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Divisions among Sikh Communities in Britain and the Role of Caste System: A Case Study of Four Gurdwaras in Multi-Ethnic Leicester

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The purpose of this article is to clarify the varied historical processes involved in the development of Sikh communities in Britain by studying the history of the Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) in one multi-ethnic city, Leicester. As a Japanese historian, I have been researching on the development of Sikh communities in multi-ethnic Leicester through interviewees of the Sikh communities, and what has emerged as common to the narratives of fission has been the factor of caste. Bearing this in mind, I look at how caste issues influenced divisions in the four Gurdwaras in Leicester, using oral accounts gathered in interviews with those involved. Through this study, I demonstrate that the Sikh communities are grouped and classified in complex ways, and their history cannot be fully understood without the reference to the continued operation of the caste system. Hopefully this article will make a significant contribution to Sikh and Punjab Studies by providing and contextualizing local-specific ethnographic data.

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Introduction

Before starting my main discussion, I should first explain how this project came about. In 2001, I spent time at the Centre for Urban History and the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) as a visiting scholar at the University of Leicester. During my stay I was struck by the fact that over thirty five per cent of the population of Leicester were from ethnic minority groups - a very different situation from the fairly homogeneous society of my home country, Japan. Subsequently, I developed an interest in the history and culture of multi-ethnic Britain after World War Two, focusing on Leicester, with its national and international reputation as a 'beacon of a tolerant multicultural Britain' and 'model of good race relations'.[1] The subject of multiculturalism seemed to be a pressing one to me, given the likelihood of Japan eventually becoming a more multicultural society. After my sabbatical, I began to visit Leicester twice yearly to interview members of both ethnic minority and indigenous groups. I also visited a variety of religious establishments, ethnic community centres, schools, factories, pubs, hospitals, cemeteries and other places, and attended ethnic, religious events and multi-cultural events.[2] Through this research, however, I became aware of the difference between the public image of multi-ethnic Leicester and the real situation on the ground, and began to reconsider the question of 'diversity' as it exists, not only between different ethnic and religious communities but also within ethnic and religious groups. Local

politicians, religious leaders and media use the term 'diversity' to promote an image of Leicester in which groups with different ethnic and religious identities live in 'harmony and tolerance'. But despite this image of harmony between communities, there are significant issues which divide groups within them.[3]

Leicester is a multi-ethnic, multi-faith city located in the English Midlands, with a population of around 280,000. According to the 2001 Census, the number of people who belong to ethnic minority groups is around 101,182, or 36.1 per cent of Leicester's population, the majority of these being of South Asian origin (i.e. Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis). There are 72,033 residents of Indian origin, making up 25.7 per cent of the city's population. In terms of religion, while Christians are the most numerous groups, they count for less than half the population (44.7 per cent). Hindus account for 14.7 per cent, Muslims 11.0 per cent (the majority being Indians), and Sikhs 4.2 per cent, in three groups totalling around 30 per cent. Amongst Indian groups, those who came to Britain as political refugees/asylum seekers via East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are economically more prosperous than those who came directly from India, and are more prominent in public life. One of the characteristics of the ethnic minorities in Leicester is that Indian residents hold proportionally more power in economy and politics than members of other groups. They have also worked hard to promote Leicester as a model of 'community cohesion' within the UK. Leicester has, therefore, been contrasted with other cities such as Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham in northern England where race riots broke out in 2001.[4] However, this idea that the history of Indians in Leicester is a story of unqualified success is rather simplistic, because economic disparities and spatial segregation still exist within the Indian community. Historians must bear in mind that the Indian community has interval divisions caused by issues such as origin, caste, religion and politics,[5] and it is vital to look further into these issues.

Caste is one of the main causes of the division between Indians. Caste discrimination is most commonly associated with India, but today it is also recognized as an issue in countries such as the UK, Canada and the USA, all of which have residents of Indian origin. In the UK, the Dalit Solidarity Network was established in 1998 to undertake advocacy and lobbying in order to raise awareness of caste discrimination and to campaign for its eradication. The Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance has also been working to eliminate caste discrimination in the UK and more widely. These groups have petitioned the UK Government to enact laws to deal with caste-related crime in the same way as race-related crime. After a House of Lords amendment to the Equality Bill, the Equality Act was formally established in April 2010.[6] However, even while this campaigning was taking place, there was allegedly a 'caste-related incident' in Vienna, Austria which resulted in the murder of a Ravidassia spiritual leader. Ravidassia Sikhs in the UK protested against the killing and against what they regarded as caste discrimination.[7] This is why I have chosen to focus on caste divisions which exist within the Sikh community in this paper.

According to the 2001 Census, there are approximately 336,000 Sikhs resident in the UK, the majority in London and the Midlands.[8] Many of them are

immigrants who came directly to Britain from Punjab or via East Africa after World War Two. As the Sikh population grew, it established Gurdwaras, just as it had in the Punjabi villages. These function as central facilities where Sikhs gather, and they play an important role in daily life, and in fostering Sikh religious identity. Today there are several hundred Gurdwaras in the UK.[9] Recently, Sikhs have been constructing new giant Gurdwaras comparable to developments of the new Islamic large-scale mosques and Hindu temples. These giant buildings have changed the urban skyline and some have been dubbed the 'New Cathedrals of Britain'. The history of these Gurdwaras is an extremely valuable topic to those seeking to understand the growth of the Sikh communities in Britain, even though, as Singh and Tatla have pointed out, the Gurdwaras have rarely been the subject of academic attention.[10]

There already exists considerable published research on the history of the Sikhs in the UK. They have pointed out that the Sikh communities in Britain are not as uniformly structured as is generally thought, and that more attention needs to be given to the differences between different castes.[11] This is an important point. However, with the exception of works by Roger Ballard, Ramindar Singh, Nesbitt and Kalsi, most research on Sikh communities considers historical relationships between different Sikh communities without painting a sufficiently detailed picture of individual Sikhs who live in the same city, of their lives or relationships within the community.[12] I would argue that it is essential to analyze the complicated and dynamic historical processes within particular Sikh communities. The reason is that behind the façade of unity which is the public face of Sikhism, there exist problems of caste exclusion and discrimination that cannot be regarded simply as manifestations of 'diversity'. There have been problematic issues facing researchers into this subject in the past, but in this paper I will try to clarify the varied historical processes involved in developing Sikh communities in Britain by studying the history of the Gurdwaras in multi-ethnic and multi-faith Leicester.[13]

The 2001 Census records 10,796 Sikhs living in Leicester.[14] They opened nine Gurdwaras between 1968 and September 2008,[15] and further research will be conducted to discover how these Sikh temples and their congregations developed and formed, and what kinds of relationships existed between them. It is not external pressures on the Sikh community that I focus on here, but the internal divisions; in particular, I wish to consider how caste issues influenced the divisions between the four Gurdwaras in Leicester in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the divisions became clearly visible. Through this study, I will demonstrate how the Sikh communities in Britain are grouped and classified in complex ways, and how the history of their establishment in Britain must be reconstructed taking into account the caste system which still persists in their homeland, the State of Punjab.

During my research into the history of the Sikh community, I used three kinds of research methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and examination of documentary material. First, I made visits to all nine Gurdwaras in Leicester and to some Sikh families, as well as attending Sikh festivals and wedding ceremonies as a participant-observer. I also visited

Gurdwaras in other cities in Britain and in the Punjab region of India. Secondly, with the assistance of the Gurdwara management committees and other Sikhs networks, I conducted 205 interviews with 140 Sikhs (including Gurdwara management committee members); they were aged between eighteen and eighty five, and mainly living in Leicester. The questions were open, allowing them to discourse on many aspects of their lives, the Sikh religion and communities, racism, the caste system and Leicester as a multi-ethnic city, Britain as a multi-ethnic nation, and so on.[16] Although as a Japanese scholar and interviewer I was an 'outsider' in more ways than one, the majority of interviewees responded frankly to these questions and allowed themselves to reveal 'hidden voices'-viewpoints and opinions often obscured behind the 'official' public face of Sikhism. These interviews were therefore particularly valuable to my research. Finally, I have also referred to newspapers, pamphlets, reports, censuses and demographic survey data as additional information. [17]

The paper is divided into five sections. In the first section, I will briefly discuss the growth of Sikh communities and Gurdwaras in multi-ethnic Leicester. In the subsequent three sections, I will describe the process by which Leicester's first Sikh congregation became divided, resulting in a number of new congregations, belonging respectively to Jats (the farmer caste), the Rajputs (a warrior caste), the Ramgarhias (the mason, bricklayer, blacksmith and carpenter castes), and the Ravidassias (Chamar, or skinner and tanner, caste).[18] In the final section, I will suggest some wider conclusions. While there are no members of the Valmikis/Chuhras (the sweeper) and Bhatra (the fortune-teller) castes in Leicester, unlike in Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Leeds and Nottingham, there are members of the Rajput caste.[19] In this paper, I will focus on Leicester when discussing Rajput Sikhs, rather than considering the whole of the UK Rajput community. I will also highlight the importance of my focus on Leicester.

The Growth of Sikh Communities and Gurdwaras in Multi-Ethnic Leicester

Early pioneers of Sikh migration to Britain arrived in the first part of the twentieth century; many were former seamen and worked as peddlers, and they belonged largely to the Bhatra caste. In the 1950s, Sikhs, like other immigrant groups, moved to Britain in response to the growing demand for labour, and many of these were from the Jat caste. They were followed in the 1960s and early 1970s by Sikhs from East Africa, and later, following the attack on the Golden Temple Complex at Amritsar by the Indian army and the assassination of the Indian Prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, by Sikhs escaping troubles in the Punjab.[20] Britain has the largest Sikh population of any country other than India. According to the 2001 census, there are ten British cities with over 10,000 Sikhs, Leicester ranking eighth among them.[21]

Sikhs started to live in Leicester after World War Two. They came from the Punjab region (Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Amritsar) and from East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). Smaller numbers came from Indonesia,

Singapore and Malaysia.[22] These groups came to Leicester in four phases.

The first phase was after World War Two to about 1962 when the Commonwealth Immigration Act was introduced, and when European, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian immigrants, including a small number of Punjabi Sikhs, came seeking employment and settled in Leicester. They found work in foundries and in rubber, hosiery, dying and other industries. They lived in so-called 'inner-city' areas (for example, Highfields and Belgrave) in low-cost terraced housing for single men, working long hours as non-skilled or semi-skilled factory labourers/operators, and saving wages to send home. In those days they endured a great deal of racism when they sought accommodation and jobs, at work and in the street. However, they had the support of friends and relatives who had come to Britain before them, and gradually managed to establish a community and a Sikh religious congregation.[23] Satnam told me about his experience after coming to Leicester in 1959 as follows:

> [My first job] was [in] an elastic firm. [I worked there for] about 6/7 months [After then I] found a job in a foundry [and] worked there for nearly a year. [It was a] 12 hour shift - about 72 hours work for £12, and very, very hard and dirty. So I [gave] up the job and [hunted] for another job, something a bit cleaner

> […] I found a job in a textile factory […] I got on the night shift at £8 per week 4 nights, so it wasn't dirty […] The main problem was for lodging […] We [couldn't] get lodging in English people's houses. We [tried] to find old premises. If anyone has got a house and could move there, all people [lived] together. It [was] crowded, very crowded.[24]

The second phase was from around 1962 until about 1970 when the economic base for the community was established. Sikhs then bought houses, brought their wives and children, recommenced family life, and gradually formed a Sikh community. The traditional culture of the 'homeland' was restored, and soon afterwards the first Sikh temple 'Guru Nanak Gurdwara' (hereafter GNG) was opened in 1968. During that period more Sikhs came to Leicester from the Punjab. In addition, Sikhs came from East Africa during the 'Independence of Africa' movement of the 1960s. Again, there was severe racism. For example, wearing a turban and having a beard could often be a pretext for refusing a Sikh a job.[25] Manjit told me about the racism which he experienced in 1964:

> In the beginning I couldn't get a job because I couldn't cut my hair or cut my beard […] I went everywhere looking for a job […] But I was told they couldn't keep me. They said you must shave it off. I said no, I don't want to shave it off. I wrote to my father back home and told him what was happening. My father told me to come back. Don't shave! Come back! Then I got a job at Dunlop [the rubber factory], and they didn't ask me to shave. The person

in charge there had lived in India, so he knew the Sikhs' background. [26]

The third phase was from the 1970s till early 1980s, when a large number of immigrants from South Asia, including Sikhs, arrived from India and East Africa. According to Deborah Phillips, there were 42,000 South Asian immigrants by 1978, 19,500 of them East African, the so-called 'twice migrants'. For example, political refugees from Uganda under the Idi Amin regime, numbered around 27,000 in Britain, over 6,000 of them in Leicester. Some had owned businesses in Africa, and after arriving in Leicester they established a new business and stimulated activity among other immigrants already settled in the city. They started to leave the inner-city and to buy houses in more up-market areas in search of a higher living standards and more educational opportunities. The second generation obtained more lucrative employment than the first, and started to climb the social ladder.[27]

Satnam told me about the South Asians from East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

> They were mostly business people. They set up business on the Melton Road like [for example] a small Bombay Bazaar […] Some people started manufacturing clothing […] They developed and gave jobs to Asian women who couldn't speak English [and who wanted] jobs in Asian firms […] A lot of big firms were closing down because of the recession. A lot of the Asian families survived because they worked in small factories and the Asian women worked hard to earn some money and develop. In that way they were able to […] buy bigger houses. The children had a quite good education, and became doctors, dentists [and] solicitors.[28]

More Sikhs came at this time, and according to the local census from 1983, there were 10,808 Sikhs (3.8 per cent of the population) in Leicester. Under these circumstances three more Sikh temples were opened: the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara (hereafter RBG) in 1971, the Guru Tegu Bahadur Gurdwara (hereafter GTBG) in 1975, and the Nirankari Advice Centre (hereafter NAC) in 1979 (this temple is not referred to as a 'Gurdwara'). These developments became the base of the Sikh Community in Leicester.[29]

The last phase was from the early 1980s to the present when five more Sikh temples were built, and the Sikh communities have further developed around these temples: the Guru Amar Das Gurdwara (hereafter GADG) in 1992, the Shri Guru Ravidas Temple (hereafter SGRT) in 1993, the Gurdwara Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib (hereafter GSGDS) in 1998, the Guru Panth Parkash Gurdwara (hereafter GPPG) in 2005 and the Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester (hereafter NSSL) in 2008.[30] The political incidents in India in 1984 and their aftermath had a great impact on the Sikh community in Leicester and mobilised Sikhs into action. Meanwhile, as Leicester's policy of multiculturalism progressed, Sikh festivals such as Vaisakhi (marking the

birth of the Khalsa in 1699) and Guru Nanak's birthday along with its procession started to gain popularity beyond the Sikh community,[31] and some Sikhs began to get involved with local and national politics. This led to some Sikhs being elected to the City Council, rising to the office of Lord Mayor for Leicester and later as Members of Parliament.[32]

Culdipp, who came to Britain in 1959, told me why he became involved in politics:

> During the 1980s a movement [the Black Action Group, was popular and] a lot of things were going on like fighting for the minority groups […] They were part of the Labour Party in those days […] They organised themselves to put some pressure on the political parties […] They wanted political rights, [a] share of the power, whatever that was. I thought that there was no point in shouting from outside; you have to join the party and then make a noise, argue [and] sit with them. Any political change should come from there for the benefit of the people. That was my basic reason for joining the Labour Party and becoming a councillor […] My ward was Rushey Mead […] Labour took that ward in 1983 for the first time and we have held it since then.[33]

He became the Lord Mayor of Leicester in 1997. He was the second Asian Lord Mayor in the city, and the first Sikh.[34]

Thus Sikh temples in Leicester are not only places to nurture Sikh identity, but they clearly contribute to Leicester's success as a multi-ethnic city, and to the drive to make Britain a multi-ethnic, multi-faith nation. One of the most symbolic events in their progress was the visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth to the GNG, in August 2002 as part of her Golden Jubilee Tour. The Sikhs welcomed the Queen by waving both the Union Jack and the Sikh flag, and presented her with a 'golden sword' in gratitude for her visit to the temple. It was the first time the Queen had visited a Sikh temple in Britain.[35]

The role of the Gurdwara is not limited to religious activities. Each temple provides a venue for educational, cultural, political and other activities, and they have extended buildings and expanded their role within the communities as congregations have increased in size. The typical Gurdwara contains a 'diwan hall'(chapel) which houses the 'Guru Granth Sahib' (the Holy Book), and which serves as a venue for festivals and weddings, a 'langar hall'(for dining), a Punjabi school, and social services facilities for the elderly and disabled. Some temples house Sikh museums, libraries, sports venues, music and dance clubs, yoga classes, marriage registry offices, and branches of the 'Shromani Akali Dal' (the main Sikh party of Punjab).[36]

The Gurdwaras are by no means identical, each one reflecting its individual community. Although they have been developed by Sikhs living in British society, their congregations have been deeply influenced by the Punjabi homeland and its traditional caste system, by Sikh sects, personal rivalries, political incidents, and experiences in East Africa. Of nine

Gurdwaras in Leicester, the GNG, the GTBG, the GADG and the GSGDS are mainly Jats, while the first president of the GTBG was a Rajput. However, two of them, the GADG and the GSGDS, started their congregations after the political incidents in the Punjab in 1984, as a consequence of differences in political outlook and personal rivalries. The RBG is for Ramgarhias and the SGRT is for Ravidassias. The other three places of worship (the NAC, the GPPG and the NSSL), to be discussed in another paper, worship '*Sants*' who are still alive (as in living human gurus). However, one of the strongest influences on Sikh internal division comes from the sense of belonging to the caste system. This paper focuses on this point.[37]

Early Divisions among Jats and Rajputs

Interviewees from the Jat and Ravidassia communities told me that, around 1959, two Jat men who worked in the John Bull rubber factory initiated the purchase of a small terraced house in Gwendolen Road, to use for meetings and Sunday worship. Later, they planned to turn the house into a Sikh temple, but they could not obtain council permission. By 1962, about 100 Sikhs lived in Leicester.[38] In 1966, the Sikh community rented St Saviour's Church Hall in Highfields, a residential area favoured by immigrants, and they held Sunday worship and established a Punjabi school there. There were about 200 members in this congregation, taking in most of the Sikhs resident in Leicester. While the majority were Jats, Sikhs from other caste backgrounds (Rajputs, Ramgarhias and Ravidassias) also joined the early congregation.[39]

In the late 1960s, politically-fuelled rifts began to develop among the St Saviour's Church Hall Sikhs. This conflict concerned issues of caste partisanship brought from the homeland, issues around the extended family, Gurdwara management, political outlook and different views regarding the Sikh faith and its ceremonies.[40] People not elected to the management committee of the first Gurdwara decided to withdraw and establish their own congregation.[41]

Those who were elected to the management opened the first Sikh temple in Leicester, the GNG, in 1968, after having purchased the former Holy Cross School in New Walk in 1966.[42] The first president of this temple was a Jat named Gurmit. According to a relative of his, he arrived in Britain in about 1951 from Hoshiarpur and worked in the W Richards Structural Steel foundry. As more Indian workers started working in the same foundry, he became a shop steward, a rare thing for an immigrant in those days. Because of his status, he managed to obtain work vouchers for people from his village with his extended family, and they came to work in the foundry. He helped them and lodged them in his home.[43] His relative described how he created a wider Sikh network:

> [He] kept our [extended] family together and led everything […]
> He could communicate in various languages. He was a good
> administrator. He knew all the rules and regulations of this
> particular country, and because he was a helpful person everyone

used to go to him for help. He was always seen not only as a
community leader, but as a family leader also.[44]

Gurmit was the President of the GNG for 10 years from 1968, but died at the
age of 52 in 1984.[45] The Sikhs worshipped in the GNG from 1968 to 1989,
when parking problems and a growing congregation prompted them to consider
moving. They purchased a warehouse in Holy Bones and rebuilt it as a Sikh
temple, opening in 1989.[46]

I will now consider the activities of the Sikhs who split away from the
original temple. According to the individuals involved, their congregation
started with 5-6 people, in the main hall of Bridge Road School. In 1975 the
group purchased a former builder's yard at 23 East Park Road, and it was named
the 'GTBG'. In 1985, they purchased a former electricity sub-station next door
(106 East Park Road) and extended the temple. The congregation sold this
temple and purchased a four-storey building nearby, on the site of the former
Chilprufe Shoe factory. They redeveloped this as a new Sikh temple and
community centre, which opened in 1989.[47]

The first President of this temple (1968-1978), was Arjan, from Jalanadhar
His father was a British soldier. Before emigrating to Britain he studied at
Khalsa College, and then worked as an army wireless operator for seven years.
He came to Britain in 1962, settled in Leicester, bought a house and then two
years later called his family over. He worked at the Dunlop factory for twenty-
one years. By 1984, when he retired, the number of Sikhs in the factory had
increased to between 200 and 300.[48] His education at Khalsa College and his
knowledge of Sikh teaching and ceremonial practices led other Sikhs to depend
on him for help, guidance and support. He also developed a new Sikh network
through the workplace, extended family and Sikh community surrounding him.

Let us now consider why the Sikh congregation divided in the 1966-68
period. Most of these conflicts were among Jats, who formed the majority of the
congregation, but one additional factor in the conflict was the fact that the first
president, Arjan, was a Rajput with a strong sense of caste status. One Rajput
remarked:

> Our family is a Rajput family […] we are a small group of people,
> and a lot of people didn't like the idea of [a Rajput] being
> President.[49]

In India the Rajputs are in the minority; of the 29 castes of Sikhs mentioned in
the 1931 Indian National Census, the percentage of Jats amounted to 52.43 per
cent as compared to the 1.25 per cent who were Rajputs. In the Hindu caste
system, Rajputs are regarded as superior to Jats. However, under the Sikh
Empire (1839-49), many Rajputs converted to Sikhism, where they came to be
regarded as inferior to the Jats.[50] A Rajput woman related the history of the
Rajputs as follows:

> The Rajputs were above the Jats […] They were part of the
> Maharajahs and were the main landowners. They had vast amounts
> of land and covered so many villages. The Jats used to work for
> the Rajputs. The Rajputs were the warrior clans. They had the
> power in their hands. In most villages they had a caste system.[51]

Her sense of belonging and identity as a Rajput was reconstructed from the 'past glory' of the Rajput caste who presided over the Jats and as a 'ruling, large landowning and warrior' caste in a 'certain period in history', and she attempted to insist on Rajput superiority over the Jats on this basis, while being aware of the status of the Jats in modern society. What is relevant to the present debate, however, is that caste consciousness between Jats and Rajputs was one of the initial causes of division in the community.

The Rajputs remain a small minority, with a few hundred families in the UK and fewer than ten in Leicester. Some of their arranged marriages are organized by the parents and relatives within the same caste, but rather than establishing their own new Sikh temple officially, they attend the same Gurdwaras as Jats, and sometimes marry Jats. But about 200 Rajput families mainly from the Punjab region live in Hitchen, Hertfordshire, which has the only predominantly Rajput Gurdwara in the UK. Rajputs, who came to Hitchen in the 1960s and subsequently became the majority of Sikhs in the area, opened their Gurdwara with other Sikhs (Jats and Ramgarhias, and so on) in 1970. After that, Jats left this Gurdwara and opened their own Gurdwara in 1976. Ramgarhias also left the Rajput-dominated Gurdwaras and established their own Gurdwara in 1993. While some of Rajputs from the Punjab region are Hindu, the majority of them are Sikhs in the UK.[52]

Gurdwaras established by the majority Jat community gradually started to proliferate in a number of cities in Britain. But it did not always mean that there was any formal network between Gurdwaras. In this respect, the Jats differed from the Ramgarhias and the Ravidassias, whom I will discuss later. The reasons for this are varied: because of the large number of Jat Sikhs in each of the UK cities, worshippers had no need to rely on the Sikhs from different cities, and there was a strong sense of autonomy in each Gurdwara. As the Jats represented the majority of the Sikh population, they had an advantage over Sikhs belonging to other castes in that they did not need to emphasise their solidarity as much. The GNG and the GTBG followed the same pattern. However, they started to alter in character, as did the majority of Gurdwaras in other cities in Britain, after the political disaster in the Punjab in 1984. They became part of a new national and global Sikh network, led by the Khalistanis who campaigned for an independent Punjab, mainly through the International Sikh Youth Federation [hereafter ISYF] (banned in 2001), and its UK successor, the Sikh Federation, founded in September 2003.[53]

Meanwhile, Sikhs who joined the protest against the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar but who opposed the Khalistan movement for the creation of a Sikh State, were defeated by the ISYF at the GTBG elections in November 1986, and left to open the GADG on Clarendon Park Road in 1992 in a former

Baptist Church. The main management committee members of the GADG were the former managers including the first president from the GTBG.[54] Another Sikh congregation was started in Halkin Street, Belgrave, in about 1996 by two businessmen. Later they opened the new GSGDS on Gipsy Lane in 1998, in the former Gipsy Lane Hotel. In 2002 the management committee members changed, and a well-known Khalistani became a president of the GSGDS.[55] In short, while the main committee members of the GNG, the GTBG and the GSGDS have been Khalistani Jats, those from the GADG have been non-Khalistani Jats. While some Rajputs remained at the GTBG, other Rajputs left and joined the GADG.[56]

Jats whom I interviewed denied the caste system's existence, but in reality they have cherished a consciousness of their 'superior' Jat caste, just as in the village communities of the Punjab, and by discriminating against the other Sikh groups, whom I will discuss later. This has enabled them to maintain their sense of belonging to a ruling caste, even though there are also conflicts present within their caste.[57] However, one must remember the fact that Sikhs who belong to the other castes have created their own sense of 'memory' and built up a 'story' of their development as a community reconstructing their own identity and emphasizing their difference from the Jats. The Rajputs, in turn, have created their own 'memory' and 'story' around the 'past glory' of the Rajput caste in a 'certain period in history' in the Punjab.

Divisions between Ramgharhias and Jats and their Historical Background

The name 'Ramgarhia' is derived from 'Ramgarh', a village near Amritsar, and it means 'Custodians of the Castle of God'. While 'Ramgarhia' was historically the title of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, the leader of one of the twelve Sikh misls (confederacies) of the eighteenth century, it has become synonymous with the Tarkhan (carpenter) caste because the majority of the Sikhs within the Ramgarhia misl were Tarkhans. Ramgarhias are descended from village craftsmen (carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers and others) and in the Punjab they served the Jats and were regarded as a lower caste.[58] The Ramgarhias worshipped with the Jats at the GNG until 1968, when they set up their own management committee and rented a room in a pub in London Road. Around 1970, they purchased a warehouse in Meynell Road, and started to rebuild it as a Sikh temple, the RBG, in about 1971.[59] A businessman from Nairobi was one of the four founding trustees, and was responsible for building the Gurdwara.[60]

An important issue is why the Ramgarhias separated themselves from the Jats. The reason, according to one Jat man involved with the management of the GNG, is as follows:

> Our religion does not believe in the caste system. We all sit on the floor and we all meet in the main prayer hall or in the main langar hall. Preaching is for everybody […] but unfortunately the Ramgarhia Board [Gurdwara] is based on the caste system which is against the principles of Sikhism.[61]

Clearly, from the Jats' point of view, the reason the Ramgarhias split from the Jats communities lay in their sense of belonging to the Ramgarhia caste. However, by condemning the Ramgarhias for going against the spirit of Sikhism, the Jats also distance themselves from the Ramgarhias, seeking to maintain their own identity as distinct from the Ramgarhias. Some Jats when I interviewed repeated the phrase 'equality among all Sikhs', but do not acknowledge that one of the main reasons the Ramgarhias cite for choosing to rely on their own caste is the behaviour of the Jats themselves. The Ramgarhia community alleges that the 'equality among all Sikhs' mantra often reiterated by the Jats is only a 'principle', and that they in fact observe the caste traditions which still exist in the Punjab. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of marriages arranged by Jats are within the Jat caste. A Ramgarhia on the former management committee of this temple remarked that:

> [Jats] don't like other communities […] They are the farmers in India and they think they are super[ior], and they are a strong nation. They like fighting. They like the army and they can challenge anybody in the congregation […] They want to be honoured and they want to humiliate the others […] In the nation of the Ramgarhia they are soft people. They don't go in for fighting […] They [Jats] feel the Jat caste is the top caste, and the Ramgarhia caste is a bit inferior, so they don't elect them to be President. That was the main cause of the split. They did not accept the Presidency of the Ramgarhia people, and the Ramgarhia said, 'First President yours and then one from our caste and nation, then from your nation' and they said 'no'. 'We will always be President and you will be either secretary or treasurer'. They always clashed and that was the main cause.[62]

From this it emerges that the main reason the Ramgarhias split from the Jats was the difference in caste. However, Ramgarhias and Jats differ in their assessment of who was to blame.

In regard to the division of these Ramgarhias from the Jats, it is necessary to call attention to two issues in the context of the historical background. One is the fact the Ramgarhias were 'twice migrants'. In other words, many Ramgarhias came to Britain via East Africa rather than straight from India. This experience caused some complicated antagonisms with the Jats. In the farming communities in the Punjab, Ramgarhias always worked under the Jats. However, from the late nineteenth century the Punjabi Tarkhans moved from the villages to towns and, under the extension of British rule in the Punjab, they acquired a reputation for remarkable skill from the British railway authorities. During these times, they began to have their own Ramgarhia identity which is connected to these skills. Furthermore, some Ramgarhias migrated to East Africa to work in construction industries. It is said they represented ninety per cent of the Sikh population in these countries, and that they received a British-style education, spoke fluent English and experienced an urban lifestyle. Some

had successful businesses. They were no longer attached to their Jat patrons and acquired a new economic power and independence which enhanced their pride in the Ramgarhia identity. However, during the movements for African independence and the 'Africanisation' policies of the 1960s and early 1970s, they moved abroad with other south Asian migrants. As some of them held British passports, a good number emigrated to Britain.[63]

Once they landed in Britain, they found a large number of Jats already there. The Jats spoke little English, and in general were less well off than the Ramgarhias. However, the Jat majority still had pride in the Jat caste. Consequently, complex feelings of conflict caused tension between the two groups. A Ramgarhia member described the relationship with the Jats thus:

> Jat people coming from India had a lot of communal problems […] They thought that Ramgarhia was a lower caste than Jat, but we say that because we are better educated and moving into modern society how can we be a low caste? How could they be of a higher caste when they were illiterate?[64]

A second generation Ramgarhia man remarked on the relationship with the Jats from the Ramgarhia point of view as follows:

> Ramgarhias are more respectful to their elders […] We speak what could be termed as being more gentle whereas the Jats because of their background, where they work in the fields, are used to shouting and ordering each other about rather than asking […] I think the Jats are more the followers with the Ramgarhias being the leaders […] Because we are more skilled and educated we do have an advantage in the knowledge we have, so they sometimes feel let down by that. There is an inferiority complex […] There is no intermarriage between the two.[65]

What I find interesting from these stories is that, while these Ramgarhias are sensitive towards 'discrimination' from the Jats, they partly derive their identity from their consciousness of their status as relatively prosperous, skilled, urban settlers in East Africa, and stress their differences from the Jats who are the predominantly working class. In other words, while they identify themselves as Ramgarhia, they have also created a new idea of the Ramgarhia as superior. They turn traditional discrimination back upon the Jats by accusing them of being rural, fond of fighting, unrefined, arrogant, and uneducated and of not respecting the elderly. This is compared adversely to the Ramgarhias, who have urban life experiences, are not fond of fighting, respect the elderly, are educated within the British culture, and who behave with moderation. While this process has been referred to as 'pursuing a Sikh version of Sankritisation' (a form of upward mobility by a social lower caste which emphasizes religious virtue),it leads to the classification of Ramgarhias as more 'Westernised', 'cultured', and

'educated' than the Jats, despite their conservatism in following the rules of Sikh orthodoxy.[66]

It also seems that the Ramgarhias did not to mix with the Jats, and that after the 1950s they developed their own community and steadily strengthened their own sense of unity. The Ramgarhias in Leeds opened their own Gurdwara as early as 1958. Ramgarhia congregations were also established in many UK cities. In 1973, the National Ramgarhia Congress was held in the Ramgarhia Sabha Gurdwara in Southall, at which representatives of twenty-two Ramgarhia Associations and Gurdwaras met and founded the Ramgarhia Council. National and regional events and celebrations organized by the Council and the Associations have become a place to exchange information, traditionally-arranged endogamous marriages and strengthen Ramgarhia networks. Recently they also set up a website providing information and support for arranged marriages.[67] Ramgarhia religious facilities have also been built not only in India but also in the US, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, the Middle East, Africa and other overseas locations. Thus, the RBG in Leicester has served not only as a temple in a nationwide network, but also functions as part of the global network.[68] Though part of the RBG became involved in demonstrations against the Indian government for a while after 1984, they still maintain a strong sense of identity.[69]

The Ramgarhias have created a new identity based on ideas of 'civilized' versus 'uncivilized' derived from Western imperialist values which they absorbed during their urban experiences in Africa, a process which occurred despite their religious conservatism. They have used this conceptual framework to assert their superiority over the Jats. Thus, whilst restrained by the concept of the caste, they have reconstructed their identity by making reference to their experiences 'in Britain via East Africa'. When Bhachu discusses 'twice migrants', she speaks of all Sikhs from East Africa, emphasising they being 'East African Sikhs', rather than designating them in terms of caste. But in my view, it is quite natural for those Sikhs who came to Britain via East Africa to speak of their communities through the perspective of caste.[70]

The Division of the Ravidassi group from Other Sikh Communities and 'Caste Exclusionism'

Another group of Leicester Sikhs, those from the caste associated with skinning and tanning, regard Ravidass (a *bhagat* in the Sikh tradition), as their 'Guru'. They separated themselves from the GNG in about 1969. There were about ten members initially. They rented a room in Highfields Community Centre, and worshipped once a month there. They also tried to purchase two houses in Vulcan Road in 1984, but they were unable to do so due to opposition from local residents. However they successfully purchased land in Harrison Road, now an Indian residential district in the Belgrave area of Leicester, and opened a new Sikh temple in 1993.[71] That year was the 600th Anniversary of the birth of their Guru, Ravidass.

One Ravidassia, reflecting on the late 1960s, talked about community division:

> There was another friction between our community and other people, and they started another group which is [the Shri] Guru Ravidass Temple […] We formed a little committee and hired [a] community hall.[72]

He explained the reasons for separation thus:

> I am a member of the Shri Guru Ravidass Temple in Leicester […] We had so many castes in India a long time ago that keeps it running as it does. We were in the lower caste, and our Guru Ravidass was from the lower caste also […] People would say, 'We are in the higher caste' and things like that. That is why there were so many frictions in life.[73]

Another Ravidasi told me:

> My parents [experienced discrimination]. Some older members would say, 'Are you from the Ravidasi community?' They would ask questions like that and discriminate against us. [My parents] wouldn't tolerate that so they thought 'rather than staying with this community and being discriminated against, we set [up on] our own. We will go away from these people and have our own society and [rather than] stay in that society to eliminate the discrimination'.[74]

After arriving in Britain, the Ravidassias were often discriminated against both by the host society and by fellow Sikhs (in particular Jats) because of their caste. There were often fights and quarrels in factories and pubs between the Jats and Chamars sometimes even resulting in murder.[75] Even when the Ravidassias succeeded in economic life and in politics, Jats continued to judge according to caste. The Ravidassias had no choice but to separate themselves from those who had a strong sense of caste, and to form their own Ravidassia organization.

