

**DEPICTION OF SIKH CULTURE
IN INDO-ENGLISH FICTION**

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS
PANJAB UNIVERSITY
CHANDIGARH

By

Manasvi Yadav



DEPARTMENT OF GURU NANAK SIKH STUDIES
PANJAB UNIVERSITY, CHANDIGARH

1991

". . . He who is truthful , contented and compassionate towards all, he who is free from covetousness and hate , he who is harmless, dispassionate and desireless, he who is self-controlled and has learnt to distinguish between right and wrong, who surrenders himself to the supreme God and learns to abide by His will , such a harmonized person has entered the path of discipleship of Guru Nanak."

— M. Mujeeb

Presidential Address in Papers on Guru Nanak .

(Patiala : Panjab University, 1970)

DEPARTMENT OF GURU NANAK SIKH STUDIES
PANJAB UNIVERSITY, CHANDIGARH-160014

Dr. DARSHAN SINGH
Prof. & Chairman

No. /DGNS.

Dated 198 .

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Depiction of Sikh Culture in Indo-English Fiction" submitted to the Panjab University, Chandigarh, for the award of Ph.D. degree by Sh. Manasvi Yadav has been prepared under my supervision. This thesis is an original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been submitted in any other University for the Ph.D. degree.

Darshan Singh
(Darshan Singh)
Supervisor
&
Chairman.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Depiction of Sikh Culture in Indo-English Fiction " being submitted by Manasvi Yadav for the award of Ph. D. degree to the Panjab University, Chandigarh has been prepared under my joint supervision. This thesis is an original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been submitted in any other University for the Ph.D. degree.

R. K. Srivastava
SUPERVISOR

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Both Sikhism as a philosophy and the Sikhs as a religious group have been subjects of fierce controversy and curiosity in the present century. Politicians, social reformers and writers have shown equal interest in the matter. The net result has been that 'Panjabiat' has come to be considered to be a very important issue in contemporary thinking. In creative writings of India, especially of the northern zone, culturally conscious and sociologically oriented writers have endeavoured to understand the special features of the psyche of the disciples of such a saint as Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and a saint-soldier as Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), and have made assessments of their contribution to cultural ethos of the country as much as the political spectrum of today.

The present task involved understanding of the history and philosophy of Sikhism, the various rituals and activities of the Sikhs, and the interpretation of the intent and execution of the ideas of the writers as reflected in the novels written in English. In this arduous assignment the help of Professor Darshan Singh has been generous. But for his benign guidance it would not have been possible to see the completion of this work. I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to him, and thank him for allowing me to work under his supervision.

I am also grateful to Professor R. K. Srivastava of G. N. D. University who acted as my Co-supervisor and helped me in a generous measure in understanding how literature can be used for cultural and historical aspects of social life and also explained to my advantage the intricate relationships of various characters of the novels I had to discuss in the thesis.

Manasvi
MANASVI YADAV

July 10, 1991

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

I	Indo-English Fiction and the Sikhs	01-- 42 44
II	Khushwant Singh . . .	45-73
III	Mulk Raj Anand . . .	74-90
IV	Chaman Nahal . . .	93-118
V	Raj Gill . . .	119-152
VI	Nayantara Sahgal . . .	155-170
VII	Minor Non-Sikh Novelists . . .	173-188
VIII	Minor Sikh Novelists . . .	189-202
IX	Conclusion : An Overview . . .	203-213
	Bibliography . . .	214-219

The words 'culture' and 'civilization' are different in connotation and yet they are confused many a time. Civilization is used for a human society which has its own highly developed social organisation and therefore is limited to science and technology whereas culture consists of the ideas, customs and art that are shared by a particular society. Thus culture is understood to be related to philosophy, religion and the arts. Culture strives to evolve the integrated man, the man who is not divided within himself and is also not against himself. A well known thinker A.L.Kroeber enumerates the quality of culture, in The Nature of Culture (1952) as follows:

1. "It is transmitted and continued not by the genetic mechanism of heredity but by inter-conditioning of zygotes.
2. Whatever its origins in or through individuals, culture quickly tends to become suprapersonal and anonymous and belongs to a whole community of people.
3. It falls into patterns or regularities of form and style and significance so that one national culture stands off distinctly from the other.
4. It embodies values which may be formulated as mores or folkways by the society carrying the culture. It is in its affect-laden idea system that the core of a culture lies. It is an objectively expressed freedom of subjective values and this is called its ethos, genius or master-pattern."

In view of the above, for the study of the culture of a civilised group of people it is necessary that the help of artists, historians, theologians and archaeologists is solicited to help built a cohesive view of the way they lived and strived

for the achievement of certain noble ends. Dr Julian Huxley wrote in History of Mankind (1946):

chief

"The chief task before the Humanities today would seem to be to help in constructing a history of the development of the human mind, notably in its highest cultural achievements."

It is this idea that impels the scholars of history to study literature as much and as well as the philosophy and religion produced and practiced by the people of the same faith.

It is worthwhile to study the special features of the culture of the Sikh community as it is understood by creative writers. The novels being extended narratives, obviously incorporate details of the socio-cultural values of the people with whom they deal. An attempt has been made here to present a view of the Sikh culture as it is understood by the Indo-English novelists and the view-point they have projected. References to the Sikh culture are not necessarily explicit or recurrent in the novels used as source material, but they are present in a good measure in the contemporary novels of the writers of the North. Naturally, the sole consideration in the selection of the novels has been their relevance to the theme, and not the stature of the novelists. This kind of study where literature is used to reconstruct history or culture has been undertaken before, no doubt, but no endeavour has been made so far to study the reflection of Sikh culture in actual life situations as depicted by the novelists of India. It is hoped, therefore, that this study will make a significant contribution to the understanding of the Sikh culture.

Literature has always been considered to be a mirror of society, more so novel, as it reflects on the culture, social manners and changes that occur in society. Indian literature is no exception, less so the Indo-English fiction which is an offshoot of the cultural integration of the Western and Eastern literary traditions. In the present form novel did not exist in India before 19th century- and this in spite of different kinds of akhyaans and Jatak tales and Panchtantra.

It was in 1864 that for the first time a novel in English was published by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) known as Raj Mohan's wife. It was a novel about a woman placed in a social context, an attempt to present experiences in the realistic mode. After this solitary attempt, the novelist decided to write in Bengali, which was his mother-tongue. But later, and gradually, others educated in the Western style came forward to express themselves creatively in English language. As a result quite a few novels appeared and it seemed that the new class of the intellectuals who had Western orientation but had roots in the Indian traditions and culture had burst upon the literary horizon of India. This new genere was not able to find its moovings for quite some time and therefore reflected haziness in its approach to the socio-political conditions of the time. It was only after Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) gave a definite direction to the mind of the nation.

in the twenties that a novelist like Mulk Raj Anand (b.1905) appeared with concerns for poor and down-trodden. He was followed by novelists like Rājā Rāo (b.1908), R.K.Nārāyan (b.1924), Anitā Desāi (b.1937), Nayantārā Sahgal (b.1927), Khushwant Singh (b.1918), Arun Joshi (b.1927) and Chaman Nahal (b.1927) and a host of others. The result is that a sizeable literature has come to be known as Indo-English fiction and is being taken as important as a social document like other literatures of the country.

As the setting of the novel is important for giving the characters a local habitation and a name, it is quite normal that socio-political and cultural moorings of the people are paid attention to and are used to give insight into the minds of the characters. English language as a foreign or second language is acquired and has a standardised form and yet like any other language it shows the impact of the mother-tongue of the user. It may be called mother-tongue interference or local variation but the fact remains that the structural aspect of language, and even its diction, reflects the peculiarity of the culture that it tends to deal with. Even sociologically the people of a particular region differ from the people of other region in their preferences, habits and even approach to socio-political or philosophical problems. It is, therefore, quite logical to believe that the special features of the life of the Sikhs get reflected whenever Sikh characters are used or the domestic or the community life of the Sikhs is presented.

Quite a few novelists from Punjab have written in English language and have earned distinction as writers. Khushwant Singh is an example. There are numerous writers who have written about Punjab with as much understanding as concern, but they are not all Sikhs, nor are they necessarily living within the area called Punjab. Rāj Gill is a Sikh writer but is a monā as he wears shorn hair and flaunts no turban. Nayantara Sahgal is a Kashmiri Brahmin who has married a Punjabi gentleman but writes with sympathy and insight about the Sikhs and their problems. Himself a Hindu, Mulk Raj Anand has dealt with the process of modernisation whether it affected the Hindus, Muslims or the Sikhs. There are even casual references to Sikh characters in such writers as B. Rājan (b.1920) who was a South Indian and had worked for some time in Delhi. It becomes clear from the above that Sikh culture and philosophy has been found attractive wherever the Sikhs have gone. From *a distance* they get distinguished with turban and hirsute appearance. They are a group of people who are easily distinguishable from others. It is curious to know how the people of this class have been treated and how their culture has been evaluated by Indian writers.

Broadly speaking, the history of thought on spiritual matters can be divided into three parts. The period of seven or eight hundred years from the time of the Upanishads to the time of Christ can be called the age of spiritual revolution as in this period man attempted to understand the real purpose

of life through magic and superstitions. The next period of 800 years from the 8th to the 16th century can be called the age of mysticism. This movement of mysticism has a pervasive experience as it was spontaneous almost everywhere. In this period the missionary attempted through religion forced by inner necessity to preach to all so that man's aspiration to establish direct and personal relationship with God could be fulfilled. This was possible through a teacher, guru or sheikh. The development of religious consciousness is circuitous and rather complex because every time this movement was modified by local requirements. From this point of view it is possible to pinpoint the sources of the ideas of Sikhism. It is associated with Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and his successors.

As Guru Nanak was against making distinctions on the basis of caste or creed, he considered Hindus and Muslims as children of God. The following can be cited to support the view that Hindus and Musalmans were considered to be one, as in essence they are human beings before being anything else:

"Some are Hindus while others are Muslims. Of the latter some are Shias and others are Sunnis. Man's caste should be considered as one.
(Manas ki jāt sabhai ekai pehchāniyo).

"Kartā, Karīm, Razāk, Rahim is the same. No other distinction should be recognised at all.

"Temple and mosque are the same. All men are alike, but they are under delusion.

"Gods, demons, heavenly dancers, singers, Muslims, Hindus wear different dresses under the condition of their countries. But they possess eyes, ears, bodies, made of the same elements, composed of earth, air, fire and water.

"Allah the unknowable, the Puranas and the Quran are the same. All are the manifestations of one and one is the creator of all".

(from Jap Sāhib)

And again:

"Even in error deem not the god of Hindus,
To be other than the God of Muslims,
Worship the one God,
Recognize the Enlightener.
All men have the same human form,
In all men blazes the same light"

(from Akal Ustāf)

In his Bachittar Nātak, Chandi Di Wār and in other portions of Dasam Granth, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) used a number of symbolic references to Hindu Mythology. His battle cry which is very popular among the Sikhs, viz. "Deh Shivā bar mohe ehai..." (Chandi Charitrā). Guru Nanak himself was a believer in the equality of all human beings. This is why in the history of the Sikhs, the following examples are important which have been identified by Satyapāl Dang in Genesis of Terrorism:

--Out of the two permanent companions of Guru Nanak who worked with him for over 24 years, one was Mardana, a Muslim musician.

--The foundation stone of the "Har Mandir" (Golden Temple) at Amritsar was laid by the Muslim saint, Mian Mir, who also interceded though unsuccessfully with Emperor Jahangir's officials of commutation of the death sentence of Guru Arjan Dev. Nevertheless he protested vehemently with total disregard for the dangers involved.

--The 10th Guru, Gobind Singh, was helped by the Muslim saint Pir Budhu Shah of Sadhaura who lost hundreds of his men and two of his sons in the service of the Guru in the battle of Bhangani in the year 1688. In the battle of Anandpur in 1702 two Muslims commanded the forces of the Guru in the battle against the Mughal troops. And, finally, Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan saved him from being captured by the Mughal officials when they were pursuing him after he had lost the battle.

--Bhai Ghanaya was a water-carrier with the Khalsa army when the sikhs complained to the Guru that he supplied water even to the injured Muslim soldiers, Ghanaya replied in the Guru's presence that he saw only the Guru's face in the faces of the Sikh and the Muslim soldiers" 1

Although it is not possible to pinpoint the qualities of a Sikh, it will be proper to quote Guru Nanak, as paraphrased by M. Mujeeb in his Presidential Address included in Papers on Guru Nanak (edited by Fauja Singh and A.C. Arora):

1. Satyapal Dang, Genesis of Terrorism: An Analytical Study of Panjab Terrorists (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1989), p.43.

"He who is truthful, contented and compassionate towards all, he who is free from covetousness and hate, he who is harmless, dispassionate and desireless, he who is self-controlled and has learnt to distinguish between right and wrong, he who surrenders himself to the supreme God and learns to abide by His will, such a harmonized person has entered the path of discipleship"²

In course of *time*, of course, historical facts, motivated attitude and approaches have modified our views on Sikhs and their Culture, but the essential features remain. This is why it will be relevant here to trace the genesis and growth of the Sikh traditions through a recapitulation of the important landmarks in the history of the Sikhs.

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the first guru. It finally took the shape of Khalsa Panth in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the tenth Guru. Its philosophy is contained in the religious, poetic compositions (Gurbani) of guru Nanak, expounded in the Shabads of the other five gurus and elucidated in the ballads (vars) of Bhai Gurdas, a devout Sikh relative and contemporary of Arjun (1554-1606), the sixth guru. Although there are controversies about the sources of Sikhism, Khushwant Singh maintains: "It was born out of wedlock between Hinduism and Islam after they had known each other for a period of nearly 900 years."³

2. Fauja Singh and A.C.Arora (eds.), Papers on Guru Nanak (Patiala: Panjabi University, 1970), p.14.

3. A History of ^{the} Sikhs Vol. I (Delhi: OUP, 1981), p.17.

Hinduism had become decadent and it had come to be associated with three aspects: polytheism, caste system and the poetry and philosophy of Sanskrit classics. Hinduism had come to mean worship of nature and chanting of hymns to the sky, to the rising sun and to lightning. Similarly, Islam had come to be associated with barbarism after the attacks by Mohammed-bin-Qasim and Mahmud Ghazni (971-1030), disturbing the faith that the Muslim traders had built with Indians over years. Islam itself had been a religion consolidated by Muhammad (570-632) who had changed the easy going and idolatrous Arabs into a nation unified in faith and oneness of purpose.

Against the decadent tendency of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism had revolted under the leadership of Gautam the Buddha (567-487 B.C.) and Lord Mahāvira (5th Century B.C.). The impact of Jainism and Buddhism had been so strong that it had spread all over northern India eclipsing the impact of Brahmanical Hinduism. It was only after the 9th Century A.D. that the Alvārs and Adyārs took up the cause of Hinduism and hit Buddhism and Jainism at their weakest point to harbingers a renaissance. They attacked Buddhist and Jain philosophies by declaring them to be devoid of emotional content. As against the dry moral ethics, they brought the element of love in the worship of Vishnu and Shiva. They did not work together, or with sympathy and understanding. On the contrary, they

decadent

opposed each other and they considered their respective deity to be the one supreme God. This clash reached a stage when the devotees of Vishnu and Shiva clashed with one another more ferociously than Hindus and Muslims have ever done. Of course, they were engaged in the same task of infusing love and confidence in the hearts of the millions of people who failed to understand the high moral tone of Buddhist and Jain ethics. They engaged themselves in worship through community hymn-singing. This attracted back to the fold many of those Hindus who had embraced Buddhism and Jainism. This was a kind of return of the Hindus to the Vedās and Upanishads through devotion to the incarnation of God. What Shankar (C. A.D. 800), a Brahmin of Malābar, had not been able to achieve as he was abstruse and highly metaphysical, Rāmānuja (1016-1137) and Rāmānand and Kabir (1440-1518) accomplished by making appeal to the hearts of the people. They said that God was one and he was the only reality although he was invisible. Everything else was māyā (illusion). By chanting mantras and singing songs of praise even the common man could reach the God and for guidance he needed a spiritual mentor, a guru.

These devotees believed that God is one and everybody born in the world is a child of the same Father. They spoke against casteism and preached oneness of humanity. This emphasis on equality of all human beings made it possible for even the untouchables to join the worship. Of course, it could not be

said that there were no clashes and conflicts of interests, and there were no differences in their approaches to the problem of untouchability, but it must be accepted that this was a revolutionary step. In order to approach God, they suggested it was necessary to resign oneself to His will and extend love to others and live on faith and trust. They also emphasised that while living life in the world even a householder could attain salvation. Thus the rigours of self-discipline that were emphasised by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were sidelined and bhakti became the watchword of the millions.

A similar situation had arisen in the thinking of the Muslims also. When the Muslim army started creating disturbances in Northern India by killing Hindus and destroying their temples, many Hindus embraced Islam for safety. But a large section built up resistance and forced the converted Hindus to come back to the folds of Hinduism. As a result of this clash even among Muslims there emerged a group of missionaries who made appeal to the hearts of people and spread the word of wisdom. These Sufis did not have a uniform doctrine but they were individuals who were known for their high moral stature and openness of mind. They used the Korān and the Hadits (tradition based on the life of Mohammed for their spiritual guidance). They also believed that God is omnipotent and omnipresent. They believed that by repeating the name of Allah which they called dhikr any one could induce

hāl which means a mystic experience. This was an easy way to merge with God. This method suggested by the Sufis was no different than the Bhakti of the Hindus. They emphasised the importance of hymn-signing by saying that it engenders a feeling of exaltation which destroys fanā (the thoughts of the self) and stills the restlessness of mind making the human being fit for submission to God. The Sufis preached a philosophy that intended to bring hearts together and called their principles the talīf-i-kulūb. They also opened doors of Islam for the untouchables as they did not make distinction between man and man. In course of time, people took Sufis as their gurus and made obeisance to their tombs and attached to them the same importance as they attached to Mecca. Even in their dress, food, customs, speech and music, they look like Hindus although their places of worship remained different.

It was at this time in the 15th Century when lot of spade work had already been done by Hindus devotees and Muslim Sufis that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) appeared on the scene in Punjab who attempted to bring the two together. He opened his arms to welcome the Hindus and the Muslims alike in love for the children of God. Himself a man of modest background, he organised the singing of hymns in the town of Sultanpur with the help of a Muslim minstrel known as Mardānā. He even dressed in a manner he looked a synthesis of the Hindu and the Muslim way of dressing. He was trying to project a philosophy that

could be acceptable to both and was a philosophy that did not hurt anyone. It only fostered love and friendship to promote that feeling. He started even langar (community dinner) where everyone participated in cooking and was served with food without any distinction of caste or creed. This was a unique idea for bringing home to the minds of people the message of oneness. He said that God had chosen him to spread the message of love and prayer. This was possible if he spent his life in the prayer of the Word (nām), practised charity (dān) and service (sevā) and made prayer (simran) after ablution (isnān). He said in Japji :

"Before time itself
There was truth.
When time began to run its course
He was the truth.
Even now, He is the truth
And evermore shall truth prevail."

Guru Nanak believed in Sahaj avasthā, that is, experiencing the state of mystic fulfilment through gentle discipline while living householder's life. It is a kind of training of the body and the mind to bring out the goodness that is inherent in human beings. This is why in place of the other steps suggested by philosophers to attain salvation like Dharam, Gyān and Karam were given less importance than Sach which implies merger in God in a blissful state. This is possible by reciting the name of Truth. This nām jap is a very important theme in the teachings of Guru Nanak, although it is very different from

counting beads on a rosary. The mechanical counting of beads is not helpful as it does not control the wandering mind. Therefore, nām implies understanding of the words and their translation into action. This is why the path suggested by him is Nām Mārg which depends for success in realisation (hirde gyān), prayer (mukh bhakti), and detachment (Vartan Vairāg). In all this what is necessary is that man should control or channelise his ego which is the greatest of all evils. The ego which is haumain, which means, literally, 'I am', is a great impediment in the attainment of humility and surrender to the Almighty. But Guru Nanak believed that when ego is channelised other sins like lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride get automatically dissolved making it possible for man to experience the Samadhi which is divine bliss. This becomes possible because this opens the dasam dwār (the tenth gate) which is super consciousness. For this activity it is not necessary to practise asceticism, austerity or penance.

Guru Nanak tried this by asking his disciples to sit in the morning for kirtan (hymn singing) in rāgas in a manner their meanings became clear. It was presumed that the early morning hours were more suited for the purpose of imbuing the heart with purity and understanding. He preached also in his sermon three things: to work, to worship and to give in charity, which he called krit karo, nām japo and vand chako. He himself said in Sārang kī Vār:

We reap according to our measure
 Some for ourselves to keep,
 Some to others give
 Oh Nanak this is the way to truly live.

This was a very effective way to communicate with his disciples. He called it satsang (truthful companionship) and used Punjabi, the language spoken by the people, for communication with his disciples and also for writing his religious verses.

His disciple Angad (1504-1552) remained guru for 13 years (1539-1552). He had been called by him Angad as he treated him as a part of his body. Angad was none else than Lehnā who was a devout Hindu, very loyal to the guru. Guru Angad continued the tradition started by Guru Nanak and used langar as a very potent means for ridding people of communal consciousness, and to promote unity and social cohesion. Guru Angad also put the teachings of the hymns of Guru Nanak in Gurumukhi (from the mouth of the Guru) which a conglomeration of the 35 letters of the acrostic composed by his predecessor and other appropriate letters from other scripts current at the time. This was a revolutionary step as it created a new script called Gurmukhi, which was different from the Devanāgri or the Persian script.

Guru Nanak's own son Srichand followed Udāsi Mārg as he renounced the world to find salvation. Guru Amar Dass (1479-1574) brought quite a few changes in the system in order to strengthen

affiliations between the Sikhs and the Hindus. He got a temple sanctified at Goindwal and in place of Sanskrit shlokas he asked the disciples to use the hymns of the gurus on ceremonial occasions like births and deaths. Like a social reformer he wanted abolition of pardāh and cessation of the practice of sati. He also made the first day of the month Vaisakh, the day for the gathering of the disciples in Goindwal.

Like him Guru Rām Dās (1534-1581) built a town called Ramdāspura, which ultimately developed into Amritsar. He worked with Bhai Gurdās and hoped that as one lamp is lighted from another, the guru's spirit will pass into the disciples and would dispel the darkness in the world.

It was for Arjun (1563-1606), the next guru, to complete the temple of god, i.e., Harimandir in Amritsar. He invited the Muslim divine Miān Meer of Lahore for the foundation laying ceremony. Their idea was to show that he was not opposed to any religion and he had an open mind on religious issues. He also kept four doors to suggest that people of various castes- Brahmin, Kashtriya, Vaishya and Shudra could come to the temple. Guru Arjun also established other towns like Tarntāran (pool of salvation), Hargobindpur and Kartārpur.

What distinguishes Guru Arjun was his attempt to compose the Granth Sāhib (the holy volume) and install it in the temple at Amritsar. Sitting on the bank of the Rāmsar tank, he dictated to Bhai Gurdas the entire selection he had made from

Various writings of the predecessors. He also appointed Bhai Buddha (1518-1631) as the first reader or Granthi in 1604. The Granth contained selections from the poets, saints of Northern India including those saints who belonged to the untouchable class. His importance came to be recognised by people as they started calling him Sachā Pādshāh (the true emperor) although it was resented by the new Emperor Jahangir and even invited his wrath which resulted in his death. He said in Bhairav:

"I will not pray to idols
Nor say the Muslim Prayers.
I shall put my heart at the feet of the
One Supreme Being.
For we are neither Hindus nor Musalman."

In this mood even Sanskrit language was not given any importance as it was the language of the gods for the Hindus.

Already Sikhs had been the target of attack by the Mughal kings, particularly Jahangir (1569-1627) and Shah-jahan (1592-1666). The result was that the Sikh gurus like Har Rai (1630-1661), the seventh guru had to live in comparative seclusion in a village for 13 years. Even when he had good relations with Dara Shikoh (1615-1658), the son of Shah-jahan, he was punished for misguiding the Prince. Even Tegh Bahādur (1621-1675), the ninth guru, who had established Anandpur (the Haven of Bliss) had to stay in the hills for a long time. Guru Tegh Bahadur went towards the eastern part of India to know what his followers were doing. He was beheaded in Delhi for refusing to change his

religion. He had written on the paper at the time of his death: Sis diya par sirr na diya (I parted with my head but not my commitment). As a brave man he sacrificed his life for his Faith.

It was his son, Gobind Singh (1666-1708), who had become the last guru at the age of nine even when the severed head of his father was brought to Anandpur for cremation. He grew into a youngman with the strong feeling that sword was necessary for the destruction of the enemy if, ignoring love and forgiveness, he persisted in his attempt to destroy. He was deeply interested in the stories of Hindu mythology. He described himself as the breaker of idols. At the same time he imbibed the quality of the goddess of wrath. He fought quite a few battles as his conception of god had undergone a metamorphosis. He had actually carried forward the work started by Guru Hargobind (1595-1644), the sixth guru, who carried two swords girded round his waist, one to symbolise his spiritual power and the other temporal. He welcomed the offerings of horses and arms instead of money like Guru Gobind Singh did later. Guru Hargobind had built a small fortress called Lohgarh (the castle of steel) in Amritsar and Akal Takht (the throne of the Timeless God) near Harimandir. At the Akāl Takht people sang ballads extolling feats of heroism alongwith the chanting hymns of peace.

The great task that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru accomplished was to finalise the form of the Granth and declare that the Granth itself would be the guru after him. He stopped the practice of appointing a guru. He also made it known to everyone of his followers that the Granth Sahib would be used for spiritual guidance and the institution of panchāyat (five beloved ones) would be used for secular function as well. He composed quite a few works which came to be called Dasam Granth which consisted of eighteen works viz. Jap Sāhib, Akāl Ustat, Bichitra Natak, Chandi Charitrā I, Chandi Charitra II, Chandi di Vār, Gyān Prabodh, Chaubis Avatār, Mehdi Mir Budh, Brahmā Avatar, Rudra Avatar, Shabad Hazare, Shri Mukh bāk Savaiye, Khālse di Mehimā, Shashtra Nām Mālā, Pakhyan Charitra, Zafarnāmā, and the Hikāyats. He also prescribed five emblems for the Khalsa, i.e. Kes (Unshorn hair and beard), Kanghā (comb to keep the hair tidy), Kachā (the lower garment of the soldier of the time), Karā (the steel bracelet on the right wrist) and the Kirpān to remain always armed with a saber. He prescribed four rules for the conduct of the Sikhs called Rahat i.e. not to cut hair, not to smoke or chew tobacco or consume alcoholic drink, not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered not being bled to death. He also gave a new form of greeting, viz. Wah Gurū Jī Kā Khalsā, Wah Gurū Jī Kī Fateh. Because of

these prescriptions and elaborate commandments, he came to be regarded as a very important link in the history of Sikhism. He also adopted 'Singh' as his surname and gave it to everyone who called himself a Sikh. He also gave the surname 'Kaur' on baptism to every woman. Both 'Singh' and 'Kaur' meant lion and lioness. He declared his third wife to be known as Mātā Sāhīb Devi as he had not consummated his marriage with her. Her marriage is, therefore, described as kuvāra dolā (virgin wedlock). Symbolically, she became the mother of all the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh was innovative while at the same time imitative of what Guru Nanak had said or done. He exhorted his followers to embrace one creed and follow one path obliterating all differences of religion. He also advised them to abandon the different rules prescribed for differentiating their duties and asked them to adopt the way of cooperation by mixing freely with one another. He asked them not to worship the Ganges or the deities such as Rama, Krishan, Brahma and Durga and advised them to believe in what Guru Nanak and his successors had said. For this he advised men of all four castes to receive baptism by taking nectar from the same vessel. This came to be known later as faith in Degh and Tegh, i.e. one couldron and one sword as a necessary symbol of a true Sikh. He rejected the idea of penance or

austerity and said that he alone is to be recognised as a pure member of the Khalsa in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shines.

He raised an army of soldier saints and advised them to wield arms only in a righteous cause. They were to raise the swords only when they were compelled. He provided the Khalsa with a sword and expected him to fight for the good of the people. He condemned evil unlike Guru Nanak who had propagated goodness. As the ultimate journey of life was to end with the merger of the individual in God, he expected everyone to live for the good of the people.

Guru Gobind Singh's own life was full of activities fighting against all kinds of invaders, particularly the forces of Aurangzeb (1618-1707). Even when Aurangzeb was dead and his son Bahadur Shah was held by him, he was unlucky to find no help forthcoming from Delhi in his attempt to control Wazir Khan of Sirhind who had been committing all kinds of crime. It was during his stay in Nanded, a small town on the bank of the Godavari, when he was holding open Darbār. he was murderously assaulted on October 7, 1708. That brought to a halt the work undertaken by the great saint soldiers.

During his busy days mostly fighting, he found enough time to compose poetry and even prepared a definitive edition

of the Granth with the help of his disciple Mani Singh. His own books were given final form by Mani Singh and given the title of Dasven Padshāh kā Granth (the book of the tenth emperor) or the Dasam Granth. This Dasam Granth is different from the first or the Adi Granth (1604). He even sent the Zafarnāma or the epistle of victory to Emperor Aurangzeb, although it remains a matter of controversy with historians. The experiences of his life are summarised by the Guru himself in his poem written in Punjab, viz. hāl muridān dā kahnā, collected in Shabad Hazāre:

"Beloved Friend, beloved God, Thou must hear
Thy servant's plight when though art not near.
The comfort's cloak is as a pall of pest,
The home is like a serpent's nest.
The wine chokes like the hangman's noose,
The rim of the goblet is like an assassin's knife,
But with Thee shall I in adversity dwell.
Without Thee life of ease is life in hell".

Khushwant Singh summarises the history of the Sikhs between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh's time in the following words in A History of the Sikhs Vol. I (1981):

"...The two hundred years between Nanak's proclamation of faith (A.D. 1499) and Gobind's founding of the Khalsa Panth (A.D. 1699) can be neatly divided into two almost equal parts. In the first hundred years the five Guru pronounced the ideals of a new social order for the Punjab. The religion was to be one acceptable to both the Muslims and Hindus; it was to be monotheistic, non-idolatrous, and free of meaningless form and ritual. The social order was to embrace all the people; no class was to be beyond the pale, and even though the caste system continued to count when it came

to making matrimonial alliances, it was abolished in matters of social intercourse. The doors of Sikh temples were thrown open to everyone and in the Guru's langar the Brahmin and the untouchable broke their bread as members of the same family. The code of this new order was the non-denominational anthology of hymns, the Granth; its symbol, the Harimandir, an edifice whose first stone was laid by a Muslim, the rest being built by Hindus and Sikhs together."⁴

The history of the Sikhs after Guru Gobind Singh is the history of persecution of the Sikhs and also the reorganisation of the Khalsa Army with their unshorn hair. They were easily identifiable and therefore they had to suffer more than others did. The Khālsā as against the Khulāsā (popularly known as sahajdhāri) were one in faith and yet different in appearance. But they used to gather on the day of Baisakhi at the Harimandir Sahib of Amritsar and seek Gurumata i.e., the decision of the congregation to follow as orders. Even they got divided into Dal Khālsa (the army of the Khalsa), which was the central fighting force, and the Tarunā Dal consisting of more youthful soldiers. In a series, with limited intermission, Persian invasions took place from 1738 onwards, forcing the Sikhs to experience two ghallūghārās (the holocausts), i.e. the chota ghallughara of June 1746 where about 7000 Sikhs were killed and the greater disaster of 1762 where about 20,000 Sikhs were just butchered. Nadir

4. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs Vol I (Delhi: OUP, 1981), pp. 96-97.

Shah (d.1747), Ahmed Shah Abdali (1722-1773) and Taimur Shah (1772-1793) were determined to liquidate the Sikhs from Punjab. But ironically, Abdali was, although, the bitterest antagonist of the Sikhs, he was the greatest benefactor because his repeated attacks dealt a crippling blow to Maratha powers in the North. Besides the Sikhs also were determined not to accept their defeat. The Persian Invasion of 1738-1739, was followed by nine Afgan Invasions between 1747 and 1769.

