982.

¹⁵ Eller, J.D. and Coughlan, R.M. 'The poverty of primordialism; the demystification of ethnic attachments', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16, 1993, 183-202

2. THE ROLE OF CRISIS

The Indian army's assault on the Golden Temple complex buildings amounted, in ordinary Sikh minds, to an assault on the collective body of the Sikh society, the Khalsa Panth. This event constituted a 'threat' without parallel in the present century, an attack on the centre of its faith. Here one is dealing with the domain of unconsciousness, an offence against deeply held religious feelings.

For members of Sikh community, the Golden Temple in Amritsar represents a unique entity. The sacred buildings built and dwelt by Sikh gurus, it is the centre of Sikh faith, epitomising a shared religious and historical tradition. Enclosed within its pool stands the Durbar Sahib and the holy Sikh scriptures -Guru Granth Sahib at its centre as an embodiment of their gurus. To stand in this centre is a mystical experience for the believer. In this complex of sacred buildings, two buildings, the Akal Takhat and Durbar Sahib represent the temporal and spiritual authority of the Khalsa. The whole area is thought to be endowed with divine powers. In their daily prayer, Sikhs recite the wish to visit the Golden Temple as part of their religious duty. The passage from the standard community prayer reads thus,

'Sikhan nu sikhi daan, Amritsar ji de darshan ishnaan..'
[Endow the Sikhs with a faithful commitment, bestow upon them a pilgrimage to the Golden Temple and a sacred bath in its pool..¹⁶].

The Akal Takhat has also been associated with the ideal of political sovereignty. Sikhs cite with pride and reverence how even Ranjit Singh, -the Sikh sovereign of the Punjab had to bow to its authority.

The events of June 1984 could profitably be compared with a group trauma and a collective threat. A threat or conflict helps to 'define group boundaries, thus contributing to the re-affirmation and the identity of the group so that the group may maintain its boundaries

¹⁶ McLeod, W. H. [ed.] Textual sources for the study of Sikhism, Manchester, 1984.

against the surrounding social world'^[17]. The duality of Sikhs' attachment towards the Indian state on the one hand, and membership of an ethno-political community was dramatically contested by such a traumatic event. They were being asked to choose between the public and political solidarity of Indian state with its official symbolism and all-embracing mythology of being an Indian and the semi-private, cultural, religious and linguistic domain of the Sikh community's historic relationship with the Punjab. This kind of choice is familiar to many minorities between the home and the world, between the enclosed, warm, but narrow, networks of ethnicity and the broad open but impersonal ties of citizenship in the state and its public community in the professional world of work^[18]. Given that many Sikhs have memories of a sovereign Sikh state, and indifference towards other Indians, with whom they share citizenship but neither the culture, language nor religion, the idea of separatism and independence was bound to arise in the aftermath of such an event, however impractical or absurd it might seem to outsiders.

Looking at the pattern of mobilisation and response of ordinary Sikhs to this event, it would appear that the Sikh elite and politicians, neither in the Punjab nor overseas, were prepared for such an eventuality. The army action was too sudden and entirely a new phenomenon. It is true that, as we have seen in chapter Four, by the 1980s, overseas Sikh leaders and organisations were seeking patronage from Punjab and Indian authorities. In Punjab, it was the Akali Dal leaders who were involved, and the authority of religious institutions, such as the Akal Takhat, advice from Amritsar was sought for particular contentious issues. In the run up to the 1984 events, as more and more Sikhs became involved in the Punjab campaign, Sikh leaders from the Punjab had to intervene and appeal to overseas Sikhs. In some cases it

¹⁷ Coser, L. The functions of social conflict, London, 1965, p.38.

¹⁸ Smith A. D. The ethnic origin of nations, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, p.151.

led to some bizarre consequences^[19].

The emotional reaction to army action in the Golden Temple among ordinary Sikhs was dramatic. This event affected their ties and sense of belonging to India in an intense way. The constraints it put on the sense of loyalty and notion of citizenship among educated Sikhs can be seen by such remarks:

... let us burn our Indian passports, we no longer belong to India... We are Americans and Sikhs and proud to be so. We are now just American Sikhs^[20]

A similar sentiment from a British Sikh of Leicester was typical:

I always said I was first Indian, second Sikh. For all these years, I've kept my Indian passport, but now I feel like burning it^[21].

Various Sikh community leaders, rather hurriedly, tried to interpret the disaster in many ways. For some, it meant a chance to re-examine Sikhs' basic beliefs and their loyalty. Leaders from new organisations based their appeals for mobilisation on the threat posed to the collective Sikh identity, emphasising the religious tradition and asking for a new type of political commitment for a Sikh state^[22]. Far from being the unmitigated disaster, according to one Sikh leader, the crisis has provided Sikhs an opportunity to examine the looming crisis for the world-wide Sikh population:

¹⁹ Indo-Canadian Times November 5, 1982.

²⁰ Des Pardes June/July 1984. Dr Tejpal Singh, Dr Amrit Singh, Dr Rajinder Pal Singh, Dr Piara Singh and Dr Amarjit Singh, three medical experts, two engineers applied for American citizenship in protest over Golden Temple invasion. In a statement they said "India is now like a foreign land to us. American Sikhs have no relation with India".

²¹ The Times, July 6, 1984.

²² Members of ISYF undertake an oath as follows:
I, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, and with permission from my conscience become member of ISYF from today. I promise to follow the rules and regulation of the ISYF according to its constitution. In times of crisis for the Panth, I will sacrifice myself with money, body and mind. Within the constitutional provisions of this organisation, I will work for the welfare of Panthic causes. I will never betray and always remain a servant of the Guru Panth.Signed.

... After the brutal eruption of this holocaust, there seems to be a jolting effect on the Sikh mind, who woke up from a long slumber. Sikhs who had deviated from basic Sikh principles started learning them again, they took on the Sikh attire, the Gurbani, and an understanding of history. They started teaching Punjabi to their children. The Amrit [the Sikh baptism] became popular. Many stopped using intoxicants...^[23]

The most common Sikh reaction was finding ways to restore the 'honour' of the community [Quami-izzat]^[24]. A typical advertisement appearing almost every June since 1984 in the Punjabi media unfolds this cultural expression:

Dear Khalsa Ji:

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa waheguru ji ki fateh. The Indian fascist regime has suppressed our rights and initiated a wanton destruction of our will and economy. They have been dissuading us from seeking the fulfilment of those contractual pledges -to respect Sikhs' right for sovereignty -ever since independence. When all such efforts failed, they launched a regime of oppression and barbarity in June 1984. This was an attempt to wipe our national identity off the face of earth.

Yet thanks to the courage and sacrifices of our brave martyrs, the Sikh nation stands upright and firm in the face of Indian tyranny. In spite of the genocide of June and November 1984 and the international terrorism that has been unleashed over us, our war of independence goes unabated .

Acting upon the commands of the Sikh Nation's War Cabinet - the Panthic Committee, chosen by the Sarbat Khalsa at Sri Akal Takhat on January 26, and April 29 1986, the Council of Khalistan -the political wing of the Panthic Committee is holding a Khalistan Day Rally and International Sikh Conference on April 27 and 28, 1991. To carry the Sikh struggle forward, it will review the struggle so far and plan for the future...^[25]

In many such advertisements published in the Punjabi media, there is clear emphasis on the heroic deeds of Sikh martyrs. The tradition of martyrdom is invoked, praising those who have died in the conflict and asking others to be prepared to sacrifice their selfishness and greed

²³ Saraon, Dr Harbans Singh Impact of "Operation Blue Star" on Sikh Psyche, *World Sikh News*, February 19, 1988.

²⁴ Darling, Malcolm. Wisdom and waste in the Punjab village, London, Oxford University Press, 1934. p. 50.

'The pride or izzat is one of the Punjabi's deepest feelings and as such must be treated with great respect. Dearer to him than life, it helps to make him the good soldier that he is. But it binds him to the vendetta.'

²⁵ Awaz-e-Quam, April 25, 1991.

in favour of the welfare of the Sikh society referred to always as a 'nation.' :

Our martyrs, among them, Amrik Singh, President of the All India Sikh Student Federation, General Subheg Singh and Beant Singh have sacrificed all. While Satwant Singh awaits his martyrdom. Bhai Jasbir Singh, Simranjit Singh Mann and many other brave Sikhs have stood for the community and have sacrificed for the sake of the nation. Following the footsteps of our martyrs, the ISYF is holding its annual conference in British Columbia's capital city, Vancouver with the co-operation of Khalsa Diwan Society. This annual convention would inform you of the Indian government's massive misinformation and propaganda against the Sikh community. How the Indian Consulates are brandishing us extremists and fanatics among Canadians, spreading hatred. How the Indian state is using media, radio, and TV and other communication channels to denigrate our just and gallant movement for independence and survival^[26].

The concept of martyrdom among Sikhs has many elements of Islamic and Christian faith. To die for the faith is an honourable way to death. Sikh historic heroes are many and are remembered daily in the community prayer. These traditions form part of the Punjabi regional culture. For example, sacrifice is part of what has been called the Punjabi heroic tradition. Scores of cassettes have been recorded in the memory of Sikh militants who have been killed by Indian security forces since 1984. These recordings have been sold in various gurdwaras. These songs relate to three inter-related Sikh traditions: the martial tradition; the strength of customary law in the rural areas whereby social and political life is framed in reference to the principles of izzat [honour] and beizzat [insult]; and by the spirit of martyrdom for the faith^[27].

In Canada, a call for an annual convention conveyed a 'potted' history

²⁶ Indo-Canadian Times, October 25, 1985. The programme is listed as: Dr Arjinder Singh Sekhon ISYF [USA] Member High Command, Dr Pargat Singh UK, Dr Gurmit Singh Aulakh USA; Dr Amritpal Singh LA; Didar Singh Bains WSO; Pritam Singh UK; Gian Singh Sandhu WSO; Gurcharn Singh(0 ' [Sikh societies] ; Mohinder Singh Gosal [Sikh societies] Bibi Gurjit Kaur Edmonton; Balwinder singh Bhullar [Calgary]; Harpal Singh Khalsa; Bhai Sahib Lakhbir Singh Khalsa [nephew Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale]; Giani Kulwant Singh BA; Langar will be provided ; Guru Panth da das, [servant of Khalsa Panth] Satinderpal Singh Gill, President ISYF, Canada.

²⁷ Pettigrew, Joyce. 'Songs of the Sikh resistance movement, Asian Music, Fall/Winter, 1991/92, p.86-7.

of the contemporary situation facing the Sikhs in India. The following is typical of such appeals, issued through the Punjabi media in all three countries:

Pray to the God, the International Sikh Youth Federation of Canada is holding its annual Convention on 10th November 1985 at Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver.

Dear respected Khalsa Ji:
Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.