In order to explain how the Ravidassias organize their group, it is necessary to mention the Guru Ravidas and Ad Dharm movement in India and Britain. The Ravidassias are 'Chamars', or so-called 'untouchables': those who have traditionally been at the bottom of the society, outside the Indian caste system. They were in the category of 'scheduled castes' up to 1935, and were also known as 'Ad-Dharm', 'Harijan', 'Achhut', 'Dalit' and 'Ravidassi'.[76]

The development of a new 'Ravidassi' identity is closely related to the tradition of Guru Ravidass, poet and thinker, who was born into the Chamar caste in the fifteenth century. He worked in the leather industry as a shoemaker, but because of his caste he faced significant discrimination. Later, he criticised all discrimination on grounds of caste, class, race and religion, and preached the equality of all humankind. In the 1920s, a religious movement called 'Ad-

Dharam' or 'Ravidassi' developed, which emphasised the equality of all humankind and took Guru Ravidas as its patron saint.[77]

This movement spread to Britain in 1956, at the time when the Chamars were experiencing problems of caste discrimination within the Sikh community. Initially it was adopted by the Ravidas Sabha congregations in Birmingham and Wolverhampton. The first Ravidassia Gurdwara was opened in Birmingham in 1966, the second in Wolverhampton in 1968. This was a stimulus to the Chamars in Britain, and it encouraged the foundation of Ravidassia congregations in other cities.[78] At present, there are over twenty Ravidassia Gurdwaras in Britain. They have a national organization, with its headquarters in the Gurdwara in Birmingham, as well as being connected to overseas Sikh centres of worship.[79]

A Ravidassia group member told me about the relationship between the Ravidassia Gurdwara and the committees of other Leicester Gurdwaras:

> There are some who hardly get involved […] whose members hardly ever come here. We do go to other temples […] Their management members don't participate […] The public will come, but not management members […] It is still the caste system which they have in mind.[80]

The same man told me why members were confined to the Ravidassia community:

> Being low caste people, people of a higher caste think we can't get married to them, because they are lower […] There is a difference in [the] caste system in England but it is still going on, and it is still annoying […] We want to get away from this, but people won't let it go. They come to the Gurdwaras and sit and pray and take part in their religious ceremonies, but the caste system in their minds is still there. You therefore have to stay in your community.[81]

This discrimination is unique to their historical situation. A Ramgarhia made the following remark about the divide between the Ravidassias and the other castes:

> Historically in India [Ravidassias] did the dirtiest jobs […] cleaning the toilets, skinning the animals and this type of thing, so the higher castes did not associate with them. Whilst in practice now things are different, […] people don't do those kinds of job now but the practice of the caste system is still there. […] The younger people are changing […] They don't feel so strongly about it, but certainly in the older generation it is very strong […] Among my relatives a girl got married to a Chamar boy […] but it was not accepted.[82]

Thus, as victims of 'racial exclusionism' stemming from the host community and also 'caste exclusionism' from within the Sikh communities, Ravidassias

have been made to feel a sense of 'otherness' in multiple contexts, and their social cohesiveness seems to arise from their fight against discrimination.[83]

The situation of Ravidassias, at the bottom of the caste system, is largely different from that of Rajputs and Ramgarhias (the Chuhra caste is traditionally regarded as 'lower', but apparently not present in Leicester). Because of their history as 'untouchables' labeled as the 'unclean', 'big gaps' have formed between them and the Jats, Rajputs and Ramgarhias. Because of this prejudice, they have chosen to follow the holy man Ravidass, who opposed the caste system. As a result, they have developed their own community and have been active in the movement to end the discrimination which has led to their 'double exclusion' or 'two-fold isolation'. Nonetheless, one might argue that this sense of cohesiveness has led to them 'closing' themselves in by marriage within the caste, a practice that has given rise to yet another dilemma.[84]

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed how caste influenced the divisions between the four Gurdwaras in Leicester. The conclusion is that caste consciousness between Jats, Rajputs, Ramgarhias and Ravidassias had a great influence on the divisions, groupings and classifications of Sikh communities centred around the Gurdwaras. My research in Leicester also identifies two wider issues: caste-consciousness and the growing significance of national and global Sikh networks.

Caste-consciousness, which has changed in complex ways during the history of the Sikh diaspora, has continued to cause strife even among Sikhs living in the West. Sikhs have mixed with British society and found a place in the British social and economic system. Superficially they seem to resist traditional hierarchical distinctions, but in reality they have used caste as their standard method of classifying individuals in society. Caste-consciousness is not limited to the first generation, but continues into the second generation and beyond. It is not always obvious to the casual observer, but it surfaces when one individual meets someone from the same Indian ethnic or religious community but from a different caste, or in matters pertaining to marriage and the extended family. This caste-consciousness is unlikely to disappear even when someone who belongs to a lower caste has achieved economic success, particularly when that person is labeled as 'Chamar'. The main factor in the shaping of each Sikh community and its Gurdwara is not the presence of class-based networks but caste-based ones, even though the Sikh community consists of Sikhs from different kinds of social class.[85] Today caste remains a vitally important aspect of the British Sikh Community.

A Sikh who came to Leicester in 1964 when he was about eight years old told me why he uses Singh ('lion', the name taken by all male Sikhs) as a surname.

> What happens is that I call myself Mahesher Singh. That states that I don't have a caste. We are all the same we are all called Singh. A lot of

people now use Singh as a middle name and they use their caste name to identify themselves. A lot of them even take out the Singh and are called [by their full names]. That donates their caste. To me as child I didn't know what caste was. It was only later on when I was asked what caste I was […] The older people know these castes and it is very important to them.[86]

He explained how caste consciousness was ingrained in people's minds:

A lot of Asian people came here twenty, thirty [and] forty years ago. They remember what [the caste system] was like. All these ideas about position in society are ingrained in their minds [The problems] come when it is time for their children to get married. That is where a lot of difficulty arises because they want their children to marry within their own communities […] Some of the children run away saying they will not marry this person or that person. So there is a lot of tension [in families] like that. I think this persists although we are not supposed to have a caste system, it is very much a caste system […] Even the Gurdwara is based on the caste system although we would preach one thing and do something else. Everybody does that.[87]

Another point is the relationship between the structure and organisation of each group and the national and global Sikh network. Divisions between Sikhs are based on a sense of being 'trapped' in the caste system, and this has given rise to discrimination and a consciousness of hierarchy between groups and organisations. It has happened not only in Leicester, but also among other immigrant communities who belong to the same caste in other parts of Britain, as research done in Leeds, Bradford and Southall has suggested.[88] But it seems to me it has also happened within the worldwide Sikh diaspora. If I am right, the development of the Gurdwaras in Leicester cannot be understood fully without a consideration of the development of global south Asian networks, in particular, Indian networks with their extended kinship ties.[89]

Finally I would like to mention briefly the problem of caste discrimination, which I referred to in the Introduction. As discussed in this article, the problem associated with caste discrimination does not only exist in the relationship between a 'Chamar' and other upper castes. However, one must not forget the fact there is a subtle difference in quality in the relationships between other castes, and the above mentioned relationship. Their experience and suffering of caste discrimination (and the fact that those who have not experienced caste prejudice are seemingly in denial) have driven them to a movement whose aim is 'eradication' (or 'abolition') of caste discrimination. From this point of view, it is utterly a natural/rightful development to see the emergence of organizations such as 'the Dalit Solidarity Network UK' and 'the CasteWatch UK'.[90] We ought to listen to their demands to 'oppose all caste-based discrimination', and their bitter experiences and 'voices'. These are not made lightly.

Map: The Gurdwaras in Leicester

1.   The Guru Nanak Gurdwara
2.   The Ramghria Board Gurdwara
3.   The Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara
4.   The Nirankari Advice Centre
5.   The Guru Amar Das Gurdwara
6.   The Shri Guru Ravidass Temple
7.   The Gurdwara Shri Guru Dasmesh Sahib
8.   The Gur Panth Parkash Gurdwara
9.   The Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester

[Gurdwaras are identified with number in circle]

Notes

[1] *The Guardian*, 1 January, 2001; *Leicester Mercury* (hereafter, *LM*), 6 January, 2001; *International Herald Tribute*, 10-11 February, 2001; *The Independent*, 12 December, 2001; Gurharpal Singh, 'A City of Surprise: Urban Multiculturalism and the "Leicester Model" ', in N Ali, V S Kalra and S Sayyid (eds), *A Postcolonial People*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2006).

[2] The purpose of this project was to research the history and culture in the multi-ethnic Leicester from the point of view of different ethnic minorities.

[3] Nick Jewson(ed), *Migration Processes & Ethnic Divisions,* Leicester: The Centre for Urban History and the Ethnicity Research Centre, University of Leicester, 1995; *The Diversity of Leicester: A Demographic Profile,* Leicester City Council, May 2008.

[4] http://www.leicester.gov.uk/departments/page.asp?pgid=1009 (accessed: 31 July 2003); Valerie Marett, *Immigrants Settling in the City,* Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989; John Martin and Gurharpal Singh, *Asian Leicester*, (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2002); *LM*., 2 September 2003; Gurharpal Singh (2006); Joanna Herbert, *Negotiating Boundaries in the City*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

[5] See note 3 and Panikos Panayi, 'The Spicing Up of English Provincial Life', in Anne J Kershen (ed.), *Food in the Migrant Experience,* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Eleanor Nesbitt, 'Sikh Diversity in the UK: Contexts and Evolution', forthcoming.

[6] *No Escape: Caste Discrimination in the UK*, Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2006 (http://www.irr.org.uk/2006/july/haoooo13.htmal) (accessed: 26 September 2009); http://www.acdauk.org.uk/?page_id=24) (accessed: 10 April 2010); *Hidden Apartheid,* Derby, November, 2009. http://www.Equalities.gov.uk/equalitybill.aspx (accessed: 7 May 2010).

[7] http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap20090525/ap_on-re_eu/eu_austria_temple_shooting; http://www.demotix.com/news/sikhs-march-london-against-discrimination (accessed: 26 September 2009); As for Ravidassia community in Catalonia, Kathryn Lum, 'The Ravidassia Community and Identity(IES) in Catalonia, Spain', *Sikh Formations*, 6:1, June 2010. pp 31-49. Regarding to the impact of 'Vienna incident' on UK Sikhs, a future study will be needed.

[8] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=293(accessed: 31 July 2003); http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/rank/ewskh.asp) (accessed: 7 February 2004).

[9] According to Paul Weller (ed), *Religions in the UK 2001-03* (Pontyool: the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby, 2001, p 36), there were 180 centres in 1999. However, there are some Sikh temples which are not counted in this book, and the number has increased considerably since 1999. http://www.sikh.net/Gurdwara/World/GWUK.htm (accessed: 26 September

2009).

[10] Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, 'Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England', *The Geographical Review,* vol 93, no 4, 2003; Singh and Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain,* (London: Zed Books, 2006), pp. 5, 69 93; Nesbitt, 'Gurdwaras in the British Press', *Sikh Bulletin*, 2, 1985; Manvir Singh Dhesi, *An Ethnographic Study of the Concept and Development of the Gurdwara in the UK*, Unpublished M Ph thesis, University of Birmingham, September 2009.

[11] The main research has been done by: Roger Ballard & Catherine Ballard, 'The Sikhs: The Development of South Asian Settlements in Britain', in James L Watson (ed), *Between Two Cultures,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977); Ramindar Singh, *The Sikh Community in Bradford,* (Bradford: Bradford College, 1978); Arthur W Helweg, *Sikhs in England*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979); Nesbitt, *Aspects of Sikh Tradition in Nottingham*, Unpublished M Phil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1980 ; Parminder Bhachu, *Twice Migrants*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985); ditto., 'The East African Sikh Diaspora', in N G Barrier and VA Dusenbery (eds), *The Sikh Diaspora*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989); Sewa S Kalsi, *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain*, (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1992); Roger Ballard, 'Differentiation and Disjunction among the Sikhs' and Nesbitt, 'Valmikis in Coventry', in R Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh,* (London: Hurst & Company, 1994); P A S Ghuman, 'Bhatra Sikhs in Cardiff', *New Community*, vol 8, no 3, 1980;Tatla D., *The Sikh Diaspora*, (London: UCL Press, 1999); Terence Thomas, 'Old allies, new neighbours: Sikhs in Britain', in Gerald Parsons (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity*, vol.1, (London; Routledge,1993); Kathleen D Hall, *Lives in Translation*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[12] See note 11.

[13] See Savita Narain, 'Sikhs in Leicester', in Nick Jewson (ed.) (1995), pp 89-107. It mentions the Jats and the Ramgarhias, but not the Rajputs and the Ravidassias, and there is no deeper investigation of various Gurdwaras and relationships between them. Moreover, in the book published in 2006, Leicester Gurdwaras are mentioned but there are some errors in description [Singh and Tatla (2006), p 74].

[14] http://www.leicester.gov.uk/departments/page.asp?pgid=1009 (accessed: 31 July 2003).

[15] See Map.

[16] I almost invariably interviewed one by one. As for four different castes, I interviewed 62 Jats, 13 Rajputs, 45 Ramgarhias, 16 Ravidassias and 11 anonymous. I use substitute names except Lord Mayor of Leicester.

[17] My historiographical method is to place material from interviews alongside other accounts. On Sikh historiography, see W H McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

[18] In the Punjab census reports that describe these castes, 'caste' is explained in

terms of Jati (zat or zat-biradari in modern Punjabi), or endogamous caste grouping. See Denzil Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Delhi; B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1974 (1916): Jat and Rajput (pp 97-163), Tarkhan [Ramgarhia] (pp 313-4), Chamar [Ravidasia] (p 297), Bhatra (p 258), and Chuhra (pp 293-4); H A Rose (ed.), *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (3 vols; Lahore, 1911-19), vol 2: Bhatra (pp 93-94), Chamar (pp 147-151), Chuhra (pp 182-214), Jats (pp 357-379) , vol 3: Rajputs (pp 272 305), Tarkhan (pp 457-460); Nesbitt, *Sikhism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).pp.116-20. While Ravidassia shows a specific caste-based religious identity, Chamar refers to an endogamous caste group and professes a variety of religion.

[19] Ghuman (1980); Hindbalraj Singh, *Bhatra Sikhs in Britstol,* Bristol University,

M.Sc.dissertation,1977; Roger Ballard and Catherine Ballard (1977); Nesbitt (1980); Kalsi (1992) ; Nesbitt (1994).

[20] Roger Ballard and Catherine Ballard (1977); Ballard (1994), pp 93-98; Nesbitt (1977), pp 50 -93; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 26-31.

[21] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/rank/ewskh.asp (Accessed:7 February 2004)

[22] See note 16.

[23] Interview with Santokh, 11 August 2004; Sarup, 17 August 2002 and 19 August 2003.

[24] Satnam, 17 August 2002.

 See Map; Interview with Kartar, 20 August 2004; Jarnail, 16 March 2005; Tarlok, , 4 September 2004; Kolhan, 28 August 2005; Raj, 28 August 2005; Ajmer, 2 September 2005.

[26] Interview with Manjit, 13 August 2004.

[27] Interview with Avtar, 26 August 2004; Satpal, 12 March 2006; Manjit, 2 August 2006; Kalwant, 30 July 2006; see also Marett (1989) ; Deborah Phillips, 'The social and spatial segregation of Asians in Leicester', in Peter Jackson and Susan J Smith (eds), *Social Interaction and Ethnic Segregation*, (London: Academic Press, 1981), p 104; Bhachu (1985); Vertovec (1994); Joseph Seliga, 'A neighbourhood transformed,' *The Local Historian*, vol 28, no 4,1998; G Singh (2006).

[28] Interview with Satnam, 19 August 2003.

[29] *Survey of Leicester*, *1983: Initial Report of Survey*, p 37.

[30] See Map.

[31] *LM.*, 14 April, 15 April and 10 October 1986.

[32]*LM*., 19 and 21 May, 2004; Culdipp, 15 August 2008; *LM*., 21 and 26 July 2004.

[33] Culdipp, 15 August 2008.

[34] Culdipp, 15 August 2008.

[35]*LM*., 2 August, 2002; *The Sikh Times*, 8 August 2002.

[36] From my visits to Gurdwaras in Leicester; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 69-93; Dhesi (2009).

[37] I am preparing for some other papers on the history of the other Sikh temples and the 'change' of Sikh communities in Leicester after the political incidents in the Punjab in 1984. See also Kalsi (1992), pp 66-73, 81-85, for a discussion of the Nirankari Mission and the Namdhari Sikhs.

[38] Interview with Karmjit, 2 August, 2006; Gurdial, 9 and 13 August 2006.

[39] Interview with Jagder, 30 July 2002, 10 March 2005 and 8 March 2006; Gurdev, 28 August 2003.

[40] Regarding to 'factionalism' among Sikhs, see Joyce Pettigrew, *Robber Noblemen*, London: Routledge, 1975, pp 63-215; Ballard (1994), pp 109-112, 231-236; Singh and Tatla (2006), pp 69-93.

[41] Jagder, 10 March 2005.

[42] Kartar, 20 August 2004 and 2 August 2006; Jagder, 30 July 2002.

[43] Jagder, 30 July 2002 and 10 March 2005.

[44] Jagder, 10 March 2005.

[45] Jagder, 10 March 2005; his obituary was published in *LM*., 12 December 1984.

[46] Gurdew, 28 August 2003; Jagder, 10 March 2005; *LM*, 17 and 20 November 1989.

[47] Interview with Ajmer, 20 August 2004 and 10 March 2006; Raghbir, 11 August 2004; Jagder, 8 March 2006; *LM*.,14 April 1975, 9 August 1985 and 4 December 1989.

[48] Arjan, 10 March 2006.

[49] Joga, 6 March 2005.

[50] Ethne K Marenco, *The Transformation of Sikh Society,* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1976), pp 113, 122; Gurpharpal Singh, *Religion and Politics in the Punjab*, (New Delhi: Deep Publications, 1986), pp 135-140; Ibbetson (1974), pp 131-163; Rose (1911-19), vol 3, pp 272-305.

[51] Sarbjeet, 16 March 2005.

[52] Joga, 13 August 2007; Karam, Mahesher, Shamser, Hundal and Sukhdev, 22 August 2009.

[53] Harbans, 29 August 2003 and 19 March 2005; Jagder, 10 March 2005 and 20 March 2008; Bahader, 10 August 2007; Weller (2001), p 36.

[54] Harbans, 29 August 2003 and 19 March 2005; Jagdev, 19 March, 2005.

[55] *LM.,* 15 March, 1996, 9 January 1998 and 19 July, 2002; Ranuana, 3 September, 2003.

[56] Joga, 16 March, 2005 & 18 August 2005; Sarbjeet, 16 March 2005 and 18 August 2005.

[57] As for caste prejudice existing in the Panth, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, *Sikh Identity among Sikhs*, Aldershot; Ashgate, 2005, pp 184-5.

[58] W H MacLeod, *Ahluwalias and Ramgarhias*, vol.4, Issue 1, 1974, pp 78-90;

Ibbetson (1974), pp 313-4; Rose(1911-19), vol 3, pp 457-460; Kalsi (1992), pp 86, 125-6, Kalsi, 'The Sikhs and Caste', in Pashaura Singh & N Gerald Barrier, *Sikh Identity,* (New Delhi, Manohar, 2001), pp 255-274.

[59] Interview with Malkiat, 17 March 2006; Harbans, 31 July 2006; Avtar, 26 August 2004.

[60] Avtar, 26 August 2004.

[61] Interview with Harjit, 14 August 2007.

[62] Manjit, 17 March 2006.

[63] See note 27; Barton M Schwartz(ed), *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities*, (California: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), pp 267-320; Kalsi (2001), pp. 255-274.

[64] Interview with Jasbir, 31 July 2006.

[65] Interview with Shamser, 16 March 2006.

[66] Bhachu (1989); Manjit Singh Sidhu, *The Sikh in Kenya*, (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1997); Ballard (1994), p 111; Jasbir, 31 July 2006; Shamser, 16 March 2006; Raghbir, 30 July 2006.

[67] Kalsi (1992), pp 111-15; Jasbir, 31 July 2006.

[68] Jaspal, 31 July 2006; Weller (2001), pp 562-85; http://www.sikh.net/Gurdwara/World/GWUK.htm (accessed: 26 September 2009)

[69] Shamser, 16 March 2006; Bahader, 10 August 2007.

[70] Bhachu (1985, 1989).

[71] Gurdew, 28 August 2003; Malkiat, 23 August 2005; Jarnail, 11 March 2007; *LM*., 15 August 1984 and 23 March 1993.

[72] Gurdew, 28 August 2003 and 18 March 2005.

[73] Gurdew, 28 August 2003 and 18 March 2005.

[74] Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

[75] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religion as Social Vision*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), pp 245-57; Ibbetson (1974), p 297; Rose, vol 2, pp147-151.

[76] Kalsi (1992), pp 125-28; Ibbetson (1974), p 297; Rose, vol 2, pp 147-151.

[77] Kalsi (1992), pp 125-28; Ronki Ram, 'Untouchability, Dalit consciousness, and the Ad Dharm movement in Punjab', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38, 3, 2004; http://ravidassia.wordpress.com/list-of-temples/ [List of Temples: The Ravidassia Community] (accessed: 20 June, 2010).

[78] Kalsi (1992), p 131; Juergensmeyer (1982), pp 245-57; Gurdew, 30 August 2005.

[79] Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

[80] Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

[81] Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

[82] Interview with Maricharan, 17 August 2007.

[83] Nesbitt (1994), p 141; Jarnail, 11 March 2007.

[84] Jarnail, 11 March 2007; Regarding 'Chuhra', Rose, vol 2, pp182- 214.

[85] See note 16 and Juergensmeyer (1982).

[86] Interview with Mahesher, 20 March 2009.

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[87] Mahesher, 20 March 2009.

[88] Singh (1978); Kalsi (1992); Ballard (1994), pp 88-116; Gerd Baumann, *Contesting culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[89] Tatla (1999), Roger Ballard, 'The South Asian presence in Britain and its transnational connections' in Bhikhu Parekh, Gurharpal Singh and Steven Vertovec (eds), *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Harold Coward, John R Hinnells and Raymond B Williams (eds), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain*, *Canada, and the United States*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000); Judith M Brown, *Global South Asians*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

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Caste in Punjab: Political Marginalization and Cultural Assertion of Scheduled Castes in Punjab

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Despite being a highly stratified society characterized by caste and class divisions and a state with highest scheduled caste population, Punjab is seldom considered for studying its caste system or a case study of *dalit* assertion. The objective of this paper is threefold - to examine the caste system in Punjab, to discuss the issue of political marginalisation among scheduled castes and finally to analyze the current phase of assertion among the two largest scheduled castes groups in Punjab – the *Ad-Dharmis* and the *Mazhabhis*. The paper argues that in the absence of a strong political force to represent the interest of scheduled castes, cultural activism has become an important strategy of assertion leading to greater conflicts in the state. The current phase of cultural assertion of the scheduled castes in Punjab, as witnessed in the emergence of *deras*, large scale construction of separate *gurudwaras* and increasing cases of caste and community related violence, could be regarded as end products of social exclusion, lack of long term economic advancement and political marginalization of the scheduled caste community in the state.

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Part One: Caste in Punjab – An Overview

In 2009, the Chairman of the National Commission of Scheduled Castes, Buta Singh, alleged that "despite constant monitoring, dalit atrocities were increasing day by day in several parts of the country and the Punjab state could be in fifth position for dalit atrocities among all the states of the country (Baines, 2009). The increasing cases of caste atrocities against the scheduled castes in Punjab and the recent and more publicized cases of *Talhan* and *Sacha Sauda*, illustrates that caste continues to be an important force in the social, economic and political life of Punjab. Yet little or no attention is given to understand the nature and working of its caste system and emergence of dalit consciousness. Given this background, this section of the paper attempts to understand the peculiar characteristics of the caste system as it operates in the state.

As compared to rest of India, the caste hierarchy in Punjab is considered to be relatively weak. The reasons for this need to be attributed to the "presence of reformist religions in Punjab - Islam, Sikhism and Christianity with their reforming zeal and their ever increasing rivalry in matters of proselytization that not only had a demoralizing effect on the caste-rigidities and on the institution of the untouchability but also positively helped in improving the status of the depressed classes" (Gupta, 1985:121-22). Gupta continues

"..neither the Muslims who numbered slightly more than the half the total population nor the Sikhs who were about one-eighth of the population believed in the *Chutt Chat*. Hinduism, whose adherents formed less than two-fifths of the total population, was under a severe attack from within by the *Arya Samajis*, *Brahmos*, *Radhasaomi*, *Ramdassia* and *Raidassias* etc. and thus could not be that assertive in its principles of exclusiveness" (ibid:121-22). The early Christian initiatives in education provided greater opportunities for social mobility to the lower castes. The presence of Sikhism, a religion opposed to Brahaminical orthodoxy and caste system, made Punjab different from southern and western Indian states where a steep hierarchy between the Brahmans and the untouchables had led to an emergence of an oppressive caste system and Non-Brahman movements. In contrast to the caste exclusivism and the practice of untouchability prevalent among the Hindus, the new institutions initiated by the Sikh gurus, such as *sangat* (congregation) and *langar* (community kitchen) which involves the practice of cooking and eating together, sitting in a row irrespective of caste distinctions, were radical statements against the Brahaminical system of caste hierarchy (Jodhka, 2001:41-46). Caste based tensions in Punjab were further relaxed by the relatively lower presence of Brahmans in Punjab. Writing during the first caste survey in 1881, Denzil Ibbeston, discovered that the roots of Brahamanical influence in Punjab were weak and that by religion "the then Punjab was more *Mohammedan*" than Hindu and that instead of the rigorous ritual purity norms of the caste-hierarchy, the people are bound by the social and the tribal customs far more than by any rules of the religion" (Ibbeston, 1916:14-15). Economically too, the scheduled castes in Punjab were better off than the scheduled castes in other states as neither were they confined to menial occupations nor did they indulge in occupational practices like that of scavenging. They took a very important part in agricultural occupations, and were in considerable demands as the tenants (Chabra, 1955: Pp 187-9). The jostling during agricultural operations not only made anemic the social institutions that encouraged the sense of exclusivism but also helped in the development of a spirit of comradeship. Thus as an institution, caste played far less important part in the social life of the people of the Punjab than in other parts of India (Gupta,1985).

However, although lesser in extent, one could easily observe the typical features of the caste system in Punjab that made scheduled castes suffer the same social disabilities as their counterparts in other Indian states. Despite the doctrinal stand of the Sikh gurus against caste hierarchy, caste distinctions continued to exist in Punjab. The following excerpt from William Franklin (Franklin, 1803:2823) is an eloquent testimony to the existence of caste among the Sikhs. He states

> The Sikhs allow foreigners of every description to join their standard, to sit in their company …, but excepting in the instance of the jauts (Jats), they will not consent to the inter-caste marriages nor will they eat or drink from the hands of the alien

except he be a Brahmin and for this caste they always profess the
highest veneration.

The early emergence of the social and political mobilizations based around
communal, caste and religious identities among various groups - Muslims
(*Ahmadiya* movement), Hindus (*Arya Samaj*), Scheduled castes (*Ad-Dharm* and
conversions to Christianity), Sikhs (*Singh Sabha* movement) played an
important role in making people conscious of the existing differentiation and
existence of caste divisions in society.

The origin of caste in Punjab and within Sikhism needs to be understood in
the context of the large scale entry of Jats into Sikhism that not only rescued
them from their low status but also turned them into a powerful community.
The Jats (with 30-35 percent of the total population of the state) not only
constitute the single largest group in the state but also the majority of the Sikh
population. Traditionally considered as a low-caste group, the Jats entered into
the fold of Sikhism during the time of Guru Arjun in great numbers and rose to
position of a land-owning aristocracy during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
The numerical preponderance of the Jats in the Sikh religion and their hold over
the landownership structure and politics of the state placed them at the top
position within Sikhism.

The fortunes of the Jats were quickly revived by the British due to them
providing invaluable support in the defeat of the Indian Mutiny (1857-58),
subsequently leading to a substantial increase in the recruitment of Jats in the
British Indian Army (Ibbeston, 1883; Fox, 1987; Harnik Deol, 2000). The
Punjab Land Alienation Act 1901 further privileged the position of the Jats, the
agricultural caste, by denying access to landholdings to non-agricultural castes
such as Tarkhans and the scheduled castes. The launch of the Singh Sabha
movement, the re-organization of Punjab in 1966 which led to the
establishment of a Punjabi-speaking state, with Sikhs forming the majority
population, consolidated the social and political domination of the Jats. The
green revolution and the subsequent transformation of Akali leadership
structure added to the economic and political clout of the Jat Sikhs, thereby
widening social inequalities. Rapid social mobilization, economic development,
party competition and factionalism, have, however also led political divisions
within the Jat community (Ashutosh Kumar, 2005:115) diminishing the
"political role of other castes groups among the Sikhs namely upper castes,
Khatris, Aroras, Ahluwalias; artisan castes, like the Tarkhans or the
Ramgarhias or the Rais and the Lohars, Chimbas, Lannas, Kumahars and the
dalit castes like the Chamars, Chuhras or Valmikis also called Mazhabhis and
Ramdasias, thus creating internal cleavages within the Sikh community"(Singh,
1984: 42).

Next to Jats in the hierarchy are the urban trading castes, the high-caste
Hindu elite-consisting of Khatris, Aroras and Baniyas, who control much of the
urban trade and industry in the state and economically are quite well off. In
contrast and constituting 29 percent of the total population of the state and with

37 sub-groups, the Scheduled Castes (hereafter SCs) in the state are at the lowest end of its society. The scheduled castes remain in a subordinated position to the Jats and the trading castes. Similar to other states, they "continue to reside in segregated houses in separate district localities –in the villages of Amritsar district dalit locality is called '*thathi*', whereas in Jullundhur district it is called *Chamarhli*" (Judge, 2004:100-31).

Presently the Scheduled Castes (also known as dalits) in Punjab and within Sikhism, dalits are divided into two segments. The first segment includes dalits whose profession is scavenging and cleaning and are called as *Mazhabhis* and *Rangretas*. Mazhabhis and Rangretas were the *Chuhras* who converted to Sikhism (Ibbeston, 1883:294). The other segment of the dalit Sikhs consisted primarily of the *Chamars*. The Ad-Dharmis are predominant among Chamars and are mainly leather workers. Chamars (including the *Ramdasias* and Ad-Dharmis) and Mazhabhis (including Chuhras and *Balmikis*) together constitute nearly three-fourths of the total scheduled caste population in Punjab. Consisting of 37 scheduled caste sub-groups, these SCs form a heterogeneous category. The Mazhabhis are numerically the largest scheduled caste group, having a population of about 2,220,945, constituting 31.6 percent of the total scheduled caste population, followed by Chamars who constitute 26.2 percent of the total scheduled caste population with Ad-Dharmis as the largest group among them comprising 14.9 percent of the total Chamar population (2001 census). The literacy data shows that the SCs of Punjab have made significant headway during the 1991–2001 decade. The overall literacy rate, which was 41.1 per cent at 1991 census, has gone up by 15 percentage points to 56.2 per cent according to the 2001 Census. The Ad Dharmis have the highest literacy rate at 76.4 per cent and occupy the top position among the SCs. The Mazhabhis, who are numerically the largest community, have the lowest literacy rate at 42.3 per cent.

According to Jodhka, "the scheduled caste population of the region has been comparatively vulnerable in the economic structure of the village. Their ownership of agricultural land is among the lowest in the country" (Jodhka, 2002:1815). The work participation rate of the SC population in Punjab is 37 per cent which is lower than the 40.4 per cent aggregated at the national level for all SCs (2001 Census). They mainly work as agricultural laborers (38.4 percent) and only 3.9 percent of them have returned as cultivators (2001Census). About 55.2 per cent of the Mazhabhis constitute 'Agricultural Laborers' followed by 'Other Workers' (39 per cent). In contrast, 68.7 per cent of the Ad Dharmi returned the category of 'Other Workers', followed by 'Agricultural Laborers' (22.8 per cent). The dalit population now also consists of the migrant laborers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa who started coming in the aftermath of the green revolution and have now mostly settled down and acquired voting rights (Singh 1984: 44).

Part Two: Political Marginalization of the Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabhis

The overall emerging pattern of India suggests that wherever the SCs found a viable alternative they prefer it to the Congress Party. The Bahujan Samaj Party (hereafter BSP) has become their first choice all over India and in its absence the Left Front and regional parties are preferred in the states where they have dominance. However, Punjab, in this sense, is unique as all the options, that is, the BSP and Left Front are available to the scheduled caste groups, but the Congress still continues to be their first choice and their preference for the BSP still carries the status of a third force. In this section we try to conceptualize scheduled caste operations in the politics of the state. Three distinct phases of electoral politics have been identified to understand the phenomenon of political marginalization of the scheduled castes in Punjab politics by studying the political behavior of the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis in the electoral politics.

Phase One: Congress Dominance (1947-1980)

Mobilization of the scheduled castes of Punjab by different reform movements during the early 20th century made them very early conscious of their political rights. The active opposition by the scheduled castes to the Akali demand for a separate Punjabi Suba clearly reflects their high level of political sense. The first autonomous political formation of the scheduled castes of Punjab had emerged in the form of the Ad-Dharm movement that was later merged with Ambedkar Scheduled Caste Front and subsequently transformed into the Republican Party of India (RPI). While parties like the RPI attempted to mobilize the support of these groups, they could not succeed in eliciting support owing to lack of strong leadership and divisions among the leadership over the strategy to be followed.

   The period between 1947-1980 is characterized as a phase of low political consciousness and participation in politics by the Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabhis in Punjab due to the initial period of accommodation and co-option within the dominant Congress party. The radical populist policies adopted by the Indian National Congress, soon after independence, such as '*Garibi Hatao*' and the 20-point programme for "total rural regeneration" (Pandey, 1974), were largely aimed at creating a new social base among the poor, landless, the scheduled caste groups and the Muslim minority, in order to counter and challenge the rich peasantry and the middle castes represented by the agrarian parties and agrarian group. In wake of these policies, the Congress Party emerged for these groups as the only secular, neutral party, especially as the Shiromani Akali Dal (hereafter SAD) and various Akali splinters were identified with the rural Sikhs, and the Jan Sangh served the cause of the urban Hindus. The co-option of major Ad-Dharmis leaders into the Congress Party, adoption of Gandhian and modern secular ideologies, removal of untouchability and provision for reserved constituencies enabled the Congress Party to build a support base among the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis.

At the same time the rapid rise of the middle castes due to mobilization by their leaders resulting from the economic gains from green revolution and increasing conflicts between the scheduled caste laborers and the rising militant middle castes, drifted them away from the Akalis. The middle castes in mid the 1960s entered into politics by forming the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) and supporting the Akalis. The massive mobilization by the farmers, who mainly happened to be Jats, the domination of Akali leadership by Jats, the increasing caste conflicts between the Jats and the laborers, who were primarily Mazhabhis, made them support the Congress. The Congress, on the other hand, recognizing the fact that Mazhabhis has been far more enthusiastic about Sikh religion and politics, worked out strategies to gather Mazhabhi support. The emergence of Sikh separatism served the Congress Party well and it appointed Giani Zail Singh, of non-Jat background and of a lower caste group, as its leader. The Congress state government under the leadership of Giani Zail Singh introduced a classification among the scheduled castes for jobs reserved under the quota system. The concessions were granted to the four major Sikh scheduled castes - Ramdassias, *Kabirpanthis*, Mazhabhis and *Sikligars*. These four Sikh castes, recognized as main scheduled caste groups, constituted about 85 percent of all the backward castes (Nayyar, 1966). Of the 25 per cent jobs reserved for the SCs, 50 per cent (or 12.5 per cent of the total) were to be offered to Mazhabhi Sikhs and Balmikis on a priority basis (Jodhka and Kumar, 2007: 21) thereby consolidating Mazhabhi support to the Congress.

To further understand the reasons for scheduled caste support to the Congress, Nayyar elaborates two hypotheses. The first is the hypothesis of the Congress strategy of changing coalitions. During the 1952 general elections the Congress Party firmly opposed the demand for Punjabi Suba and was able to win considerable Hindu and SC support. Prior to the 1957 general elections, the Congress Party had conceded the regional formula to the Akali Dal and allowed the Dal to merge politically into the Congress Party; in this manner it was able to secure a large majority of support from that part of the Sikh community which was under the influence of the Akali Dal, but in the process it lost a large part of the Hindu vote. Before the 1962 general election, however, the Congress party firmly opposed the Akali demand for Punjabi Suba and refused to be intimidated by Akali agitations and consequently was able to count on the Hindu and SC votes to a greater extent than would have been possible if it had made further concessions to the Akali Dal (Nayyar, 1966:300-301). The strategy of changing coalitions helped Congress to be a representative of all the social and economic groups of the state's population and cut the support base of all other political parties.

Nayyar's second hypothesis, known as the hypothesis of the minority support, argues that Congress gets the votes of all those groups which fear domination by an opposing group. Thus in a Sikh-majority constituency, it is likely to get the votes of the Hindus and SCs who would like to see an Akali or Communist Sikh candidate elected. On the other hand, in a Hindu-majority constituency in the Punjabi-speaking region, the Congress party is likely to get

the votes of Sikhs and SCs who would not like to see a Jan Sangh candidate elected. Thus the Congress Party turned out to be the beneficiary of the situation in which groups do not like the Congress Party so much as distrust the other political parties and the groups they represent (Nayyar, 1966: 460).

The participation of the Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabhis in the Communist movement remained low because being less educated, and less politically conscious than the average, they found it difficult to understand the rather abstract political philosophy devoid of cultural and religious symbols. Further, the Communist Party in Punjab has its origins in Sikhism, especially within the Akali Dal and Singh Sabha movements and those who agitated for the Gurudwara reforms in early decades of the century. Hence from the very beginning the Communist strength in Punjab came from the 'middle class' small landowners who were by and large Jats. Table 1 below provides information on Party electoral performances upto 1980 and illustrates the dominance of the Congress Party and its eventual decline.

Table I: Punjab Assembly Elections Party-wise Performance

Percent of votes polled							
Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980
INC	**36.7**	**47.5**	**43.7**	**37.7**	**39.2**	**42.8**	**33.6**
SAD	**12.4**		**11.9**		**29.4**	**27.6**	**31.4**
BJP	5.6	8.6	9.7	9.8	9.0	5.0	-
JD				20.5	1.7		
CPI	3.9	13.6	7.1	5.3	4.8	6.5	6.6
CPM				3.2	3.1	3.3	3.5
Janata Party	1.2		3.9	0.5	0.9	0.0	15.0
BSP	7.5	1.3	0.9	0.5	0.5		
Independents	23.9	23.7	17.2	15.8	8.9	12.3	9.6

Source: www.eci.gov.in

Phase Two: The Rise of BSP and Decline of Congress (1985-1997)

Even though through its populist policies the Congress were able to capture and integrate the support of the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis within its patronage and protection system, yet due to the dominant position of the backward castes and a cultivating peasantry, the benefits of Congress policies remained limited. In fact, implementation of the policies related to land reforms created more tensions as the beneficiaries in most of the areas were the landowners who were primarily Jats rather than the scheduled castes, whether tenants or laborers, leading to a growing disillusionment with the existing system amongst the latter.

