



Crisis of Identity in 20th Century: The Case of the Sikhs in India

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Abstract

Punjab has been in turmoil since the partition of British India and now its predicament is the outcome of blend of factors. These factors may include mixing of religion with politics, central machination, vote-bank polities and obvious economic grievances. In the post-partition period, the Sikhs demanded affirmative discrimination largely based on colonial heritage job and regional autonomy. They started using ethnic symbols like history, geography, culture and land to gain sympathies of the masses and to attain greater political autonomy and economic benefits. Unfortunately, the Congress considered their struggle for identity disturbing for the secular outlook of India and put this social issue into the conceptual framework of communal politics and aligned it with Sikh tradition. The situation was politically engineered by Congress through mixing religion with politics and it took decisive actions following the divide and rule policy and extracted electoral benefits out of it. The militant operations against fellow the Sikh citizens and manipulated actions radicalized the society which created social unrest and urged the Sikhs to demand a separate state. This article has highlighted the Sikh political struggle for the

recognition of their separate identity and demand for Khalistan. The critically analyzed historical study is based on qualitative methods by using secondary sources.

Keywords: Sikh, Identity, Congress, Operation Blue Star, Khalistan

Introduction

Numerous conspiracy theories related to Sikh Movement in India have already been floated by academics and the media, might be deliberately to highlight and discuss the issue or use this issue to further gain some targeted/ pre-settled objectives. Some academicians wrote that it is the outcome of 'divide and rule' policy of colonial India where an imperialist Britain intentionally took risk to de-stable India on communal grounds and engage Indians in communal politics which will help them to function smoothly but Akhtar Hussain Sindhu completely rejected this notion and asserted that divide and rule named policy projected, quoted, manipulated and then exploited by the Indian nationalist writers portray a positive gesture of Hindus towards their promised land India and to showcase their affiliation with minorities of India mainly the Muslims and the Sikhs. If it was not true then why not Congress treated them as enemies in discussions and took help from Allan Octavian Hume to establish Indian National Congress in 1885. Besides moving anti-government boycott movement, Hindu top statesmanship requested Mountbatten to be the first governor general of India. Particularly regarding Sikhs, Congress leaders agitated against the right of separate electorates granted to the Muslims in 1909 under the provision of Minto-Morley Reforms but remained quite in 1919 when Britain granted the same rights to the Sikhs. (Sandhu, 2009, p. 61-80).

Secondly, Muslim League (ML) urged the Sikhs for separate entity and created communal disturbances which seem like a vague conspiracy. Primarily, it was Guru Nanak Sahib (1469-1539) who had staunch belief on One God, gently turned the conventional Hinduism and introduces a separate identity apart from Hindus. It was his teachings that his followers start thinking the other way and found his teachings impelling rather than alluring and exciting.

Later guru Nanak's predecessors (from guru Angad to Guru Gobind) took several measures to further solidify and institutionalize the features of Guru Nanak teachings which developed a sense of separate identity. Like second Guru, Guru Angad (1504-1552) introduced the Gurmukhi script, Guru Amar Das (1468-1574) introduces the concept of Langar, Guru Arjun (1563-1606) builds Harmandir of Amritsar, Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) built Akhal Takht and organized militia, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) further militarized this militia whereas, the last guru, Guru Gobind (1666-1708) created Khalsa and made 5 emblems obligatory for the believers i. e. *Kes*- unshorn hair and beard, *Kanga*- comb, *Kachh*- knee length pair of breeches, *Karah*- steel bracelet and *Kirpan*- sword .

This Khalsa became the league of warriors pledged to fight for the faith which is absolutely not Hinduism but a separate identity "Sikhism". Later, it was Sikhs whose Khalsa guerrilla force challenged Mughals first and Ranjit became the most powerful Maharaja of Punjab annexing Kashmir and NWFP in his domains. It was not until the death of Ranjit Singh (1839) that Punjab was annexed by the British after two Anglo-Sikh wars. Punjab was the last state annexed with British because of successor's dissensions after Ranjit and left space for British to consolidate their hold on the northern domains of India. Till then, because of the warrior characteristics, Sikhs got recognition and by the 1850's the British began recruiting Sikhs into the colonial army. At times, the proportion of Sikhs in the military rose as high as 33 percent (Tirmizi, 1995, p. 46). Such preferential treatment makes them the Martial Race. This shows that it was the British who recognize the fact that Sikhs are different. Might be they did not think about them as different nation but somehow acknowledged their separate identity.