After evoking the Sikh greeting, which is characteristic of Sikhs' collective meetings, [Punjabi words, Khalsa, the Panth, Waheguru, are a shared vocabulary in religious realm], the Indian government's oppression is described thus:

As every member of the Sikh fraternity knows already, the Khalsa Panth is passing through a very difficult and dangerous period of its history. In the so-called Indian democratic republic, the proud and respected Sikh nation's culture, religious traditions, identity and integrity are being crushed. The Indian government is using all its power including the army, the police commandos, armoury and tanks to annihilate the Sikh nation.

The army invasion of the Golden Temple, the humiliating demolition of the Akal Takhat, the burning down of the Sikh Reference Library, priceless manuscripts of the Gurus, handwritten copies of the Guru Granth Sahib, sacred letters of our Gurus. Ten thousand Sikhs were killed by the Indian army's butchers. These were atrocities committed by the Indian government and these cannot be made to overlooked despite all the lies of the government. The black deeds of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi's governments are writ large^[28].

It then goes on to narrate the violent clashes in Delhi and other cities which resulted in the death of thousands of Sikhs following the death of Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh body guards.

After Indira's assassination, innocent Sikhs in almost every large city of India were murdered by the Hindu majority at the connivance of the Indian government. Daughters and mothers of the Sikh nation were humiliated, their property burnt. After three decades, Sikhs were, once again, reduced to the status of refugees. Our nation's new generation was killed by the armed forces..

This characteristic militant reaction in the face of calamity may provide some interesting insight into cultural configuration of an

²⁸ Indo-Canadian Times, November 17, 1985.

ethnic group and could be contrasted with other groups^[29].

Reaction to 1984 events, the consequent shock, anger, and change in outlook can perhaps, be best illustrated by the annual reports of the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver. Upto 1981 these were usually illustrated with the Gadrtes and other Indians who fought for freedom. Starting in 1982, the KDS report carried a picture of Sikhs who volunteered to go the Punjab in support of Dharma Yudh Morcha^[30]. The 1984 annual report displayed a picture of the damaged building of Akal Takhat inside the front page. The first page carried a stanza of the tenth Guru in Punjabi and English. The English version was titled 'the Sikh National Anthem' -this was an innovation and this has been repeated since in other contexts. A picture of Sant Bhindranwale on the second page quotes him, "Physical death I don't fear, death of conscience is sure death". The last paragraph reads:

The sant was neither a "secessionist" nor a "terrorist" as the official and other agencies would have us believe. He has been more sinned against than sinning^[31].

The last phrase is reminiscent of the famous case of Thind in California in the second decade of this century^[32].

Despite a high degree of mobilisation, it would seem there is as yet no clear consensus on the Sikh homeland. Not only is the community divided

²⁹ Walter, Zenner 'Lachrymosity: a cultural reinforcement of minority status', Ethnicity, 4, 1977, pp. 156-166.

³⁰ Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, Annual Report 1982. It carries a picture of Shahidi Jatha A Delegation of Martyrs] for the Punjab. Singh Randhawa, Amar Singh Thind, Kehar Singh Bains, Buta Singh Panesar, Mohar Singh Gill, Thaman Singh Brar were the volunteers who went to take part in the Punjab autonomy campaign. Each person is carrying a Kirpan and is garlanded.

³¹ Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, Annual Report 1984.

³² Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, Annual Report, 1984. The report quotes from newspapers, with pictures of General Subheg Singh and Amrik Singh. It claims that the Indian government has taken the decision to annihilate the Sikh nation, and Sikhs have determined to fight and many Sikhs have taken baptism. It notifies that 198 persons took Amrit during the year. The back page has a picture of Mewa Singh with the caption 'a Sikh martyr of Canada, born in Lopoke, Dist Amritsar, hanged in New Westminster B.C., Canada in October 1914'.

over the need for a country, the nature of discourse shows that this demand has been a reaction rather than a well-argued rationale for a Sikh homeland. In short, the ideological foundation for a Sikh homeland has, yet found no proponents abroad. This can, obviously, be related to the socio-cultural and educational milieu of the community and its elite. Originating from a peasant society, their outlook has been utilitarian rather than ideological on issues facing themselves or the community as a whole. In some ways their mobilisation can be described as of a 'proletarian' diaspora^[33].

3. THE NATURE OF DISCOURSE ON THE HOMELAND

For some Sikhs, the Punjab was just a piece of land where they lived before migration, for others it was a sacred territory with a mythical hold on their consciences. Events of June 1984 must account for some share of this transformation^[34]. Indeed, the aptly named booklet Sikhs in their Homeland: India was widely circulated among overseas Sikhs by the Government of India in June and July 1984 to encourage Sikh association with India rather than Punjab as their homeland. It was an acknowledgement of Sikhs' rather ambiguous relationship with India as could possibly be recognised by a state.

In Canada and elsewhere there has been vigorous debate about Sikh homeland and Sikhs' relation to India. The diverse constituency making up the overseas Sikh population has hindered a united call for a Sikh homeland. Some have asked for restraint and stopped short of a demand for Khalistan. A number of educated Sikhs in Canada have seen this issue as particularly harmful to the collective image of Sikhs. They also fear such slogans and demands would add to problems of Canadian-Sikh relations. In one of the anti-Khalistan arguments, one Vancouver Sikh argued:

³³ Armstrong, John A. 1976, op cit., p.407.

³⁴ Oberoi, Harjot 1987, op cit., p.40-43

I have invited you here simply to state, once and for all, to the world that an overwhelming but silent majority of the Sikhs residing abroad in Canada, United States of America and Great Britain, although aggrieved, are Indians to the core, and want their just place in one India and want very sincerely and strongly to reject the attempts of a handful of individuals to give a separatist tinge to the injured feelings of a community. Khalistan is not our demand, all religious and political grievances are soluble within the context of one united India. The attempts to promote a division of India or violence associated with those attempts are not condoned by the overwhelming but silent majority of the people residing abroad.

I ask those of us who have raised separatist slogans to reconsider their position and come and join hands with all of us... We have not only the integrity, communal harmony and unity of India at stake but also the credibility and respect of our community in Canada and other parts of the world^[35].

Another Sikh, Gurdev Singh Chohan responded to Ujjal Dosanjh's letter in a Vancouver newspaper in the following terms:

Ujjal Dosanjh [The Vancouver Sun, April 3] seems all wet behind the ears to say that ethnic minorities must "integrate". Canada highlights multiculturalism. The Sikh community's wide support for Khalistan in no way detracts from Canadianism. Just let him look at what American Hebrews have done for Israel. Dosanjh obviously continues to exaggerate since he conveniently charges the 'proponents of Khalistan' with violence, terror etc' [which is] non-existent in fact. As the elusive 'silent majority' he is neither silent nor majority, spotlighting himself in a false controversy^[36].

Did the overseas Sikhs perceive the Punjab as their homeland before the events of 1984? If so, what was their relationship with the larger entity India?. The answer to these questions is difficult.

A single event could turn a major section of an ethnic group onto a collision course with a state with which it had previously a cordial relation. It also shows the 'homeland' is not a straight choice but rather a complex issue of evolving and shifting identities with no unilinear path in view. The dynamics of ethnic identity, a rather ambiguous and complex concept, in this context, can be seen through the mode of protest and mobilisation among overseas Sikh communities. A

³⁵ Indo-Canadian Times, August 31, 1984, This letter was published in several papers, including The Vancouver Sun, 22 August 1984.

³⁶ Indo-Canadian Times April 26, 1985.

crisis could potentially re-align ethnic identification but this needs to be studied with reference to its internal cultural matrix and external environment.

Khushwant Singh, a noted Sikh historian from Delhi debated the issue of Sikh homeland extensively with the American Sikh leader, Ganga Singh Dhillon, during 1981-82. In one such letter Khushwant wrote:

...in your articles you make a large number of assertions which are totally at variance with my reading of Sikh history...the demand for Khalistan is based on erroneous interpretation of the word 'nation' which has an entirely different connotation when used by historians you quoted and acquired a sinister innuendo after the Muslim League demand for Pakistan. The demand is manifestly mischievous and goes against the interests of the Sikhs. It is wrong of you to dismiss the strong opposition to this demand among the Sikhs themselves as being born out of fear of the government or the Hindu majority. Nor do for that matter, people like me oppose it to seek any favour from the government.

We have the interests of the Khalsa at heart as much you and your supporters in the States and Canada. Only we happen to be, as it were, on the scene, and you, despite your emotional attachment to your ancestral faith, live in comfort in a foreign country. For you this may be an academic exercise; for us it is hard reality³⁷

Ganga Singh Dhillon, however, pleaded taking a different line:

We are not looking just for a piece of land. We are looking for a territory where Sikhs can protect their women and children. Where a Sikh can become a master of his own destiny -where our religious shrines are not allowed to be run over by army tanks. You can call it an independent Punjab, a sovereign state or Khalistan. What we are asking for is a homeland for the Sikh nation³⁸.

K S Sihra, a Sikh based in Britain with a long experience of life in different countries, argued his case for a Sikh homeland in more mythological terms:

God gave the Sikhs their land, a rich and fertile land blessed with much sun and irrigation, the land of five rivers' the Punjab...Maharajah Ranjit Singh gave the Sikhs their state, later handed in trust, first to the British then to the Hindu Raj -but the Sikhs never surrendered their ultimate sovereignty to any power other than their own. Today after forty years abuse of their trust, the

³⁷ Khushwant Singh, 1992, op cit., p.p41-42

³⁸ Dhillon, Ganga Singh 'Give us Khalistan and leave us in peace', The Illustrated Weekly of India, July 21, 1985.

Sikhs are ready to create again their independent, sovereign state^[39].

He also issued a charter for Khalistan with a draft constitution of the Sikh state. His analysis ran on the following lines:

It is abundantly clear for all to realize that the India of today is a superficial state imposed from above by the transfer of power from the British raj and in a sense is a continuation of that raj by trickery and perversion in many ways and is an un-natural outcome...

Several nationalities of Indian in their territorial units which like Khalistan should be able to form their own sovereign states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoland, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir and come together in a new economic union as the European Economic Community with full freedom for self-development in unity and mutual regard for each other. The reorganisation of India on the basis of regional ethnic nationalities with distinct ethnic language and cultural background has become imperative as the only satisfactory primary answer to end the perpetual conflicts with the underground movements that have constantly engaged the police and the army in the several nationalist states since 1947 at great economic cost and loss of life^[40].

A Sikh from Canada commented on Sikhs' predicament through two books^[41]. Examining the Sikh community's future, he visualised three alternatives: i. to accept the status quo, 'which will ensure a certain death for the community', ii. Campaign for the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, this would only lead to being 'entrapped by the government's false promises', iii. Campaign for 'an independent and sovereign Sikh homeland encompassing the Punjabi-speaking region of the erstwhile East Punjab' this, he suggested, 'as the most realistic option'. On the concept of a Sikh homeland and its recent evolution, he observed:

The concept of Sikh homeland which appeared to exist only in imagination has now taken a turn for reality, which will certainly be attained in due course of time.Khalistan, a dream of some, and fanciful wish of many, has now become the demand of all Sikhs. Voice of the people is the voice

³⁹ Sihra, Kirpal Singh Sikhdom, South Harrow, The Sikh Commonwealth, 1985, p.55.