It was only when Mahārājāh Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) came to power in 1799 that most of the different misls of Northern India got united as an independent state. He was given by the Panth Khalsa the title of Maharaja so that he could maintain the royal dignity and privileges of a king. In the context of Sikh culture, he refused to wear the emblem of royalty in his turban. He did not sit even on throne. He met people sitting cross-legged in his chair. His government was called the Sarkār Khalsā ji and the court he held was known as Darbār Khālsā ji. He proved by using his political acumen and his valour that he was a capable administrator and a gifted leader despite the fact that he had only one eye and had a pitted face because of the attack of smallpox. He was lucky in his early days to have the advice of his mother-in-law Sadā Kaur in running the administration but was unlucky to have her turn against him a plot for his downfall. Notwithstanding this handicap, Ranjit Singh tried to modernise his Army by appointing soldiers

who had been trained by the British. He prescribed the most exacting standards he could think of for his army - efficiency in march, manoeuvre and marksmanship. The process of europeanisation ultimately resulted in a large army. It must go to the credit of Maharajah that he advised his people to "realise the revenue with a sweet tongue", although at many times he needed money to tide over the financial crisis. He correctly summarised his achievements in his own words as recorded by H.M.L. Lawrence in Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab: "My kingdom is a great kingdom: it was small, it is now large; it was scattered, broken, and divided; it is now consolidated; it must increase in prosperity and descend undivided to my posterity."⁵

After the death of Maharajah Ranjit Singh in 1839, there arose conflicts within the family and for quite a few years in various ways various persons tried to secure the throne, and in that pursuit no efforts were spared. Trying to give a poisoned cup of wine, using a concealed dagger, or fight in public were quite common. This chaos continued for about 10 years during which time the British gradually moved into the Punjab territory and strengthened their hold on the throne. Through different wars and also the use of diplomacy,

5. H.M.L. Lawrence, Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab (London: H. Colburn, 1846), pp. 64-65.

The English succeeded in taking Ranjit Singh's kingdom under their control. There were quite a few battles, though. No doubt the Sikhs fought determined and grim battles but ultimately they had to surrender as they were pitched against both the Darbar of Delhi and the British. While under the occupation of the British, the Sikh Sardars were lured by the jagirs and thus they forgot how to live with dignity, they, therefore, decided to accept favours from the British rulers ignoring the offences that the Englishmen had inflicted on them and their religion. They allowed them to slaughter cows and even enter gurudwāras with shoes on their feet. But they continued to meet on the Baisakhi day and take decisions for the welfare and the unity of the Sikhs. Sarbat Khalsa and Khalsa Panth came into vogue. Quite aware of the martial quality of the Sikhs, the British recruited them into the army and paid handsome emoluments. Sandford had written on November 24, 1848 in Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern: "The Sikhs fought like devils...fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle....such a mass of men I never set eye on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets and struck at their assailants when they were transfixed."

The British consolidated their power in Punjab and followed the policy of rewarding the deserving ones with jobs. Hindus were given clerical jobs, Muslims were employed as policemen and the Sikhs were recruited in the army. The result of this policy was that in 1857 when the sepoy mutiny took place, the Sikhs helped the Englishmen in controlling the mutineers.

The most obvious act of loyalty was seen by all those who were present in Delhi when the English army had stripped naked the two sons and a grandson of the Emperor of Delhi and shot them, leaving it to the Sikhs to take the corpses of the princes to Chandni Chowk and lay them out for display in front of Gurudwara Sis Ganj. Gurudwara Sis Ganj was the same place where only 182 years earlier their Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the ninth guru, had been executed by the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. Besides this the Sikhs indulged in looting with open connivance of the British army. They were happy that they were being recruited in the army without any discrimination. They were encouraged to maintain their traditions like pāhul ceremony and wearing turban to cover the unshorn hair of the head.

It was a common experience to come across Sikhs who did not keep hair on the head and even worshipped Hindu gods alongside their own Granth and even went on pilgrimages to Hindu holy places. And also it was not uncommon to see Hindus going to the gurudwārās. In this interfacing, it was not easy for the Sikhs to keep their identity intact and follow the path suggested by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) sincerely. It was this desire to maintain identity and to differentiate Sikhism from Hinduism against the view propogated by Arya Samajists that quite a few movements were started to reform Sikhism and fight the menace of being swallowed by Hinduism.

Singh Sabha was one such movement which was keen on ridding the gurudwārās of the presence of corrupt Hindus or sahajdhāri Sikhs. The events of Nanakāna Sahib (February 20, 1921) and Guru Kā Bāgh (September 13, 1921) where Sikhs were butchered mercilessly were indicative of the vested interests of those who had been controlling the gurudwārās over years. Even Hindu idols were kept inside the gurudwārās which were to be taken out so that Sikhs could go to pay their homage to the memory of the gurus and the Granth Sahib. This was in many respects similar to the movements like Brahma Samāj (est. 1828), Prārthanā Samāj (founded in 1867) and Arya Samāj (founded in 1875) to fight superstitions and reinforce faith in the original scriptures of Hindus by providing rational interpretation of what was available in the name of religion and culture. Among the Sikhs even there arose a sect of the Nirankāris with Dyāl Dās (d. 1855) at the head. The Nirankāris condemned idol worship and refused to make obeisance to holy men. They even disapproved of going on pilgrimages. However, they believed that God was formless (Nirankār). Dyal Das said: "Dhan Nirankār/Deh Dhāri Sab Khwāhr which means, praise be to the formless creator/worship of mortals is of no avail. Contradicting themselves they also believed in worshipping living gurus, calling them Sri Sat Guru (The True Guide) or Sri Hazoor Sāhib (His Holy Eminence). They also rejected the militant Khalsa and introduced the Ānand Marriage which is performed by circumambulating the Granth.

Not very different from them was the other sect known as Rādhāsoami sect with Shiv Dyāl (1818-1878) of Agra as their leader and adviser who was influenced by the teachings of the Ādi Granth (1604). His doctrine contained elements of both Hinduism and Sikhism. Taking the symbols from Hinduism Rādhā and Soāmi, he propounded the theory that by worshipping Rādhā-Soāmi man shows his faith in the oneness of the soul and the oversoul. The Rādhāsoāmi also believes in a living guru and also in the idea that all those who are initiated by the guru become guru bhāis or guru-bahns (brothers in faith or sisters in faith). They do not recite kirtan and do not believe in pāhul (baptism), nor do they believe in militant vows of the Khalsa. They do not keep the Granth Sahib in their temples, although the raised temple is used by the Guru for delivering discourses. They accept only the teachings of the first five gurus contained in the Ādi Granth and reject the rest. They are in many respects like those of the sahajdhāri sect.

Another splinter group of the Sikhs called the Nandhāris own their allegiance to Bālak Singh (1797-1862) who exhorted his followers to live simple life and practise no rituals except repeating the name of God. They also thought that while reciting the name of God the devotee goes into raptures and dances like dervishes and in a state of frenzy emits loud shrieks (kūks). It is because of this that they are also called kukās.

They wear only handspun cloth of white colour and wear necklaces of woollen rosary. They carry staves in their own hands and bind their turban in a style of their own. They mostly came from the poorer classes but they called themselves saints and considered others mlecha (unclean). They paid special attention to the ethics and hygiene in daily life and also tried to correct the princes if they were indulgent or corrupt. They even invoked the Hindu goddesses of destruction like Shakti, Bhagwati and Jagdambā to ride the land of the filthy whites who ate cows. The Kukās adhere to the puritanical faith of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) more sincerely than generally Sikhs do. Their gurudwārās also are not showy.

The Arya Samāj started the movement for shuddhi (purification) so that through proselytisation people from other castes and religion could be brought into the folds of Hinduism. But in their enthusiasm they denounced even the Sikh gurus calling them hypocritical and ignorant of Sanskrit. This was a jolt to the Sikhs. It made the Singh Sabhā also aware of the need for keeping the Sikhs united in spite of their differences and tendency to identify themselves as splinter groups. What was important was that the Singh Sabhā movement not only tried to check the return of the Sikhs into Hinduism but even retaliated by bringing them from the Hindu Camp back to the Sikh fold. In a mood of defiance, Kahān Singh, the then Chief Minister of Nahba, published a booklet Hām Hindu Nahin Hain.

However, the Singh Sabha movement petered out by the end of the twenties.

In their attempt to maintain their identity and also to get recognition in social life and live in peace, the Sikh Sardars had to decide to be loyal to the crown. They also contributed soldiers to strengthen the British Army in the First World War (1914-1918). But the incident of April 13, 1919 when, at Jallianwāla Bagh (Amritsar) made them disillusioned. They saw the British people for their treachery and indifference to their cause. Even the Ghadr Party (founded in 1913) which had pledged to destroy the British hold and had decided to take the help of Germany could not do much. Their declared aim was as follows is published in Ghadr on November 1, 1913:

"Today Ghadr begins in foreign land but in our country it will wage a war against the British Raj...What is our name? Ghadr. What is our work? Ghadr. Where will Ghadr break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink."

The Ghadrites discovered that the political condition in India was not conducive to revolution. They also did not have enough arms and ammunition. Even their leadership's ability to sustain the movement was too limited. But it must be recognised that it was the first movement which aimed to liberate India by the use of arms in modern times. Even the Akali terrorists known as the Babbar were generally recruited from the ranks of the Ghadr Party. It is said that even Rashbehari Bose a prominent member of Indian National Army (1944-45) of Subhash

Chandra Bose (1897-1945) was connected with the Ghadr Party.

On November 15, 1920 it was decided by the Akal Takht of Amritsar that Shriyani Gurdwārā Prabandhak Committee (Central Gurdwārā Management Committee) known as SGPC, consisting of 125 members, would look after the management of all Sikh shrines. They also formed a group of volunteers called Akali Dal (army of immortals) to raise men for action in taking over the gurdwārās from the corrupt Mahants. In course of time, of course, the Akali Dal underwent transformation and expected to be politicised in its nature. The SGPC did a lot to improve the conditions of the gurdwārās but its policy of non-violence was not accepted by all and sundry. Therefore, a group called Babbar Akāli Terrorist emerged with the object to die for the cause of the Panth. The SGPC became, as Khushwant Singh says in A History of the Sikhs Vol. II (1981), "...a sort of Parliament of the Sikhs: its decisions acquired the sanctity of the ancient Gurumata the Dal became its army; and income from gurdwārās (over 10 lacs of rupees per year) gave it financial sustenance" (p.214). This movement also brought political awakening in princely States as a result of which agitations were organised against the autocratic misuse of power by the Maharajas.

In course of time the Sikhs could not remain indifferent towards politics. When the demand for a country for the Muslims became identifiable and when it became almost certain that the country would be divided on the basis of religion, the

Sikhs anticipated trouble for themselves. They became apprehensive as they knew that a large part of Punjab would go to Pakistan and they, as a religious group, would get divided. Even the main places associated with their religion would fall in the Muslim country. They would be in minority in both the countries. Under threats of getting rendered insignificant, they had to choose either to align themselves with the Indian National Congress and oppose the Muslim demand for the partition of India or make attempts for the creation of a State of their own. This remained for quite a few years in the thirties and forties a live issue. Master Tara Singh (1885-1967) in a letter to Stafford Cripps (on March 31, 1942) said: "We have lost all hopes of receiving any consideration. We shall, however resist by all possible means, separation of the Punjab from all India Union"

(Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs Vol. II, page 250).

With various alternatives thrown about, considered and rejected, they found ultimately India divided in 1947 and they had to content themselves with the assurance that they would have a Sikh state where the language and culture of the Sikhs would be given due recognition. It is also maintained by quite a few that the demand for a Sikh State had not cropped up as something inherently desirable but simply as a point in an argument against Pakistan. This was the reason why the Congress failed to contain Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1875-1948) but succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to give up their demand for a Sikh state.

This demand for a Sikh state could not be considered because of different reasons. But in order to meet the requirement of a separate linguistic state for the Panjabi-speaking people, Punjab was carved out in 1966 as a state by separating Haryana from it. The problem is not yet over as the matter is still alive. There are differences of opinion on the viability and even advisability of having a Sikh state. But the fact remains that the people of the country are not yet able to finally draw the curtain on the issue.

It is evident from the above that the Sikh history deals with Guru Nanak (1469-1539). That he inherited quite a few ideas from Indian culture and philosophy, and even religions of non-Indian origin like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is abundantly clear from his works. But it is wrong to presume that he was a mere mediator of other men's ideas, as maintains Sher Singh.⁶ The history begun by him continued for two centuries through a succession of nine other gurus providing the major tenets of Sikhism. The distinctive features of Sikhism took shape during this period and became consolidated with Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) having specified the use of Kesh, Karā, Kānghā, Kachā and Kirpān and also declaring the creation of the army of the Khalsa. What later happened was only continuation of the traditions or interpretation of their

6. Sher Singh, Philosophy of Sikhism (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1966).

ideas. Even purification and rationalisation had been resorted to preserve the identity and independence of the Sikh religion.

During this period three important things have happened: the first event was the formal appointment of his successor by Guru Nanak to lead the community; the second was the compilation of the Ādi Granth (1604) by Guru Arjun (1563-1606) which became the canonical scripture; and the third was the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1704) in 1699. This gave a definite form to the Sikh religion and established its status but the declaration by Guru Gobind Singh that the authority of the guru would vest in the scripture known as the Ādi Granth and in the corporate community known as Khalsa or the Panth, the Ādi Granth came to be taken as the manifest body of the guru.

Guru Nanak's teaching are scattered throughout his works but from them one can reconstruct a coherent theology. He had a belief in a personal God and accepted that the creator of the universe is a Being beyond time and human comprehending, although manifest in the cosmos and ready to grant grace for the salvation of man. Man can grow into the likeness of God and merge with the Timeless one if he follows the path of mediation and nām simran.

As regards the philosophical ideas of Guru Nanak, they are available in the Japji with which the Ādi Granth (1604)

begins. What is basic to the thoughts of Guru Nanak is the nature of God which is explained by Guru Arjun (1563-1606) at the very beginning of the Ādi Granth in his own hand which is called mūl mantra, the Basic Credal Statement. What is written in the Ādi Granth is called Shabad and that is taken as the Word of God made manifest in all that lies around. It is only through the Shabad that the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient is available to man. Therefore, the meditation of the name of God is the only way to achieve salvation.

There was already a very powerful current of devotional poetry in the tradition of Vaishnav Bhakti and the Sufis. Even the Nāths and Siddhas were quite a powerful lot practising Hathyoga who called themselves the followers of Gorkh Nāth. Although there are no direct evidences available to prove that Guru Nanak was influenced by these godmen but it cannot be denied that he was living in an age when prayer was considered to be a very potent means for the union of man with God.

Guru Nanak was quite critical of the Hindus who claimed to know the mystery of God as he was quite vocal against some of the views of Sufists. He said in Māru Solahā 2(6) of the Ādi Granth: "Neither the Veda nor the Kāteb know the mystery". Whereas Veda is used as an omnibus expression for the Hindu scriptures, Kāteb designates the Qurān, although Sikh theology has traditionally interpreted Kāteb as the four Semitic texts,

namely the Torāh, the Zabūr (Psalms), the Injil (Gospel) and the Qurān, as is evident from Vār Āsa.

The discussion of God centres around the divinity of God and his attributes. Such ideas as God is formless, ineffable and immanent and is great, are all in some form or the other available in the Hindu scriptures. But what Guru Nanak (1469-1539) emphasises is the nature of unregenerate man, i.e., man's attachment to the world which results in pride, self-centredness and death and transmigration. This condition man must transcend if he wants salvation, i.e. release from transmigration.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) says, "Mani jītai jag jītu" (to conquer the mind is to conquer the world). Here man stands for the ego and it is the faculty by means of which Truth is apprehended. It is clear from all that he had said that unless haumai (ego) is controlled nothing can be possible. It is said that by casting aside pride we ascend to celestial heights. As and when the ego is cast aside, God becomes available to man within his own frame. So long as man is burdened with haumai he remains handicapped and fails to perceive the true nature of salvation as his mind remains choked with falsehood. Kām (lust), Krodh (anger), Lobh (Covetousness), Moh (attachment to worldly things), Ahankār (pride) are evil passions from which springs all the deeds of violence and falsehood, which in their turn, if not controlled, protract endlessly the cycle of

transmigration. A victim of māyā (temptation) man remains bound to the attractions of life. But when man is able to realise God within his heart, which is the palace of God, he becomes enlightened. It is again a matter of God's will that he graces some with divine self-expression. Karma or deeds are not enough.. God's grace is equally important.

It is the Guru who utters the words whereby man can know both God and the path which leads to Him. In Sri Rāgu, 15 of the Ādi Granth (1604) it is said:

"He has ~~neither~~ form, colour, nor material sign,
but He is revealed through the true Word (Shabad).

"By the Guru's leading he obtains salvation and
is no longer bound (to the wheel of transmigration).

Meditating on the Word (Shabad), (repeating) the
Name of God, he is released.

Without the Word (Shabad) one is condemned to wander.
Worldly affections cause many to sink (in the
Ocean of Existence). O man, apply your under-
standing to the word (Shabad) and cross over.
He who has not followed the Guru and so has
not understood the divine Name, (such a person)
continues to transmigrate.

Nanak, the Lord, the true Creator, is known by
means of the Word (Shabad)".

The word spoken by the Guru is the gurupadesh; that expression of God's truth which is imparted to man by the Guru. God himself manifests through the Divine Order (Hukam), which is defined by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) as follows:

"The Hukam is beyond describing, (but this much we can understand that) all forms were created by the Hukam, that life was created through the Hukam, and that greatness is imparted in accordance with the Hukam. Distinctions between what is exalted and what is lowly are the result of the Hukam and in accordance with it suffering comes to some and joy to others. Through the Hukam one receives blessing and another is condemned to everlasting transmigration. All are within the Hukam; none are beyond its authority. Nanak, if anyone comprehends the Hukam his haumai is purged."

Thus God's Hukam directs the path of man. For some interpreters Hukam is "Will", but "Divine Order" is a better rendering of the word "Hukam" as it relates to the principle of governing the structure and functioning of the physical universe. This is also expressed in the form of law of Karma. Guru Nanak himself says in Dhanāsari, 6 in the Ādi Granth:

"One receives in accordance with what one does.
What you sow, that you must eat".

This gives freedom to man to function as he wants but it ultimately depends on the divine grace. It is itself a result of one's former deeds that one meets the true guru, although many try. The guru is the communicator of the divine truth.

Without a guru it is not possible to achieve salvation. This is why Guru Nanak himself says:

"The Guru is the ladder, the dinghy, the raft by
means of which one reaches God;
The Guru is the lake, the ocean, the boat, the sacred
place of pilgrimage, the river.
If it please Thee I am cleansed by bathing in the
Lake of Truth.
Without the Guru there can be no bhakti, no love;
Without the Guru there is no access to the company
of the wants;

Without the Guru one blindly engages in futile
endeavour;

But with the Guru one's man is purified, for its
filth is purged by the word.

When the True Guru is merciful faith is perfected;
When the True Guru is merciful there is no grief;
When the True Guru is merciful no sorrow is known;
When the True Guru is merciful the love of God is
enjoyed;

When the True Guru is merciful there is no fear
of death;

When the True Guru is merciful there is eternal
peace;

When the True Guru is merciful the nine treasures
are obtained;

When the True Guru is merciful one blends in
union with the True One."

Guru therefore is God, the voice of God and also the truth
of God. All three are one, Shabad, Nām and Guru. This is why
the emphasis in Guru Nanak's preachings is on the prayer of
God which is a sadhanā (discipline) which the individual has
to undertake for the attainment of that stage when atnā (soul)
could meet the Paramātma (oversoul).

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) has rejected the practices that
were prevalent in his time for purification of mind and union
with God. He rejected austerity, self-mortification or Hathyog
as a medium. He even declared that idolatry, bathing at places
of pilgrimage (tirath) or asceticism are meaningless as the God
for whose attainment man makes efforts lives within him. If
man is unclean within, he cannot clean his body and get near
God. It is said in Āsā, 32 in the Ādi Granth, that Tirath is
within and for that nām simaran or nām japan is the only right

way, although what he means by Nām Simaran is not mechanical 42
repetition of the name of God. It is meditation on the Word
(Shabad). He says in Gujari, 1 in the Ādi Granth:

"The worship (puja) which we offer is meditation
on the Name, for without the Name there can
be no (true) worship."

As a matter of fact, this practice leads to Visamād, which
means, a prodigious wonder is engendered by the indescribable
greatness of God leading to the condition of ecstasy. For
this purpose he has given a telling image from rural life
comparing the human body with a field in which the seed of
the divine name is to be sown:

"Regard your body as a field, your man the plough,
your actions the ploughing, and effort the
irrigation. (In the field) sow the Name as
seed, level it with contentment, and fence
it with humility.

Let your actions be those of love. (The seed) will
the sprout and you will see your home prosper.

Love is the soil, holiness the water, and truth
and contentment the two buffaloes.

Humility is the plough, the mind the ploughman,
remembrance (of the Name) the watering, and
union (with God) the seed-time.

The Name is the seed and *grace* the crop. (These
constitute Truth whereas) the world is wholly
false.

Nanak, if the Merciful One is gracious all separation
(from Him) comes to an end."

Thus in five stages, the ascent of the soul takes place
through Dharamkhand (rational functioning in physical universe)
Giankhand (knowledge of the creation), Saramkhand (the realm of
forging) and Sachkhand (the realm of truth). The stage of

the search for truth the ultimate because in this state there is perfect union of the individual with the Divine order (Hukam). This stage transcends the three gunas (i.e. rajas, tamas and satva) and is the parampad or turia avasthā, which is the final achievement.

As is clear from the above, the history of the Sikh has been chequered, punctuated with strategic movements by survival. The Sikhs moved in course of time from the spiritual to the temporal aspects of life and whatever happened between Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) in about 200 years came to be treated as important for the Sikhs of the later period. Bravery, dedication and forthrightness have been their qualities and the sole aim of the Khalsa has been to protect the innocent and make sacrifices for the happiness of their people. It is a different matter that after 1947, gradually, misunderstandings have developed about the Sikhs and even the Sikhs have felt alienated and frustrated in the country. Even if it is considered unimportant to view the foreign agencies as promoters of terrorism and disruption, it must be accepted that the psyche of the Sikhs has been wounded and that has resulted in a lot of misunderstanding and sword-rattling. This does not augur well but this is the present situation.

In view of the foregoing account of the Sikhs and their religion, it is really interesting to know how their social,

political and religious life has been viewed by novelists of India, particularly those who have written in English. The creative artists take unbiased view and try to understand problems in perspective. It is with this in mind that the study of the cultural ethos is being undertaken. In order not to confuse issues and special flavours of various novels, the treatment of the subject is undertaken authorwise and only in the final chapter conclusions are given so as to have an overall view of the creative artists about what the Sikhs have been, what they are and how they are politically and socially situated in contemporary India.

CHAPTER-IIKHUSHWANT SINGH

Khushwant Singh (b.1718) is an important Sikh writer who has created in his novels and short stories the ethos of the life of the Sikhs of Punjab. He has been quite vocal about his views on Sikhism but at the same time he has been clear in his mind that others who belong to other religious groups are in no way despicable or ignoble. Frequent references in his novels to Sikhism have made some critics remark that his novels are documentaries. But that is a different question. What is important here is the fact that he has tried as an artist to create the life of Punjab in his fiction and he has shown instinctive understanding of the mentality of the Sikhs. His vision is ironic and is even critical as it is quite natural for an intellectual like him. But on the whole his sympathies remain with his community and his delineation sounds authentic.

He has so far three novels to his credit: Train to Pakistan (1956), I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale (1959) and Delhi (1989). The third novel has come out after a long gap. It is a bulky novel running into more than 500 pages as it deals with the life of several generations of people including Sikhs who have come to stay in Delhi. The first two novels have Sikh characters in plenty as it is the life of their families and problems of their life that is intended to be depicted. He has quite a few short stories to his credit which also delineate Sikh characters, even in humorous vein as is evident

from a story like "When a Sikh Meets a Sikh". However, as a major writer of Punjab, his novels are dependable documents for a study of the special features of the life and culture of the Sikhs.

Train to Pakistan (1956)¹ deals with the socio-political reality of the historic moment when India was partitioned (1947) and, as aftermath, hundreds of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had lost their lives in the communal violence. A small village on the Indo-Pak border, called Mano Majra provides the setting for the novel. This village had Sikhs and Muslims almost equal in number but the Sikhs owned all the land around the village. The Muslims were the tenants who shared tilling with the owners. There was only one Hindu family in the village and that was of the money-lender Lala Ram Lal. Of the 70 families, the village had only one Hindu family and a few families of sweepers whose religion is not known. Besides this demographic representation, the novelist had given description of the topography of the village also which is very like other places.

As almost half of the people are from Sikh community, they have a gurudwārā where they gather on all important occasions to pray and seek peace and strength from the Akāl Purukh. They observe rituals consciously and believe in the unfailing wisdom of their gurus. The gurudwārā had a triangular flag on which was the Sikh symbol painted in black "a quoit

1. Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan (1956; Bombay: India Book House, 1975). All quotations are taken from this text. Figures given in parenthesis immediately after the quotations indicate page numbers.

with dagger running through two swords crossed beneath." The Granth was kept wrapped in green silk under a velvet awning. This description of the interior of the gurudwārā is significant as it is the place used by the villagers for all activities whether they are secular or spiritual. The rituals are observed with fan-fare and it is presumed that observance of rituals is necessary to record one's allegiance to religion.

There are three important Sikh characters, Juggut Singh, Comrade Iqbal and Meet Singh who occupy the canvass of the novel. They represent three different types so that the life of the villagers could be presented in its natural pattern and also it could be shown how new wind was blowing in the traditional village. Comrade Iqbal is a westernised Sikh who had stayed abroad for some time. He had returned to the country with a lot of difference in his approach to the ideas of Sikhism. He had lost faith in the sanctity of the gurudwārās. He even took swigs of whisky inside the campus of the temple and used religion for convenience. Not that he was not a Sikh but then he suffered from obsessive compulsion to look progressive. He had got his hair cut and he shaved his beard and did not use the other necessary insignia of the Sikh, i.e. Karā(ring), Kacchā(underwear), Kanghā(comb) and Kirpān(sword). For his misdemeanour he was even put behind bars but he knew that the traditional symbol of Sikh faith gave him protection against the communal frenzy indulged in by Muslims, Hindus and even Sikhs. He did not want to be taken as a Muslim or a Hindu.

He was, therefore, for reasons of security following the Sikh ways.

"He wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove his Sikhism to save his life." (p.142)

He is a selfish man whose sole aim is to look uppish. He is essentially a self-seeker. He is against Indians' obsession with sex and pretensions to spirituality. He is an educated person who has renounced his religion but their modern views have not given him any comfort or stability.

The other character who is really important for his faith in Sikhism and his instinctive allegiance to the tenets of religion is Juggut Singh. He is a courageous man, always willing to make sacrifices for the welfare of the people. He is against discriminating Muslims or other human beings who did not belong to his religion. He loves a Muslim girl and without caring for his safety he endangered his life by trying to cut the rope running across the bridge so that the people *going to* Pakistan in the train could be saved. Train loads of Hindus and Sikhs murdered by Muslims murderers were coming from Pakistan as they were going from India with Muslims butchered by Hindus and Sikhs. But even in such circumstances Juggut Singh retains his sanity and shows concern for humanity. Even when the sanctity of the gurudwārā is to be violated by having a mock prayer in the gurudwārā to invoke the blessings of the Guru, he opposed it and tries to restore its sanctity.

He is a bandit and is called by people badmāsh but the novelist presents him as a martyr like the Sikh gurus had been in the past. The act of sacrifice is a means to salvation, although his initial desire was to seek revenge against his rival Malli. He rises above personal anger and dies for the safety of the people. He emerges as a foil to Comrade Iqbal. Juggut Singh is illiterate and yet a true Sikh whereas Iqbal is an intellectual and is a Sikh by necessity. It is obvious from this contrast that the novelist wants to underline the fact that Sikhism is not glib discussion but faith in the tenets propounded by the gurus.

The young Sikh who comes to Mano Majra as a rabble rouser is actually a believer in tit for tat. Much of the communal hatred that is seen in the village is spread by him. His acts are sacrilegious as he is a man of dead sensibility. He is an immature politician and a mindless leader who does not understand the implication of the provocative speeches he gives and the poison of ethnic hatred he spreads around in the village.

The Sikh priest is called Bhaiji by the villagers with affection. He is Meet Singh, as the name suggests, a friend of all. He accepts Comrade Iqbal without any suspicion into the gurudwārā and advises him to follow the instructions so as to look like a normal Sikh. In order to preserve the sanctity

of the temple, he tells Iqbal: "This is a gurudwārā, the guru's house - any one may stay here but you must have your head covered and you must not bring in cigarette or tobacco or smoke" (page 31). In his appearance and also by his manners, he looks like a typical granthi: "He wore his turban only when reading the scripture otherwise he went about with his long hair tied in a loose knot held by a little comb, combing his long beard with his finger....He seldom wore a shirt and his only garment - a pair of shorts was always greasy with dirt" (p.69). Meet Singh was a peasant who had become a priest in course of time as he did not enjoy working on the field. He had accepted the job of the priest as "an easy way of earning bread with the offerings at the gurudwara" (p.69). As he was not an educated man, he was not able to read and interpret the Sikh scriptures. He did not even know the history of the religion or the history of the sacrifices of the gurus for the preservation of their brethren Hindus. He is an ignorant and ill-educated man but in his own way he argues convincingly with the people to preserve the sanctity of the religion and the gurudwāra. When Juggut Singh asked him to have a prayer in the gurudwārā so that he could ensure the failure of the inhuman plans of the communalists, he said: "You never come to the gurudwara any other time. Now when the scriptures are resting and the people are sleeping, you want me to read the Guru's words -- it is not proper...." (p.152).

He ultimately mumbled out a prayer but he did so only after lot of persuasion.

The Sikh priest is not able to argue in a sophisticated manner as is evident from the above. But he is clear in the mind as to how to maintain the dignity of temple. He tries to maintain the sanctity of the sangat(congregation). He has no answer to the rabble rouser's argument that "Sikhs are the chosen of God. Victory be to our God" (p.134). He does not see the mistaken view of the bearded Sikh youth leader. He lacks courage and also inability to argue as an intellectual for obvious reasons but he has the quality that endears him to his fellowmen. Qualities like open heartedness, instinctive cordiality and humanity are rare, but Bhai Meet Singh is rich in these qualities. He makes no distinction between man and man on ethnic or religious grounds. He lives in his life the gospel of the gurus by remaining ever willing to serve humanity. He embodies brotherhood and piety.

Yet another character is Malli, who is different from others. Malli is a bandit and lives like a criminal. He is a victim of jealousy and revenge. He calls himself Sikh leader but his sole aim is to take revenge against Muslim chauvinists. He reacts sharply to the violence done to the Sikhs by the Muslim fanatics. As a matter of fact, the whole Sikh history is full of clashes between the Sikhs and the Muslims and the glorious sacrifices made by the Sikhs in the cause of self preservation and the security of their brethren Hindus.

Some of the Sikhs had in course of time under the constant stresses of strained relationship had become militants and thrown finer thoughts to the wind. Malli is a representative of that category. Ironically such militant characters had strayed away from the path of love and tolerance although their militant stand is quite justifiable in the circumstances they had been forced to live.

Lamberdar Banta Singh is a rustic with good heartedness and also he represents the saner section of the Sikhs. He said, "If you decide to stay on, you are most welcome to do so. We will defend you with our lives" (p.111). Such characters are not rare as it is because of such well meaning, ready-to-sacrifice loving souls, that the Sikh community has maintained its identity. Contrasted with him characters like Malli pale into insignificance although their sinister designs do create fear and cause uneasiness in the village.

Train to Pakistan thus gives a graphic and detailed picture of the village Mano Majra. Different sections are represented by different characters but emphasis seems to be laid on the fact that the Hindus and the Sikhs lived in peace till the rabble rouser came from the city and spread the seed of communal hatred. People became all of a sudden conscious of their religious moorings and found themselves divided into groups because of the partition. The basis of partition was communal consideration. Once this wale of ethnic differences had come in, it was difficult for the people to get rid of it.

It is a sad matter, though historically true, that even a village like Mano Majra was made to suffer the agonies of a divided heart. It was linked with what was happening on the national scene.