Later on, Sikh started an agitated campaign against the corrupt Hindus to liberate Gurdawars from them and meanwhile established Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in 1920. British supported Hindus in these clashes which resulted in bloodshed. This incident shows that British did not show any concern about the emergence of another communal entity but support Hindus which as well

resulted at establishment of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak. Committee primarily worked to protect the gurdawars. The Gurdwara Reform Act 1925 was a decisive action created a durable demarcation between Hindus and Sikhs. The above stated arguments did not show any role of Muslims and Muslim League in developing or nourishing any element of Sikhism.

Thirdly, nations build on the basis of common territory not on religious basis. This theory also lost its worth after the creation of two religious ideological states Pakistan (1947) and Israel (1948). Talking about pre-partition scenario, it was worldwide phenomenon that nations build up on the basis of common territories means people from different communities, religion and group have potential to absorb each other and sharing common sense of nationalism. But it was Sikhs who grown the seed of separate identity in sub-continent through different modes i-e via language by introducing Gurumukhi script, concept of Langar to show separate social approach, organized militia and added Khalsa obligatory in Sikh attire which shows that common territories cannot stick the people having different beliefs on the ground of nationalism. Religion plays an important role which deals with every sphere of life and give awareness to people about their distinguish identity. Sikhs realized about their separate identity based on Sikh tradition but were unable to express because of weak leadership particularly after the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839. But now it seems like that after partition of subcontinent into Pakistan and India, Sikh realized that they miss the opportunity by associating themselves with Hindus at the time of partition and striving to get constitutional rights to be called as separate nation in India.

Partition and Sikhs' Search for Identity

Before looking into Sikhs urge of separate identity, we must know first who is a Sikh? Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee SGPC (an association made on communal grounds by Sikhs to take control of management and income of Sikh religious institutions) published a work named "Sikh Rahat Maryada" in 1930 which defined that "The man or woman who has faith in one god, ten

Gurus (From Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Shri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib), Shri Guru Granth Sahib and the writings and teachings of the 10 Gurus and baptism of Dasmeshji (Guru Gobind Singh), and who does not believe in any other religion is Sikh” (Nabha, 1973)

Partition turned the three way equation of Hindus-Muslims and Sikhs into an axis between Muslim-Hindus and Sikhs where Hindus did not want to lose the Sikh support in Punjab as by trapping the Sikhs they will be able to make partition vulnerable for Muslims. So, Nehru proposed on 7 August, 1946 that, “The brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special considerations. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the North where the Sikhs can also freely experience the glow of freedom (Sharma, 1992, p. 72).” Besides such assurance from Congress, partition was still disturbing for Sikhs as mainly Punjab was going to split and around 2.5 million (Singh, 2019, p. 15) Sikhs were living in eastern Punjab. Besides rehabilitation and settlement problems which disturb their demographic pattern, there holy places in western Punjab also created emotional disturbance for them. Sikhs were total 1% of India’s population in 1947 whereas, 14% of undivided Punjab. Partition altered the demographic proportion of Sikh from 14% to 35% (Mohanka, 2005, p. 6).

The decision to support Hindus at the time of partition proved wrong soon after partition. The Sikh bitterness against the Government found its first forceful expression in February 1948 when Master Tara Singh announced that “we have a culture different from Hindus. Our Culture is Gurmukhi Culture and our literature is also in Gurmukhi script. We want to have a province where we can safeguard our culture and traditions.” Answering criticism that his demand smacked the communalism, he declared that “he wanted the right of self-determination for the Panth in religious, social, political and other matters” and added that “if this was dubbed as communalism then he was a communalist (Sarhadi, 1970, p. 178-179).” So the relationship between the Centre and the top leadership of Congress shifted from accommodation to confrontation. Sikh leadership in Constituent Assembly refused to sign the draft of constitution in January 1950 because it did not recognize their separate identity and failed to introduce separate

personal law for them. The Sikh community feel aggrieved upon the state actions that “all the state boundaries in the new Indian Union except those of Punjab were redrawn (Singh, 2019, p. 16)” on lingual bases. Thus the identity struggle now called for Punjabi Suba.