A number of parallel developments and significant changes among the scheduled castes in the 1980s affected the pattern of mobilization to be followed by both the groups in the arena of electoral politics. The rural economy of Punjab underwent structural transformation with the introduction

of the green revolution leading to far reaching structural and occupational changes in Punjab. The State Development Report of Punjab (PSDR 2002: 152) provides a vivid description of the structural changes in Punjab as a result of the green revolution:

> *kutcha* houses were progressively converted into *pucca* houses; the proportion of kutcha houses which was 33.28 per cent in 1981, sharply declined to 12.40 per cent in 1993-94. All the villages were electrified and road links were developed in almost all the villages. The government hastened to provide irrigation facilities (by providing subsidy for tube wells and free electricity since 1997). Irrigation covers 94 per cent of the total cropped area. Simultaneously, credit facilities for farm mechanization and other inputs were extended.

In terms of occupational structure, the green revolution led to a shift in the employment structure of the state from agrarian to non-farm sector. The shift is described in the same report as follows:

> with the onset of green revolution technology, crop production activities became economically attractive, which created an active land market for selling and leasing land. Secondly, progress of agriculture under the green revolution technology created additional employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. This encouraged many marginal farmers either to sell their land or lease it, to earn higher incomes from non-farming jobs. The period was therefore marked by a shift in employment structure from the farm to non-farm sector (PSDR, 2002: 152).

The rural non- farm sector accounted for "25.8 percent of the total rural main workers, highest in India and grew at a rate of 3.2 percent per year during the 1980's as against only 2.8 percent at the national level" (Sukhpal Singh, 2000: 1889).

Not only was the green revolution accompanied by drastic structural and occupational shifts but it also transformed the social structure within agriculture, weakening the old patron and client relationships. The higher wages gave scheduled castes a little better status and they later started moving from rural villages to towns for employment. The process of transformation of the agrarian social structure as a result of green revolution is explained by Jodhka in the following way:

> Apart from an increase in agricultural productivity brought about by the growing use of new seeds, chemical fertilizers and machines the green revolution also transformed the social structure of the agriculture. As elsewhere, it led to the development of the capitalist social relations of production. It transformed the old

structures and ties between the landowners and the landless. The commercialization of the agriculture led to a near complete disintegration of jajmani ties and many of those employed in their traditional caste occupations moved to agricultural labor.
(Jodhka, 2004: 64-99)

The changes taking place in the institution of caste and untouchability in the rural Punjab could be best explained by what Jodhka calls as "disassociation, distancing and autonomy" (Jodhka, 2004). With large proportion of dalits dissociating and distancing themselves from the traditional occupations and agrarian economy, this created a situation where scheduled castes "begun to assert for equal rights and a share from the resources that belong commonly to the village and had so far been in the exclusive control of the locally dominant caste groups or individual households" (Jodhka and Louis 2003; Jodhka 2004).

The impact of the green revolution differed across three different regions of Punjab. The *Doaba* region was foremost in this trend, followed by *Majha* and, only a part of the *Malwa* region. The Ad-Dharmis, being concentrated in the Doaba region, were the first ones to take the advantage of the green revolution. Field work by Judge suggests as many as 21.75 percent of the scheduled castes from the Doaba region moved to non-agricultural occupations (Judge 1997: 58). The economic change created an elite class among the Ad-Dharmis who later demanded better status and more share in structures of political power at various levels. The Mazhabhis being unskilled and belonging to Majha and Malwa regions, that remain backward in taking the benefits of green revolution, were not able to take advantage of the green revolution to the extent the Ad-Dharmis were able to. Yet the green revolution sharpened the assertion on the part of the Mazhabhis due to the increasing spate of conflicts resulting from the exploitation by Sikh Jats of Mazhabhis labor.

Another important change during this period was in the field of education. The scheduled castes literacy rates increased from 23.9 percent in 1981 to 41 percent in 1991 according to the 2001 Census. As discussed earlier, among both the scheduled caste groups, the Ad-Dharmis were first to experience the changes in the field of education and employment. The most literate in the 1980 were the Ad-Dharmis (40 percent) as compared to the general scheduled castes literacy rates (24 percent) followed by the Balmikis (22 percent) while the Mazhabhis, the most numerous among the scheduled castes in Punjab had a literacy rate of only 13 percent (Chandra, 2007). This led to the emergence of small urban elite, primarily among the Chamars, as it was mainly the Ad-Dharmis who were first to gain in education in the post independence period and avail the benefits of the reservation policy. The above developments led not only to the emergence of a white-collar middle class amongst them but led to a small number of entrepreneurs emerging amongst them. Some of them prospered in the traditional leather businesses. These developments provided a room for the emergence of the BSP and decay, in fact, collapse of the Congress system in Punjab, as has also happened in many other states of north India (Stone, 1988: 1018-30).

It was during this period of rapid democratization of the political system and the growth of identity consciousness among the scheduled castes that Kanshi Ram formed the BSP in 1984. The BSP made its impact on the state politics in the very first election it fought in 1985. While in the Doaba region the Ad-Dharmis switched their loyalties primarily from the Congress to the BSP, in the Majha region of Amritsar, the shift in Mazhabhi support from Congress in favor of the Akali Dal facilitated it to win a large number of the rural seats. The single most important reason that made the Ad-Dharmis support the BSP in its early years of formation was the lack of representation that they found in every political party in the Punjab for the most important positions. This factor also emerges clearly in the writings of Kanchan Chandra, who in her work on the rise of the BSP in Hoshiarpur states that since positions of power in the Punjab Congress organization and governments were monopolized by the upper and the intermediate castes, emerging scheduled castes elites saw very little chance of obtaining office themselves by joining the Congress Party. The Akali Dal, exclusively a Sikh party, did not offer any better prospects. The withdrawal of the Mazhabhi support from the Congress Party also needs to be seen in the context of violent attacks on Sikhs after the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The subsequent unification of the faction-ridden Akali Dal, especially following the assassination of Sant Longowal in August 1985, on the eve of the elections, also led them to vote in large numbers for the Akalis.

In 1985, the BSP secured only 2.2 percent of valid votes which damaged the Congress, CPI and CPI (M) parties (Punjab Human Development Report, 2004: 145) and thereby facilitating the Akali Dal to win several seats by cutting the solid vote base of the dalits. In the continuing elections to the legislative assembly and to Parliament in 1992, the Congress claims to be a broad communal and class coalitions were further eroded by the presence of the BSP, which made substantial gains into its traditional support base among the Ad-Dharmis and other backward castes. Appealing to the SCs, the BSP did exceptionally well in the Doaba area -Jullundhur, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur districts (Singh, 1992:994). Even though the Congress was remarkably successful in terms of assembly and parliamentary seats, its success was based on a very narrow support base as the Akalis did not participate in these elections. The BSP was able to attract a substantial number of dalit voters, who had traditionally been voting for the Congress, and its candidates won in as many as nine of the assembly constituencies (Kumar, 2004). This could be regarded as an early phase of the growth of the BSP, during which it fought an election alone, thereby establishing a social and regional base.

Yet the realization on the part of the BSP that as a party, its base was largely limited to the scheduled castes and that too mainly the Chamars and Ad-Dharmis among them and that it could not capture the power on its own led BSP to enter into a system of alliances with the main parties. The SAD being aware of the fact that in case the BSP made an electoral adjustment with the Congress in Punjab it would become a hard task for the SAD-BJP alliance to win the electoral battle against the Congress, negotiated an alliance with the

BSP. This alliance marks an important shift in the electoral politics of Punjab (Singh, 2002). The necessity to enter into an alliance made political parties drift away from the religious towards performance and development issues. The shift was evident in the two-day SAD conference held on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), on February 24-25, 1996. At this conference, the Akali Dal (B), while committing to maintaining peace and harmony in the state at any cost and affirming full faith in the democratic and constitutional methods, emphasized the establishment of 'Halemi Raj' a holy expression used by Guru Arjun Dev. This meant a just dispensation in which no person, community or country would predominate over others and where SAD would try to transform itself into a party representing all sections of Punjabis, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion, instead of being a body of only the Sikhs (Verma, 1999:3520).

The declaration supporting the Akali Dal (Badal) to broaden its base worked well for the Akalis. Out the total 117 assembly seats, the Akali Dal (Badal) candidates won in as many as 75 seats and its partner BJP won another 18. The Congress, which had as many as 87 seats in the outgoing assembly, could only win in 14 seats, securing a mere 26.6 per cent of the total votes polled. The BSP's share of seats collapsed from 9 in 1992 to 1 in 1997 and its share of the vote declined from 16.2 percent to 7.5 percent (Singh, 1998:405). This also aligned with the BSP performance in the 1996 parliamentary elections. Wallace stated "The BSP-Akali alliance proved to be effective with eight constituencies won by the Akalis. Especially notable is the Akali win with BSP support in Faridkot, and particularly Jullundhar. In turn, the BSP relied on Akali support for its three victories such as in Jat-dominated Phillaur" (Wallace, 1997: 2965). Unable to strike a deal with the Akali Dal (B) or the Congress (I), the BSP fought the 1997 assembly elections in alliance with Akali Dal (Mann). Recognizing the growing importance of the BJP, the Badal government entered into an alliance with BJP. The victory for the SAD-BJP alliance had been possible because it received support from all the sections of society. The CSDS data exit polls confirm that not only 66.8 percent of the Sikhs, but even the 44.1 percent of the Hindus also voted for the SAD-BJP alliance. The dalits seemed to be badly divided. Only 23.4 percent of the dalits voted for the Akali Dal (Mann-BSP) combine while 28.2 percent voted for the SAD-BJP alliance. With 27.9 percent of the dalits voting for the Congress, its support remained low even among the Hindus and the Sikhs (Kumar, 1997: 39-40).

From the 1997 state assembly elections onwards, the BSP declined in Punjab. This decline of BSP could be attributed to the continuing deep divisions and splits within the party over issues of power sharing and alliances with the main parties, and also much criticism was received by the Ad-Dharmis for their alliance with the Akali Dal. The failure of the leadership to find a genuine ally in the social and political spheres led to great disillusionment among both the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis of Punjab, as their newly formed identity and stirring political consciousness could enable them to move away from the groups that dominated them earlier. Despite

initial successes in the early years of its initiation, the BSP leadership in Punjab could not evolve an integrated ideology that could unite the different dalit castes in the state under one umbrella. The unevenness in the literacy rates of the SCs, with Ad-Dharmis and Chamars being the most educated, meant office positions came to be largely dominated by them and this failed to mobilize the poorest of the scheduled castes groups such as the Mazhabhis. In such a situation the Mazhabhis and Balmikis felt threatened by increasing influence of the Ad-Dharmis. In addition, the BSP failed to capture the regional, cultural and economic specificities of Punjab. The purity-pollution issue and *Manuvad* that are BSP's main ideological planks do not find expression in the socio-cultural domain of Punjab in its fundamental form, as say it exists in Utter Pradesh (Kumar, 2007:73). The failure of the BSP to capitalize on the most important Talhan caste conflict issue in Punjab at the time and its failure to intervene in cases involving caste conflicts led to gradual abandonment of the Ad-Dharmi support to the party.

Yet, emergence and then decline of BSP had important consequences for the electoral politics in Punjab. First, its emergence led to a shift in the state party system from a stable bi-party system to coalition politics and building coalitions with the third force involving either CPI/BSP/BJP have become inevitable for major parties like the Congress and Akali Dal. Second, the growing assertiveness on the part of the scheduled castes compelled even political formations like Akali Dal to shift its agenda from the politico-religious to general socio-economic issues. Third, the decline of the BSP has introduced a new phase in the Punjab politics, where the identification of the scheduled castes with any specific political party, unlike other Indian states, is absent and they (both Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabhis) are divided between the Congress and Akalis and its factions.

Phase III: From 2002 onwards till present

The decline of the BSP marks the beginning of a third phase in the electoral politics with scheduled castes voting either for the Congress or the SAD. The trend is visible from the 2002 Assembly Elections onwards. While the support of the scheduled castes to the Akali-BJP alliance led to a resounding victory by the alliance, their disillusionment with the alliance led to its defeat in the 2002 elections. Most of the flamboyant promises made by the Akali Dal came unstuck and their non-fulfillment disappointed the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis. Non-implementation of the free power policy, including for the SCs, increasing atrocities against the SCs, failure to provide houses to SCs and those living below the poverty line, despite the fact that an amount of around Rs 60 crore was earmarked in the 1997-98 budget for construction of 12,000 houses in all the 17 districts of the state, led to their growing discontent with the Akali-BJP alliance, leading to a victory of the INC-CPI alliance in the 2002 assembly elections.

The erosion of BSP's vote bank due to fragmentation and leadership's opportunistic politics helped the Congress (I) to resurrect its base among the

Ad-Dharmi group. In fact, some important functionaries of the BSP, after its decline and including the state president of the party, switched over their loyalties to the Congress Party. The scheduled caste operation in politics during the state assembly elections of the 2007 was far more visible than any other election.

In the 2007 assembly elections, the Congress performed badly in the Doaba region and could win only 3 out of 26 seats, while the SAD-BJP combine won 20 out of 25 seats contested (Kumar, 2007:270). In the Jullundhur district, a district that constitutes a large proportion of the Ad-Dharmi population, the SAD-BJP succeeded in eliciting their support, cutting into the base of BSP and the Congress. The SAD-BJP combine won 9 out of 10 seats in the district. In order to appeal to the scheduled caste groups (mainly Mazhabhis) the SAD reconstituted the political affairs committee and also gave them tickets this time in large numbers. Through its Kirti Samaj Wing, the SAD also mobilized the support of other backward castes (OBCs) (Kumar: 270). While the strategy of SAD bought it positive results, the BSP suffered because of new parties formed by the various splinter groups such as Bahujan Samaj Morcha, Bahujan Samaj Party (Ambedkar), Bahujan Kranti Dal. Some of these factions joined the left parties to set up a third front that split the dalit vote even further.

The withdrawal of the Chuhra support to the Congress has to be seen in the context of the controversy regarding classification of quotas. The termination in classification of quotas ordered by the Punjab court in July 2006, led to a massive protest by the Chuhras. They organized themselves under a group called the 'Balmiki and Mazhabhi Sikh Reservation Bachao Morcha' to protest against the High Court ruling and demanded restoration of the 12.5 per cent reservation for the Balmiki and Mazhabhi Sikhs in government jobs as per the 1975 notification. In addition, they also emphasized extending the reservation to educational institutions regarding admissions to them (Jodhka and Kumar, 2007:22). Noting the fact that the elections to the state assembly were due just in couple of months time, the Congress government responded quickly to their demand by drafting a bill that was unanimously passed by the Legislative Assembly and it became an Act on October 5, 2006. The Act however failed to satisfy the aspirations of the Mazhabhi and Balmiki groups as it failed to provide a quota in admission to the educational institutions. Leaders of the agitation regarded this to be a consequence of the continued domination of Chamars in Congress politics and the state bureaucracy, which became additional reasons for the loss of Mazhabhi support to the Congress. The loss of Congress in Doaba and Majha, the traditional support areas of Congress scheduled caste support could also attributed largely to Amarinder Singh's concentration on Jat Sikh politics and on the use of Sikh symbols. Table 2 below shows how parties have in the last three Assembly Elections and how crucial it was for two main parties to build allinces.

Table 2: Punjab Assembly Elections Party-wise Performance

	1997	Vote	2002	Vote	2007	Vote
Party	Contested/ Won	Vote (%)	Contested /Won	Vote (%)	(Contested/ Won)	Vote (%)
INC	**105/14**	**26.5**	**105/62**	**35.81**	**116/44**	**40.9**
SAD	**92/41**	**37.6**	**92/41**	**31.08**	**93/49**	**37.09**
IND	92/75	10.8		11.27	43/5	6.82
BJP	22/18	8.3	23/3	5.67	23/19	8.28
CPI	15/2	2.9	11/2	2.15	25/0	0.76
CPM	25/0	1.7	13/0	0.36	14/0	0.28
SAD(M)	30/1	3.1	84/0	4.65	37/0	0.52

Source: CSDS, Delhi Data Unit

Part Three: Cultural Assertion among the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis

Apart from electoral politics, mobilizations at the grassroots levels have been an important channel of empowerment among the dalits all over the country. While in some of the states such as Tamil Nadu the major trend has been the shift from grassroots level movements to formal political participation in elections, in Punjab the route has been the reverse as when all the efforts to forge a political identity failed, dalits resorted to grassroots assertion to ascertain their autonomous position. In Punjab as elsewhere, the assertion has not only been through participation the local level institutions such as Panchayats, but also through use of cultural and religious symbols.

With political marginalization and improved social consciousness the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis have started demanding the social status that has pushed them to *Deras* and others forms of cultural assertion. This has brought them into direct conflict with the non-scheduled caste groups, primarily Sikh Jats in the state. The cases of the Talhan conflict and the Dera Sacha Sauda controversy represent just few such examples of cultural assertion. It is argued that Dalit Sikhs' desertion of the Panth and their entry into various non-Sikh Deras is directly related to the overall control of Sikh Jats on the various Panthic organizations. Since all the important Sikh/Panthic organizations are under the control of the Jats and they are adamant not to share their management with dalits, dalits were forced to build their own separate religious organizations or to take refuge in non-Sikh Deras in the state (Ronki Ram, 2007).

However, the phenomenon is not new and has been in operation since the decline of the Ad-Dharm movement with scheduled castes taking cultural route and joining Ravidass deras. Commenting on the early existence of Deras, Singh writes "the history of the Deras in Punjab is older than the Sikh Panth. The Deras in Punjab, before the Sikh Panth belonged to the Muslim Peers and Yog Nath's Deras. With the emergence of the Sikh Panth, some prominent Sikh and non-Sikh Deras came into existence, such as Udasi Deras, Dera Baba

Ram Thaman, Namdhari, and Nanaksar. Most Deras came into existence in the twentieth century and they are still popular today, such as Radha Soami, Sacha Sauda, Nirankari, Dera Sachkhand Ballan and Dera Bhaniarawalla" (Singh, 2009). However what is important to understand is that these Deras in recent years have acquired strategic political overtones and the support of these deras have become important for political parties to win the elections.

My fieldwork in Punjab, in both Jullundhur and Amritsar district, reflected a high sense of cultural assertion among both the Ad-Dharmis and the Mazhabhis. Both the caste groups have developed their own cultural symbols– seen in the construction of their own gurudwaras and joining with non-Sikh Deras to declare their assertiveness for equal rights and dignity. The sense of cultural assertion was particularly noticeable among the Ad-Dharmis as the Ravidass movement has emerged as a strong and autonomous movement and an icon of their newly emerging identity. The majority of Ad-Dharmi respondents, irrespective of age, gender and education status, claimed to be members of the Ravidass Deras. While for the poorest of the Ad-Dharmis, the image Ravidass envisioned for an egalitarian model of the state and for ensuring human rights and civil liberties is the most important, for the younger generation organizing and participation in the Guru Ravidass Jayantis have become a matter of pride. Most of the illiterate sections in the area mentioned Ravidass's famous city of "Begumpura" (literally means the city free of sorrows) – the main reason for increasing Ravidass's popularity among them. The respondents also mentioned the important role played by Dera Sach Khand Ballan, an important Ravidass Dera, in popularizing the image of Ravidass and propagating a social egalitarian ideology. The importance of Ravidass Deras and Dera Sach Khand Ballan in developing an autonomous religious and cultural identity of the Ad-Dharmis is also confirmed and explained in the recent writings by Ronki Ram (2007) as follows:

> Ravidas Deras played a significant role in the formation of a separate dalit identity in Punjab. Based on poetry, teachings, and legends about the life of Ravidas, the emerging dalit identity in the state represents a kind of middle path between assimilation, on the one hand, and radical separatism, on the other.

He further states

> the movement of the Ad-Dharmis to the Ravidas deras reflects the fast changing socio-cultural scene of Punjab where the once powerful and revolutionary Sikh religion is failing to meet the needs of the oppressed who discovered the right remedy to cure their wounded psyche in the Ballan experiment.

Dera Ballan became a paragon of the Ravidass movement in northwest India. It made concerted efforts for the construction of a separate Dalit identity, independent of both Hinduism and Sikhism, the two main religions of Punjab.

The Sants of Ballan developed their own religious symbols, flags, prayers, dress, salutations, and rituals of worship. The architecture of Dera Ballan is also unique in its outlook. It resembles both a temple and a gurudwara at the same time. The Guru Granth Sahib is placed in the Dera, but unlike a gurudwara, the idols of Guru Ravidass and the late heads of Dera Ballan are also installed in its premises and are worshipped along with the Guru Granth Sahib (Ronki Ram, 2008:1343-1357).

Another important symbol of assertion noticed during the field work among the Ad-Dharmis has been their association with identity of Dr. Ambedkar. It was not uncommon to find pictures of Dr. Ambedkar in the houses visited during the field trips. Most of the respondents also reported the importance of the Ambedkar slogan on 'educate, agitate and organize'. In recent years the Ambedkar ideology has been propagated by local newspapers like *Bheem Patrika*, whose editor happens to be Lahori Ram Balley, a prominent Ambedkarite and leader of RPI**.** Most of the Ad-Dharmi youth reported to have formed the Ambedkar Youth Mandal, the Ambedkar Welfare Society and the Ambedkar Club to promote the political and social ideas of Ambedkar.

The construction of large scale gurudwaras has become another important symbol of scheduled caste assertion in Punjab. The field work in Talhan village suggests the presence of three gurudwaras at that point of time. Similarly the urban locality of Boota Mandi had four gurudwaras with fifth being under construction. It is however important to understand while all major caste groups visited each other's gurudwaras, the construction of separate gurudwaras could be regarded as an index of assertion as in Ad-Dharmi gurudwaras, Ad-Dharmis were seen to propagate the Ravidass vani (also a part of the Guru Granth Sahib). The cultural symbols of the pride of the Ad-Dharmis are even more visible and not limited only to construction of the separate gurudwaras. During my fieldwork most of the Ad-Dharmis also mentioned that they have developed their own symbols – a flag of *Majith* color and with symbols of *Har* and *Suhang*. They acknowledge each other by '*Jai Gurdev*' (by the name of Ravidass) instead of '*Sat Sri Akal*' (more commonly used by Jat Sikhs). In another episode during the field work, cultural assertion among Ad-Dharmis came to be reflected when in Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur, activists of Shri Guru Ravidass Sabhas led by Mr. Bhagwan Singh Chouhan, a BSP candidate and Mr. Onkar Singh Jamat, general secretary of the Punjab unit of the BSP, staged a *dharna* and blocked the traffic at Singriwala on the Hoshiarpur - Jullundhur state highway against the wrong portrayal of Guru Ravidass in chapter No. 4 of class VII book published by the Punjab School Education Board. They demanded that the government rectify the mistake as soon as possible or the non-compliance with these demands will hasten the process of violent agitation by the Ad-Dharmis. The government had to finally give in to the demands of the Ad-Dharmis considering the fact that elections were due in Punjab and the Ad-Dharmis constitute a strategic vote bank of the Congress. The emergence of the Deras has acquired strategic political

overtones and they also function as centres for networking, attracting dalit administrators and politicians.

Similar to the Ad-Dharmis the Mazhabhis in the Amritsar district have also constructed their own gurudwaras to display their own identity, although the cultural assertion of Mazhabhis through any organizational structure or flow of literature is limited. Unlike the Ad-Dharmis, they continue to be economically backward and the process of Ambedkarism is yet to be fully developed among them. Yet the Mazhabhis proudly declare themselves as "We are the Chuhras of Punjab" and are able to gather quickly to retaliate if the feelings of the community are injured. Some of the Mazhabhis reported during field work that "They (Ad-Dharmis) conceal their identity by calling themselves Ad-Dharmi; but we proudly declare ourselves as the Chuhras of Punjab." (Field Survey, 2006). In Amritsar, younger Mazhabhi Dalits of one village formed a youth association in the name of a legendry disciple of the tenth Sikh Guru, Bhai Jeevan Singh (who belonged to their caste). The office bearers of this association were able to secure a special grant of Rs 250,000 from the state government for building infrastructure in the dalit localities and for renovation of their gurudwaras.

By joining non-Sikh Deras, constructing their own gurudwaras the SCs are stating their independence from mainstream Sikh society. This has contributed further to a series of violent conflicts as the recent cultural assertion by them have come to be interpreted by the Jats as a challenge to their long established supremacy in the state and also to their Sikh Khalsa identity.

Conclusion

The above analysis has attempted to understand the nature of caste and scheduled caste politics in Punjab. It does so by studying three factors – social exclusion as manifested in the caste system, political marginalization and the resultant cultural assertion of the scheduled castes in Punjab, with specific reference to Ad-Dharmis and Mazhabhis in the state.

The above analysis clearly shows that even though known as the region without caste, the social and occupational structure of Punjab continues to be compartmentalized along caste lines. However the structure of the caste hierarchy in Punjab continues to be different from the rest of India. The presence of Sikhism and Islam and the relatively less presence and influence of Brahmans in the region not only weakened the notions of purity and pollution but also made the caste system less oppressive as compared to the rest of India. Rapid social mobilization, economic development following the green revolution, the religious reform movement among the Sikhs in the 1920s led to the emergence of a powerful Jat community creating internal cleavages within Sikh society. In addition, the emergence of social religious reform movements among the Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Christians and autonomous political mobilization of the scheduled castes in the form of Ad-Dharm movement had the impact of making people aware of the importance of their numbers.

Discerning the three distinct phases of Punjab electoral politics, the above discussion clearly suggests that the scheduled castes have been witness to phases of integration and separation from the dominant political formations and the societal groups they represent. While a small elite middle class has emerged among the Ad-Dharmis, the strong presence of the Congress in Punjab and the consequent assimilation of the Ad-Dharmi electorate within Congress, have affected their pattern of mobilization. The BSP's forays into the State have so far had little successes. The emergence of BSP into a party primarily interested in competitive electoral politics with little interests in the struggles at grassroot levels severely limited the transformational potential of the BSP. Its inability to capitalize on the most important issues such as the case of Talhan caste conflict led to the loss of support base among the Chamars. In addition, its coalition with the Akali Dal, emergence of factions and splinter groups within the party led to disillusionment among the Ad-Dharmis who withdrew their support from the BSP to support the Congress. The Mazhabhis continue to support the SAD on account of two reasons (a) the growing dominance of the Ad-Dharmis and Chamars in the Congress and the BSP and (b) at individual level 98.5 percent of the Mazhabhis continue to regard themselves as Sikhs.

The disenchantment with the three major parties –SAD, Congress and BSP has led them to turn to a cultural route in seeking a respectable social identity for themselves, matching their economic status. In the vacuum created by the political forces, joining various Deras, construction of separate gurudwaras, advocating the *vani* of their own gurus have become new instruments for articulating their grievances. The recent violent clashes between the followers of *Dera Sacha Sauda* (established in 1948 with its headquarters in Sirsa, Haryana) and different groups of Akalis as well as a spate of other social conflicts between Jats and dalits in the state seem to have acquired significant importance in the current political history of Punjab. Moreover, the frequent politicization of the Deras makes the issue further complicated. The persistent attempts made by the various Sikh organizations during the recent Akalis-Dera clashes to win over their *disgruntled* dalit Sikh followers are a clear case in point.

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Subnational Reforms and Public Policy Issues in Punjab

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The Indian economy has undergone a paradigm shift and moved towards market-oriented reforms through deregulation, liberalisation and openness of the economy leading to a higher rate of economic growth. However, the sub-national constituents did not respond to the reform programme with similar effort and enthusiasm. The economy of Punjab witnessed deceleration from the beginning of the 1990s. The State which enjoyed top position in terms of per capita income in the country has slipped to fifth position in recent years. However the polity of the State has been apathetic towards the development needs of Punjab. Though the institutional framework for reforms is in place there is a huge governance deficit on the implementation front. This paper reviews the public policy issues in the State over the last two decades.

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Introduction

The state of the Indian economy in 1991 necessitated the implementation of an economic reform programme with the focus changing from a controlled and regulated economy towards a more liberal policy framework. Successive reforms and reduction of state intervention and control over economic activity progressively moved the economy towards a market-based system. The regulatory regime was replaced by de-control, de-reservation, de-regulation and removal of restrictive policies. The rate of growth of the economy which was 2-3 percent from Independence up to the end of the 1970s has gone up to above 8 per cent over the last two decades. Liberalization has had an impact on most aspects of economic policy including industrial and trade policies, foreign investment policy, fiscal policy, financial market reforms and public sector restructuring. However, the pace of economic reforms has not been consistent over the last two decades across states and sectors because of various domestic and global compulsions.

In a federal set-up, the relevance of policy reforms at the national level is undermined if its sub-national constituents do not make an effort towards economic betterment through institutional and policy reforms in tune with the national policies. Therefore, the Indian states were expected to create an enabling environment for the implementation and success of macro economic reforms and the structural adjustment programme adopted by the Government of India (GOI) in 1991. State level fiscal consolidation and responsibility, creation of a better infrastructure and effective governance are the prerequisites for the success of sub-national reforms. However, the sub national reforms in India

have been largely neglected and are not much discussed at academic or political forums. It has been established widely that the state-level reforms in India have been uneven throughout the country and the success or failure of the same has been largely determined by the quality of governance at the level of each state of the Indian union (Howes et al, 2003).

Research into state-level reforms is still not enough as compared to the work on the progress and review of national economic reforms. There have been some studies by Callebaut, (1997) Ahluwalia (2000), Howes, Lahiri and Stern (2003), World Bank (2005), Sawhney (2005), Nambiar (2007, 2010), etc. Most of the work at the sub-national level relates to fiscal reforms and a lot of research on this aspect is done by scholars based at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi. No doubt the fiscal responsibility of the state governments in India needs to be scrutinized closely but other areas like public sector, especially, the power sector reforms, infrastructure development commensurate with the national development policies and issues relating to the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of government activities, have been largely ignored. The present paper seeks to examine the pace and pattern of sub-national reforms in Punjab, one of the most developed states in India. It is important to study this in view of the deteriorating economic condition of the State over the last few years. The study assumes significance in view of the fact that the institutional framework to facilitate the reforms has been updated and restructured from time to time by the Government of Punjab (GOP) but the economic performance of the State is not showing any significant improvement. The paper is organized into eight sections with the first one introducing the structure of the Punjab economy. Section II gives an overview of the institutional framework for reforms in Punjab. Sections III, IV, V and VI discuss the status of agricultural development, industrial, public enterprise and fiscal reforms in the State respectively. Section VII evaluates the overall reform process and the final section offers some conclusions and suggestions for a way forward.

I. The Economy of Punjab

Punjab was one of the fastest growing states of India in the 1970s and the 1980s. The data (GOP, 1992, 1994, 2010) show that when the average Annual Compound Growth Rate (ACGR) of Gross National Income in India was 4.08 percent in 1985-86, Gross State Income was 7.88 in Punjab; when it was 1.20 in India in 1991-92, it grew at 5.09 percent in Punjab. But when the same for the Indian economy was 9.52 percent in 2005-06, it was only 4.50 in Punjab which was less than half of the all India figure. Similarly during the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) the Gross National Income in India grew at 7.80 percent per annum and it grew at only 5.11 percent in Punjab.

The average ACGR for various sectors of the economy of Punjab and India also shows similar results. When the growth rate of the primary sector in India in 1985-86 was only 0.87 percent, it was 8.41 in the case of Punjab and for the secondary sector the figures were 4.53 and 12.93 for India and Punjab

respectively; while the tertiary sectors growth rates were 7.05 and 3.38 percent for India and Punjab for the same year. The situation remained the same in 1991-92 as well when the primary sector in the country grew at a negative rate; its growth rate was 5.85 percent in Punjab. But in 2005-06 the situation reversed and the All-India rates of growth of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors were 5.75, 10.65 and 10.59 respectively while the same for Punjab were 1.94, 7.77 and 4.73. During the Tenth Five Year Plan the annual rates of growth of all the three sectors of the Punjab economy improved and were 2.28, 7.75 and 5.96 for primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, but were still below the rates for the country as a whole which were 2.74, 9.40 and 9.37 respectively. This shows a marginal improvement in the performance of the Punjab economy.

The State had the highest per capita income in the country up to 2003-04. The remarkable development record has also been manifested in the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals (World Bank, 2004). Most citizens of Punjab have already achieved a level of socio-economic status that the majority of Indians may not even dream of. The poverty ratio in the State has always been far lower than the all India figures of population below the poverty line (GOP, 2011). In 1973-74 when the population below the poverty line (BPL) in India was 54.93 percent, it was only 28.08 percent in Punjab and in 1999-2000 the figures for the country and Punjab were 26.10 and 6.16 percent respectively and in 2004-05 the same was 21.80 at the All-India level and Punjab accounted for only 5.20 percent of the BPL population.

But Punjab lost its 'numero uno' position gradually as its pace of growth slowed down during the 1990s and in 2005-06 it was at the third position in terms of per capita income amongst the major Indian states and in 2008-09 slipped to the sixth position (GOP, 2011). The rate of growth of the Punjab economy is much slower than the all-India growth rate as mentioned above. A number of factors are responsible for the slow pace of economic development in Punjab: cross border terrorism affected the state for more than a decade resulting in not only the deceleration in the growth rate of the economy but also flight of capital from Punjab; fiscal profligacy of the successive governments during the 1990s due to their populist policies; stagnant agriculture, slow pace of industrial development and last but not least, the bureaucracy and the polity have been apathetic towards the developmental needs of the State over the last two decades (World Bank, 2004 and GOP, 2002).

Punjab, believed to be predominantly an agricultural economy, has undergone a structural change in terms of the contribution of various sectors to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). As per the data provided in the Statistical Abstracts of Punjab (various issues), the primary sector contributed more than 57 percent to GDP in 1970-71, followed by the tertiary sector (26.87 percent) and the secondary sector (15.70 percent). But the contribution of GSDP originating in the primary sector declined to nearly 47 percent in 1990-91 and only 26.60 percent in 2008-09. The contribution of secondary sector increased to nearly 25 percent in 1990-91 and that of the tertiary sector remained more or less the same at about 28 percent. However, the contribution to GSDP from the tertiary sector has gone up to more than 43 percent in the recent past (2008-09)

and that of secondary sector more than 30 percent during the same time. This clearly shows that the primary sector is no longer the leading sector in Punjab and is contributing only about one-fourth to the state income whereas the tertiary sector is contributing the maximum to GSDP in Punjab. Successive governments in Punjab since 1992, when the popular government came into power after a decade long civil strife in the State, did not make any concerted effort towards the revival of the primary sector and also did not fully tap the growth potential in other sectors of the economy. There is a tremendous scope for the growth of manufacturing and services sectors in the State. There is a dire need for strong policy measures to be taken to revive the economy of Punjab and improve the rate of growth of all the sectors in the State. There has been a lot of academic and media focus on the issue of restoring the lost glory of the State as also the need for a turn around of the primary sector but the government has seldom taken it seriously (Sawhney, 2010, 2009, 2008; Dhesi and Singh, 2009; Times of India, 2010).

II. The Institutional Framework for Reforms in Punjab

Punjab has an excellent record of enacting various Acts and Legislations as mandated by the GOI for implementing certain reforms at the state level. The GOP was amongst the first states in the country to constitute the State Finance Commission as required under Article 243-1 of the Constitution of India as per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992.The State Finance Commission looks into matters relating to state finances including the transfer of funds from the state government to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and ways to generate more resources for these institutions. The GOP declared industrial policies in 1992, 1996, 2003 and 2009 to facilitate industrialization in the State and to attract not only domestic private capital but also foreign capital in tune with the national policies. The focus of the policies has been on hassle free investments in Punjab with various incentives to certain categories of investors like the Information Technology (IT) and IT enabled services (ITes), agro-industrial development, uninterrupted power supply and location of industries in the border areas, etc. The Punjab Information Technology Policy, 2001 was specifically designed to meet the growth requirements of the IT sector in the State. There is a separate Tourism Policy, 2003 meant to tap the tourism potential in Punjab. The Punjab State Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2009 is the sixth SEZ policy at the state level in India. There also exists a Punjab Industrial Facilitation Act, 2005 to further simplify the procedures related to industrialization in the State.

The GOP established the Directorate of Disinvestment under the Department of Finance in July 2002 to restructure/privatize the State Level Public Enterprises (SLPEs) and their subsidiaries/promoted companies. Punjab was amongst the first few states to enact the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBMA) in October 2003 under the directions of the GOI to bring about fiscal reforms. The GOP enacted the Punjab Infrastructure Development Act in 2002 and set up the Punjab Infrastructure Regulatory

Authority. It has a very clear policy on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the State. The State also has a Textile Policy, 2006 and Biotech Policy, 2006. Punjab implemented Value Added Tax (VAT) in the State in 2005 as a part of the tax reform effort of the GOI.