The other novel of Khushwant Singh, I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale (1959) is another attempt by the novelist to present the Sikh way of life for his readers' information. Not that the novel is a treatise on the Sikh ethos but its treatment is such that easily it can be said that the main theme of the novel is delineation of the Sikh way of life. The novelist himself says in the Prefactory Note to the novel:

"Sikh, Hindu, Muslim in the religious and social differences between these three form the basis of this story, and the two communities which figure most prominently are the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Sikhs, who emerged as a separate religious community in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the intention of bringing the Hindus and Muslims together, became militant and anti-muslim after severe persecution by Muslim Rulers."²

The central character of the novel is Sabhrai, who is old and very different from the young generation. She is a devout lady with total faith in "the True, the Great Guru." She visits the gurudwārā without fail every day and performs all rituals. She participates with full zeal in the activities of the gurudwārā, like preparation of pershād, reading the Granth and serving the congregation on the first of the month

2. Khushwant Singh, I shall Not Hear the Nightingale (1959; Bombay: IBH Publishing House, 1983). All subsequent quotations are from this edition, with page numbers given in parenthesis.

and other occasions. She has also absolute faith in the power and dignity of her husband like she has in God and also she has no worldly ambition. She is ready always to accept her fate presuming that whatever happens to her happens to her because God wills so. Even when she is on the death bed, she refuses to accept medicines knowing well that the end of her life has come and that what she needs is to go to her guru by listening to the morning prayer. She orders, "Say the morning prayer -- all together and do not stop ~~it~~ till it is over" (p.233). Thus she is least perturbed even when she finds herself face to face with death. She enjoys by the grace of Great Guru perfect equipoise and emotional balance.

The whole story of the novel deals with the period of Quit India Movement (1942), to be precise, from April 1942 to April 1943, although Khushwant Singh himself acknowledges that the central experience presented in the novel is a fact from his own life. He says "...in actual fact it was my father who was the hero of the episode. He was expected to be knighted. But I chose to make my mother the heroine for Freudian reasons." However, Sabhrai has a hallow around her and is very different from ordinary mothers. She believes that prayers are efficacious. She keeps awake to seek guidance from the guru sitting in the Golden Temple for hours together, sometime the whole night. She experiences perfect calm and

clarity of mind after going through this exercise. She sees her guru in her vision as riding in his own roan stallion across stream, his white falcon perched on his right hand with its wing out spread" (p.204). She does not forget the fact of the Saint-Soldier Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) having made tremendous sacrifices for the protection of his people. She believes that loyalty and sincerity are essential qualities of a true Sikh. She advises her son, therefore, that "he should not betray his fellow brothers as by doing so he will forfeit his right to be a Sikh" (p.209). It is a matter of pride for her that she endeavours to follow the path of the guru. She has grit in her character combined with moral uprightness and piety. She, therefore, gives the right advice to her son, unfettered by any personal consideration or weakness for her child. She remembers

"Eternal God, who art our shield
The dagger, knife, the sword we wield
To us protector there is given
The timeless, deathless Lord of Heaven."

She is not only a devout reader of the Guru Granth Sāhib but also she quotes from the holy book whenever occasion demands. She knows that the life of the "pasture of fenced-in fields entices and insnares but ultimately leaves the black buck sorrowing." She loves her son Sher Singh like any mother does. But more than normal mothers what she knows is that anybody who is concerned with himself alone would not be normal as life

will not be anything for others. She loves even animals with the same intensity with which she loves her child.

There are cases of memorable sacrifices made by mothers in the history of Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh's sons were walled alive. Mata Gujari gave them the advice that befitted her character. She taught her grand-children to be brave and to die for the cause of their religion. Similarly, Mata Sundari's sacrifices are known to be great. In that great tradition of selfless mothers Sabhrai, maintains the values that have always been cherished by the Sikhs. She has humanistic outlook and had an open mind on human problems despite the fact that she is a firm believer in the guru and Sikhism. She is neither bigoted nor fanatical. She is an ideal Sikhni who has tried to live in her life all those values which are preached by the Sikhs.

In the other novel Train to Pakistan (1956), the character of Juggut Singh which has been discussed above has been noted for simplicity of mind and total commitment to the cause of love. Although he was a dacoit, he was a believer in the wisdom of his guru and tried to be a good Sikh. He even prayed in the gurudwārā before undertaking the task of saving the life of the passengers of the train that was going to Pakistan. For his love for Nooran, a Muslim girl, he forgot the words of the tenth guru, "Befriend the Turk only when all other communities are dead" (p.30). He was uneducated and ignorant, but he knew the language of his heart. So ^{he} sacrificed his life ^{for his}

beloved and also for everyone else who was going to be butchered⁵⁷ for no rhyme or reason, except hatred. Sabhrai is a character similar to Juggut Singh. In that she is also simple minded and honest. They are different only in the sense that Sabhrai is, being woman, passive whereas Juggut Singh, being a physically able bodied man, is active in his attempts to help mankind. They also complement the secular and the spiritual as Juggut Singh tries to transcend his personal weaknesses in secular life by saving the lives of human beings while endangering his own. Sabhrai undergoes penance and thus purifies her heart and develops the capacity of a saint to be above worldly consideration.

Sabhrai's husband is a bureaucrat. He is a self-seeker. Buta Singh is also servile. He is rightly made fun of by the novelist. Sabhrai's son Sher Singh belies his name as he is a weak character and lacks moral strength. He tries to seek strength from the image of the tenth guru but then he remains a weakling.

Sabhrai's daughter-in-law has excessive interest in sex and in her weaknesses she develops relationship with Madan who is himself a light-hearted person. The character of Champak, the daughter-in-law, is very much contrasted with that of Sabhrai. But this is so to give a realistic picture of the family where different kinds of people live. Even S.C. Harrex ^{3 says} that "the Sikh element is the most

3. S.C. Harrex, The Fire and the Offering (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1977), p.180.

central aspect of Singh's novel" (p.180). The novel presents in the form of fiction the Sikh way of life and the tradition of the Sikhs.

It may be said that Khushwant Singh had written these novels for acquainting the world with the special experiences and the quality of the life of Sikhs but the fact remains that these novels are quite good as stories. Khushwant Singh incorporated details of rituals and ideals of Sikhs in the novels judiciously. As he himself is a Sikh, he knows what it means to a Sikh. Despite the fact that details of Sikh life and culture dominate the novel, essentially at the bottom of it the novel remains humanistic. The major concern of the novelist is man and he offers his criticism of the illiterate Sikh granthis like Bhai Meet Singh, the Muslim Mullah like the Peer Sahib and even the Hindu pretenders to spiritual powers. What he emphasises is the need for tolerance and compassion so that human society may be developed as a unified whole without consideration of caste, community or religion.

Buta Singh is a Senior Magistrate in I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale (1959), and is a great admirer of Englishmen and their culture. He depends on their mercy for his promotion and social dignity. He had come to believe that "loyalty became synonymous with servility, respect for English officers, synonymous with sychophancy" (p.24). He gradually realised that the Freedom Movement was a movement for the restoration

of dignity of the country and even started appreciating Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru for their attempt to free the country from the political shackles. He had a jeep and also friendship with a Commissioner like John Taylor and other dignitaries. His son, Sher Singh, was a terrorist and was undergoing training so that he could become tough as a leader. He knew "our ancient warriors used to dip their swords in tray of goat's blood and lay them before Durgā, Kāli or Bhawāni or whatever name the goddess of destruction was known by" (p.4). He therefore used his position to hoodwink the government officers and also the gatekeepers of government buildings. Once he even gave a wrong number for the car. He took his friend Madan to the village and shot birds. The Lambardār had no courage to oppose them knowing his position. He was using the gun of his own Magistrate father.

In spite of the fact that Sher Singh was a leader of a terrorist group, he did not have the eyes of a sharp man. His own sister, Beena, and his wife, Champak, were being exploited sexually by his friend Madan Lal but he did not even suspect that they had any undesirable relationship. John Taylor was only 28 but he used slick tongue and befooled people like Buta Singh who despite his knowledge of law was essentially naive. It was enough for him that a person of the position of John Taylor gave him opportunity to be with him and enjoy his company.

He was even taken in by John Taylor's sweet talk that he was on the side of the Indians and that the British were ready to hand over the power to the Indians.

Sher Singh's activities were being watched by John Taylor and the informers were people of his own community. Being callow he did not understand the implication of not keeping the empty shells with him after shooting the birds. John Taylor showed those shells to Sher Singh to terrorise him when Sher Singh wanted licence for a gun. But the same Sher Singh discussed with his father the political situation of the country with clarity. He said that Englishmen had to learn from Indians tolerance and hospitality. His Magistrate father said "Rubbish ! Ask the 80 million untouchables what they think of tolerance of the caste Hindu. Ask the Hindus and Sikhs about the tolerance of Muslims" (p.77). But Sher Singh was sure that Englishmen will go and only after their departure the nightingale of freedom could sing. He was arrested on suspicion and was questioned by the police. His house was searched and his even father was detained. But surprisingly on the intervention of John Taylor's wife who was against depriving a man of liberty "on grounds of probability of guilt" (p.220), Sher Singh was released although he had not given away the names of his accomplices. At the same time even Buta Singh was given promotion. He was given the CIE in the new year's honour list. He was glad that his son was back and that his

services were recognised. Sher Singh believed that "India can only be ruled by strong men," and "This democratic business of votes for everyone, elections, assemblies, committees, is nonsense" (p.229). Even his father was praising Hitler secretly admiring the Englishmen. He proposed a memorial for his wife to John Taylor and Mrs. Taylor and his request was accepted. He said while leaving the Taylors after tea "Thank you Madam. A famous English poet has said all is well that ends well" (p.243). Even to the last moment what Buta Singh did not have anything of his own to say: "He was entirely dependent on Englishmen for their mercy."

61

The latest novel of Khushwant Singh is Delhi (1989)⁴ which deals with the chequered history of the city of Delhi. He has aptly quoted Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869) to define Delhi as "The world is the body and Delhi is its life". His major concern, therefore, in the novel is with the changing face of Delhi which wears on its face the marks of various Muslim rulers and Sikhs who had come either to exploit the city or to live in the city as normal citizen. Bhāgmati is a hermaphrodite and eunuch who was physical capacity to act as a woman. She is presented as the beloved of the narrator and the passion and the ugliness and the coarseness of behaviour, all are presented to give a feel of the city of Delhi which is both attractive and repulsive at the same time. Delhi may appear, says the narrator, "like a gangrenous accretion of noisy bazaar and mean looking hovels growing round a few tumble-down forts and mosque along with a dead river." But the narrator make

4. Khushwant Singh, Delhi (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989). All quotations are taken from this edition, and page numbers are given within brackets.

a candid confession: "I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagnati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign land. For the simple reason that Delhi and Bhagnati have a lot in common-- they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness" (p.1). The narrator has "love hate affairs with the city and the women" (p.2) and he is writing in the novel about his experiences of the city.

The narrator is a Sikh gentleman who lives by writing for newspapers. He works as a journalist and even when necessary as a tourist guide. But whatever he may do, he is a man with a massive common sense and tremendous humour. Combining with these qualities, he has dependable scholarship and complete information about the various places of Delhi which are remnants of the Mughal culture and rule, and even of the times of the Mahabharata. The ease with which he writes about those times is impressive as is his ability to make apt observations on contemporary reality. When he gets down from the cab, he finds that the amount he is asked to pay by the driver is more than the normal. He wants to question the cab driver but he decides not to as he remarks: "One Sikh may argue with one Sikh. One Sikh must never argue with two Sikhs -- certainly not after dark" (p.4). This remark, although made jokingly, explains the panic people have in the city of Delhi because of terrorism. In the cab, besides the driver, there was another Sikh sitting which made the narrator remarks like he did.



540635

The watchman who is on duty in the apartment in which he has his flat, is another Sikh known as Budh Singh, who is "a Budhoo (simpleton) Singh" and, the narrator adds, "one has to be very gentle with Budhoo Singh" (p.5). Budh Singh presses switch after switch without quite knowing which is the right switch for the tube. He also does not like Bhaguati because she calls him mad and also because she is a hermaphrodite. This Budh Singh gets once involved in a case of molestation but he is saved by the narrator who gives a concocted story to the police by saying that Budh Singh, being an ex-military man, had the habit of going off his head. Even this simple Budh Singh is shocked when he finds the Granth and the Bhai of the gurudwara thrown on fire as an aftermath of the murder of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister. Budh Singh "has a kirpan in one hand and is whirling about like a dancing dervish, yelling abuse at the gang of youngmen armed with steel rods who have surrounded him" and abusing all those who had put the Granth on fire. He wonders if those Hindus ever burnt their own Vedas and Shastras. He is pushed around by his long hair and made fun of and finally killed, making a mockery of the Sikh call of victory "Boley So Uihal ! Sat Sri Akal". This only shows how people have forgotten the great sacrifices made by the Sikhs to protect the Hindus from the Muslims. It also shows how in free India the sense of oneness between even Hindus and Sikhs is lost, at least in reaction to the murder of the Hindu Prime Minister by a Sikh bodyguard.

But in no case can the senseless killing and torturing innocent Sikhs be taken to be justified on any ground, political or moral. This refers to the human carnage of 1984, which followed the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Contrasted with the Hindus and the Muslims is Bhagnati, who knows human beings by their love or lack of it. She covers her head with a scarf when she goes near Sher Singh's mosque and also reveres the gods of the Hindus. She says, the narrator asserts, "...she is both -- and more, because now she is also Sikh" (p.105) as she has come to have the Sikh narrator as her lover. She has her own understanding of human problems. She is uncultured and she knows her place in society and she talks vulgar language. When the narrator informs her about Indraprastha, the first city of Delhi built by the Pandavas and Draupadi and her five husbands, she remarks acidly "seeing what the men of today are like, every woman should have five husbands" (p.105). This is a subtle commentary on the effeminacy of modern man. She has full satisfaction from the narrator as a woman but her obsession with sex with nothing else in her life to think of she has a point when she makes that remark.

The Sikh narrator describes his affairs with three different women. The first woman is Georgine, an adolescent of about 16 years, who is quite knowledgeable about Indian history. She accepts the Punjabi dress from the narrator and in her turn succumbs to the sexual temptation offered by the

narrator. The other woman is Kamala who has lot of academic interest but bored to death because of her husband's job requirement keeps away from her. The third woman is a middle aged skinny person who had come to India to see its beauty with all her snobbery. She is as vulnerable as any young woman to sexual temptations. From these experiences with different women, the narrator probably wants to suggest that he is virile and he exploits the weaknesses of women. This may be for purposes of introducing some spice to the story but this also is to suggest that innocent persons like Bhagmati are more morally conscious than are the women of high class society. She is neither on the side of Emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707) who got a Sikh guru murdered nor on the side of the guru. And yet she refuses to have sex on sacred days. This evidences her consideration for the saints and spiritually elevated souls. A politician proffers his version of the political situation when he finds Hindus and Muslims together: "He would not have executed your guru and the guru's sons would not have had any excuse to make you grow all this fungus around your chins." The Sikh journalist says in defence of the creation of Khalsa: "If there had been no bearded Khalsa, the only thing your Hindu ancestor could have offered in the way of defence against invader like Nadir Shah and Abdali, was their bare buttocks to be bugged" (p.121). In this connection it is interesting to note that the narrator summarises different points of view, the creation and role of the Khalsa in the history of the country.

Although the Sikhs could not defend their Gurus when they were executed, the Sikh journalist explodes: "We settled our scores with the Muslims long ago. It is you Hindus, whose mothers and sisters they raped, who provoked us against them. You cannot bear to see Sikhs and Muslims becoming friendly" (p.121).

From the above it becomes clear that the narrator is presenting both the sides of the picture-- the Sikhs who had fought for the safety of the Hindus are now looked upon as a different community and therefore even as adversaries. In this confused situation the novelist explains at length how even the untouchables came to be admirers and supporters of the Sikhs when they found that Badshah Jahangir (1569-1627) killed Guru Arjun (1563-1606) and got his son Hargobind (1595-1644) who became the sixth guru, put in jail. They did not know about Guru Nanak (1469-1539) nor did they read the Granth but most of the untouchables of Rikabganj attached (themselves) to the lotus feet of the guru and began to call (themselves) the Sikhs of Nanak. They did not celebrate their Diwali because they had heard of the death of the King who had murdered Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675). Everyone was talking about the miracle the guru would perform but nobody knew how. The untouchables found that suddenly a tempest had come and created darkness. In this unusual situation an untouchable lifted the body of the Guru and carried it on his shoulder and brought to a safe place and put it on the funeral pyre in the courtyard of Laxhi Rai's house.

The Afghans had come to attack India and create terror. Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722-1773) had been a great terrorist who

had ravaged the entire northern zone on his way back to Afghanistan. The Afghans had become arrogant and proud. In order to teach them a lesson, some 40,000 to 60,000 Sikhs blocked the passage of retreating Afghans and fought them with rare courage. They did this by descending on the Afghan from all directions at night and they used their flying hair to create weird situation.

Nihal Singh is a character from Punjab who had the desire to be in the Army so that he could do something for his country. But what happened actually was that he joined the British Army which was fighting against the Indians to establish its power. He found the city of Delhi a miracle, a wonderful city. He demeaned himself when he massaged the legs of Hodson Sahib but he found to his surprise that among the casualty that his Sahib noted, he did not include the Indians. He thought only of the English soldiers, although he thought "Sikhs are also very bahādur. One Sikh is equal to 1,25,000 others. He knew that the Sikh army had been betrayed by his leaders otherwise they would have won their battle at Ludki, Pherushar, Multan and Chillianwala, etc.

Nihal Singh wondered how people thought that the Sikhs were crazy because they had long hair. He yelled back at the Dogras who sniggered saying "Oi, your mothers and sisters also have long hair. They must feel the heat. Send them to us, we will cool the heat between their thighs" (p.280). He also joins others in making fun of the Muslim prostitute who comes

to spy on the movement of his people. She is quite religious and totally ready for anything that happens to her, whether it is rape or it is murder. . After completing her prayer she looks at him and says "May Allah keep you.... May Allah give you and your children long life.... May Allah...." (p.287). This was so touching that Nihal Singh allowed that woman to walk back to her people. He refused to kill her. The situation changed when he and his friends entered Delhi to capture it. After shooting with lances and carbines, the Sikhs entered the city through Delhi Gate and reached the Jama Masjid. He says, "after the great ride and the grand shikār of humans we wash our lances in the mosque-cistern. The water becomes so red that even the horses refuse to come near it" (p. 299). This is a situation of the time in 1857 when the Indians were struggling against Englishmen. But, Punjab was annexed with the help of Indian forces including Muslims and Hindus. That is why Sikhs, like a large number of other Indian states, did not help those working against Britishers in the War.

Even the narrator describes how in his own family, Queen Victoria (1837-1901) the Queen of England was as much revered as Guru Nanak (1466-1539). His mother would light two joss-sticks and stick one each in the frame of the picture and make obeisance to them: first to the Guru then to the Empress. This was in reaction to what the Muslims had done to the Sikhs during the Mughal period. Even when Bengal was partitioned in 1905, people thought that it was a political step to divide

Hindus and Muslims by creating a Muslim State in East Bengal. But as the narrator says, "Young Bengali Hindus and Maharashtrians and some misguided Sikhs vowed to undo the partition and destroy British rule" (p.320). This explains how the loyalty of the Sikhs has been confused. The Mutiny of 1857 therefore created ambiguous feelings in the hearts of many Indians. The Sikhs shut the gates of the gurudwārā and collected around the Granth Sahib to listen to recitations of guru's words when the "city awaited its fate" (p.329).

The question why the Sikhs do not get out of a life time of licking the boots of the British remains quite important. The narrator remarks ~~about~~ such stooges, "as for licking British boots, I tell them that If I was given the choice of being born in any period of Indian history I liked, I would not choose the Hindu or the Muslim--not even in the short period of Sikh dominance in the north -- but the British. I would re-live my days as a builder-contractor under the British Raj." (p.344). When he is asked why he has forgotten Jallianwala Bagh incident (1919) and such other humiliating experiences spread over a hundred years, the narrator places a counter argument for consideration:

"No, I have not forgotten any of these, I reply as calmly as I can. Nor have I forgotten what Indians have done to each other. I can show some of their handiwork in Delhi. Ever seen the Quwat-ul-Islam next to the Qutub Minar? Twenty-seven Jain and Hindu temples demolished to build one large mosque ! Faces and limbs of gods and goddesses hacked off. Tell me of one place of worship, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh which the English destroyed?

Remember Babar raising pyramids of Rajput skulls, the general massacres of citizens ordered by Taimur, Nadir Shah and Abdali ! No one was spared, neither the aged nor the new born, nor their mothers. Tell me of a single instance of a massacre ordered by the English. Not even after the murders of their women and children in Delhi, Lucknow and Cawnpore after your so-called First War of Independence did they touch your women or children. They hanged a few people, levelled some bazaars to the ground that was all" (p.344-345).

Even he goes on to say that there was no justice in India till the British came and there will be no justice in India after their impact has worn off. He even calls the freedom fighters "hired yellors of slogans who spent more comfortable time in jails than in their own hovels. And now want to be compensated with life pensions" (p.345). These are remarks of a bitter person but they are not untrue. The version of history presented by a Sikh is not so easy to reject as it is not devoid of truth.

Hindus and Sikhs lived in the same house and they lived with Muslims in the same village in Punjab. Life was normal with Muslims having been accepted but in the wake of the struggle for freedom from the English rule Muslims came to be treated as a separate community and their claim for a country for themselves came to be recognised by politicians. The result of this was that Hindu women were raped by Muslims and even the police behaved in a partisan manner. Sikhs and Hindus were even butchered. They ran to the Indian soil to save their

skin. Even the Sikhs who had been well off had to work as ordinary servants to eke out their living. They wandered around in Delhi for jobs. In this tragedy of displacement what infuriated them most was Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on reading Qurān in his prayer meetings. The communal feeling got the better of both the Hindus and Muslims. R.S.S. voiced the extreme feelings of Hindus and in the months following declaration of independence in 1947, a large number of communal clashes took place. Mahatma Gandhi was even murdered by a Hindu in 1948. All around when Hindus were set against Hindus and Muslims were sworn enemies of Hindus, the Government was trying to put forth the idea that Hindus and Muslims had always been one and they had never been different. The situation is so confused that recitations from the Rāmāyana, the Gītā and the Qurān and the Granth go on all day to keep up the facade that all Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are one but the situation is so bad that even when the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) is to be celebrated, lot of police-men are put on duty. The lesson of ahinsa preached by Mahatma Gandhi is forgotten. The anger against the Mahatma is genuine but the narrator realises that what he had done was great and every Indian who had forgotten the value of love and cooperation had killed Bapu.

In this anger the narrator says we are neither Hindu nor Muslim because we are hijdās (eunuchs) and the Sikh journalist who is a prankster says: "In the year 1947 I grant you hijdas

the empire of Hindustan " (p.376). This is the condemnation of the entire nation. But this only shows that the narrator's anger has its background. Even Bhagmati has never displayed more than a cursory interest in Sikhism and has never bothered to go inside a Sikh gurudwārā despite the fact that she has consorted with the Sikh narrator for a number of years. The last scene that is presented in the novel is of the time of Sant Bhindranwale when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was abused for the desecration of the Golden Temple (1984) because "in short, to kill a rat she pulled down the house" (p.386). There was, therefore, total chaos. The Sikhs were made target of attack and mindless destructive activities. This culminated in the death of the priest of gurudwārā and the death of Budh Singh, both Sikhs of simple nature. Their tragedy highlights the inhuman side of the political activities of one recent decade of Indian democracy.

Khushwant Singh seems to be quite annoyed in the novel. He has used undesirable language for Mahatma Gandhi and angry language against Mrs. Indira Gandhi (d.1984) but he has tried to explain the political background so that the narrator's anger may be understood. *Discussion of* Culture and ethos of the Sikhs is not the aim of the novel but it does delineate the straightforwardness and simplicity of Sikh characters. Even where the Sikh characters like the journalist are vulgar, they are like other characters. There is nothing special about their vulgarity. The narrator on the contrary in the first three-fourths of the novel shows tremendous

amount of humour in the use of Indian English and the dramatisation of small situations. The novel has been written over 20 years and that probably explains why the tone of the latter part of the novel vary much differs from that of the first half of the novel.

Contemporary reality is a lived reality. It is not fully distanced so as to give the novelist a proper perspective. This explains why when he is superb in his description of the historical remnants, he is quite ^{an} involved personally in his depiction of the atrocity of the post-independence and the post-emergency period. For the robustness of attitude and broad humour, the novel distinguishes the narrator and that is one special feature *which* sets Khushwant Singh apart from writers of other communities.

MULK RAJ ANAND

Mulk Raj Anand(b.1905) is a writer of a very different order. He is a progressive novelist with his doctorate in Philosophy from England and his passion for the improvement of the lot of the common man of Punjab. He started writing with a conviction. He believed that fiction can be used as a tool for the upliftment of the poor and regeneration of self-awareness in the ignorant and superstitious masses. Convinced of the need of the moment, he came back to India in *late* 1930's to establish himself as a champion of the under-dog.

Lalu trilogy is the only novel that takes a Sikh character as protagonist. In other novels Sikh characters appear only briefly and occasionally. The trilogy consists of The Village(1939), Across the Black Waters(1941) and The Sword and the Sickle(1942). Lalu is actually Lal Singh, the youngest son of Nihal Singh who had fought for the Panth as a soldier in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh(1718-1839). Now an old man of 70, he remembers vividly that the defeat of the Panthic Army was a consequence of betrayal by Sikhs themselves including Teja Singh. He was not afraid of the English whom he called Ferungis but was unhappy to have outlived those fortunate soldiers who had died for the cause of the Panth. He was one of those who had drunk the nectar at the foot of the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar and therefore while swearing by the Guru Granth they had rushed to their death to face the guns of the ferungis. But when he was wounded and put in the hospital and accosted by the English

doctor with Sat Sri Akal, he changed his mind and "...accepted the oath of allegiance to the Sarkar" (p.12) and felt unhappy to think that he could not die while fighting. He accepted the boon of land, although 10 acres out of 25 was swindled away by Teja Singh the landlord. He knew that "these angrez log are crafty" (p.11) and yet he could not condemn them as he found that his own people like Teja Singh and Harbans Singh were suckers of blood of the poor. He uttered with shame, "Oh Lord ! So low in scale of life, so mean by performance" (p.13). Now his ambition was only to see his two sons were married -- Dayal Singh of 35 years and Lal Singh of about 20 years. A simple, hard working and faithful man, he did not make any difference between doings of the mahants and the expectations of the gurus of his panth. In the true sense he was a rustic of Punjab.

His son Dayal Singh was a man of religious bent of mind. He remembered lines and even full dithyrambs from the Guru Granth Sahib and quoted in his conversation quite often from his memory. On the contrary, Lal Singh, his younger brother, was a rebel and saw everything rationally.

Lal Singh was studying in Nandpur and at the same time working in his field along with his brother. He was a very keen observer of the social and cultural situations of the village, he was a man of self-respect and was very keen on making the life of his people better. He was quite respectful to his mother, elder brother Sharm Singh, and his father. He was unable to appreciate the view that girls coming from city to live in

villages are of no use. Sham Singh's wife was from a city, and it was her conduct that was responsible for his mother's disgust: "These city folk have raised their heads to the skies, they have neither religion left nor shame" (p.24). This was a prejudice which Lal Singh was not ready to accept. Nor was he prepared to believe that the Name of God which is Truth, as Dayal Singh asserted in deference to the philosophy of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), was able to provide fodder to the bullocks. He also joked with his brother when he argued on ethics. He mocked his brother by asking why human beings should wash their face when lions do not do so. This makes oblique reference to his brother's cowardice although he is a sikh and calls himself a "Singh" which means a "Lion". He had friends among Muslims and even among the untouchables as he did not believe in such distinction on the basis of caste or creed. Such considerations were not sustainable on rational ground. He knew that lawyers like Balmukand were things and the priests were hollow and hypocritical. But he was alone in considering such people anti-welfare and selfish. Others knew the reality, but were not prepared to publicly denounce, the mahant of the gurudwara, whose life was shady. The mahant put on silk and smoked charas and also perpetrated superstitious beliefs. Not only because he was himself ignorant but also because he did not want his power among the villagers to shrink.

The mahant had ordered the sewaks of the Panth to prepare Sardai which was a drink of hemp on the birth-day of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). When Lal Singh was asked by the mahant to grind

the hemp in place of his old father he felt revulsion and yet found himself incapable of changing the whole system in a trice. He realised that only in course of time, through unabated endeavour alone could he prepare people to shed superstitions and look upon life rationally. He got his hair cut in the fair because he thought:

"I will have this forest of tangled overgrowth cut if I get to the town for the fair, 'he said with increasing impatience. 'As to this religion it is only ritual.' He twitched his lips in a pout of disgust. The katch, kara, kirpan, kesh and kanga might well have been necessary when Guru Gobind was fighting Aurungzeb. Then it was said he enjoined his men to wear shorts because he couldn't get clothes, bangles and swords for symbols, and long hair because he couldn't get barbers to shave them, and combs to tidy their hair. Such provisions were dictated by necessity and common sense. But as everyone with a grain of intelligence said, what was the use of observing these conventions now that there was no further need for them."

It passed his understanding why people in his village put on the same clothes: whether enjoying leisure or working on the field. He thought shoes also were necessary for efficiency during working hours because the feet needed protection from pebbles as much as from cold. Whenever he got opportunity he could buy "a few angrezi things for wearing on his holidays in the town and cigarettes and a revolver" (p.36). Among the things he wanted to possess, the mention of cigarettes is significant as Sikhism does not permit smoking. This sacred wish to be modern free from the rituals and restrictive don'ts of his religion, he wanted to be free. This is why he ate from a Muslim cook-shop in the fair as

he believed that the religion of the shop-keeper did not make any difference in the quality of cooked food. However, for getting his hair cut, he was made to sit on a donkey with his blackened face and was taken round in the village for his committing a sacrilege. Everyone in his family, his father, his mother, and his elder brother, thought that this one single act of hair-cut was enough to damn the entire family and bring them dishonour among the people of his Panth. None one was able to see the point that everybody else who is a non-Sikh had shorn hair and yet is a good or bad man. Even a Sikh before taking a vow to be a disciple of the Guru is a Hindu or something else and has short hair. But, to his chagrin, he found that fanaticism had taken hold of the mind of the disciples of Guru Gobind Singh making them dogmatic in their beliefs. It was not a secret that Father Annandale, the full-bearded, long-robed missionary, who was Headmaster of the Middle School of Sherkot, had converted to Christianity quite a few outcasts, including sweepers.

Lal Singh had bought a steel-framed looking glass and was unable to appreciate the logic of Hukam Chand who said to his father, "Let a boy go seven miles away from the village to town, he will acquire the sins of a gentleman, blowing his nose and spitting into handkerchiefs instead of on the earth, and flaunting the temperament of the son of a Sahib" (p.44). He knew that the people of Punjab were poor as they could not afford to give even two pairs of dresses to their women folk.

It is ironic that, the Sahukar fleeces even such ignorant peasants who cannot make two ends meet. It was meaningless to think of God in such miserable conditions, it was escapism to think that except God "all else is illusion". He was impressed by the old man who had attached himself to the shrine some 30 years ago after losing his worldly goods to a fraudulent money-lender. This old ascetic lived in the same shrine where the mahant rules like a lord without any qualities or rights to the place of distinction. He carried pitcher all day tirelessly without the "sign of a protest or a prayer" because, he said "if there be no heart, son, let there at least be feet". He knew there was no justice in the world except for those who had money but hard work was something that he could always do in the interest of happiness. The mahant used even a witch woman Chandi to fool people into believing that even snake bite can be cured by pleasing the God of snakes. The Englishmen had constructed the power house for supplying electricity but for the villagers it had meant only increase in the revenue rates. The mahant still continued to believe that God fulfils his Will only through "the service of the Saints."

Lal Singh did not believe in miracles. He knew that snake bite was cured by doctors in the city and exorcism used by the mahant was an irrational step. Even if he believed that the Chandi, the crazy and demented woman possessed some peculiar faculty, he could not understand how poison could be taken out

of the body by beating drums. Under the influence of the English education and reformation by Indian social workers like Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1842-83), B.G.Tilak (1856-1920) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), people had come to realise that what they had believed to be true since the Middle Ages was based on crumbly logic. They were expected to change their attitude without which they could not improve their lot. The Sahukar made Lal Singh's father and elder brother sign the paper without mentioning the amount and the conditions for the loan despite Lal Singh's protestations as he was yet an adolescent and in the presence of the elders he had no right to put forth his views. Lal Singh despite such limitations had lot of interest in crops and the folk songs which made him ecstatic sympathetically in his blood.