Now the Akhalis realized that religion based political struggle will not succeed. So keeping the struggle alive, language was chosen as the marker of their identity. It sounds well as democratic, fitted to secular outlook but Hindu population refused to favour the struggle of Punjabi Suba on lingual basis as they feared that it will only highlight Sikh community and had potential to undermine their Hindu identity. The situation hyped the political rivalry between Akali's and Congress and movement turned into violent mass mobilization as 50,000 Sikhs face imprisonment. On 1 October 1953, Andhara Pradesh state was created on lingual bases and develops resentment among Sikhs. This strengthens the demand of Separate state on lingual bases mainly because of two reasons:

- States were starting reorganizing themselves under the “States Reorganization Act 1956” on “one state one language”. But the demand of Punjabi speaking province was rejected.
- To neutralize the Sikh population in Punjab, States Reorganization Commission recommended enlarging the province by merging PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) whereas; several northern districts of Punjab were added in Himachal Pradesh.

Such steps created a sense of insecurity among Sikhs towards Centre. Akali Dal felt that such steps are meant to ensure that “Sikhs may not claim or attain such status or rights which may even indirectly nourish and sustain their cultural integrity and sense of individuality (Singh, 1960, p. 30-31).” Due to internal factionalism in Akali Dal, Tara Singh faced set back in elections of SGPC held on 18 Jan, 1954. Tara Singh apparently-for political purposes- out maneuvered the situation and merged his faction with Congress in 1956 to weaken Jat-Sikh. However, this merger did not last for long and Tara Singh quit Congress and revived his

demand of Punjabi Suba and as its extension started Morcha in 1960. Upon failure of Morcha, Tara Singh kept fast unto death at Manji Sahib in Golden Temple but gave up on the request of Maharaja of Patiala which was regarded as “Betray of Panth” by his followers and subsequently resulted as degradation of his political entity. Such decline degraded his political status on one hand and provided a gap to Fateh Singh to emerge as his alternative as the leader of Panth on the other hand.

It was quite obvious that Congress will take the advantage of this factionalism and opt it as opportunity. Congress accused Tara Singh upon communal approach and support Fateh Singh to emerge as the Akali Dal leader. With the downfall of Tara Singh, the Punjabi Suba movement took a new shift. Besides Tara Singh, Fateh Singh introduced secular approach in Akali Dal and forwards the demand of Punjabi Suba in more inclusive terms of language and culture as it was clear to Fateh Singh that Congress will never entertain any demand based on religion. Sant Fateh Singh opted secular political approach while demanding Punjabi Suba and wrote to Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru: “We want a linguistic and only linguistic unit, where Punjabi culture and language is prevalent, regardless of whether Hindus or Sikhs are in majority there” (Singh, 1993, p. 362-372).

This positive gesture and secular political approach led to the acceptance of Punjabi Suba demand apparently for four reasons:

- Nehru and Chief Minister of Punjab, Pratap Singh (Congress supporter) were no more who strongly opposed this demand.
- The heroic contribution of Sikhs in war against Pakistan in 1965 which was actually proved as scale to measure Sikh patriotism towards India.
- It was the time to gain Sikh support on permanent basis by rewarding Punjabi Suba and secure western boarder and route towards Kashmir permanently.
- Water head works of Indus Basin were located in Punjab which flows towards Pakistan.

The lost status of SAD due to factionalism was the most disturbing aspect of Sikh politics and a major setback for the cause of separate identity recognition of Sikhs. SAD was a complete failure to be called as the true representative of Sikh Community. They did not follow the teachings of their Gurus and the religio-politic equation was not actually practiced nor reflected. Not even a single time, they formed sole government. SAD always come up with a coalition and unconsciously provided ground to Jan Sangh to get nourished and flourished while enjoying the perks of being in provincial government. The political downfall of SAD (Tara and Fateh group) enabled them to realize about the objective for which they were struggling for. But the time was running out as they lost the support of Sikh Community regarding identity struggle particularly after 1972 Punjab Assembly elections. To regain the support of Sikh community, Akalis once more reverted to tactics of agitation and took shift from Sant Fateh's moderate approach to religious outlook mainly because of following reasons.