⁴⁰ Khalistan, 1986; p.10 It is labelled as 'authorised for publication by Khalsa Punth Secretariat, Durbar Sahib, Amritsar, Khalistan'.

⁴¹ Dharm, S. S. The only option for Sikhs: Internal and External threats to Sikhism, Arlington, Ill, Gurmat Publishers, 1986.

of God...^[42]

While, much of the arguments for a Sikh homeland are to create an environment to safeguard the Sikh religious traditions and Punjabi language, paradoxically, the theological argument has also been used by those opposed to the Sikh homeland. They have argued that energies poured into the creation of a Sikh homeland will only restrict the Sikh faith's universal appeal. Gurutej Singh Khalsa, an American-convert to Sikh faith, asked fellow Sikhs to re-consider their commitment to a 'Sikh homeland':

This cannot just stop with putting on an orange turban and calling for a homeland. True spiritual education is needed. We must develop public relations tools and skills so as to correct this damaged view of what a Sikh is. Next, we must seriously bridge this gap between Indian origin Sikhs and other Western Sikhs. This religion belongs to no one nationality. It is not to be confined to a homeland, for the nature of the Khalsa is a sovereign, spiritual nation which knows no physical boundaries. Then this religion will be viewed as a lifestyle that the rest of world not only wants but has a right to.....^[43]

This theological vision would have little appeal to many Sikhs of Punjabi origin. Nor did their sense of outrage seem compatible with the subtle reasoning of American Sikhs^[44]. The contrast between the two groups was striking. While a representative of the American-convert Sikhs was able to condemn the murder of the Prime Minister of India at the CBS Morning News, a number of Sikhs of Punjabi origin were shown celebrating on the streets of New York.

For many Sikh leaders, their ability to influence the foreign policy of their host country is an important measure of their self-worth^[45]. The Khalistan Council as an international wing of the Panthic Committee of

⁴² Dharm, S. S. 1986, op cit., p.90.

⁴³ The Sikh Social and Educational Society, Proceedings, 1985, p.84.

⁴⁴ Dusenbery, Verne A. 'On the moral sensitivities of Sikhs in North America', in Lynch, Owen and Kolenda, P. [eds.] Divine Passions: the social construction of emotion in India, Berkeley, 1989.

⁴⁵ Weiner, Myron 'Asian Americans and American Foreign Policy', Revue Europeenne des Migrations Internationales, 5[1], 1989.

the Punjab [with Dr Aulakh as its representative in Washington, and Dr Chohan in London] has acted as the international protagonist for the Sikh homeland demand. In issuing a draft constitution for the Khalistan, by writing through periodicals and newspapers, Sikh leaders have impinged upon the imagination of ordinary Sikhs in various countries. Annual conventions of various organisations see the convergence of Sikh leaders from other countries as delegates. Dr G S Aulakh, in this respect, travelled to Europe many times^[48]. In a number of cases, the Western governments have put up various barriers to make such exchange trips difficult, even refusing entry to some Sikhs.

In the post-1984 period, a mere naming of a market led to legal fighting in Vancouver. The issue was, should it be called the 'Punjabi Market' or the 'Indian Market'? A dispute over its name in the post 1984 period could well illustrate the process of subtle but perceptible change in the Sikh identity emphasising their 'Punjabiness' rather than 'Indianness'. Similarly an assertion of ethnic pride, seen in the unfurling of a Sikh flag at the United Nations Congress of ethnic groups, where the Indian government delegates walked out in protest, shows some similar trend at work.

⁴⁸ Dr G S Aulakh, President, Council of Khalistan gave a statement to the Parliament of Belgium, on 28 October 1993. Part of his speech are:

I come to you as a representative of Khalistan, the captive nation, to seek support of the good people and government of Belgium in the Sikhs struggle for freedom against the oppression of the Indian government. ...

There are two path for Belgium and the International community in regards to India. One is the status quo, where violence, agony, despair and frustrations continues to havoc India's shackled nations. The other is the road to peace and prosperity through freedom and self-determination. Clearly, morality, justice and South Asian regional security demand Belgium to choose the second.

On behalf of the sovereign Sikh nation, I urge Belgium to support freedom for Khalistan by doing three things. First, extend full diplomatic recognition to Khalistan. Second, introduce legislation similar to the American legislation calling or a UN sponsored plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan. Third cut all monetary aid to India because of its human rights violations against minorities.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The intense debate and its ambiguity on the question of a Sikh homeland, notwithstanding, overseas Sikhs have certainly turned Punjab issue into an international one. Their protests, mobilisation and the reaction of India and host states have effectively internationalised the Punjab crisis. Earlier during the Punjab autonomy campaign, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, the Akali Dal leader, had written 'An Open letter to Khalsa Abroad' knowing overseas Sikhs' potential in the international political arena:

Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh, I am sending This special letter to you because you should know what is happening to the Panth⁴⁷.

Sikh organisations since 1984, tried to spread themselves internationally; the WSO has operated in Canada as a parallel group, and it tried, unsuccessfully, to gain a foothold in Britain; the Babbar Khalsa has close-knit parallel organisations in several countries from North America, to Europe and the Far East. Literature published by these organisations include reports on the Delhi riots, human rights issues, the Amnesty International Reports and the Panthic Committee Declaration on 26 January 1986. The WSO has appealed to the UN Secretary-General in open letters and memorandums. In one such letter, WSO President, Dr Manohar Singh Grewal wrote:

...The situation in the Punjab is becoming more alarming. The bleeding Sikh nation is in agony...Attempts by the International Committee for Red Cross and Amnesty International to go to Punjab have been rebuffed. Similar requests by US congressmen and Members of British Parliament for visiting Punjab on a fact-finding mission were not granted...

Your excellency, as Secretary General of the World Organisation, you represent the conscience of humanity and the UN inspires hope for freedom and justice.... Thousands of innocent Sikh orphans, widows and older parents whose loved ones have been lynched, for them freedom of religion and expression have been reduced to the 'right to cry in the wilderness'.

Their voices, though inaudible amidst the media blitz of

⁴⁷ See Appendix-1 for the full text of his letter. The letter is signed by Harchand Singh Longowal, President of Akali Dal, as Guru Panth da das [Servant of the Guru-Panth].

misinformation and deception, are appealing to the world community and the UN to urge the ruling regime of India to stop the genocide of the Sikhs.^[48]

Frequent visits of Sikh leaders such as Ganga Singh Dhillon, Didar Singh Bains, Gurmit Singh Aulakh across Sikh communities in Europe and the Far East has brought a new consciousness abroad. The issue of Sikh refugees especially those landed on a Canadian port in 1987 received wide publicity^[49]. In July 1993, a delegation of Sikhs drawn from North America, Britain and Europe went to the UN International Human Rights Forum in Vienna.

In many ways, a chain of events since 1984 have brought Sikh issues into international arena leading to much discussion among the overseas communities. Examples of such events include: the plight of Sikhs in different jails in various countries has been an issue taken up by Sikh leaders from several countries^[50]. Reports of Sikhs from Europe and North America are regularly exchanged through the Punjabi media. In recent years, there have been stories about: Belgium based Sikhs burning the Indian flag in front of the Indian Embassy on 21 February 1986^[51]; Sikhs commemorating 15 August in Frankfurt as a black day^[52]; a Sikh from Stockholm, Jasbir Singh, sending telegrams to Amnesty International and Punjabi papers against his deportation^[53]; a Paris gurdwara where a photo of sant Bhindranwale was taken off after a local dispute between two factions which led to the intervention by the Babbar Khalsa leader, Gurmej Singh. The report alleged that under the

⁴⁸ See appendix-7 and full text of the letter in World Sikh News, June 17, 1988.

⁴⁹ Des Pardes, July 31, 1987.

⁵⁰ Des Pardes, May 30, 1986. Letter from American jail by Jasbir Singh Sandhu and others is addressed to UK Sikhs.

⁵¹ Des Pardes, March 7, 1986. It reported that some seventy Sikhs participated.

⁵² Des Pardes, September, 12 1986.

⁵³ Des Pardes, January - March 1986. He edited Khalistan News - a weekly newspaper.

control of Nirankaris and Communists, this gurdwara, on the eve of Indian Prime Minister's Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Paris, issued a statement that Sikhs are doing fine in India. From Germany, Basant Singh Ramuwalia has been editing a journal titled Shahadat^[54]; from Oslo, a Sikh telling of the dearth of Punjabi books in the library, with large stock of Hindi books with no Hindi readers in sight^[55]. Other instances of such exchange abound.

This exchange of information is not limited to the Western countries only. Contact with the Far Eastern Sikhs has been quite extensive. News of protest marches and resolutions appear in the Punjabi media from as far away as Australia^[56]. A communication from Hong Kong concerned the Government of India's decision to impound the passports of three Sikhs. A photocopy of the letters from Indian High Commission in Hong Kong was displayed with the news^[57]. In a letter written by Deputy President of Khalsa Diwan of Hong Kong, Mr Charan Singh told how Sikhs abroad are being harassed and made stateless by the actions of the Indian government and asked 'if our appeal to Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to be scrapped and put into rubbish bin, then..?'^[58]. The Khalsa Naujawan Sabha [Sikh Youth Association] of Hong Kong sent another communique, describing the Far Eastern Sikhs' role and the critical times ahead for overseas and Punjab's Sikhs^[59].

⁵⁴ Des Pardes, September 12, 1986. Swaran Singh is Vice President, Prem Singh as General Secretary, Balwinder Singh, Treasurer. The Pasla Dhadi Jatha from UK will be singing.

⁵⁵ Des Pardes, December 19, 1986.

⁵⁶ Indo-Canadian Times Vancouver, June 22 and July 7, 1984. According to the report a number of Sikhs met in Sidney and passed a resolution for a separate Sikh state it also reported another protest march by Sikhs in front of Parliament House in Melbourne attended by 300 Sikhs. Ajit Singh Rahi and Dr Manjit Singh Sekhon led the march. Dr Joginder Singh Sekhon, Subheg Singh, Dr J. S. Sidhu and Charan Singh Kooner were among those who spoke on the occasion.

⁵⁷ Sikhs involved were Gurmukh Singh Dhillon, Daljeet Singh Gill, Balwinder Singh Sahrai.

⁵⁸ Indo-Canadian Times, October 25, 1985.

⁵⁹ Indo-Canadian Times, April 26, 1985.

Second major factor in internationalising the Sikh issue is the host countries' reactions to Sikh political activities. Such governmental are based upon several considerations, the foremost being the sensitivity of the Government of India. In the aftermath of 1984 the government enforced strict visa regulations aimed at the Sikhs visitors to India. Only in November 1989, when the Indian election produced a new government led by the Janata Party which replaced the Congress Party led by Rajiv Gandhi, changes of diplomats eased the situation somewhat.