The GOP set out to carry on the power sector reforms and formed the Punjab State Electricity Regulatory Commission (PSERC) in March 1999 under section 17 of the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, 1998 with the objective of rationalization of electricity tariff, advising in matters relating to electricity generation, transmission and distribution in the State. Thereafter the Electricity Act , 2003 was enacted under which the state electricity boards were supposed to bring about massive restructuring of the power sector in order to make them economically viable entities in all the states, as the state electricity boards continued to be in huge losses and were the cause of fiscal deficits in almost all the states.

The Punjab Social Development and Governance Reforms Commission was set up to suggest measures to improve the governance and delivery system in the State in January 2009. More recently the GOP has enacted a Right to Service Act, 2011 to ensure the implementation of several social welfare schemes as well as the delivery of citizen-centric services. It is clear from above that Punjab has an adequate and an up to date institutional framework to carry on the state-level reforms as needed from time to time as also directed by the Government of India.

III. Agricultural Development in Punjab

Punjab was the first state in the country to usher in the Green Revolution after the adoption of New Agricultural Strategy comprising high yielding varieties (HYV) of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and assured irrigation in the mid-1960s. The agricultural development in the State was structured to produce food grains, mainly wheat and rice, to meet the food requirements of the country. Therefore, a fairly good canal irrigation system and certain state level institutions were created to provide agri-inputs to the farmers at subsidized rates during the 1970s and 1980s. The emphasis was also laid on agricultural research and extension activities especially by the Punjab Agriculture University at Ludhiana as well as Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The total food grain production increased significantly from 7.3 million metric tonnes in 1970-71 to 26.9 million metric tonnes in 2009-10 (GOP, 2011) and Punjab emerged to be the largest contributor to the central pool of food grains over the years.

Rapid agricultural development of the state resulted in Punjab experiencing a rate of growth much higher than the rest of the country as mentioned above. However the growth momentum could not be sustained and deceleration started in the agricultural sector. There has been a negative impact of the wheat-paddy rotational cropping pattern on the environment in the form of falling water table, deterioration in soil health, river water pollution, etc. Successive governments in the State did not pay much attention to the maintenance, modernization or up-gradation of agri-infrastructure in Punjab. Storage of food grain during the

procurement season and thereafter poses a major challenge. The storage capacity for agricultural produce in the State is extremely inadequate. Grain is exposed to the vagaries of nature and is damaged due to lack of covered space in *mandis*. The state government collects hefty taxes on the sale of food grains from the farmers but has failed to provide any shelter. Large quantities of precious food grain are lost every year due to bad weather - both the center and the state are responsible for this condition. Food rotting in the open fields is a common sight when millions of poor can't afford two square meals a day. Manual handling delays grain procurement causes wastage and raises cost. The irrigation system in the State has not been strengthened since it was created almost four decades ago. There is colossal water wastage due to dilapidated canals making the area vulnerable to floods.

Land acquisition for infrastructure, industry and real estate development in the State is proving to be detrimental to the long term interests of the farmers, especially those who are holding small farms. For a short while the gains from land acquisition seem huge to the farmers as a lot of money comes into their hands but in the long run it is not easy for them to sustain their livelihoods. This is because most of them, especially the younger generation, dissipate the lump sum cash in their hands on consumption expenditure like buying flashy cars, houses in urban areas, etc. rather than investing it fruitfully in ventures that give them steady income. An average farmer is not trained to take up any non-farm activity, so is rendered jobless leading to frustration and often drug-addiction and alcoholism. The repercussions of indiscriminate changes in land use for non-farm activities can also create issues of food security as the area under cultivation is likely to shrink in the long run. There also seems to be no regulation and discipline in government actions as far as the utilization of farm land is concerned.

The GOP seems to be apathetic towards the deteriorating conditions in the agricultural sector of the State, which was the growth driver in Punjab since 1966-67. There is no specific policy to improve the deteriorating condition of agriculture, either by the Government of India or the State government.

IV. Industrial and Infrastructure Reforms

Punjab had a fairly developed industrial sector prior to the advent of militancy in the State in 1980-81 with Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar and certain small towns like Mandi Gobindgarh and Goraya having industries like hosiery, cycles, machine tools, sports goods, woolen textiles, carpets, steel re-rolling, agricultural machinery, etc. One decade of terrorism spelt a doom for the state economy, in general, and industry in particular. The World Bank (2004) states

> The impact of militant activities on growth was swift, widespread and, in some cases, permanent: The industrial growth rate halved, from 8 to 4 percent: and the growth rate of services sector decelerated as well, and fell by half, between 1987/88 and 1992/93. Even the agricultural growth rate plummeted from

around 6 percent year to around 2 percent during this period due to decline in long term investment associated with the uncertainty surrounding the militancy activities. Our calculation shows that the output loss suffered by Punjab on account of militancy activities could be as large as Rs.13,000 crores in today's prices (equivalent to 29 percent of today's GSDP).

However, even after two decades of the end of that era, the State has a different set of problems which are proving to be major hurdles in the development of industry in the State.

In line with the GOI, the state governments in the country started drafting new policies to facilitate industrialization under the liberalized and globalized regime. Accordingly, GOP announced its first post-reform industrial policy in 1992 followed by another in 1996, 2003 and the latest being the policy of 2009. Each of these policies brought out, more or less, the same set of strategies towards industrial development in the state. All the policies emphasized facilitating the setting up of industries through single window clearance, encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI), attracting private domestic investment by offering better incentives vis-à-vis the neighbouring states including the fiscal sops and easier land acquisition, etc. The latest policy of 2009, based on a review of Punjab's industrial scenario by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2008), is no different from the earlier policies. It does not offer anything which has not earlier been institutionalized through certain organizations, policies, acts and legislations in the State. Punjab has a separate document for every provision made for facilitating industrial development in the State in the new policy. But the investment climate in the State is not conducive because of the prohibitive cost of land, severe power crisis, acute shortage of skilled manpower and increasing corruption and red-tapism. The neighbouring states are also competing away investment as Punjab is not offering any attractive incentives for the investors and is also not honouring its own commitments made from time to time, for example, the Industrial Policy of 2003 had a provision for capital subsidy for setting up industrial units in the border districts but no subsidy has been paid to the entrepreneurs so far. Therefore they are unable to compete with their counterparts in other states.

The state-wise data on FDI inflows into different Indian states show that of the total FDI equity inflows reported by different regional offices of the Reserve Bank of India, between April 2000 to August 2011, the Mumbai office comprising Maharashtra, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu accounted for 35 percent followed by the Delhi office comprising Delhi and parts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, accounting for 20 percent. Punjab falls under the Chandigarh office which comprises Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and it accounts for only around one percent of total FDI equity inflows during 2000 to 2011, which means that the share of Punjab is almost negligible (GOI, 2011).

The key to high rate of industrial and economic growth is a well-developed infrastructure. The budgetary resources are inadequate to provide the requisite investments to ensure sustainable infrastructure development in Punjab. The Punjab Infrastructure Development Board (PIDB) is the nodal agency for facilitating private investment in infrastructure across different sectors - roads and highways, urban infrastructure, industrial infrastructure, electricity, health and education. The PIDB is funded through the Punjab Infrastructure Development Fund. The Punjab Infrastructure Initiative Fund (PIIF) has been created to finance project development through public private partnerships (PPP). The State is in dire need of both rural and urban development, airports, good roads and uninterrupted power supply.

V. Public Enterprise Reforms with Special Reference to Power Sector Reforms

The State Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) consist of 45 companies and 5 statutory corporations of the GOP. Nearly 86 percent of the investment of PSUs is in the power sector, followed by the financial sector (about 7 percent), while there is only an investment of about 3-4 percent in the SLPEs meant to support the agriculture sector. Most of the SLPEs in Punjab have been suffering huge losses and are inefficient, lack transparency and accountability in their working (Sawhney, 1993). Prior to the setting up of the formal framework for disinvestment, it was decided to close down six SLPEs between 1991 and 2001. After the adoption of economic reforms in India, the GOP decided to restructure the PSUs and accordingly the State Disinvestment Commission recommended dissolution of nine companies (Sawhney, 2005). Presently there are 19 non-working state undertakings and winding up/closure of the recommended undertakings has not yet been finalized.

As per the Report of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India (2010), during 2004-05 to 2009-2010, the working public sector undertakings incurred losses every year except 2004-05. The percentage of turnover of PSUs to the State GDP declined from 15.03 in 2004-05 to 11.64 in 2009-10. The losses of SLPEs are mainly on account of deficiencies in financial management, planning, implementation of projects, running their operations unprofessionally and lack of monitoring. Most of these losses are controllable and there is huge avoidable expenditure incurred by these organizations. The return on capital employed has been extremely low in their case, being as low as 0.96 percent in 2008-09 and negative in the years 2005-06 and 2007-08. There are huge accumulated losses, very high debt and interest payments (GOP, 2010).

The GOP is aware of the serious financial burden of the SLPEs on the public exchequer but is absolutely apathetic towards taking any concrete steps to divest out of these loss making undertakings. Most of the undertakings are not only running into perpetual losses but do not adhere to sound accounting practices as per their respective Acts. They neither finalise their accounts annually within the stipulated period nor present them for auditing and thereafter to be tabled in the State Legislature. In some cases the accounts are running in arrears for more

than five years. This prevents the scrutiny of the working of these organizations. Delay in finalization of the accounts can lead to gross misappropriation of funds and misuse of public money, apart from the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956. Thus the SLPEs are a source of major fiscal burden on the state exchequer as their accumulated losses were 5.5 percent of the State GDP in 2009-10 as calculated on the basis of the CAG report of 2010 (op.cit).

Failed Power Sector Reforms

More than 85 percent of the public sector investment in Punjab is in the power sector, i.e., the Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB), which had been running into huge losses over the years due to mismanagement, over-staffing, heavy transmission and distribution losses, unviable electricity tariffs and free power to the agricultural sector. The CAG (2010) has observed that to meet the chronic power shortage in Punjab, the PSEB resorted to unplanned purchase of power at exorbitant rates resulting in avoidable extra expenditure of Rs.43229.8 million during 2005-10. If the Board had planned well and augmented the power supply in the State in response to demand or resorted to long term power purchase arrangements at a lower cost, huge amount of resources could have been saved. The GOP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 2001 with the Union Ministry of Power for implementation of power sector reforms with identified milestones like reduction of transmission and distribution losses, 100 percent metering of consumers in the State, monitoring of MOU on quarterly basis, etc. Most of the milestones have not been achieved even after a decade of entering into this agreement. The PSEB was to be unbundled into three separate companies for transmission, distribution and generation of electricity in the State as per the Electricity Act, 2003. The Union government gave a specific time frame to each state to unbundle the power utilities under the Act.

The GOP should have unbundled PSEB after carefully creating awareness amongst all the stakeholders regarding its impact and boldly implementing it by putting all the institutions in place at the earliest; which included the withdrawal of electricity subsidy to certain classes of consumers in the State. Instead it chose the path of procrastination and kept on postponing the inevitable in order to retain the populist policy of free power to farmers as well as relenting under trade union pressure. It sought 13 extensions from the Union government on one pretext or the other. Thereafter in April 2010, the Punjab Cabinet decided to corporatise PSEB by creating two separate companies - Punjab State Transmission Corporation Limited (TRANSCO) to look after the transmission and Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd. (POWERCOM) to manage generation and distribution of power in the State. However both the companies are fully owned and managed by the government and also the staff and their service conditions continue to be the same as PSEB, only they are nominally allocated to the two new organizations. Tariff continues to be determined by the PSERC as in the past and all the subsidies to different sections of the consumers, including the farmers continue as before. So far it seems that this structural change in the power sector has been brought about merely to fulfill the

obligation laid out in the Electricity Act, 2003 and has not resulted in any radical power sector reforms and the State continues to face severe power shortage and the two new organizations are also suffering huge losses.

VI. Fiscal Reforms

Fiscal reforms form a very important part of any reform programme and enables a government to implement the development-oriented policies more effectively. The most important factor responsible for the declining economic performance of Punjab is its gross fiscal mismanagement.

Punjab has been under fiscal stress since the mid-1980s, when it became a revenue deficit state. Punjab had the dubious distinction of being among the states with the highest fiscal deficit in the country at the beginning of the reform period. Militancy, that lasted for over a decade in the State, was one of the major causes of its poor fiscal condition but not the only reason as reported in the *White Paper on State Finances* (2002). It further brought out the factors that adversely impacted the State's fiscal situation which include the ever increasing burden of committed expenditure – wages, salaries, pensions, interest payments on mounting public debt, power subsidies, loss making public undertakings and slow growth of revenue. Populism undermines the capacity of the government to raise resources and improve the productivity of revenue. Low irrigation charges, free electricity for the farm sector, abolition of octroi and uneconomic transport fares added to the burden on the state exchequer and resulted in further decline in investment on health, education and other social services. The populist policies in the State have resulted in too much indebtedness over the years. The GOP has taken all the institutional and sectoral measures suggested by the GOI, Reserve Bank of India and other agencies to attain fiscal balances and restore macro-economic stability in the state finances. An evaluation of the fiscal reform programme of the State reveals that the Government of Punjab has not adhered to the recommendations of most of the committees and commissions and the financial targets laid down in various documents have rarely been achieved (Sawhney, 2005).

As per a recent report of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII, 2011) on a comparative study of State Finances of Northern States, the Gross Fiscal Deficit as a proportion of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in Punjab was 3.1 for the average of 2005-08 and 4 for 2008-09, whereas it should not be greater than 3 percent as per the FRBMA. The revenue deficit as percentage of GSDP was 1.8 for 2005-08 and 2.9 in 2008-09, despite the receipt of Non-plan Revenue Deficit Grant from the GOI, whereas it should have been completely wiped out in order to meet the Fiscal Responsibility targets. It is notable that on one account Punjab has met the FRBMA target, i.e., debt to GSDP ratio which was 42.6 as the average for 2005-08 declined to 35.2 percent for 2009-10 (RE); though the time frame of this target has not been adhered to as it was supposed to be achieved by 31 March, 2007. In short, it may be said that Punjab is still having fiscal imbalances despite various reform measures spelt out by the government.

VII. Overall Evaluation of Reforms in Punjab

As observed in the preceding sections of this paper, Punjab has all the legislations, rules and regulations for the development of different sectors of the State. What is glaringly missing in the entire institutional framework is a comprehensive policy for the revival of agriculture in Punjab. No official document, except the annual budget speeches, spells out a roadmap for the all-inclusive growth strategy in the State. The present paper has not dealt with certain socio-economic indicators reflecting poor gender ratio, lack of proper civic amenities as well as a dire necessity for health and education reforms in the State. The entire success of the policy depends on its implementation, i.e., the strategy, seriousness and the delivery system. Mere enactment of such policies has no meaning. The various concessions and subsidies offered to attract industry can only be granted if the financial health of the State allows it. Presently that is not the case. Also a prerequisite for the rapid and effective development of any sector hinges on good infrastructure including assured power availability. Punjab is not able to meet these conditions at present. The State does not offer an investor-friendly environment and so has not been able to attract any major domestic or foreign industrial/service sector project except a joint venture refinery between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mittal Energy Investments Pvte. Ltd., Singapore known as HMEL. There is hardly any simplification of procedures for setting up a business in Punjab; on the contrary, there are too many bureaucratic hurdles and corruption is rampant.

It is not the content of the industrial policy in Punjab that matters, but the capability of its polity and bureaucracy to implement not only this policy but several other commitments made to the electorate and people of Punjab to improve the quality of their lives and also to arrest deceleration of the state economy. This requires an enabling environment, including investments in technological and organizational capabilities of the state. The much talked about e-governance, put to effective use by other states, is far from being attempted in Punjab. Accountability of administrative performance is necessary for all the stakeholders, including the corporate sector, civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations. There is a huge potential for industrial and service sector growth, particularly, agro-industrial development in Punjab if the GOP implements certain decisions which may not be populist and may seem harsh in the short run but will accelerate the pace of growth of the economy of Punjab and will confer political dividends in the long run.

Although the Punjab government has formulated various policies for encouraging industrialization in the State, yet there are certain decisions which the government takes outside the formal institutional framework. A case in point is that of the issue of concessions to HMEL. After the final negotiations on concessions with the promoters of HMEL with the GOP in 2005 and with the refinery now nearing completion, the company allegedly asked for further concessions and the GOP seriously considered them, which did not seem like a prudent fiscal step. Renegotiation undermines the credibility of the government

and erodes confidence of the people. There should be a definite, well-defined, objective and transparent criterion laid down in the industrial policy, listing concessions and subsidies for promoting industrialization. There should not be any tinkering in the already framed strategy. Granting of ad-hoc concessions under the influence of powerful industrialists or lobbies, if that is what is happening, is bound to raise issues about the credibility and transparency of the government.

Punjab's record in infrastructure development is far from satisfactory. Most of the agri-infrastructure created in the State during the period of the Green Revolution, that is, during the 1970s and 1980s has neither been upgraded nor supplemented. Due to the weak fiscal position of the State as well as the apathy of the government many vital sectors of the economy have remained neglected, especially the social areas of education and health. Punjab failed to avail funds from the Central government/ Planning Commission for several social welfare/education/health and infrastructure development schemes. The review carried out by the Planning Commission (2009) reveals that during the Tenth Five Year Plan the utilization of funds for centrally sponsored schemes was only 54.13 percent in Punjab. The major factor adversely impacting the schemes was non-release of the share of the State which was only 22 percent. In 2009-10 there was only 36.81 percent achievement against Annual Work Plan in *Sarv Siksha Abhiyan* and under the National Rural Health Mission there was only 37 percent utilization of the available funds. In the case of certain schemes there has been absolutely no utilization of funds. As reported in the review there is gross under utilization of funds under all the central schemes in Punjab, which leads not only to non-creation of socio-economic infrastructure in the State but also available funds are wasted at a time when the State is starved of developmental resources (Planning commission, 2009)

Governance reforms are central to the successful implementation of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The main objective of the implementation of reforms under JNNURM is to provide an enabling environment for the growth of our cities by enhancing effective urban service delivery, land management, financial management and stakeholder participation in local governance. The withdrawal of property tax in Punjab is in contravention to the spirit of JNNURM.

VIII. Conclusions and a Way Forward

The governments in Punjab, ever since the mid-1990s, have been pursuing populist policies in the expectation of creating vote banks and returning to power, but the reality has been, except for the last election, to the contrary, that is, the same political party in the State has not returned to power for two consecutive terms. The following reforms are urgently needed in Punjab if economic deceleration in the State is to be seriously arrested.

   1.   Revival of Agricultural Development

A renewed thrust is required for putting agriculture back on the growth path with special emphasis on making agriculture more remunerative. Special effort has to be made for creating new and modern agri-infrastructure, maintenance, modernization and upgradation of existing facilities as per the contemporary requirements wherever diversification out of wheat-paddy has taken place. Extensive crop damage and wastage of precious water is reported due to frequent breaches in canal embankments. There is a pressing need to maintain and rejuvenate the canal system in the State.

Another area which requires a fresh impetus through public investment is agricultural research and development, which was the harbinger of growth and success of the Green Revolution. The government seems to have lost focus on this account; this needs to be pursued with renewed zeal and vigour. Better agri-infrastructure can surely help and surplus food grains can be stored in food deficit states instead of the states where they are procured. All this requires a coordinated effort between the centre and Punjab. Blaming each other for the condition is not the solution to any problem.

The membership of World Trade Organization poses huge challenges for Indian agriculture and a State like Punjab must be well equipped to meet them. However, the GOI must take the first step forward to deregulate the agricultural sector in order to increase India's competitiveness in world markets by integrating the domestic agricultural market. The GOP must give up a populist regime and eliminate subsidies that have largely benefited interest groups rather than poor farmers, in order to align incentives and liberate resources from the State budget. These freed-up resources must be directed towards urgent public interventions, such as building storage space for agri-produce, create and maintain irrigation channels and meet other challenges of infrastructure.

The ad-hoc and self-serving decisions of the government lead to frequent changes in land use, that is, land may have been acquired for building infrastructure or industries but is normally being used for creating residential colonies where the profits are huge. A clear cut land acquisition policy along with a framework for the rehabilitation of the uprooted farmers is urgently required.

2.   Conducive investment climate for industry and service sectors

The GOP must focus on implementing the provisions for the efficient growth of the industrial and services sectors as per various state policies and facilitation acts enacted from time to time in order to encourage investment in industry and services in Punjab. The investment climate in the State must be made conducive by eliminating certain roadblocks that discourage industrial investment, like prohibitive cost of land, severe power crisis, acute shortage of skilled manpower and increasing corruption and red-tapism.

It is imperative for Punjab to strengthen its manufacturing and service sectors which offer huge potential for growth and development in the State. Punjab has a huge potential for developing food processing industry, which can help create jobs for the people of the State who have been rendered unemployed

after land acquisition. This can also help the problem of food grain wastage due to poor storage and mismanagement to a great extent. Processed food can be exported as well as sold in the domestic market as there are no restrictions on the movement of industrial products but agricultural produce cannot be freely sold in the other states.

The GOP should focus on the development of technologically advanced sectors like IT, ITes, biotechnology, pharmaceutical sector, etc. The policies for the same already exist but are not implemented seriously. The endeavour should be to remove all the bottlenecks like infrastructure, shortage of power and bureaucratic hurdles. The public private partnership model must be used wherever the capacity of the state is limited. Industrial clusters for sports goods, leather goods, textiles, hosiery, cycles and cycle parts, industrial tools, etc. must be created as a priority in Punjab. The State has also not availed of special incentives/schemes offered by the Central government from time to time for industrial parks/zones. Once again the problem is that of slow moving polity and bureaucracy, not being able to seize the opportunity at the appropriate time for comprehensive development of the State.

3.   *Fiscal and other reforms*

Fiscal responsibility is a prerequisite for arresting further deterioration in the economy of Punjab and putting it back on the path of development. Reduction and maintenance of fiscal deficit and debt to GSDP ratios as per the FRBMA, 2003 is imperative. Improving the composition of public expenditures, by reducing the share spent on wages, pensions, interest payments, agricultural subsidies, notably the power subsidy and also efforts to mobilize on tax resources are also required. Punjab must not dissipate the funds allocated under centrally sponsored schemes but must use them effectively. There is also a need to encourage local governments to mobilize resources as well as adhere to the constitutional commitment of devolution of funds to the ULBs and PRIs.

The restructuring/winding up of state level public enterprises at the earliest is a must in order to arrest the flow of scarce public resources to loss making SLPEs. Power sector reforms - other than notional unbundling of Punjab State Electricity Board - need to be expedited in order to meet the power needs of all sectors as well as the household consumption requirements. There is an urgent need to augment power generation capacity in the State and also to emulate 'best practice' from other states like creating a power bank, etc.

A perusal of the economic reform programme in Punjab suggests that the governments of the State, since the mid-1990s, have been indulging in competitive politics and have paid no heed to the developmental needs of the State. It is only a comprehensive multi-sectoral development policy coupled with effective governance and service delivery which can arrest the deteriorating economic condition in the State. Populist policies, destroying the roots of development, cannot be sustained in the long run. It has been proposed by Bhagwati and Panagariya (2004) that economic performance has become an important determinant of voter behaviour in recent years. This explains the

reason why anti-incumbency has become a prominent feature of election outcomes. Gupta and Panagariya (2010) have brought out a very strong relationship between growth performance and election outcomes. Superior growth performance is positively associated with good governance and law and order.

A state policy can be termed as 'public policy' only if it promotes the public interest. The interest of the masses must be protected and the poor be given priority in the allocation of public resources. If such policies create disproportionate gains to one section of society at the cost of others, these can create instability in the system. Populist policies create wider social and economic disparities than they bridge. Such policies are neither economically sound nor benefit the people for whom they are meant, for example, subsidized farm outputs, including free power, have rarely benefited the small and marginal farmers; rather they weaken the system if pursued indiscriminately over a long period of time.

It is worth noting that the Punjab government set up the Punjab Social Development and Governance Reforms Commission to suggest ways and means to improve the governance and delivery system of various public services in the State and has also enacted the Right to Services Ordinance. This amounts to an admission by the government that there are serious flaws in the delivery system, policy implementation and the quality of governance. However, the Commission has submitted three reports to the GOP but no action has been initiated on any of the recommendations so far. This further reflects the apathy of the government towards the urgency of improving the quality of administration in Punjab and to put Punjab back on the path to economic recovery.

To conclude, it may be noted that there is an urgent need for governance reforms, transparency in the development delivery mechanism and fiscal reforms ensuring that the public funds are utilized according to sound financial practices and not diverted for gaining political mileage through wasteful public functions and populist announcements. Timely and regular audit of public expenditure as well as judicious use of public funds is imperative to ensure transparency and good governance along with improving public access to information, fixing responsibility to strengthen accountability. It is necessary to use precious public resources for inclusive growth. There is an acute skill deficit in various sectors of the state and the educated youth are not employable. Capacity building of the state administration for the implementation of various central and state schemes is also very essential. The Government of India also must come forward to provide a push to the State by offering certain special incentives for industrial and service sector development of the border districts of Punjab on the pattern of special assistance/incentives/ subsidies that are offered to special category states.

Public policy in Punjab has been sacrificed at the altar of populism. A well framed and cohesive public policy must be designed in order to expedite the economic revival of the State, to serve the interest of the masses without sacrificing economic interests of the State. Blaming the central government for

all the ills of the State as well as shifting the onus of poor economic performance on the era of militancy in Punjab cannot resolve any crisis. The Akali-BJP government in Punjab has been re-elected with a historic two-term victory in the recent elections (March 2012). The party has made innumerable promises to the electorate to give away 'freebies' to various segments of the population like the girl students, unemployed youth, widows, etc. If actually delivered, these would cost nearly Rs.10,000 crores per annum as per the early estimates. The State is already reeling under a huge debt of Rs. 78,000 crores as well as unpaid salaries and arrears, along with several other bills. Therefore the newly formed government is likely to face an insurmountable task of fulfilling the 'populist' promises as well as fiscal management. The revival of the State economy requires certain tough measures like reducing non-merit subsidies, cutbacks on non-developmental expenditure especially on administration as also streamline the essential public outlays on strengthening infrastructure in the State in general and agri-infrastructure in particular. Leakages in revenue collection and social expenditure need to be plugged with an iron hand.

The past record of the present government on the economic front is not very encouraging and there was no evidence of any serious effort towards reviving the economy of the State. The pre-poll promises also included providing clean and effective governance and strengthening the public service delivery system. The people of Punjab have provided an opportunity to the government to prove themselves. Therefore, it is not only a challenge but also the responsibility to deliver what they promised. A strong and committed leadership is necessary which can work to protect the interests of the poor and deserving but which is tough with the 'free riders'. The apathetic attitude towards the real problems of Punjab and a self-serving approach needs to be abandoned in order to restore the lost glory of the State before it is too late and the economic decline becomes irreversible.

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Contemporary Watchdogs Domesticated: Conduct of Punjabi Print Media in Punjab During the Assembly Elections of 2007

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The following study provides a close scrutiny of the conduct of Punjabi newspapers during the Punjab Assembly Elections of 2007 and demonstrates, with the help of comparative empirical analysis of three newspapers (namely, *Ajit*, *Jagbani* and *Punjabi Tribune*), that the media has diluted and compromised its role as a watchdog of democracy. The study brings out that several factors have come together to erode the democratic role and function of the vernacular press. These factors include commercial competitiveness, communalization of the media space, changing technologies and a compromise with journalistic ethics on account of business and political rivalries. The most important finding of the study is that democratic political space in the vernacular press has shrunk alarmingly. This has happened at a time when the space of political deliberations should be expanding.

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"The marriage between media and politics and the economy has shaped the culture of our politics" - Florangel Rosario Braid

Introduction: Democracy, Elections and Expected Role of the Media

The important functions that we can expect the media to perform in a democratic society include keeping an eye on socio-political developments, identifying the most relevant issues, providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, holding officials to account on behalf of citizens, involving people in the political process, and resisting the efforts of outside forces to subvert the independence of the media (Fog, 2004, p. 2). Across the entire range of these functions, the media has certainly become a decisive factor in electoral politics all over the democratic world. It is obvious that elections are of crucial importance in a democracy and constitute the process whereby the leaders who pilot the affairs of a nation are elected. This electoral process allows all eligible voters to exercise, as democratic citizens, their rights (to vote and to be elected) in the formation of a government. From the time the elections are announced to the day they take place, a period of usually six to eight weeks passes. During this period the role of media is supposed to be very crucial as this is the time the rulers and the ruled interact directly on a common platform provided by the media.

The media is supposed to provide correct and reliable information about the competing political parties and their programmes and candidates, and thus to actively contribute to the formation of opinion of the electorate. It has an active role in informing the public about what the politicians are promising and the politicians about what the people want, and thus it is supposed to ensure that the polls are free and fair. This may include formal voter education material provided by the electoral management body; alternately or additionally, the media themselves may produce their own voter education materials. The information supplied by the media does have a bearing on public opinion as it influences the individual voters' decisions. Simultaneously, the media also performs the role of a watchdog by exposing the errors and wrong-doings of those in power (Fog, 2004). Meinardus suggests that the role of the media is to enlighten and inform the citizens so that they are in a position to make reasonable decisions on election day (Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Liberty, 2004). The overall aim of media coverage during election campaigns should be fair and objective reporting and unbiased information dissemination (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2004). This is important because it is impossible to find a democratic country today in which a candidate could go to elections without using the media in one way or another. Moreover, whenever political parties launch their election campaigns, they have a clear and planned set of expectations from the media. Consequently, they deal with the media on the basis of a considered policy and strategy.

Predominance of the Print Media

While the role of mass media in democratic political contests is not new, the media platforms used to disseminate information among the public have certainly changed with developments in communication channels. Political communication strategies are also, to a great extent, technology-driven. The accessibility of different media platforms matters a lot when it comes to election campaigning for a specific electorate. Although the accessibility of general public to different media platforms varies from one country to another, in most parts of the world, television today plays a dominant role in political campaigns, followed by radio and print media. Radio programs are still important in less developed countries where every household cannot afford a TV set. The role of print media also should not be underestimated, as it has largely emerged as an agenda-setter particularly in the socio-political spheres. Moreover, the print media has historical significance, as noted by Benedict Anderson in his famous study, *Imagined Communities*, of the rise of print media, as an indispensable force aiding the rise of national consciousness among the people. A relatively new vehicle for political communication is the Internet. The use of the Internet for campaigning sometimes varies drastically, and this reflects what is commonly termed as the growing digital divide in highly developed societies like Japan and the USA. No serious political campaign can be carried out today without at least a website (Meinardus, 2004). Over the years then, due to the advancement of technology, the impact of media has increased manifold in

every sphere of life, particularly in the political domain. No wonder the political institutions are increasingly becoming dependent on and are being shaped by the mass media. Many scholars have rightly termed the current situation as "mediatization of politics" (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). They further argue that "[m]ediatization is, in fact, a phenomenon common to political systems of almost all democratic countries, where it has taken different shapes and developed at varying speeds…. The process of mediatization of political actors, events, and discourses has been a major trend in political systems of the 1990s" (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999).

Indian Electoral Scene and the Media

In India, elections are a colourful affair, with a liberal use of posters, banners and music. Many candidates travel on specially built coaches adapted to resemble medieval chariots. At the same time, in recent elections, political parties and candidates have increasingly begun to use new media technologies too. The growing number of mobile users and Internet surfers has provided the political parties new platforms for campaigning. Most of the political parties and candidates now have their own websites to attract voters. Political parties also send catchy text messages to voters through mobile phones. A party may use SMSs and e-mails to reach the voters who may otherwise be apathetic. Mobile phone numbers and e-mail addresses of voters are compiled by the parties with the help of local resident associations and clubs. In India, however, the print media still has not only the upper hand over the electronic media, but the general public also has greater faith in newspapers. Newspapers are treated as a significant source of information by the common people who believe that whatever is written in the newspaper has a special truth value. It is particularly true of the countryside where people often base their political arguments on newspaper reports. They look upon newspapers as an authentic, even sacred, source of information. In fact, there are several socio-economic and historical reasons for people's faith in the printed word. One of these reasons is the inaccessibility of the electronic media to a large section of the population.

The cable and satellite TV network has not fully reached the countryside and the majority of the population still watches national television. When it comes to new communication channels, the Internet is still unavailable in majority of the villages. Certain historical reasons could be also located in the leading role the newspapers played during the Indian freedom struggle. In 1920, the Indian National Congress under Gandhi's leadership reorganized itself into provincial units based on language, even though these did not correspond to the administrative divisions of British India. This innovation recognized the power of local languages to influence the minds of large groups of people, something that English could not do, nor for that matter could Hindustani. Such developments greatly stimulated the growth of a nationalist press in regional languages. Robin Jeffery, talking about the rise of newspaper publishers in this period states that in the twenty largest states of India in 1994, seven newspapers "had originated in this period (1920-32) due to intense nationalist

idealism….these regional newspapers dedicated to the nationalist cause represented influential Congress politicians who in turn articulated the interests of their own class" (Jeffrey, 1997). Nevertheless, the emergence of these papers was largely motivated by the attempt to raise the political consciousness of common people.

At the state level, vernacular press takes precedence over the national press. In Punjab, the vernacular press has always played a relatively more important role. If it can be stated that politics is essentially local and regional, than nothing covers local politics like local and regional newspapers do. Compared with any other medium, voters count on the newspapers to find out what is going on in their communities. They know that unlike TV or radio news programmes, newspapers cover local issues of everyday importance. They know that with the newspaper they would not be getting a mere 30 seconds sound bite but would get some real in-depth coverage of the issues which are really important to them. They read about the issues that usually determine how they would cast their vote. No other medium covers the issues directly related to the people as thoroughly as does the print media, especially the vernacular press. In fact, the vernacular press even sets, to some extent, the agenda for political parties. On the other hand, parties try to use the media to their advantage.

However, one major drawback is that people who read newspapers give a lot of uncritical credence to the written word. They still have not sufficiently understood the nexus of market economy, consumerism, entertainment industry and news media. The vertical nature of the news (written word) is, however, highly suspect. Besides this, our education system does not foster critical consciousness. The majority of population is illiterate and, even today, villagers gather on the same spot to read a newspaper or listen to the news from a newspaper reader. On the other hand, radio and TV have evolved largely into the media for entertainment. It is the newspapers which carry information on current affairs, entertainment and consumer goods. The written word still wields special power. In short, the newspapers, thus, continue to play a more important role vis-a-vis the other media.

Punjabi Print Media: Background and Context of the 2007 Assembly Election

In 1966, when the present-day state of Punjab was formed as a result of the reorganization of the states, the largest daily circulation of a paper in *Gurmukhi* script was only 8000 copies. No Gurmukhi daily had enough circulation to merit a listing in the Press and Advertisers' Yearbook. An immense change occurred over the following 25 years. By 1991, more than 650,000 newspapers in Gurmukhi were circulating each day (Jeffery 1997). The most significant newspapers in terms of quantity were *Ajit*, *Jagbani* and *Punjabi Tribune*. *Ajit* and *Jagbani* are published from Jalandhar while *Punjabi Tribune* is published from Chandigarh. These newspapers continue to play an important role in Punjab politics today.

After independence, the two issues that gripped Punjab politics were those of Punjabi language and Punjabi statehood. The editor and owners of *Ajit* took a firm stand in favour of Punjabi language and Punjabi statehood which was fairly obvious in their editorials. The editor not only wrote editorials but also took part in political rallies. The communal arguments that were made in these rallies would be published as news the following day. On the other side, the family which owned the Hind Samachar Group of newspapers and was to publish *Jagbani* (from 1978 onwards) also did the same thing, but they opposed Punjabi statehood and the Punjabi language, often writing provocative editorials against these two. The press was thus divided on these issues, and in an attempt to propagate its own perspective, each side often crossed the borderlines of responsible and objective journalism. We may say that these two newspapers were at war. The reason for this can be located partly in business interests, with each side trying to grab the attention of the public by writing more impassioned editorials (Johal, 2005). In an interview, Vijay Chopra (the Editor of *Jagbani)*, admitted that Hamardad (the Editor of *Ajit*) had asked him to write against him, and he would in turn write against Chopra. As a result, it was expected that the circulation of papers would increase. The present Editor of *Ajit*, commenting on the role of Punjabi press during the time, admits that "Punjabi journalism became vocal and loud, and even communal" in those troubled times (Singh, 2005).