- To regain the lost political prestige.
- A sense of discrimination and injustice dawned upon SAD as many Sikh majority areas were not added in Punjab during reorganization of the province. The provincial capital of Punjab was Chundigargh which was situated in Haryana, which will work as union territory, controlled by the Centre. It kept the irrigation projects, river water rights and projects under the complete control of Centre.
- It was time to manipulate the situation and take the maximum benefits out of it as Punjab become the breadbasket for India after the green revolution in agriculture sector in 1960's and early 70's.
- Highlight the geographical and geo strategic importance of Punjab in context to Kashmir, border with Pakistan with whom two wars have been fought and being upper riparian of Indus Basin.
- As SAD has the potential to raise communal outbreak so they can create a situation where religious card could be used to bargain for more provincial autonomy with respect to politics and economy.

Religion was once again highlighted for political purposes. The targets settled by SAD were goal oriented, manageable though achievable. In October 1973, Akali Dal adopted a resolution named as Anandpur Sahib Resolution which articulates the political and economic demands of the Sikhs. These demands includes

- Greater state autonomy
- Inclusion of Punjabi-Speaking areas and Chandigarh into Punjab's territory.
- Sikh employment in the armed forces on the basis of merit.
- Central government financing of heavy industry in Punjab
- State control irrigation head works and an increased share of river waters over non riparian states like Haryana and Rajasthan (Tirmizi, p. 52).

The demand for more provincial autonomy by SAD provided sufficient justification to Congress to call the working of Akalis as separatists. The demands itself lauds economical separation along with non-intervention of Centre into Punjab politics and dominance of Sikhism on their land which will ultimately cater their desire to be call as a separate nation within India. The Indian government refused to meet these demands. However, a gap was widened between Akalis and government on unequal distribution of wealth because of Green revolution. Punjab alleged that Centre allowed the surplus water to flow into Rajasthan and Haryana but according to Indus Water Treaty 1960, Ravi, Sutluj and Beas were allotted to India and Punjab being upper riparian and agro based state need more water than Haryana and Rajasthan but on 24th March 1976 only 23% water of Ravi and Beas were allotted to Punjab by Union Government while rest 76% water was given to Rajasthan and Haryana. (Cheema, 2006, p. 69).

Such issues related to the unjust distribution correlated with economic and political crises and blown air to compliment these grievances with religious tone for better public support and mainly to consolidate SAD at this critical time. This provided base to

bring militancy in Punjab. Circumstances made the situation more worsened. Centre confronted with Punjab by showing cold shoulder to Sikhs upon their demand put forward in Anandpur Sahib Resolution but this time Indira Gandhi was unseated on the charges of misuse of government machinery and resources -for personal purposes mainly to run her election campaign- by Allahabad Court on 12 June, 1975. The court debarred Indira Gandhi from holding office for 6 years. The phenomenal judgment electrified the Indian politics and of course Punjab politics took another turn. Emergency lasted for 22 months after high court verdict. During emergency, SAD proved itself as political party which stood against “Maintainance of internal security Act” which gave special rights to police to arrest and detain people without trial. Akali was a formidable challenge for Congress at that this critical time “which had sent 40,000 volunteers to court arrest against emergency” (Singh, 2019, p. 296).

Now Congress following the previous footsteps of “divide and rule” during independence Movement -as discussed earlier- looking for a substitute leadership within SAD mainly because of two reasons:

- To neutralize the traditional Akali’s ideology which purely demands the recognition of Sikh identity based on their culture, traditions and language (Gurmukhi script).
- To end up their hegemony in Punjab particularly related to Sikh affairs which gave them tuff time since independence and during emergency too.