The Government of India has exercised considerable pressure upon Western governments to 'combat Sikh separatism and terrorism based abroad'⁶⁰. The Government of India in its 'White Paper' put major responsibility for Sikh separatism on overseas Sikh leaders. In a report of just 58 pages, nine pages are devoted to Sikh organisations abroad:

Several secessionist Sikh organisations are operating abroad. The chief among them which have raised the slogan of 'Khalistan', or a 'separate Sikh state' are the National Council of Khalistan, Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa nd Akhand Kirtani Jatha. The 'National Council of Khalistan' headed by Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan is active in the UK, West Germany, Canada and the USA. The Dal Khalsa activities are mainly in UK and West Germany, while the Babbar Khalsa is operating largely from Vancouver in Canada. The Akhand Kirtani Jatha has units in UK and Canada.

Why overseas Sikhs should be involved into a Sikh homeland demand, the White paper offers rather brief insight;

However, some are misinformed or misled by interested parties some others may be vulnerable to pressures in those countries. It is not always easy for the affluent abroad to identify themselves with the basic socio-economic interests of the working Sikh masses in India. For some of them the trouble in Punjab were a good opportunity to project themselves as leaders of the Sikh community⁶¹.

The White paper goes on to list activities of each of these

⁶⁰ Rubinoff, Arthur [ed.] Canada and South Asia: political and strategic relations, Toronto, 1992.

⁶¹ Government of India, White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, 1984, p.35-42.

organisations. Most of this information comes from newspaper reports and relate to 1981-1984 period. As we saw in chapter Four, the total sum of activities of Sikh leaders advocating a 'Sikh Homeland' prior to 1984 events was almost negligible as far as their support among ordinary Sikhs was concerned. The White Paper quotes the Vancouver Sun report on 'Johan Vanderhorst affair', which we noted in chapter Five, was no more than an inspired lie about the training camps. Moreover, it omits to mention that major Sikh gurdwaras and organisations had either boycotted these leaders and in any case these leaders had very small following among overseas Sikhs. The White Paper deals with Dal Khalsa which was banned in 1982 in India, at quite a length, quoting Jaswant Singh Thekedar's several remarks in 'various congregations' without sources.

Since 1984, the Government of India has been pressing upon the Western governments, especially Britain and Canada to deal severely with Sikh 'extremism'. Proofs of 'foreign conspiracy' in the dismemberment of India and the creation of Khalistan have been many, based usually upon Indian journalists' reports. According to one such report, high on imagination than its investigative powers:

It throws light on the activities of various extremist Sikh groups abroad.... Among these blatantly separatist groups are 'National Council of Khalistan, in Britain, West Germany, Canada and America, Dal Khalsa in Britain, West Germany, Babbar Khalsa in Canada and Akhand Kirtani Jatha in Britain and Canada. The aim of these groups is to mislead the Sikhs settled abroad, to collect funds for the Khalistan agitation, to defame the Government of India, spread false propaganda about Hindu dominance and to secure all possible help from foreign governments and organisations for the setting up of an independent Khalistan. The Akalis have not expressed any concern over these anti-national activities. Instead they maintained links with these separatists⁶².

⁶² Kshitish, Storm in the Punjab, New Delhi, The word Publications, 1984. p.139-43. It goes on allege that:

The army was investigating reports that a few days before the army action, there had been a meeting at the Golden Temple between Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the self-appointed president of Khalistan, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Ganga Singh Dhillon and a Pakistan General. The documents recovered from the basement of the Akal Takhat indicate these three had spent the night as guests of Bhindranwale. Sources reveal that these three had briefed Bhindranwale in detail about how the last phase of the Khalistan conspiracy

Among other foreign powers, Pakistan has been an easy target and blamed routinely for any troubles in the Punjab, Kashmir or indeed, in other provinces. The USA is another case. From the 1980s, overseas Sikhs have entered this circle⁶³. Indian journalists writing for leading New Delhi dailies or weeklies sent copious commentaries on the 'emotional outbursts' of overseas Sikhs. In a report by a former Indian ambassador to Britain and noted journalist the overseas Sikh involvement was presented thus:

[But] most of the Sikhs have not come round; they are still sitting on the fence. Cut off from India and getting their information through sketchy reports in newspapers and rumours, the Sikhs abroad have only a one-sided story of what has happened in Punjab. I have never heard from anyone such exaggerated accounts of Operation Bluestar and the killings in Delhi and elsewhere in the wake of Mrs Gandhi's assassination as in the United States and Canada.

They are not at all in touch with reality and live in a make-believe world of their own. The divide between the Sikhs and the Hindus visible in the Punjab is visible abroad as well. The Hindus do not visit the Sikh gurdwaras and the old Punjabi spirit is lacking even in the rare social gatherings that they have⁶⁴.

Overseas Sikhs have been described by other commentators as 'romantics,' or 'fools and knaves', living in the 'make-believe world of their own'. Thus according to another journalist, the role of overseas Sikhs:

... Which some people regard as a fourth new salient feature in the Sikh community. ...The majority of Sikhs living abroad, who like the great majority of the Sikhs living in India, have suffered great anguish and have held fast to their sense of responsibility and reality and have continued to realise that it is within India that the Sikhs have to work out their new destiny, and however difficult the task or imperfect the results, no other destiny holds better promise for them.

...Those Sikhs who live abroad but have seized the opportunity to dance upon the agony of the Sikhs living in India. Their numbers are small, but they can be divided

was to be accomplished.

⁶³ Jeffrey, Robin 1986, op cit., p.142-44.

⁶⁴ Kuldeep Nayar, After the accord, in Amrik Singh [ed] Punjab in Indian politics, p.392-93.

into three categories: fools, knaves and buffoons^[65].

At a more serious and consequential level, the Indian parliament has debated the role of overseas Sikhs. In a major debate in the Indian Parliament on April 18, 1985, MPs discussed the US Congress' Human Rights Proceedings on Punjab^[66]. Saifullah Chowdhury MP congratulated the 'Indian embassy who refused to appear in the briefing and sent a strong note condemning the event'. This event according to Chowdhury, 'became a platform to spread anti-India feelings with the vociferous participation of extremist Khalistani leaders like Ganga Singh Dhillon and Jagjit Singh Chauhan. The whole country has been outraged at this briefing on a subject which is exclusively India's internal matter that has been sought to be internationalised by vested interests with a pernicious motive'. Prof K K Tewary [MP, Buxar] took this issue further saying, 'the CIA has been trying, over the years, to infiltrate our organisations especially frontal organisations, our educational institutions and our political bodies. Therefore this is two-pronged attack from America. Destabilisation of India has become the focus of their attention and I must refer to ...Mr Nixon's book'^[67]. Prof Tewary

⁶⁵ Chopra, Pran 'A turning point for Sikhs,' in Singh, Amrik [ed.] Punjab in Indian Politics, Delhi, 1985, p337-38. While dismissing knaves and buffoons for obvious reasons, the fools get a calm examination by Chopra as, 'they are a mistake born of a mistake. The potential mistake has been made by a type of western scholar of Indian affairs who has always taken it granted that India is going to fall apart, broken into its religious, linguistic, and racial parts. More mistakenly than viciously perhaps, he has taken the fulfilment of his expectations in what he believes he has seen on his television screen as a wholesale uprising by the Sikhs in the Punjab, and he has concluded that 'Khalistan' is a possibility. But what he has seen as a possibility the fool among his Sikh neighbours has seen as an option, and he has proclaimed himself as the vanguard of the coming dawn, little realising what great hardship his foolishness causes Sikhs in India as equally foolish Hindu reaction identifies all Sikhs with such rash nonsense.'

⁶⁶ Parliamentary Proceedings, Lok Sabha, Debates, 18 April 1985, p.343-400.

⁶⁷ India, Parliamentary Proceedings, Lok Sabha, Debates, 18 April 1985. Prof K K Tewary quotes some passages from Nixon's book. Part of it is quoted as:

'Only an immensely powerful man could have held India together during those critical early years, maintaining it as a single nation against all the forces pulling apart. ...it was no more in the order of all India to be one country than it was for all Europe to be one country: linguistically, ethnically and culturally India is more

went on to remind the Sikh situation in Britain and Canada:

In this connection, I would also like to mention about the activities of extremists in Canada, America and Great Britain. Recently, Mrs Thatcher, was here in Delhi. She made some very pleasant noises about her concern about India's unity and the activities of secessionist and extremist Sikhs operating from Britain.

...The government of Canada is directly helping. They have granted funds to the tune of millions to different Sikh organisations and they are characterised as minority groups..^[68]

Replying to the debate, Khursheed Alam Khan, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, agreed with most of the honourable members that:

..in certain countries like UK, Canada and America, over-indulgence has been shown to these terrorists. It is really

diverse than Europe. But whether this accomplishment benefitted the Indian people is another question. Unity is sometimes more important to the unifiers than to the unified....'

Prof. Tewary then cites Hardgrave's book as a further proof of America's sinister designs against India.

⁶⁸ Parliamentary Proceedings, Lok Sabha, Debates, 18 April 1985.

He goes on to narrate Dr J. S. Chohan's role in Britain in the following terms:

...I will refer to only one incident, the horror of horrors. Before Madam's assassination Jagjit Singh Chauhan that extremist, fiendish, secessionist leader who has been operating in connivance with the British and America authorities, went on BBC and announced prizes for the assassination of Madam Gandhi. Then after that when Madam Gandhi was assassinated when the terrible tragedy overtook the nation, again the same person was allowed to go on BBC and gloat over the success of his murder squad. I want to put one question to this House and to the government of India. They say that their laws do not permit prosecution of these extremists. If the lawless laws of Britain are in operation there protecting the activities of extremists, will the BBC and government of Great Britain allow a similar broadcast by the Irish Republican Army people against the British Prime Minister or any PM of a country friendly to the western bloc.

He questioned how the Sikh Council of North America could put an appeal in The New York Times, which called for 'the determination of the destiny of Sikhs by themselves'. And 'may I know from the hon. Minister whether this man called Deedar [sic] Singh Bains came and stayed here in Rashtrapati Bhavan ...Who allowed him here? He came here in 1983 and he stayed there....Both Deedar Singh and Bhajan Yogi were staying in Rashtrapati Bhavan complex. ...They are associated with Jagjit Singh Chohan and Ganga Singh Dhillon and Ralph Singh who appeared before the so-called Human Rights Committee to depose against the Government of India and attacked the very concept of Indian unity and oneness'.

very regrettable and we have made it very clear to these countries that India's friendship will depend upon the treatment that these people get.

The Minister also offered advice to overseas Sikhs:

I would like to advise them that they cannot find the solution of their so-called problems in Canada, USA or UK. They can find the solution of their problems only in this country and with the leaders of this country. They have to come and talk to them^[69].

The Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi in a written reply to Satya Pal Malik in the Upper House of Parliament informed him that twenty-six organisations abroad were working for Khalistan^[70]. The Prime Minister seem to have been hurriedly briefed by officials, as a few organisations had no existence. Accordingly, 'Indian government intelligence on external groups has increased dramatically in the last two years, mainly because of the additional intelligence operatives from RAW and the IB [Intelligence Bureau] that have been posted under diplomatic cover in key embassies like Toronto, Vancouver, London, Washington, New York, Bonn and Paris'^[71].