Sardar Bahadur Harbans Singh, the landlord of Nandpur and son of Teja Singh who had betrayed the Sikhs after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1469-1539), was out to destroy Lal Singh's family. He had attached part of the land holdings of Lal Singh's father. He suffered from leukaderma that made his face "the colour of an Englishman in the tropics, and endorsed it with disfiguring patches of brown into the bargain" but for his cunning "he was blessed by fortune with an array of fineries, a silk turban on his head, a silk uchkin on his body, a white muslin cloth wrapped around his neck and patent leather pumps on his heavy, bulging feet, over which a fine pair of stockings with a check design showed beneath the folds of the tight white trousers which stuck to the dumb bell-like legs" (p.84). He was a great friend of

the mahant and the price of their friendship was cunning and lust for power although the area of operation was different. Nihal Singh's family was fighting a case in the court but it had no hopes of getting the lands back in near future. He encountered another hope in the fair when he found a sweet-vendor was selling "Elixir of Life" for the people of jaded nerves. Sweets were being sold to the people even when they were exposed and flies were sitting on them. Lalu Singh knew that ignorance of the shop-keeper made them blind to the need for cleanliness but what the seller of "Elixir of Life" was doing was pure deception, although it was all for money for maintaining his family.

The custom among the Sikhs as among Hindus was to use a barber as a go-between for settling marriages. The marriage of Dayal Singh, Lal Singh's elder brother, was also to be fixed and therefore Ramji Das had come to negotiate on behalf of the girl's parents. Lal Singh's father wanted the marriage to be arranged without any further delay and therefore he was trying to placate the barber by calling him Raja Ramji Das. Ramji Das was telling beads and whispering Wāh Guru, Wāh Guru while sitting on stool. The Sikhs have no use for barbers and yet as match-maker they employ them.

Lal Singh became a lonely figure, totally isolated from his friends and the elders for his daring and unconventional views. He even thought about the quality of life being lived by people around him:

"For what was life? What did it mean? He asked himself, tossing his head so that the wind rustled through his shorn locks. What was it if it did not mean that one could enjoy oneself be happy, since in the end one had to die? To be sure it was not all play, and one had to work. But why the pain?" (p.122).

and yet it seemed that he was going to be a lonely traveller in life. It very soon became clear to him that it was not easy to convert the masses to his views. His logical but straightforward views alienated him from the money-lender and even his own father and brother. Later when he went to deposit the revenue, he found the clerk misusing his position to wrongfully penalise a driver by abusing him and threatening him with harsh legal action. Lal Singh wanted Jhandu, the driver, to revolt against the unjust Patwari and refuse to ask for his forgiveness but to his surprise he found the driver, despite his strength and innocence slink away for fear of undue punishment. The novelist himself describes the Hindu race as "a tame docile species, tolerant and the hospitable in the extreme," but he knows that this helplessness is a byproduct of penury. In spite of this, these weak people are possessed of a curious fire which has helped the race to endure through thousands of years" (p.147). He was sorry to find that even Sikhs had become docile and ready to accept bashing up even where they did not deserve.

He saved Mr. John Long who was nicknamed as Hercules Long from the buffalo who had chased him up the tree. This endeared him to the Englishman. With his ability to speak in English, he

further proved that he was fit to be drafted into the Boy-Scout Rally. Of course, this decision of the Deputy Commissioner was taken to be eccentric by the mighty people of the village but what was given to Lal Singh was quite deserved. Lal Singh had found in the Deputy Commissioner a kinship of soul. The Englishman also had seen the rubbish heaps and the dirty tanks with smelling sewers and desired that the villagers lived a clean life. The Deputy Commissioner said that he saw a ray of hope for the future in the presence of the youngman Sardar Lal Singh there in the village. By joining the rally Lal Singh was going to declare himself loyal to the king. He preferred to do so as this was going to give him an opportunity to change the lot of the village. The landlord got so jealous that he came out with trumped up charges against Lal Singh. The landlord alleged that Lal Singh had tried to dishonour his daughter and stolen three bundles of fodders. Even the policeman, Napoo, who was a good man basically, was unable to feel convinced of the misdeeds of Lal Singh but he was helpless as he had been ordered by the powerful man of the village to arrest the youngman. Lal Singh had no way out but to run away from the village to save his dignity and muster his strength for future struggle. He shouted, "I wouldn't live in this crushed village" (p.184) and ran away from the clutches of the police and the jealous landlord.

Lal Singh joined the army but the village landlord Sardar Bahadur Harbans Singh got summons issued to him even for arrest from there. It was a matter of chance that Capt. Robert Owen being a good man got the warrants returned and in course of time

cancelled as withdrawn. But Lal Singh was admitted to the army in the 68th Rifles in the Hindu Dogra Regiment on the ground that he was short haired and he was a Rajput from the border of Punjab. At a later stage he got involved in a brawl with Lance Naik Lok Nath. It was again a stroke of luck that he was saved with admonition. His father got ill and he came on leave to find that his brother had been hanged for killing Hardit, who had been found drinking with his wife Kesari and Mahant Nandgir. His brother Dayal Singh recited from the Guru Granth: "In the beginning was the Real, in the beginning of the ages was the Real. The Real O Nanak, is and also will be..." (p.226) and also "if you exert yourself to action, you will be saved." His father lying helpless on his sick bed also remembered Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) and recounted how he had not killed the enemies as a soldier of the Panth because they were eating and as a Sikh he had been advised to desist from killing any one who was at prayer or at his dining table. The Guru Granth was recited by Dayal Singh regularly while Kesari, Sharam Singh's widow was "waving a horsehair whisk with a silver handle over her brother-in-law and on the book as she crouched piously behind" (p.244).

Muslims have their own ideas about the Sikhs and Hindus but the Maulvi was prepared to pardon the Sikh because "the first Guru, Nanak, was an admirer of Mohammad, however, and that may count in your favour." But Lal Singh pointed out the inherent infirmity of this argument. He said, "...but each day in life is judgment day....And surely there is no favouritism

shown to men in heaven, if there be such a place, just because men belong to one religion or another" (p.247). As usual the Maulvi brushed aside the point raised by Lal Singh as he had no answer to the question. He was now as a soldier able to see that what he had believed all along was true that all men are children of God.

"They were men of all races, all religions, castes and creeds; Hindus of the four kinds, Mohammadans of the 72 sects, Christians from the regimental bands, Sikhs. There were men high and low, merchantmen in muslin and uncouth coolies in homespuns and straw. And they were all astir and all agitated (because of the war)" (p.256).

Life for Lal Singh seemed an adventure but it was a set scheme for others. With his enthusiasm and passion, he was able to stir through the difficulties created by his Lance Naik and others. He had the stamina and determination of a true Sikh despite the fact that he knew that the human freedom to act any way was limited.

Lal Singh Trilogy deals with such themes as the contrast between the Indian tradition and Western modernity, exploitation of the lowly by those in power and authority, and the relationship between the Indians and the whitemen of the West. Lal Singh's perceptions get sharper about his role in society as also about what is needed in India for the amelioration of the lot of the ignorant and superstitious Indians. He is in several ways as conservative as his father and yet he has the understanding of the need for change in attitude so as to be able to move in step with the modern world. He was appreciative

of the way Western people accepted each other on equal footing and also was thrilled to find that the animals in the West were healthy and well polished. He contemplated:

"If it was typical of Vilayati peasant households, then all his righteous indignation against his own village folk had been justified and his aspiration to live as European farmers was a great ideal. He wished some of the old fogies of his village were here for then he could show them how true had been his talk about reforming the village" (p.177).

He saw in the family of Western people the same concern for children and parents as he had seen in Indian families. He also argued, "If the French liked the Blacks, why shouldn't he like them? Why had he thought himself superior?" (p.84).

Although Lal Singh discarded the external signs of Sikhism like hair, yet had emerged as a fighter like a Sikh for the rights of the peasantry. He found himself pitched against feudalism. He opposed exploitation of the poor by the rich and he wanted the new movement to give a new faith to the farmers so that the "demoralised backboneless creatures who would abjectly catch hold of the feet of a policeman and grovel in the dust with joined hands completely unlike the gentle, kindly men with bottomless souls..." to gain self confidence and dignity. He was unable to appreciate how Dayal Singh's habit of frequently quoting from the works of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) or his father telling the beads of a rosary could bring any change. He desired a change in the social set up so that the possibility of exploitation of the poor could be ruled out:

"He had been in revolt against the limitations... as well as the prejudices of religion in Nandpur, and he had sought to perfect himself in the face of evil though he had suffered...and since self perfection was not enough, he would try to cleanse the blunt mind of all the peasants, to open their minds to inequity which were practised on them" (p.247).

The novel ends with a ray of hope, a clear understanding of the goal of life: "Now is the time to learn the ways of struggle... now is the time to change the world, to fight for life and happiness..."

It is obvious from the above that the social life of the Sikhs depicted by Mulk Raj Anand is no different *than* the general social life of the Indians who had been from century victims of the feudal system. They had been denied their rights to dignity, education and even equality. Therefore, religion had been used by those in power to make the masses fatalistic and superstitious. Lal Singh opposed this system and therefore he is presented by the novelist more as a rebel than as a perpetrator of fundamentalism. And yet on the whole his target of attack is poverty which breeds misery and not Sikhism and such or for that matter any religious attitude.

As an educated man Lal Singh had accepted the soldier's duty to be obedient. He agreed that doubts and fears should not be allowed to stand between a sepoy and his destiny. He said to himself: "Obey the orders of the Sarkar and of God who made us servant of the Sarkar for our past deeds" (p.136).

But at the same time he believed that the job as a soldier he had undertaken to accomplish was no better than the deeds of a murderer as "if one who slays one is a murderer then he who slays a thousand is not a hero" (p.137). On the whole he was thus against the war in spite of the fact that he had desired to see Vilayat. In Europe he saw Englishmen, Germans and the French at close quarters. He believed that Havildar Lachman Singh was a hero because "neither his hand nor his heart was defiled by cowardice". Even the death of Kirpu the elderly soldier, although a result of suicide, was unhappy as it was a sequence of the unjustified humiliation heaped on him by Lok Nath a haughty and malicious officer. He believed in hell and yet he conceded that man could improve his condition if his intentions were firm and his deeds were good. He appreciated Kirpu's view that "Men are tested when set to work" (p.208). But what he wanted to know was whether the land was being given to the soldiers as reward in the wake of decision of the British Government to give order of merit to those who showed gallantry as declared in Delhi Darbar in 1911. As a peasant, even though he was performing the duties of a soldier, he retained his interest in his people and wanted their upliftment. He was shocked to find that in the West also "a rigid caste system" prevailed "among the Sahib and the Sepoy" as "no Indian soldier could ever dare to aspire to such heights of dignity as to sit down at the table with a British Officer."

(p.217). He also believed that "everything was the reward for ones past deeds as the elders said" (p.255). Although he was not able to understand how Kirpu's suicide could be interpreted whether as a consequence of his past deeds or an act of failure of nerve.

He retained his peasant sensibility even though fighting in Europe far away from his land. In depressed mood he hummed a melancholy Punjabi melody in his throat which summarises the Indian philosophy:

"Only four days to play, Oh mother, only four days to play!"

Night has fallen, mother, my Beloved is far away,

Oh mother, four days, only four days to play."

Similarly, for fun along with other Punjabi colleagues, he sang "Lachhi" which is sung with gusto and abandon as it is a song of love and gaiety. He had read the Bible when a student at school and remembered not only lines from the holy book but also how to make a cross to indicate atonement.

In the third volume of the trilogy The Sword and the Sickle (1942) Lal Singh is back in his village after release from the German hands. He had not received any reward or pension as he had been taken prisoner by the enemies. But in his village, he desired to use his talent to improve the lot of his people not only by using the sickle but the sword, if necessary. He joined a group of seditionists under the leader-

ship of Kanwar Rampal Singh, the deposed prince of Rajgarh estate. His Comrades organised an abortive revolt of the peasants of Rajgarh and of a neighbouring estate of Nasirabad. But the agitation was suppressed and Lal Singh was arrested. During the days of imprisonment, he reflected over the sad plight of the downtrodden all over the world.

"Why had a whole generation been wiped off the surface of the earth?... Why were there food riots in Germany? What had happened to the square of land I was promised by the Sarkar? And why was I demobilised? Why the money famine?... What is the destiny of man and how can I control it? Why is it that after a long time of struggle....after seeking to grapple with my own destiny and that of other with a devotion even like that of the religious devotee... Why is it that I have ended up in this reeking hell, scratching my head, tossing restlessly from side to side..." (p.388)

He was a victim of such moments of despondency quite frequently but it was only a fleeting experience. What he learnt from Comrade Sarshar was also valuable as the terrorist activities undertaken by the Count were no solution. For any success what one was expected to do was "to master oneself to discard one's family and caste antagonism to banish all the wills of religion and to break the narrow walls which separate man from man (p.392). And also that "revolution is a need of togetherness" and also "the need to curb malice among men, the need for men to stand together as brothers" (p.192). The time for changing the world has come although he has to reckon with undependable politicians around him -- politicians like Srijut Ladli Prasad Tewari and even communists like Sarshar

because they have vested interests and they are not able to see the Indian peasants' problems in perspective. Even Mahatma Gandhi did not care for the lot of the peasants as he was obsessed with the cause of the untouchables. Ironically enough Lal Singh discovered when he met the Mahatma that the Mahatma was pledged to the protection of the cows more than to the welfare of the neglected poor farmers. On the contrary, Lal Singh was delighted to find that Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) did care for the villagers as he undertook a journey to Rajgarh to acquaint himself with the condition of the people.

The Sword and the Sickle (1942) is on the whole a confused novel as the writer does not present any clear cut choice between terrorism and communism. He also fails to present the Congress and the movements led by Mahatma Gandhi in right perspective. At the same time, his prejudice against Sikh form is clearly evident throughout the proceedings of the novel. But the novelist does succeed in presenting Lal Singh as a confused youngman who was faced with various alternatives and yet as the whole country was in an ambivalent mood, he himself did not know how best to accept one particular view and live by that. The story of Lal Singh is the story of many other Indian peasants who awoke to political consciousness on the eve of the struggle of national liberation in the post-War I years. S.C.Herrex² rightly says:

2. S.C.Harrex, The Fire and the Offering (Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 1977), p. 106.

"Epically, the story is of the birth of a nation: heroically it demonstrates through the central character, Lal Singh, with the man of destiny in the emergence of a free and independent India is the Indian common man" (p.106).

The novelist thus presents Lal Singh as an intelligent common man and through his sensibility presents the pitiable condition of Indian peasants. He says in Apology of Heroism (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946): "I believe first and foremost, in human beings, in the whole man" (p. 95), and in all genuineness he attempts to achieve his goal by underlying the possibility of improvement of the socio-economic status of his contemporaries. The central character Lal Singh, goes through the harrowing experiences of an average Sikh of a conservative family to achieve some understanding of the temporal problems of life. He emerges as a representative of all those who have come to see the need for mending our ways of life without ignoring either the spiritual or the material side of life. He rebels, but stays within the religious fold as his aim is to make the common man happy in his day-to-day life. The growth of his social consciousness is a matter of satisfaction, despite the fact that even by the end of the novel, he does not come to evolve a clear cut ideology. But the unfortunate part of the story is that M.R. Anand has come to believe that Lal Singh would not be able to do, which he did, if he continued to live in a proper Sikh form.

Chaman Nahal (b.1927) is taken to be a political novelist as he has dealt in two of his novels with the political events of singular importance viz. Azadi (1975) and The Crown and the Loincloth (1981), and in an oblique manner in The English Queens (1979). He has also written two good love stories in My True Faces (1973) and Into Another Dawn (1977), and yet he stands out as a novelist of contemporary India for his breadth of range and the clarity of perceptions, whether he deals with the early twenties or the forties when the role of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was crucial in shaping the course of history.

Chaman Nahal was born at Sialkot but had to come to Delhi in the wake of partition in 1947 as Sialkot went to Pakistan. Educated both in Delhi and Nottingham he has been a Professor of literature and has written fiction in the last 20 years or so. Among the three important historical-political novelists he is quite important, the other two being Khushwant Singh (b.1918) and Nayantara Sahgal (b.1927). He was chosen to write in English for reasons of felicity and not for any snob value of the language. His attitude to life and culture has been nationalist and he has never shown in his writings any preference for the Western system or the British Raj.

He has not chosen to write about the Sikhs in particular but he has not ignored them if they formed part of the milieu

from which he was trying to struggle to transmute the real 94
life incidents into fiction. In Azadi (1975) the setting
of the novel is uncertain, as it starts in Sialkot and
culminates in the city of Delhi. In the other novel The
Crown and the Loincloth (1981) the major events are located in
Amritsar, the heartland of Sikh culture.

Himself a Hindu, Chaman Nahal has lived with the Sikhs
of Punjab and known them for what they stand and do right
under his clinical eyes. He knows their culture, their
predilections and also their predicament. He has never turned
his back on the true feelings of the disciples of Guru Gobind
Singh (1666-1708), the tenth guru of the Sikhs.

In Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975)¹ Sikhs and their problems
have not been treated at length. But the Sikh family to which
references have been made in the novel is distinguished for
certain characteristics. None of the members of the family,
the grandfather, the father, the daughter and her husband is
educated or in any sense distinguished from the lot, but for
their humane culture and innocent faith in Waheguru they are
definitely distinguished.

Isher Kaur is a young woman of about 25 years whose
husband Sardar Niranjana Singh stays with her parents. She is
beautiful and quite a loving character. She has grown in that
house and even after marriage she stays with her parents.
She has excellent neighbourly relations with the families
occupying rooms in the same building. She is expecting a

1. Chaman Nahal, Azadi (1975; New Delhi: Orient Paperback, 1979)
All quotations from this novel are taken from this edition.
Page numbers are mentioned within brackets immediately after
the quotations.

child at the time the whole trouble of Partition begins in June 1947.

Sardar Teja Singh, the father of Isher Kaur, is afraid of facing displacement and the consequent hardships following the partition of the country. He is a simple hard working man without any understanding of the communal or political issues. So is his father Sardar Jodha Singh, the octogenarian, who believes in working according to the requirement of the time. He advices his grandson to have his hair cut so that he could survive the mindless attacks by Muslims on the turbaned--bearded Sikhs. But, Chaman Nahal says, "He held his head high and his white turban shone like a distant star in the sky" (p.68). He lived with dignity. He died of diarrhoea. His ashes were immersed in the stream close to the camp and "his reaction to the partition had been typical of the man of his age: he had gone utterly mute" (p.243).

However, the youngman Sardar Niranjan Singh, "the volatile husband of Isher Kaur" was despite his political naivete quite a conscientious man of active habits. He was unable to understand why the Congress had agreed to the partition or the Sikh leaders and the Akalis had concurred with the decision of the Congress. He was so angry that "... what he wanted to do was to take out his sword and hack Nehru to pieces" (p.66).

After the partition was announced in 1947, Muslims celebrated the occasion by not only eating sweets and

garlanding one another but also by indulging in indiscreet massacre of Hindus and Sikhs. Naturally when Muslims wanted to enter the gate to reach the house of the Hindus and the Sikhs, none but Sardar Niranjana Singh resented the move and wanted to go with his kirpan and fight bravely. But he was not permitted to do so by his senior neighbours. He said "I suggest we stay here and we fight the bastards if they try to enter the street. We should be able to kill a few before we get killed" (p.70). He was so disgusted with the Hindus who decided against giving a fight to the Muslims that he thought in a disgruntled moment:

"These Hindus were too weak. Always thinking of consequences. Guru Maharaj had given him strength for occasions such as this, and they wouldn't let him use it. He loosened his beard and quickly running his small comb through it at number of times, wound it up into its little knot before his chin" (p.75).

But it is ironic that he was asked by his own grandfather to get his hair cropped to save his life. Sardar Niranjana Singh preferred to immolate himself on a pier in place of living to suffer humiliation for deserting the Sikh faith. He was in a tight corner but he remained quite conscious of his strength and possibility of change in the course of history if his people showed some stamina in facing the odds. Chaman Nahal says:

"Niranjana Singh lay awake, thinking. He had passed the evening like a caged lion -- they would not let him act. He was certain in his mind he was stronger than all those Muslims put together. He could even dance the Bhangra better than they! At that he smiled and went to sleep (p.90).

The Sikhs as a group demanded the boundary line at the Chenab basin so that their temples and places of worship in that part of Punjab and also the fertile land of Montgomery could stay in India. But it was not conceded and the Sikh community had to accept what was offered by the Congress and the Muslim League.

The English had been known for using the policy of divide and rule and that was understandable as they had to rule a big country where people of different faiths lived. But it was surprising to find Inspector Inayat-Ullah Khan using the same trick when he wanted to get the Sikhs against the Hindus and the Hindus against the Sikhs in breaking the gate that led to the safe residences. He called the Sikhs by name one by one and ordered them to move forward and break the gate open. Muslims did not make difference and killed Hindus and Sikhs indiscriminately after separating them in two groups when the trains came from Indian side. The terror had been so much that the foot convoy going to India preferred to walk rather than go by train and get killed.

The Hindus and the Sikhs had been living together in peace without acrimony or communal feelings. Even schools run by various dominations admitted children without any consideration for their religion. A Sikh could join any school. Arun went to Arya Samaj School and Munir went to Islamia School.

"The names meant nothing to the boys. There was a Khalsa School in the city and a Mission School, too. Maybe the English made those parochial distinctions, or maybe different communities wanted it in that way. The children themselves did not think on ethnic lines. Arun could not recall a single fight between the schools on parochial ground" (p.99).

And yet Hindus were noted for their timidity and Sikhs for their bravery. Even Hindus had similar prejudices against Sikhs when they thought that "Sikhs had no mind." (p.252).

Maybe the Sikhs could be identified from a distance by their turban or beard, but they shared their culture and social views with Hindus. That is one important reason why there were no clashes on religious ground and Sikhs went to temples as Hindus went to Gurudwaras to offer prayers to God. Niranjjan Singh's ashes were collected and placed in a red cotton bag and the bag was handed over to his wife Isher Kaur so that she could carry the ashes for immersion in the Ganges.

The common man did not make difference between a gurudwārā or a temple or the Granth and the Gitā. It is borne out by the fact that Kamal's grandmother, "a living example of untainted goodness" (p.23) in Chaman Nahal's My True Faces (1973)² recites from the Gitā even while sitting in the gurudwara and the Japji while sitting in a temple (p.23). Even when there was a conflict in the Thakur Shanti Nath's family in The Crown and the Loincloth (1981), the father and the son and the wayward daughter Shyama went into the Golden Temple to sit

2. Chaman Nahal, My True Faces (1973; Delhi:Orient Paperbacks, 1980)

down and to sort out the problem of her marriage with her revolutionary lover as they found the atmosphere inside the temple serene and spiritually elevating. And yet there were Hindus or Sikhs who had unswerving faith in their religion without vitiating their social life. In Azadi (1975) Lala Kanshi Ram was a staunch believer in Arya Samaj in the same way as Sardar Niranjana Singh in Sikhism. Lala Kanshi Ram in the characteristic style of the Arya Samajists shrewdly argued with Niranjana Singh about the rationale for not cutting the hair, and said, "If you perish, your religion will perish with you" (p. 251). "Religions of man", he asserted incisively, "are the inventions of man himself", the reason being they provide inspiration to lead inspired lives". Religion can be practised only by those who live. But for Sardar Niranjana Singh this cold logic did not hold water. He emitted the last cry of pain through the flames: "Life I'll gladly lose, my Sikh dharma I won't" (p.262). "This--martyrdom--was something", says the novelist, "they had heard of but not seen it happen" and "such a supreme sacrifice had a singularly humbling effect". The incident was so impressive that "in no time the ashes had become a Samādhi, a place of religious veneration" (p. 262).

The Crown and the Loincloth(1981)³ is another novel of Chaman Nahal which deals with the years immediately following the arrival of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) to India from Africa. Popularly known as Rowlatt Act (1919), the

3. Chaman Nahal, The Crown and the Loincloth (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1981). Quotations are taken from this edition, with page numbers mentioned within brackets.

Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act had been passed and the Governor-General had equired the right to make the act applicable to any part of India and arrest any suspected person and try the accused without a jury. Finding the laws most deleterious and brutal Gandhiji gave out a call for a 'hartal' by the entire nation and declared that the closure will be different from an ordinary 'hartal'. It will be "an act of atonement". People were, therefore, expected to fast for 24 hours to protest against the inhuman laws.

People belonged to different religions and yet they lived in unity and even displayed that unity on occasions by indulging in such acts as mass fasts or taking bath in the Golden Temple where Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs broke their bread together. This was something unique which the Englishmen could not understand. But they could understand that if they wanted to rule India they had to separate the people of one religion from those of the other, divide and rule being their policy.

Thakur Shanti Nath was a big landlord, who had acquired lot of property and strength by remaining on the side of the Government. His forefathers had worked as informers for the Englishmen even in 1857 when Muslims and Hindus were fighting together for the freedom of the country, that being a common cause, ever since the family had acquired land and titles at the hands of the British rulers. In Ajitha he was quite a

big shot. Out of the four sons that he had, the second one, namely, Sukhbir, had gone and embraced the Sikh faith. He had just done that without caring for the permission or concurrence of his father without whose explicit order nothing was done in his feudal family. But Thakur Shanti Nath understood the implications of this small event. It could disintegrate his family if he discarded the son or took some other hard step. Very wisely, therefore, he accepted the accomplished fact. Chaman Nahal says:

"Thakur Shanti Nath could not afford to have an open confrontation with them. So he took on the role of a noble-hearted chieftain, under whose protective wing diversity could flourish, and he announced the news of conversion to the village himself and treated them to a religious feast as well where a total reading of the Granth, the Sikh scripture, was done." (p.57)

This he had done particularly to avoid disintegration of the family but it should also be appreciated that "Sikhs formed a sizeable community in Ajitha, many of his tenants were Sikhs, and Thakur Shanti Nath could not afford to have an open confrontation with them". It is clear from this that, even though for personal reasons, there was a spirit of accommodation in the family. And yet the political forces around were pulling the family apart. As Sukhbir courted Sikhism, his brother Sunil took refuge in the Golden Temple at Amritsar and refused to return home to pressurise his father to allow him to continue his studies. Later he joined Congress Party. Each

went his way as, under the socio-political forces of the time, the centre of the family could not hold all together the way it had done in the past.

General Dyer was incharge of the area and even had the pretension of understanding Indian for their character and culture. More than stiff in his performance of duties, he was a sadist totally indifferent to the feeling of people around him. He considered the Indians, including the Sikhs, to be "scheming" so that he could not trust even one Indian even one bit and in his arrogance considered even the Anglo-Indians quite an inferior class of people. He thought that the entire city of Amritsar, which was a network of lanes and high houses, was "a messy melange of inelegance and dirt". He was disgusted to see the area where the Golden Temple was situated surrounded by ugly tracks. He had always wondered why ever since he had taken a commission in the Indian Army in the year 1887 he had seen the open stretch of land in the heart of the town known as Jallianwala Bagh unutilised. He even thought that Gandhi was an "arch villain". It was with these feelings that he had viewed the most important centre of the Sikhs. He had, therefore, without a warning and without a moment's hesitation ordered massacre of about 500 persons on 13th April 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh. People had gathered there for an innocent meeting in response to the call given by Gandhi. In the melee when General Dyer had been firing straight

at the crowd, people ran helter-skelter and got killed if not already fallen into the blind well in the centre of the Bagh.

Sukhbir as a Sikh was as much shocked to find the English soldiers inhuman as anyone else in the family or outside in the country. But the loss of Thakur Shanti Nath's family was more than ordinary in the sense that he had also lost on the same day his daughter Shyama who had run away with her lover Rakesh. Also his son, Sunil, had been badly beaten up by the soldiers of General Dyer. These tremors were felt in the entire country, more in Punjab the heartland of the Sikhs. The general massacre of Jallianwala Bagh became a rancour in the heart of the Sikhs for decades to come. But the Golden Temple remained a place where anyone who walked into it experienced peace and serenity. It was here, therefore, that Shyama had been asked by Sunil and her father to sit down and consider with a cool mind whether the impetuosity that she had shown by running away with a revolutionary was proper for her. The question of the personal Dharma, i.e. duty to oneself and society, was discussed at length in the benign presence of the Granth to everybody's advantage.

As a Sikh, Sukhbir observed that the Gurudwaras were open for the people of all communities but he was pained to know that the Granth Sahib was recited by the Mahants who had been incharge of gurudwaras. The Mahant, Chaman Nahal says:

"...kept concubines in the shrines, they drank liquor, they held muzras, dance performance for their entertainment, and in other sacred doctrines. They had also put in large arsenals in their gurudwaras, and kept a private force or armed musclemen and Pathans to guard them" (p.137).

The Sikh intelligentsia had made repeated requests to the British to take necessary steps to end corruption in the gurudwaras but the British were indifferent to the problem. They were interested only in keeping the Sikhs divided and weak so that they did not have any fears from their side. As a matter of fact Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) had been a formidable king called the Hawk for the reason that he had lost one eye as a child in an attack of smallpox. The British had entered into a treaty with him in 1806 and again in 1809. He was even invited in 1831 at a grand Darbar on the otherside of the Satlej by Lord Bentinck as he was treated on par with the British. But after his death the British annexed the Punjab in 1849 destroying the Sikh Empire to the chagrin of the self-respecting Sikhs.

The last Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) had made it clear that religion was more than a personal matter; it was a matter of public importance. As Chaman Nahal says:

"While he wanted the Granth to be read by the Sikhs, he also wanted every Sikh to wear long hair and observe several other visible signs of his faith. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to power in the Punjab and a politically viable Sikh State was established in India, he made the dictates of Guru Gobind Singh mandatory for all Sikhs" (p.137).

From this it becomes clear that Sikh community was in jeopardy and was in need of repair. Drastic reformatory steps were needed to improve the situation. It was to meet the challenge of the time that the Akali Dal founded (in 1920), which was a Sikh revivalist group came into existence at a time when the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885), under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi was introducing innovative steps into the struggle against the Raj, to ensure freedom for the country.

Sukhbir joined this Akali Dal as a youngman and moved in white khaddar with a black turban and a small sword. The Akali Dal was not a political party as its main aim was to restore to the Khalsa the honour that once belonged to the community. Its members were zealous but not begotting. The result was that they could not remain uninfluenced by the movements being launched by Gandhiji and the Congress. They also organised jathas and lead non-violent protest marches against the wrongs done to them. They collected funds from people and also from Sikh princes and landlords. Although it did not aim at subverting the British Raj, the British looked upon the Congress. Once when people were throwing their clothes into the fire inspired by the swadeshi movement,

an American, Aunt Celia, observed that the people had come prepared for the display of their contempt for British clothes. She thought the burning of foreign clothes was like the burning of the Empire. What was most noteworthy was that the gathering included not only Hindus and Muslims but also turbaned Sikhs and they were "all wearing the mark" on their forehead and "they were not just marching, they were marching in step- in step, Indians in step." This kind of unity of Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs has been observed in several situations on different occasions because the Sikhs made with others the common cause of freedom from the British rule.

Nankana Sahib is about 100 Km. away from Amritsar. Being the birth place of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), it has always been like Jerusalem for the Christians. In the gurdwara there the Akalis had gone to offer prayers without any violence in their mind. But they were fired at by Mahant Narain Das and killed in large numbers, about 150 of them. As a reaction, hundreds of Akalis gathered at Nankana Sahib and created a law and order problem for the police. But it was surprising, observed Aunt Celia, that the Sikhs observed full decorum in the gurdwara. Says Chaman Nahal:

"Even though the Sikhs were agitated at the killings of their brethren and were raising slogans, they displayed no hysteria. Groups were going round identifying the dead, maybe relations, maybe friends, and while their faces sagged with grief, not a single one was weeping. The congregation was filing past the area where the martyrs had fallen and they were kissing the blood stained Granth - all very peacefully." (p.197)

It was a blood curdling scene as the butchered Sikhs had been thrown into the potter's kiln, tied to trees and burnt alive, lying scattered half burnt. The mahant had tried to cremate them by throwing kerosene and fire-wood on them. He had killed even the leader of the Akalis Bhai Lachhman Singh even when he was reading the Granth. It was ironic that even at the place of the great Guru's birth there was mindless massacre, and that too, attempted by a mahant. Sukhbir was also killed here innocently without any involvement in any political activity. This incident only proved that the Sikhs were pitched not only against the English who had killed them in Jallianwala Bagh but also against the Hindus as was clear from the heinous crime committed by the Mahant.

There is an interesting observation the ~~Novelist~~ has made about the culture of the Sikhs: "The Sikhs did not treat the fellow Sikhs with contempt, nor did the Muslims look down upon other Muslims. It was Hinduism alone that was infested with the cancer of mutual acrimony" (p.227). It was a different matter that the Sikh sowars looted the foodgrain and had their foods in Roharu like the Hindus and the Muslim

chieftains. There was no difference in their life style.