For that purpose, Indira Gandhi promoted Sant Kartar Singh Khalsa during politically charged environment when most Akalis were in jail due to Maintainance of Internal Security Act imposed after High Court verdict. But the death Sant Kartar on 16th August 1977 created the chaotic condition and downfall of congress in 1977 elections changed the situation and Akalis became the coalition partner of Janata Government at Centre in 1977. Now the Akali’s were more focused for the objective to implement Anandpur Sahib Resolution by the Centre but Centre’s failure to

implement resolution led to the eventual breakup of the Akali alliance with the Janata in Centre. At the same time, the Akali Government's failure to obtain concessions from the Centre and Sikh-Nirankari (a section believed themselves a section within Sikhism but since they believed in a "living Guru were regarded as heretics by the faithful") clash in 1978 promoted further internal factionalism as extremists sections of the Sikh Clergy which was seemingly generated and supported by Congress following Divide and Rule policy intensified their efforts to wrest political control of the community from the more moderate Akalis.

Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale, being the head of "Damdami Taksal" named Sikh orthodox organization got enough limelight and grab a central political role in Punjab politics with massive public support due to his revivalist movements related to Sikh identity. His political career moved around 4 phases:

- Moral, Humanist and egalitarian phase where he oppose cast and vulgar consumerism (Singh, 2007, p. 560).
- His clash with Nirankaris in 1978 which caused 17 deaths (The Tribune, 19 November 2019).
- His quest for identity of Sikhs as separate Nation.
- His direct demand from Centre for the acceptance of all provisions put forward in Anandpur Sahib Resolution 1973.

Discussing Bhinderanwale's political phases, first phase provided him ground to get religious introduction in public. His mode of working in first phase was acknowledged by Congress to dent Akalis fame. His outspoken and dare political steps were manipulated by Congress during Sikh-Nirankari clashes (based on religious faiths) which upgraded his status and was emerged on political scene of Punjab as central player. He somehow showed potential to surpass moderate Akalis. So the Congress supported and promoted Bhinderanwale in SGPC elections. Initially, congress and Bhinderanwale alliance was politically productive for Congress as Akali lost State government control in 1980 elections whereas, Congress won mid-term elections but simultaneously Bhinderanwale's dramatic rise as leader in Punjab particularly for

the quest of separate identity was now disturbing for Congress as Shani termed his sudden uplift as “lion of Punjab-which Indira could not tame (Shani. 2008, p. 55).” Keeping Bhinderanwale’s growing graph as leader in consideration, Congress pointed him as suspect of Lala Jagat Narain’s (ex-minister of Punjab and MP) assassination in September 1981. The first attempt to arrest him in Haryana was a failure and Punjab Police in return “set fire to his vans and burnt several Bhindhranwale’s sermons and copies of Guru Granth Sahib. This was an affront to Bhindranwale’s sensibilities (Singh, 2019, p. 16)”. Later he offered himself for arrest on 20 September 1981 but was released on the basis of lack of evidences which results his rise as heroic leader. Bhinderanwale disassociate himself from Congress and moved to Golden Temple and align himself with Akalis for *Dhamram Youdh* (holy war) and supported Akalis in demanding all the provisions put forward in Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

Meanwhile, the thesis of Sikhs as a separate nation was pronounced by Ganga Singh Dhillon, an expatriate, in March 1981, in his address to All-India Sikh Education Conference convened at Chandigarh (Singh, 1979, p. 745). A month later SGPC passed a resolution moved by Akali Dal President *Sant* Harchand Singh Longwal, declaring Sikhs were a nation and hold convention at Gurdwara Manji Sahib (outside Golden Temple) on 26 July, 1981 and issued a charter enumerating minimum 45 demands which latterly reduced to 15. On political grounds they demands territorial and river water claims as envisaged in 1973 Resolution and government asked to stop the work on Sutluj-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal to meet the requirements of the Punjab farmers. Whereas on political grounds they demand to grant the status of Holy city to Amritsar, banning the sale of liquor, meat and tobacco in city, relaying of kirtan (devotional music) on All India Radio as broadcast from Golden Temple, naming Frontier Mail as Golden temple Express, carrying Kirpan (ritual sword) on the airlines and the All-India Gurdwara Act.