The year 1978 is very crucial insofar as the Punjabi press is concerned. In that year, the Hind Samachar Group started publishing *Jagbani*, and the Tribune Trust started publishing the *Punjabi Tribune* from Chandigarh. The *Punjabi Tribune* established itself as secular, non-communal and unbiased newspaper. It followed the ethics of journalism whereas *Jagbani*, not breaking with the old tradition, established itself as an heir to *Hind Samachar* and *Punjab Kesari* (Johal 2005). From this year onwards, Punjab was in a crisis for almost two decades. The Jalandhar press (*Ajit* and *Jagbani*) repeated what they had done during the *Punjabi Suba* struggle. They wrote editorials against each other and exploited the sentiments and feelings of one community against the other. Newspapers did this to fulfill only one motive, which was to increase their circulation. They succeeded in this aim. In 1978, the circulation of *Ajit* was 46,000, of *Jagbani* 9,000, and of *Punjabi Tribune* 30,000. In 1988, the circulation of *Ajit* went up to 1, 24,000, of *Jagbani* to 97,000, and of *Punjabi Tribune* to 46,000. During this period, both *Ajit* and *Jagbani* substantially increased the circulation, whereas the circulation of *Punjabi Tribune* grew only marginally though it still firmly stood by ethics of secular, non-communal and liberal press (Johal 2005). After 1992 when normalcy returned, *Ajit* became the mouthpiece of SAD (Shiromani Akali Dal [Badal]) and the editor, B.S. Hamdard, got nominated to the Rajya Sabha, ostensibly as a reward for his services.

Punjab, a leading state a few decades ago, was facing a grim crisis on various fronts. Its agrarian economy was in a shambles because of heavy indebtedness among farmers; the urban economy had no secure foundation because it was dependent on the rural economy; education was in a mess; and

youth faced unemployment and were falling prey to drugs. The social system and values were crumbling. The crime rate was going up, notwithstanding the highest number of policemen per 10,000 of population. In terms of the number of policemen per 100 square kilometers in area Punjab ranks first (Singh, 2008). Punjab's economy remains overwhelmingly agricultural and has yet to witness a transition from agricultural to industrial economy. But agriculture has become unsustainable because of the shrinking size of land holdings.

The main economic and social issues facing Punjab at the time of elections were the following. After independence, Punjab was viewed as the most dynamic and progressive state of the country, particularly for its success in the agrarian sector. The Green Revolution was successful in other parts of India as well but it was Punjab that it primarily came to be identified with it (Jodhka, 2006). Punjab was then considered to be a leading state of the country with the highest per capita income. However, the excitement did not last very long. After two decades of growth, the Green Revolution began to lose its effectiveness, and was followed by a series of crises (Jodhka, 2006). From politics and economics to culture and ecology, everything seemed to be in a state of crisis in Punjab.

Before analyzing the content of the print media it is worth reminding ourselves of the socio-economic context in which these elections were being held. Around the time of the 2007 Assembly Elections, the overall situation in Punjab was extremely alarming. The agriculture sector was not only moving towards stagnation of yields but also to a squeeze in incomes (Gill and Singh, 2006). The Peasantry increasingly came under debt. The manifestation of the agrarian crisis in the form of suicides had reached dangerous levels (Gill and Singh, 2006). The indebtedness of the surveyed farmers who had committed suicide in the Malwa sub-region of Punjab was in the range of Rs 10,000 to Rs 6.5 lakh, and the average outstanding debt was Rs 1.25 lakh per farmer household (Gill and Singh, 2006). The rural debt kept mounting and reached Rs 24,000 crore in 2007, according a state government report (*The Hindu,* 2007).

The extensive use of new agricultural technologies had led to grave degradation of the environment. As both wheat and paddy are water intensive crops, massive ground water-based irrigation resulted in a depleting water table in Punjab. According to estimates, the water table in central Punjab was going down at the rate of 0.23 cm per annum (Chandhoke, 2006). Experts also blame the indiscriminate use of pesticides for serious contamination of both water and crops. A study prepared by the Punjab Pollution Control Board has pointed that out of the 183,243 people (39,732 families) surveyed, the number of confirmed cancer cases is alarming. It was 103.2 per 100,000 in Talwandi Sabo, compared to 71 per 100,000 in Chamkaur Sahib. The study covered 129 villages in Talwandi Sabo in Bathinda and Chamkaur Sahib in Roop Nagar (*The South Asian,* 2005).

The development expenditure of the state government had dropped from 71.92 percent to 64.92 percent of the total government expenditure in the period 1981-91, largely on account of militancy. There was no reversal of this trend even when normalcy returned in the 1990s (Chandhoke, 2006). Declining

employment avenues for the rural people was compounded by the fact that other sectors of the economy provided few opportunities for employment. According to the 2004 Punjab Development Report "One of the serious problems Punjab is confronted with at present is the high volume of unemployment" (quoted from Chandhoke, 2006). This report had emphasized the gravity of the problems. According to one estimate, approximately 12.85 lakh agricultural workers were surplus to requirement (Chandhoke, 2006).

In 1984 there were 53 blocks categorized as dark zones, in 1995 there were 84 and in 2005 the figure went up to 108 out of the total 138 development blocks in Punjab. Ground water level falling much faster then assumed. With this the situation worsened even further. In 1980 there are 3712 villages identified as drinking water problem villages, this figure went up to 6287 in 1990, and then in year 2000 the number went as high as 8518 and soon 11,849 villages or habitations out of total 12,423 in Punjab were facing drinking water problems (Dutta, 2006). The falling water level had led to increase in power consumption in the agriculture sector in the state. But the Punjab State Electricity Board had added very little to the generation capacity in the previous decade and half.

With the state spending less and less on public health, government hospitals and health centers in Punjab suffered from lack of medical supplies, and shortage of doctors; on the other hand, the funds that were available were not being used fully. According to Rajesh Kumar Aggarwal, most of the public health budget was being spent on salaries during this period. The percentage of public health spending in the State budget was between 1.8 and 4.5 per cent. The Punjab Development Report (2002) revealed that 70 per cent of the sub-centres, 67 per cent of the Subsidiary Health Centres or dispensaries, 62 per cent of the PHCs and 51 per cent of the Community Health Centres did not have proper buildings. Perhaps, some answers may lie in Punjab's spending patterns. Over the past few decades, the State's expenditure on health and family welfare has been falling as a percentage of the annual Budget. In 1980-81, spending on health comprised 5.49 per cent of the State Budget so that during the Tenth Plan (2002-07), state spending on health formed only 2.28 per cent of the Budget (*The South Asian,* 2006).

In 2007, out of 100 children in the age group of 6 to 11, only 76 percent went to government schools and 53 percent of them entered middle school. Just 33 percent students reached Matric, and only 10 to 12 percent appeared in the 12th examination. The worst scene was in higher education, where only 5 percent of students from government schools actually managed to benefit from it. Punjab which was then at 5th place in the country in primary education was apparently joining the states of Bihar and Jharkhand. Nearly 10,000 posts of teachers in elementary schools and 22000 in other schools lay vacant. About 1100 schools were without principals (Bains, 2007).

Scope of the Present Study

For the purpose of our study, we have chosen the news coverage of fifteen days for our analysis, from the last date for withdrawal of candidature that is 30 January 2007 to 13th Feb 2007 in the three papers. The elections took place on 13th of Feb. We have examined two pages of each of the papers: the front page and the editorial page.

We now proceed with the analysis of the front-page of selected newspapers in order to see the distribution of space between advertisements and news against the backdrop of the moral code supposed to govern this distribution. As per this code, laid down by the Second Press Commission (1984), the newspapers should publish news and advertisements in 60:40 ratio (Kumar 1994, p. 202).

Advertising and News Content of Ajit, Jagbani and Punjabi Tribune

Ajit		
	Advt.%	News%
30-Jan	67.2%	32.8%
31-Jan	69.8%	30.2%
1-Feb	72.5%	27.5%
2-Feb	56.7%	43.3%
3-Feb	67.6%	32.4%
4-Feb	77.9%	22.1%
5-Feb	77.5%	22.5%
6-Feb	77.3%	22.7%
7-Feb	76.0%	24.0%
8-Feb	55.3%	44.7%
9-Feb	77.3%	27.7%
10-Feb	54.0%	46.0%
11-Feb	79.4%	20.6%
12-Feb	73.9%	26.1%
13-Feb	59.1%	40.9%

Jagbani		
	Advt.%	News%
30-Jan	86.4%	13.6%
31-Jan	67.4%	32.6%
1-Feb	88.7%	11.3%
2-Feb	88.7%	11.3%
3-Feb	71.8%	28.2%
4-Feb	83.4%	16.6%
5-Feb	72.7%	27.3%
6-Feb	34.1%	65.9%
7-Feb	93.2%	6.8%
8-Feb	75.5%	24.5%
9-Feb	35.4%	64.6%
10-Feb	53.4%	46.6%
11-Feb	60.4%	39.6%
12-Feb	88.8%	11.2%
13-Feb	68.6%	31.4%

It is significant that during the fifteen days under analysis, *Ajit* did not follow the code for even a single day as it gave more space than prescribed to the advertisements as compared to the news. News got only 20.6% to 27.7% space for eight days, 30.2% to 32.8% space for three days and 40.9% to 46.0% space for four days.

Jagbani followed the moral code of conduct for two days only when it gave 34.1 and 35.4 % space to advertisements and 65.9% and 64.6% to news.

Otherwise, the news received less than 40% space on twelve days, less than 16.6% on six days, and it did not even reach the double digits on 7th February. On this day, the news was given only 6.8% of the space.

The *Punjabi Tribune* also did more or less the same thing. News got less than 40% of space on thirteen days; for the remaining two days, it got only 44.2% and 56.8%.

Punjabi Tribune		
	Advt.%	News%
30-Jan	71.3%	28.7%
31-Jan	65.1%	34.9%
1-Feb	68.6%	31.4%
2-Feb	67.6%	32.4%
3-Feb	63.0%	37.0%
4-Feb	67.3%	32.7%
5-Feb	72.3%	27.7%
6-Feb	73.5%	26.5%
7-Feb	71.6%	28.4%
8-Feb	73.9%	26.1%
9-Feb	69.9%	30.1%
10-Feb	43.2%	56.8%
11-Feb	67.8%	32.2%
12-Feb	71.9%	28.1%
13-Feb	55.8%	44.2%

A comparison discloses that only *Jagbani* followed the moral code of conduct though for just two days, whereas the other newspapers did not even do that. News received the minimum percentage of space in *Punjabi Tribune*: less than 40% for thirteen days. Then comes *Jagbani*: twelve days. *Ajit* is the last in the list: only eleven days. If we compare which newspaper gave the highest percentage of space to advertisements, we find that *Jagbani* gets the first place with 93.2% of space given during one of these days to advertisements, followed by *Ajit* with 79.4%, and by *Punjabi Tribune* with 73.5%. Similarly, when we compare the space granted to news, we find that for five days news got less than 16.7% of space in *Jagbani*. No other newspaper even touched this percentage. For nine days, *Jagbani* gave less than 30% of space to news, thus achieving the top position among the three papers, followed by *Ajit* and *Punjabi Tribune*, which both gave less than 30% space for eight days and six days respectively.

Media Space: Between News and Advertisements

The media is supposed to articulate social norms but, as the tables reveal, the media itself has been violating the norms prescribed for it. The newspapers, during the elections, gave more space to advertisements, with the percentage of advertisements at times going up to more than 85%. Meanwhile, news got only a marginal space of 15%. The least space given to news in one of these newspapers was 6.8%.

During the period of elections, readers expect informed discussions to be published in newspapers so that they can get a certain perspective on public issues. However, as indicated by the figures cited above, this is also the time when the media is tempted to exploit the situation and earn money by selling newspapers space to advertisers. It is conveniently forgotten that people buy newspapers primarily for news, not for motivated propaganda to buy commodities. It is clear that *Jagbani* and *Ajit* topped in selling newspaper space, arguably because both these papers are privately owned. *Punjabi Tribune*, on the contrary, could avoid the temptation probably because it is run by a trust, in which editorial decisions are governed by public interest and not by the motive of private profit. Moreover, the trust functions on the principle of collective public responsibility.

The story of advertising in Indian newspapers has two elements not commonly found in the West. The first is that in the years before 1947 many Indians, particularly those sympathetic to the national movement, regarded advertisements as a compromise. The second is that after independence, in a controlled and planned economy, whatever advertising was there, went overwhelmingly to English language newspapers. And it is significant that between 1947 and 1977 the government advertising itself was crucial for the survival and health of newspapers (Jeffery. 1997).

Nationalist newspapers in English and Indian languages took their lead from M.K. Gandhi. His weeklies did not accept advertisements, "ninety-nine percent" of which he deemed "totally useless….If there were no system of advertisements, we are surely to save at least half the price [of any article]". Gandhi declared that "the sole aim of journalism should be service." As late as in 1965, a study of small newspapers found six proprietors who ran their publications at a loss "as a missionary work" (Jeffery, 1997). But in the 1990s, driven by the "liberalization" of the Indian economy and the arrival of multi-national corporations, advertising grew, according to an industry magazine, "at a frenetic pace, making it resemble the California gold rush" (Jeffery, 1997).

Political Parties and the Media: Growing Interdependence

But the media space that is ideally to be used for political debate and commentary has come to be used for selling political and other goods and even images. Slowly, the civic and democratic values that were supposed to guide broadcasting have been replaced by commercial and entertainment interests. More often the newspapers now give information about the candidates and their

campaigns through paid political advertisements than through reporting and analysis. What is more, a substantial part of this information is an exercise in personal image-building, having little bearing on pressing political and socio-economic issues. Braid uses the term "showbizocracy" for this phenomenon. She argues that "the marriage between media and politics and the economy has shaped the culture of our politics" (FNF, 2004). Paulynn Sicam notes that "there is manipulation because there is a lot of money to be made" (FNF, 2004).

In recent years, some studies have appeared which foreground the significance of media in shaping public perception of political personalities. A study conducted by McCombs during the regional and municipal elections of 1995 in Spain found that both the newspaper and television news shaped the voters' opinion about candidates. Similarly, another study found that "the press significantly contributed to the construction of candidate images in the heads of the voters" during the 1994 Taipei mayoral election (Barrett and Barrington 2005).

In this way, when people have a low confidence in political parties or become critical about them, the media uses its skills to cast the parties in a new light. While doing this, the media uses subtle psychological techniques to persuade people to accept facile solutions offered by it as the only possible solutions for various intractable problems. The most effective of these techniques allow a manipulator to achieve the desired results by implanting in the public consciousness those social processes which are most acceptable to him/her. With the development of these techniques, convincing communication (based upon facts and arguments) has gradually been transformed into suggestive communication. As a result, the focus has shifted to the development of external but subliminal techniques and methods aimed to deliberately modify the psychic processes, conditions and behavior, so that the subject cannot control his or her responses to external stimulation (Dzyaloshinsky, 1999).

Moreover, political leaders know that political agendas are quite significantly shaped by the media as the campaigns are being increasingly conducted through the media. Hence political candidates now directly appeal to citizens without relying on the party apparatus. As a result, political campaigns are now becoming more expensive and technically complex. One usually notices that there is today widespread cynicism towards political parties. In fact, people tend to trust the media more than they trust the political parties. The crisis of political parties has, thus, in a way expanded the functions of mass media. Political parties appear to be unequipped to solve the problems of poverty, education, clean drinking water and public health, so that they rely increasingly on cosmetic solutions in place of real solutions. As a result, they nowadays have media managers who are assigned the task of supplying the absence of political debate with empty rhetoric and attractive images and sounds. Indeed, one can venture to state that today in the absence of political followers there is hardly any genuine political leadership; after all, it is the followers who produce leaders. Consequently, political parties often look like MNCs and the "leaders" conduct themselves like CEOs.

Political parties tend to see voters as consumers. In this race for consumers they try to buy the maximum space in newspapers at whatever cost. In consequence, election campaigning becomes money-driven. And only those parties get reporting space which buys advertisement space and, consequently, the basic issues affecting common people are totally forgotten. So in this way a self–perpetuating cycle emerges that undermines democracy. Expensive advertisements mean candidates must raise huge amounts of money. Big money donations and slick ad campaign breed cynicism and disinterest towards politics, and this translates into low ratings because of political coverage (which stands reduced), prompting candidates to buy even more ads. The mantra is that those who will not be able to raise the funds will not get space in the media.

Another notable thing about the election being analyzed here is that the newspapers also published political parties' news written by their very leaders. The result is that one cannot differentiate between news and advertisement. The border separating news, advertising and entertainment thus gets increasingly blurred. We can see how market forces shape the print media, which in turn shapes public opinion and political climate. According to J.M. Balkin, "Media adopt[s] two basic strategies for simulating transparency; diversion of attention and supplementation of reality. The goal is to consume the opponent's time and attention. In other words, the skillfully played discovery battle creates new objects of contention; it produces ever new things to be concerned about, to become angry about, and to fight about" (Balkin, 1998).

Politicians seek to shape public opinion and benefit from it, and the media seeks to entertain the public and maintain public attention and influence. Nevertheless in achieving their ends, politicians and the media both divert the audience's attention and supplement politics with fabricated political 'realties'. Jean Baudrillard remarks that in this way the media creates a new reality, a hyper-reality, composed of the intermingling of people's behaviour and media images. The world of hyper-reality is constructed of simulacra - images which only get their meanings from other images and hence have no grounding in an "external reality" (Giddens, 2001). In short, the language of politics gets wedded to that of advertising, public relations and showbiz.

Comparative Analysis of Newspapers (Part I): Editorial Content

We will next try to critically evaluate the structure and discourse of the editorial page. The editorial has a significant place in the newspaper wherein the editor makes considered observations on current issues, identifies the problems in society, and opens the issues to public discussion and deliberation. The editor also acts as a kind of watchdog on whom the public can rely for uncovering the lapses and wrongdoings of those who command power. During the time of elections, the editorial page acquires special importance for people as well as for the rulers as it focuses on the agenda before the political parties.

Ajit

Analysis of *Ajit* Editorials from 30 Jan to 13 Feb			
Total Number of Editorials	On International Issues	On National Issues	On Election Issues
17	3	5	9

Editorials on Election Issues in *Ajit*					
Total Editorials	Write-ups on Punjab Issues	Critical Political Commentary	On Manifesto	On Surveys	On Election Process
9	1	6	1		1

During the period from 30 January to 13 February 2007, *Ajit* published seventeen editorials during the fifteen days out of which three were on international issues, five on national issues and nine on electoral issues.

When we further analyze the editorial contents on election issues, we can see that out of the total of nine editorials on election issues, more than half were in the nature of political commentary. For example, these editorials discuss rather simplistically only the arithmetic of seats between political parties, or try to predict who will win the election. The remaining editorials included one on the election process, one on manifestos, and one on Punjab issues. During these days, Punjab was crying for water, farmers were committing suicide; education and healthcare were in the grip of severe crisis. Yet *Ajit*, "the voice of Punjab", as the motto of the paper has it, maintained an unbroken silence on all these pressing and troubling issues before Punjab.

Jagbani

Jagbani carried 26 editorials, of which more than half dealt with national issues, three with international issues, and just seven with elections.

Analysis of *Jagbani* Editorials from 30 Jan to 13 Feb			
Total Editorials	On International Issues	On National Issues	On Election Issues
26	3	16	7

Editorials on Election Issues in *Jagbani*						
Total Editorials	Write-ups on Punjab Issues	Critical Political Commentary	On Manifesto	On Survey	On Election Process	On Election Violence
7		7				

In *Jagbani*, a total number of seven editorials were written on election issues: all the seven were, significantly, in the nature of critical political commentary. However, not a single editorial was on the issues before Punjab, on manifestos of parties, on the election process, on election-related violence, or on electoral survey.

Punjabi Tribune

During the fifteen days under study, *Punjabi Tribune* carried 26 editorials. Out of these, three were on international issues, eleven on national issues, and twelve were on election issues.

Analysis of *Punjabi Tribune* Editorials from 30 Jan to 13 Feb			
Total number of Editorials	On International Issues	On National Issues	On Punjab Election Issues
26	3	11	12

Editorials on Election Issues in *Punjabi Tribune*						
Total Editorials	Write-ups on Punjab Issues	Critical political commentary	Manifesto	Survey	Election process	Election violence
12	2	5	2	1	1	1

If we further examine the editorials on Punjab elections, we find that there were only five on political parties in which serious comments were made. The issues included fake affidavits by politicians, and the exploitation of religion, caste and class for votes. One write-up was on a pre-poll survey, especially on how the survey was conducted and how it was really baseless. The critical analysis of the parties' manifestos formed the subject matter of one full editorial.

Print media serves a democracy best by enabling open debate and discussion that exposes individuals and groups to different or alternative and opposing

ideas, viewpoints, opinions and beliefs. Media as a public communication channel has the potential, if editorial freedom is respected, to be an open forum for serious and meaningful democratic debate and discussion. Elections are about choices to be made by the people; and therefore the media as an open forum for discussion and debate should allow citizens, candidates and parties to openly discuss and debate relevant issues. In-depth analyses and debates on critical issues afford a perspective on various problems and concerns. The media in a democratic society are supposed to be part of a system of checks and balances and if they are controlled by powerful corporate or state forces and fail to carry out their watchdog functions, they end up as nothing more than instruments of propaganda and entertainment (Kellner, 2006).

We can reasonably aver, on the basis of what we have seen above, that the mass media are becoming a tool for manipulating public opinion and that commercial interests are increasingly taking precedence over public interests: "Public opinion is not formed through open, rational discussion, but through manipulation and control" (Giddens, 2001). As Pritam Singh has remarked in his study of the role of the media during the Punjab crisis in the 1980s, media's performance has been "discreditable" as time and again it has "resort[ed] to lies and half-truths", perverting actual information to suit political vested interests (Singh,1985). However, the task of socially responsible newspapers is to counteract any attempts to misinform the voters about the true background of a candidate or about the real substance of the promises made and the measures proposed by them. This means it becomes necessary to monitor and disclose manipulation and other devious methods designed to mislead voters.

Comparative Analysis (Part II): Content of Articles

We shall next consider the main articles in the three newspapers during the period under study. The number and classification of major edit-page articles in *Ajit* are displayed in the following table.

Total Articles	Critical	Religious/ Historical	National issues	Election arithmetic	Election scenario
13	2	Nil	5	1	5

During these 15 days there were only 13 articles; in the last two days, there was not a single major article but a few news stories were used to fill that space. Out of the 13 articles, five were on national issues, one on the election arithmetic, and five generally dealt with the political scenario of Punjab, for example:
1. What is the impact of PM's rallies on Punjab?
2. Will the result of assembly elections be surprising?
3. How will the third front impact Punjab politics?

Only two articles addressed education in Punjab and other common problems.

The number and classification of major edit-page articles in *Jagbani* are displayed in the following table.

Total Articles	Critical	Religious/ Historical	National issues	Election arithmetic	Election process
15	0	0	15	0	0

Jagbani was manifestly the worst performer in this regard. No major article was published on Punjab elections; all major articles were about national issues only.

The number and classification of major edit-page articles in *Punjabi Tribune* are displayed in the following table.

Total Articles	Critical	Religious/ Historical	National issues	Election arithmetic	Election scenario
15	8	3	1	1	2

Punjabi Tribune published 15 articles. Out of these one was on national issues, three on historical and religious issues, two on the electoral scenario, and one on the electoral arithmetic. As many as eight articles dealt with the most important current issues before Punjab politics, like agriculture, the employees' problems, water crisis, and other issues concerning the common man. These articles gave voice to the concerns of the common Punjabi people. Many more such articles could and, indeed, should have appeared in the papers, which unfortunately did not happen.

During the crucial days before elections, the vernacular print media clearly failed to sufficiently highlight the major issues, including poverty, water crisis, the collapse of education, and even the controversy surrounding the policies on SEZs. The newspapers, instead, focused only on the polls and the election process itself, paying inadequate attention to really significant issues and to the background and track record of candidates as well as the potential consequences of their policies. Pritam Singh calls such abuse of the media its reduction to a "propaganda weapon" and sees in it "a serious threat to democratic values and institutions" (Singh, 1985).

As the print media becomes increasingly commercialized, it encroaches on the functioning of the "public sphere" as described by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas views "the public sphere [as] an arena of public debate in which issues of general concern can be discussed and opinion formed." (quoted in Giddens, 2001) He warns that "as the public sphere shrinks, there is marked increase in public apathy, a relentless pursuit of economic and material interests and a rising tide of cynicism and social alienation. The collapse of the sphere is therefore a danger to the very core of civil society." (Giddens, 2001) In the context of Punjab, the most disturbing inference, however, is that the media has failed to interrogate the deliberate and systematic lies of the campaigns of contesting candidates, their appalling record in office, or the consequences of five years of previous misrule.

The foregoing study shows that though the print media in Punjab at present seems on the surface to have a diverse structure of ownership, by and large its ownership is private, corporate and oligopolistic. The owners frequently work in

tandem with political parties to impose a kind of self-censorship. There are shared mutual interests, including commercial and political. Advertising revenue and newsprint quota are only two of the more obvious examples of such interests. A close examination of the ownership structure reveals two major problems. First, the owners and editors are often the same persons. Second, an oligopolistic structure keeps the ownership of major newspapers in the hands of a few. This leads to formation of cartels, with the result that the journalists' wages and job security issues are tightly and undemocratically controlled. Consequently, journalists are forced to tow the line drawn by their pay masters.

Unfortunately, there is no independent mechanism at the peoples' level to examine the authenticity of the media's conduct during elections. There are no organized groups to challenge the strategies followed by newspapers. Even after practicing democracy for over six decades, we have failed to develop public forums where politicians and media could be examined thoroughly on their claims, statements and promises. For without adequate information, intelligent debate, or criticism of the establishment, of institutions and parties, democracy is but an ideological phantom, without life or substance (Douglas, 2006). So in this way, media serves a reinforcement function rather than the function of an agent of change (Johal, 1976).

Conclusion

A vigorous democracy requires informed citizens who have the necessary information to participate in political discussions, debates, movements and other activities. If the media does not provide adequate information and an open platform for debating issues of crucial importance, and if it does not help promote informed democratic participation, it fails to fulfill its democratic responsibilities (Douglas, 2006). In the context of what we have explained above, the words of J. M. Balkin, quoted earlier seem absolutely apt.

To remedy this situation, there must be a strengthening of the media reform movement, better recognition of the importance of media politics in the struggle for democratization, continued efforts for a just and equitable society, and greater support for the development of alternative media (Douglas, 2006). It is essential that school curricula should enable young people to become critically engaged with the media culture that surrounds them everywhere. Indeed, media education should not be confined to academically analyzing the media, much less to the exercise of some mechanistic critical viewing skills; it should rather aim at encouraging young people's critical participation as cultural producers and political stakeholders in their own right.

As Habermas (2001) has pointed out if the media is to retain its independence in an increasingly profit-driven world, the state should subsidize the major newspapers and news channels to enable them to stand guard on people's interests against encroachments of unbridled private greed and political manipulation. Habermas's ideas need to be considered seriously in the situation currently prevailing in Punjab.

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The Sikh Community in Indian Punjab: Some Socio-Economic Challenges

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The Sikh religion, though the youngest among the major religions of the world, has come to acquire a distinctive identity. Its followers have emerged as a distinct socio-religious community. The community, however, has been facing formidable socio-economic challenges in view of the changing development pattern and emerging global scenario. The access to quality education and health services to all members of the community so as to enable them to participate in the development process are the foremost challenges. The occupational diversification - shift from farm to non-farm sectors - and the unfavourable sex ratios are still further challenges. This paper argues that all Sikh institutions – religious, social, economic, educational and political – need to address these challenges and thus play a vital role in translating the challenges into opportunities.

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Introduction

Sikhism is one of the most prominent, if not the only, surviving links with the several Bhakti movements that made their appearance in various parts of India during the medieval period.[1] That it has stood the test of time, whereas most of the other contemporaneous movements have practically vanished, is however, not a mere accident of history. According to Fauja Singh (2000), this may be explained by three important factors:

    (i)   the establishment of suitable institutions;

    (ii)   the firm social commitment of the Sikh movements; and

    (iii)   the powerful social backing from the business and agricultural classes of the then society .

Further, according to J. S. Grewal:

> Essentially, the ideology of Guru Nanak embodies his creative response not to religious strife but to the total political, social and religious situation of his days. His message was meant to transcend all contemporary dispensations... Guru Nanak founded a new religion as the basis of a new social order. (Grewal, 2005, p. 54).

The Sikhs are the fourth largest religious community in India next to Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Their number increased from 7.85 million in 1961 to 19.23 million in 2001. Their proportion in the total population of India increased from 1.79 per cent in 1961 to 1.89 per cent in 1971 and to 1.97 per cent in 1981. Thereafter it started declining. It was 1.94 per cent in 1991 and 1.87 per cent in

2001.[2] Their decennial growth rate during 1961-1971, 1971-81, 1981-91 and 1991-2001 was 32.0, 26.2, 25.5 and 16.9 per cent, respectively. Compared to the Sikh community, the growth rate of all other religious communities was 23.4, 24.2, 22.8 and 20.0 per cent, respectively, during the corresponding periods (Govt. of India, 2004).

Though Sikhs are present in almost all the states of India and in a large number of countries of the world yet their maximum concentration is in the Indian Punjab. Out of the total population of Sikhs in India, nearly 76 per cent reside in Punjab and 6 per cent in Haryana, Delhi, and Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are the other states with a conspicuous Sikh religious community. Within the state of Punjab, the proportion of Sikhs is approximately 60 per cent, followed by 16 per cent in the union territory of Chandigarh (GOI, 2004).

The rural population of Punjab constitutes 66 per cent of the population and the urban population makes up 34 per cent, whereas in the case of India as a whole, the proportion of rural population is 72.18 per cent (Government of India, 2001, paper 1). In the case of the Sikhs, 79.27 per cent live in rural areas of Punjab. The remaining 20.73 per cent are in urban areas. By comparison, in India as a whole, a little more than 73 per cent of the total Sikh population is resident in rural areas (GOI, 2004). The remaining 27 per cent live in urban areas. In the national context, the proportion of rural/urban population of Sikhs resembles nearly with that of the total rural/urban population. Of India's rural Sikhs, very high proportions are engaged in agriculture and in allied agricultural activities, either as cultivators and dairy-farmers or as agricultural labourers. The urban Sikhs are largely engaged in the tertiary sector.

The community, however, has been facing formidable socio-economic challenges in view of the changing development pattern and emerging global scenario. Improving access to quality education and health services to all members of the community so as to enable them participate in the development process are the foremost challenges. Other issues such as occupational diversification involving a shift from farm to non-farm sectors and the unfavourable sex ratios are yet further challenges before the community.

This paper is a modest attempt to discuss the above mentioned socio-economic challenges to the Sikh community. The next section reflects on the gender scenario in Punjab in general and among the Sikhs in particular. Subsequent sections will, respectively, discuss agrarian change and their occupational and economic scenario; and then the education and health situation. The last section provides a brief summary of the arguments.

The Gender Scenario: Female-Male Ratios

Punjab's ranking amongst the 35 states and Union Territories in India, was 24th in terms of its gender ratio in 2001, in descending order. It is noteworthy that the gender-ratio (number of females per 1000 males) in Punjab was only 874, compared to the all India average of 933 (GOI, 2001, paper 1). The gender-ratio in Punjab declined from 882 in 1991 to 874 in 2001. The Ludhiana district in

Punjab was dubbed as having the lowest gender ratio (824:1000), according to the 2001 census. It is further pertinent to note that in Punjab the gender ratio in the age group of 0-6 years declined from 875 in 1991 to 793 in 2001. Amongst the districts of Punjab, Fatehgarh Sahib has the lowest gender ratio (754:1000) for this age group. Evidently, 207 females in Punjab and 246 females in Fatehgarh Sahib district, respectively, are missing for every 1000 males for this age group (GOI, 2001, paper 1).

Table 1 highlights the fact that the sex ratio among all the religious communities in India declined from 941 in 1961 to 930 in 1971. It declined further to 927 in 1991 from 934 in 1981, and then slightly increased to 933 in 2001.The sex ratio in the Hindu community remained close to the national average. As regards the Muslims, it was slightly lower than the national average in 1961 and 1971 but was marginally higher than the national average from 1981 onwards. The sex ratio among Christians and Buddhists has been noticeably higher than the national average. The Jains also registered a higher sex ratio than the national average during 1971 and 2001.

Although the population census in India dates back to 1872 yet since 1891 it is being conducted successively after an interval of every 10 years. It is only in the 2001 census that a Report on Religious Data has been included (ibid. p. XXVII).

Between 1961 and 2001 the sex ratio among Sikhs was significantly lower than both the national average and that of the other religious communities. There were only 849 females for 1000 Sikh males, compared to the national average of 941 females in 1961. The situation was no better in later years, as is evident in Table 1.

The situation is particularly serious in the age group of 0-6 years. The sex ratio among the Sikhs in this age group was 780 and 786 females for 1,000 males, in Punjab and India respectively, in 2001. Compared to this, the sex ratio in this age group among all the communities was 798 and 927 females for 1,000 males in Punjab and India, respectively (GOI, 2004). To spread awareness and sensitize the people, an innovative programme, *Nanhi Chhaan*, was launched on August 27, 2008 at the Golden Temple, Amrtisar (Dhillon, 2009). The most important objectives of the programme were to save the girl child and the tree as both need tender care to bloom. Both the girl child and the tree provide protective cover like a mother. Without girl child there would be no human race and without tree the world would be a desolate desert. Both these mothers display one of the rarest quality and true spirit of nature – the selfless service.

Table 1: Religion-wise Gender Ratio in India: 1961-2001

Religion	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
All Religious Communities	941	930	934	927	933
Hindus	942	930	933	925	931
Muslims	935	922	937	930	936
Christians	989	986	992	994	1009
Sikhs	**849**	**859**	**880**	**888**	**893**
Buddhists	981	962	953	952	953
Jains	924	940	941	946	940
Others	1022	1011	1010	982	992
Religion not stated	976	863	881	887	900

Source: Computed from Government of India (2004), *Census of India, 2001, The First Report on Religions Data (Abstract)*, New Delhi; p. XXVII.

It is also important to note that the proportion of the Sikh population in the age group of 0-6 years in the total Sikh population of India is 12.8 per cent, as compared with 15.7 per cent in all communities. In Punjab, the proportion of Sikhs in this age group is 12.1 per cent as against 13 per cent in all communities (GOI, 2004). The alarmingly low sex ratio in this age group among Sikhs will have very serious long term repercussions for social and cultural stability in the state in general and amongst the Sikhs in particular. It is an indication that in the near future male Sikh youth may have to search for brides from amongst the non-Sikh communities, either in Punjab or elsewhere.

Such a serious imbalance in the gender ratio is a disturbing phenomenon. It is an indication that the practices of female feticide and infanticide may still be prevailing in Punjab in general and among the Sikhs in particular in spite of the fact that it is against the Sikh religious philosophy and ethics.

Significantly, the sex ratio among Sikhs in the United Punjab (before the Partition of the country into India and Pakistan in 1947), had been highly skewed against the females. In 1881, there were 765 females per 1000 males among Sikhs, while the province as a whole (all religious communities) had 843 females per 1000 males. The situation had not improved even by 1901 (Kaur, 2005, pp. 125-126).

Sikh religious teaching holds females in very high esteem. According to Gurū Granth Sāhib: "*bhande jaminane bhande niminane*, ...*So kion manda aakhie, jitu jame rajaan'* (Gurū Granth Sāhib, p. 474). (It is by woman, the condemned one, that we are conceived, and from her we are born…, why should we call her evil from whom great men are born?). The Sikh *Rehatnama* advises the Sikhs not to keep any social ties with those who kill their daughters (Padam, 1989, p. 65).[3]

Historically, a number of cultural, social and economic factors have been responsible for the low sex ratio among the Sikhs. The preference for a male

child is particularly pronounced in Punjab because of its martial and agricultural traditions. Punjabis have always preferred sons to daughters, because in times of war their sons could go to the battle and during peace time they could plough the fields (Singh, 2007, pp. 191-195). According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) 29 per cent of the parents in Punjab wanted more sons than daughters. Nearly 86 per cent of the parents wanted at least one son. Only 0.4 per cent of the parents wanted more daughters than sons (Inderjit Singh, 2007, p. 220).

The preference for sons in the Punjabi psyche is deep rooted in the history of Punjab. The main reasons usually given for son preference were: to run the family; make the family and parents respectable in society; for social and economic support; to inherit the family property; and to take care of parents in their old age (Bose and Mira, 2003). Further, the very location of Punjab, as a border state, made it and its female population vulnerable to outside invaders over the centuries. Due to the subjugation and atrocities committed on local women by the victorious invaders, women came to be perceived as a liability in Punjabi society (Agarwal, 2003). The need for more males to work in the fields (Punjab being primarily an agrarian society) is also responsible for son preference. The custom of dowry and post-marriage liabilities are among other significant reasons for son preference.

More generally, other forms of violence against women remain high in Punjab. A recent report (*The Tribune*, 2008) highlighted the fact that women continue to be unsafe in Punjab, as per the information revealed by the Punjab State Women's Commission. At least one rape and kidnapping of two women are reported daily in Punjab. A women is murdered every third day and at least one case of molestation is registered every day. At least 12 women commit suicide every month and the same number are killed for dowry. And all this is happening in a state where the majority of the residents are Sikhs.

Agrarian Change, Employment and Occupational Structure

Traditionally, the main occupation of the Sikhs has been agriculture, along with defence, transport and small scale business. Nevertheless, they have diversified into many other occupations over time. It is worth noting that the number of Sikhs employed in major government departments, up to the second decade of the 20th century, was insignificant as compared with other religious communities (Singh, 2005). The spread of education, and shrinking opportunities in agriculture and in rural areas, have been largely responsible for the increase in non-agricultural employment. Immigration and employment opportunities in other countries of the world have also made a significant contribution towards their entry into new occupations. Nevertheless, the rural Sikhs in Punjab are still predominantly engaged in agriculture and allied agricultural activities.