It was fondly remembered that people felt quite easy with Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) and even enjoyed respect. But in course of time they had come to be treated like other degraded people.

Another very interesting character is Sardar Sardar Singh, a sepoy appointed in Roharu, to keep an eye on the people who associated themselves with political activists. He was "...not only unlike a policeman in build, with that shaggy stump on his face, and that lean, stooping figure, he was unlike a policeman in his psychology too" (p.236). A simpleton, he had a family of four to feed, an old mother, his wife and two sisters but he had no child. He was a believer in fate and in the theory of karma. When he sprained his foot, he thought it was a punishment given by the Waheguru who was angry with him for committing foul deeds every day by reporting against the people of the area. He was of course in his own way doing his duty and he proclaimed with confidence, "I can make any sacrifice for the sake of my religion...." But in the immediate context of his spraining the leg, he said "...but my foot that's another matter." This showed the naivete of the Sardar who did not know even that the meaning of the word Sardar was the equivalent of lion and he carried in his name Sardar Sardar Singh, three lions. Rather a pathetic character, Sardar Singh is more a commentary on the administrative

machinery of the country than his inability. It is probably because of such characters that the Sikhs have been made butt of ridicule in anecdotes, although "the same jokes could be told against the Jats or the Muslims (p.293).

Along side the Akalis and the Congress activists, who were working in many areas together for reformation and also for independence, there were other revolutionaries who were working against the British. The Ghadr Party, established in 1913 in Canada, had its followers even in India, although it died soon as a viable group. But many of the Ghadrites had continued to be active and joined new groups of the revolutionaries in the country. Purshotam Mehra says in his Dictionary of Modern Indian History 1707-1947 (DUP, 1985)

"The importance of the Ghadr movement lies in the fact that it was the first secular, democratic and revolutionary upsurge aiming to free India from foreign shackles. For the Sikh community, it meant the end of the long saga of unquestioned support to the Raj. No spectacular results followed. The aim was to murder and drive out the British from India. Although the vast majority of its members were Sikhs, both Hindus as well as Muslims joined. The movement was suppressed, but later it gave the Akalis their more radical aspect, for Akali terrorists, known as Babbar, were largely recruited from the ranks of Ghadrites. Nor was that all. When returned after serving their terms of imprisonment, the Ghadrites formed the nucleus of many a left-wing political movement in the Panjab -- whether socialist, or communist" (p.265).

The group called the Himmat was being run in Panjab on the pattern of Ghadr Party under the leadership of Rakesh, the

brother of Sukhbir. Out of the five founders of The Himmat, two were Sikhs, Hoshiar Singh and Darbara Singh. Darbara Singh was an ex-member of Ghadr Party and had returned to India in the Kamagata Maru in 1914 and since then he had been active, living the life of a nomad. Like other members of the Ghadr Party he also took the whiteman as the villain and worked for a revolution. The Ghadr in its insertion of 18 August 1914 read:

Wanted:	Enthusiastic and heroic soldiers for the Ghadr in Hindustan.
Pay (or remunderation)	: Death
Reward	: Martyrdom
Pension	: Freedom
Field or work or battlefield	: India

He had cut his long hair in Canada itself but on reaching India he grew his beard. He ran three miles in the morning to keep himself in shape so that he could perform his secret assignment whenever given to him.

The other revolutionary was Hoshiar Singh, a son of another revolutionary, who was sentenced to death and whose property was forfeited for his involvement in the First Lahore Conspiracy case. He was "grumpy, had an oil skin and a greasy beard and for years had been taking revenge on those Indians who had cooperated with the authorities to hunt his father down" (p.359). He never felt deterred by any considerations--

personal, moral or spiritual. He was totally committed to the task of throwing the Englishmen out of India.

These two Sikh revolutionaries "spoke up against the fear of being wiped out" as they thought it was their privilege to carry their coffin on their heads. They were sure of victory against the whitemen:

"Was the faith of Sikh Gurus wiped out by the Mughal emperors? Who ever remembers Aurangzeb today? Historians, yes, but who else? Whereas the glory of Teg Bahadur and Gobind Singh increases from year to year. Heroism is like a crop. The more you feed it, the more it grows" (p.360).

In the true spirit of revolutionaries, therefore, they offered themselves for any task. The Himmat decided to kill the Prince of Wales who had come to India in November 1921 to mollify the feelings of Indians after the Montago-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) were announced. It was decided that Hoshiar Singh will derail the Gorkha Troop trains, which were due to pass through Amritsar. Darbara Singh was to participate in the tonga race and drive the tonga on to the dais so as to create confusion and give a chance to their comrade Rakesh to shoot at the Prince.

In their life of turmoil and uncertainty they also had their tender feelings and affections. Whereas Darbara Singh had retrieved Salma from a brothel to give her clean life, Hoshiar Singh was living with Rosy, the wife of an engine driver, who had left her husband for good. Like other

revolutionaries they also lived with their women without moral inhibition. What was important about the life was, Chaman Nahal says,

"If there are hardy Sikhs who die unflinchingly in the cause of their religion, there are also Sikhs in the Punjab who would die unflinchingly for any other cause -- even robbery or murder. The most feared dacoit had come from the Sikhs alone. It depends on what they take on. If it happens to be dacoity, well they have to make or mar for themselves there too. Darbara Singh and Hoshiar Singh had nothing but revolution in their blood. They both belonged to the new defunct Ghadr Party" (p.358).

It is evident from the above that Sikh characters in The Crown and the Loincloth (1981) are all men of passion devoted to the task of improving the lot of their countrymen whether they are in the Akali Dal or in the Himmat. Although it must be kept in mind that Sukhbir died innocent death being a victim of the devilish desires of the Mahant to wipe out the Sikhs, in the case of Hoshiar Singh and Darbara Singh it is they who are out to extirpate the whitemen. Sukhbir was not a calf or chicken as he also had gone to fight the war in the Middle East and had returned with lot of memories of his brave acts. Sepoy Sardar Sardar Singh is created rather as a caricature to juxtapose him with the social workers like Sunil in Roharu. It is worthwhile to mention here that even among the leaders of the Congress, there were Sikhs who were as dedicated to the cause of freedom and preservation of India's

cultural identity as others. Baba Kharak Singh (1867-1963) was such an example. He sacrificed life for the country and was bracketed with such leaders as Lala Lajpat Rai, Vallabh-bhai Patel (1875-1950), Rajgopalchari (1879-1972) and C.R. Das (1870-1925). Baba Kharak Singh was founder-president of the Shiromani Akali Dal. He was a staunch nationalist. About this betaj baadshah (literally, 'uncrowned king') Jawahar Lal Nehru said, "There are few hands which can uphold the honour and preserve the dignity of the national flag better than those of Baba Kharak Singh".

In The English Queens (1979)⁴ there are six characters, one of whom is a Sardarni Satwant Kaur by name. Her husband Sardar Sawan Singh Ahluwalia was not from an officer class nor did he have a snob family history to boast of. And yet they belonged to a class that had become suddenly rich. The novelist says, "It was only accidentally that they were Sikhs; they could as well have been Hindus" (p.15). Satwant Kaur outdid even English women in maintaining her figure. She shaved her legs and plucked her eyebrows every single day, while even Barbara Smiles, the only European family of the group did these barely twice a week" (p.16). Besides she used imported make-up for her face and used 'ji' with any word or sentence she spoke, like "Yes ji", "No ji", "Papa ji", "Mummy ji", etc.

4. Chaman Nahal, The English Queens (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1979). All quotations are from this edition. Page numbers are mentioned within brackets immediately after the quotation.

She belonged to the group of Sikh women, who had been given the charter in 1947 by Lord Mountbatten- the Governor General of India and the Crown Representative (March-August 1947) to maintain the status of English in free India by having "all conversation in home and outside to be always in English" (p.9). The novelist has isolated Satwant Kaur as a ridiculous character by making her speech ridiculous. But he has also used in a very subtle manner this habit of combining 'ji' with English words and sentences as an argument in favour of national integration. The novelist says:

"That was a style she fancied suited the Indian temperament the best. It was a subtle mind and Indians much more so than any other mind anywhere in the world else. Its nonce could never be expressed 'No ji', they couldn't be, through one language alone. So why not combine Hindi with English, and Bengali and Sanskrit too, if possible? Good for national integration too that".

Obviously the writer is hitting hard at the excessive interest taken by the people of Punjab in the preservation of the alien language.

Besides leaving the legacy of English Cool-Hot was entrusted with a task of collecting "families already beaten by the English bug" and the choice of Satwant Kaur was made to constitute that group as a member by a hair breadth margin. Satwant Kaur had excellent finger nails and eyebrows of the size fixed as a criterion for the selection. Without realising that Lord Mountbatten shook his head "like a modern Machiavelli" (p.36). He knew that the Raj had not ended.

The English lady Barbara Smiles being a novelist, writing about India, underlined those ideas in her fiction which made India look exotic as she knew that the foreign audiences expected that kind of stuff. This is why she was shocked to find that Rekha and Pradeep were going to marry on their own. She said

"They (foreign audiences) cannot conceive an unarranged marriage in these back waters. Hence the institution of the go-between I have developed in my fiction. Now if it gets about that a girl is marrying a man of her own choice, there might be serious international repercussions. Already the American aid to India is drastically cut... if they learn that the money they are giving is being diverted towards love affairs and fantasies there might be further restriction" (p.73).

As this idea is fantastic because it speaks of insincerity Sardarni Satwant Kaur made a suggestion to bring about peace and avoid clash between the people of Bide-a-Wee and JJ Colony (JJ standing for Jhuggi Jhonpari). Sardarni Satwant Kaur made a suggestion that Rekha should marry her lover Pardeep with the understanding that she would wear a chastity belt so that she would not lose her chastity unless she wanted. Satwant Kaur said "when God said to Adam ji and Eve ji to multiply and replenish the earth, he didn't say it to Adam Bhai alone. He said it to Eve ji too. You have to open the Bible to see the truth of it...in our Sikh religion women are considered fully on par with men. Look at the Sikh couple in

a street. Sikh brides walk abreast of their husbands, not behind. And in love making I should say they are even more awake than their Sardar ji...." (p.110). The suggestion was ridiculous and it showed naivete on the part of Sardarni Satwant Kaur.

The novelist makes a dig at the English men who had not only left behind their language but also had left behind the city of New Delhi and even bridges and railways. They used the bridges and railways for their troops but they did not prevent Indians from using them. They also renovated the Taj and the Red Fort and also "they renovated the different races: made a Hindu a Hindu, a Sikh a Sikh, a Muslim a Muslim" (p.112). The religious communities of India had never been so conscious of their separate identity as they had become under the British Raj. The communities were made to look upon other communities as different from itself as were the different parts of India made to believe that they were each different from the other part. What was most atrocious was the suggestion that Satwant Kaur would continue "to provoke a quarrel between Rekha and Pradeep and bring about a divorce" (p.113) and this she would do with the help of her husband, Brigadier Chopra. She also offered to ask her Sardarji to find out how chastity belt could be procured and made available on commercial basis for use by Indians. Even in course of time when the marriage was to be solemnised Sardarni Satwant Kaur who was ever ready

for a frivolous pastime participated in a rather vulgar manner in the jokes played by the conjurer.

Another character in the novel, who is a Sikh, is Sardar Fauja Singh who is a poor but witty man. His sympathies are with Pradeep, the leader of the Jhuggi Jhonpari dwellers. In order to create panic among the residents of Bide-a-Wee Colony, he had bribed the youngster and taken buffaloes and pigs to the Colony and allowed them to wander about. He was surprised in his own honest way why Rekha had not agreed to part with the Royal Charter which had decreed that the Sikh women of India would use English as their mother-tongue. Pradeep was a lover of Hindi and also was a foil to the products of English education. He took the charter in his hand and transformed into Lord Chetana. He had left for heaven but the charter had slipped out of his hand and thus English had continued to be most favoured language in the country.

This novel is a fantasy. It is written with a view to satirising the anti-national attitude of the Anglo-philes, who are blind as they are ignorant about the ground reality of the day, but are not ready to modify their stand. But what is important is that the Sikh characters are shown as victims of the conspiracy of the English rulers.

Chaman Nahal has not written for or against any particular community. He is a novelist, and therefore concerned with the delineation of social life. He has seen the area of Panjab

with loving eyes and Delhi the city of his education with the eyes of a critic. That is reflected in his treatment. People of the Sikh faith are presented more as human beings engaged in the mundane affairs of life than people of frog mentality, bigoted and myopic. They have their faith and look upon their gurus with reverence, but they are not fanatical in any special way. His concerns are human, and yet his understanding of the culture, philosophy and style of life is quite perceptive. The result is that his novels are read by Sikhs as much as by Hindus or Parsees or Englishmen.

Raj Gill is primarily a journalist, but he has established himself as a sensitive writer on the social life of contemporary India. He keeps shorn hair and does not wear turban. He writes both in English and Panjabi. Three of his 6 novels written in English viz. The Rape (1974), Jo Bole (1983) and The Torch Bearer (1983) deal with the problems of the Sikhs. The Rape (1974) is written against the background of partition of India and its aftermath, whereas Jo Bole (1983) and The Torch Bearer (1983) concern themselves with the Sikh Movements of the seventies, around the period of Emergency (1975-77).

In Raj Gill's The Rape (1974)¹ the entire experience of the disturbed Sikhs is presented through the central consciousness of Dalipjit Singh, a lad of 18 years, who was a student in Amritsar. In his personal life, he was experiencing a change as he had grown physically mature and was getting more and more involved in his affairs with Jasmeet, a girl of another community of the village. It is at this time, when he is himself in a terrible emotional mess, he encounters a total change in the political climate of Punjab. People have suddenly become suspicious and antagonised against the Muslims as much as the politicians of the country. None of the important politicians who had a role to play had succeeded in avoiding the partition. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), Sardar Patel (1875-1950), Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1875-1948) and Master Tara Singh (1885-1967), all had succumbed to the pressure of the circumstances and agreed.

1. Raj Gill, The Rape (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1974). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers in brackets.

to the sinister proposal of Jinnah to divide the country on religious grounds. Master Tara Singh was seen as a possible saviour of the Sikhs but his aim was not the safety and dignity of the people of his Faith but his own political intentions. Baldev Singh was too weak a Congressite to do anything for his people. Dharam Gopal minced no words to accuse the British of disrupting the unity of the main communities in India. He also used his glib tongue to promise to translate into action the ideas of his scheming brain. Dalipjit Singh did not care to read with interest the ghastly details of riots published in the newspapers. When it burst upon him as a reality he was shocked to find that people suddenly became cut-throat enemies of one another. Even members of the same family clashed with one another not only for their interest but for reasons of having their own perceptions of the situation.

The novel opens with a rural scene when Dalipjit in his Lucknowi shirt tip-toed into the room of his newly married aunt to dab his clothes with scent so that he could present himself before his beloved in an attractive manner. He had done this knowing well that "scent was taboo for the unmarried". Although he knew that "a woman -- a faithful woman had nothing to hide" and that she would not sit behind closed doors to watch his activities. Within the family everything was known to everyone as people had not learnt to be secretive yet. It was another taboo that a youngman of the same village would not marry

a girl of his own village less so if she were a girl of another community. And on both these counts, Dalipjit was going to differ with his people. But more violent difference with the people of his Faith is seen in his leaving the gurudwārā before Initiation Ceremony was completed as he had to meet Jasmeet.

The novelist describes at length the Initiation Ceremony that was specially organised in the gurudwārā to educate them on the impending danger to their life and safety and to ensure that all those who drank the Amrit got infused with so much boldness that they pounced upon the enemy like hawks to shred them to pieces. The miracle was brought about once again:

"The frightened Sikhs and Hindus were to rise in a crusade after the Initiation and stem the tide of hatred, arson, murder and loot set off by the Muslim League" (p.11).

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) had given five commandments: to wear full hair, a steel bangle, knee-length shorts, a comb and a sword. He performed obeisance to the holy scripture - Guru Granth Sāhib, which was recited continuously. The Initiation had become necessary after three envoys from the Sikh population of Rawalpindi and Lahore had come to inform the people that the Muslims were perpetrating brutality on the non-Muslims for no reason.

Everybody who went to the gurudwārā took with him a plateful of wheat flour, one and a quarter rupees and a quantity of black gram which constituted the family offering to the faith.

This was a custom: "A Sikh had to take an offering each time he visited the gurudwara. It was not ordained but expected."

The ceremony started with elaborate religious fervour. The five beloved ones remained all through the focus of attention at the congregation. The faithful men, women and children sat in a semi-circle before the Granth as they were to be initiated by taking twice a mouthful of the Amrit when the pan was circulated to emphasise oneness and brotherhood eliminating difference of caste, colour and creed. Dalipjit also drank from the pan like others but "when the pan started on his return journey, he carefully rivetted his eyes "to the section that had been held by Jasmeet's lips while drinking from it" and "when it was his turn he sucked at the iron rim more than the Amrit. The adolescent mind, even though in the middle of Initiation which was a very important event, was still bothered about his love for the girl and less for the cause. He was, therefore, not bothered to stay on to take the oath after drinking the Amrit. He did not think it necessary to take the oath before the Granth. He thought what was important was the sincerity and the genuineness and not the place where the oath was taken. He thought he could do it at the Nathi's Tomb because in his opinion "a saint was a saint whatever faith he belongs to", and "pledging before one saint was as much binding as pledging before another in the gurudwara" (p.15). He rationalised, although half-heartedly, that "afterall the gurus did give the saint a place higher than themselves" (p.15).

Some of the incidents that took place in the life of Guru Gobind Singh are referred to in the novel. The sons of the tenth Guru did not even wince when they were bricked alive by the Mughal tyrants. But in the present circumstances all the 3000 had waken up and sat on their cots with profound fatalistic resignation to supernatural interference in human affairs, "that one destined could not be averted" (p.22). The hearts were in the grip of fear as the riots were taking place everywhere. Mercilessly and meaninglessly people were being attacked and killed. Women only exchanged despair and men talked of fate and their deeds. The incidents of Noakhali (1946) and Rawalpindi where Hindus and Sikhs were butchered were fresh in their mind and yet they were not able to control. "The brewing religious fervour, which was bound to boil into a fanatical madness of unprecedented magnitude" as "hatred mixed with faith would turn the devil pale (p.28).

People were reminded of the glorious acts of the Sikhs of the past. Jathedar Veragi indulged in religio-political polemic in order to encourage people. He said reminding the Sikhs of their great heritage:

"Remember your heritage, your history, your Gurus who fought for truth, justice and peace for the weak and oppressed. Remember, only a Sikh can sacrifice his life for others. Only Sikh Gurus could sacrifice for Hindu Rajas. Remember they roused against Aurangzeb fought Abdali and Durani. Remember all that and see if your fingers are not itching for the hilt of the sword, for the curve of the trigger. Brothers, you must vindicate each drop of blood that was drawn from a Sikh. Swear that you will shake the earth, blast the sky, ground, the mountain and explode the ocean but you would not be humiliated. Swear it now, swear at this very moment if the spark that was lit by Guru

Nanak and was fanned into an internal fame of Guru Gobind Singh is burning in your hearts" (p.30).

It is clear from the above that the atmosphere was charged with both fear and hatred and people were ready to be pushed into any calamity. It was because of this that some of the young persons of the village planned to get ready for attacks from Muslims and also be ready to defend themselves if there was a need. Balkar said, "feuds are never settled by arguments. It is a matter of lathi and who hits first." The family feuds were known to them all and therefore vendetta was not a new thing. Dalipjit had no faith in the sanctity of the idea that the Sikh should not drink from the hands of untouchables because "he never thought anyone untouchable or below human dignity even if he was a sweeper or a criminal." As he asserted, "this was what the Sikh creed thought." (p.42). He drank therefore from the hands of Preetu, an untouchable, and even he offered the half-drunk bowl to the untouchable to drink from the same bowl to initiate them into his Faith. This act of his was resented by his father. But he did not care as in his own way he was breaking the irrational taboo imposed by the followers of Sikh Faith. There was a change within him and the change was for progressive reasons. He was shocked to find that principles had disappeared as deference to age had gone. Honest toil was replaced by boisterous living and he was amazed to find that degradation was over-powering even his own father who was at

his worst when his father raped his beloved in the full knowledge of the fact, the young beloved of Dalipjit who had been given shelter in his house. Leila had been an unlucky girl as she had lost her parents and everything else in the brutal attacks on her people by non-Muslims.

The Sikhs had felt disillusioned with all politicians but they were specially so about what Mahatma Gandhi had done to the nation. "There was a general feeling", the novelist says, that Gandhi was playing a double game, though what it was none could say with any certainty. It was an open fact that Gandhi had come round to accept partition as unavoidable. But "the Sikhs in the villages of the West Punjab were more angry because of Gandhi's incomprehensible implicit antagonism for their community" (p.69). Mahatma Gandhi had said "we are little men serving great causes, but because the cause is great something of greatness falls against us." This infuriated the Sikhs as they did not see any greatness in the partition. They repented having nominated Baldev Singh to the Centre. Anger was so much that once in his reverie Dalipjit thought he had murdered Mahatma Gandhi for his betrayal. Though Mahatma Gandhi was actually murdered in January 1948 Dalipjit for a moment was not prepared to believe that Mahatma Gandhi was dead. One of the persons who came to the area to arouse passion in people and instigate them to get ready to fight against Muslims was General Bal of the Indian National Army. He was on a secret tour of the West Punjab to organise resistance against the Muslims conspiracy to expel the

non-Muslims from Pakistan. His meeting with the people was top secret but he was being looked upon by people as "reincarnation" of Guru Gobind Singh and he was being seen as capable of destroying the present enemies even though they were "a thousand times worse than... Ghenghis Khan, Timur, Nadir Shah or Abdali" (p.83). In their blind faith the Sikhs saw a white hawk at Akalgarh, the birth place of the Khalsa and believed that miraculous things were going to take place. Under his guidance a secret organisation was brought into being and weapons were collected for use in case there was a need for self defence. In order to attract people to the gathering, he had sung the song which was dear to the hearts of people. Karamjit Singh INA Captain was to command the guard of honour. A man of few words, the Captain was forthright in putting the basic facts before the people in his speech. He said:

"You know we fought against the aliens. It seems once again we'll have to fight aliens within the country. These people who were born and brought up here, educated here and were given means of livelihood here, all of a sudden feel different from us. They say they do not belong to us. ...these patriots (Muslims) who infact are traitors to the country and traitors to the ancestors, also who took refuge here and flourished here...they do not belong to this country. They must be fought. They must be chastised. You have to do it" (p.103).

As the Sikhs were ordained to carry long hair, it was difficult for Dalipjit to manage to get a razor blade so that he could cut his arm and write a love letter to his beloved. But he got

himself hurt by a plough and wrote his letter in blood. His personal misery is comparable with the misery of the people of Punjab who found that even "Amritsar, the fort of the Sikhs was the ghastly scene of human brutality and they were asked to move to India beyond the river Ravi leaving behind their possessions and their fertile land. In the confusion of chaotic emotions they destroyed deliberately even the standing crop and moved with whatever little they could carry with them, towards the side of India.

The exodus itself was a ghastly scene: "For 60 miles continuously the carts in the convoy trundled on with attacks on the way on them by Muslims. Even police constabulary was employed in the senseless killing of departing Hindu population of Jhang and Multan" (p.159). It was shocking to think of the hypocrisy of officers, and the decline of moral and ethical codes. It seems imperative to believe therefore that the history of man was no better than a stock exchange report showing losses and gains, rises and falls and indicating future trends, promises and bids.

Even in the Indian village Jagdev Kalian in the East Punjab where Dalipjit had reached a week later, he found that "the value of human life had fallen below that of the pariah-dog" (p.191). Even the wells were poisoned so that people die if they drink water from there. Indian armies reached not all places and even where they reached, they reached late. But the will to live was so strong in people that they moved on and on

even carrying the sick and the old on their back. On the other hand, some so fed up with the old and the sick that they even dumped them on the road-side or buried them under the ground and moved on for their own safety. It was interesting to observe, the novelist says that "these people were not called upon by any ethics to revenge those whom they did not know, might never know." They were doing it as a pure fraternal gesture towards those belonging to their religion and community" (p.208).

Besides Jasmeet, Dalipjit came to develop love for Leila, the Muslim girl, who had been provided shelter by him. Although the scandal mongers let it be remoured that Leila was made to work as a pros, it was not so. But it was ironic that Dalipjit's own father raped her knowing well that she was his own son's beloved. He called his son the "black faced adder". But the fact was that he himself was a devil. Appropriately, therefore, Santokh, the enemy of Dalipjit, killed his father instead of killing the son to bring an end to the whole devilish plans of the old man. Jasmeet having left the village, Leila remained and it was obvious that Dalipjit and Leila were to marry.

There are stray comments on the place of woman in the Indian society. A girl is a misfortune in this glorious country "that gave magnanimity to Lord Krishna and compassion to Lord Buddha gave misfortune to woman--woman who despoiled the blessed mental stage of the saints, broke the vow of celibacy of the ascetics and snatched the cup of salvation from the Rishis and Munis when it almost reached the lips. As the whole village was

a betrayed lot nobody was respectable, upright or honourable. 129
People had lost faith in goodness, as a result of which there was total degradation. The Sikhs had become a class of suspects. Even Gandhi exclaimed, after the explosion in his prayer meeting, "it must be a Sikh." They were destined to live in humiliation like Dalipjit, the son of a rapist and Leila--the helpless victim of lust of father-like figures.

The young Sikh lad Dalipjit was obsessed with three equally strong emotions--love for Jasmeet, devotion to his family and obligations to his community. But gradually he discovered that what was valuable and meaningful was only his love. Even his community had lost much of its purity and had developed superstition and irrational ideas against the tenets of the Gurus. But in all the degradation and inhuman acts and loss of values what remained valid was that people killed others "in a bid to live and not to die" (p.296), and only those survived who like Dalipjit and Leila believed in love without consideration for caste, creed or religion. This is a hopeful note on which the novel ends although with a rueful smile.

Jo Bole (1983)² is another novel of Raj Gill that deals with the political situation of the country in the context of militant activities in Punjab. There are direct references to decisions taken by the Government of India and other officials in regard to the solution of the problem of terrorism. Although the novel is not on the whole able to treat the problem of

2. Raj Gill, Jo Bole (New Delhi: Varity Books, 1983). All quotations are given from this edition, with page number within brackets.

militancy in an objective and artistic manner it does merit attention for making a live issue the subject of discussion. The writer himself is a Sikh (with short hair) and is thoroughly familiar with the terrain and temper of the State Punjab which has been experiencing disturbances right from the time India was partitioned in 1947. Master Tara Singh did not agree to accept a separate State for the Punjabis as he did not believe the Sikhs as a religious group had any desire to secede from India. What he wanted was the contribution of the Sikhs to the cause of independence to be recognised and Sikhs to be treated like others of the country with respect. In course of time the demand for recognition of identity came to acquire several hues and also ambiguities which led to multiple interpretations of the words "nation", "identity", "self-determination", etc. What started as a vague demand for Punjabi Suba has come to be so confusing that now nobody knows what exactly people want and what exactly politicians understand. Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1972 has itself become so controversial a document that it is difficult to understand it. Raj Gill has taken all these issues for consideration and tried to evolve an intelligible picture of the problem. But the novel leaves many things vague. However, it can be said in justification of the haziness of the writer's perceptions that it is a contemporary problem which is yet in the crucible of politics and the lineaments of its shape have yet to clear out.

As a result of unimaginative leadership of Tanseem, two members of the group had been caught and coerced by the police to divulge secrets of the action group of Akal Dal Khalsa. It was in this situation that Naseeb was appointed to run the action group and take care of the activities. A devout young lady, she had grit and also tacts and had the courage which other members lacked. She held a meeting of the action group in gurudwara Samsheer Sahib in Amritsar, which was not a part of the main Golden Temple Complex. It was an important gurudwara where only flower petals were distributed the way it is done at Muslim Tombs:

"Only the Sikhs took the petals home and preserved them in their purses, cash chests or jewellery boxes. They did not eat the petals the way Muslims did when they received them at a Tomb" (p.1).

This temple was situated at a place where administrative and police authority did not suspect any secret activity could take place. Since Giani Jagtar Singh had been shot dead, the congregation was in despair. People thought that the essence of helplessness could be modified "only by someone no less than Guru Gobind Singh or Banda Bahadur" (p.2). They were all ready to offer their lives for the cause because they felt hurt. Even Jathedar Mahavat Singh had surrendered and betrayed friends and allies. It was Naseeb who said that hijacking was a wrong activity. It was impolitic to try to hijack the plane to negotiate. In her opinion hijacking plane was no solution to

the problem. What she wanted to do in the name of the saint-soldier Guru Gobind Singh was to "carry out the cause of the Panth". Impatience is a sin, she thought, and she sang with passion "Mitre Piarey Noon Haal Muridan Da Kehna."

Sant Sher Singh Thunder had been declared to be the salvation of the Panth. His popularity was growing faster as his militant postures and puritanism appealed to the Sikh masses. It was something new as it generated hope. He had elected Naseeb second in command and removed Tanseem from that position for his wrong action plans. Naseeb knew that even Amrit-Dhari Sikh could buckle in under torture. She said, "the acid test of our Dharam, my brother, is death and not life, nor love for life, nor love for one's property it is sacrifice, absolute sacrifice. They are now just non-absolutes for us" (p.7). In addition to this what she firmly believed was that Sikhs needed to plan their own strength and resources so that they did not have to depend on foreign agencies. A dependent is always handicapped, she proclaimed. She also believed in Sangat as she thought that in the wisdom of the community lay the wisdom of the individual. A Khalsa, she declared, is God's wrath and is also God's compassion. So the Khalsa must fight "a just war with just means" (p.13). Khalsa faces the enemies, never ambushes as personal hatred makes people blind and there is no vendetta with the Panth or with the Khalsa. This is why she knew that Giani Jagtar Singh despite his cleverness succumbed to the human weakness for Vendetta and demanded surrender of the DSP who had his wife stripped ignoring the demands of the Dal Khalsa.

Naseeb's plan was to have a group of students of Khalsa School led by her active workers into the Golden Temple so that they could enter with impunity and use their presence inside the temple to show their strength to the Chief Minister who was coming to visit the temple. It was discovered to their shock that a Hindu in the disguise of a Sikh had committed the sacrilege inside the temple in order to bring a bad name to the Sikhs. He was sent by Mansa Ram, the leader of the Shudh Hindu Maha Sabha. This disclosure made the Hindus, led by Mansa Ram, against the Sikh feel humbled and humiliated. The Jathedar very clearly said

"We placed watch on all Hindu temples in the city, a 24 hour watch. It served us. My Hindu brothers must remember that the Khalsa was created for their protection against the Mughals and other tyrants. I promise you that the Khalsa will never harm a Hindu. It is against his Dharam...our fight is with the Government and not with you...though what we have been fighting for is also for good, good for everyone who lives in the Punjab, the land of the sacred rivers, the land of Vedas and the land of sacrifice and martyrdom. Bole So Nihal" (p.30).

Besides exposing the purist Hindus who were prejudiced against the Sikhs, the writer has also exposed the Chief Minister, Giani Deep Singh who was out to exploit the political situation. He was quite unpopular with the Sikhs as he was a politician through and through. All of a sudden, demand for Khalistan had arisen ignoring the history of the Akali Movement which had been an integral part of the National Freedom Movement. Some

Sikhs from abroad had started talking of Khalistan ignoring the contribution of Baba Bhagwan Singh and Baba Kishan Singh whose names are associated with the movement for the liberation of the gurudwaras from the mahants and Kamagatamaru. The misguided young-men were demanding a separate State from their own motherhood under the guidance of Sant Thunder. A morcha was to be organised and Naseeb was given charge. On the top of the Akal Takhat fire had been created so that Sant Thunder could immolate himself if need arose. Naseeb went out of India to Afganistan. After talking with the leaders there, she returned without being detected. She also had a big box in which she kept the wireless and kept in touch with the foreign countries. Although she had said in the beginning that the Indian Sikhs were expected to be self-dependent, she herself was working in collusion with foreign instigators. Even a Hukamnama was passed to boycott Nirankaris by every Sikh. The Morcha was anathema to the "Puritan Hindus specially the R.S.S." (p.47). She was sure in her mind that Guru Ka Morcha is never defeated. Therefore, the attempt of the Chief Minister to crush the movement in a determined and vicious manner was bound to rebound. The entire Sikh Community called him a traitor. Even the Prime Minister was not happy with him.