Rounds of Negotiations

There were four rounds of negotiations started from 16th October 1981 to November 1982. In first round moderate Akalis come forward with the Anandpur Sahib resolution which comprised of 45 demands but reduced to 15 in revised list. The demands were clear and the release of Bhinderanwale was on the top of list which was accepted by the congress besides other demands. The release of Bhinderanwale was actually the Congress triumphant as Bhinderanwale was considered as ‘Antidote to Moderate Akalis’. The second round started from 29th November 1981 and was a failure because Bhinderanwale started a campaign for the unification of all the parties and organizations of Sikhs either Moderate or Traditionalist primarily to week Akalis mainstream leadership mainly Sant Longwal. The police actions against general public created chaos and the moderate Akalis were the prime victims of such brutal indiscrimination. Whereas, extremists were free to move around. The Congress strategy was to create radicalism in Sikh Society because Akalis only demand the enforcement of Anandpur Sahib Resolution whereas, extremists demanded autonomy. So the negotiations were zero-sum and inconclusive as Sharma stated that “the Akalis blamed that the Prime Minister wanted to prolong the discussion to keep issue pending, the government blamed the Akalis for adding more and more demands” (Sharma, 1992, p. 98).

The third round started from 5th April 1982, it was the time when radicals influenced the public. Meeting held between Sant Longwal and Ms. Gandhi and the negotiations were on the improvement process. The main issues -like the transfer of Chandigar as the capital of Punjab and Punjabi speaking areas to Punjab, Ravi-Beas Water Accord, the declaration of Amritsar status as Holy City, Punjabi as second official language in Punjab and other neighboring states, allowing to wear Kirpan publically and enactment of All India Gurdawara Act- come under discussion and Akali Dal was quiet satisfied for themselves but the negotiations were failed due to electoral politics of Congress which disturbed Akalis and in disappointment started Dharam Youdh on 4th August 1982 which was later joined by Bhinderanwale. Sharma

underlines Longwal efforts to remove the misunderstanding created on their demand based upon Anandpur Sahib Resolution. On 12 October 1982 Longwal said “Let me make it clear once and for all that the Sikhs have no design to get apart from India in any manner. What they simply want is that they should be allowed to live within India as Sikh free from all direct and indirect interferences and tempering with their religious way of life” (Sharma, 1992, p. 98).

Fourth round began in November 1982 and the situation was getting sever and now the Bhinderanwale demanded the implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution as it was. Congress miscalculated the situation because of electoral politics and around 70,000 Sikh volunteers presented themselves for court arrest, riots erupted and such miscalculation disturbed the social fabric of Punjab and Congress put this social issue into the conceptual framework of ‘communal politics’. The problem was no longer the problem of Punjab but of the Sikhs only. The 1973 Resolution’s demands were interpreted as communal which can risk the secular outlook of India. The situation was further politically engineered by Congress and demanded to compromise upon 1973 Resolution before having any negotiation. The Akalis were under great pressure of Congress and Bhinderanwale as Bhinderanwale was stuck on complete implementation of Resolution. It was the time when Congress projected Bhinderanwale start calling Sikhs to support for the cause of an independent Sikh country “Khalistan” on the bases of separate nation.

The law and order situation further deteriorated, Punjab rocked with bomb blasts and the murder of DIG Police A.S. Atwal outside golden temple worsened the existing tensed situation and center dismissed its own party government on 6 October 1983 and imposed President Rule and suspended the publication of all local newspapers (Walter, 2008, p. 15). Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale entered in Golden Temple in December 1983 and fortified his position against any possible military action by the Congress Government. The tensed situation was followed by ‘Operation Blue Star’ in June 1984 where Indian Government attacked on the holiest shrine of Sikhs- Golden Temple- which was

severely damaged and deeply hurt the Sikhs. The Government of India fought against their citizen fellows by deploying the 3 wings of their armed forces along 13 Tanks (Singh, 2007, p. 7). Operation Blue Star resulted in death of more than 4,000 Sikhs, including Congress promoted Bhinderanwale and severe damage to holiest Shrine and Akal Takht (Singh 2019, p. 17). The mass massacre was later called as ghallughara ('holocaust') (Singh 2007, p: 8). The Congress government put all the blame of Operation Blue Star on Akalis and Sikhs in the White Paper published in July 1984 and make them responsible for the failure of negotiations. The depressed and mourning was turned into revenge and Indira Gandhi was its first prime victim. Her two Sikh bodyguards killed her on 31 October 1984 for which they were butchered, burnt alive, cut into pieces, women were gang-raped, their property were looted and police looked hopelessly and nothing worked (Singh 1975, p. 775).