It is important to note that the work participation rate[4] and the nature of occupations are major determinants of the economic position of a community.

Besides, there is a very high correlation between work and dignity. The work participation rate among Sikhs is lower (37.7 per cent) than the average work participation rate of all religious communities (39.1 per cent) in India, according to the 2001 census. However, the male work participation rate among Sikhs is higher (53.3 per cent) than the average work participation rate among all religious communities (51.7 per cent) in India. Female work participation rate among Sikh women is lower (20.2 per cent) than the average work participation rate among all the religious communities (25.6 per cent) in India (GOI, 2004).

In the case of Punjab, however, Sikhs are slightly better placed as compared to the average work participation rate among all religious communities. The overall work participation rate in Punjab is 37.5 per cent compared to 38.2 per cent amongst the Sikhs. However, in the case of the male work participation rate, the overall rate is 53.6 per cent compared to 53.2 per cent among Sikhs. It is interesting to note that the female work participation rate (21.5 per cent) is higher among Sikhs than the overall female work participation rate in Punjab (GOI, 2004). Such an outcome may be attributed to one of the three spiritual trinities (the basic tenets) of Sikh philosophy – *dharam di kirat* (earning livelihood through honest and truthful means). This also implies dignity of labour.

At the all India level, 31.7 per cent of the total workers are cultivators amongst all religious communities whereas the proportion of cultivators among Sikhs is 32.4 per cent. In the case of agricultural labourers, the corresponding proportions in all the religious communities and in the Sikh community are 26.5 per cent and 16.8 per cent, respectively. Thus, at the all India level nearly 58 per cent of the workers, from amongst all communities, are engaged in agriculture (as both cultivators and labourers) compared to 49 per cent amongst Sikhs. In the case of non-agricultural activities, the corresponding proportion in all religious communities and in the Sikhs is 42 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively (GOI, 2004).Thus, at the all India level, Sikhs are relatively better placed, as employment in the non-agricultural sector is more rewarding than that in the agricultural sector.

The occupational structure of Punjab presents a different situation, as compared to all India, as far as the Sikh community is concerned. The proportion of the population in the agricultural workforce amongst all religions communities in Punjab is 39 per cent (22.6 per cent cultivators + 16.3 per cent agricultural labourers). Compared to this, the corresponding proportion amongst Sikhs is 50.4 per cent (32.1 per cent cultivators + 18.3 per cent agricultural labourers) (GOI, 2004). In rural areas it is still higher amongst Sikhs, as most of the Sikh workers in the rural areas are engaged in agriculture, as cultivators and labourers, and in allied agricultural activities.

It is significant to note that the age-old folk-saying '*Uttam kheti, madhaam vapaar, nakhidh chakri'* (Agriculture as a profession is supreme, trade comes next and service is subservient), (Kohli and Singh, 1992) seems to have been reversed. Global experiences and economic theory tell us that agriculture is subject to the law of diminishing returns. In fact, nature's productive system is subject to decreasing returns and agriculture is all the more governed by the law

of diminishing returns. This means that, after a certain stage, the successive marginal doses of inputs generate a lower and lower marginal output.

As a result of diminishing returns, per hectare net return from agriculture starts to decline. This is what has happened to the highly acclaimed green revolution in Punjab (Ghuman, 2001). The sheen of the green revolution started dimming in the late 1980s. In fact, the annual trend growth rate of per hectare return, over variable costs, in major crops (wheat, paddy and cotton) was negative during the 1990s. In the case of wheat-paddy (combined) it was minus 2.18 per cent per annum and in the case of cotton it was minus 14.24 per cent per annum (Ghuman, 2001). Furthermore the predominance of the paddy-wheat cropping pattern in Punjab resulted in a serious depletion of the water table (Singh, 2007; Romana, 2006). Excessive uses of fertilizers and pesticides, over-mechanization and declining fertility of the soil have further aggravated the problem. In fact, in the form of rice cultivation, Punjab has been exporting its precious sub-soil water to other states of India and abroad.[5]

At the same time, the labour absorption capacity in Punjab agriculture has been declining ever since the mid 1980s. The employment of the workforce in cultivating and rearing crops declined from 480 million man-days in 1983-84 to 430 million man days in 1996-97 (Gill, 2002). It is likely to have declined further during the last decade or so. All this has led to Punjabi farmers being heavily indebted. More than 65 per cent of Punjab's farmers are in debt, next only to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The average debt burden per farmer household in Punjab is to the tune of Rs. 41,576 (GOI, NSSO, 2005a). This was the highest among all the states in India and 3.3 times higher than the national average.

According to estimates generated by Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, the total debt burden of the Punjab farmers had already reached about Rs. 200,000 million to Rs. 260,000 million. Nearly 89 per cent of the farmer households in Punjab are in debt and, and debt per farmer household amounted to Rs. 201,427 (Sukhpal Singh, et. al., 2007). According to Shergill (2010), the total farm debt in Punjab amounted to Rs. 303,941 million during 2007-08. In the absence of suitable policy measures, nearly 64 per cent of the farmers in Punjab (those with up to 10 acres) may not be able to repay the debt/loan and are likely to fall into a debt-trap during the next 10 to 15 years (Ghuman, 2008). For all these reasons, nearly 37 per cent farmers in Punjab have already expressed their willingness to opt out of agriculture (GOI, NSSO, 2005b). About two hundred thousand of the small and marginal farmers in Punjab have already been pushed away from farming, during 1990-91 and 2000-01 (Karam Singh; Singh and Kingra, 2007). However, in the absence of alternative employment opportunities they find themselves beleaguered in the situation. The suicides by the agricultural workforce (both cultivators and labourers) are being largely attributed to such a desperate situation in the agricultural sector (AFDR, 2000; Gill, 2005).

The Indian government earmarked Rs. 700,000 million in its annual budget of 2008-09 for waiving, and one time settlement of agricultural loans. In Punjab 0.42 million farmers benefited to the sum of Rs. 12000 million (*The Tribune*,

2009).This amount for loan waiver and one-time settlement covered only outstanding institutional agricultural loans, as on 31 December 2007, which was only about 25 per cent of the total institutional loans and 1.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of India (Ghuman, 2008b).What is needed as a lasting solution is diversification of the agricultural sector and of the rural economy (Ghuman, 2008b).

Although there are no official and authentic estimates of the number of farmer suicides, some rough estimates indicate that the number of such suicides in Punjab may have been between eight and ten thousand during the last 15 to 20 years. Besides farmers, agricultural labourers, whose number may be anywhere between 3000 and 4000, have also been committing suicide during the same period.[6] A recent study (PAU, 2009) has revealed that 1757 farmers and 1133 agricultural labourers committed suicide in two districts of Punjab, namely Sangrur and Bathinda, during 2000 to 2008. The study further highlighted the fact that 73.31 per cent of farmers and 59.22 per cent of these agricultural labourers had committed suicide as a result of indebtedness. The average outstanding debt on farmers (who committed suicide) ranged from Rs. 2.95 lakhs (district Bathinda) to Rs. 3.36 lakh (district Sangrur).The average size of land holding of those farmers who committed suicide was 2.35 hectares in Sangrur and 1.26 hectares in Bathinda.

The most important causes of suicides have thus been serious economic distress and consequent indebtedness. According to another study (Gurpreet Singh, 2008) the debt burden of those farmers and agricultural labourers who committed suicide was Rs. 270,419 and Rs. 57,121, respectively. Public policy responses have so far been far from satisfactory (Gill and Singh, 2005) since no government in Punjab recognized the gravity of this serious phenomenon so as to address it at the policy level.

In the absence of alternative employment opportunities, cultivators and agricultural labourers are compelled to remain in agriculture. Most of the workforce (both cultivators and labourers) are either only apparently employed or are grossly under-employed, with zero or negligible marginal productivity. This means that, even if they were to be withdrawn from agriculture, the total production of the agricultural sector would not decline. Rather, the per capita productivity and earnings would improve significantly. Thus, what is required urgently is the shifting of the agricultural workforce from agriculture to non-agricultural activities. The ever rising rural unemployment, the dismal growth rate of employment in other sectors, the shrinking labour absorption capacity of agriculture, the declining employment opportunities in agriculture, (Bhalla, 1987 and 1989; Gill, 2002), plus the high growth rate of the labour force and the predominantly capitalist agriculture in Punjab combined together provide a strong rationale for the development of a rural non-farm sector (Gill and Ghuman, 2001 and Ghuman, 2005).

The development experience of present-day developed countries and their pattern of growth indicate that as an economy attains higher stages of growth the share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) declines (Kaldor, 1967; Kuznets, 1965). The size of the agricultural workforce in the total

workforce also declines with growth and development. Punjab must learn from the global experience and evolve some long term policy measures for a smooth transition of its workforce from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors.[7] Such a transition is inevitable but very painful if left to market forces alone. To minimize transitional pains, the state must make an effective and pro-active intervention within an appropriate policy framework.

Unfortunately, whatever shifting of agricultural workforce is taking place in Punjab it is largely because of 'push' factors and not because of 'pull' factors, that is, the workforce is being pushed out of agriculture and not being pulled in by non-agricultural sectors. Moreover, the proportion of rural workers employed in non-agricultural sectors in Punjab ranges from 15 to 20 per cent (Ghuman, 2005). They, too, are largely employed in the unorganized sector at very low wages.

Thus, what is required is the development of a rural-non-farm sector (RNFS) in a systematic manner. This is possible only through the development of rural-based-rural linked, rural-based-urban linked and urban-based-rural linked enterprises and activities. It would further require development of 'mandi-towns' (marketing towns), 'agri-polis' and/or focal points, etc. that have a natural growth potential. The vertical integration of agricultural produce to the industry would help the development of RNFS in a big way (Basu, 1992; Chadha, 1986; Friedman, 1976; Ho, 1986; Seth, 1992; and Ghuman, 2005).

The opening of the Wagah and Hussainiwala international borders for trade, between India and Pakistan, would certainly help the development of the non-farm sectors/employment in both the Indian and Pakistan Punjabs and in the adjoining regions (for a detailed analysis on this, see Ghuman, 1986; 2005b; and 2006).

The Education and Health Environment

Modern growth theories have established that economic growth and development cannot attain an optimum and self-sustaining path without the development of human resources (Romer, 1990; Lucas, 1993; Benhabib and Spiegel, 1994; Barro and Sala-i-Martin, 1995; Baroo, 2001; Krueger and Linddahl, 2001; Chadha, 2004; Becker, 1964; Nelson, 1966; Qian, 2007; World Bank, 2002; and Tilak, 2001). All countries that made appropriate investment in human capital formation in the past have achieved a high growth trajectory in their national and per capita income (OECD/UNESCO, 2002).

However, in terms of its literacy rate, Punjab ranked 16th amongst the states and Union Territories of India in 2001, in descending order. The state of Punjab stood at 25th and 14th ranks in the descending order in terms of male and female literacy rate, respectively, in 2001 (GOI, 2001, paper 1).The literacy rate in Punjab is high, compared to the all India average, but within Punjab the literacy rate among Sikhs is slightly lower than the overall average of the state. The overall literacy rate in Punjab as per Census, 2001, was 69.95 per cent compared to 67.3 per cent amongst Sikhs. The overall male literacy rate in

Punjab is 75.2 per cent as compared to 72.9 per cent amongst Sikhs. In the case of the female literacy rate, the corresponding ratios are 63.1 per cent and 61.2 per cent, respectively (GOI, 2004). The literacy rate in rural Punjab was 65.16 per cent as compared with 79.13 pr cent in urban Punjab, in 2001 (GOI, 2001, paper 2). However, what is important is not simply the literacy rate, but in fact the level of skills and quality of education as they play an important role in the socio-economic development of the community and the region.

Health is another important determinant of human development. In fact, the level of educational attainment and health indicators account for a two-third weightage in the human development index (HDI). Only one-third weightage has been assigned to per capita real income (UNDP, 2006, p. 394). The publicly funded education and health services in rural Punjab, where most Sikhs live, are grossly inadequate. Of the total number of students in Punjab's four universities (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana; Panjab University, Chandigarh; and Punjabi University, Patiala) during the academic session 2005-06 only four per cent were of rural backgrounds, the latter defined as those whose schooling up to 10th and 12th standard had been in rural schools (Ghuman, Singh and Brar, 2006). Moreover, the proportion of rural students in higher professional education was only 3.71 per cent, during the academic session 2007-08 (Ghuman, Singh and Brar, 2009).

About 40 per cent of the rural households and 31 per cent of the urban households in Punjab cannot afford to pay the cost of general higher education, let alone medical, engineering or other professional education, for even one child. The high charges of the private service providers are beyond the reach of nearly 80 per cent of Punjab's population, with the proportion as high as 90 per cent in rural areas (Ghuman, Singh and Brar, 2007).

The public delivery system in education and health in Punjab (and especially in rural Punjab) has almost collapsed since 1980. Government schools in rural Punjab are turning into schools exclusively for students from weaker sections, scheduled and backward castes. The proportion of such students in these schools ranges from 65 to 80 per cent (Joshi, 2003; Kaur, 2004; Rani, 2007).

A recent National Health Survey (IIPS, 2007) provides a strong indicator of the collapse of the public health delivery system in Punjab. According to this survey, about 80 per cent of urban people and 81 per cent of rural people use private health services, which are much costlier than the government health services, reportedly because of the poor quality of public health services. Moreover, in 67 per cent of the rural households in Punjab there was, reportedly in 2005, at least one drug addict. About 73 per cent of the drug addicts are in the age group of 16-35 years (Thukral, 2009).

Moreover, more than 22,000 teaching posts have been vacant for many years in the government schools in Punjab and a very high proportion of them are in the rural schools (*The Tribune*, 2008).The rural government schools also suffer from serious inadequacies in terms of safe drinking water and toilets, especially separate toilets for female students.

About 1.5 lakh children, in the age group 6-14 years, in Punjab were out of school, during the academic year 2007-08 (Sarava Sikhyia Abhyan Authority,

2008). Another recent study (NGO, 2007), highlighted that 5.0 per cent children in the rural schools were out of school (including those never enrolled).The study further indicated that out of the fourth and fifth standard students in Punjab, 60 per cent and 36.5 per cent, respectively, could not read a second standard textbook. Furthermore, 58 per cent of the fifth standard students were not able to divide a simple sum by 8 and 63.3 per cent could not subtract a two-digit figure from a higher figure. The difference between the private and government schools ranges from three to four percentage points. This is a grave reflection on the quality of rural education, both in government and private schools, whereby students fail their examinations in higher standards. This explains the high drop out rate in the middle, high and senior secondary schools in rural Punjab. This, in turn, explains the exclusion of rural students from education at secondary, senior secondary and higher levels.

Estimates indicate that in 69 per cent of the rural households in Punjab not one member has matriculated. In the case of agricultural labour households, this proportion is as high as 90 per cent (Ghuman, Singh and Singh, 2007b). Rural households neither have access to quality education nor can they afford it.

This vicious cycle deprives many rural people of quality education, thus adversely affecting the development process in Punjab, in general but more specifically the Sikh community. Punjab's political leadership, across the parties, needs to compete in socio-economic development rather than in non-developmental political populism. For more than a decade both the leading political parties (Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal-SAD), have provided free electricity to the agricultural consumers and for certain other socially backward classes. The amount of subsidy increased from Rs. 14359 million in 2005-06 to Rs. 26017 million in 2008-09 (PSEB, 2008, 2009). This competitive political populism (which ill accords with Sikh religious principles) is being pursued to the detriment of education and health delivery systems.

At the policy level, the government is withdrawing from both education and health. These services are being pushed into the hands of for-profit private service providers. Moreover, the privatization of education and health services (and thereby reckless commercialization) is being justified in the name of efficiency. In connivance with the civil bureaucracy, the agenda of all Punjab's political parties is apparently to create a rationale for the entry of private service providers by wrecking public institutions. The academia and affluent sections of population are *de facto*, party to such an agenda (Ghuman, 2008c). The consequent exclusion of common and rural people has serious implications for Punjab's future socio-economic development and that of Sikhs in particular.

The unrestricted dependence on *laissez-faire* policy (policy of non-intervention) would further lead to the exclusion of a large section of the population from access to quality education and health services, especially in rural Punjab. And rural Punjab is predominantly inhabited by the Sikh community. One of the natural manifestations of such a policy would be their exclusion from the growth process itself. This, in turn, would have serious and far-reaching socio-political and economic implications for the growth of Sikh community in particular and that of Punjab economy in general.

According to Lucas (1993, p. 270) the major engine of growth is accumulation of human capital or knowledge and the main source for the difference in living standards among nations and communities is the difference in human capital. It is well recognized in the literature, especially with regards to East Asian economies, that capable human resources can create miracles as their skill and knowledge have the capacity to produce increasing returns. Raw human resources are translated into human capital in the schools, colleges and universities. Amongst the main determinants of development, education is deemed the most significant as it empowers people resulting in social transformation. Physical capital plays an essential but decidedly a subsidiary role.

Further, as stated in the very first Human Development Report "The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth" (UNDP, 1990, p. [i]). The ability of a nation to absorb, adopt and implement new technology from abroad is a direct function of its domestic human capital stock (Nelson and Phelps, 1966).

The political leadership, civil bureaucracy and policy makers in Punjab need to understand that the accumulation of human capital or resources is the key growth driver. The difference in human capital has been the main source of difference in the living standards among nations, along with the private returns (Tilak, 1994; Psacharopoulous, 1994; and Psacharopoulous and Patrinos, 2002). Even the World Bank (2000) recognizes higher education as a 'merit good' and hence advocates that higher education deserves public funding. As such, mindless privatization/commercialization of education is a very poor substitute for publicly funded educational institutions.

Unfortunately, successive governments in Punjab (incidentally, all headed since the 1980s by Sikh Chief Ministers, whether belonging to the Congress or the Akali Dal) followed a policy of withdrawal from education and health. The share of social services (primarily education and health) in the State's budget on revenue account declined from 31.35 per cent in 1970-71 to 19.79 per cent in 2005-06. The share of education, sports and culture declined from 22.17 per cent in 1970-71 to 12.57 per cent in 2005-06. The share of health and family welfare decreased from 7.24 per cent in 1970-71 to 3.82 per cent in 2005-06. It is just to supplement that the budgeted expenditure on education and health came out to be only 2.35 per cent and 0.67 per cent, respectively, of the state's gross domestic product (GDP) during 2004-05 (GOP, 2008). This is far below the recommendation of 6 per cent of GDP made by the Government of India's Education Commission, popularly known as Kothari Commission, way back in 1968 (GOI, 1968).

The combined share of social and economic services (known as development expenditure) has decreased from 65.26 per cent in 1970-71 to 40.19 per cent in 2005-06. By comparison, the share of general services (mainly classified as non-development expenditure) increased from 34.74 per cent in 1970-71 to 57.76 per cent in 2005-06 (Govt. of Punjab, 1974; and 2008), so

reflecting the state's changing priorities. Without public funding for health and education the majority of Punjab's population continues to be deprived of access to these services and inevitably Punjab's economy and society as a whole deteriorates further.

The shift in priority of public expenditure by the Government of Punjab may partially be attributed to the increased expenditure on law and order so as to tackle the problem of militancy during 1980-1992. As a consequence, the government squeezed allocation to social sectors taking it as an easier option. Unfortunately, the priorities in allocating public expenditure have not been resettled even after a period of over 15 years since the ending of militancy.

Role of Punjabi Diaspora

The Punjabi diaspora, predominantly comprising Sikhs is now settled across almost every country of the world. Most of them have earned good fortunes abroad and are willing to contribute in the socio-economic development of Punjab. Their willingness and potentialities must be harnessed to supplement the developmental efforts of the state of Punjab. Presently many members the Punjabi diaspora are sending community remittances through the development of hometown or village welfare associations. Such a phenomenon has gained momentum over the last 10-15 years, though, earlier too, individual were doing philanthropic activities. The community/individual remittances have been largely focused on activities, such as charity, infrastructure, human development and recreational and, of course, income-generating programme for community (Thandi, 2008).

There is an urgent need to provide a global platform to the overseas based Sikh community settled across various countries of the world. They should have their own global networking. Punjabi diaspora, located in various countries of the world, with estimates ranging from 2 to 5 million[8] needs to be mobilized so as to contribute to the development of social capital in Punjab. Lack of institutional mechanisms and lack of appreciation of the potentialities have been the major reasons for the unsatisfactory involvement of the diaspora in the development of Punjab, specially the rural Punjab (Dhesi, 2008). There is, thus, a need to strengthen global networking of the Sikh religious community. The community should create a global endowment fund to invest in social institutions such as education and health. The institution of a Sikh think tank is also the need of the hour.

The government of Punjab, the NGOs and religious institutions must make earnest efforts to rope in the Sikh diaspora for the development of the state, particularly the rural areas. There is a need for its greater incorporation into the decision making pertaining to social sector development. That would require networking and a nodal agency comprising the representatives of diaspora, NGOs, religious institutions and the government. The diaspora must be assured and convinced about their potential role in social sector development. Their participation and contribution must be given due recognition. They must have

the confidence that their contribution is in safe hands and is being invested without any pilferage.

The Punjab has already experienced certain success stories where the Punjabi diaspora has made a significant contribution towards the provision of modern amenities in sanitation and hygiene, education and health sectors. That has been made possible by the joint efforts of the government, village community, NGOs and overseas Sikhs (Bassi, 2008, Gill, 2008 and Tatla, 2008). Such efforts must be replicated and encouraged.

Some Conclusions

The most serious challenge, in the socio-economic domain, to the Sikh community is to provide access to quality education and health services for all members of the community. The unfavourable sex-ratio is also a major challenge to the community. Shifting the workforce from farm to non-farm sectors and from low-productivity to high productivity employment avenues are the other imminent challenges. All these challenges are inter-connected. All the Sikh institutions – religious, social, economic, educational and political – need to address the above mentioned imminent challenges so as to translate them into opportunities. That is the only way to empower the Sikh community and contribute to the welfare of mankind.

An educated, skilled and healthy person can be a better social, economic and political agent. So what is expected from the Sikh religious bodies, the Sikh community, the Punjabi diaspora and Sikh leadership in all spheres of life, such as political, social, academia, civil bureaucracy, etc. is action-oriented thinking to provide quality education and health services to all members of society. These services should be made available to them at an affordable cost. Those who cannot afford to pay for these services should be taken care of by the Sikh religious bodies and the overseas Sikh community. The government, too, must be persuaded to enhance its budgetary allocation to the education and health sectors in Punjab.

Notes

1. Sikhism comprises the religion and social system of the Sikhs. It originated with Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1539), the first of the ten Gurus of the Sikhs. The Sikh religion was nurtured and developed further by the succeeding nine Gurus up to 1708 (Sethi, 1972).
2. Historically, the proportion of Sikh population (both in Punjab and India) has not been very large. During the pre-Independence period (before 15 August 1947), the percentage share of Sikh

population oscillated between 0.86 (1881) to 0.92 (1901). It increased to 1.20 per cent in 1911, 1.29 per cent in 1921, 1.55 per cent in 1931 and 1.79 per cent in 1941. In 1951, it was 1.72 per cent (Krishan Gopal, 2005, p. 240).The total number of Sikhs in the British Punjab increased from 1.14 million in 1868 to 2.13 million in 1901. Their percentage share in the total population of Punjab, in the above mentioned two years, was 6.50 and 13.90, respectively (Kaur, Anurupita, 2005, p. 122).

3.   *"Meena aur masandia, mona kuri jo maar, hoi sikh vartan karih aant karega khuar"* [(He who keeps social relations with the hypocrites, wicked and killer of the daughter will have to suffer ultimately at the hands of those people), *Rahetnama Bhai Parihlad Singh,* edited by Piara Singh Padam, p. 65)].

4.   Persons in the age group of 14+ and up to 65 years constitute the workforce. Work participation rate means percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to the total population.

5.   The share of area under wheat and paddy in the total cropped area in Punjab was 31.8 per cent and 6.0 per cent, respectively, in 1965-66 which increased to 44.10 per cent and 33.34 per cent in the year 2006-07 (Government of Punjab, 1971, 1987 and 2008). This cropping pattern led to an enormous increase in the number of tubewells. The number of tubewells in Punjab increased from 1.92 lakh in 1970-71 to 12.32 lakh in 2006-07 (Government of Punjab, 2008).

6.   Rough estimates generated from various reports by the farmers' unions and some individual academics appeared in newspapers from time to time and in a recent study (PAU, 2009). The phenomenon of suicides by the farmers and agricultural labourers became visible in Punjab during the 1990s. It is, however, worth noting that no government, irrespective of their political affiliation, has taken up the issue seriously. Since 1992 government leadership in Punjab has alternated between the Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal-Bhartiya Janta Party.

7.   The share of primary sector (mainly consisting of agriculture, live-stock and dairying) in net state domestic product (NSDP) declined from 54.38 per cent in 1961-62 to 34.34 per cent in 2006-07 (Ghuman and Gill, 2009). The proportion of total agricultural workforce (both cultivators and labourers) in Punjab's total workforce declined from 55.29 per cent in 1991 to 39.40 per cent in 2001 (Government of India, 2002). The percentage share of total agricultural workforce in total rural main workers in Punjab declined from 79.8 in 1971 to 53.5 in 2001 (Census of India, 1971 and 2001).

8.   No reliable estimates are available on the number of overseas Punjabis. The numbers mentioned in the text are based on various guess estimates floating around in official and unofficial circles,

both documented and undocumented (Dhesi, 2008; p. 427). Thandi (2008) gives an estimation of Punjabi diaspora, predominantly Sikhs, of between 1.5 to 2 million.

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BhangraNation
New Meanings of Punjabi Identity in the Twenty First Century

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Punjabi identity, *punjabiyat*, has been fissured several times by religious, linguistic and national boundaries in the last century or so. Historians, anthropologists and religious studies scholars have turned their attention in the recent years to recover the meaning of punjabiyat in the everyday lives of people. Their research has uncovered a shared Punjabi place differentiated by region, religion, and caste with porous, fluid, multiple boundaries. The construction of formal religious boundaries, reinforced by linguistic, resulted in their closure, which was completed through the division of Punjab in 1947. Even though a literal return to the shared Punjabi place might not be possible, ordinary Punjabis have resisted its reinscription and division through new cartographies by returning to the memory of the Undivided Punjabi place. Advanced travel and communication technologies have opened new possibilities of contact between dispersed Punjabi groups enabling virtual, if not real, reconstructions of *punjabiyat* in cyberspace.

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Introduction

Those of you who do not belong to my generation will live to see Punjab's identity overcome the effects of the religious divide of 1947 and enjoy the fruit of a prosperous and happy Punjab which transcends the limitation of a geographical map.
(*Khizar Hayat Tiwana,* Minister of the Punjab Union 1947, in 1964[1])

Several attempts to carve out a distinctive Punjabi identity have been made before and after the 1947 Partition, including ethno-linguistic constructions such as Azad Punjab and Punjabi *suba* movements or ethno-religious ones such as the movement for Khalistan or the Sikh Nation. This paper examines the new global imaginings of *punjabiyat* and the Punjabi nation to propose an ethnocultural and ethnospatial definition of the Punjabi nation by examining the new meanings of *punjabiyat* and communities produced in relation to Bhangra performance. BhangraNation is similar to the Sikh Nation in being a deterritorialized transnational *topos* of community that invokes primordialist objects to interrogate nationalist cartographies. But it is an inclusive narrative, which not only erases but also extends boundaries to transform the meaning of *punjabiyat* in the global village. My contention is that the self-fashionings in BhangraNation cross national, linguistic and religious boundaries to converge on cultural contiguity. At the same time, they point to future elective identities

where commonality of concerns and interests rather than birth will be community producing.

<div align="center">I</div>

The homepage of *Punjabi Network,* a Punjabi website, appears to voice the shared Punjabi nostalgia for the ethnolinguistic community splintered by nationalist cartography in 1947.[2] The collectivity invoked on the site is disengaged from territory and made to converge on an ineffable primordiality located in speech, consciousness and customs in turns. Language and culture are privileged over location and religion in a desire to recover the undivided Punjabi memory prior to its compound fractures.

Punjab?

> Punjab - is a state of mind.
> You may live in any part of this earth but if your mother-tongue is Punjabi you are a Punjabi. Punjab is wherever a Punjabi lives! It has nothing to do with any religion or belief.

Having defined Punjabi in quasi mystical terms, the website continues by inviting Punjabis of all hues, classes, castes, nations and sects to reconstruct the lost ethnocultural community.

Global Punjab?

> Global Punjab has more than 150 million people worldwide with majority living in Pakistan and India and rest scattered over in Africa, Europe, Asia and North America.
>
> In Global Punjab - all are welcome. There are no biased restrictions nor any fundamentalist ideas about life. Punjabi culture is so ancient that having seen so many invasions, so many heavy mistakes and tragedies, Punjabis have become more global than any other community. Their globalness may not be very apparent at first, but inside every Punjabi is a global citizen, striving to *make it* in this life.
>
> We are *attempting to unite* all Punjabis and not dividing them by classes, castes, religions or nationalistic systems, which have been means to screw us up[sic] in last thousands of years. Enough of all that! That has only made us poorer, ignorant and a rural lot.

Senior Punjabis lament for the lost homeland, invariably expressed as a question, mourn the multiple fissures suffered by the region eponymously named after its five rivers (*Punj* five *aab* water). The rhetorical question, *Punjab reh kithe giya?* (What remains of Punjab?), interrogates Indian history's

unfathomable silence on the Partition experience. If taxonomy could be used as a guideline to Punjab's sacred cartography, how can the region retain its name with two rivers left behind in another nation? Only three of the rivers (Sutluj, Beas, and Ravi) remain in the territory of present day Indian Punjab, the other two having gone to Punjab Pakistan. But traces of the old Punjabi place, superscripted by national cartographies, are still clearly visible in Punjabi markings of the homeland. Unlike the self-imaginings of other Indian regions, these homeland memories are disloyal to national borders as they follow the passage of the five rivers flowing in total contempt of national barriers. The imagery of overflowing rivers washing down frontier checkpoints and controls connects these primordial attachments to the contemporary globalizing wave that has put the national constellation into question.

What accounts for the appeal of this originary narrative of an organic community? Edward Shils' answer is that social bonds such as those of blood, religion, language, and race are taken as 'given' and natural and evoke stronger emotional loyalties than the instrumentalist ones mobilized in the formation of civic nationalisms. Clifford Geertz concurs that the 'overpowering' and 'ineffable' coerciveness of ties believed to be primordial creates 'conflicting loyalties between primordial ties and civic sentiments' threatening the unity of the nation state.[3] Anthony D Smith testifies to the persistence, change and resurgence of *ethnies* in the nation state and mentions the emotional appeal of the ethnic past in shaping present cultural communities, particularly in the formation of post-colonial nation states in non-western societies. What role can primordialist self-definitions play in the postmodern, post-colonial constellation? While some see little space for sub-national identities in the post-industrial nation state, others discern a distinct resurgence of sub-national and ethnic movements fostered by electronic networks. What are the factors propelling the new ethnolinguistic or religious 'tribes' in the postnational constellation? Whether primordial identities will have a place in the global world and whether they would provide fixity, as Melucci maintains, or create further fragmentation, it seems unlikely that the ethnic myths of descent and ethnic heritage will cease to have impact. If it is true that *ethnies* have always been fissured and have permitted multiple identities, does the representation of Punjabi difference in postmodernity require the mobilization of a monolithic ethnic essence or can it accommodate conflicting narratives and accretive identities? Will Punjabi difference be articulated in interstitial diasporic spaces or would it be translated in the sending areas through hybridity to reinscribe the metropolis and modernity? Arguing that the shared performative cultural heritage of the Punjabi speech community including music and dance remains the sole resisting space for interrogating the multiple splintering of *punjabiyat*, the Punjabi identity, this paper will focus on the reconstruction of a new *punjabiyat* in relation to the Bhangra revival of the eighties.[4]

Bhangra was rediscovered and appropriated in the articulation of two forms of cultural difference, the one signaled by what Hall calls 'the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject' and the second by the end of, what one might call, the essential Indian subject.[5] Ethnic loyalties to village,

family, place, or clan subsumed in the symbolic construction of 'a people' in the making of the nation-state returned through the hyphenated, in-between spaces of British Asian music groups splitting the marginal space of blackness in Britain and the dominant narrative of Indianness in India. The musical production of British Punjabi youth reintroduced ethnicity into the identity politics of the marginalized, destabilizing identarian constructions based on nation and race in Britain as well as India. In the process of producing a unified Punjabi identity to oppose an essentialist blackness with Asianness, Asian youth subcultures helped to produce global *punjabiyat*.

Though the *punjabiyat* so produced was appropriated in diasporic Sikh separatism, it paradoxically enabled the reconstruction of a unified Punjabi space. The linguism of the Sikh demand recovered the Punjabi speech community from the palimpsest of Hindi and Urdu. Similarly, the summoning of 'core' Punjabi values in the constitution of the Sikh diaspora made them available to the entire ethnos. This happened for the simple reason that the pastoral Punjabi past that was mobilized in the construction of *punjabiyat* has never been exclusively Sikh. The dancing Bhangra body, consecrating the Sikh nation's primordial wholeness in the *amritdhari* bodily iconicity, also put together the unbroken Punjabi body. The performance of Punjabi identity through shared cultural rituals like Bhangra released the Punjabi ethno spatial space for reclamation by Hindu and Muslims in addition to Sikhs. As Punjabi harvest ritual, Bhangra revived the unified 'village', bioregional identification before its sectarian and nationalist cracks. A separatist movement, invoking a pre-given ethnic essence in its self definition, therefore, inadvertently led to ethnospatial restoration and reunification.

II

Arjun Appadurai, in *Sovereignty without Territory*, examines new nationalisms in relation to the problematic of sovereignty and territory and concludes that 'territory is still vital to the national imaginary of diasporic populations and stateless people of many sorts'.[6] It is interesting that Appadurai should cite Khalistan as an example of the 'new postnational cartography' of the post Westphalian model, which borrows the spatial discourses of the nation. This view of the Sikh nation as a 'deterritorialized' nation without a state is shared by Verne A. Dusenbery, who maintains that 'the Sikhs, in managing to maintain a collective ethno-religious identity without a sovereign homeland, have come to constitute almost a 'paradigmatic example of a transnational community'.[7] Though the nation might be imagined differently from the territorial nation-state, calls to solidarity in postnational constellations continue to be made in the name of the nation.

BhangraNation is the name of the most prestigious Bhangra event held in Toronto every year with Bhangra bands from the world over competing for the first position.[8] A Punjabi folk dance competition conducted in a diasporic location, boasting of participation from groups from the homeland and the diaspora, might well serve as a metaphor for the collectivities clustered around

Bhangra performance in real and virtual places. BhangraNation's *topos* of national identity resembles that of the Sikh nation in being a *topos* of community that contests the *topos* of the nation and national cartographies. But BhangraNation is as an inclusive, ethnospatial narrative permitting porous, intersecting boundaries opening out to all Punjabi and non-Punjabi *ethnies* in opposition to the exclusivist, reactive, ethno-religious Sikh nation. Imagining Punjab as an ethnospatial rather than ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious complex conforms to Harjot Oberoi's notion of the ethno-territorial community in *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*.

I view BhangraNation as recalling the memory of the Punjabi ethnospatial complex overwritten by religious and scriptural identifications. Oberoi's definition of Punjab as a geographical as well as a cultural area, which he opposes to humanly constructed political and religious boundaries, meets the postmodern concept of the bioregion conceived by Peter Berg and Larry Dasmann in the 70s, referring to 'both a geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness.'[9] Emphasizing the interpretation of the Punjabi places of culture, healing and worship at the level of popular village religion and everyday practices, Oberoi shows how they were overwritten by formal religions. Peter van der Veer places this rupture at the turn of the twentieth century in the emergence of *tomb* cults signaling the region's Islamization, which were followed by the birth of Islamic and Hindu nationalism.[10] While the intersection of Sikh with Hindu boundaries was fairly common knowledge, the collapse of Sikh and Hindu with Islamic boundaries uncovered by Oberoi adds new dimensions to the understanding of Punjabi identity.[11]

John Connell and Chris Gibson, in examining the relationship of music with space and identity, show that musical cartographies cannot be read outside political and social cartographies. Bhangra's generic classification reflects the fluid, porous boundaries of the old Punjabi place. Bhangra performance illustrates the complex interweaving of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh strands in Punjabi identity, which were separated in the emergence of sectarian and linguistic nationalisms. Though certain genres might have a sectarian provenance in being attached to specific Sufi, Sikh or Hindu practices, participation is dictated by the rules of performance rather than by concrete identities. Like all other aspects of Punjabi identity, Bhangra is not the exclusive legacy of any particular group but forms a part of that shared ethnospatial past, which resisted sect, language and nation based boundaries.