India has seen fit to make the issue of overseas Sikh activities as part of its external relations with Britain, Canada and the United States. India as a senior member of the Commonwealth and as a larger trading partner has a large clout with Canada and the United Kingdom. While Anglo-British relations have been on decline for a long time,

⁶⁹ Parliamentary Proceedings, Lok Sabha, Debates, 18 April 1985.

⁷⁰ The organisation involved were named as: National Council of Khalistan, World Sikh Organization, Dal Khalsa, Nankana Sahib Foundation, Babbar Khalsa, Akhand Kirtani Jatha, All India Sikh Federation, Dashmesh Regiment, Sikh Youth Movement, ISYF, Sikh Youth Federation, Sikh Student Association of NA, Sikh Council of NA, Sikh Association of NA, Sikh Students Federation, Federation of Sikh Societies, North America Akali Dal, International Akali Dal, Guru Nanak Foundation of America, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, International Sikh Solidarity Organisation, Sikh Defence Council, Sikh Cultural Centre, Khalsa Diwan Society.

⁷¹ India Today, July 1985.

Sikh political factor has added to these tensions⁷². The Indian officials have alleged Britain is harbouring militant Sikhs. Negotiations of bilateral trade, particularly the arms deal, which Britain was keen to get from India were conditioned by such policy considerations. Although Britain had delayed signing the bilateral treaty with India, Mr John Major the British Prime Minister had to assure the Indian government:

That we will continue to work closely with them [the Indian government] in every way that we possibly can to defeat the evil of terrorism...we shall continue to look at the ways of strengthening our co-operation with India. We hope to be able to conclude a bilateral agreement with India soon covering the confiscation of terrorist funds.

The Indian government has all along insisted on concluding a bilateral treaty of extradition in order to curb the activities of Sikh 'extremists.' This was duly signed on 22 September 1992, and ratified in November 1993⁷³. Both governments described it as 'the fight against international terrorism'. In Britain, the Sikh issue has figured in the House of Commons several times. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr William Waldegrave outlined the government's position in the following terms:

We have been closely in touch with the Indian government during the past few days to find ways of strengthening our co-operation to combat the activities of extremists within the framework of our laws. That co-operation is something to which the Indian government understandably attaches great importance, and it has assume a central place in the political relations between the two countries. ..

The extremists number perhaps a few hundred at most. ..But organisations are active in the Sikh community whose main purpose is to offer help and support to the extremists in India. Those organisations have been able to draw on the moral and financial support of many Sikhs in Britain who do not share that objective. I call on all decent Sikhs in Britain to ensure, before they give their support to an organisation, that they are clear about its intention⁷⁴.

⁷² Chopra, H. S. 'Improving Indo-British relations: opportunities and obstacles', India Quarterly, 44(3-4), 1988, pp. 155-187. Lipton, M. and Firn, J. The erosion of a relationship: India and Britain since 1960, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Oxford University Press, 1975.

⁷³ See Appendix-2 for excerpts from the Treaty.

⁷⁴ House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 11 November 1988.

The Minister then compared the case of the Irish Americans' role in Northern Ireland. He cautioned that, 'against the background of tragedy and terrorism, it behoves us all not to do anything to encourage the spilling over of those bitternesses in Britain'.

In the United States, the Sikh issue has also occupied several Senators. Dan Burton has, many times since 1984 spoken on the issue of human rights of Sikhs. In a recent speech he highlighted this issue again:

Mr Speaker: I rise today to direct your attention to the continued horror of life faced by Sikhs under the Indian Government. Despite increased international attention to atrocities committed by Indian security forces, despite congressional passage of legislation to cut United States aid to protest India's human rights abuses, the violence against Sikhs continues unabated.

I have risen to share with my colleagues examples of atrocities committed against the Sikh people. It saddens to have to do so again. The Indian government has 1.1 million troops in the northern states of Punjab and Kashmir. These troops have committed countless acts of terror against civilian population -torture, rape, abductions in the dead of night and extra-judicial killings⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Several senators have written to the US President periodically reminding him about US interests in the Indian subcontinent and why the Sikh unrest should be American concern. In a recent such letter, Rep Gary Condit wrote to President Clinton along with 15 other Senators. In the letter Condit reminded the President, 'While the Geronimo resolution presents one avenue for peacefully resolving the Khalistan crisis, diplomatic solutions should not be abandoned'. The 'US must step forward as an honest broker between the Sikh nation and the Indian government'⁽⁷⁶⁾.

⁷⁵ Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 103 Congress First Session, Vol 139, no 161, Washington, November 18, 1993.

⁷⁶ India Abroad, December 10, 1993. Other signatories to the letter were: Dan Burton, Rep. James P Moran [D. Virginia], Peter D King [Rep, New York], Walter R Tucker [D, Cal], William O Lipinski [D, Ill], Richard Lehman [D. Cal], Richard Pombo [R, Cal], Wayne T Gilchrist [R. Maryland], Ileana Ros-Lehtinen [R. Florida], Esteban E Torres [D. Cal], Wally Herger [R Cal], Newt Gingrich [R. Georgia], Christopher Cox [R Cal], Lincoln Diaz Balaz [R Florida], Randy Cunningham [R Cal], Charles Wilson [D, Texas].

In Canada, the Sikh issue has been even more pressing. Mr Joe Clark, Canadian External Affairs Minister urged seven provincial premiers to boycott three Sikh organizations, the WSO, ISYF and the Babbar Khalsa which advocate the creation of an independent homeland called Khalistan. In issuing this letter, the minister was concerned about maintaining warm relations with India¹⁷⁷. This letter was issued on December 11, 1987 by Mr Clark to seven provincial premiers asking them to boycott the three Sikh organisations. It said:

The activities of these organisations have been a significant irritant in our relations with India. The government of India has taken particular exception when elected officials attend functions sponsored by these organisations.

This letter became a subject of acrimonious debate in Canadian Parliament. Several members of Parliament with Sikh voters took part in the debate. It is interesting to look at how they viewed the case of Sikhs¹⁷⁸. A Liberal Democrat MP, Mr Sergio Marchi [York West], proposed the following resolution from the opposition. Starting the debate Mr Marchi argued:

It is with a certain degree of sadness that I raise on behalf of my Liberal caucus colleagues the matter before the House of Commons, to ask the Government particularly the Secretary of State for External Affairs [Mr Clark] to account for the letter which urged a boycott of the activities of Sikh organisations.

I believe those actions constitute an undermining of the social and cultural fabric which is Canada as we know it. We know that the Canadian Sikh community has been besieged in recent days and in recent times. However this should not condone its further abuse as a member of the Canadian community or as a member of the Canadian family.

That in the opinion of this house, the Secretary of State for External Affairs erred seriously in urging upon the Provincial Premiers a political boycott of three Sikh organisations in Canada, thereby undermining ethnic groups on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations against individuals and, consequently undermining the multicultural fabric of Canadian society.

That his House, while condemning violence, and terrorism as political instruments affirms that all Canadians,

⁷⁷ The Globe and Mail, May 24, 1988.

⁷⁸ House of Commons Proceedings: Sikh Organisations: Government position. These were reproduced in the Sikh Times, April 1988. pp. 12-21.

regardless of origin must not be subjected to any coercion, intimidation or other action by the Government designed to prevent their free and peaceful expression of their opinions and concerns about events and issues in Canada or in other lands: and

That this House therefore demands that the Government provide Parliament with all relevant information that led to its aforementioned communication with the Provinces and provide the Canadian Sikh community with a full, public opportunity to defend its honour and integrity and that the Government immediately withdraw its allegations and issue a full apology to all Canadians, and to the Canadian Sikh community in particular, for initiating an unprovoked attack on the rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens and for thereby subverting federal multiculturalism policy.

A number of MPs took part in this debate. Some MPs demanded to know by what right Clark could force any Canadian ethnic community to change its democratic objectives. 'Should not Clark apply the same reasoning to Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians and others seeking independence from the Soviet Union [another friendly country?]' his words echoed the double standard, according to Mr Rils who supported the motion by saying:

...While I listened to the Hon Member's remarks I could not help but think that years ago Jews living in Canada urged and worked for the creation of Israel. Today Palestinians as well as Canadian citizens are urging the creation of a homeland for Palestinians. On Parliament Hill, we have seen demonstrations of people of Croatian origin urging the creation of a Croatian state. We have seen Ukrainians, Slovaks and a long list of people appear on Parliament Hill, in all their own way, and I might add in their own peaceful way with an emphasis on the word 'peaceful' indicating their concern for the creation of a homeland or a state for their people.

Is there something different here? Again, people of Sikh faith are urging the creation of a homeland for their people. I do not see much difference between that and the Jews some years back urging the creation of the State Israel.

Other MPs, with significant Sikh voters, Mr Kaplan and Mr Robinson and Ms Copps also spoke. Ms Copps [Hamilton East] put forward a major criticism of Clark's approach to the Sikh affairs. She argued:

In his letter the Minister points out a number of reasons why he claims that we as Members of Parliament should not attend functions of the International Sikh Youth Federation the WSO or the Babbar Khalsa. One reason is that these organizations exist largely to advocate the creation of an independent Sikh state known as 'Khalistan'. I suggest if the members of Parliament follow that advice and refuse to attend functions of any of these organisations that wishes to dissociate itself from a Government under whose umbrella

it is currently found, we would not be allowed to attend Ukrainian functions or functions of many of eastern bloc countries including Lithuania.There are many nations around the world fighting for an independent cultural and political identity. Are we Canadians then to say that we will attend no functions organised by the Tamil community? I dare say that Members of Parliament not only have a responsibility but a right to attend cultural functions of people in our communities who represent various political viewpoints which differ from that of their respective Governments.

On Clark's second point that some members of these organisations have also engaged in or promote violent activities, she argued:

- The Roman Catholic Church is a very large organisation in Canada. I happen to be a member of that church. Does that mean if another Roman Catholic is caught robbing a bank or in some way breaking the law of the land, somehow all members of the Roman Catholic Church are now persona non grata?

He is appealing to a sense of racism which says that this organisation will be blackballed by all Canadians because the Minister claims some members are involved in so-called violent activities.

Mr Stevnd J. Robinson from Burnaby, B.C with a large constituency of Sikh votes raised several questions. Mr Robinson also asked if Ontario's premier who is a liberal would obey the orders of the Federal Conservative government. He argued:

Mr Speaker I am pleased to participate in the debate on this very fundamental question of human rights, a question which really goes to the core of Canada as a multicultural nation.

Canadians across the land were shocked when they learnt of the attempt by the Conservative Secretary of State for External Affairs [Mr Clark] to dictate to elected officials at the provincial level and presumably to officials at the local level and even officials in his caucus which organisations they could meet with in Canada.

Another MP, Mr Manly said:

...By ending this letter there was a secret process involved, not a public one, which had the effect of shutting off a whole group of people from access to public officials and to provincial politician. It shut them off from having any access to being able to raise issues that are of importance to them all with the terrorist brush.