Chief Minister's decision to have Sant Thunder's top aide Dr. Banga Singh arrested was a wrong step as it electrified the entire state. It was a political misadventure as people from different parts of Punjab came forward to join the morcha. The

Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister found themselves in a quandary. The situation was out of control. In this political uncertainty Naseeb got even a passport with Sikh insignia, that is, crossed swords around a spear. She got issued a currency note which carried the legend "Deg-O-Tegh-Fatah-O-Nusrat-Bedrang/Yaft Az Nanak-Guru-Gobind Singh." Also Dr Banga, the Political Advisor to the Sant who was a Professor in Politics was dropped from his position of distinction. In the hit list even the Chief Minister's name did not appear which he took as a bad sign. When people were doing their best to protect the Sant, the Chief Minister was taken to be on the other side of the fence. Even old women thought that "Panth comes first, family comes after" like Sardarni Sadakaur thought. The Chief Minister obviously underestimated the strength of the Akalis and thus their readiness to lose life and property for the cause of the Panth. They believed in martyrdom more than in being a victor and a ruler. Chief Minister's best friend left him. It was interesting that even those who had hair and clipped beard and moustache were joining the morcha.

Explaining the background of the creation of Khalistan movement the novelist enumerates the happening of the seventies and says that "only three persons are responsible for starting this movement which is fast snowballing into something gigantic and terrifying" (p.77). Those three persons were Travel Agents whose main job was to smuggle Asians into America, Canada and

England. Since their business was depleted they created the demand for Khalistan with the promise that they would give money. But the main travail started in the country when Sant Thunder was wooed by the ruling party to win the election in 1980. The matter was further complicated by the Union Home Minister who indulged in the political game of toppling Gyani Deep Singh's Government. The Sant met with about a hundred armed followers the Union Home Minister at his residence and there was no checking. This raised many an eye-brow as this was a clear proof of collusion between the Central Government and Sant Thunder. More than this, since people had started coming to Amritsar to join the morcha, the leadership of the movement slipped into the hands of the Sikh peasantry. In the past also Sikh politics had been controlled by the peasants. The Akali Dal, as a matter of fact had launched the Nahar Roko Morcha "for keeping the peasantry under control" knowing well that "the Punjab does not need as much of water as the Akalis were putting claim to." (p.79).

Even Prime Minister's intervention and keenness to solve the Punjab tangle did not solve the problem. He tried even to project the image of an independent man, one who did not depend on his Home Minister. But he could not succeed in accomplishing anything worthwhile, even though he was a shrewd person, a Gujarati Baniya. The representative of Mukhtiar Singh Shamuwalla was equally clever and a slick talker. The writer says, "The Akali leaders believed in playing it by the ear. This was characteristic of the Akali leadership that they were never definite on their demands, never

presented to him by his devotee. He believed in ego-control and that he thought was best done by touching the shoes of the Sangat. He lived mostly in Samadhi but at this time of the Dharamyudh he had come out to give his blessings. The morcha dictator Jathedar Laoke and the Sant were likely to be arrested on the orders of the Chief Minister but that was an unfortunate announcement as that united the Sikhs. In the confusion resulting from the orders of arrest, the Sikhs started saying that "Khaslistan is wherever the Khalsa is" (p.111) and that what the Sikhs wanted was not a Khalistan or a Sikh homeland. What they needed was "dignity, self-respect, and identity". The Sant was taken as the spirit incarnate of Guru Gobind Singh.

The daring act of the action group being led by Naseeb to kidnap the Pakistani players was shocking and puzzling at the same time. Although the prisoners were kept safe on drinks and drugs, the Government was in jeopardy. Pakistan had arrested the High Commissioner in retaliation and even the military movement on the border increased. This act was no different than the hijacking of a plane and it was done in the name of war in which all actions were permitted. The war was to get the demands accepted by the Govt. The result of this was the imposition of President's Rule in Punjab. Even the goodwill gesture of the Prime Minister to release all the Akali prisoners in the State, numbering 30,000, was a non-event. The Government was squarely blamed for viles. But it was serving no purpose as the Sant had roused the mob to religious frenzy. The Sangat wanted to

touch his feet to ensure their salvation. Although Khalsa was 139 not a regular soldier, he was the divine force to fight the evil, the operation and the tyranny whenever it raised its hands. His first duty is the family, the second duty is the community, which means not the community of Sikh alone but the entire humanity. A Khalsa attacks only when he is attacked. The first attempt is to create peace. With this in mind, the Sikhs decided to talk first and postpone the idea of morcha and immolation. The Pakistani players were to be returned with respect. In that spirit Naseeb distributed the flowers among the congregation as if she were distributing peace and love like Baba Budha Singh had been doing.

Despite the fact that Jo Bole (1983) has mustered lot of information and also has summarised the teachings of the Sikh gurus, it does not make a coherent story. A perceptive and logical mind fails to work through the confusion and chaos of events. For any one who wants to know about the governing principles of Sikhism, this novel presents a good source material. It also emphasises that the whole Sikh community is as confused about its demands as is the Government.

Raj Gill's The Torch-bearer(1983)³ is a novel that deals with the rise of a woman of the Punjab from ordinary status to that of the Prime Minister of the country. Her story is presented like a fantasy although quite a few situations presented in the novel bear close resemblance to the happenings of the country

3. Raj Gill, The Torch Bearer (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers mentioned within brackets.

during the seventies. Alvika was born in a village in the Punjab in a Sikh family and was brought up as child with respect for the Gurus and zest for life. The parents were from the Jat Stock and had lived their life like simple hearted, hard working and God fearing farmer. It was a matter of chance that she fell down from the ladder and lost consciousness which resulted in her being taken as dead. There was no breath in her nostril, nor was warmth in her body or light in her eyes. Actually she was not dead. It became evident when she came to consciousness and shouted for help. But nobody was ready to believe it that she was alive. Even her parents and friends were not prepared to believe that resurrection was possible. They believed, "If her ghost was resisting and not giving up, she must be re-created" (p.31). She did manage to escape the pyre but she was not permitted to live amidst the living.

She was asked to live in the crematory. Ever since that happened she had been running away from one thing or the other, from one person or the other or from one situation or the other, "running, running to recover her identity; her right to live and love" (p.31). It was, therefore, ironic that a group of dancing and singing people came with sweets to seek her blessings for the bride who was getting married. Her own marriage was not celebrated and she was a creature of the crematory. But the villagers were determined to defy her and seek her blessings. She was supposed to forget her personal tragedy and wish well to everyone around her. She was expected to accept the responsibilities of a house-holder forgetting her own hurt. Even in

this anomalous situation she played her role of a sublime being and extended love to the bride wishing her happiness. This is the pattern that repeats itself in the novel. The first situation is related to her role as a shelter seeker in a Sikh family in the village and later in the city of Delhi. The other role relates to her dealings with people and politicians as a social workers and later as Prime Minister. In every situation she is presented as a woman of understanding, pious of mind and self-sacrificing for the welfare of people, friends or others alike. It is this quality that endears her to the people around her. But this is the quality that scares the thick skinned politicians away from her. This solid quality of her character gives her strength and also qualifies her for a great task that she undertakes to perform in domestic as well as political life.

When she was asked to give blessings to the bride in the crematory, she felt a terrible rage gripping her mind. She wanted to spit into the bride's face, to kick at the offerings and to curse the whole lot of them accompanying the bride. But she did what was expected of her. She accepted her fate. This readiness on her part to accept the pressure of the movement so as not to be out of tune with the expectations of people around her is reflected in her actions. When her parents were holding discussion about her marriage, she felt thrilled, a wave of ecstasy rippled through her body. She yearned to conjure up the figure of the man who was going to enter into her life. But she

immediately thought that it was undesirable to think of the handsome youngman as this would be inviting evil on herself by indulging in such fantasy. As a devout child of a Sikh, therefore, "she dashed to the gurudwara with a plateful of flour in offering and prayed fervently to the gurus to ward off any evil that she might have incurred upon herself" (p.35). Similarly, the priest who was asking for re cremation was irrational and illogical in his suggestions. But she was unable to convince that she was alive and she had right to live. Village dogs were set upon her so that the solution offered by the priest was accepted by everyone-- the suggestion being that she will make her shelter in the crematory. This was inhuman as she was not only a woman but also young and the crematory was a fearful place where no human lived. It is there in that crematory that she learnt to face life with grit. She made her decision in the dark night to stand against odds and prove that she had as much right to live as anyone else. She had to leave the crematory to seek opportunities to express herself. She ran away under cover of darkness from the crematory.

When her fate was likely to change in the family of a Sikh, whose son Balwant was a driver, there again came a sudden change. Not only her foster parents were killed but also when she was being taken to the city of Bombay by her foster brother she was made to run for life when Balwant got involved in a fight with a lecher. Her dignity and chastity were in danger. So she

ran to Gurudwara Sisganj. There she came across another good family of a Sikh and she accepted the job of a maid-servant to help Kundan, the young lady, and her child. Even here in this family she very soon became acceptable for her good manners and readiness to do everything to make the family happy. It is here in this family that she learnt that social work was possible to be undertaken by women in the city. The idea of social work was given to her by Balwant when she was living with her parents in the village. This idea was quite enticing as she saw in social work the possibility of fighting the prejudices of people against the education of women and their participation in social regeneration. She was thrilled to learn that college education for girls had become normal. She had already passed Matriculation. Here also in this family of Kundan, her mother-in-law was against allowing her to go outside to work as social worker. It was surprising that even in such a good and educated family, women did not cherish the idea of women joining men in social work. She could understand if the villagers were ignorant, but she was unable to reconcile to the backwardness of the women of the cities. She had prayed for the inception of her friend Bachno in the gurudwara and even undertaken a fast of 40 days for rescuing the people and the cattle from the affects of flood when the cattle were dying and their hooves were festering. The Brahmin started the non-stop recitation of the Granth and invited the magicians and charlatans to help stop the disease from

attacking their cattle. They made offerings in their ignorance even to non-descript graves and tombs, witches and ghosts and benign and evil spirits. This only shows that superstition ruled the mind of the people. It was because of this understanding of the backwardness of people that she decided to fight with total commitment against ignorance and hypocrisy. She even was surprised to find that when she was maturing into a woman, she wanted to dress well but she was prohibited to care for her appearance. This was life denying and also was irrational, although she learnt with shock that beauty attracted man only if it was unblemished. The scar on her breast was a reminder "of her past of death and pain and agony and the vicious beastly nature of human beings" (p.80). But the most shocking feeling was that she would be required to hide this fact and lie about the truth of the origin of that scar which she had received from the burning on the pyre.

Sisganj Gurudwara was built where Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, had sacrificed his life to save the innocent from Mughal tyranny and operation. The Golden Temple in Amritsar, which he had visited a couple of times was mainly visited by those who came from nearby villages. Her mother had warned her in childhood that the oracles were not always true. They were to be listened and forgotten because they did not make any sense: "Those who preached did not themselves practise it" (p.82). She had sought shelter in the gurudwara and also got opportunity to meet the parents of Kundan. But she was unable to understand why she was compelled to go through ordeals before she reached

her place in the general stream of her life. The harshness she was shown by life was unjustified. But it was also a mystery that every time she was in trouble, there was a plan to rescue her after knowing that she was capable of doing something of her own. Despite her sufferings, she felt "for the first time... as a whole individual, a person, a human being with desires, wishes and feelings" (p.90). It is with this feeling that she agreed to change her name from Ambika to Alvika. This was not only a change of name but it was change of identity. Her rise from maid-servant to beautician and then to governess in the family of Mrs. Chadha and later to the status of an organiser and fighter for the cause of the poor got justified.

She was a celebrity and people wanted her. Officials listened to her. She was "in a minor way a leader, a celebrity" (p.100). She took up the cause of the vendors and became quite popular. She was likely to be elected President of the Karol Bagh Pushcart Vendors Association. But the spark in her to become a social worker was so strong that she recommended Brij Lal Sharma for the post. But when she found that the politicians were doing social work only to get photographed and talked about in newspapers, she started moving on the revolutionary path of doing actual social work in a colony of untouchables. She took time to persuade the ignorant and superstitious Harijans but then ultimately she was able to get the entire colony cleaned. This attracted the attention of even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and for her

dedication, devotion, sincerity in social work, he even named her in Parliament and invited her to breakfast. She was invited even by the Chief Minister of Delhi, Krishan Prakash, to call at his office to discuss the slum work in the city. Even the casual encounter with the reporter from the Hindustan Times turned out to be helpful as she became the most sought-after social worker. The correspondent who saw her in the colony of the untouchables engaged in actual work, wrote admiringly of her. That boosted her image, and brought her in contact with Jawahar Lal Nehru the Prime Minister. She was invited to have her breakfast with him. She was so much impressed by Nehru that she decided to follow his principles in her life. This was the beginning of her political career.

She was given a ticket to contest from Azmal Khan Road constituency in the bye-election. She was elected unopposed as she had done a lot of work in the slums which was more than a proof of her faith in democratic norms. Even the Chief Minister of Delhi, Shri Krishan Prakash, was so fascinated by her personality and work that he had started consulting her in every issue. In course of time he even developed personal interest in her. He was a married man but he was a representation of "the rugged masculinity of the village people" and "there was that something primitive about him that made the sons of the soil so handsome in spite of their coarse, working clothes and wind and sun brazened skin" (p.122). She felt attracted to him

physically although she did not approve of his politics. He was ruthless and even criminal in his tendency but she approved of him as a man. The result was that in course of time they developed physical relationship as she was seeking in him only the stud. However, when he discovered she had a scar, he felt scared and left her in the middle of sexual act. This was a great eye opener to Alvika. When she was experiencing her first moment of truth as woman, she suddenly realised that "she was a fossil from her past, a subject of history, an object of interest and nothing more" (p.121). Her past was neither proud, nor was it something that she could show with satisfaction. Although there is no identity without a past she had in the name of past only a bitter memory:

"She had a past which she could not own. She could not talk of her parents, her fall from the ladder, her resurrection from the pyre. She could not talk of her foster parents because she could not back it up with evidence. She could not tell them that she was the foster sister of a truck driver who was also a murderer" (p.121).

And this was coupled with the other experiences of her life, which were equally sordid -- her experience as a maid-servant and governess in the family of the Chadhas and also her ordinary beginnings.

Despite her disapproval of Krishan Prakash, she accepted the man knowing well that he was married. He wanted her to score a victory and to prove his manhood. But despite her

robust commonsense and political acumen, she felt a victim to his personal charm. But it goes to her credit that she used Krishan Prakash by not only pandering to his masculinity but also to his need for a position when he was politically an orphan. She gives him a ticket and ensured that he won the election and kept him in her cabinet as a Minister. This not only humbled him but also made him feel that she was quite considerate and helpful to him. He was "a Jat from Rohtak, known for his boldness and courage and his fatal attraction for women" (p.136). With this knowledge, he was not prepared to take any help from a woman like Alvika as "she was just a woman, a creature like a mare, a cow, a goat, a convenience" (p.136). Even though these views he nursed and blamed the Malviyas and Gandhis for raising the status of women. He was humbled by Alvika who was "a Jat of a different hue, proud, haughty and bold" (p.136). She did not suffer from any inferiority complex when sitting with males. So she knew how to curb the irate male ego of her Krishan. She was even a match for Krishan Prakash in wit and humour. She was a jat-sikhni from the Panjab.

She worked among the people and therefore she knew the pulse of the masses. She introduced in the manifesto of the Socialist Congress everything that the people wanted-- all the lost causes and failure that the people had pointed out. The result was that hers was "the manifesto of the people; of

individuals" (p.144). This was a new kind of manifesto which spooked the opposition parties. Moreover, she put up the photographs of the party candidates with only their names and the election symbol as the caption. The photographs smiled at the people. She herself went from house to house to talk to every individual making everybody feel important. She met her voters as their Alvika Behn. She even went to Hanuman temple knowing that he was a devotee of Hanuman although she herself was a Sikh. This was her readiness to accommodate to the requirement of the situation and also openness of her mind. She was not fanatical about religion. As a matter of fact, she wanted to finish communalism whereas others believed that without communalism the political parties would not survive. She was in politics without being in any controversy that depended on communal considerations. She wanted people to be happy in democracy and for that she thought she was working. Her slogan was Gharibi Hatao whereas the political parties blinded by their narrow goal were trying to remove her from power. In her own cabinet when she was Prime Minister, people like Todar Mal Singh, Chandgi Ram, Dorai Swamy were dissidents who had launched a signature campaign to requisition a special session of Parliament while hobnobbing with with opposition. It was at this time that an old colleague of Mahatma Gandhi was also going round asking for a total revolution. "His programme included work, food and shelter for all, finishing the monopoly of the capitalists, promoting village, handloom and

cottage industry to end unemployment and land to the landless and tillers only" (p.156). This reference probably is to Jai Prakash Narayan. This situation was a little tricky and delicate. But even in this situation she kept her cool and she decided to give political kulaks the fight of their life. But that again was not like her as she was not motivated by a desire to cling to the office she occupied, but for the millions of the poor. Finding herself totally isolated, she decided to use ruthlessness to meet the challenge. She imposed internal emergency ignoring even the fears of Krishan Prakash who himself was a bully in politics, even irrational in his approach. As a Minister in Alvika's cabinet, he had become human and even cooperative. Probably he was the only man around her who was totally loyal and devoted to her. She embraced Alvika in spontaneous love after the final orders for emergency had been opposed and the dissident Ministers unceremoniously dismissed and even high ranking Government officers sacked for their inefficiency and doubtful loyalty. She knew that her foster brother Balwant had been made a victim of blind anger that wrangled in her mind. People realised soon that she was not weak despite the fact that she was a woman without a past, without a bold link, without property and without a blemish on her character. She had worked as a Minister without portfolio at the Centre with success and now as Prime Minister she was working for the country against the odds created by her colleagues.

Finding herself surrounded by clever politicians, who were out to confuse her by raising all kinds of problems, she

decided to prepare an inclusive plan which would take care of every small problem that people were facing: the suppression of Harijans, the landless being driven out of the villages, the poor being denied employment, the minorities being hounded out of their ancestral land, and deterioration in the law and order situation. On the top of it was the allegation that she was selling the country to the foreign powers. This was all engineered by a few power hungry politicians. She felt "that the Shakti of the Third Eye of Lord Shiva was taking birth in her being. She was the Shiva's agent. She was Shiva. They would not escape her wrath. None would" (p.182). She was gradually turning out to be a real tigress with sabre teeth and tearing claws like Chandi. This was the image that people saw in her face and realised for the first time that she was not a woman made of ordinary stuff. She was verily an Avatar of Goddess Durga. Our heritage of democratic traditions and conventions owe their origin in the experiences of the God and Goddess who enjoyed equal rights. In course of time this idea of equality was enshrined in the Constitution of 1950 and she was proving for the first time in the history of India that she was in no way less capable than man. Male chauvinists thought that their prerogative to decide the destiny of the country and of the women was being taken away so they wanted to finish her by indulging in character assassination. In this vicious atmosphere, she pilloried some members of the House without naming them and

circulated her programme carefully so that everyone felt she was the only hope of the country.

During her discussion with Krishan Prakash, she told him "one can be a guru to oneself, Krishanji, if one has the will to learn, learn from anywhere, from anyone, friend, enemy, alien or even Nature and its inhabitants. A guru can tell you about wisdom. But he can't make you wise. That you become when you become your own guru" (p.195). This seems to be rather odd coming here from her mouth as she being a Sikh, had all the respect for the ten gurus. But in the light of her experiences, she had known that mere knowledge of what the guru had to impart was not enough. What is necessary is that one has "the mental and physical constitution to bear the impact of knowledge... Because knowledge is terrible... Far more frightening than ignorance..." (p.195). It is translation of knowledge into action that is important like Guru Gobind Singh did. She believed in definite action to safeguard the interest of the people. She saw in the condition imposed by the World Bank as a pressure tactic. The World Bank wanted population control to be a time-bound programme. Once she knew their intention, she came out with a family planning blueprint and cornered them effectively. She proved more than a match for enemies both within the country and enemies outside the country. Her colleagues talked of reaction to the loss of fundamental rights in a single morning after the imposition of the internal emergency. But what she wanted was to put some fear into the people, never to harm them. It may be that the M.Ps. had

voted for emergency out of fear or ignorance. Alvika thus was fighting against even such sycophants and mindless supporters who were burdened with feudal consideration. She wanted to bring real feeling of equality and that was possible only by giving everyone opportunity to grow and not by showing charity. She even in her attempt to keep the opposition to her decision under control thought of communal consideration as political expediency. She knew that politics and feeling or politics and religion were two different things. But she thought of a strategy and decided "to put up a candidate for the office of President from a minority community" (p.219) so that she could get decision cleared by the President. The decision to impose emergency was an example of the kind of understanding she had developed with the President. The final victory was for her as she had done the impossible. She had outsmarted a whole team of seasoned leadership.

From the rise of Alvika to power and the grip she showed against odds, it becomes clear that the novelist is presenting in her character the distinguishing characteristics of a Sikh -- courage, altruism and commitment to the cause of humanity. She does not bring out her background as a potent factor in her activities, but the fact remains that she had been a true Sikh. She was not a believer in rituals, nor was she a believer in miracles although in the first phase of her life in the village she had believed in all these and she had ample evidence in her

life to prove that miracles mattered. But she was convinced after working among people that human endeavour was of utmost importance for the alleviation of suffering in life. She was a revolutionary in many ways. She cared for her personal love. She cared for the purity, for her passion least bothered about the marital status of her lover. She was also not bothered about what the majority of the politicians thought about communalism or political expediency. She had the gumption and robust commonsense of a Jat Sikh. It is this quality of her character that has been brought out so meticulously by the novelist, although it looks like a fantasy. It is based on the political happenings of the country in the seventies of the present century. It goes to the credit of the novelist that he has invested a woman of low and even despicable background with such distinguished qualities. The emphasis is on grit, strength of character and total commitment to the cause of human welfare as against pettifogging, slings of mud or power-mongering. She shows in her character the best that a Sikh is expected to imbibe and express in his conduct.

CHAPTER VINAYANTARA SAHGAL

Nayantara Sahgal (b.1927) is the daughter of Vijay Laxmi Pandit, and a celebrated writer in English. She does free lance writing also. Married to a Panjabi gentleman she has seen at close quarters what it means to be a resident of the land of the five rivers, where for centuries political life has remained disturbed and the boundaries uncertain. In this area of invaders came from the western frontiers from the side of Afganistan, and also from the Southern side from Delhi. Marathas and the Mughal rulers were no less a source of irritation than the Persian invaders. Constantly under pressure from invaders, political adventurers and imperialists, the people of this area have learnt to be tough in temporal life in the same way as they have developed the psychology of dependence on God's grace in their spiritual life. The teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) presented a way by which people have lived to evolve practical philosophy of life. Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) carried two swords--one symbolising the temporal the other the spiritual side of life as he believed Sikhs could ill afford to ignore either of the two. The role

of the Sikhs in the shaping of the history of this area has been quite significant.

156

Nayantara Sahgal has written constantly about the politicians of India and the political conditions of the country. Her main focus has been on those who have been important in national politics. But in two of her novels she has dealt with Panjab and its people at length: Storm in Chandigarh (1969) and The Day in Shadow (1971). These two novels will be analysed here for an understanding of her appraisal of the Sikhs and their contribution to the safety and development of this region.

Nayantara Sahgal's Storm in Chandigarh (1969)¹ is set in Chandigarh and it deals with the happenings of the year 1967 when there was lawlessness and violence in every sphere of life. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) had died leaving a big gap in ideals and reality with the lesser politicians becoming more and more power-conscious and selfish. In 1966, the big State of Punjab stood bifurcated, with the emergence of Haryana to fulfil the aspirations of the people of the southern Hindi-speaking districts.

Violence lay close to the surface everywhere in the country. Punjab did not have in any sense a larger measure of it but because of the displacement of the Punjabis in the wake of Partition of 1947 quite a few new adjustments had become necessary. The most important adjustment was the adjustment of the feelings of people to the mood of the country, which was tending to be more and more conscious of regionalism and

1. Nayantara Sahgal, Storm in Chandigarh (1969; New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1969). All quotations are from this edition with page numbers within brackets.

communalism. In the newly carved out State of Haryana, there was a lack of "confident working alliance between government and civil servant" (p.10), "labour trouble threatening industries (p.15), police officers indulging in "wanton killing and extraction of money" (p.65) and "the language fever running high among the people" (p.141). In addition to the above even Ministers while talking of high ideals indulged in corrupt practices. The bureaucratic machinery moved at snail's pace, even essential services got neglected. Everyone seemed to be interested in paralysing the work by resorting to strike.

The scene of antagonism in the novel is Chandigarh and the antagonists are both Sikhs, the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana. The bifurcation of the big State of Punjab had been undertaken on grounds of language, separating the Hindi speaking and largely Hindu part of the Punjab from the northern part of the Punjab which was dominated by Panjabi speaking Hindus and Sikhs. Chandigarh was jointly shared by both the States as a common capital but it turned out to be an apple of discord as it demanded co-existence whereas what ruled the mind of the politicians was power. Divisive tendencies got the upper hand in the wake of the split of 1966. The author says:

"The map of India, once a uniform piece of territory to administer, was now a welter of separate, sensitive identities, resurrected after independence. Psychology seemed to have played as important a part in understanding them as did History, Geography and Economics. Much more than facts and figures were required in coping with political rivalries that had now ceased even to make bargains. As long as bargain could be made, work could go on. When that capacity wore out, only a collision was possible" (p.13).

And this collision of interests between the two States, Haryana and Punjab acquired serious dimensions because of the fact that the questions of boundary, sharing of water and electric power were yet to be decided. Even the rationale behind this division of Punjab was not sound, particularly when for 20 years after the gruelling Partition of 1947 it had been administered without much problem.

Harpal Singh himself a Sikh had been opposed to this further division of the State as he belonged to the old order of politicians who had faith in the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi (1969-1948). He believed in living in communal harmony and striving for national integration and maintaining unity of the country at any cost. His sole desire was to "work for its reconstruction" and help "refugees who had settled in it after the partition" (p.27). He was even prepared to believe that there was something sinister at the root of partition mentality and those who upheld it. Punjab was truncated because of the ruthlessness and unprincipled stand taken by the new, rising Sikh leader Gyan Singh, who was out to exploit the religious sentiments of people and their desire to maintain their identity by preserving their culture and language. He looms large in the novel as a "megalomaniac" (p.18). Gyan Singh claims the control of two huge water reservoirs of Bhakra and Pong for his own State. These reservoirs supply water to areas as widespread as Delhi, Himachal and Rajasthan and even in Kashmir besides Punjab and Haryana. In view of this fact that the reservoirs were not

meant to supply power only to Punjab, the Central Government, therefore, took control so that equitable distribution of power to the neighbouring States could be ensured. But Gyan Singh, the power mongering Chief Minister of Punjab, did not like it. He threatened to demonstrate his power by launching a total strike in both the States of Punjab and Haryana. This was interference in the affairs of the other States and also it was a move to embarrass Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana.

Harpal Singh is worried about the turn the situation is taking. Everything is going to dogs. Desire for power and blind assertion of rights results in a tense atmosphere. Even the Centre seems to be totally sucked into the political crises. The Home Minister of India is "a small, slight, and dhoti-clad" old man nourished on Gandhian ideals, a selflessly dedicated man. He was irked to see the spirit of dedication and selfless commitment to the cause of nation dwindling since Independence (1947).

It is interesting to note that the clash between the two Sikhs is also a clash between two ideologies: Whereas Harpal Singh, Chief Minister of Haryana, although a Sikh, is all for peace prosperity and progress of the State to which he was not born. Gyan Singh, another Sikh, is presented as a robust lover of power, position and pelf. From their clash, it is not possible to decide who is a real Sikh and who is a deviant. Both have qualities of mind and heart and are in their own ways interested to serve their people. But the contrast is puzzling. The only

purpose that seems to justify the juxtaposition is the change in the mood of the country as a whole. Selfness austerity and emotional oneness seem to be the value of pre-partition days. Now what was emerging as the most dominant driving force was a new ethos of self-love, affluence and enjoyment. The idea of sharing anything was an anathema, whether it was the capital of the power generated by the reservoirs or even the love of people. Division, usurpation and possession seemed to be the hallmarks of the time. The result was the dilution of the values of the Gandhian era which already had gone out of fashion; "Freedom from fear, the head held high and the indomitable will in the emaciated body of India, open decisions and open actions" were no more visible. What was practised was furtiveness and stealth and therefore there was lot of scope for shame as not every act was performed proudly in the sun light.

For Vishal Dubey, the IAS Officer, put on duty as observer at the time of the impending clash between the two Chief Ministers, "it is a clash of personalities" but what is more shocking is that "that is what politics has degenerated too. There are no issues left, only squabbles" (p.18). The general view that "there is something spineless about the man who does not want to get ahead" had become the password and Gyan Singh was working on this theory. For Harpal Singh it was a real test, to head the State of Haryana in whose creation he did not have faith. He had openly opposed the creation of the new State sitting face

to face with Gyan Singh across the conference table. After the decision had been taken, he drove to Chandigarh by road repeating to himself in an attempt to reconcile to the new set up: "20 years of efforts are in splinters this day" (p.27). Although his own mother-tongue was Punjabi and he was himself a Sikh, he was going to work as Chief Minister of a Hindi speaking State whose creation he had opposed tooth and nail. Even the background of Harpal Singh had been modest. His father had owned a provision store in Jhelum. He was studying with scholarship in a college even when the threats of partition of the country were rife and the people of Punjab were moving away to safer places. Harpal's father and his friends had stayed but within the next two months of their decision bedlam broke loose in the town when gangs armed with knives and pitchforks looted the shops and killed those who stood in their way. Harpal Singh himself was a Clerk in a cement factory in a nearby town. When his locality had been set on fire he paid two hundred rupees, the entire contents of his purse, to leave on the last vehicle leaving the town. The communal riot had separated him from the people with whom he had lived in peace and friendship. Now he realised that men had always wanted power over each other's minds and religion had been only one weapon in their hands. It was here that he had come to know Gyan Singh, the driver of the bus. They had met five years later and kept their friendship alive. Harpal Singh had joined

the Congress Party work for the people, and his earnestness had impressed his elders. But in the same city of Delhi had come Gyan Singh who even now was ready to help Harpal Singh. Harpal Singh wanted peace and was doing his best to maintain peace as he did not believe in clashes and violence. But contrasted with Gyan Singh "Harpal felt colourless, stern, and puritanical" (p.37). Gyan Singh hardly showed his years except in an accumulation of confidence". Surprisingly "the partition had not so much as grazed him" (p.37). This was something that made Harpal Singh resentful but the fact remained that Gyan Singh remained a powerful politician, capable and overweening as he had taken Harpal Singh in the bus from the troubled spot of Punjab to the safe place of Delhi. He had also helped Harpal Singh in winning his election by using his muscle power and pragmatic philosophy. Gyan Singh did not waste his time on niceties. He meant business and therefore he could use even force to subdue his enemies. He emerged as a champion of the dispossessed Punjabis who had settled in Delhi.

Other characters in the novel are also refugees from the Punjab who had come to settle in Delhi or Chandigarh after partition. Saroj was a refugee from Lahore as were persons like Inder Mehra and Jit Sahni. Their tragedies were no different from the experiences of the millions who had left Punjab to live in peace in other parts of the country. By dint of labour and

commitment to work, they had built respectable places for themselves and were living in peace. If they were bothered about anything, it was the individual freedom and cultural harmony. The problems created by politicians like Gyan Singh were political and even disruptive.