The contemporary Bhangra space retains Bhangra's traditional boundary crossing feature though it collapses further boundaries to enable non-Punjabi participation. A visit to this performance space returns one to Oberoi's Punjabi pastoral insensitive to nationality, geographical location, religion or class. Even where visible markers might provide a clue to location, their porousness prevents the fixing of identities. Performing on a transnational network in a music album produced by a local company, the Bhangraplayer could be located on any site on the BhangraNation. The alphabetical arrangement of Bhangra artists on a Bhangra website crossing several boundaries illustrates the transnational character of the contemporary Bhangra map. Neither the artists'

names, nor those of companies can provide reliable clues to their sectarian, national or locational coordinates.[12]

A.S. Kang	Gurdas Maan (photo)	Pargat Bhagu
Abrar U1 Haq	Gursewak Mann	Parminder Sandhu
Achanak	Hans Raj Hans (photo)	Premi
Alaap (photo)	Harbhajan Mann	Punjabi MC
Amar Arshi	Harbjan Shera	Ranjit Kaur
Amar Singh Chamkila	Hard Kaur	Ranjit Mani (photo)
(photo)	Hard-E	Sabar Koti
Amrit Saab	Heera Group	Sahotas
Anakhi	Inderjit Nikku	Sangeet Group
Apna Sangeet	Jagmohan Kaur	Sarabjit Cheema
Atul Sharma	Jasbir Jassi	Sardool Sikander
Avtar Maniac	Jassi Premi	Satwinder Bitti
B21 (photo)	Jaswinder Kaur Brar	Satwinder Bugga
Babu Mann	Jazzy Bains (photo)	Shamsher Sandhu
Bally Sagoo	K.S. Makhan	Shazia Manzoor (photo)
Balwinder Safri (photo)	Kuldip Manak (photo)	Silinder Pardesi
Bhinda Jatt (photo)	Kulwinder Dhillon	Sukhbir
Bhupi	M Saddiq	Sukhdev Sukha
Bikram Singh	Madan Maddi	Sukhshinder Shinda
Bobby Jahol	Malkit Singh (photo)	(photo)
Daler Mehndi	Manjit Pappu	Sukhwinder Panchi
DCS (photo)	Manmohan Waris	Surinder Shinda
Didar Sandhu	Maqbool	Surjit Bindrakhia (photo)
Diler Begowalia	Meshi Eshara	Surjit Gill
Dilshad Akhtar	Mohammad Saddiq	XLNC (photo)
Dippa (Satrang) (photo)	Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan	Yamla Jatt
Dolly Singh		

As Urdu names are as common in Punjab as Hindi, how is one to conclusively prove if an artist is Hindu, Muslim or Sikh? Even if Sikhs dominate the Bhangrascape, the beard and the turban do not function as definitive identity signifiers for there are as many clean shaven Sikhs as there are bearded Hindus. Is the clean shaven Gurdas Mann a Sikh and the bearded Hans Raj Hans a Muslim?[13] The popular cultural compulsions of creating powerful brand images complicates bodily semiotics further. Apache Indian and Jazzy Bains use Punjabi lyrics but, with names evocative of the Wild West, they could be from anywhere.[14] Sikh Muslim imbrication occurs even in Sikh names through the appendage of the *ustad's* name as in Daler Mehndi's case.[15]

Not only concrete identities but also their discursive representation reflects the interpenetration of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh boundaries. Since Bally Sagoo's remix of Malkit Singh's *gud nalon ishq mitha* inserted the inimitable Sikh in the visual narrative of a Hindu wedding, it has become customary to dissolve Hindu

Sikh boundaries in Bhangra music videos.[16] Jassi Sidhu's *virji vyahon chalya* with the Sikh performing at his Hindu brother's *sehrabandhi* is particularly evocative of the Hindu Sikh kinship destroyed by separatism. Similarly, Hans Raj Hans's adoption of the Sufi idiom in the *julli* genre has the bearded Hindu rehearsing the Muslim gestures at the *pir's* tomb resurrecting the shared spaces of Punjabi worship. Despite their deep commitment to the Sikh cause, Sikh Bhangra artists have reserved their commitment to *sikhi* in their devotional rather than Bhangra albums. Given such frequent border crossings, it comes as no shock when the Muslim Sabri brothers compare the beloved to God, using the Punjabi term *rab* (not *Allah*), or when the Sikh Harbhajan Mann invokes His Islamic name, *Wallah*, to warn against lovesickness.

BhangraNation's character as a transnational virtuality was brought home at the first Punjabi popular music award in 2004. A young Sikh, Jassi Sidhu, received the Best Newcomer award at the first ETC Channel Punjabi Awards in 2004 for his Punjabi album. His location was revealed only when he peppered his pure Punjabi 'thank you' speech liberally with Cockney asides.[17] When pure Punjabi is as likely to be found in Birmingham and British Columbia as in Jallandar and Lahore, *punjabiyat* ceases to be anchored to geography. I see the Bhangra cartography as reinscribing the geographies of nation states to construct a translocal Bhangrascape with specific local inflections. While studies of specific Bhangra 'scenes', particularly from Bhangra's new British capitals, have been particularly helpful in illuminating Bhangra's participation in local cultural politics, I wish to call attention to the translocal identity spaces formed in relation to Bhangra that reveal a complex negotiation with local identities.[18]

<div style="text-align:center">

III

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Steven Grosby, in 'The Inexpungeable Tie of Primordiality', explains that though primordiality might be socially constructed and largely 'an affect issue', human beings 'do make classifications of the self and the other in accordance with such criteria'.[19] Grosby holds that ineffable attachments and ties to certain objects depend on beliefs about these objects. Bhangra participates in the construction of global *punjabiyat* through the activation of cultural resources to which 'primordial sentiments' are attached. Whether the primordial return is possible or not, Bhangra texts celebrate an *apriori* Punjabi ethnicity in romanticized narratives of the Punjabi homeland. The objects mobilized in the construction of Punjabi ethnicity include consanguinity, religion and language but also common territorial origin, conspicuous biological features as well perceptible differences in the conduct of everyday life. In my opinion, the attachment of affect in Bhangra texts to territorial location, customs and culture rather than to religion rescues it from the ethnic absolutism and exclusivism of the Sikh nation.

Bhangra texts repeat a rap like nostalgia for a primordial *punjabiyat* captured in the trope of return. The myth of return undergirding Bhangra texts grows stronger in inverse proportion to the impossibility of return, literal and

metaphoric. The text invariably opens with the protagonist's returning home, often accompanied by a westernized partner, and concludes with his reintegration into an exoticized Punjabi sociality. Though the return trope underlies most texts, some articulate it more unambiguously than others. The unofficial anthem of the BhangraNation by the Punjabi poet laureate Gurdas Mann needs to be quoted in detail as an introduction to the objects to which primordial sentiments come to be attached though the use of the conditional might hint at the impossibility of return.[20]

Apna Punjab hove	To be in our own Punjab
Ghar di sharaab hove	Where homemade liquour flows free
Ganne da danda hove	A sugarcane
Baan da manja hove	A string cot
Manje ute baitha jat	And the peasant reclining royally
Oye Banya nawab hove	on the string cot
Pehle tod vari vichon	In the very first gulp
Duja peg lava hoye	downing the second peg
Gandala da saag	*Gandalan* greens
Vaddi bebe ne banaya hove	cooked by grandmother
Muhn de vich rakhde e	The taste of raw spices
masale da swad hove	tickles my tongue as I put it in my mouth
Saron de saag vich main	To mustard greens
Ghyo te ghyo paayi javaan	I keep adding dollops of butter
Makki dian rotiyaan noon	Countless homemade maize corn bread
Bina gine khayeen javaan	I go on eating
Khoon te jaake ganne choopan	I saunter across to the well suck fresh sugarcane
Oye ghar da kabaab hove	Oh for homemade kebab

The rap remix of the song translates the song's centrality to Bhangra's 'return to roots' identity performance in the diaspora. A deep male voice announces 'We are now returning to the roots', before playing the soundtrack peppered with Jamaican patois. Other Bhangraplayers share and repeat Mann's '*makki di roti*' nationalism revealing an emotional attachment to everyday items and rituals. Malkit Singh's new album echoes Mann's homeland yearning, once again translated as food.[21]

Vekh Li Valait	I have had enough of foreign lands
Yaaro Vekh Li Valait	Friends, enough of foreign lands
……………………..	
Mera Maa De Hata Diyan	
Pakiyan Rotiyan Khaan Nu Bara Hi Dil Karda	
I ask for nothing more than bread made by my mother's hand	

The song trails off with the protagonist being escorted back to India by family. Other examples of homeland nostalgia abound.

More often than not, this mystical, elusive Punjabi essence translates into a female iconicity comprising the mother, the sister and the beloved. As in Indian nationalism, the Punjabi woman's body becomes the site for the negotiation of Punjabi modernity. The female body is draped or undraped to inscribe quintessential Punjabi values. The veiled Punjabi woman apotheosized as virgin or mother is set in opposition to the *mem* or the westernized urban or diasporic woman, whose journey back home must parallel the male protagonist's for her to transform into the beloved.

Br-Asian Bhangra artists first apotheosized the virginal Punjabi woman to tease Punjabi difference out of essentialist blackness. Since Apache Indian's romanticization of the 'gal from Jullundar' in *Arranged Marriage*, the *sohni kudi* has fed reels of Bhangra homeland nostalgia.[22] The village belle, or *jatti Punjab di*, has conquered many an urban male heart as much by her fabled beauty as by her personification of a valorized Punjabi rusticity. The fetishization of the *sohni*, virginal but coquettish, sublimates the Punjabi male desire for the homeland.

Alternatively, the homeland may be visualized as mother. If the *sohni* is made to serve the Punjabi male fantasy of pristine sexuality, the *bebe*, or *ma,* is made to conform to the idealized image of the selfless, nurturing mother who nourishes the male without demanding anything in return.

Eis Duniya Vitch Jine Risthe	All worldly relationships
Sab Juthe Te Beroop	Are false and ugly
Maa Da Rishta Sab To Sachcha	The only authentic bond is with the mother
Maa Hai Rab Da Roop	Mother is the very image of God[23]

While the representation of the homeland as maternal is characteristic of romantic nationalism in general, the Punjabi male's mother fixation invests the image with a particular emotive appeal. Both the *sohni* and *ma*, embodying the primordial tie with the rustic homeland, are contrasted with the westernized temptress or the *mem* who must be socialized into essential *punjabiyat* before being accepted into the Punjabi fold.

It figures directly as place as well, albeit a place constructed as much by ecology as by practices of everyday life. Bhangra's originary location in the *doabas*, or deltas, of Punjab's five rivers, customarily invoked in the *boliyaan*, enables Punjabi subjectivity to be grounded in concrete, material reality. Along with reconstructing Punjabi topography by retracing Bhangra genres to their originary *doabas*, Bhangra texts also rebuild the cultural and sacred geographies of undivided Punjab around built spaces.

These texts close in to fix a specific locus with the result that the homeland they return to is an extremely small place, a province, a town or a village reflecting the longing for the face to face community displaced by the new imaginings of collectivities in nationalism or globalization. Though a few Bhangra texts name a specific region or city, the locus of *punjabiyat* in contemporary Bhangra texts is the Punjabi village, a *pind*, illustrating the mapping of transnational Punjabi identity on a rural Punjabi imaginary. They

retrace the topography of the five rivers and their deltas to recount the history of multiple erasures and recoveries older than those affected in the making of nations.[24]

Eh Punjab vi mera ve	This Punjab is also mine
Oh Punjab vi mera ve	That Punjab is also mine
Eh sutluj vi mera e	This Sutluj is also mine
Oh chenab vi mera e	That Chenab is also mine
Sara jism	Of the broken body
Tukre jod deyo	Put together the pieces
Hatthan jod deyo	Join hands
Sarhadaan tod deyo	Break all borders

IV

Biological difference is recognized another object of primordial attachments. The body has turned into a key codifier in the iconicity constructed to produce Punjabi identities. From the stereotyped portrayal of the Punjabi in the popular Indian imagination as all brawn but no brain to the materialism ascribed to Punjabi core values, the body comes to acquire a centrality that might be useful in the understanding of the production of Punjabi subjectivity in the present. Bodily icons and signifiers construct a particularly masculine ethic centered on labour, battle and pleasure. The beautiful virginal or nurturing maternal female body is juxtaposed against the laboring or warrior male body.

Punjabi subjectivity has traditionally employed the body and bodily signifiers as the site for representing difference. As Brian Keith Axel has pointed out, the iconicity of the male Sikh body was constructed to separate Sikh identity from other Punjabi ethnicities.[25] Similarly, the female body has inevitable served as the site for marking or invading boundaries between different Punjabi groups. The celebration of physical strength and energy in *jatt* self-definitions converges equally on the body and bodily signifiers.

An imagery is generated in relation to the body in Punjabi ascriptions and self descriptions equating the body with the body politic. Bodily markings and coverings, such as hair, beard, or headdress merely signify Punjabi identity-in-difference before the rupture. The rupture is signified through images of the bruised, dismembered broken male bodies and violated female bodies in narratives of Partition and of anti-Sikh riots. The Partition violence, the nightmare of burnt, torn, bleeding, dismembered bodies, aids the representation of the division of Punjab as a physical rupture. The images of bleeding, wounded broken bodies return post 1984 in Sikh nationalism but are now contrasted with the wholeness of the *amritdhari* Sikh body.

The dancing Bhangra body returns against the backdrop of the bleeding Punjabi body offering glimpses into the vision of wholeness before the fragmentation. In Bhangra performance, the body stands unadorned and unburdened by visible identity markers signifying difference. Shorn of facial or head hair, or other identificatory marks, the body signifies similarity rather than

difference. Casting away divisive identity markers, it dons the peasant Bhangra costume to return to the Punjabi life-place. But the dancing Bhangra body plays on differences of caste, class, region or gender without unifying them into an unchanging Punjabi essence. In performing Bhangra moves, Punjabis cast aside all other identity markers to reclaim the *habitus* they were dislocated from to perform a *punjabiyat*, located in body language and movement.

Bhangra is the harvest ritual that Hindu, Sikh, Muslim Punjabis may perform to reenact a peasant memory. Bhangra belongs to the living-in-place *habitus*, to particular ways of doing or saying things, which bind members of the community together. Bhangra body and bodily movement, embedded in the tribal Punjabi place, offer an elusive unifying moment in which a shared *punjabiyat* might be performed transcending all barriers. The body and its movements, ritualized in Bhangra performance, mark out individuals as Punjabis. In performing stylized Bhangra movements, shared across differences, Punjabis reinhabit the lost place. Through the performance of shared kinesics, it attempts to resist the splitting of the Punjabi memory further. The shared knowledge of the rules of performance about when to say what, where, to whom, in what manner, reaffirms a tribal solidarity enabling them to shed, at least during the performance moment, their new identifications overwritten on the older bioregional memory.

Bhangra's boundary crossing space enables all concrete Punjabi identities to perform their *punjabiyat* in dance and music.[26] 'We only have to start singing Heer Waris Shah from our border post at the Wagah and let's see how the fellow on the other side responds'. Ishtiaq Ahmed, agrees. Bhangra's performance and speech nationalism enables Punjabis to congregate crossing all boundaries in contrast with ethno-religious nationalisms predicated on scriptural difference. The Bhangra performance space alone offers a commingling of Punjabis of all complexions, classes, castes, religions, nations, locations and gender that interrogates the imaginings of nations, secular and sacred.

<div align="center">V1</div>

The myth of return to the Punjabi homeland dramatized in several Bhangra texts might suggest organic identifications. But the impossibility of return, literal or metaphorical, disables an uncategorical affirmation of *punjabiyat* as the Punjabi memory itself reveals deep gashes. Heated discussions on Punjabi culture on the website foreground multiple claimants to *punjabiyat* speaking in the name of language, religion, culture and class. Most chats conclude in vituperative exchanges nipping the dream of a global Punjab in the bud. As the confusion of categories defining *punjabiyat* on these website reveals, *punjabiyat* is still under construction. It would be more pertinent to inquire, therefore, what imaginings of *punjabiyat* are produced in the mobilization of various identity spaces in Bhangra texts and how the Punjabi subject is transformed in assuming that image. The problem of Punjabi identification can certainly not be the 'affirmation of a pre-given identity' but 'the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image'.

Bhangra's identity politics reveal the negotiation of several aspects, such as religion, nation, class, language, generation or ethnicity, which might overlap as well as contradict. The collective experience of Punjabi nationness may be negotiated in the interstices, in the overlap between Hindu, Sikh and Muslim difference. The Punjabi difference represented at these intersections can be produced in relation to a Punjabi anteriority that accommodates the experiences of invasion, displacement and migration. The 'unhomeliness', which Bhabha marks 'the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural' constructs a Punjabi homeland defined in relation to displacement and migration.

Following Anthony D Smith, T K Oommen regards the notion of homeland as the 'irreducible minimum for a nation to emerge and to exist'. 'In the case of nation formation, territory is the first requisite'; he declares rejecting the claims of both language and religion to nationhood. The new *punjabiyaat* destroys the isomorphism between place, space and nation that has been noted in nationalist organizations of space illustrating the non-contiguous places enabled by global connectivity. The absence of an originary Bhangra location in the context of its multidirectional flows interrogates and challenges essentialist, universalized or fixed identities. At the same time, the desire to fix a homeland in a specific locus reflects the pull of primordial ties. In the absence of territorial materiality, the reconstruction of the lived place in the memory can produce only an image. Though the BhangraNation returns to the physicality of place to root itself firmly, the place can exist only in the imagination, corresponding to the real place but not quite the same. The attempt to reconstruct the old place in new lands in changed environments and settings results in recovering the semblance of the place without its sensuality. Arjun Appadurai's distinction between territory as soil, the ground of emotional attachment, and territory as a civil arrangement shows how post-Westphalian nations can exist without territorial sovereignty. BhangraNation proves that the nation can exist outside the territory but not the soil.

In the process of engaging with the variety of subject positions it unfolds, *punjabiyat* is transformed. The Punjabi identity constructed in relation to Bhangra disengages ethnicity from nation and religion and returns it to language, region, culture, and the body. Unlike Sikh nationalism, which mobilized religion and language to appropriate *punjabiyat* for *sikhi*, BhangraNation manipulates primordial ties attached to the bioregion, biology and everyday conduct and rituals in reaffirming an inclusive *punjabiyat*. The realignment of the ethnocultural identity along these lines might be disjunctive with allegiance to national or sacral solidarities unless the new imagining of community can accommodate contradictory multiple narratives of the self. The recall of the Punjabi ethnospatial place in Bhangra texts can produce a new non-essentialising imagining of *punjabiyat*, which enables multiple tenancies of language, religion, caste, gender and location.

Notes

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[1] Tiwana , one of the staunch critics of the two nation theory, was the leader of the Punjab Union as the Indian subcontinent was being divided and died broken hearted in exile. Incidentally, Tiwana belonged to a caste that has Hindus as well as Muslims.

[2] Punjabi Network. http://www.punjabi.net/punjab/1index.htm. 24th February 2004.

[3] Clifford Geertz. 'Primordial Ties'. *Ethnicity*. (ed) John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith. Oxford: OUP 1996. 42-43.

[4] Bhangra is a specific beat and dance genre but is loosely used today to denote Punjabi dance genres. I extend the term to include Punjabi music which strictly does not fall under Bhangra. The concept of *Punjabiyat* or Punjabi identity emerged and was debated for years prior to the Partition. It was resurrected in the construction of the Sikh diaspora in the eighties. It has resurfaced globally in the new millennium in the reconstruction of a unified non-exclusive ethnolinguistic Punjabi identity. The call for a Punjabi nation was renewed at the Second World Punjabi Congress in British Columbia in 2002. In the first week of December 2004, artistes and sportspersons from East and West Punjab congregated for the first time in 57 years in Patiala to 'revive the spirit of Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat'.

[5] Hall, Stuart. 'New Ethnicities', *Critical Dialogues in Culture Studies(*ed) David Morley & Kuan G Chan, (London: Routledge 1996), p 443.

[6] Arjun Appadurai, 'Sovereignty Without Territory', 1996, 50.

[7] Verne A Dusenbury. 'Nation or World Religion? Master Narratives of Sikh Identity' in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.), *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change,* 1999, p. 138.

[8] Bhangra Nation is a weeklong celebration comprised of several events, with the participation of over 10,000 people. After 7 years, Bhangra Nation has established a prominent role as a promoter of cultural awareness. Bhangra Nation's philosophy is to enhance and promote the concepts, history and symbolic representation of Bhangra.
 http://www.realbhangra.com/BhangraNation8.htm, *Bhangra Nation. Com* http://www.bhangranation.com/terms.htm.

[9] Richard Evanoff. 'Bioregionalism Comes to Japan. An Interview with Peter Berg' http://www.sustainable-city.org/intervws/berg.htm The first published definition of a bioregion is, 'Geographic areas having common characteristics of soil, watershed, climate, native plants and animals that exist within the whole planetary biosphere as unique and contributive parts...The final boundaries of a bioregion, however, are best described by the people who have lived within it, through human recognition of the realities of living in place...there is a distinctive resonance among living things and the factors that influence them which occurs specifically within each separate part of the planet'.

[10] Peter van der Veer notes 'the creation of a regional identity around the symbolic cluster of a tomb cult as that of Faridudin Chisti in Punjab. He asserts

that the establishment of Baba Farid's shrine was instrumental in the transformation of this region from a non-Islamic to an Islamic one. He offers an insight into the fracturing of a regional identity into a sectarian identity, particularly in Punjab. He mentions that the change in names from Punjabi secular to Islamic, which disappear completely by the early nineteen century reveals a very slow homogenization of the identities of the followers of Baba Farid, which he compares to Hinduization or Sikhization. Veer, Peter van der. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1984).

[11] The separation of Sikh from Hindu identity is extremely problematic considering that raising the eldest son as a Sikh and offering prayers at *gurdwaras* was a fairly common practice among Hindus in Punjab. ''WAH Dutt sultan, Hindu ka dharma, Musalman ka iman/Wah Dutt sultan, adha Hindu, adha Musalman.'' Here's a saying still prevalent in parts of undivided Punjab, eulogizing the remarkable sacrifice of Rehab Singh Dutt, a Hindu Punjabi who fought on the side of the Prophet at the Karbala in 681 AD, in which seven of his sons were killed on the 10th day of Muharram. Wracked by grief, Rehab Singh returned to Lahore, and ever since the Dutts of Lahore have also been known as the Hussaini Brahmins', 'Reviving Ancient Bonds across Border'. *The Indian Express*, Wednesday March 3 2004.
 http://iecolumnists.expressindia.com/full_column.php?content_id=42209

[12] http://www.punjabonline.com/servlet/entertain.gallery?Action=Main, 27th July 2004.

[13] Gurdas Mann is a folk singer, a lyricist, composer, singer and choreographer, whose album *Dil da Mamla* introduced Bhangra to a non-Punjabi audience. A true legend, he has twenty seven albums to his credit and is looked upon by younger Bhangra artists as a role model. 'A name synonymous with Punjabi folklore and Sufi songs, Hans Raj Hans is as Punjabi as they come - donning a beard and long curly hair, he is the epitome of the rural Punjab village youth. Guru Ustad Puran Shahkoti Sahib, his guru who trained him, bestowed his surname 'Hans' on him.' http://www.musicindiaonline.com/MIO-Artists/IndiPop/Pages/HansRajHans.html 26th July 2004 'Classical poetry and music take up much of this time and his extensive research into the workings of the Sufi poets and saints such as Baba Farid, Baba Bulle Shah, Shah Hussain, Hashmat Shah & Waris Shah have contributed immensely in winning the Fellowship bestowed on him by the Washington University for Folk Music and Sufiana Gaiki, a rare distinction for any Punjabi singer.'

[14] Apache Indian is an artist that has linked traditional Asian sounds with influences from mainstream Pop, Reggae and Hip Hop. Born in Handsworth (Birmingham, England), Steven Kapur AKA Apache Indian has been recognized for linking different cultures through music, and becoming the first true International Asian Pop Artist. http://www.karmasound.com/artists/apache/. 26th July 2004.

[15]Born on August 18, 1967, into a family of musicians, Mehndi is the typical lion-hearted Leo. He was named after the character of a dacoit, Daku Daler Singh. He left home at the age of 14, to study under the legendary Rahat Ali Khan Saheb of Patiala Gharana at Gorakhpur'. The Dalermania began 'when Magnasound was quick to realize his multi-platinum potential. It not only signed him for a release next year, but such was his pre-release popularity that the label gave Mehndi top billing'! Daler Mehndi is the first Bhangra artist who made the national crossover by selling more than a million albums in Kerala

[16] Malkit Singh, Punjabi folk artist now based in Birmingham, was already a celebrity when Bally Sagoo remixed his *gud nal ishq mitha* for a new generation and turned him into an international star.

[17] Jassi Sidhu, ex B21 artist, came into limelight with his winning an award in the first ETC Channel Punjabi award.

[18] Baumann, G. (1990) 'The Re-Invention of Bhangra. Social Change and Aesthetic Shifts in a Punjabi Music in Britain' in *World of Music* 32(2): 81-95; Bennett, A. (2000) *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (London: Macmillan).

[19] Steven Grosby. 'The Inexpungeable Ties of Primordiality', *Ethnicity*, op.cit., p 74.

[20] Gurdas Mann, *Apna Punjab hove*, http://www.apnaorg.com/music/punjab/

[21] Malkit Singh, *Maa.*

[22] Apache Indian, *Arranged Marriage.*

[23] Malkit Singh. *Maa.* http://www.desitunes4u.com/Song_Lyrics.htm.

[24] Hans Raj Hans, *Ai Punjabi wi mera ai*, http://www.apnaorg.com/music/punjab/

[25] Brian Keith Axel. (2001). *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press.

[26] Harbhajan Mann is a popular Sikh Canadian Bhangra artist.

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Book Reviews
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Madra, Amandeep Singh and Singh Parmjit, *The Golden Temple of Amritsar Reflections of the Past (1808-1959)* (London: Kashi House, 2012), 294 pp ISBN 970-9560168-1-2 (hb), £45.00.

This beautifully produced book is intended to, 'pay homage to the time when the Golden Temple, the city of Amritsar and the Sikhs were at the height of their glory.' After a brief introduction there is a section of travellers' accounts of the Golden Temple and the city of Amritsar which spans the period from Ranjit Singh to the 1950s. This is followed by 489 illustrations in the form of pencil sketches, water colours, oil paintings, black and white and coloured photographs, maps and architectural drawings. Each is provided with a description both of its subject matter and of its creator. The works of famous artists and photographers such as William Carpenter and Margaret Bourke-White are included alongside those of amateurs. The subject matter varies from aerial shots of the city and temple complex to the visits of Royalty and Viceroys, day to day activities and the gatherings of *Shahidi Jatha*s to take oaths of non-violence before the Akal Takht at the time of the Gurdwara Reform movement. The distinctive Akali-Nihangs form the focus of many portraits. The illustrations have been painstakingly acquired from public and private collections around the world. Many of the early photographs are rare and have not previously been widely available.

The challenges facing the Sikh community and the Golden Temple in the colonial era emerge clearly both from the text and the illustrative material. British power was inscribed on the temple complex by the erection of a large Gothic Clock Tower immediately outside. This not only attested to the ruling colonial presence, but directly confronted the timeless spirituality of the Holy Tank with modern Foucaltian disciplinary notions of time. The text alludes to western visitors' cultural insensitivities as they were confronted with the need to remove their shoes as they entered the complex. The pushing aside of pilgrims by Sikh policemen and guides to allow easier access for them is also repeated in the text. While many of the accounts acknowledge the tranquillity of the Temple they also have recourse to Orientalist stereotypes, comparing this with the 'chaos' of Hindu Mandirs. Two of the authors in seeking to convey the surroundings to a western audience fall back on a comparison with St Mark's Square in Venice.

The growing tensions in end of empire Amritsar are missing from the text and illustrations. Yet by the time of independence, nearly ten thousand buildings had been burned down, leaving around half of the walled city in ruins. Hall Bazaar which was at the centre of the initial outbreak of violence on 5-6 March 1947 features in a photograph, but in the tranquil early twentieth century. There are no photographs of the refugees who criss-crossed their way at the nearby Wagah border, although their plight has been so poignantly captured through the lens of Margaret Bourke-White.

The authors probably sought to draw a veil over this period in the city's

history, as it would have jarred with their celebratory aims. It is for the reader to judge whether the book would have been enhanced by a 'grittier' dimension. In its own terms, this is a splendid and evocative representation of a hundred and fifty years history of the Golden Temple and its environs. It is sumptuously illustrated in what was clearly a labour of love. The book undoubtedly deserves a place in the homes of all those who are continuously drawn to the centre of the Sikh faith.

Ian Talbot
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Ilyas Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-1961*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011) xiv + 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-906172-3 (hb) £16.99.

Dr Chattha's book is an important contribution to the growing corpus of material which has taken the focus away from the 'high politics' of South Asia, and given a regional and local perspective to events. Such studies allow us to better grasp the complicated process of partition, violence and resettlement in the sub-continent, which has a critical local dimension. Dr Chattha is singular in the utilisation of police First Information Report [FIR] records in the Punjab, which gives depth and local contextualisation to his subject. With strong archival research, Chattha views '...violence [during the partition] as variegated and complex, [which] illustrates the existence of an organisational and "genocidal" element in it, alongside spontaneity' (12).

The book is divided into three parts. The first part contextualises Gujranwala and Sialkot by providing information on the ethnic, religious, social and economic make-up of both cities, with a focus on the British period. Here Chattha argues that 'colonial rule not only brought increased material progress, but heightened awareness of communal identity' (74) in both the cities.

In chapter two Chattha gives the Punjab-wide context of partition-related violence. He traces the beginning of partition-related violence from the disturbances in Rawalpindi division in March 1947 to the scenes of carnage on both sides of the Punjab following the formal Transfer of Power on August 15, 1947. Together with narrating the main events and themes surrounding partition violence - like the genocidal, class and gender issues, Chattha also points out that the issue of forced conversions still remains an understudied dimension. The chapter also traces the complicated process of refugee resettlement which brought to the fore tensions between the centre and the province, the reluctance of Punjab officials to resettle refugees from 'non-agreed' areas, and the corruption relating to allotment of land, properties and businesses. The chapter also touches upon the urban settlement and economic development challenges which large scale migration posed for the Punjab.

Part II analyses in two chapters the incidents of violence and migration in Gujranwala and Sialkot. Here Chattha weaves an interesting story of how violence was perpetrated on the non-Muslim residents of the two cities, and how these cities were 'cleansed' of non-Muslims. Writing on Gujranwala, for example, Chattha argues that the replacement of a Hindu Deputy Commissioner by a Muslim one 'served to emphasise the helplessness of the minorities' and that from then onwards, 'police raids on non-Muslims were considered attacks by them' (122). This event highlights how perceptions, coupled with rising political tensions, and a few law and order issues, created a sense of panic among the non-Muslims of the city. Chattha also points out how 'violence in Gujranwala district was frequently marked by its cold-blooded organisation' (124). He further argues that the FIR records simply put the perpetrators of these attacks as '*hamlahwar*' [attackers], which covers a broad spectrum of people. This was obviously done to prevent the identification of the attackers with a certain group, caste, or locality, and to prevent future prosecution. Chattha then localises the narrative by assessing the killings of Hindus and Sikhs by the Lohar community of Nizamabad in Gujranwala (130-8), where pre-planning, the lure of loot, abduction of women, and the complicity of the local police become clearly evident.

The chapter on Sialkot also provides fresh insight into the local effects of partition, where over a third of the city was burnt down, and over eighty percent of its industrial units were closed down or abandoned (146). In this chapter, Chattha again keeps close to the archival record and constructs a strong narrative of how local gangs organised and perpetrated violence on the non-Muslims, frequently through police complicity. Chattha also points out that whereas a lot of the partition migration was hurried and chaotic, there were instances, such as that of Dr Kishan Chand, where the wealthy were making 'anticipatory migration' (150), highlighting the class differences in the partition experience. The chapter also discusses the effect of the partition on the 'untouchable' community in Sialkot. Considered outside the Hindu fold, initially this community had been spared the partition violence, but the aftermath of the Dogra-led violence in Jammu and the influx of vengeful refugees took its toll on this community (169-75).

The third section of the book describes the pattern of refugee resettlement and development in Gujranwala and Sialkot. Here the emphasis of Chattha's argument is on the economic change and development brought about by the refugees in both cities. Chattha argues that 'refugee labour, capital and entrepreneurial enterprise,' played a key role in the development of the iron and steel, hosiery and jewellery industries in Gujranwala (189). Similarly, the coming of refugees, mainly Kashmiri, into Sialkot gave new life to industry in the city, especially in the sporting goods and surgical industries. The chapters also highlight the role of the government, both central and provincial, in the economic development of the refugees and the two cities.

Ilyas Chattha's book is an important contribution to our study of partition and

its effect at the local level in the Punjab. Together with the studies of Ian Talbot, Gurharpal Singh, Joya Chatterji and others, this monograph shows the complex nature of partition violence and, in terms of two districts of the Punjab, gives a face to the hitherto unnamed victims and perpetrators. It also shows how refugee rehabilitation was a long and fraught process, but one which provided opportunities for both the locals and refugees.

The book is well written except for a little repetition in the concluding remarks of sections and chapters. The section giving the historical perspective, important as it is, however, could also have been more succinct, with a larger focus on the processes through which refugees in both cities negotiated governmental and local hurdles to re-establish themselves.

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Pritam Singh, *Economy, Culture and Human Rights: Turbulence in Punjab, India and Beyond,* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2010 1st (ed) x+250 pp. ISBN 978-81-88789-62-7 (hb) Rs. 600, ISBN 978-81-88789-69-6 (pb) Rs. 300.

There are very few subjects in contemporary times on which so much is written by so many persons from different walks of life as "human rights". Yet, so much still remains to be discerned and discussed to make human rights a central concern of justice and governance, nationally as well as internationally. In this context, this book is a welcome contribution coming as it does from a person who had been a victim of police torture in 1971 as a young radical activist and who has been engaged in the study of the political economy of development of India and Punjab since that time. The brilliance of this work shines through the imaginative integration of the personal life story of the author – the evolution from a religion influenced Sikh childhood to the theoretical perspective of Marxism - with the politico-economic account of Punjab and India's recent history, and the theoretical architecture of the book exploring the competing approaches towards human rights.

The central argument of the book is that there is a dialectical relationship between politico-economic interests and human rights. This dialectical relationship is explored by arguing that governments and business organisations sacrifice human rights to promote their economic interests of trade promotion and profit maximization, but that if human rights' campaigning becomes powerful, the same governments and business organisations are forced to accommodate human rights in their foreign policy designs and business strategies. In the first chapter, the author has explained the theoretical framing of the discourse on human rights by expounding two possible approaches towards human rights: an instrumentalist approach versus an intrinsic worth approach. The instrumentalist approach, according to the author, looks upon human rights, either for supporting or opposing these rights, merely as a means or an

instrument to achieve some other goals. The goals for those supporting human rights could be: development, democracy or national independence. The goals for those curbing human rights could be: suppression of a dissident movement or gaining control over economic resources. The intrinsic worth approach towards human rights views these rights as good or desirable without linking them to some other goals. The author proposes a synthesis of the two approaches by suggesting a middle path of grounded intrinsic worth approach in which the ethical richness of the intrinsic approach is married with the concreteness of the instrumentalist approach.

The second chapter lays down the macro environment of human rights in India by capturing the trend towards centralisation of economic and political power in India and the implications of this trend for generating conflicts over resources, competing nationalist aspirations and class interests. These conflicts are then shown to be linked with violations of human rights. This chapter fulfils a dual function: it provides a politico-economic perspective to those students of human rights who view human rights merely as a legal or ethical concern, and a human rights perspective to those who merely study the quantitative dimensions of India's economic and political development.

Chapter 3 brings out the international dimensions of human rights by examining the context of economic relations between two countries - India and the United Kingdom (UK) - and the placing of human rights in those relations. A critical evaluation of UK's foreign policy towards India is made to demonstrate that various UK governments have tried to ignore human rights violations in Punjab to protect and promote UK's economic interests of trade and investment promotion in India. On the other hand, the pressure of human rights organisations on the UK parliamentarians has forced them to press the UK governments to take up seriously the violations of human rights in India. This central chapter ties the theoretical concerns of the book into the applied dimensions concerning India and Punjab. Chapters 4 and 5 delve deeper into the past and present of Punjab to understand the history and political economy of conflicts that have implications for human rights conditions in Punjab. Both chapters aim to capture the historical evolution of the political culture in Punjab. Chapter 6 deals in detail with the phenomenon of religious revivalism in Punjab which has been a source of intensified conflicts in Punjab in the recent decades. This chapter also explores a rather uncharted territory of examining the creative possibilities of alliance between religious humanism and the Left political tendencies in Punjab on one issue i.e. building sound foundations of a human rights oriented political culture in Punjab.