The image of a Sikh as a violent person seems to have become entrenched

in Canadian social and political life⁷⁹. Editorial writers have taken an increasingly hostile attitude towards Canadian Sikhs' involvement in Punjab affairs, some have even labelled it as a terror campaign. In a report to The Times of London, from Toronto in March 1986, its correspondent reported 'recent events in the Punjab have left a bitter echo in Canada, poisoning relations between the Federal Government and Canada's Sikh community and creating tension and mistrust between Sikhs and other Canadians. It cited the negative attitude of a number of Canadian newspapers. The Victoria Times columnist reacting to Canadian Sikh demonstrations against the Rajiv-Longowal Accord of July 1985, instructed the Sikhs bluntly, 'if they wish to make it their business, they should return to India to do so'. The Globe and Mail commented, 'it is cruel irony that Canadian Sikhs ... have by their offensive behaviour hurt the reputation of their community in Canada'. The Winnipeg Free Press praised Canada government's offer to step up the co-operation between the Canadian and Indian intelligence services aimed at Sikh militants as 'proper and appropriate'. Indian Government's drive to portray the overseas Sikh campaign for a separate state as nothing more than a terrorist campaign seems to have certainly succeeded, especially as far as the Canadian Sikhs are concerned. An opinion poll conducted for the Macauliffe Institute of Sikh Studies at the University of Toronto also confirmed Sikhs' poor image. In a poll of the 500 English speaking and Francophones, results were summarised

⁷⁹ Recent fiction has added, in its small ways, towards a portrayal of Sikhs as terrorists. Mukherjee, a distinguished professor of literature at Berkeley, in her novel Jasmine describes a heroic struggle of a Punjabi girl's settlement into America. She posits a Sikh terrorist at strategic breaks in her narrative. Her heroine's 'progressive and anti-feudal' husband is murdered by Sikh 'hit men', when she is about to fall in love with a learned man, her love is thwarted by a Sikh terrorist's appearance in New York. Mukherjee, Bharati, Jasmine, London, Virago, 1991.

Salman Rushdie's infamous novel The Satanic Verses begins cryptically with the Air India disaster over Ireland with its central character emerges from a Sikh terrorist's new incarnation. Rushdie, Salman. The Satanic verses, London, Viking, 1988, pp. 78-79.

In Days of the Turban, Mr Sharma sends his central character of the novel to Europe as his days of terrorist activities in the Golden Temple are over. Sharma, Pratap. Days of the turban, London, Bodley, 1986.

thus, '...the turban had become synonymous with violence'^[80]. In a book written by two Canadian journalists, they conclude 'the disinformation campaign made the public look upon the Sikhs as a menace and the separatist groups as the obvious culprits responsible for the bombings. And first impressions are hard to change. On all counts, the Indian disinformation operation was a success'^[81].

The result of this stereotyping has created problems for ordinary Sikhs. According to a Canadian scholar, the post-1984 situation has led to circumstances where:

...Criminal cases affecting Sikhs in Canada in which investigating or prosecuting officials have been found to have compromised their integrity and credibility of their work. ... This repeated violation of the normal legal guidelines in the case of Sikh defendants has alienated many Sikhs and undermined public confidence in Canadian investigative and judicial agencies that deal with minorities^[82].

Gian Singh Sandhu in his annual report for WSO-Canada summed up the portrayal and predicament of Sikh community in Canada as:

increased harassment, misinformation, distortions and invasion of privacy, intimidation and violation of our fundamental rights of civil liberties. The amateurish cloak and dagger behaviour of various investigators, ..lack of significant convictions, convinces us that further co-operation is a waste of time. It feeds a fiction about the Sikh community which never had any foundation or basis except in the paranoid perceptions of Indian officials⁸³.

Conclusion

The overseas Sikh mobilisation and political ties with Indian Punjab can be interpreted in several ways. Various statements of Sikh leaders

⁸⁰ Kashmeri and McAndrew, 1989, op cit., p.149. The survey was conducted in Montreal in the Summer of 1988 by Tandemar Research Inc.

⁸¹ Kashmeri and McAndrew, 1989, op cit., p.94. According to the authors, such was the pressure from Indian intelligence on the CSIS that the officers working in the CSIS were convinced that the Indian government 'will use both legitimate and illegitimate means'.

⁸² O'Connell, Joseph T. 'Postscript: comments from Toronto', in O'Connell, Joseph T, Israel, Milton, Oxoby, Willard G. [eds]. Sikh history and religion in the twentieth century, University of Toronto, Centre of South Asian Studies, 1988, p.444.

⁸³ World Sikh News, April 15, 1988.

involved in the Khalistan movement, show how these are derived from a specific world-view of Sikhs' identity and the nature of the crisis as understood by the Sikh leaders. The cry for homeland can be interpreted as about collective 'pride and honour', 'respect' wishing to be seen as equals among the world of other nationalities and nations. This struggle is about 'not to be dictated by others'. Seen in this light, Khalistan may be less of a statement of political sovereignty than it is of 'personal dignity', 'religious integrity' and 'ethnic identity'. It may be as a scholar has put it, 'the utterance of the Sikh soul which yearns for fullness of expression'^[84]. The movement may also be accounted as a feeling of those feeling abandoned by India and other states. The role of Indian embassies in the pre-1984 period, and in the post 1984 period Indian officials actively lobbying against Sikh activists may have prompted anti-Indian feelings. The condition may then be similar to the Ghadar Party activists in a way:

Abandoned by British in their fight against Canadian immigration legislation, for the first time a section of Jat Sikhs broke from their quiescent loyalism to adopt the revolutionary nationalism of the Ghadar movement-with all its consequences for the community's political development. The fate of a small but highly significant group of Indian exiles helped focus attention on the complex racial, political and constitutional issues arising in the rapid evolution of a complex multi-racial empire^[85].

Between the Gadr and present campaign, there are clear parallels⁸⁶. Like Gadr members, Sikhs have been asked to mobilise to undo the 'humiliation' inflicted by a state. The personal rivalries among leaders, the fiery songs, propaganda rhetoric, style of mobilisation, and emphasis on personal sacrifices and seeking martyrdom for the cause reflect some of the commonalities. It may indeed be appropriate to call the present struggle as the return of 'Gadr syndrome' defined as:

A militant nationalist movement ...created abroad by

⁸⁴ Spellman, John W. Strife stalks the Punjab, The Saturday Windsor Star, September 26, 1987.

⁸⁵ Fraser, T.G. 'The Sikh problem in Canada and its political consequences, 1905-1921', The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, VII[1], 1978, p.35-55

⁸⁶ Bose, A. C. Indian revolutionaries abroad, 1971.

expatriates, for whom the movement is also an outlet for their economic and social frustrations, and a vehicle for their ethnic identities. It is the fusion and the mutual interaction of ethnic anger and nationalist pride⁸⁷.

However, the differences with the early Gadr movement are also striking. The present movement is primarily based on religious identity organised around and within the religious institutions. The Gadr movement was secular both in principle and in the composition of its leaders; members were mostly drawn from Sikh peasants originating from the central Punjab. In terms of geography, the parallel is even closer. Like the Gadr, the present movement has spread to all localities of Sikh population from Thailand to the United States. However, unlike Gadr, the movement does not arise because of racial discrimination in foreign lands as was certainly the case for Gadr members. Not it is due to economic frustrations alone. By all accounts, Sikh settlers have done well and no economic crisis has channelled their energies into a rebellion. Social frustrations may, on some account, still be similar to their Gadr compatriots. The gulf and differences between Sikh social customs and those of host societies, between the private world of Sikh settlers and the public open system of the Western countries, is considerable. This leads on occasions to crisis for particular members, giving others a general sense of uncertainty of their situation and the future.

The Punjab crisis has broken a long tradition of loyalty towards a state among the Jat Sikhs. Although strongly integrated into the coercive apparatus of the India state, the crisis has perhaps for the first time, persuaded some Jat Sikhs to reconsider their own role in the future development of the community. The mobilisation for the movement also shows how elites who have tried to manipulate symbols of group identity for political purposes are constrained. Moreover elites are indeed limited and constrained by the cultures of the groups they

⁸⁷ Juergensmeyer, Mark. 'The Ghadar syndrome: immigrant Sikhs and nationalist pride', p.173-190 in Juergensmeyer, Mark and Barrier, N.G. eds. Sikh Studies, Berkeley, 1969.

hope to represent^[88]. Moreover, men in pursuing their interests are limited by the range of concepts available to legitimize their actions, and that this range of concepts is in turn limited by the prevailing morality of society. To a large extent the pre-existing values, institutions and cultural practices set limits to potential mobilisation. In the Indian subcontinent, the cow, the sharia, the script say Hindi or Urdu and other potential symbols have been used as a basis for collective mobilisation.

In this process, The Sikh leaders are in the process of bringing a new kind of consciousness as well as a considerable shift in the loyalty, re-defining Sikh ethnicity in terms of an ethno-national bond. With the exception of psychologists, social scientists tend to be uncomfortable in confronting the non-rational^[89]. The ethnic bond is perhaps irrational and emotional, it can be described, even analyzed but not explained rationally. Theories lag behind the conceptual tools necessary to deal with group passions, the symbols that move them and the intensity of attachments which cut across borders and nations:

As emerging actors in the international system, they [the ethnic groups and the emerging new ethnic groups] are indications that our perceptions of international relations and the causes of war and peace lag behind the consciousness of the men and nations we study. The ethnic nation cannot compete with the state in nuclear warheads and warships but it continues to exercise formidable influence over the primary authority patterns of men. It is from this exercise of power that revolutions are born^[90].

Thus, on some rational calculations, it may look like a futile attempt to influence events at home, but for a migrant community which derives many essential definitional marks from the homeland, these efforts can be seen as coming to terms with their past and contemporary world.

⁸⁸ Brass, Paul. Language, Religion and Politics, Cambridge, 1974. Skinner, Q. 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action', Political Theory, 2[3], 1974, p.277-303.

⁸⁹ Walker Connor, 'Beyond reason; the nature of the ethno-national bond', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16 [1993], 373-389.

⁹⁰ A A Said and L R Simmons [eds] Ethnicity in an international Context: the politics of disassociation, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1976, p.14.

While Sikhs in the Punjab are themselves undergoing a process of self-definition and re-alignment of political options, the stresses and strains in overseas Sikh communities may not seem as far removed. Whatever the outcome of the crisis facing the people of the Punjab, the overseas Sikhs' role and involvement is likely to continue and play a significant role in their resolutions. By overseas standards, Sikhs who are promoting the Khalistan are legitimate dissidents, but by Indian standards, dissidence amounts to sedition. Viewed in the Indian context, the overseas Sikhs campaigns for a Sikh homeland may seem to be a world of make-belief; viewed in the Punjab it has remarkable continuity from the days of the Gadr movement.