Gyan Singh had a following as he meant business, got things done, and was gifted with strong commonsense. On the contrary, Harpal Singh did not make any impression as he was soft spoken and was even put in the shade every time he stood comparison with his adversaries. Gyan Singh even created a hell for Vishal Dubey, the mediator sent by the Home Minister to Chandigarh, by publishing in his paper exaggerated story of the bureaucrat's relationship with a woman in Chandigarh and his excessive interest in the liquor contractor. Not that these things were untrue but they were blown out of proportion in order to stigmatise the bureaucrat and thus reduce his respectability. He ran a paper for the sole purpose of demoralising his adversaries by publishing scandalous stories. Even he collaborated with an American firm to build a factory when he was Industry Minister. He even released the plot of the area around the automated factory so that he could claim that he was responsible for industrial revival. Although a crude Sikh, he had "elemental attraction" quite "uncomplicated in his functioning" who would come to immediate grips with a situation and manipulate it to suit himself." Gyan Singh "trode a path that involved no inner struggle." He was

a careless "Atlas carrying the world like a bundle that he would not think twice about dumping if he felt like it." The major plans on which Gyan Singh erected his political career were his faith in his religion, his admiration for his language and his will to live happily. He believed that people cannot commit themselves to any course of action based on cowardice. He had courage to change, to do what has not been done before as against the monolithic slab of antiquity that had survived the ages. He had learnt from his Christian teacher that "honour was everything in life" "the missionary had yet tried to instil the boy with conscience but Gyan Singh had been bred in a turbulence where honour had more meaning. He knew that manhood depended on it and all important choices flowed from it. Conscience was invisible, hidden under secret layers of bafflement and doubt. Honour like prestige was public. It was a badge, the insignia of hardihood, the sign of a man's standing in his community. It must at all costs be upheld and it could never be shared. Conscience was no match for it. And during the apprenticeship in the factory Gyan learned that if there was one thing more important than machinery, it was the man who controlled it" (p.117).

Besides, Gyan was using history to weave an atmosphere. He was interested in making the land of five rivers, the twice truncated State of Punjab, again a prosperous land. He knew the history of irrigation introduced by Feroze Shah Tughlak

(1351-88) to his own times and therefore he wanted Bhakra to be exclusively for the Punjab and for that he was ready to make any sacrifices. He was determined to have the strike to show his strength and prove his point. Symbolically this show of strength has its portents in other experiences of the two Chief Ministers. When Harpal Singh's car had gone out of order, he had got into the car of Dubey. Whereas when Dubey's car had gone out of order, he had gone into the car of Gyan Singh. As in early days, Gyan Singh had taken Harpal Singh in his bus to Delhi. Gyan Singh had even repaired his car when it had failed to move on the road. Being a trained mechanic and also a believer in doing his work with his own hands, he appears to be a confident person. He stood for order and identity and therefore talked of Punjabi language and Sikh religion and even blended the two without caring for the secular thoughts that were in vogue.

Harpal Singh was a clean man and wanted a clean administration. Harpal even counselled caution and patience. He believed in giving reward to poets and authors, the growers of the best wheat and breeders of the best cattle of Haryana. He was shocked to find that each day brought some new statement that was more shocking than the previous one. "Yesterday the Punjab Assembly had passed an unofficial resolution declaring that Chandigarh and the Bhakra Dam belonged to the Punjab, and now Gyan had thrown the bombshell into their midst that there would be religious instructions in the schools. What would the next step be, an army and a flag for Punjab? The spectre of states stuffed with power rose before

his eyes" (p.145). Harpal on the contrary felt uneasy and ever since he had taken over as Chief Minister of Haryana, he had thought that he should have resigned right at the time the decision to bifurcate Punjab was taken. He had demanded a larger Haryana but he found that he was not able to produce any idea that "would generate its own quota of fanatics to clothe it in colour, put it to music, and fire a whole population." (p.145).

Even in the life of Saroj and Inder, there comes a stage when they lose faith in each other. Inder suspects Saroj of disloyalty despite her confession to contrary. Even he slaps her as he is obsessed with his doubts about her character. This crisis in the family is symbolic of the crisis that is outside in politics. Although he apologises, he fails to look after his wife's interest and protect her from the impending danger. Similar is the case of State of Haryana, which is likely to be thrown into darkness if the strike succeeded. As Chief Minister, it was Harpal Singh's duty to take necessary administrative steps to ensure that the supply of power was *undisrupted*. It was a test of strength. Under the guidance of Vishal Dubey, he did decide not to buckle in, although he wondered how the democracy of his country "super imposed on illiterate masses" could find any meaningful expression.

In this tense situation when the strike is imminent, the anti-social elements go on rampage making the life of people miserable. Inder's mill is attacked and that was done without provocation *or incitement*. He himself had been a successful

man although he had lost his father and had his past destroyed with the destruction of his business. He started his new business in Chandigarh believing that "the partition with all its horrors had in the end been good for the Punjab as it had brought out the energy and the drive of the people and revolutionized their lives" (p.230). But to his utter shock, he realised that everything was not always to go according to his wishes. The turbulent love he had for his friend's wife had brought only devastation.

As there was violence in the town resulting in the destruction of Inder's mill and his violent behaviour with his wife, passionate love for Tamara. There was violence in the town which affected others as well. Inder himself hit Dubey for transporting his wife Saroj to a safer place out of Chandigarh. Harpal Singh himself was attacked by people in his car. During all these unexpected violent happenings, the death of the Home Minister came as a shock but not without relief to the people of Punjab and Haryana. As a mark of respect to the Home Minister, Gyan Singh called off the strike. Everybody realised that some kind of compromise could have been a better solution than confrontation between the two states. In the new situation, loyalties were being altered, sometimes too fast to be understood by conscientious people. The rift between Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh being dangerous the bureaucrats and the politicians both recognised that persuasion and discussion could be a better way of resolving the tangled issues. What was shocking to Vishal Dubey at the end of the

crisis was that the politicians were divided not by a principle or convictions, they were divided by "nauseating hypocrisies" (p.245).

The novel makes an attempt to treat two themes at the same time by cleverly intermingling the characters and their personal actions with those in the realm of politics. There are questions of altered loyalties and clashes of personalities among politicians. Everywhere conventions and higher values are under attack and the new democratic and secular culture is not able to assert itself. It is this period of transition when the ethos of crude power mongering is developing and the Gandhian ideals are fast diminishing. Questions of identity are being raised on wrong grounds and feelings of people are being aroused for political purposes more than for purposes of constructive work of regeneration of the country.

The Day in Shadow (1971)² deals with the experiences of a woman of advanced age with the eldest son of 16 years, who had been divorced by her husband. Som, her husband, had been a successful businessman with tremendous acumen for dealing with people and matters related to business. Bash and brusque in his manners, he was quite arrogant and uppish without any consideration for the feelings of others whether it was in business or in personal life. Simrit was a writer, quite sensitive and modest. She had only one aim, that is, to look after her family well and bring up her children with proper attention and care. Som had come from Punjab after losing everything in the wake of Partition. But the tragedy had not taught him any lesson in humanism.

2. Nayantara Sahgal, The Day in Shadow (1971; New Delhi: Bell Books Paperback, 1976). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers within brackets.

Raj Edwin Garg is another person of about 40 years, who had been thrown out of his home at 19 for his conversion to Christianity. He had gone penniless and nameless "braving the rough emotional weather of immigration on his own soil, to become one of the outstanding man in his community"(p.104). He had not forgotten the heritage of his Hindu background. His blood belonged to that tradition but his upbringing clashed ruggedly with that. His loyalty had been questionable in the pre-partition days because of his conversion to Christianity. But he had chosen to remain in politics and even been elected to the Parliament in course of time. He enjoyed good reputation as an independent thinker and played a vital role in the history of the country. He showed lot of sympathy to Simrit and took her to Professor journalist Ram Krishan and tried to help her solve her problems of payment of income tax from her earnings on the share allotted to her by her husband as part of agreement for divorce. Till her son became mature she was supposed to pay the tax. This was a hard condition and also was unjust. His experiences were not different from those of the Sikhs of Punjab who had been fighting for recognition of their identity. Himself a nice man, he found in Simrit a fine woman worth his love. Sheila, whom he had loved for four years had been so different; he had discovered to his chagrin that she was a faithless woman.

The other important characters are Sardar Sahib, the old Minister who is incharge of Petroleum and Sumer Singh, the

young Minister of about 40 years working under him. Sardar Sahib, a leader with massive commonsense was ailing at the moment when a major decision was being taken by Parliament around 1967 -- the decision to choose one of the three tenderers for the excavation of oil mines in Jammu and other border areas. Sardar Sahib "had been schooled mostly in hardship, had not been to Harrow and Cambridge like the Prime Minister" and was totally dedicated to the cause of freedom of the country. In his absence, the Parliament chose on the recommendations of the young Minister Sumer Singh to engage Russia for oil production. Sumer Singh a son of Zamindar given to sensuality, and unscrupolous in his conduct, was over-ambitious. Sumer Singh "never got tired of saying that there was no room for ideology in a country's development". The achievements of Sardar Sahib had been many and praiseworthy as he had been a Minister for about 11 years already but "the future was here in this man (Sumer Singh) his deputy, in whom he has no confidence" (p.120).

The contrast between Sardar Sahib and Sumer Singh is quite significant. If Sardar Sahib was a hard working, honest patriot, Sumer Singh was incompetent and a pleasure-seeking epicurean. As Sumer Singh's father did not accept him for his inadequacy, even Sardar Sahib rejected him as a specimen of leadership. What was needed in the country was generation of faith in one's ability and following a philosophy for the leaving and not going on the path of restraint or self-denial. It was as much true in the case of

Simrit as in the case of Sumer Singh. If Simrit suffered for modesty, Sumer Singh loomed large as a travesty for his sensuality and incompetence in the political affairs of the country. Knowing well that in India no single belief has the answer, Ram Krishan thought of harmonising the irreconcilables of Hindu and Christian beliefs. He wanted Hinduism to undergo resurrection like the corpse of Jesus Christ, to ensure that its tenets were modified to suit the requirements of the changed times.

Som-Simrit relationship cracked up like the British Raj, leaving Simrit-like India to hope for a better future, the present being painful. On the contrary, Simrit-Raj relationship builds up like India's relationship developed with Soviet Russia in years to follow the partition. But in this situation what emerges as most painful in the novel is the possibility of good and dedicated workers like Sardar Sahib disappearing from the socio-political life of the country and people like Sumer Singh taking over. Equally sad is the presence of people like Som, who refuse to understand the finer aspects of life and enjoy being sadistic to innocent persons and smug in their approach to the problems of the poor and the helpless. There is a ray of hope in the novel in Raj deciding not to sideline Simrit and give her full chance and freedom to participate in political matters and grow as an individual:

"From this high spot and immense valley of choices spread out before her gaze and she felt free at last to choose what her life would be. She was filled with the sheer rightness of being alive and healthy at this particular time".

This novel does not deal with the problems of the Sikhs, but it does make reference to the contentious issues of Punjab in the totality of political situation obtaining in northern India. Sikhs are a major group. Sumer Singh is a bad presence, as he represents the rotten side of the democratic system contrasted with Sardar Sahib, the patriarchal figure, who not only stands out as a man of calibre but also as a man of integrity. This presents a picture of the Sikh ethos and culture.

In A Situation in New Delhi (1977)³ the main characters are non-Sikhs. There is only a driver who figures as a Sikh. He has the simplicity and the forthrightness typical of those who follow the precepts of Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Ajaib Singh wrote a letter to Devi, the Prime Minister, to inform her about some matter. His language and style are typical of a man of his education. It is funny and also incompetent. He writes 'respected sir' for the lady Prime Minister and uses out-of-the-way words and expressions like "epistle", "noble, high and mighty soul", and "your sweet self". Like Ajaib Singh, there is one more Sikh character in The Day in Shadow (1971), a driver who quietly watches the movements of the Minister who goes to the hotel to meet his keep Prieixie totally unconcerned about the moral aspect of the problem. What the driver offers to do is to make his

3. Chaman Nahal, A Situation in New Delhi (New Delhi: Himalaya Books, 1977). All references are to this edition with page numbers within brackets.

taxi available for movements. It is a different matter that in A Situation in New Delhi (1977), the attempt of the writer is to bring about understanding between Hindus and Muslims and isolate terrorism, immorality and indiscipline as impediments in the attempts to develop integrated culture.

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that Nayantara Sahgal has not carefully created Sikh characters and discussed the problems of their cultural identity. It is only in one novel Storm in Chandigarh (1969) that she has created two Sikh Chief Ministers and showed their clashes. But here again the clashes are not because of religion or cultural differences. The clashes are political and the difference in their style of functioning is a consequence of their being different by temperament. If Punjab is referred to, it is only as setting or as background of the characters, who have moved from those parts of India which have gone to Pakistan after partition. She deals with Punjabi characters but they are mostly with human problems and problems of living. As a matter of fact it is rare that Nayantara Sahgal talks about the religious background of the characters. Although in the case of Raj and Usman who figure in The Day in Shadow (1971) and A Situation in New Delhi (1977) respectively, their religious background is mentioned and the question of communal harmony is raised and even commented upon. Her major problems are the problems of human relationship and day-to-day living. But wherever she has dealt with Sikh characters, she has taken an objective view without personal or political prejudices.

MINOR NON-SIKH NOVELISTS

Except Chaman Nahal (b.1927) no other Hindu writer has written extensively either about Punjab or about the problems of the Sikhs. Even where references are available they are scanty and they do not give any inkling of the special features of the life of the Sikhs and their culture. However, there are stray references and on the basis of the casual and incomplete information available in Cry the Peacock (1963) of Anita Desai (b.1937), A Bend in the Ganges (1963) of Manohar Malgonkar (b.1913), and The Dark Dancer (1959) of Balachandra Rajan (b.1920).

Anita Desai (b.1937) is a psychological novelist and is mainly concerned with the issues related to alienation. But in the very first novel that she wrote, Cry the Peacock (1963),¹ she created a Sikh couple Harbans Lal and Manju. They were a happy-go-lucky lot and believed in living life with full involvement. They invited Gautama and Maya, the main characters in the novel, to a cabaret and regaled the company with jokes to keep the mood light and carefree. The Sikh even invented tales to entertain the company with light talk. Slapping Gautama heartily on the back, he said "O-oh but we used to have good time, my friend and I, we were always begging him to come with us to the coffee house to look at the girls from the Women's College.

1. Anita Desai, Cry the Peacock (New Delhi: Rupa Paperbacks, 1963). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers within brackets.

Oh Oh Ha Ha... We used to get sick on that hostel food" (p.85). 175

It was strange to bear with the "irresistible Sikh" who "bellowed and winked at his wife". He even pretended to be a palm reader although Maya saw 'ignorance' in "that shining glaze of well-being" and "that blank, round openness of childish innocence" (p.89). The Sikh was a hoax, even vulgar. He was "no ally of mine", thought Maya, "but of that magician of the underworld, the albino, his shadow" (p.91). Also says Maya, "I detected in his leer something of the lascivious evil in the smiles and gesture of the albino astrologer, and I perspired freely in my panic." The Sikh shouted exuberantly that they all believed in Fate. He set his turban at "a jaunty angle" and clapped and cried happily for the cabaret to start.

His wife Manju was another prim lady who was snooty and conceited. She looked down upon everyone and pooh-poohed the culture of the poor and also of the rich. She "screwed her ant-eating mouth into a small red pimple of disapproval" at everything whether it was the poverty of the middle class or the thieves who took away the airconditioners of a neighbour. She was over-dressed and ununderstanding, a simple silly woman.

This couple does not give any definite view of the Sikh culture or their social life but it does emphasise that Sikhs live full-blooded life and drink life to the dregs. He is a lusty young man and believes in enjoying every moment of life.

Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1963)² does not present actual Sikhs as character in his novel but he does present

- malgonkar*
2. Manohar Malgonkar, A Bend in the Ganges (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1964). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers within brackets.

Shafi Usman the leader of the Hannuman Club in the disguise of a Sikh. He led a group of terrorists who believed in oneness and with their united force remained ready to fight the British for freedom with their battle cry, "A million shall die." This terrorist group of 37 members was elitist, "having smashed down the barriers of religion that had otherwise divided Indians", "making them blood brothers" for the service of the mother land." (p.73). They ate curry using the meat of both pig and cow and also called themselves Ram and Rahim Club to emphasise oneness of heart despite difference in their religious background.

But the curry that was supposed to hold the terrorist together committed to a single cause failed to keep them united unlike the Amrit that the Sikhs drink from the same pot in Gurudwara to emphasise unanimity and togetherness for a cause. It is so because Shafi Usman turns out to be a Muslim fanatic and he betrays his Hindu friends when the police raid their Club. He was not a Sikh essentially. He was only a Sikh in disguise and therefore he lacked the qualities of loyalty and honesty. Through his character it is emphasised that dedication and sacrifice are the qualities of only Sikhs and not of all those who put on long hair or put on appearances like Sikhs. Therefore, Shafi was killed by a Hindu finally, while trying to dishonour Sundri, the young daughter of Tek Chand.

Shafi changed his views about the Hindus under the influence of the fanatics so much so that he believed that the Congress Party was a party of the Hindus and it was meant for

the welfare of the Hindus only. It was not surprising because even Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan and Mohammad Jinnah had initially worked for national solidarity but later become champions of the Muslims. He nurtured the popular Muslims' notion that they were the superior race and after the British left India they would become second rate citizens in view of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus. He "detested the Sikhs more than the Hindus and therefore he felt it absurd to go about as a Sikh as he once did." But the fact remains that he betrayed his friends often. He was only a travesty of a Sikh. He could not ever aspire to emulate the Sikhs for their bravery, straightforwardness and honesty of purpose.

There is a real Sikh Dhan Singh in the novel who worked as Tek Chand's chauffeur. He went to his village to bring his family but could not return as his entire family was brutally butchered. "His wife and two children were dragged out" and the children put "to death in front of their parents" and petrol was poured over his hair and beard and he was burnt alive. Finally, his wife was taken away by the Muslims. This was the common fate of the Sikhs when the communal hatred reached its peak in the wake of partition.

Balachandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer (1959)³ depicts India's struggle for freedom and the violence caused by the partition of the country. It also deals with the police atrocities on non-violent freedom fighters. Whereas there are women like Kamala

3. Balachandra Rajan, The Dark Dancer (1969; New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1976). All quotations are from this edition, with page numbers within bracket.

in the novel who risked their lives while saving Muslim girls from the rapacious hands, there are cases of apathy and even active involvement in meaningless brutalities.

Although the partition had its maximum impact in Punjab which fell on both sides of the new borderline to divide India from Pakistan, the repercussions were felt all over the country. Even in distant South where the incidents of ^{the} novel take place, people are not free from the tremors of partition and the resultant communal frenzy like the riots and carnage of Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Lahore and Amritsar and such other cities of the North as Noakhali and Calcutta. But even these people who had fled the disturbed areas in Pakistan to other peaceful regions of India were not safe. Their families were still in Punjab. Or if the families were intact they were facing hardships and humiliations of refugees. Partap Singh, a Sikh officer was worried about the riots and saw the police hand in those calamities. He rightly thought that people in South India who were living far away from the scene of carnage could not imagine the dimensions of the communal disaster. But then he was told by Krishnan that the country was theirs and "it does not matter how far away the corner was, what happened in one room happened to us" (p.76). His parents were feared to have been killed in violence and he had no control over the situation nor had he any means to safeguard the people of his dear Punjab.

Partap Singh lamented the partition. What he wondered to see was that people who had lived for centuries at the same place in India were being forced to admit that they were not Indians. What was more shocking to him was that as a Sikh he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. The real sufferers were the Sikhs, he thought because "the Hindus want Independence" and "Muslims want their theological State" whereas the Sikhs did not know what they wanted, and yet they had "to pay the price between the millstones" (p.89). They had been attached to the land of the five rivers and now they were being buffeted around, a dispossessed and humiliated lot. Like other Sikhs he also said, "You think we have not paid for being Indian? The thousands that are dead and the millions that are homeless, the rich land abandoned and the lives we have left behind; that is our sacrifice for making india" (p.199). In retaliation, therefore, even the Sikhs attacked Muslims and their women and they felt relieved after killing even the unknown and innocent Muslims because the Sikhs just thought they had to kill the worms that bit them.

However, it is interesting to note that it is only in The Dark Dancer (1959) that the predicament of the Sikh community has been brought out so clearly. Other novelists including the Sikhs had treated Hindus and Sikhs as one and pitched them against Muslims. But here in this novel the Sikhs are presented as a bewildered lot for the reason that they have separated themselves from Hindus as a community of the disciples of Guru Nanak (1469-15

Tamas (1974)⁴ of Bhisham Sahni (b.1915) is another novel that deals with the problems people of Punjab faced in 1947. The village which provides the backdrop for the novel had population from Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. Their life had been quite harmonious till the seed of discord was sown by the All India Muslim League (est.1906) which was asking for the creation of Pakistan. Religion was almost always accepted as an individual or a group activity, and it seldom caused a wedge between the communities. The Sikhs lived with their five distinguishing marks: the hair, the comb, steel bangle, the underwear and the sword. Also it was known to even the English D.C. that the Hindus did not eat beef and Muslims did not eat pork and the Sikhs ate jhatka (meat of goat killed with a single stroke) and the Muslims halal (meat from goat where the blood is let out slowly). Religious feelings were so much respected and cared for that even when the workers of the Congress Party (founded in 1885) went round in the morning singing prayers they did not sing their prayers near the mosque, although their group included members from the Muslim community also. As a matter of fact because of such considerations of the Congress, Muslims started believing that Congress was a

4. Bhisham Sahni, Tamas (1974; New Delhi: Penguin India, 1989) All quotations are from this edition with page numbers within brackets.

party of the Hindus. Muslims even regarded other Muslim members of the Congress Party as traitors to their community, and slaves to the Hindu community. But the life of the village on the whole remained peaceful.

In order to widen the gap between the communities by a few mischievous politicians, a dead pig was placed at the gate of Kailon Ki Masjid in the same way as a dead cow was placed at the gate of Mai Sati Dharamshala. This was done only to foment trouble and divide the Hindus from the Muslims. But when these activities were taking place, efforts were on to bring about understanding to ensure peaceful living by Peace Committees and even the Congress Party. But cries like Pakistan Zindabad used to be heard often and it was not safe for the Hindus to walk through the lanes in Muslim mohallas. The radical Hindus were preparing their people to meet the challenge by training them to use lathis and also advising them to keep their sharp edged weapons like spears, axes, etc. ready, in case there was a need. The whole atmosphere was charged with suspicion and fear as nobody seemed to believe that co-existence was possible. The Sikhs remained in the background, here and there invited only to join committees and offer suggestions.

It is interesting to note that in the holocaust, the Sikhs were as much involved as the Hindus when the riots started. Even taking out procession on the birthday of the Guru or a tazia by Muslims was not safe as fanatics could attach any one

any time. Even Liza, the wife of Richard, the Deputy Commissioner, remarked that human values had lost relevance in the present context as people were fighting among themselves like animals and the theory that the Indians were up in arms against the British was a hoax.

As nowhere else in any other novel, here the Singh Sabha is mentioned as an important association of the Sikhs whose cooperation was being solicited both by the Congress and the Muslim League. The Singh Sabhas had been playing constructive roles since the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the realm of religious and social reforms. ~~Even~~ the Communists, who were supporting a different cause were active in the area for maintaining peace. In spite of their efforts to educate people about the situation, innocent Sikhs got butchered mercilessly. Ironically, this was being done even when the avowed aim of the Congress was to bring purna swarāj for India.

The novel deals with the tragic story of Harnam Singh and Banto, their son Iqbal and their daughter Jasbir. Sardar Harnam Singh was owner of a small tea stall and was living in peace when he was suddenly informed by Karim Khan that Muslims were out to destroy peace. Sensing danger, Harnam Singh and Banto collected part of their belongings and left the place. They left behind the box with the remainders, including jewellery, and fled for safety treading the difficult terrain to reach a place of safety. They did reach a house but that was the house of a Muslim which nursed grouse against the Sikhs. The old man

in the family Rehmat Ali was understanding, but the son and the daughter-in-law were quite fanatical. Harnam Singh and his wife believed in the protective power of the Guru and the mercy of God and regularly recited the Japji. They were God-fearing, honest and hard working people. They were given shelter in a dark attic and later in the cow-shed overflowing with dung and its stench. They were forced to leave and go away from there lest other Muslims should know about their presence and harm them.

Harnam Singh's daughter Jasbir had her own tragic experiences. She was married and happy and yet when the danger of liquidation of the entire Sikh population became imminent, she took shelter like others in the gurudwara and sang in a voice charged with fervour: "I have no saviour but you." With their eyes closed, their hands joined together, their heads swaying in unison, the members of the congregation repeated the lines after the singer. Some clapped their hands marking time. It was the voice of sacrifice resounding again "Soorā so pahachāniye larai jo deen ke heit" after a lapse of centuries. 300 years ago they had sung the same song before they met the enemies: "Now that there was another crisis... their souls" the novelist says, "had merged with those of their ancestors as they lived their glorious past once again: "It was time to fight the Musalmans again" (p.161).

The fervour was real. So was the fear. But nobody knew from which direction the enemies would attack, although every member of the congregation was prepared to face the worst. The

gurudwara was being guarded by the Nihang Sikhs who were attired in their blue robe with yellow sash and a blue turban supporting an iron circle which they used as boomerang. The Nihang Sardars flared up on every small suggestion showing their readiness to meet any challenge even though it may be impolitic. When the Nihang Sardars were asked to hold the spear in a manner the tip did not glaze and tint in the light, they lost temper. Considering themselves to be the dedicated soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh (1666 - 1708) they were always ready to defend the Panth. The novelist remarks:

"Battles of long ago passed before his eyes. Armies marched, spears glittered in the sun, horses neighed, war drums boomed and conch shells blew" (p.162).

Even when the mindless Nihangs created small ripples with their audacity other Sikhs kept busy running the community kitchen and making necessary preparations. Everyone was in the subconscious mind attuned to the past quite saturated with the spirit of sacrifice. The only people they were oblivious of were the Britishers, ironically, remarks the novelists, as they were "only thinking of the Khalsa and of the Muslims whose horses were at that very moment marching upon them." They were reciting the ardas in full readiness to sacrifice their life for the Khalsa Panth. The congregation rose to its feet as one body with its head bowed in prayer it intoned, "The Khalsa, the pure at heart will dominate the world. The enemy will be eliminated."

Sohan Singh, the Communist, tried hard to explain to the people of his community in the gurudwara that their "welfare lies in keeping the trouble from breaking out" (p.167). But nobody cared to understand what he said as passions ran high, blinding them to the reality of the situation. On the pretext of being killed the Muslims attacked the gurudwara. And for safety the women led by Jasbir went to the nearby well to throw themselves into it so that they could save their honour. Jasbir was usually addressed as the Guru's daughter as she washed the stairs of gurudwara every morning. She had even embroidered the silk cloth covering for the Holy Book. A small kirpan hanged from the black strap at the waist for use in self defence. But in the melee seeing no way out she led the group of women to the well even while the Nihang cried "The Turks have come ! The Turks are here !" It was a tragic end of the brave women of the brave Sikhs.

The tale of Iqbal, the son of Sardar Harnam Singh, is horrendous and quite blood-curdling. He was caught hold of by a group of Muslims led by Ramjan and he was forced to read the Kalima (confession of faith) and accept the Muslim faith. This was not the end, he was circumcised and his name was changed to Sheikh Iqbal Ahmed from Iqbal Singh. His beard was trimmed in Muslim style and a piece of beef dripping with blood was pushed into his mouth. Thus "all the signs of Iqbal Singh's Sikhism had been carefully obliterated" (p.192). Ironically, the novelist says, "from an enemy, he had been transformed into a friend, not an infidel but a believer -- a Musalman. The doors of all Muslim houses were now open to him" (p. 192).

It was pathetic that the gurudwara was littered with the dead bodies of the Sikhs, including those of Nihang Sikhs and Sohan Singh, the peace maker, near the Guru Granth Sahib. But this was not the only shocking thing. The Muslims were demanding two lacs from the living Sikhs for ceasefire and the Sikhs in their utter helplessness were trying to raise money for buying peace. It was true

"... the Sikhs had as much pride in being of village Sayyedpur as the Muslims. They were proud of its red soil, of its excellent wheat, its loquat orchards, its extreme winter and icy winds. The Sikhs like the Muslims of this place were known for their hospitality, generosity and joviality and as the riots were proving for their volatility as well" (p.196).

It was shocking to hear a Muslim youngman boasting of his having forced many Hindu women to submit to his passion. In his bravado he narrated how he had raped even a corpse, the woman having died after several men had sexually abused her. Equally gruesome was the sight of that Bagri youngwoman who lost all sense of dignity in the face of death and said that all the seven Muslims could have her if they so desired, but they should leave her alive. But she was as mercilessly killed as was the Junior Granthi. The Sikhs holding their naked swords and their hair hanging loose marched towards the Muslims to engage in the battle; but they all did not return safe. It was only fortunate that before the gurudwara was set to fire a helicopter with a white man inside arrive to take the survivors to safety.

When the clashes between the Sikhs and the Muslims were taking place and lives were being lost, the Deputy Commissioner was not seen. But after the tragedy had occurred, the District Administration was active to provide succour and maintain peace. Even the Congress and the Muslim League workers came forward to devise means and ways of restoring peace. For them what was really important was who was put on the peace committee and who was left out. The ultimate solution to the political chaos was found in representation from all the three communities to ensure communal harmony. Elections were material, and not solutions to the problem of discord in social life. What everyone wanted to do was to create a good impression of the leaders for better prospects in elections.

The victims of the riots, Sikhs and others, faced humiliation while answering questions about the whereabouts of the families. While their lives had become miserable, the District Administration was taking its own time to go through the tortuous questioning to assess the amount of losses suffered by them. Even new relationships were being forged between men and women. Both Hindus and Sikhs still retained their prejudices and preconceptions. Prakasho refused to eat barfi from Allah Rakha's hand as he was a Muslim. But once she saw the black thread around his neck from which a talisman dangled, and a new fresh shirt, even this tonga driver became acceptable to her. In midst of miseries and tortures they were only regaining confidence in

themselves. But the tales of their sufferings had been so spine chilling that even Liza was not ready to listen to her Deputy Commissioner husband's talking about the incidents. She knew "it made no difference to her whether he told her or not" (p.236). The losses had been so great and faith in human dignity and value so badly shaken that she wanted rather to avoid discussion on the sad chapter of the community life than revel in its narration.

MINOR SIKH NOVELISTS

Besides such an eminent writer as Khushwant Singh (b. 1918) quite a few other Sikh writers have written about the tragedy of the partition of India. Among whom Balwant Singh Anand, H.S.Gill (1924) and K.S.Duggal (b. 1917) and Amrinder Kaur are important. It is not the difference in treatment that matters. What matters is the passion and the concern and the genuineness with which they treat the experiences of the people of Punjab in the wake of Partition in 1947.

Balwant Singh Anand's Cruel Interlude (1961) is another novel by a Sikh which deals with the difficulties and sufferings endured by the Hindu and the Sikh refugees who had to stay in camps in Pakistan before evacuation to India. They were forced to stay in camps because they were always in danger of being attacked by the very Muslims who had been their neighbours and friends. The novel deals with the Lyallpur Refugee Camp and the Sargodha Kafla and "fear, anguish, sorrow and suffering, murder and rape and abduction" which made life an unending nightmare. Scarcity of food, molestation of girls and indignity were the common experiences.

The novel was written about 12 years after Partition and significantly after the publication of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956). The memories of the days were green still

and therefore there was a lot of description of the "reprehensible events that took place on this side of the border as on the other side so that no man in India or Pakistan, can look back on the tragic events of partition and not hang his head in shame" (p.8). It may not be forgotten that "in spite of the blinding fog of religious fanaticism and political bigotry... the innate goodness of man asserted itself" and "often man risked the displeasure of their co-religionists and even their lives to help the afflicted in the other camp" (p.7).

The novel deals with real persons and much of what is delineated here had been actually experienced by the novelist himself. The novel had at its centre the Principal of Khalsa College at Lyallpur who went to his College to evacuate the refugees and help them reach the Indian border. The Sikhs like Hindus had taken shelter in the College and his colleagues had been busy lending helping hand to the refugees. Tarlok Singh, a teacher of medium height, was a natural leader in times of trouble as Fauja Singh, an Akali Physical Instructor with his dark blue turban on the head, was active. So were Sudhir Singh, the Vice-Principal and other professors. The gurudwara had been burnt and people had been butchered mercilessly. The Baluch and Pathan soldiers had been grabbing the articles of refugees and misbehaving with women. The Sikhs were so depressed that they could not "put up a bold face and a show of authority" (p.83). Even the trains that came with refugees from India or those which went from Pakistan to India were spattered with blood and were

choked with dead bodies cut into pieces. The details are gruesome. Even the convoys were looted and ransacked by anti-social elements and attacked by unknown Muslims. The story of the miseries of the Sikhs is narrated at length. People had lost faith in their action and even the purpose of life. They all had succumbed to fatalism as they were totally demoralised to find even the soldiers totally apathetic to their feelings and anguish.