Rajiv Gandhi tried to dilute the tension and concluded Punjab Accord in 1985 regarding massacre enquiry, rehabilitation of army deserters and enactment of All-India Gurdawara Act with Sant Longwal but Longwale was also assassinated by extremists. Later reconciliatory efforts were made like Mathew Commission (August 1985), Venkataramiah Commission (April 1986), Desai Commission (June 1986), Eradi Commission and Mishra Commission but the cry for Khalistan remain dominated. Now the militants on 26 January 1986 issued a declaration at Akal Takht demanding the state of khalistan. On 29th April, 1986, the committee again passed resolution for the formation of Khalistan where almost 80,000 Sikhs were present (Singh, 2019, p. 18). On 26 January, 1987 another resolution was adopted for Khalistan. In a gathering of about 25,000 to 30,000 Sikhs the flag of India was burnt and the flag of Khalistan was hoisted (Times of India. 1987).

The Sikh community's perception of alienation was again heightened by Centre's dismissal of moderate Akali Government of Surjit Singh Barnala and imposition of President's rule in May 1987. The dismissal of Barnal's government and the stringent measures by the Governor S. S. Roy (hero of anti-Naxalite operation in West Bengal) and J. F. Riberio (Director General of

Punjab Police) who had been given 'free hand' to crack down Sikh militants, violence in the state increased spectacularly. In 1985, when the Punjab Accord was signed, the killings of Sikhs came down to 63 as compared to 26 in 1982, 75 in 1983 (Tirmizi, p. 57). In 1986, the death toll rose steeply to over one thousand and rocketed to 3,000 in 1987 when President's rule was imposed. The figures of 1988 killings were 3,074, 2,729 in 1989 which rose to 3,364 in 1992. These massive killings were done during the President rule which was the longest uninterrupted period by Centre government in any state of India. The operations like Operation Blue Star (1984) followed by Operation Black Thunder (1987), Operation Wood Rose (1988), Operation Rakhshak-I (1990), Operation Rakhshak-II (1991) and Operation Last Assault (1992) only meant to contain violence through violence which multiplies the Sikh antagonism against Centre particularly the youth. The tensions were however reduced after lifting the President Rule but Sikhs never forgot the trauma and show their annoyance in 1995 by assassinating Congress Beant Singh, the Congress Party CM of Punjab. In 1997, Prakash Singh Badal from moderate Akali Dal became the CM of Punjab.

However, even in early 1980's, the matter had such potential which can be politically solved rather it helped congress in three ways to deteriorate the situation.

- It may put an end to the growing Sikh demand of autonomy by using its divide and rule policy.
- It was a lesson for other states of India not to disturb the secular outlook of India.
- The situation was used as a stunt for electoral politics in rest of India as it defines the strength of Congress to consolidate the state.

Conclusion

The political engineering of congress based on ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy, nations build on the bases of common territory not on religious bases and Mixing of Religion into the Politics helped Sikhs to think out of the box. The Question got limelight after Operation Blue Star among Sikh Nation that after 1947 partition “Hindus got Hindustan, Muslims got Pakistan and what did Sikh got” being one of the principle victims of partition? But now the answer for every Sikh is obvious now in form of demand of Khalistan. As Sikhs realized that Hindus do not have any affiliation for them but they will keep them because of obvious reservations like the cry for Khalistan will develop a nation within a nation, it can create insecurity and instability anytime at its western border and have potential to boast several other separatist movements in multi-ethnic India based on ethno-social basis and can be a hallmark for Indian ambition in Kashmir. Now Sikhs, have an option to follow the Israeli Model of settlement in Gaza as it is also been practiced by India in Kashmir. For the purpose of Demographic Engineering, Sikhs have considerable population around the world as diaspora mainly in Canada and Britain.

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