Before June 1984, the undifferentiated and ambiguous position of ordinary Sikhs, or that of its elite and Sikh leaders was never put to an agonizing and stark choice. A Sikh could easily pass between several identities -as a Punjabi, an Indian, an Asian and in a particular country a Canadian, an American or British. The Punjab crisis have made these categories significant and for its elite a painful choice. Community leaders emphasising or de-emphasising such differentiating markers were in no hurry to seek a resolution of the ambiguous position of ordinary Sikhs. Thus we find, prior to 1984, some Akali leaders joining hands with Communists and Congress people in order to win the seat on a management committee of a gurdwara. In Britain to win a seat on local Community Relations Council, Akalis would support IWA in return for support on some other issue.

The Punjab crisis since 1984 has ushered in specific social and psychological changes in the moral and mental orientation of the Sikh migrants, affecting in particular its educated youth. Overseas Sikhs' campaign also presents a serious challenge to those who consider symbolic meanings to be merely epiphenomenon, or a reflection of a false consciousness. Overseas Sikh separatism is not born from immediate factors of socio-economic reality of Western societies in which Sikhs have been trying to make homes. Nor can we account for many

Sikhs willingly becoming martyrs to a cause which on any rational ground would seem a wild dream. A more suitable explanation will include such factors as an ethnic community's symbols, memories, myths, values and how these have been interpreted by its elite. The geography and cultural maps of particular regions enclose within them mythologies of particular groups of people and Punjab as a region has produced many features of Sikh collective memories. The Sikh self-perception as it unfolds in the literature of overseas Sikh organisation committed to a Sikh homeland points towards a complexity of the culture and the place of human experience in its constitution. The overseas Sikh political development and its role in the Punjab affairs cannot be understood without the symbolic solidarity between co-ethnics separated by distance but sharing many common assumptions, meanings and the semantics of language. The Sikh case also shows how cultural identities constitute their effect on individuals and their collectivities.

Finally, this case study demonstrates that once an ethnic group has entered into the arena of international politics, the policies of home and host states intersect to reinforce ethnic consolidation while, paradoxically, their objective is to control and limit, and manipulate its influence. The strategies of control do not necessarily increase the effectiveness of either the home or the host state's capacity to manage ethnic groups. Migrant groups by virtue of settlements, retain certain degree of autonomy and can make effective use of international institutions, media, and international law which are often at direct variance from a state's objectives and instruments of control.

CONCLUSION

The Sikh communities of Canada, the United States and Britain have played considerable role in the economic, social life of Punjab. They have been affected by events in the Punjab and India and in turn, their role in the political developments in the Punjab have also been significant. Remittances, exchange of ideas and ideology, visits and pilgrimages to ancestral homes and kin, have kept a lively exchange and participation. Through kinship network, communications and travel to and from Punjab, nurturing of literary traditions and political associations has helped to maintain a range of ties. The richer section of the community has invested in projects ranging from economic to religious, educational and charitable works. While the first generation overseas migrants are obviously related to the homeland in many ways, a 'traumatic' event in the homelands has generated solidarity among the second and third generation.

In the developments leading to the Punjab political impasse in the aftermath of June 1984 army action in the Golden Temple, the role of Sikh communities in the three countries have been significant. The idea of Sikh homeland and support for organisations campaigning for the Sikh state has been substantial. The overseas Sikh connection, besides attracting significant material and moral support has helped to internationalise the issue of Sikh homeland.

This study has highlighted that the conceptual tools for dealing with

transnational linkages are relatively underdeveloped. The use of the concept of the diaspora for all migrant groups involved in international politics does not seem to represent a rigorous theoretical advance over ad-hoc hypotheses. For diaspora to be a useful concept of analysis it has to have a degree of precision. Our study suggests, however, that where ethnic groups are involved in the demand for a 'homeland' an element of 'diasporicness' or 'diasporic consciousness' -as happened after 1984 in the Sikhs case -might be appropriate. While the overseas Sikh communities do not meet *sufficient* conditions to be described as a diaspora, [this of course may change in the future with more refugee migrants abroad], they do seem to have acquired certain *necessary* elements of psychological and sociological nature which are essential for diasporic consciousness.

This study has also indicated that the Punjab crisis has probably generated a re-alignment of Sikh identity away from India towards Punjab in small and perceptible ways, though such shifts are inherently difficult to quantify. Reaction to the Punjab crisis has led to a sustained campaign for Khalistan among a section of Sikh leadership abroad. The mode of mobilisation and the formation of new organisations has been informed by cultural, moral and religious traditions of the Sikh society. The study highlights the complex nature of identity formation and development process of an ethnic community. While a broader loyalty towards India probably still exists, the events in the past twelve years have made perceptible changes in their loyalties towards Punjab and this has also effected individual strategies towards the host societies. The impact of Punjab crisis has been to re-draw a strict definition of Sikh identity, drawing upon the religious tradition and collective symbols on the community as prime factors instead of geography, language and cultural traits. These developments within the community serves to underline the 'situational' nature of ethnic consciousness, while the articulation of the demand for a 'homeland' is seen to be anchored in the primordial givens.

The overseas Sikh identity has undergone considerable re-definition, with boundaries more sharp than the pre-1984 period. Emphasis on Amrit, and strict religious observances have been propagated as a reaction to the crisis. The reaction also shows how the event has been seen and interpreted as threat to the collective entity of the Sikh community, a humiliation for the community's pride. The characteristic call for mobilisation has been to avenge this humiliation and to establish a separate Sikh state -a secure homeland where such threat could not arise in the future.

Thus in its reaction an interplay of culture, group consciousness and uncertainty of migrants status in the host society can be seen to be at work. With the settler countries providing a limited expression of their cultural and religious traditions, conditions perhaps existed for such yearnings and frustrations to be channelled into a homeland cause. The 'Khalistan movement' abroad may also be taken as a measure of Sikh migrants' alienation from the institution of the host societies. Neither equal citizens, nor sharing the powers to satisfy their cultural ambitions, the aspiring community leaders have looked back on their 'land of origins' for prestige and honour. Such a reaction ought not be brushed aside as brainchild of a few misguided zealots. Initial somewhat ambiguous and complex set of attachments towards an imaginary homeland has been reinforced by the 'crucial' event which posed a challenge to the deeply held beliefs and feelings.

The study also highlights, rather tangentially, an aspect of a modern state building in the post-imperial world. Disjunction of borders, peoples and their loyalties to the post-imperial states in South Asia has led to divided loyalties among its non-dominant populations. Building such multiethnic societies into a nation-state require aggressive centralisation policies and these in turn have endangered a conflict of loyalties among its minority groups. For those minorities who have strong regional base, strong and distinct ethnic identities, perhaps a history of sovereignty over its homeland as in the case of

Sikhs, the conflict with the dominant majority at the centre could potentially become explosive. In such a combat, the conflict of loyalties to the new state versus a minority's cultural homeland gets politicised and the 'homeland' may very well win the minds even if it loses out militarily.

In terms of geography and mobilisation characteristics there are clear parallels with the Gadr movement. The formation of Gadr movement was attributed to the exclusionary policies of the Canadian and American governments coupled with an uncaring attitude of the Indian colonial state towards the plight of its overseas peoples. The Khalistan movement may also be located within those parameters: the home government's unsympathetic attitude towards a minority's aspirations seen through an unparalleled attack on its religious centre and host states' policies coupled with a sense of alienation from those societies, may have provided all the ingredients necessary for the mobilisation for a secure and an independent homeland.

A sovereign 'homeland' offers the possibility of becoming a substitute for an alienated migrant elite. The contemporary evidence seems to suggest this may well be true only for a small section of the Sikh population now settled in Britain and North America. However, the strength of alienated elite could grow wider in the distant future. Although a secure and independent Punjab may have been an 'imagined homeland' for small number of Sikhs before the 1984 army action in the Punjab, the subsequent crisis and its handling by the Indian state and the reaction of host states may have converted it into a serious and attractive scenario for a considerable number of Sikhs. A distinct minority within Sikhs seems now committed to the achievement of an independent country, whether the silent majority of ordinary Sikhs would also be convinced of their arguments depends upon two factors; namely, a sense of security they feel in Britain, Canada and the United States, and events in the Punjab and India. That both of these factors are outside the parameters of a migrant community points to the dilemma

of a large number of its members' ambivalent attitudes and loyalties in the current crisis. The Sikh reaction and the pattern of mobilisation to the Punjab events provides a clear example of how a 'secure' ethnic minority could, due to a crucial event affecting their country of origin can become conscious of a 'threatened homeland' and mobilise in its defence.

APPENDICES

Appendix-1

Letter from Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President of the Akali Dal, to overseas Sikhs. August 1983

Appendix-2

Excerpts from the Extradition Treaties between the Government of India and the Governments of Canada and Britain respectively.

Appendix-3

Letter from the Jathedar, Akal Takhat, Amritsar to the Gurdwara Management Committee, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

Appendix-4

Letter from the Home Secretary, Government of United Kingdom to Harjinder Singh Dilgeer

Appendix-5

Letter from Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal, President, World Sikh Organisation, USA, to the Secretary-General, United Nations. [Source: World Sikh News, June 17, 1988.]

Appendix-6

Appeal from Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President, Shiromani Akali Dal and Co-ordinator, Punjab Dharam Yudh Morcha to Members of Khalsa Diwan Society, 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver, BC [Source: Indo-Canadian Times, November 25, 1983]

Appendix-7

Appeal by some Sikh Leaders in the Punjab to the President of America [Source: World Sikh News, 20 November 1991]

Appendix-8

Excerpts from Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Appendix-1 *Letter from Sant Harchand Singh Longowal,
President of Akali Dal to Overseas Sikh
leaders. Published in Indo-Canadian Times,
October 15, 1982.*

I am sending this special letter to all of you because you should know what is happening to the Panth. It is now 144 days into the Dharam Yudh Morcha. Some 17,557 Sikhs have courted arrest. Of these 44 have been tortured to death in jails. Another 34 were crushed under a train. Jails are like black holes, full, overcrowded, no water, no roof and nothing whatsoever to eat.

You should take a deputation to the Indian High Commission office on 17 October, with a letter stating how Sikhs are being repressed in India. You should make the world aware how India is treating the Sikh Panth and to show that all Sikhs, wherever they are, share the anguish of Panth.

I am stating with firm conviction that the Dharam Yudh will continue until the cruel Indian government agrees to our just demands. the Punjab is boiling while the Congress leaders are dithering and enjoying themselves. Of peace, justice and law the Congress leaders are never tired of evocation, but the Khalsa has kept itself within the limits. The government is out with extreme measures. Our youth is crying out to do some daring. Many innocents have been killed and are being killed. I hope you have already received the report of the appointed commission.

Please send a copy of the memorandum that you would give to the Commission on October 17 to Akali Dal Office in Amritsar.

I remain, the servant of the Panth,

[Sant Harchand Singh Longowal]
President
Shiromani Akali Dal
Amritsar

Appendix-2 *Excerpts from Extradition Treaties between the Government of India and the Governments of Canada and Britain respectively.*

Extradition Treaty between the Government of Indian and the Government of Canada. The Treaty was signed by Charles J Clark for the government of Canada and Narayan Tiwari for the government of India and came into effect on 10 February 1987.