Kartar Singh Duggal's Twice Born Twice Dead (1979) covers nearly a year and a half before the Partition and quite a few years after the Partition. Naturally, it deals with the same historical material and political personalities and anecdotes of human sufferings as we find in other novels. Here in the novel the stories of human sufferings are mostly narrated by the refugees themselves who had seen both violence and kindness practised by Muslims. The novel depicts a harmonious social life before the poison of communalism came to be spread in the wake of the demand for Pakistan. Even those who had been friends became sworn enemies. Sikhs had been participating in the festivals of Muslims and Muslims in the celebrations of the Sikhs. Allahditta and Sohne Shah were ideal friends as they lived in understanding, although they belonged to two different communities. Even their daughters were almost identical. They dressed alike, used dupattas of the same colour and even thought alike. They had not seen any difference between themselves although Rajkarni was a Sikh and Satbharai was a Muslim. Their friendship was so deep and Sohne Shah's emotional dependence on them was so great that after Rajkarni was abducted,

Satbharai went to live with Sohne Shah to help him sustain interest in life. But the poison was spread by a stranger in a green robe who whispered something in the ear of Khudabaksh, a Muslim of the village. This new man's appearance in the village brought suddenly a change in the attitude of the people so much that even over the tomb of a peer the flag of the Muslim League was seen fluttering.

In Bihar there had been some attacks on the Muslims. Therefore as reprisal, Muslims were attacking the Hindus in Dhanyal. It was all meaningless even nonsensical and yet it was a reality. The Government remained surprisingly inactive. Master Tara Singh's warning that if drastic action was not taken Sikhs "would be wiped off the face of the earth", looked ominous, but was true. The village Sikh youths Panjoo and Basanta fell victims to *hatred*. Their bodies were hacked to pieces. Ironically, if the attackers were killed they were declared martyrs. The cry of "God is great" and "Long Live Pakistan" was heard everywhere. Even the Muslims who had assured Sohne Shah of all protection became enemies and looked for his blood. Even when Dost Mohammad was killed by a British soldier, the wrath of the Muslims was inflicted on the Sikhs.

What is more shocking is that even on the side of India, the scene was not different. Here also Hindu-Muslim friendship had met the same fate. Here the Hindus were as violent and aggressive as were the Muslims in Pakistan. The voice of sanity

was ignored and there was the reign of anarchy with rioters coming with spears and guns, beating drums and playing shahnai to indulge in horrible deeds of murder, rape, abduction and loot. Even the peer thought that conversion of women and children was the only way to propagate Islam. Horror was seen everywhere: "Children were transfixed with spears, women cut up with axes, old men dragged by their beard and hair and youth massacred with bullets" (p.37). The cry that Islam was in danger and that not a single Hindu and Sikh was to be left alive was heard all around. Even gurudwaras and temples were defiled on purpose by killing unarmed people and raping women inside their premises. Even the places of worship were set on fire ruthlessly. Harnam Dass fainted while narrating the sad story of how the rioters had cut one of his arms and pulled out one of his eyes and made his daughter to dance stark naked and was raped by several gundas. "Long Live Pakistan" was tattooed on her breasts and a crescent and a star on her forehead.

In these troubles and tortures, Satbharai, the Muslim girl fell in love with Kuldip, a young Sikh son of Sohne Shah in the camp. Their love was genuine and had nothing to do with religion. It was rather reassuring that even when people were being killed indiscriminately like ants, and women were being humiliated, there was scope for hope as is evident from the love of the two young persons coming from two different communities.

Twice Born Twice Dead (1979)¹ highlights the trauma, gloom and tragedy of the partition of India and makes sad commentary¹⁹⁴ on the brutalities of the two communities but ultimately ends on a note of hope. The writer suggests that the unfortunate tragedy was a creation of a handful of mischievous elements. The suggestion is that a peaceful co-existence is both relevant and commendable.

From the four novels discussed above, it becomes more than evident that the impact of the holocaust of Partition (1947) was so great on the minds of the Sikhs that even after settling down in India and living in peace, they could not forget those sad days. But it is interesting to note that all the novelists have shown the path of peace and underlined the possibility of the Sikhs and Muslims living together in peace. This is why a Sikh youngman is shown in love with a Muslim woman and they are presented as innocent lovers, as two symbolic life forces. It is idealistic and impracticable and yet it shows the pious wish of these writers.

It is another interesting thing that in all the four novels, discussed here, viz. Cruel Interlude (1961), Twice Born Twice Dead (1979), Ashes and Petals (1978) and Lajo (1990), Hindus and Sikhs are always clubbed together and they are set against Muslims. Culturally also, the Hindus and the Sikhs are not shown different except that the emotional attachment of the Sikhs is to gurudwaras and their faith is in their gurus and the Granth. In their social life they are almost indistinguish-

1. K.S. Duggal, Twice Born Twice Dead (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979). All quotations are from this edition. Page numbers are given in parenthesis.

able, practising the philosophy of oneness as preached by Guru Nanak (1466-1539) and the Upanishads. After all, they share the same cultural heritage.

Another novel Ashes and Petals (1978)³ written by H.S. Gill (b. 1924) is quite a significant contribution to the historical understanding of the Punjab between 1947 and 1971. During this period the Hindus and Sikhs of India who had to leave their homes to settle down in the territory of divided India in the wake of partition in 1947 have lived under the nagging memories of the holocaust. They have not been able to forget the humiliation that they had to live through. The Politicians fought among themselves and for their ulterior motives got the country divided. The hearts of the people got mangled, ^{and} attitudes ^{got} distorted. Before the partition, in spite of differences in Faith and customs, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs lived a cohesive life each one needing the other. They were mentally adjusted to the differences of religious practices. The novelist explains the change in attitude and the loss of goodwill after the division as follows:

"In the pre-partition days when the boys played guli-danda on the village dung heaps, the sardars had rubbed shoulders with the Muslims. As co-tillers of the fields the Muslim and the Jat Sardar had toiled together and appreciated each other's ways, even though so divergent. The Muslim was the artisan, the cobbler and the potter. The Jat farmer needed all this help in his fields. The two grew up in the village, helping each other. In 1947, when partition came about, the Muslims moved away. The village ties between the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Hindus broke and such ties can't be restored overnight." (p. 136).

2. H.S. Gill, Ashes and Petals (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978). All quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers are given in brackets.

The novel begins with a train-load of the Hindus and the Sikhs on their way to a safe land in India leaving behind their home and hearts. The train stopped at the outer signal of Lahore and the train driver Anthony Peters, an Anglo-Indian of Jabalpure, found to his chagrin that an employee from the station who was on duty had gone to the Muslims to join them in the attack on the people travelling by that train. It was a frenzy and meaningless exercise and yet people were indulging in killings without any justification.

Risaldar Santa Singh, a Sikh who had led a clean life and believed in certain human values could not accept the dragging away of his fourteen year grand-daughter by a Muslim. He shot her dead so that he could at least ensure that she was not dishonoured. This was not an isolated case as shooting the women dead or asking them to throw themselves into wells was the only sure way of defending the women from the mad Muslims who were out to rape Hindu or Sikh women. This sight stayed in the mind of Risaldar Santa Singh like a canker and even when after several years when his son, Ajit Singh, wanted permission to marry Muslim girl Salma, he refused to allow him to have anything to do with a Muslim. He had lost his faith in the unity of Hindus and Muslims and did not believe that marriage between a Sikh boy and a Muslim girl could ever be successful. He had preferred death to disgrace and shot his 14 year old grand-daughter Baljeeto and now he wanted to avoid that situation by disallowing Ajit Singh to marry. The Sikhs had "crossed the last

frontiers of fears and become giants", so much so that they had "united in a common bond of revenge and retribution, the tidal mass swept the shores of sanity and sought the final confrontation" (pp. 9-10). No doubt Ajit and Salma realised that Sardar Santa Singh was filled with destructive communal hatred but he was justified in his feelings. Ajit Singh forwarded quite a few rational arguments to persuade the Sardar. He said that he had been saved by Salma's brother. The Sardar himself had been a good friend of such Muslims as Mida, Gama and Rauf. On the front their blood mingled without any distinction as "never did anyone say it was Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Jat or Muslim blood" (p.180). In his view "Salma is not one of us. She is us" Sardar Santa Singh did not budge from his prejudiced position. Ajit Singh declared "I will marry her and her alone" (p.180), and true to words, ultimately, married Salma in the court.

The marriage of Ajit and Salma was seen as quite absurd by people around. The Brigadier's wife considered this kind of relationship undesirable. She could accept inter-caste marriage but she would not accept a marriage between the Sikh and the Muslim:

"But how many such marriages are there? You read what you like to read. Sure, I have read of the golden wedding made specially in heaven for the Sikh marrying the Goan girl. Or the modern Bihari marrying the foreign-returned Punjabi. But never in all my life have I heard of Muslim marrying a Sikh...You seem to forget'⁴⁷. Anyhow, I tell you, I am not very happy with all this. Best if the Sikhs marry Sikhs, and the Muslims, Muslims. These things just don't work out in our country, no matter what you say". (p.140).

But the whole situation changed when Ajit Singh died in a battle and was awarded Mahavir Chakra posthumously for showing gallantry. It was only after losing Ajit Singh that Sardar Santa Singh realised the folly of his prejudiced attitude and he affectionately asked Salma to proceed to receive the award as he said "Ajit would never have liked it any other way" (p.193). This change of mind and attitude signifies that the spirit of love is stronger than that of hate. But the fact remains that the tragic happenings of 1947 have embittered the Sikhs and as a result kept their bewilderment alive. Their actions even have been affected by those bitter memories.

It is an irony that in free India division between the Hindus and the Muslims or the Sikhs and the Muslims has become greater and it has become a social problem. It is no more a personal problem, a problem of individual feelings. It is a problem of exploiting the communal feelings by politicians which is much worse and yet it is a reality of free India. In the novel are mentioned the Meerut riots which erupted on insignificant grounds. A cow's head was found in a Hindu locality and that became the nucleus of explosion of hatred. Kishori Lal, defeated candidate in general elections, was out to use the Hindu sentiments as was Wali Hussain whose political existence depended upon whether or not they kept the communal flames alive. In the Lal Kurti Bazar, a predominantly Muslim locality, Muslims attacked the Hindus and as in other areas the Hindus attacked the Muslims. The philosophy of love and

cooperation was thrown to winds. The police was rendered helpless, necessitating the calling of the army and later the CRPF to control the unruly mobs. Politicians of all hues were out to exploit the sentiments of people and even encouraged violence and merciless abduction of women. It seems that in this atmosphere of passion, misunderstanding and communal fanaticism the love affair between Ajit and Salma is presented as antidote. It is as significant as is the affair between Dalipjit and Leila in The Rape (1974) of Raj Gill. The Sikhs and the Muslims are expected to live together in love, and that is the pious hope of the novelists. But the question remains whether the social conditions of the country allows that to happen. In any case, the relationship between Ajit and Salma is more realistically delineated than the relationship between the Dalipjit and Leila. Additionally Ashes and Petals (1978) also concentrates on the positive forces of love and understanding as against the nefarious motives and actions of the political leaders whether they are Hindus or Muslims.

The only novel of its kind Lajo (1990)³ by Amrinder Kaur has appeared recently which deals with the 1984 communal riots of Delhi. The riots had taken place in the wake of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's murder by her own body guard. The murderer was a Sikh and the case continued for about 5 years before it was settled by the court. Linking the murder with the Blue Star Operation in the Golden Temple, it was presumed

3. Amrinder Kaur, Lajo (New Delhi: Sharma Publishers, 1990). All quotations are taken from this edition.

by the fanatics that the murder was a consequence of conspiracy. In the explosion of political expediency, misled by their leaders, people had gone out into the streets and lanes to kill the Sikhs and loot their shops without any rhyme or reason. The riots, some believe, were only a ruse for the anti-social elements to make fast bucks. In any case it was a traumatic experience for the Sikhs, no less shocking for the level-headed Hindus.

Amrinder Kaur has dealt with this frenzy and its repercussions on the social life of the people. Hindus and Sikhs started suspecting one another which resulted in misunderstanding and even clashes which could be easily avoided. Detailed accounts of looting, rapes and murders are given which are very like the descriptions given by other writers about the riots of 1947. In that respect the novel is not quite different in tone or temper from other novels.

The love of the Sikh woman Lajo for a Hindu Vikram Kumar who was a land-lord is given conventional treatment. In intensity of feeling of course it is impressive, but is very like what we get in novels like Raj Gill's The Rape (1974), and Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975). However, what is different here is that the woman walks out of the marital bond to have an affair with a landlord on her own. She is a young, beautiful woman but her Sikh husband is an unexciting, quiet man without much sexual passion in him. She chooses Vikram Kumar for his

blatant sexuality and experiences agonising ecstasy. Despite this relationship she discovers that when her husband Mohinder Singh is hounded out by a frenzied Hindu mob and set ablaze, her Hindu lover remains a passive observer to the gruesome spectacle, emotionally totally uninvolved. This is a moment of self-examination for her. On the spur of the moment, she decided that lover deserved to be stabbed for betraying her and she did so. But, ironically he remained alive even though she thought he was dead.

After the carnage and wholesale destruction she stays in a camp and there again she comes across Vikram Kumar and develops against her conscience physical intimacy with him and quietly and secretly allows herself to surrender to him. However, after about 20 years her son Sharan came to know that she had illicit relationship with a Hindu. In anger he killed him. This is, of course, a melodramatic situation but this is only to complete the story of revenge and show that, where faith was in question nothing mattered. She had betrayed herself by leaving her husband and deciding to live with a man who was no better than a sexual maniac.

Sharan is left behind to marry Channo, the young girl with whom he had fallen in love. His mother had taken the blame for killing Vikram and thus seen that her son Sharan was not implicated in the case of murder. He was saved. The novel ends thus with an impassioned plea for secularism and liberal humanism. The Granth Sahib does not permit any one to harm

fellow men and it pleads for essential oneness of various religions. The novelist pleads for communal understanding although its ending is rather unconvincing. But in her disillusionment with the Hindu lover, she brings up her son, the consequence of her illicit affair, as a rabid Sikh. Her love-hate relationship with Vikram Kumar results in the formation of strong reactions against the Hindus as a community.

It is clear from the discussion attempted above that the post-Partition days were tragic as the dawn of Freedom had come with arson, looting, murder and rape. That was an outburst of communal frenzy and the consequence was physical uprooting of millions of people who did not know even the cause of the holocaust. But the riots of 1984 after the Prime Minister's murder were engineered without any rational explanation, probably by some anti-social elements including political leaders, to fish in troubled waters. What is most pernicious is the outcome of the riots- the feeling that the Sikhs and the Hindus are enemies to each other, as is evidenced in Lajo by Amrinder Kaur. The Sikh gurus did not preach separatism, nor did they ever suggest, even obliquely that communal hatred or hatred of any kind for that matter, is desirable. It is a sad development in the history of Sikh-Hindu relationship. The distortion of vision can be corrected only if the political motives are not allowed to get the better of human qualities like love and friendship. The creative writers, discussed above, are one in underlining the need for understanding, accommodation and harmony between the various religious communities of the country.

CHAPTER IXCONCLUSION: AN OVERVIEW

It emerges from the discussion of the novels of various writers who have written in English about the culture and social life of the Sikhs that there is a considerable amount of interest among contemporary writers in the people of Punjab. Not only has the history of Punjab been chequered but also full of episodes of human interest. It is difficult for any one to ignore the acts of bravery of the people of this strategic region. The attempts to live life with full zest despite disturbances and rise and fall in their fortune are commendable. In course of time, under the stresses of varied experiences, the people of Punjab have grown physically and also mentally tough and have given a good account of themselves as fighters and thinkers.

With the philosophical planks derived from Guru Nanak (1469-1539) in the 15th & 16th century, the Sikh Panth gradually took the form of the Khalsa Panth finally under the guidance of the Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). He stopped the practice of appointing a human being as guru and declared that the Adi Granth will be the guru of the followers of the Sikh faith. Naturally, the details mentioned by various gurus for leading disciplined life have been taken as pious words and have been propagated time and again. Interpretations are offered in the light of what Guru Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh had said or done, and also what other gurus have said or done, depending on the

relevance to the real life situation. Quite a few ceremonies have come to be a normal part of a Sikh's life and it has also become a distinguishing feature of the Khalsa Panth from other religions. Despite differences in some of the details or even ideas and even differences in the names of sects, all the splinter groups share the common planks on which Sikhism stands.

Writers of fiction have therefore used the details of observances followed in personal life or rituals of the gurudwaras, as per requirement, depending on what they ultimately intended to achieve by including such details. It is, therefore not possible to collect a list of such details and say with certainty that this is what Sikhism means or a Sikh in real life appears like. Had it been done like that the novels would have been only chronicles and not works of fiction.

It is quite interesting to note that the first important reference to Sikhism comes in the novel of Chaman Nahal's The Crown and the Loincloth (1980) which deals with the early phase viz. 1922-23 of the Gandhian era (1920-47). Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) returned from Africa in 1915 to India and took a plunge into the political activities of the country at the time when the entire country was gradually coming to realise that liberation from the British Raj was the only way to ensure progress and culture. It was also felt that social reform and spread of education was equally important. It was only through the inculcation of rational thinking that freedom from superstition could be expected and genuine commitment to the betterment of human lot could be ensured. Chaman Nahal (b. 1927)

has therefore shown how in the same family of feudal lord there were sons with different political views -- if one was a Congressite, the other was a Sikh and the third was a terrorist. Adjustment within the family among the brothers and their wives was not a problem, although Jasbir, the boy who embraced Sikhism, had done so without the explicit permission of his father. But the tragedy of Jasbir was that he had not been recognised for his goodness by people and was tortured. What the novelist emphasises is the fact that there was understanding between Sikhs and Hindus and even Muslims as everybody was living according to his faith. If there was difference, it was because of the politicians who were spreading the poison of communal hatred playing one community against the other. The Harmandir Sahib Amritsar is shown to have been taken as a place of peace and spiritual experience as people shed their worldly interest when they entered the gurudwara. The corrupt mahants had been expelled from the gurdwaras. It was a general movement to educate people to root out superstition and social evils. The experience of Jallianwala Bagh (1919) is also referred to underline the violence of the atmosphere which was responsible for the massacre of innocent Sikhs. The English Raj had shown indifference to the services rendered by the Sikhs in the First World War (1914-18). Not only this, the English rule had been tightening its hold every day making the life of the people of Punjab suffocating. The novelist has sympathy with the Sikh community

that was a victim of indifference and even discrimination at the hands of the English rulers who had used their valour and selfless dedication to their advantage.

The years of World War II (1939-45) are important in the history of India for reasons other than those that had engaged the western civilization. It was not Fascism, nor was it Nazism. It was the impact of the global war on the mind and heart of the people of India. Mulk Raj Anand (b. 1905) has delineated the attitudinal change it brought in its trail in his trilogy viz. The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1941) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942). A young sikh peasant, Lal Singh questions the rationality of many of the social practices his parents and fellowmen observed and even shocks them by getting his hair cut against the injunction of the tenth guru. He eats from Muslim cook shops and mixes with children of low castes. He goes to France and Germany to fight for the British and learns to see the world from altogether a different angle. This is a new orientation of approach to the secular problems of life. Without losing his contact with his village and mother earth, he attempts to inculcate a new awareness in his people.

During his decade itself, the call for Quit India (1942) given by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) had created a new atmosphere in the country. Khushwant Singh (b. 1915) deals with this period in I shall Not Hear the Nightingale (1959) to show how the

Sikh families were divided on the issue of whether or not to support the Raj. Though the clash of the political and personal interests between the father and the son, the novelist has shown the hollowness of allegiance to the British rulers for personal gains. It was a time for a dispassionate evaluation of the political situation so that the movement for the freedom of the country could be sustained. The old lady Sabhrai is uneducated and yet totally devoted to the Guru, and committed to the ideas contained in the Shabads of the Granth. She dies, but not without proving to the hilt through her conduct that honesty of purpose is unquestionably a high virtue. Both Mulk Raj Anand and Khushwant Singh, in their own ways, emphasise the need for reorientation of mind, so that correct choices could be made for ~~the reconstruction of society.~~

The other important event that has been given lot of importance in Indo-English fiction is the partition of India that took place in 1947. It was a result of concession granted by the Congress to the Muslims who wanted Pakistan under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1875-1948). This was a shocking experience. The Indian National Congress which had stood for secularism had succumbed to the pressure of communalism brought to bear on the thinking of the political leaders of the time. Much of the territory associated with Sikh gurus and the history of the Sikhs was going to Pakistan and the Sikhs were not going to get a Sikh homeland. This was irksome on two counts: (1) Sikhism as a religion was not accepted as a basis for carving

out a Sikh State, and (2) the Sikhs were going to be physically separated from the places with which they had religious and sentimental association. Besides, the movement of the convoys from the area that became part of Pakistan to that of India were not allowed to reach safe. Communal passion ran so high that hundreds and thousands of Sikhs were killed by Muslims. In reprisal, train loads of corpses of Muslims were also sent from the Indian territory to Pakistan. The total result was traumatic as the dawn of freedom had brought bloodshed and dismemberment of families. People were rendered homeless compelled to live as refugees in tents in unknown places, without basic amenities. Against the back-drop of this political holocaust quite a few novels have been written. Prominent among them have been Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975), Raj Gill's The Rape (1974), Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956). All these novels in their own ways have attempted to underline the grit of the people of Punjab and the special nature of the tragedy of the Sikhs in whose case it was more than Physical dislodgement as it was a painful separation from the cultural hinter-land.

The other period that has caught the attention of a novelist like Nayantara Sahgal (b. 1927) is the mid-1960's when the demand of the Sikhs for a Punjabi speaking state was conceded in 1966. She has discussed at length the problem of division of the bigger Punjab into Punjab and Haryana in Storm in Chandigarh (1969). The Chief Ministers were Sikhs and were known to each other since early days of youth. They were from the same Jat

stock. And yet they were very different in nature and their approach to the political problems of the time. The one who held reins of Punjab was a man of guts and gumption, quite willing to undertake manual work. He was a peasant who had become Chief Minister from a driver. He used whatever he could lay his hands upon to assert his existence and incite the people of his State to project them as a powerful but neglected lot. He used the invincible cards of the questions of the religious identity of the Sikhs, the Gurmukhi script and the Punjabi language, and combined with them the economic problem which was directly related to the Bhakra Dam and storing of water with Haryana and Rajasthan. On the contrary the Sikh Chief Minister of Haryana who had originally migrated from Punjab was meek and mild and was without much grit or gumption in him. This contrastive study has its significance as here two Sikhs are presented as advocates of two different political ideas despite the commonness of their origin and background. The other novel A Situation in Delhi (1977) has only casual references to the problem of terrorism which was an offshoot of communal hatred.

The problem of terrorism which has just been hinted at in Nayantara Sahgal's A Situation in Delhi (1977) is dealt with as a central problem in Jo Bole (1983) by Raj Gill. Himself a Sikh, he has presented with knowledge and sympathy the inner story of the terrorist movement. He has also made accurate references to Sikh rituals and treated the problems of the angry

Sikhs with insider's understanding and genuine sympathy. This novel is distinguished for being stuffed with all kinds of information about Sikh religious practices, although as a piece of art it remains ordinary.

The simmering discontent of the people of Punjab continues to reflect itself in various political activities. Terrorism is being used as a tactic in the same way as Punjabi is being identified to establish the special claim of the people of Punjab for recognition and distinctive treatment. Raj Gill's The Torch Bearer (1983) deals with the rise of a Punjabi girl to the position of the Prime Minister of India and it shows how a Sikhni of Jat stock comes to grips with the difficult and complicated political situations against heavy odds, without losing her essential innocence. She presents a model of a person who can withstand pressures, face awkwardness and command even tough and experienced officers. She has inherited the characteristics of hard working, sincere and honest Jat-Sikhs. What is interesting from the point of view of depiction of culture is the fact that Sikh characters in the novel are found quite helpful to each other and are presented as basically good people. They are shown as conscious of their dignity and religious identity. Although the novel does not make any claim to being interested in the glorification of Sikh culture or the philosophy of Sikhism, *it does* bring out the essential toughness of character and honesty of purpose as distinguishing qualities of the Sikhs.

In the history of Punjab and also the country, 1984 is a distinguished year as it is in this year that the Blue Star Operation was undertaken and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of the country was shot dead by a Sikh body guard. As the Blue Star Operation wounded the psyche of the Sikhs, the death of the Hindu Prime Minister by a Sikh member of her own guards hurt the feelings of the Hindus. There arose a riot-like situation in Delhi following the death of Mrs. Gandhi in which innocent Sikhs were humiliated and killed indiscriminately. This clash between the two communities viz. the Hindus and the Sikhs has been depicted by Amrinder Kaur in Lajo (1990). The murder of Mrs. Gandhi was as shocking as the reprisal which followed it. But the fact remains that it was a tragic chapter in the history of India where the same Sikhs were butchered who had been raised to protect the Hindus from the marauders and invaders coming from Afghanistan and Persia. Opinions are divided on the genesis and the aftermath of the riots. But the fact remains that after 1947 when both the Hindus and the Sikhs had been victims of Muslim fanaticism, in 1984 it was the fanaticism of the Hindus against the Sikhs. Enmity once sown takes roots and grows to destroy the warring groups causing biton injuries even to the well-wishers. Lajo, the heroine of the novel is an example of the type. Having found her Sikh husband inadequate in bed, she developed relations with a Hindu youngman but discovered to her shock that he refused to do what he could do as a human being to

save the life of her husband who was subjected to inhuman treatment and murdered mercilessly in his presence. It is only in course of time when her child is grown up, he takes revenge and kills the Hindu lover of his mother. It is clear from the situations developed in the novel that for 20 years or so the communal hatred that had entered the heart of the heroine continues to torture her resulting ultimately in the ghastly murder of a man of the other community. The novel seems to emphasise the importance of love but at the same time warns that love without understanding and readiness to accept the religion of the partner cannot succeed. What is needed is the urgent realisation that religious hysteria does not solve social and human issues. It only aggravates the situation and makes life hellish.

It emerges without doubt from what has been discussed in these novels that communal considerations in matters of social life do not play a decisive role. The most important consideration is the consideration of peaceful and happy life and for that, secular needs must be given top priority. Spiritual needs and religious matters should be left to the individuals without mixing up the religious with the secular issues.

The novels have directly or indirectly dealt with the culture and social life of the Sikhs. It must be acknowledged in all fairness that it is not only the Sikhs who have written sympathetically and with understanding about the Sikhs, even the non-Sikhs have written with feeling and understanding about

the Sikhs and their cultural and social life. Most of these Sikh and non-Sikh writers are from Punjab who have moved to other parts of the country in search of job to eke out their living- Delhi being one important centre. Even among other Indo-English novelists, there are quite a few who have observed Sikhs for their cultural habits and social life and have written about them. Among such writers Anita Desai (b. 1937), B.Rajan (b. 1920), and Manohar Malgonkar (b. 1913) etc., are important. Except Mulk Raj Anand (b. 1905) who has settled in Bombay, all other novelists are settled in the northern part of India. Their understanding, therefore, of the special features of Sikhs and their religion and culture is quite dependable. One hardly comes across a Sikh character who is degraded or degenerate. All the writers seem to agree that the followers of the philosophy of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) are a respectable lot as their contribution to the safety of the northern region of the country, to the freedom movement and to the enrichment of the culture and literature of India is significant and noteworthy.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y1. Books on Sikhism and Sikh History

Ahluwalia, Jasbir Singh. The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrines.
New Delhi: Bahri Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1983.

Banerjee, A.C. Guru Nanak and His Times. Patiala: Punjabi
University, 1977.

_____. Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. New Delhi:
Rajesh Publications, 1978.

_____. The Khalsa Raj. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications,
1985.

Dang, Satyapal. Genesis of Terrorism: An Analytical Study of
Punjab Terrorists. New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1988.

Duggal, K.S., The Sikh Gurus: Their Lives and Teachings.
New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1980.

Gill, Pritam Singh. Heritage of Sikh Culture. Jullundhar:
New Academic Publishing Co., 1975.

Kohli, Surinder Singh. A Critical Study of Adi Granth. Delhi:
Motilal Banarsidass, 1961.

_____. Outline of Sikh Thought. New Delhi:
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1978.

_____. Philosophy of Guru Nanak. Chandigarh:
Publication Bureau of Panjab University, 1969.

- McLeod, W.H. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion. Delhi: OUP, 1968.
- Mehra, Parshotam. A Dictionary of Modern Indian History 1707-1947. Delhi: OUP, 1985.
- Randhawa, G.S. Guru Nanak's Japuji. Amritsar: GND University 1970.
- Singh, Avtar. Ethics of the Sikhs. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970.
- Singh, Harbans. The Heritage of the Sikhs. Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1985.
- Singh, Khazan. History of the Sikh Religion. Patiala: Language Department (Punjab), 1914 (Rep. 1988).
- _____. Philosophy of the Sikh Religion. Patiala: Department of Language (Punjab).
- Singh, Khushwant. A History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: 1469-1839, and Vol. II: 1839-1974. Delhi. Oxford University Press 1977.
- _____. Hymns of Nanak the Guru. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1969.
- Singh, Ranbir. The Sikh way of Life. New Delhi: India Publishers 1968.
- Singh, Santokh. Philosophical Foundation of the Sikh Value System. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982.
- Singh, Sher. Philosophy of Sikhism. Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1944.

Singh, Teja. The Sikh Religion: An Outline of its Doctrines.
Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1982.

2. Novels of Indian Writers in English

Amrinder Kaur. Lajo. New Delhi: Sharma Publishers, 1990.

Anand, Mulk Raj. The Village. New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks,
1978 (Orgn. pub. 1939).

_____. Across the Black Waters. New Delhi: Orient
1978 (Orig. pub. 1941).

_____. The Sword and the Sickle. New Delhi: Orient
Paperbacks, 1976, (Orig. pub. 1942).

Desai, Anita. Cry the Peacock. New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks,
1963.

Duggal, K.S. Twice Born Twice Dead. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing
House, 1979.

Gill, H.S. Ashes and Petals. New Delhi: Vikas. Publishing House,
1978.

Gill, Raj. The Torch Bearer. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983

_____. The Rape, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1974.

_____. Jo Bole. New Delhi: Vanity Books, 1983.

Malgonkar, Manohar. A Bend in the Ganges. New Delhi: Orient
Paperbacks, 1964.

Nahal, Chaman, Azadi. New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1979
(Orig. pub. 1975).

217

_____. My True Faces. Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1973.

_____. The Crown and the Loincloth, New Delhi: Vikas
Publishing House, 1981.

_____. Into Another Dawn. New Delhi: Sterling
Publishers, 1977.

_____. The English Queens. New Delhi: Vision Books,
1979.

Rajan, B. The Dark Dancer. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann,
1976. (Org. pub. 1959).

Sahni, Bhisham. Tamas. New Delhi: Penguin India, 1989
(Orig Pub. 1974).

Sahgal, Nayantara. Storm in Chandigarh. New Delhi: Orient
Paperback, 1969.

_____. The Day in Shadow. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing
House, 1971.

_____. A Situation in Delhi. New Delhi: Himalaya
Books, 1977.

Singh, Khushwant. Train to Pakistan. Bombay: India Books
House Pvt. Ltd., 1975. (Org. pub. 1956).

_____. I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale.
Bombay: IBH Publishing House, 1983. (Org. pub. 1959).

_____. Delhi. New York: Viking Penguin, 1989.

3. Critical Books on Indo-English Fiction

Bald, Suresht Ranjan. Novelists and Political Consciousness.
New Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982.

Dayanand, J.Y. Manohar Malgonkar. New York: Twayne
Publishers, 1974.

Dhawan, R.K. Three Contemporary Novelists. New Delhi:
Classical Publishing Company, 1985.
(This includes essays on Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh)

Jain, Jasbir. Nayantara Sahgal. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann,
1978.

Kirpal, Viney (ed.). The New Indian Novel in English: A Study
of the 1980's. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1990.

Naik, M.K. A History of Indian English Literature. New
Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.

_____. Dimensions of Indian English Literature.
New Delhi: Sterling Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1984.

_____. Mulk Raj Anand, New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1973.

Prasad, Madhusudan. Anita Desai: The Novelist. Allahabad:
New Horizon, 1981.

Rao, A.V. Krishna, Nayantara Sahgal. Madras: M. Seshachalam &
Co., 1976.

Shahane, Vasant. Khushwant Singh. New York: Twayne Publishers
1972.

Sharma, K.K. and H.K.Johri. The Partition in Indian-English Novels. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1984.

(This contains essays on Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Raj Gill).

_____. Perspectives on Mulk Raj Anand. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1978.



540635
Rayu