The penultimate chapter (Chapter 7) interrogates sectarianism and instrumentalism in the human rights praxis in Punjab. This chapter examines three movements in the post-colonial history of Punjab that were movements of armed challenge to the authority and power of the Indian state, and consequently resulted in massive violations of human rights in Punjab. These movements were: the Lal Communist Party led tenant struggle in the late 1940s and the early

1950s, the Maoist Naxalite movement of the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, and the Sikh militant movement of the 1980s and the mid-1990s. While appreciating the brave work of many human rights campaigners and organisations in Punjab, the author has provided a penetrating critique of instrumentalism and sectarianism in the approaches of Punjab's political parties, most human rights organisations and even professional groups- academics, lawyers, journalist and artists- to human rights violations that took place in Punjab during the period of these three armed struggle movements. This chapter completes the full circle of the argument of the book by concluding the debate about instrumentalism versus intrinsic worth of human rights, in which the author concludes by arguing for rejecting instrumentalism and for deepening the intrinsic worth towards human rights in ideas and practices concerning human rights.

This book provides a reflection on theoretical underpinnings of economy, culture and human rights by inter-linking them with examples of turbulence in Punjab, India and beyond. What is very appealing about this book is that, on the one hand, it is a serious theoretical exercise on human rights and would interest academics involved in human rights research but, on the other hand, it would be of deep interest to those involved in the human rights movements, who are interested not only in descriptive accounts of human rights violations but also in understanding the wider context of such violations, so as to be better equipped to struggle against those violations. There have been vast changes in the economy and politics of Punjab since the period which is discussed in this book, though the emerging dimensions of human rights violations, whether relating to agriculture, industry, labour, women, children or health and environment, can be very fruitfully studied and fought against by employing the methodology of this work, which highlights the conflicts between the politico-economic interests of the people in power and those who question their powers. It is a stimulating, challenging and, at times, disturbing read which provides some guiding principles for further studies and research and can warmly be recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

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J. Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2010) xix + 314 pp. ISBN 978-81-321-0302-8 (hb) Rs 750.

It is fair to say that the issue of separatism, far from being a phenomenon afflicting fragile post-colonial societies solely, is actually something which can potentially erupt in any nation. Nevertheless, it can be said that states which consist of heterogeneous populations tend to be more prone towards experiencing, and perhaps ultimately succumbing to, secessionist activities –

though admittedly, it would be foolish to suggest that heterogeneity in itself was a sufficient factor to explain the rise of secessionism.

Frequently described as the 'most diverse country in the world', with its multiple linguistic, religious, caste and even racial cleavages, it is probably not surprising that India has to date endured a number of sub-nationalist movements since its independence in 1947. Jugdep Chima, in this book, focuses on one such movement, namely the Sikh nationalist struggle for Khalistan, which reached its zenith in the period from 1984-1992 and declined rapidly from 1993 onwards. Chima's contribution towards what is quite a narrow band of literature is particularly welcome because, rather than focusing simply upon the rise of the movement, he rather ambitiously also endeavours to explain its sustenance and decline. In order to achieve this end, Chima attempts to position human agency, or *patterns of political leadership* as he defines it, as central to understanding the nature and trajectory of this secessionist movement. This is a marked departure from the work of many other scholars who have generally attempted to explain the rise of the Khalistan movement by focusing on 'underlying structural factors' such as economic deprivation. Perhaps Chima's thesis, though interesting in its own right, could be accused of being slightly naïve, for it gives the impression that personality or elite behaviour somehow functions independently from underlying structural factors. Nevertheless, by focusing on *patterns of political leadership* in such depth, Chima displays a large degree of sophistication in appreciating the highly complex intra- and inter-group relations that existed behind the crudely drawn 'Sikh versus New Delhi' image of the conflict.

Overall this book is definitively a worthwhile read for anyone interested in Sikh politics, and could even be of interest to scholars simply interested in the field of sub-nationalism in general.

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Anjali Gera Roy, *Bhangra Moves: From Ludhiana to London and Beyond*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010 + 289 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-5823-8 (hb) £60.00.

Anjali Gera Roy's ethnomusicological masterpiece *Bhangra Moves* presents a uniquely Indian vantage point on the phenomenon of bhangra. Bhangra is commonly understood as the hybrid music produced through mixing Punjabi folk elements with western pop and black dance rhythms, and it has been studied predominantly in a diasporized domain. In the 1990s and 2000s bhangra acquired an allure for white consumers, and its popularization under the patronizing terms of Asian Kool has been critiqued as an instance of musical production at the periphery being appropriated for the consumption of the core. However, as Gera Roy argues, "not much has been said about Bhangra's return

to India where it is caught up in quite different cultural battles" (p.3). To do this, she leads us through a rich and complex reading of bhangra in a global frame, drawing on poststructuralist and postcolonial theory. Her analysis is well-written and erudite as much as it is humorous. Her vibrant and fun writing style seems to mirror the genre, as she insists on bhangra as a foot-tapping musical form, "something that persuades through providing pleasure… to understand the linkage between *nachna-tapna* (dancing and jumping) and cultural identity" (p.26).

The ethnography starts off with the 'return' of diasporic bhangra mutants to Punjab, where traditionalists consider it "not bhangra at all". Rather than offering a folkloric genealogy in terms of Punjabi harvest rituals, she shows that bhangra is an archetypal reinvented tradition, a postcolonial musical form that compressed the diverse dance forms of pre-partition Punjab (*jhummar*, *luddi*, *dhamal*, *sammi*, *gidha* etc), which were distinguished by gender, movement, region, function or context, into a single vigorous and manly amalgamation. She pinpoints the inception of bhangra as we know it to the performance of a nostalgic dance medley by students of Mahindra College in the early 1950s, which attracted the approval of the Maharaja of Patiala (p.56). Bhangra was therefore formalized through a collaboration of feudal and institutional interests in a postcolonial gesture of inventing Punjabi cultural identity or the *punjabiyat*. She then takes us through a series of encounters to narrate how it was that bhangra returned to India charged with diasporic subcultural capital.

The chapter on bhangra's circulation in global commodity markets shows it to be the most successful instance of brand marketing in recent history. The Indian music industry, cashing in on bhangra's success overseas, successfully placed bhangra as urban and diasporic as well as rustic, appealing to metropolitan youth as well as Punjabi truck drivers and *dukandar*s throughout India. Importantly, she shows that bhangra's cooption into Bollywood as a genre signifying family togetherness and earnest courtship as well as vulgar item number has appropriated the Punjabi 'body-in-pleasure' for the services of the entire nation. Similarly, the post-liberalization flourishing of TV channels from MTV to ETC Punjabi allowed Punjabi to rupture the hegemony of Hindi-Urdu in the national public sphere. She also recasts debates about exploitation and argues powerfully that "rather than a centralized world economy in which the production of the periphery is appropriated for the consumption of the core, the bhangra industry functions through an unconventional division of labour where performers, industry and media mutually coopt and cannibalize one another" (p.119). The consumption of bhangra on TV is important as this medium prefigures the performance aspects of bhangra. She moves beyond Brian Axel's account of the centrality of the body in Sikh subjectivity through the Khalsa signifiers, and points out intersections with the Rajput *sardar* and the *jat* landowner which coalesce into a corporeal ideal of *lamba uchcha gabru* (robust and masculine). Thus, the iconic figure of Punjabi masculinity has moved from the fighting and laughing colonial Sikh body to the bleeding body post 1984 and

returned as the dancing bhangra body in the 1990s, and moreover, an aesthetic of 'body-in-pleasure' which the nation borrows through re-enacting its kinesics. Another important intervention is in her analysis of the *bolian* (lyrics), where she reverses the celebratory accounts in cultural studies concerning the boundary-effacing mixing of black and Punjabi lyrics British Asian dance music by showing how these moments of lyrical fusion actually accentuate cultural difference rather than similarity. Whilst she agrees that the bhangra trans-nation is open to Punjabis and non-Punjabis alike, and points to the ambiguity of the bodies of diasporic bhangra artists whose appearance defies categorisation as Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, she insists that the use of Punjabi *bolian* protects cultural interiority and allows the encoding of nostalgia for a primordial *punjabiyat*.

In a book so rich in scholarly interventions it is hard to do justice to them all. Two questions that remained underexplored were why she neglects the possibility of female or queer performances of bhangra in her haste to see bhangra as an essentially masculine genre. We learn that the widespread perception of *giddha* as the female dance form to bhangra's male dance form is wrong, but the book stops short of any further comment. It would also have been helpful to have a more sustained analysis of how it is that bhangra has been reinvented as the patrimony of Punjabi Sikhs at the expense of Hindus and Muslims, and of the different postcolonial history of bhangra in Pakistan and its diaspora. The big ethnomusicological intervention may be her delineation of three different modes of bhangra which come out of this return – *punjabibhangra*, *desibhangra* and *vilayetibhangra*, domains respectively presided over by Gurdas Mann, Malkit Singh and Daler Mehndi (p.49-101). For Punjab studies, it is probably her masterful exposition of the contemporary 'bhangrascape', using the metaphor of the five rivers and their capillaries to "subvert global hegemonies by altering the relations between diasporas and homelands, the global and local music industry, cosmopolitans and locals, and producers and consumers to provide new virtual communities in which marginalized rusticity is valorized" (p.12).

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Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan: Perspectives on Community, Land, and Economy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010) xix + 475 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-547723-8 (hb) Rs.1295.

In 1949, Zekiye Eglar arrived in Pakistan to embark upon a project that would become the first of its kind; an ethnographic account of life in a Punjabi village in the newly created state. Eglar would spend the next five years in Mohla, a village in the Gujrat District, where she would learn Punjabi and work closely with Fazal Ahmed Chowdhry, the head of the village and an American-educated

artist, in order to more deeply embed herself within the everyday dynamics of rural life. First published in 1960, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*, would quickly come to assume the status of a seminal text in a field that had, until then, been crowded by colonial treatises written for the District Gazetteers and the erstwhile Board of Economic Inquiry.

In addition to the original text, this new edition of *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* also includes a second book, *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village*, a previously unpublished manuscript that was prepared by Eglar as a sequel to her original work on Mohla. The two books are accompanied by an Introduction, an Epilogue, and a short but deeply interesting biography of Zekiye Eglar, all of which have been written by Beena Sarwar with some assistance from Fazal Ahmed Chowdhry, Eglar's companion and principal informant during her stay in Pakistan. The Introduction to the two books provides a brief summary of the contents while also outlining the significance of the texts not only as pioneering works when they were first written, but also as guides for subsequent work in this area. In this context, it is possible to see how, despite the passage of five decades since it was first published, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* retains some relevance for those interested in the dynamics of rural life in the Punjabi countryside.

The first book is split into two substantive sections. Through successive chapters, the first of these sections provides an account of the village and its inhabitants, focusing in particular on questions of *biraderi*, kinship, and the rhythms of rural life. Here, despite the richness of the ethnographic detail presented by Eglar, the narrative remains largely descriptive, seldom delving into a more detailed analysis of what is being observed. This is perhaps most evident in Eglar's discussions of *biraderi* and *seyp* labour¸ both of which she sees as being key to the social and economic stratification of the village populace. *Seyp* was a long-term, contractual between landlord and artisan, or between artisans, with the former providing payment in kind for services rendered by the latter.

For Eglar, *biraderi* is an important marker of group identity and status which also serves to underpin the occupational segregation that underpins the interdependent village economy. However, the potential for *biraderi* and the *seyp* relationship to impede social mobility, and to serve as the basis for economic exploitation in the guise of interdependence, remains largely unexplored. Hamza Alavi and Saghir Ahmad (and later, Shahnaz Rouse), writing soon after *A Punjabi Village* was published, would provide a more critical examination of this question, noting the economic and political implications of the traditional rural hierarchy in Punjab. In this sense, Eglar's omission of any discussion of politics in the village is also curious; by the time Eglar left Mohla in 1955, elections to both the Provincial Assembly and District Boards had taken place in Punjab. While these events would have presumably had some impact on life in the village, no mention is made of them, or of the way in which they may have shed light on power dynamics within the village.

In contrast with the first section of the book, the second section, devoted almost entirely to *vartan bhanji*, the ritualized and reciprocal exchange of gifts

between households, provides for a much more rewarding read. Tracing out first exactly what *vartan bhanji* is, and then how it is put into practice, Eglar's focus shifts towards the primary role played by women in the ritual; despite being used to strengthen bonds of kinship and economic exchange, it is women who undertake the responsibilities of the ritual, and play a key part in facilitating it. As argued by Eglar, this is all the more important when bearing in mind that this ritual exchange of gifts contributes strongly towards sustaining and reinforcing the interdependent system of social and economic relationships in Mohla. Eglar's emphasis on women and *vartan bhanji*, which illuminates the often overlooked yet multifaceted nature of female participation in rural public life, is echoed by other observations made in the book. Far from performing purely passive roles within the confines of their homes, Eglar finds the women of Mohla to be deeply involved in the management of their households, and in the processes of agriculture, commodity production and exchange.

A Punjabi Village ends with a chapter on Mohla in a changing world, in which Eglar documents the way in which many of her findings, particularly with regards to economic production and interdependence, would potentially be transformed by the impact of agrarian reform and urbanization. To an extent, *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village* represented an attempt to set the context for these changes, providing a more exhaustive account of economic relations in the village prior to the reforms. In this respect, as well as revisiting some of the material presented in the first book, the second also shares some of the first's deficiencies. Eglar begins the book with a few chapters devoted to the history, social organization, and demographics of the village, before moving on to descriptions of land ownership patterns and agriculture. As was the case in the first Punjab, Eglar brings a considerable amount of detail to bear on her account, documenting the roles and position of individual families and groups in the entire production process. This is best demonstrated by the chapter on Khushi, a tenant farmer whose work and economic decisions are used to provide a description of economic life, as well as the constraints faced by individual villagers. Thus, while a discussion of exploitation and domination is still lacking, Eglar nonetheless acknowledges, and shows, that the inequitable access to land and surplus does limit the potential for social mobility. Alongside the chapters on agriculture and production, Eglar also includes three chapters on the role of cattle in Mohla. The prima facie incongruity of this inclusion is quickly cleared up when understanding Eglar's interest in livestock; in addition to providing milk and horsepower, cattle also help to regulate the rhythm of village life, and inform the barter relationship between different individuals and groups.

In her Epilogue to both books, Beena Sarwar revisits Mohla and attempts to document the changes that have taken place there since Eglar did her fieldwork in the 1950s. Mohla in 2008 is, according to Sarwar, radically different from the village that Eglar visited. In addition to being much more heavily populated than before, Mohla is now virtually a suburb of the city of Gujrat, linked as it is to that city, as well as Punjab's other major urban centres, by a road network that

had simply not existed in Eglar's time. Increased urban linkages have brought economic opportunity to Mohla which, coupled with the remittances from migrant workers in the Gulf, have allowed the village to experience a considerable degree of prosperity. Significantly, the occupational stratification, artisanal commodity production and *seyp* relationships that Eglar observed have all but disappeared, replaced by wage labour and industry. Unsurprisingly, *vartan bhanji* continues to exist in a vestigial form at best, having declined in importance as the interdependent village economy disappeared. Although the general picture that is painted of contemporary Mohla is one of progress, it is clear that this is due in no small part to the village's propitious proximity to a reasonably large hub of urban economic activity. In the more rural parts of Punjab, where mechanized agriculture and increasingly skewed landownership patterns continue to shape the agrarian economy, it is possible to see the breakdown of the social relationships that Eglar documented without the benefit of the growth witnessed in Mohla.

A Punjabi Village therefore remains an important text, not only because of its richly detailed account of life in rural Punjab, but also because of the insights it gives us into the extent, and effect, of the change that has since taken place in the province. The inclusion of *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village* in this new edition provides additional information on the economy of Mohla that partially addresses some of the shortcomings of the original volume. Furthermore, Eglar's work on *vartan bhanji*, and the centrality of women to the social and economic life of Mohla, continues to serve as a vital contribution to our understanding of gender roles in a Punjabi village. The book remains a necessary read for those interested in ethnography, and the socio-economic dynamics of rural Punjab.

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Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo! The Hidden Culture of a Red Light Area,* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011 2nd (ed) + 336 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-906279-9 (pb) Rs595.

This new edition of *Taboo!* marks ten years since the book was first published, and it has been supplemented by an epilogue from the author, reflecting on the book's reception as a cult phenomenon. The *shahi mohalla* red light district of Lahore is iconic, and has been explored in two other monograph-length works since *Taboo!* was published: Feryal Ali Gauhar's (2002) *The Scent of Wet Earth in August* and Louise Brown's (2005) *The Dancing Girls of Lahore*, both of which are characterised by a blend of ethnographic observation and fictionalized narrative. In a recent critical essay, Kamran Asdar Ali (2005) questions the fascination that the figure of the *tawaif* or courtesan holds for South Asian viewing and reading publics, as a stock character in countless morality tales that abound on screen and in pulp and highbrow fiction. He asks why there has been

such a proliferation of works on the life-world of the prostitute, by the liberal intelligentsia as well as the media. What is the nature of the debate on morality, sexuality and gender politics taking place through the figure of the courtesan, where extra-marital sex remains a crime against the state and where memories of severe punishment for sexual liaisons under the Hudood Ordinance of the Zia era in the 1980s still resonate among the public?

Fouzia Saeed's book captures explicitly this mixture of liberal, feminist impulse with the titillation that the figure of the prostitute produces in Pakistan, and the production of the book – with its photographs of dancing girls with their calves strung with bells, men showering money over dancing girls and prostitutes at their doorsteps waiting for clients – accentuates this effect. The topics discussed in the text range from the political life of the *mohalla*, police abuse, rivalries and interdependencies between musicians and *kanjar*s [the pimp/prostitute caste], competition from prostitutes outside the *kanjar* caste of the *mohalla*, the aspirations of young girls to become film stars, to tangled family relationships, generational gaps and anxieties over 'getting their daughters married'. She attends to the *mohalla*'s internal discourses of lamenting the decline from the noble stock of *tawaif*, which is reflected the *nawab* clientele being replaced by common men off the street who are more interested in prostitution than courtly dance and recital. Saeed stamps over these stories the message that women of the *shahi mohalla* are not so different from their counterparts in the larger respectable society.

However, this objective is hamstrung by her persistent exotifying of the women of the *mohalla* through the narrative style she adopts. In *Taboo!* we find the author struggling with her positionality between an academic, a fiction writer and an activist. As an activist, she claims "my book is about eliminating the social stigma associated with women in this profession" (p.xxi). She declares that a "straight academic treatment of this subject would not be a good way to achieve this objective" (p.xix), yet she sounds like a positivist ethnographer when she says "I show these people as they are" (p.xix). She is also a feminist researcher who wants to be visible in her work. Towards the end, and especially in the epilogue to the new edition, the author goes into scholarly mode as she tries to develop her theory of 'good women' and 'bad women' and the politics of morality. Of the many stories that run parallel in the book one is of Saeed's transformation from a curious visitor at a *kotha* to a myth-buster, an international expert and consultant on gender issues in Pakistan, and, of course, celebrity author of *Taboo!* She vividly describes how her journey as a woman was fraught with disapproval from family and friends, how her colleagues at Lok Virsa turned against her because they did not like her work, and how she was intimidated by police for carrying out fieldwork in the *mohalla*. Once she overcame these difficulties, she not only managed to win over her family and friends but also started confiding in them her field findings—the 'juicy stories' that they seem to have anticipated from her fieldwork. At one point she tours American visitors around the *mohalla* with a group of her urban cousins who

covered their faces with *dupatta*s to avoid being seen in the *mohalla* by future husband and in-laws. The visitors seem to have thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of being so close to these forbidden women and actually being able to touch them "as if they were objects" (p.86). At personal level, Saeed hardly speaks about her anxieties, internal struggles, and the transformations during the course of this journey from a lay observer to a 'feminist researcher' of prostitution. In other words, it appears as if she renders herself visible to the reader only to the extent that she is "a PhD girl in the red light area" (p.13). A careful reading, however, would suggest that unlike some ethnographies which strive to give voice to the people they study, in *Taboo!* it's Saeed who speaks through her respondents rather than vice versa. So, readers should not be puzzled when they find a respondent presenting academically coherent and theoretically informed arguments favouring of women's empowerment or lamenting patriarchy.

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P. Panayi *Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) xxvii + 305 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-22747-7 (hb) £55.00.

Though there exist a multitude of reasons for how and why a given populace becomes forcibly exiled, this edited volume attempts to advance an underlying linkage between imperial collapse and refugee creation. Such a connection seems perfectly plausible, for history is testimony to the fact that the much of the adverse humanitarian consequences associated with imperial rule manifests itself not so much during periods of strength (i.e. when empires have consolidated their territorial gains and developed structured relations with their subjects) but rather during periods of expansion and contraction. Moreover the humanitarian consequences of imperial collapse seldom fall upon its subjects, or former subjects, equally. Rather, as this volume makes abundantly apparent, it is often the case that certain groups or communities have tended to suffer more than others as a result.

    Despite choosing to focus its attention exclusively on the twentieth century, this book can hardly be accused of lacking breadth. The earlier chapters shed light on the collapse of two grand empires as a result of World War I, namely the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman, with Thorpe focusing on the former, and Chatty and Rowe paying attention to the latter. There are also some extremely

well researched contributions from Panayi, Talbot, Levene and Frank, which offer a refreshing comparative dimension to the literature on refugee studies. This book also includes a collection of chapters, by Virdee, Chattha, Sen and Robertson concentrating on the end of British colonial rule in India and Uganda, in terms of its direct and indirect consequences. In this latter section, Virdee's chapter 'No Home but in Memory' is a particularly fascinating read, not least because it offers an oral history take on both sides of divided Punjab, Indian and Pakistani.

The main objective of this volume was to explain how and why forced migration was so inextricably linked to imperial collapse and undoubtedly, through the range of contributions made by the various authors, it has more than achieved this. It is evident to the reader that aggressive forms of nationalism tend to emerge in support, or indeed in opposition, to collapsing or collapsed empires. As such, when these groups manage to articulate territorial claims, owing to the gaping power vacuum left behind by imperial collapse, there exists an underlying compulsion to 'naturalise' the link between this demarcated space and its national populace. This inevitably leads to minority groups within such territories becoming increasingly vulnerable to persecution and forced exile.

Overall, owing to the comparative nature, and also area specific focus, of this volume, it constitutes a 'must have' for any student of refugee studies, or indeed anyone studying the last days, and legacies, of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, and of course the impact of British departure from the Indian-subcontinent.

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Ali Nobil Ahmad, *Masculinity, Sexuality and Illegal Migration: Human Smuggling from Pakistan to Europe*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011 + 215 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-0975-5 (hb) £55.00.

Ali Nobil Ahmad's monograph offers far-reaching critiques of orthodox migration studies. This is a literature that was for a long time fixated with economistic push-and-pull explanations. Of late, it has been dominated by social networks and transnationalism, frameworks which disqualify questions about the causes or consequences of migration in favour of understanding its intermediary processes. In contrast, Ahmad takes seriously what has been called 'migration culture', setting out a new and original theoretical model that sheds light on why so many thousands of young men from Pakistani Punjab have set out in the last decades for an increasingly perilous journey across central Asia to the West.

The book is based on detailed life histories. There are three main pools of interviews: with post-war old-timers in East London; with recent illegal migrants in London, namely 'freshies'; and with illegal migrants in Florence, Italy. These are supplemented with updated interviews from Lahore and Peshawar, including

encounters with smugglers and deportees. These sites allow him to make comparisons across historical regimes of migration, labour and welfare, as well as across spaces located differently in transit routes and final destinations. All of his informants are men, a point which is significant for the analysis that follows. His data are intimate and sustained, which is itself a considerable achievement given the level of familiarity needed for an illegal migrant to speak trustingly about his situation.

Of the many interventions laid out in the book, three stand out as particularly important. First, the notion that men are sent overseas to improve their families' lot is set upside-down. Probing the recesses of their memories, and offering explanations seldom heard in migration studies, the old-timers explain that their decision to migrate was often undertaken in the face of parental opposition and, even more often, pleas from their spouses that they should not go. If the impetus was not the family, what was it then? Ahmad spells out the importance of influences outside family and household, prising open the working of homosociality, male friendship and networks of class-fellows, colleagues and neighbourhood in which speculative gossip circulated about the prosperity of those who went abroad. These old-timers, now grey-bearded patriarchs and respectable members of mosque committees, were moved by a sense of adventure and exploration, a desire to see the colonial metropole for themselves rather than experiencing it second-hand. More interesting, from the perspective of recent postcolonial theory exploring race and desire, is their curiosity about white people and freedom, which Ahmad relates to the men's experiences of chilling out with bourgeois white youths enjoying hash-hazed years on the hippy trail. The England-returnees returned to their villages to display themselves in starched white *salwar kamiz* and gold watches, and were described as having turned white in their skin colour too. Ahmad sees their white clothes, gold watches and disposable cash as sperm-like, circulating fetishes of male potency.

These themes endure in his interviews with freshies too. Not only did they often leave without their families' knowledge, or coerce their families into paying to have them smuggled, by using outbursts of *zid* and *nakhra*, but some even talk about desiring to be free from their families, no matter what happened to them when they went abroad. Ahmad locates this desire in growing up in a repressive culture offering few opportunities for sexual exploration. They wanted to go abroad and do *aiashi*. Mess around, and mess around with girls. These dynamics are no doubt significant in Indian Punjabi migration too.

Ahmad understands these drives through George Bataille, whose lurid work centred on "the disavowed extremes of human experience, and the way these are grounded in economies of expenditure and erotic desire" (p.33). Bataille offers a 'strangely ethical vision' helping to theorize that "human needs defy the logic of utilitarianism – to engage in costly and often ruinous risks" (p.36). As well as making sense of the erotic undertones in the men's migration stories, it also helps to comprehend their journeys through Europe and its economies. This brings us to the second important intervention: understanding illegal migration. Bataille

distinguishes between restrictive and general economies. Europe's restrictive economy generates booms and busts that have produced a flow of migrants so excessive that labour demand bears no relation to labour supply. This excess is "siphoned off, wasted and diverted elsewhere as deemed fit by core, rich countries" (p.5) and periodically expelled out of its bowels through raids on illegal migrants, arrests, deportation, and repatriation into the clutches of the FIA. Illegal migration, which Ahmad shows to have been present but un-analysed in earlier post-war Commonwealth migration, is a giddying, vertiginous endeavour of death-like risk-taking. He offers gut-wrenching reflections on the Mediterranean, which swallows brown bodies on banana boats into its belly and spits them out as bobbing corpses, and on oversight by border authorities, which tacitly permit migrant bodies-that-don't-matter to cross in suffocating lorries and car boots, or treacherous routes by foot and in the hands of unscrupulous agents, to feed Europe's low-pay economies.

His third intervention is to point to the importance of timing in differentiating migrant experience in Europe's economies. The old-timers, who arrived in time to enjoy the favourable capital-labour relations under the Fordist regimes of the 1970s, were haunted by a myth of return and an unfulfilled desire to sojourn in England and go back to Pakistan. By contrast, the freshies work in a precarious, flexible, new economy and are haunted, rather, by a myth of arrival – never managing to quite get themselves established, eking out a livelihood of perennial insecurity, never sure when they might be picked up by the authorities and sent back, never able to call over their spouses and enjoy the privileges of reproductive life. Moreover, they are exploited by the old-timers who came before them. Social networks are shown here cannibalizing themselves, rather than generating value and capital.

The book is not as informative as it might have been on the sending contexts in Punjab. In particular, we learn little about why Gujrat, Gujranwala and Mandi Bahuddin have the highest rates of human smuggling to Europe, although other work suggests that the capture of the police and other state institutions and the proliferation of firearm-holding by exploitative landlords with a brazen disregard for human life might be important contributing factors in these districts. The *biradari* dimensions of emigration are also not explored, though Christine Moliner has suggested that the domination of migrant networks by Jats means that lower castes are more likely to get stuck on mainland Europe and fail to make the final journey over the English Channel. Ahmad's representation of Pakistani culture as sexually repressive is a bit stylized and could have benefited from a more nuanced literature, for example Thomas Walle, Filippo and Caroline Osella or Mark Liechty. However, it is very strong on human smuggling, travel, transit and the new migrant economies in Europe, and offers richer analysis of any of these areas than any other work I can think of.

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Roger Connah, *The Rest is Silence: Zahoor ul Akhlaq. Art and Society in Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), xvii + 390pp, ISBN 978-0-19-547472-5 (hb), Pak Rs. 2,000.

As thousands of visitors make their way to the Asia Triennial Manchester, Pakistani artists Adeela Suleman (1970-) and Rashid Rana (1968-) play a leading role respectively in the local Cathedral and at the Cornerhouse. Their outstanding creativity and exceptional ability to project the anxieties and the rich tapestry of their cultural, political and social context into their art allow them to be a success with critics. Back in 2006 the same city hosted *Beyond the Page: Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, an exhibition where Zahoor ul-Akhlaq (1941-1999), versatile artist whose works resonate in both Suleman and Rana's art, got a further chance to shine as the father of Pakistani art. Roger Connah, in his recent *The Rest is Silence: Zahoor ul Akhlaq. Art and Society in Pakistan*, embarks on the first-ever attempt to make accessible to a wider audience the life of a painter, designer and sculptor that is at the root of contemporary art in independent Pakistan.

   Any attempt to summarise Connah's book fails to grasp and explain its complex and multi-faceted analysis of Zahoor ul-Akhlaq's oeuvre and personality. A journey into the biographer's discovery of Pakistan and the artist and into the artist's mind and cultural context, *The Rest is Silence* drags its reader into a fierce battle of the senses rather than into a mainstream academic analysis on the Pakistani painter's painter. Indeed, its pages echo the notes and rhythms of Nusrat Fateh Ali's *qawwalis*, smell of the pungent and spicy aroma of Pakistani dishes, and smear the dust of the hundreds of documents that Connah found in Akhlaq's studio over readers' fingerprints. Despite its three-book structure (1. Fragments from a Critical Life; 2. Critical Fictions; 3. Strange history), the biography shapes as a *sui generis* interior monologue that hides a sophisticated interwoven three-level plot and narrative framework. First, Zahoor ul-Akhlaq emerges here as the epitome of Pakistani history. Born in a family that had fled from India in the wake of Independence in 1947, he underwent the estrangement of the Pakistani Diaspora in North America and the United Kingdom and soothed his nostalgia away only through his return to his homeland. An emotional description of his mood and inner feelings mirrors the words of Ardeshir Cowasjee's obituary and depicts Akhlaq as "a man of words, pacifist, the gentlest man imaginable who could probably not even swat a fly […] [a] close and most reliably unreliable friend" (Cowasjee, 1999). Secondly, as he intermingles private events with public ones, Connah gives voice to the memories of some of the hundreds of students that squeezed in Akhlaq's classes at the National College of Arts, Lahore, his colleagues, friends and simple acquaintances. It is in those tiny spaces where public and private interact that the reader finds the ethos of Akhlaq's art and, in the last resort, the biography itself:

"a constant dialogue, a constant discourse, constant action and constant self-analysis" (p. 304). By digging into the records of these multiple conversations, the author finally examines in detail the aesthetic, philosophical and artistic foundations that underpin Akhlaq's oeuvre. Indeed, Cubism, the Banhaus art, Paul Klee, Islamic calligraphy, Mughal miniatures, Georg F. W. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Jacob Burckhardt or John P. Berger – just to quote a few of them – come into question and substantiate all the images that are disseminated across the whole book and in the final appendix/portfolio.

The Rest is Silence is an engaging and interesting biography that merges history with art, personal stories with world events and narration with paintings and sculptures. Unfortunately, the quality of the images that are reproduced all throughout the book does not do justice to Akhlaq's chromatic choices, expressivity and sinuous or geometric shapes. The book will be a particular boon to general readers and informed researchers that want to explore the twists and turns of one of the finest minds of Pakistani art and to engage in a learned analysis of the creative background that informs all the emerging local artists.

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In Remembrance

Dr. Amrik Singh (1920-2010)

Dr Amrik Singh, a very distinguished Indian educationist with deep interest in Punjab, died at the age of 89 in Delhi on March 22, 2010.

He was born on September 20, 1920 at Abbotabad, now in Pakistan. He studied at Khalsa College, Amritsar and Government College, Lahore before going to University College, London where he obtained his doctorate in English. He taught at Delhi University and Punjabi University, Patiala and spent a year as a Visiting Professor of Educational Policy at University of Wisconsin in 1969-70. He edited two journals, *Journal of University Education* and the *Indian Book Chronicler: News and Reviews*, for many years. He was also active in the Delhi University Teachers Association and became the Secretary of the Association of Indian Universities, a position he held for 17 years. In 1977, he took up the Vice Chancellorship of Punjabi University, Patiala and tried to radicalise teaching, research and administration and, therefore, faced fierce resistance from entrenched interests there. He summed up that experience in a book *Asking for Trouble: What it Means to be a Vice-Chancellor Today*. The book generated a lot of controversy and has almost become a classic as a critical commentary on the state of university education and administration in India. What was most interesting about Dr Amrik Singh's stint as a Vice-Chancellor was that he left the post before completing the tenure when he realised that he could not accomplish the changes he wanted to. This was in sharp contrast with most Vice-Chancellors in India who try to hang on to the position as long as they can because of the perks and power the office provides them. Dr Amrik Singh rated his academic achievements more highly than the attractions of that or any other administrative office.

An anecdote is worth telling here. Dr Mahip Singh told me that he was once on the national committee that decides Indian awards such as Padma Bhushan etc. and that he suggested to Dr Amrik Singh that he (Dr Amrik Singh) deserved that honour. Dr Mahip Singh further suggested that in order to follow the procedure he could get some one to nominate him, as it was certain that the committee would select him for one of the awards. Dr Amrik Singh flatly refused to do that and said that he was not interested in any of those awards. For him, what mattered was the respect he received from his academic profession and not state awards.

Dr Amrik Singh viewed himself as an acute observer of the education system in India as a whole and did not have any particularly strong interest in Punjab Studies until 1984. The Operation Blue Star and the November 1984 anti-Sikh carnage changed that. Although he was rooted in his cultural and religious identity as a Sikh, his outlook on political matters was broadly secular

and left-wing. 1984 provoked him to examine Punjab and Sikh issues from that progressive outlook. Up until then, we did not know each other and until one day, in late 1984, I received a letter from him that he had read and liked my articles in the *Economic and Political Weekly* on the government media' coverage of Operation Blue Star and that he would be thankful if I could contribute an article on the coverage of the entire Punjab crisis by both the government and non-government media for a book he was editing on the Punjab crisis. A few days after that, he landed at my house in Chandigarh. I was a bit overwhelmed. I was at the start of my academic career and he was already an educationist of international repute. But I was relieved to find very quickly that for Dr Amrik Singh, these academic hierarchies did not matter. What he valued was the relationship of ideas. We nearly became friends transcending age and status hierarchies. I gladly accepted the invitation to write the article he had requested, but I took time to complete it. One day, another letter came with just two sentences: 'The book is being withheld from publishing because your contribution has not arrived. That is unfair'. I replied to him only by posting the completed article. The book *Punjab in Indian Politics: Issues and Trends* (1985) in my view will remain to be one of the best edited collections on many dimensions of the Punjab crisis.

I spent nearly a year as a Visiting Professor at JNU in 2009 and when I met Dr Amrik Singh, he said that it was not good enough to write books sitting in Oxford and asked me that I should contribute articles for newspapers in India and finally got me to contribute to *The Tribune*. He was a teacher and public intellectual who believed that those who have had the privilege of good education have a moral duty to share their learning with the wider public. He was weak in health but was still contributing articles to *The Tribune* and *The Hindustan Times* on a regular basis on a very wide range of issues concerning teaching methods, curriculum development, assessment methods, research and administration in Indian education. His views and observations on all aspects of the education system were taken note of by policy makers. He became the most well known observer of Indian education. One indicator of the esteem he enjoyed was that his cremation on March 24 was personally attended by the Vice- President of India Hamid Ansari and the Chief Minister of Delhi Sheila Dixit. The President of India and the Prime Minister sent messages of condolences to the family.

Dr Amrik Singh played a leading role in setting up the National Institute of Punjab Studies in New Delhi. Through that, he has left a rich legacy to Punjab Studies.

He is survived by his wife Harsharan Kaur, son Pradeep Singh, a retired IAS officer, and daughter Rachna, a pottery artist.

Pritam Singh
March, 2011

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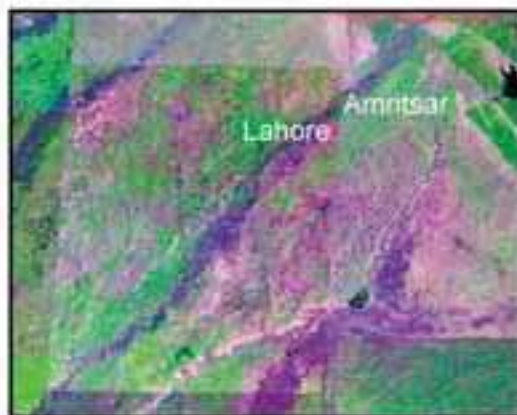Dates should be given in the form 11 March 2001; 1997-99.
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Centered around the cities of Amritsar and Lahore, the region of Punjab spreads from Delhi in the Southeast to Peshawar in the Northwest, and connects the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and the Middle East. Beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization, the region has played a pivotal role in the cultural, economic, and political development of India. The *Journal of Punjab Studies* is a forum for interdisciplinary and comparative scholarship on the region of Punjab and Punjabis living overseas.