[Article 1, Duty to Extradite]:

1. Each contracting state agrees to extradite to the other, subject to the conditions of this Treaty, any person who, being accused or convicted of an offence of an extradition offence as described in Article 3, committed within the territory of one State, is found in the territory of the other State, whether or not such offence was committed before or after the coming into force of this treaty.

Article 3, Extradition Offence:

1. An extradition offence is committed when the conduct of the person whose extradition is sought constitutes an offence punishable by the laws of both contracting States by a term of imprisonment for a period of more than one year.

Extradition Treaty between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of India Signed by Kenneth Clarke and S B Chavan in London on 22 September 1992.

Article 1, Duty to Extradite]

[1] Each Contracting State undertakes to extradite to the other, in the circumstances and subject to the conditions specified in the Treaty, any person who, being accused or convicted of an extradition offence as described in Article 2, committed within the territory of the one state, is found within the territory of the other state, whether such offence was committed before or after the entry into force of this Treaty.

Article 2, Extradition Offences

[1]. An extradition offence for the purposes of this Treaty is constituted which under the laws of each Contracting State is punishable by a term of imprisonment for a period of at least one year.

Appendix-3 *Letter from Jathedar, Akal Takhat, Amritsar to
the Gurdwara Management Committee, Surrey,
British Columbia, Canada*

Office Sri Akal Takhat Sahib
Sri Amritsar

No. 75/5/82
Sri Amritsar
21-9-82

Tara Singh Hayer
Editor
Indo-Canadian Times
Vancouver, BC.

Sardar Tara Singh Ji,

Wahiguru ji ka khalsa, wahiguru ji ki fateh

Your letter of 18 August 1982 reached us here on 20 /9/1982 and also a received a copy of Indo-Canadian Times. You have written that on 15th August, to celebrate the Indian independence day, Indian and Canadian government's flag were unfurled in the Surrey Gurdwara premises.

May I make it clear that within the boundary of a gurdwara, no other flag be it of the government or another denomination, except that of the Khalsa ji' own Nishan Sahib is to be allowed.

Yours faithfully,

[signed]

[Kirpal Singh]
Head Granthi
Sri Durbar Sahib and Jathedar
Sri Akal Takhat Sahib
Sri Amritsar Ji

Appendix-4 *Letter from the Home Secretary, Government of
United Kingdom to Harjinder Singh Dilgeer
[Published in Des Pardes, September 26, 1986]*

To: Harjinder Singh Dilgeer

The Home secretary has considered information that you are an active member of an extreme Sikh organisation which advocates the use of violence for political ends and has therefore given the personal direction that you should be refused leave to enter the UK on the ground that your exclusion is conducive to the public good for reasons of national Security. I

I therefore refuse you leave to enter the UK.

I have given directions for your removal at 16.30 hrs. 7 September 1986 by ship for Scandinavia to Sweden.

Immigration Officer
Port Ref: HAH 571/86

Appendix-5 *Letter to the Secretary-General, United Nations by Dr Manohar Singh Grewal, President, World Sikh Organisation, USA, Source: World Sikh News, June 17, 1988.*

His excellency Javier Perez de Cuellar
Secretary General of the United Nations
United Nations
New York, 10017

Re: The Genocide of the Sikhs in India

Your excellency,

The situation in the Punjab is becoming more alarming. The bleeding Sikh nation is in agony. Once again Indian paramilitary force are holding innocent people in the Golden Temple as hostages. As per news reports, 'they can't drink water or even go to toilet without being shot at' [The New York Times, May 13, 1988]. By what law is everybody in the Golden Temple complex is being presumed guilty and shot at on sight?

For too long, the Indian government has been engineering incidents to justify a new wave of oppression. Since Punjab is closed to the foreign press [except for the guided official tours], the world does not know the truth about Punjab. As recorded in the human rights report:

an undeclared, unilateral ruthless war -against hundreds of innocent defenceless men and women in far-away tiny villages of Punjab from where their voices do not reach the rest of India' [Oppression in Punjab, page 9]

All attempts by the International Committee for Red Cross and Amnesty International to go to Punjab have been rebuffed. Similar requests by US congressmen and Members of British Parliament for visiting Punjab on a fact-finding mission were not granted

Recent reports indicate that the government has hired hard-core criminals known as 'Red Brigade' to kill the Sikhs. Besides every Sikh who is killed in 'fake encounters' is declared a 'separatists, or 'extremist' and the paramilitary forces are acting prosecutors, jurors and judges without any accountability.

The Sikhs' struggle for retrieving their distinct national status, lost during the partition fiasco of 1947 is almost four decades old. They have been struggling for the kind of environment where the Sikh heritage could pick up the 'bits of a shattered rainbow' to borrow Tennessee Williams' words. In this quest for justice they are subjected

to tyranny and oppression....

More than four decades ago the UN Charter enshrines 'the faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person, in equal rights of men and women and nations large and small'....

Your excellency, as Secretary General of the World Organisation, you represent the conscience of humanity and the UN inspires hope for freedom and justice.... Thousands of innocent Sikh orphans, widows and older parents whose loved ones have been lynched, for them freedom of religion and expression have been reduced to the 'right to cry in the wilderness'. Their voices, though inaudible amidst the media blitz of misinformation and deception, are appealing to the world community and the UN to urge the ruling regime of India to stop the genocide of the Sikhs.

In the meantime, the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide should be invoked. India should be asked to lift the occupation of the Sikh homeland.

....When the normal conditions are restored the people of Punjab should be given the opportunity to determine their own destiny through an independent and impartial referendum.....

With best wishes and regards

Yours sincerely,

Manohar Singh Grewal, Ph.D.
President,
World Sikh Organization, USA

Appendix-6 *Appeal from Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President, Shiromani Akali Dal and Co-ordinator, Punjab Dharam Yudh Morcha to Members of Khalsa Diwan Society, 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver, BC [Indo-Canadian Times, November 25, 1983]*

Parm satkar yog Sadh Sangat Jio,

Waheguru ji ka khalsa, waheguru ji ki fateh

The Khalsa Diwan Society has been sending regularly a generous amount of help towards the 'Martyrs Fund' opened for the benefit of Sikh families, by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal. I am very grateful to the Khalsa Diwan Society for their enthusiasm shown towards Dharm Yudh Morcha.

The Shiromani Akali Dal has pursued the constitutional rights of the Panth and the Punjab with determination. Although the central government has used all means of repression and oppression to subdue the Sikh nation's rights, hundreds of Sikhs have been martyred, about 200,000 have courted arrest and thousands of Sikhs are in jails. This tradition is going on.....

I have come to know that the election for KDS for 1984 are due on 3 December 1983. The KDS is a famous organisation of patriots. Its importance and role is attested by the number of its members. At the critical times when we are engaged in the Panthic struggle, the control of Ross Street Gurdwara must be in the hands of those sympathetic to the Sikh-Panth. The Khalsa Diwan Society has already contributed very significantly to the cause of Sikhs in the Punjab, those elected in the past year have proved worthy of their offices. I was very impressed by their dedicated work when I was on tour of Canada.

I appeal to voters to elect only those persons who are clearly committed to the cause of the Panth and disown those whose activities will weaken religious and other progressive tasks undertaken by the Society.

With thanks and respect,

Guru Panth da das,

[Harchand Singh Longowal]
President
Shiromani Akali Dal

Appendix-7 *Letter from Sikh leaders to the President of America, [Source: World Sikh News, 20 November 1991]*

President of the United States
White House
Pennsylvania Ave
Washington DC

Dear President Bush,

This is to bring to your attention that two of our Sikh brothers, Ranjit Singh Gill and Sukhminder Singh Sandhu are lodged in a New York jail for over five years. They have committed no crime anywhere.

Sir, on behalf of the Sikh nation we appeal to you not to extradite these two Sikhs to India.

Yours Faithfully,

Daljit Singh
Dr Sohan Singh
Satinderpal Singh
Harmander Singh
Shahbaz Singh

Appendix-8 *Excerpts from Anandpur Sahib Resolution*

The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a draft of the new policy and programme at Sri Anandpur Sahib, on 16-17 October 1973. Later it was passed in the form of 12 resolutions at the 'Open Session' of the 18th All India Akali Conference at Ludhiana on 28-29 October 1978. On the basis of these resolutions, Akali Dal started its struggle. The text of these resolutions, as authenticated by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, is reproduced below.

Basic Postulates of the Shiromani Akali Dal as adopted by the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal in its meeting held at Sri Anandpur Sahib on 16-17 October 1973.

[A] **Postulates**

[i] The Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation. The basic postulates of this organisation are human co-existence, human progress and ultimate unity of all human beings with the spiritual soul.

[ii] These postulates are based on the great principles of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji namely, a meditation on God/'s name, dignity of labour and sharing of fruits of this labour. [Nam Japo, Kirat karo wand chhako]

[B] **Purposes**

The Shiromani Akali Dal shall ever strive to achieve the following aims:

[i] propagation of Sikhism and its code of conduct; denunciation of atheism

[ii] To preserve and keel alive the concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth and to create an environment in which national sentiments and aspirations of the Sikh Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and growth.

[C] **Political Goal**

The political goal of the Panth, without doubt, is enshrined in the commandment of the Tenth Lord, in the pages of Sikh history and in the very heart of the Khalsa Panth, the ultimate objective of which is the preeminence of the Khalsa through creation of a congenial environment and a political set-up.

Weaker Section and Backward Classes

The Shiromani Akali Dal aims at grooming the Sikhs in a strong sturdy nation highly educated, fully aware of its fundamental rights ,very well versed in various arts and ever ready to honour the more outstanding of its sons.

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| 1. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan | 2. Bhai Gurmail Singh |
| 3. Gurmej Singh Gill | 4. Dr. Pargat Singh |
| 5. Dr. Jasdev Singh Rai | 6. Gurdeep Singh |
| 7. Manjit Singh Rana | 8. Balhar Singh Randhawa |
| 9. Balwinder Singh | 10. Bachittar Singh |
| 11. Giani Amolak Singh | 12. Gurdev Singh Chohan |
| 13. Avtar Johal | 14. Niranjana Singh Noor |
| 15. Tarsem Singh | |

[ii] Canada

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|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Hari Sharma | 2. Surjan Singh Gill |
| 3. Lakhbir Singh | 4. Talwinder Singh |
| 5. Uday Singh | 6. Darshan Singh Saini |
| 7. Pritam Singh Aulakh | 8. Kesar Singh |
| 9. Daljeet Singh Sandhu | 10. Harpal Singh Khalsa |
| 11. Jawala Singh Grewal | 12. Charan Pal Gill |

[iii] USA

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Gurdip Singh | 2. Dr. G. S. Grewal |
| 3. Didar Singh Bains | 4. Dr. Gurmeet Singh Aulakh |
| 5. Dr. Karmjit Singh Rai | 6. Sher Singh Kanwal |
| 7. M. S. Sidhu | 8. Balwant Singh |
| 9. Dr. Sukhmander Singh | 10. Dr. A S Sekhon |
| 11. Hari Singh Everest | |
